

Eighteenth Annual

TRUTH IN LOVE

LECTURESHIP

Theme:

**Modern
Applications
Of
Ancient Texts
(New Testament)**

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INTRODUCTION

All Scripture is inspired of God (God-breathed) and is profitable for doctrine, correction, reproof, instruction in righteousness (2 Tim. 3:16-17). What a reassuring truth! God has spoken (Heb. 1:1-2). The powerful (Rom. 1:16) truth from God is complete and all that we need (2 Peter 1:3) and can save us (James 1:21).

Tragically, many take the Holy Scriptures for granted and fail to truly appreciate this priceless treasure. How sad that we read newspapers and magazines, keep up with the news through television and radio, often know the latest statistics on our favorite team or sport, can immediately discuss the schedule and occurrences on our favorite television program, etc. – yet neglect to read and know the inspired message of God.

Those familiar with the Holy Scriptures fully understand the value and treasure of the Scriptures (Old and New Testament). In this volume (and series of lessons to be presented at the 2008 Truth In Love Lectureship) we will give special emphasis to select New Testament passages.

Each chapter will examine the passages more thoroughly. Allow me to offer the following collection of phrases, from these precious verses, for our admonition:

Matthew 6:33-34.....“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”

Matthew 28:18-20.....“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and,

lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”

Luke 12:15.....“And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.”

John 1:1-5, 14.....“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not ... And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us....”

John 4:23-24.....“But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”

John 5:28-29.....“Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”

John 8:31-32.....“Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

John 14:1-6.....“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”

John 17:20-21.....“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.”

Acts 2“And when the day of Pentecost was fully come ... they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues ... Peter said unto them ... this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel ... Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God ... ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain ... This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted ... Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost ... they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers ... the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”

Romans 12:1-2“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”

Galatians 6:1-2“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.”

Ephesians 6:10-18“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil ... loins girt about with truth ... the breastplate of righteousness ... feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace ... taking the shield of faith ... And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer ... and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;”

2 Timothy 3:1-7.....“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come ... Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof ... Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

1 Thessalonians 4:13-17...“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, ...For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout ... the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive ... meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.”

Titus 3:4-7.....“But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared ... according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost ... he shed on us ... being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”

James 1:12.....“Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.”

James 4:7.....“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”

2 Peter 1:20-21.....“Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”

1 John 3:1-3.....“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.”

2 John 9-11.....“Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.”

3 *John 1-4*.....“The elder unto the wellbeloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth. Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth. For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.”

Titus 2:3-5.....“The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.”

Though written almost two thousand years ago, it is amazing to see the appropriate application and relevance to our lives in this twenty first century. The problems of man are still the same – and certainly the answers found in God’s word are the solution.

A Final Exhortation: While we will not attempt to suggest that our lives are not busy, frantic, filled and overflowing – we will plead for you to **read, study and learn** the Word of God. Do not allow the world’s “*rat race pace*” to shut out the most precious source of help and strength. Do not neglect and miss the opportunity to hear the powerful precepts of Almighty God. Please, allow the Creator of “*all things*” to provide the guidance and instruction that can lead you to a mansion eternal.

The awesome facts and truths which are discussed in this volume are of little value, almost no benefit to YOU, dear reader, unless you hear them, believe them and follow the way of God. Dear reader, do not allow another to study for you. Another individual cannot believe for you, nor obey in your place. It is YOUR responsibility and if it is to be accomplished for YOU, then YOU must do it.

It is our fervent prayer that the messages contained in this book will be the “*spark*” that lights a fire within you that will continue throughout your earthly journey. Neglect the world - but never neglect the Book of all books, the Word of God.

~ Paul Sain
Director of the Lectureship

DEDICATION

Were it not for many special *"behind the scenes"* workers, an annual lectureship would not be possible. There are many who deserve praise and commendation. Any attempt is probably not wise because likely some valuable ones will be omitted.

Advertisements to prepare and mail • Preparations around the building • Food provisions for the Friday evening cook-out • Food provisions for the Saturday Bar-B-Q lunch • Set-up and clean-up • Tables and chairs moved • Attractive signs placed around town • Advertisements in the local newspaper • Housing for the Memphis School of Preaching students • Video and audio taping and duplicating • Etc. These and so many other works are accomplished in large part by a core group of faithful, diligent workers. Once a *"need"* is known, it is almost immediately met and accomplished. An attitude of *"what can I do"* is possessed and demonstrated. Often you have said, *"just let me do this, but don't say anything"* or *"I don't want any credit for doing my part."* A large percentage of these workers have been Christians for a few decades and have been the *"strength"* of the East Hill church.

While I will not endeavor to name each one - please know of our love and respect for you for each project accepted and accomplished. Please be aware that many see and appreciate your good works. You are an inspiration and a great example to others. Thus, we dedicate this volume to each unnamed servant who willingly and sacrificially give of themselves to make this and many other efforts a reality.

To God be the glory for all we endeavor to do.

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***Modern
Applications
Of
Ancient
Texts
(New Testament)***

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Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:

Matthew 6:33-34

This Chapter Written By

Garland Elkins

Jesus said, as recorded in the Sermon on the Mount,

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof (Matt. 6:33, 34).

What a tremendous section of Scripture is Matthew 6:25-34. God gave us life and He will sustain our life. We are to learn from the example of the birds: we are to work hard! Worry takes from life, but cannot add to life. If God clothes the flowers, He will take care of us. Worry reveals our lack of faith in God, like unbelievers. Then in our assigned texts, Matthew 6:33-34 Jesus teaches us that if we seek God first that what we need shall be given unto us. Further Jesus teaches us that we need to learn the art of living one day at a time. We must learn to meet today's responsibilities today!

Seeking The Kingdom First Means That We Will Not Forsake The Assembly

In what context does the Bible say: *“Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord?”* or *“The Lord shall judge his people”* or *“He that despised Moses’ law died without compassion on the word of two or three witnesses”* or

of how much sorer punishment, think ye, shall he be judged worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb. 10:26-31).

All of the above was said in context with what the Holy Spirit had the writer of Hebrews to write in the following:

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching (Heb. 10:25).

The above is very strong language, but since it is so serious I will summarize it for us.

1. To sin willfully, for which there is no more sacrifice is connected with forsaking the assembly.
2. This certain fearful looking for judgment

and fiery indignation devouring the adversaries is connected with forsaking the assembly.

3. His mentioning the fact that men who despised Moses' law died without mercy is connected to our forsaking the assembly, since we would be despising the law of Christ, and that law forbids us from forsaking the assembly (Heb. 10:25).
4. Trodding Christ under foot is connected with our forsaking the assembly.
5. Counting the blood of the covenant wherewith we were sanctified refers to our forsaking the assembly.
6. Doing despite unto the Spirit of grace is referring to our forsaking the assembly.
7. The Lord judging His people is speaking of forsaking the assembly.
8. To fall into the hands of the living God is in Hebrews 10:31, speaking of forsaking the assembly.
9. "*Vengeance is mine saith the Lord,*" is dealing with the forsaking the assembly. He, of course, will take vengeance against all types of sins.

There is an assembly of the church when all members, unless unable to attend, should be present. Paul wrote to the Corinthian congregation, "*When therefore ye assemble yourselves together, it is not possible to eat the Lord's supper*" (1 Cor. 11:20). Although they were not taking the Lord's supper properly. In 1 Corinthians 11, Paul reprimanded them for that, and instructed them as to how they should partake of the Lord's supper, nevertheless it is also true that they were to "*assemble yourselves together.*" Also, in

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1 Cor. 14:23 he writes, *"If therefore the whole church be assembled together..."*. This passage of Scripture also shows the necessity of a public assembly of the church.

Hebrews 10:25 is not discussing attendance at a funeral, or a ladies sewing class, etc., but rather the public meetings of the church. The Sunday morning and Sunday evening services of the church, mid-week Bible study, and other meetings in which the Lord, and the elders expect all members to attend.

God Knows Our Needs And Provides (Matt. 6:25-34)

The emphasis in verse 25 should be on the word *"therefore,"* which is a word following a series of statements which cannot be contradicted and which introduce an inevitable conclusion. The remainder of the sixth chapter of the Sermon on the Mount is an expansion of the thought already introduced in verses 19-24 that we are to live for God and not for the world. We are to trust heavenly riches and not mammon.

We must not attach ourselves as servants to the material things of this earth. There is something in life higher and more to be desired than mere food and drink and clothing. There is a Father in heaven who cares for the birds and the grass, which He brought into existence. God, who has given life, which is more than food, will take care to provide food for maintenance of life. God, who provides food for the birds, will certainly provide food for His own children. Anxious care about the success of means cannot produce any good.

God clothes the grass and flowers of the field with more than all the glory which Solomon's garments had. In the creatures God has made us see the living evidence of the non-necessity for anxiety on our part. The "*birds of the heaven*" (verse 26) are not anxious, the "*lilies of the field*" (verse 28) cannot be, yet, their wants are supplied. It is, therefore, unreasonable, since we are of "*much more value than they,*" that we be anxious. Again, I emphasize that Jesus warns us against anxiety but not against foresight and prudence. Foresight is not the cause of anxiety but is usually a preventive. Anxious thought is contrary to all the lessons of nature which show it to be unnecessary. "*Be not anxious*" is expressed in slightly differing forms (verses 25, 28, 31, 34) four times in this context.

The heathen world, knowing nothing of the loving heavenly Father, seeks eagerly the externals of life, but Christians, knowing that their Father is in heaven, should not admit heathen worries (or any other worries) into their lives. "*Be not anxious*" is a command of Christ, and it is as binding as any He ever uttered. When we worry, we are breaking one of His solemn commands. Our Lord would call us back to a consciousness that life is an infinitely larger thing than the externals. To be anxious reflects on God's power, love, and goodness.

Our main aim in life must be to promote the Cause of the Lord. The necessary things will then be added. A confident and assured dependence upon the care of our heavenly Father will banish anxiety.

It is a great blessing that we do not know the future, for, if we did, we would often be miserable. It is folly to borrow trouble and cross bridges before we

get to them. A large part of our unhappiness arises from the dread of that which never comes. A French saying states (and, there is often a great element of truth in it), "*The worst misfortunes are those that never arrive.*" The cure for anxiety is simple trust in the faithfulness, love, goodness, and providence of our heavenly Father. On the other hand, anxiety is most injurious in that, when our present thoughts are thus taken up with the possible evils of tomorrow, we are making them possibilities by so doing the certain evils of today. The concluding verse (34) shows that it is foolish to anticipate tomorrow's trouble today and to try to bear it today. If it does come, it must be borne just the same on the morrow—and much that we anticipate today may never come even on the morrow. The morrow shall bring with it troublesome difficulties of its own; the present day has problems sufficient for our attention.

Worry Is Unnecessary And Futile

To avoid worry, it is necessary first of all to be a Christian. We must be convinced that God will, indeed, take care of us. We can be assured of His wisdom to take care of us. He is the "*only wise god*" (Rom. 16:27). Likewise, we are assured of His ability to take care of us.

Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us (Eph. 3:20).

The most encouraging (for us) attribute of God is His goodness toward His children. "*Our soul waiteth for the Lord: he is our help and our shield*" (Psa. 33:20).

God is wise, powerful, and good (Psa. 139:12). We rejoice in the following encouragement:

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose (Rom. 8:28).

What To Do With Anxieties

Harassing cares and anxieties are represented as burdens. There are three kinds of burdens, First, there are burdens we alone must bear: *"Each man shall bear his own burden"* (Gal. 6:5). Second, there are burdens with which others may assist us: *"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ"* (Gal. 6:2). Third, there are also burdens which we cannot bear, nor can others bear them with us. To handle these we must: *"Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved"* (Psa. 55:22). These burdens are too heavy for us and our fellows. What we are to cast upon God are those cares and anxieties which lie beyond the range of human agency and ability. Peter instructs us, *"Casting all your anxiety upon him, because he careth for you"* (1 Pet. 5:7).

We Can Depend Upon God's Providence

Jesus tells us: *"Be not anxious for your life."* He then begins a series of arguments which are designed to cause us to trust in the providence of God. His first argument is that the life is more valuable than food and the body than raiment. Since God has given us the greater gift, He argues, He will give us the lesser gifts necessary to the sustaining that greater gift.

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A second reason Jesus gives for our trusting the providence of God is that the birds of the heaven neither sow nor reap nor gather food into barns, and, yet, they are cared for by God. God has not made it the duty of the birds to gather their food in the summer to last them through the winter, but He has made it our duty to provide for ourselves (2 Thess. 3:10) under His providence (2 Cor. 9:8).

His third argument for His providential care for us is that a man cannot add *“one cubit unto his stature”* (KJV) or *“one cubit unto the measure of his life”* (ASV). The point is we are not to be anxious about that over which we have no control and for which we are not responsible. Jesus points out that: *“For after all these things do the Gentiles seek.”* It is perhaps to be expected that those who are not believers in God would have as their chief interest these things, but Jesus tells His disciples that they have a heavenly Father who will provide these things for them, and they are to trust Him for them. If the disciples of Christ do not trust their heavenly Father to provide for them, they are no better than the heathen.

Jesus then deals with practical problems; what people eat and wear cause perhaps as much, and often more, anxiety than anything else in life. He points out that the lilies of the field grow but they neither toil nor spin. They do not provide their own clothing, yet, He says that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. He then shows that we are of far greater worth. In three concise, terse, and pointed questions Jesus covers the field of anxieties of a vast majority of people. *“What shall we eat? Or, What shall we drink? Or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?”*

Jesus gives a final reason to trust God's providence. He said, "*For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.*" Our heavenly Father knows that we need all these things, and, loving us as He does, He will provide our necessities. Jesus said, "*Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you*" (Matt. 7:7);

If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask him? (Matt. 7:11).

It Is Imperative That Our Priorities Be Right

Jesus said,

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you (Matt. 6:33).

Thus, our Lord teaches that happiness and security are within the reach of His children (and, all could obtain it, if they became Christians and would put the Lord and His kingdom first). If a person seeks only the material things, he cannot expect the spiritual, but, if he seeks the spiritual, "*All these things shall be added unto you.*"

We are to live our lives a day at a time. Jesus said, "*Be not therefore anxious for the morrow: for the morrow will be anxious for itself*" (Matt. 6:34). We are not to borrow troubles from either yesterday or tomorrow. Each day has enough duties and

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responsibilities to engage all our wisdom, strength, integrity, and efforts.

Let us remember that God knows our every need and that He is able to fulfill our needs.

And my God shall supply every need of yours according to his RICHES IN GLORY IN Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:19).

He loves us and will gladly provide for us.

And God is able to make all grace abound unto you; that ye, having always all sufficiency in everything, may abound unto every good work (2 Cor. 9:8).

Therefore, let us

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths (Prov. 3:5-6).

Paul Learned The Cure For Worry: Let Us Follow Him

As He Followed Christ (1 Cor. 11:1)

1. *"Rejoice in the Lord always"* (Phil. 4:4). This is the counsel given by an old man who is now the prisoner of Imperial Rome. It is the optimistic exhortation ringing through the stifling air of difficulty and strife. Age is not frequently associated with such sunny exuberance of spirit. Age is so prone to become reminiscent, and memory is often a fertile breeding-ground of sad and tearful regrets. Age frequently dwells on *"radiant mornings"* which have passed away, while often turning the eyes away from the east where new mornings break. But, this old

man is different. Hard circumstances have not made him hard. Apparent failure has not soured him into a cynic. He retains his fine, appreciative sense of life's essential sweetness. He does not become depressed as he reminisces of past accomplishments. He looks to tomorrow. The pains of today are only the birth-pangs of a better tomorrow. The immediate difficulty is only a thorn which contains the possibility of producing fruit for the Lord (Phil. 1:15-21). Circumstances may impose restraints upon him, but they cannot destroy him. Rome may separate him from his fellows, but she is powerless to separate him from his Lord! Imprisonment still provides a room for two, and by no earthly conspiracy can he be bereft of his Companion (2 Tim. 4:16-18). His old age glows with optimism.

From Paul we learn that Christian joy and contentment are not dependent on our surroundings. If they were, then they would be as uncertain as our unprotected candle burning in a gusty night. One moment the candle burns clear and steady, the next moment the blaze leaps to the very edge of the wick and affords little or no light, or else, goes out. Thus it is with the circumstances of life. At one time they arrange themselves like a sunny day in June; a little later they rearrange themselves like a gloomy day in December. One day I am at a wedding; the next day I stand by an open grave. The solution to this problem is an *"open secret."* Jesus said, *"Lo, I am with you always"* (Matt. 28:20)—literally, *"Lo, I am with you all the days."* He is no fair-weather companion leaving me when the day grows dark and cold. He is with the faithful Christian *"All the days"*—the day of life; the day of death; the day of judgment! If I

draw my water from the wells of circumstance, my resources are exposed to peril. If I draw from the wells of salvation, the rich and bountiful supply shall be found "*springing up unto eternal life*" (John 4:14).

Therefore will not we fear, though the earth
be removed, and though the mountains
be carried into the midst of the sea (Psa.
46:2).

In all his thinking Paul's first thought was ever of the Lord. All his purposes began in the Lord, and in the Lord they ended. He did not call upon Him just when things had gone amiss, but he thanked Him when all was well (Phil. 4:6; Rom. 8:28). To the apostle, the Lord was his Alpha. He consulted Him at the beginnings of things. He was also his Omega; in Him everything found its culmination.

2. "*Let your forbearance be known unto all men*" (Phil. 4:5). The man who is clothed in sunny assurance and who rides triumphantly upon his circumstance will not be harsh toward his fellows. Real gentleness is not to be confused with weakness. A surgeon with a weak will and a trembling hand can never be gentle with his patient. It is the surgeon with irresistible will, with iron nerves, who can hold his hand with such steady control as to touch a wound with the softest touch. A weak hand would torture the patient; a strong hand is the gentle minister of restoration. We need iron for the making of the finest blood. Likewise, we need iron in our character. And so, it is necessary for us to remember that this same apostle, who counsels his brethren to be "*forbearing,*" also counsels them to "*be strong.*" Forbearance,

or gentleness, is reasonableness of dealing, a fine consideration for others, the spirit which does not urge its personal rights to the uttermost. It is frequently true that my highest right is not to claim my right. The faithful Christian offers the chief seats to others and finds an excellent delight in the lower place. Further, it is possible to recognize the rights of my brother and for my behavior to be unattractive and unpleasant. A surrender may be brutal or sullen. In Christian forbearance there is kindness. It does not involve ominous grumbling. The spirit is altogether kindly-how can it be otherwise with a spirit that is rejoicing "*in the Lord?*" Then, Paul adds, "*The Lord is at hand.*" This remarkable statement was intended to further encourage the brethren. It was not as when some stealthy terror appears upon the field and all the birds are hushed in tearful silence. When the apostles (and other Christians) thought of the Lord's coming and "*of the day of the Lord,*" their hearts rang out with a merrier peal. The thought that "*the Lord is at hand*" should not bring the gloom of eclipse but the daybreak when all shadows flee away. This truth brings courage to our hearts, firmness to our steps, and out of valorous strength there springs all the gentle graces of the consecrated life.

3. "*In nothing be anxious*" (Phil. 4:6). How exacting the ideal! Harassing care is to play no part in the Christian's life. Worry is an alloy which always debases the fine metal of the Christian character. It mars and spoils it. The counsel, "*In nothing be anxious,*" is unconditional and covers every period and sphere in human life. Anxiety is to be banished from everything. It is not to be permitted the smallest foothold in our lives. Anxiety never reinforces my

battalions; it only weakens. Anxiety means the shrinkage of faith. The shrinkage of faith results in impoverishment. If the spirit of harassing anxiety could be cast out of our individual lives and of the church collectively, we would be amazed at the spiritual progress we would make. Ridding ourselves of worry would within itself be a spiritual step which would defy description! But, how is it to be done? The apostle gives us the answer, and in that answer we have the antidote to care. (1) The first secret is "*by prayer.*" All real prayer begins not in words but in attitude. Correct prayer reflects a proper spiritual posture which is often more important than the clumsy expediency of words. We must acquire and maintain a prayerful spirit; we must "*pray without ceasing*" (1 Thess. 5:17); however, the proper attitude will express itself in humble request. (2) Thus, the second step is "*by supplication*"—such is the amazing range of our privilege in the Lord. (3) The third step is "*with thanksgiving.*" Paul made certain, not to omit that element from his recipe when giving his cure for care. Many of our worries would immediately melt away if we would begin to count our blessings. Note this great passage,

Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us
with benefits, even the God of our salvation
(Psa. 68:19).

Please observe: One—He blesses us with "*benefits*"; two—He blesses us with "*loads*" of benefits; three—He blesses us with "*daily*" loads of benefits. I seldom sing the song "*Count Your Many Blessings*" that I do not remember the above passage. Some anxieties can resist everything except thanksgiving. When

that begins, they melt away like icebergs in tropical seas. Paul wrote, "*In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus to you-ward*" (1 Thess. 5:18). The life that is ungrateful is very cold, and icebergs abound in the atmosphere. Let us raise the temperature, and we shall be amazed at the results. A truly thankful heart is so crowded with the sense of God's mercies that it affords no hospitality to worry and care.

The Blessing Of Peace

If we practice the great truth that we have just discussed, we shall reap the rare and beautiful fruit "*the peace of God*" (Phil. 4:7). If we live in the mood of prayer, if it is to be our constant frame of mind, if instead of worrying about our needs, we habitually present them to the Lord in trustful supplication, and if in all our communion there is the joyous note of thankful praise, we shall most assuredly be kept and sustained in "*the peace of God.*"

Peace is a word which is most grievously misunderstood. Peace is not necessarily in the stillness of death; nor, is it found in the silent stagnancy of a body of water. Peace is life; it is motion; it is movement without friction. Peace is the absence of discord; peace is when man serves God and in turn his fellow man "*in the Lord.*"

This is "*the peace of God which passeth all understanding.*" This is the peace that a non-Christian cannot comprehend. It can no more be realized by an unbeliever than a perfume can be realized by one who is destitute of the sense of smell. Knowledge is good; wisdom is better; but peace is best. Peace brings a higher and deeper satisfaction than all the

devices and acquisitions of the intellect. The *"peace of God"* is easily first surpassing all the gathered treasuries of mental acquisition and it *"passeth all understanding."*

This peace of God shall *"guard your hearts and your thoughts."* It is the figure of a siege. The life is surrounded by subtle foes seeking to gain an entrance into a treasure. Temptations, fears, and alarms all are at the gate cunningly waiting for admission, but within peace stands as a sleepless sentinel and guard, and life is secure. Our very peace is our defense. When there is perfect peace between the soul and the Lord, there is no discordant element, and the faithful Christian presents to the foe an invulnerable front. Oneness with God is a unity invincible!

Let us mark well where the vigilant guardianship is to be concentrated—in *"your hearts and your thoughts."* The heart is the seat of thought where all our thoughts and purposes are born. Hearts and thoughts represent both the soil and the flowers which spring from the soil. They are both at their best when *"the peace of God"* dwells in the life. When we are at peace, the heart-soil will be kept sweet, and the thought-flowers will be kept beautiful.

And, here is the secret of the sure defense. They are to be guarded *"in Christ Jesus."* This was the apostle's familiar phrase. To rely quietly on the Lord is to obtain an ally against whom the subtle and mighty hordes of wickedness cast themselves in vain. When we become Christians and then live in such a way that we enjoy *"the peace of God,"* we can, and will, successfully stand against *"the world, the flesh, and the devil!"*

Garland Elkins



Garland has been preaching the gospel for half a century; known and highly respected throughout the brotherhood. For many years he worked with the Getwell church in Memphis and directed the *Spiritual Sword* lectureship. Presently he works with the Memphis School of Preaching. He is the author of "*The Saviour's Way*" and numerous tracts and fine articles. Garland and Corinne have three girls.

Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:

Matthew 28:18-20

This Chapter Written By

David Sain

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen (Matt. 28:18-20).

Evangelism In The First Century

As cited above, Jesus commanded his disciples, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations...” (Matt. 28:19-20). In Mark’s account of the giving of this great commission, the words of Jesus are,

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned (Mark 16:15-16).

According to Luke, Jesus told his apostles that

they would preach in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem (Luke 24:45-49).

Their fulfillment of that solemn charge by Jesus was begun on Pentecost (Acts 2:14ff), and continued with daily proclamation of the gospel, both publicly and from house to house (Acts 5:42). There was a public outcry in opposition to their message, resulting in an outbreak of threats and persecution. Many of the disciples were driven from their homes, but that did not deter them from making the soul-saving message of the gospel known. The divine record says that those who were driven from the homes preached the Word wherever they went (Acts 8:1-4). They practiced what I call "*everywhere evangelism*" – that is, everywhere they went they took advantage of every opportunity they had to proclaim the gospel.

It is, therefore, no mere coincidence that the book of Acts records that the number of disciples multiplied, with daily additions to the church (Acts 2:47, 6:7, 16:5). And, approximately 25 years after Pentecost, the apostle Paul declared that the gospel "*was preached to every creature which is under heaven...*" (Col. 1:23). What they did is very impressive, and they did it without the benefit of automobiles, airplanes, mass media, duplication machines, and Internet.

The early church was mindful of evangelizing. They were bold and zealous in teaching the truth. They were uncompromising. They were brave. They had deep conviction that no amount of opposition could shake. They confronted people with the gospel everywhere – in their houses, in their market places, and in the temple. Oh! How inspiring it is to read of their diligence, their courage, and their boldness!

Evangelism In The Twentieth Century

In the twentieth century, another story emerged that was also impressive and inspiring. We were told that from 1945 to 1965 we were the fastest growing religious group in America. And there was little doubt about why—the church of that era was mindful of evangelizing.

The Christians in those days were not timid. They were bold—even daring. Members confronted lost neighbors. “*Cottage meetings*” were common. The church believed strongly in the oneness of the church and the rightness of their message about salvation, and they talked it with firm conviction.

In their conviction and boldness, some of them were offensive to their friends and relatives. They did not intend to be unkind or offensive, but their aggressiveness did offend some people. As a result, a lot of people became prejudiced against “*the Church of Christ.*” And the common inflammatory charge against us was that we believed that we were “*the only ones going to heaven.*” And, as stated above, from 1945 until 1965, the church grew faster than any other religious group!

Now, in the foregoing observation, I am not defending any unkindness or mean spirit by anyone at any time. However, don’t overlook an important point. During those days, notwithstanding the fact that a few were “*untactful*” and “*unkind,*” the church was growing! The church grew because of the evangelistic zeal and plain preaching that characterized the Lord’s body in that era.

However, that evangelistic zeal waned and we have grown very little since then. But, why? What happened?

The Winds Of Change

During the seventies, I began to notice a change. Seeing what some perceived to be a “*mean spirit*,” many in the church began to back off from the “*offensive ways*” of the past. In the quest for a “*non-offensive image*,” and in trying not to appear “*narrow-minded*,” many backed off from all confrontations with religious neighbors. The result was: being unmindful of evangelizing.

Also, during the seventies and eighties, another change began to take place in the church that should be factored in. During that time, we began to shift our focus to meeting the “*needs*” of the church members, and we began to place more emphasis upon human relationships, mental health, being a single Christian, overcoming grief, building strong families, etc.

Now, make no mistake about it. Those things are not wrong within themselves, but, in our emphasis upon those things, could it be that we have become so self-serving that we have neglected evangelism?

We have developed some great “*programs*” and we conduct wonderful activities for the various age groups, with “*something for everyone*.” We are busy, but the fact is that most of our programs and activities, in the local congregation, are initiated to keep the membership happy, content, and faithful in attendance. In other words, most of our programs are for “*us*” and have very little, if anything, to do with the spread of the gospel. Meanwhile, our friends and neighbors are lost, dying without eternal hope.

A Sobering Comparison

When you consider the success that the church had in spreading the gospel in the first century,

you have to wonder why we are not more evangelistic.

1. It is not because of more difficult circumstances. Think of preaching to the Jews in the synagogue. Think of teaching the Greeks in immoral Corinth or the pagans of Athens who were steeped in their idolatrous practices. The apostles and early Christians were faced with the daunting challenge of preaching the gospel under the threat of being arrested, stoned, and even killed. No, we do not face more difficult circumstances than did they.

2. It is not because of poorer methods. Never have more or better methods and aids been available than those available to us. As previously noted, they did what they did without television, the Internet, and the ease of travel that we have. They did not even have the printed page to aid them. No, if we are failing to preach the gospel to "*every creature*," our failure to evangelize is not because of the lack of effective methods.

3. It is not because of wealth. We are far more affluent than were the Christians of the first century. In comparison to them, we would have to say that our failure to evangelize in the fashion that they did is not a lack of resources. We are not the richest people on earth, but neither are we the poorest people on earth. With our resources and the methods available to us (mentioned in the previous point), most of us have the capability to extend our evangelistic outreach anytime we decide to do so!

What Hinders Us?

Why are we not more evangelistic? Why are we not growing? Why do the waters of our baptisteries

go unstirred for days, and even weeks? Well, here are what I believe to be some real reasons that we are not more evangelistic.

1. A lack of conviction about the scriptures. The influence of relativism has led many to believe that there is no absolute truth. And, it follows logically that if there is no absolute truth, evangelism is needless because everyone is right regardless of what he believes, and no one needs to be converted.

If we do not believe in the authority of the Scriptures, we have no legitimate motivation to evangelize. (Note: The Bible teaches emphatically the inspiration and authority of the scriptures, in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, John 17:17, Galatians 1:8-9, 2 John 9-11, et al.)

2. A lack of conviction about the distinctiveness of the church. Through the influence of false teachers, and under the sway of pluralism, many people have come to think that the Church of Christ is no different from any other religious group. And, furthermore, our pluralistic society has conditioned many people to “*feel*” that it is wrong to be judgmental or narrow-minded (which they have concluded was the case with many of those in previous generations).

If we believe that the church is regarded as just another denomination, and if we do not believe in the distinctiveness of the church, we have no valid reason to evangelize because our neighbors are all right regardless of what they believe and practice religiously. (Note: Contrary to these popular ideas, the Bible clearly teaches the oneness and distinctiveness of the church, in Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 1:22-23, 4:4, 5:23, et al.)

3. A lack of conviction about the lost. At

the heart and core of our being so unmindful of evangelizing is the way we view people who have not believed and obeyed the gospel. Many of us simply do not believe that such people are lost. Instead, we have concluded that God's grace covers anyone who is *"sincere"* and *"does what he believes is right."*

One thing that has, no doubt, produced that conclusion is the worldly mindset, alluded to in the previous point, that no one has the right to *"judge"* another person. *"Therefore,"* they challenge, *"who are you to say that another person is living in sin?"*

Well, the truth is that if we do not believe that people who have not believed and obeyed the gospel are lost, we have no valid reason to evangelize. I remember H. A. Dixon, former President of Freed-Hardeman College, saying that there are two reasons why we are not more concerned and more active in confronting people with the gospel. First, he said, we are not convinced that they are lost if they do not obey the gospel, and, second, we are not convinced that we are lost if we do not try to teach them. (Note: The Bible teaches in unmistakable words that one must believe and obey the gospel in order to be saved, in Mark 16:15-16, 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9, et al.)

Compelling Reasons For Evangelizing

Having considered these reasons why we are not more evangelistic, it is appropriate now to focus upon some reasons why we must be evangelistic.

1. We must be evangelistic because of what we know. What we know places a great responsibility and obligation upon us. What we know involves the souls of everyone in the whole world.

MATTHEW 28:18-20

- We know the truth about sin (Rom. 3:23, 6:23; Luke 13:3).
- We know the truth about God's love (John 3:16).
- We know the truth about the grace of God (Eph. 2:8-9).
- We know the truth about the oneness of the church (Eph. 4:4, 5:23).
- We know that the church is composed of the saved (Acts 2:47).
- We know the truth about salvation in Christ (Col. 1:13-14).
- We know what puts one into Christ (Gal. 3:26-27).
- We know the truth about how to obtain the remission of sins (Acts 2:38).
- We know the truth about the judgment (Acts 17:30-31).
- We know the judgment that shall come upon the unrighteous (1 Cor. 6:9).
- We know the judgment that shall come upon the disobedient (2 Thess. 1:7-9).

As long as there is just one person who does not know these truths, and as long as there are those who have not obeyed the gospel, we must keep preaching the truth!

2. We must be evangelistic lest we have bloody hands. One of the most sobering passages in the entire Bible is Ezekiel 3:17-18. There God told the prophet,

Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the

wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.

Then the Lord said,

Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul (Ezek. 3:19).

Today, we are the “*prophets*” with a message for the wicked, and we shall give account to God for our efforts to warn and teach them.

3. We must be evangelistic because of compassion. We are disciples of Jesus, and we need to follow his example of compassion. Matthew recorded a defining moment in the earthly ministry of Jesus, saying,

...when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few (Matt. 9:36-37).

If your doctor knew that you were dying with some disease, and he had the medicine that could cure you, would you want him to tell you of your condition and offer the medicine to you? Of course you would!

Well, if someone knew you were lost in sin, and he knew the gospel could save you, would you want

that person to care enough about you to tell you? Of course you would! If you are headed to eternal destruction, you would want someone to at least try to warn you! Well, our Savior said, "...*whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them...*" (Matt. 7:12).

4. We must be evangelistic because of the gospel. The gospel has the power to transform every creature (Rom. 1:16). It is the message of hope and salvation, and the Lord has placed that message into the hands of his disciples, with the charge to preach it to everyone (Mark 16:15; Matt. 28:19).

In a time when wickedness and ungodliness abound throughout the world, let us remember that we have the message that can and will make a difference in the life of everyone who hears, believes and obeys it. It may not be that which men who have itching ears want to hear (2 Tim. 4:4), but it is the message that they need to hear. It is our responsibility to proclaim it, regardless of what the hearer does in response to the message.

Two Concluding Thoughts

Today, the church erects large, beautiful buildings in which we worship and edify one another, and we build "*activity centers*" in which to eat and enjoy Christian fellowship. And there is absolutely nothing wrong in having a nice, commodious facility in which to meet for worship and edification. But, what about our friends and neighbors who are lost? Could it be that, as we worship in our comfortable facilities and engage in our edifying programs, that we have become numb to the condition of people around us?

DAVID SAIN

We can tire ourselves out doing all kinds of good things, but if our energies do not include evangelizing lost people, we are simply not fulfilling God's purpose in our lives.

Of one the Lord has made the race,
Through one has come the fall;
Where sin has gone must go his grace:
The gospel is for all.

These words, written by J. M. McCaleb, are a part of one of our well known hymns, and the singing of it affirms that which the Bible teaches clearly and abundantly: The gospel is for all men and wherever sinful man exists, there the gospel needs to be preached.

Dear reader, are you personally active in evangelizing? Are you talking to those whom you know and with whom you associate? Remember that evangelism is an individual responsibility, and I invite you to say with me, Evangelism begins with me!

David Sain



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MATTHEW 28:18-20

Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:

Luke 12:15

This Chapter Written By

Garland Elkins

1 . Jesus was speaking to a multitude:

And one out of the multitude said unto him, Teacher, bid my brother divide the inheritance with me (Luke 12:13).

Jesus replied to his request, *“But he said unto him, Man, who made me a judge or a divider over you”* (Luke 12:14)? Jesus did not come to settle petty family squabbles over inheritance, *“For the Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost”* (Luke 19:10). Then Jesus made the following profound and significant statement:

And he said unto them, Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth (Luke 12:15).

2. The occasion of this parable was a blunt exhibition of worldliness. Knowing this our Lord gave utterance to the timely truth recorded in Luke 12:15. Jesus enforced what He said in Luke 12:15 by the parable of a rich man (Luke 12:16-21).

3. Let us notice some things which do not make the abundant Christian life.

- a. The greatness of life depends not on the possession of things. Men may be pigmies with them or giants without them (verse 15).
- b. The distribution as well as the production of goods is a serious thing. We need to produce in God's name, and we need to distribute in God's name (1 Cor. 16:1-2).
- c. The man who gives God no credit for gain, seldom uses the gain as God would have him. He who says, "*I made it*" and leaves God out will also say, "*I will keep it or spend it on myself.*"

4. The man who leaves God out of his plan will see his plan fail. Note: What the man said to himself, and what God said to him (Luke 12:19, 20).

5. We learn from this parable that a man and his goods are distinct. At death he goes one way, they another (1 Tim. 6:7). This parable settles the question of ownership (1 Cor. 10:26).

6. We also learn from this parable that he who gives his soul for the world must in the end lose both the price and the purchase. It is great wisdom to be rich toward God (Luke 12:21).

Solomon Is An Example

1. Solomon is an example showing us that life does not consist of fame. His fame was such that:

And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom (1 Kings 4:34).

2. Solomon excelled in wisdom and understanding and yet that was not enough to satisfy him.

And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore (1 Kings 4:29).

3. Solomon wrote many proverbs and songs: *"And he spake three thousand proverbs; and his songs were a thousand and five"* (1 Kings 4:22).

4. Solomon was the richest and most powerful man in the world and yet having tried the ways of the world he said, *"All is vanity and vexation of spirit"* (Eccl. 12:8). He reached the proper conclusion:

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.

What Is Life?

1. Life is a gift. Since God gave us life (James 1:17), then God holds us responsible for the way that we live it (Eccl. 12:13, 14).

2. Life is a preparation (2 Cor. 5:10).

3. Life is a period of building (Matt. 7:24-27).

4. Life is a conflict or war (Matt. 6:24; 1 Cor. 9:27).

5. Life is a time of choices (Josh. 24:15; Heb. 11:24, 25).

6. Life must be lived a little at a time (Matt. 6:34).

7. Life is short.

LUKE 12:15

Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away (James 4:14).

Garland Elkins



Garland has been preaching the gospel for half a century; known and highly respected throughout the brotherhood. For many years he worked with the Getwell church in Memphis and directed the *Spiritual Sword* lectureship. Presently he works with the Memphis School of Preaching. He is the author of "*The Saviour's Way*" and numerous tracts and fine articles. Garland and Corinne have three girls.

Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:

John 1:1-5, 14

This Chapter Written By

Robert R. Taylor, Jr.

It has been my joy and delight to speak on all these East Hill Lectureships except one when I had a conflict of schedule. My genuine thanks to Paul, the elders and all precious people at East Hill for the invitation to speak twice and pen two chapters for the book for 2008. Last year's coverage of bright and beautiful texts from the Old Testament was a classic. I read the book with pleasure and profit. This year's emphasis upon New Testament texts will be a follow-up classic.

I have nine verses in two chapters with which to deal—six from John's gospel record and three from his first epistle. These nine verses contain golden gems of redemptive riches, of brilliant beauties, of literary lovelies.

The Eternal Word

Who Was/Is God (John 1:1-2)

The apostle of love wastes no time but begins promptly with his attractive affirmation of the Deity of the Second Person of the Godhead. There is one God; there is one divine nature; there is one Deity.

JOHN 1:1-5, 14

However, there are three distinct persons who compose the Godhead, the Godhood, the Divine Family—God the First Person, God the Second Person and God the Third Person. The first two are mentioned directly in John 1:1-5, 14; the Third, the Holy Spirit, is mentioned by implication. He was the One who inspired these six verses to be penned by the hand of John the apostle. These Three were all active in the creation of the universe. All Three have been active in the unique unfolding of the scheme of human redemption. Such is the very heartbeat of the whole Bible—redemption of the race that has fallen into sin.

*“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God”*¹ (1:1). It is eloquently evident from the opening declaration of this fourth gospel record (ONE gospel but four accounts of it) that John is depicting One who is Deity—not a mere man, not just a master Teacher, not just a noted Philosopher. He lost no time in labeling his Lord as God. Read the opening words of Matthew 1, Mark 1 and Luke 1 to see how John differed in preface remarks from the synoptic scribes who had written earlier.²

John 1:1 is reminiscent of Genesis 1:1 wherein we read, *“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”* Faith begins or ends with Genesis 1:1. Faith begins or ends with the opening quartet of words, *“In the beginning God...”*. Accept these initial words and the remnant of the Bible becomes easy of eager acceptance. John 1:1 also is reminiscent of 1 John 1:1 wherein we read,

That which was from the beginning which
we have heard, which we have seen with

our eyes, which we have looked upon,
and our hands have handled, of the Word
of life.

References are to the beginning and the Word of life. In both John 1:1 and 1 John 1:1 the Second Person of Deity is called the Word. Just as faith begins or ends with Genesis 1:1, so also faith begins or ends toward Jesus Christ with John 1:1. He either was in the beginning with God or He was not. The matter is just that simple. He either was the Word or He was not the Word. He either was before or face-to-face with God or He was not before or face-to-face with Him. He either was/is God or He was not/is not God. Accept John 1:1 and the 878 verses that follow are easy of belief and acceptance. Reject John 1:1 and the 878 subsequent verses will register neither belief nor acceptance. John 1:1, therefore, is an opening key to the remainder of John's gospel record.

Time's beginning is marked as well as creation's origin. Prior to it was vast eternity inhabited by the Godhead Three.

Three sweeping affirmations are made relative to the Word. (1) He was in the beginning and thus did not begin with the beginning, Jehovah's Witnesses to the contrary notwithstanding! He was eternally existent. (2) He was with God the First Person—face-to-face or before God's face. This marks a distinction between these two divine persons, Oneness Holiness people to the contrary notwithstanding! (3) He was/is/always shall be God. It is slander of the deepest kind to say He was "*a little god*" as **The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures** (a Watchtower product) had Him portrayed. I have had **many** discussions with them through the years. I insist we

begin with Christ and whether He is God in fullness or not. That is not their normal beginning place but I want it to be the focal point of any worthwhile discussion which usually is futile. They, as a rule, are far more interested in **talking** than in **listening** and **learning**. I had one of them enraged when I answered all his quibbles about Christ being a little god and a created being. In Ripley, Tennessee, their Kingdom Hall is next door to ours. When they were building it some twenty years ago, I said to one of our members, *"On a given Sunday I will be preaching on The Eternal Word and their man in the pulpit will have Jesus just a little god and a created being."* They are wrong about many doctrinal issues but this one is crucial and critical.

Three times in John 1:1 the inspired penman referred to Him as *"the Word."* Why the usage of this eloquent expression? He is called the Word for just as a word is the expression of an idea, the Word is an excellent expression of God. He has interpreted, explained and exegeted the Father to us (John 1:18). Would you understand the Father? Look closely and reverently at the Eternal Word who became God's only begotten Son in the unique unfolding of Heaven's scheme of human redemption. By Him God speaks to us (Heb. 1:1). Under Christianity He is our Prophet, Priest and King, the only One in all the Bible to hold all three of these distinguishing offices. Samuel was prophet and priest, but not king. David was king and prophet, but not priest.

To behold Him is to behold the Father (John 14:7ff) He partakes of the one divine nature as much as do the Father and the Holy Spirit. He has always been, is now and ever will be God. Gnostics

did not know and accept this in John's day or the devilish, damnable documents they put out in the post apostolic era. Incidentally, these are the very documents modern mindsets such as Dan Brown find so fascinating and factual. Factual they are NOT! The media is giving all kinds of publicity to such false and misleading propaganda.

John 1:2 states, "*The same was in the beginning with God.*" Affirmed attractively in this verse is more of what is stated so eloquently and excellently in John 1:1. He is another reference to the beginning. He is another affirmation that He was with God—face-to-face or before Him. There is no way He could be face-to-face with God or before Him if He were ALL the Godhead. There are three in the Godhead—not one. Matthew 28:19 makes this crystal clear and positively plain. Father, Son and Holy Spirit constitute THREE—not ONE! One plus one plus one does not equal one; they equal three. John knew this and so do we.

The Eternal Word As Creator (1:3)

"All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made" (1:3). Linked here with His eternality is His role as Divine Creator. All (**panta**—Greek) things were made by Him from atoms to mountains, to men and to the celestial heavens above (sun, moon and stars galore). He would have been the Maker of angels as well. They are not eternal beings—but created ones. There was a time when Michael and Gabriel did not exist. Not so with the Eternal Word. He is an eternal or endless Person.

If all things were made by Him, and they were, then it is crystal clear that He was not a part of

JOHN 1:1-5, 14

that which was created. He is not a created being as slanderously reported by Jehovah's Witnesses. They are not reliable witnesses about Jehovah God nor about Christ. John Rainey was my Greek teacher at Lipscomb in the early 1950's. He lived across the street from the campus. One day he told us in class about a couple of Witnesses who knocked on his door. He listened for awhile and then went to get his Bible. He could have quoted in English or Greek what he wanted them to hear but he preferred to read it to them. Soon they had had enough and went their way but not before he told them *"You fellows are not reliable witnesses for Jehovah!"*

Minus Him not one thing was made, not even the minute particle of an atom, small building blocks of our unique universe. John 1:10; Colossians 1:15-17; and Hebrews 1:10 add helpful insights to Him as Creator of all. Not only is He Creator of all but He upholds all things by the Word of His power as per Hebrews 1:3. Little men with swiveled souls like Nietzsche and Altizer proclaim the death of God from time to time yet the mighty Messiah stays at the controls of the universe thus proclaiming universal chaos and anarchy. Surely, a passage like Psalm 2:4 has such people as these two in mind, *"He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision."*

Refuted in John 1:1-3 are Jehovah's Witness dogma which makes Christ a creature, evolution which denies a creative beginning for the universe with a Creator in complete control, Oneness Holiness doctrine which teaches Jesus is ALL the Godhead and the whole infamous family of atheism which denies God's existence and the Word as Creator.

**The Eternal Word
As Life And Light (1:4-5)**

"In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness and the darkness comprehended it not." Life, light and darkness are key words in all the Johannine writings. They are prominent in the Prologue (1:1-18). The Eternal Word is the stately source of both life and light. Plant, animal, human and eternal life all flow from Him. He holds sovereign sway over all these.

Light traces its source to Him. This is a term descriptive of truth, right enlightenment and salvation. Darkness symbolizes the devil, ignorance, sin and corruption. Darkness is utterly impotent in extinguishing one small candle! How much more is worldly darkness unable to put out all the luminous light from the very Lord of light. John 8:12 and 9:5 both have His claiming to be the light of the world. Light emanates from sun, moon (reflected light) and stars galore. In James 1:17 Jehovah is spoken of as *"the Father of lights."* So is the Son.

Both material and moral (spiritual) lights come from Deity.

**The Eternal Word Became Flesh
(John 1:14)**

Between John 1:5 and 1:14, verses 6-13, we have a glimpse of John's work. This is John the Baptist. Incidentally, the writer never designates him as the Baptist but simply as John. Since he never refers to himself by name in his gospel record there was no need to apply *"the Baptist"* to the name John as the synoptic scribes did. John was a sent man from God.

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He came as a witness of the Light of the Lord Jesus but was not that Light. The true Light was the One which *"lighteth every man that cometh into the world"* (1:9). Verse 10 affirms again His creation of the world though the world knew Him not. He came unto His own (His own things) and His own people received Him not. However, to the ones who received Him, to them He gave power (right) to become the sons of God even to them that believe on His name. This shows that we become children of God subsequent to belief—not before—not in the formation of faith initially. We become children of God neither by blood descent (human blood) nor by physical generation motivated by sexual desire on the part of a male and female as in physical births. Instead, it is by a spiritual birth which is detailed for us in John 3:3-7. Peter also alludes to this birth in 1 Peter 1:23.

And the word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth (1:14).

Here unfolded so uniquely is the thrilling thesis of when God the Eternal Word became Son of man and Son of God with perfection blending humanity and Deity. He became as human as mother Mary but remained as divine as His Heavenly Father. He was not 50% human and 50% divine as some have claimed. He was 100% human and 100% divine.

The Second Person of the Godhead was given a body of flesh (Heb. 10:5ff; 2:17-18). This referred to His Incarnation—God with us—the stately significance of that attractive appellation, Emmanuel. Isaiah 7:14; 8:8 and Matthew 1:23 are the only three passages in which Emmanuel occurs in Holy Writ.

There was NO Emmanuel in Isaiah's and Ahaz's era regardless of what some of our left-leaning brethren declare. Emmanuel refers exclusively to Jesus Christ and not some eighth century son born in the very same way ALL eighth century sons were – unions of men and women. The Eternal Word, now God and man, pitched His tent among humanity. John, the writer, and his peers witnessed the glory of God's only begotten Son full of grace (favor) and truth. He was its very personification (John 14:6; 18:37).

"Only begotten" uniquely occurs five times in John's writings (John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9). It derives from **monogenes**, a compound Greek term rich in significance, majestic in meaning and deep in its connotation. Preeminently, He was/is Jehovah's Marvelous Monogenes. Modern versions en masse, influenced by modernists and those loose with truth, as a rule, tamper with this rich Greek term. They translate just the **mono** part and leave minus any translation at all the **genes** portion of the compound term. They have Jesus the only Son of God or the one and only Son of God neither one of which is a reverent handling of this thrilling term. However, we are sons of God, if we have obeyed the gospel, as per 1 John 3:1 but we are not God's only begotten sons. But **genes** has to mean something, else the inspired John would not have included it in connection with the Messiah.

For nearly twenty centuries now the cream of Bible scholarship has opted correctly and reverently for only begotten. The Holy Spirit and John set the tone and established the tenor for such and reverent, scholarly men in each century since have acquiesced in this as the marvelous meaning and

proper translation of the term. I have researched very carefully the writings of the Ante-Nicene, Nicene (second, third and fourth centuries) and Post-Nicene church or patristic fathers and they, in overwhelming numbers, viewed Christ as God's only begotten Son. Conservative Reformers did more of the same. The greatest and most renowned names among us have consistently styled the Mighty Messiah as God's only begotten Son. Lexicons and lexicographers have done more of the same. These are men who lived with the Greek language all their adult lives. They knew what **monogenes** meant.

Some years back we had a native of Greece come to Ripley and open a restaurant. He took a liking to some in our congregation and would come often and chat with us when we ate at his restaurant. He even attended our service once. He was fluent in both Greek and English and quite intelligent. I asked him one day what **monogenes** meant. Promptly, he said, "*Only begotten!*" He knew far more about that term than do some of our own brethren!

Campbell's **Living Oracles** translated it as "*only begotten.*" (For a much more detailed analysis of this term see the fine comments of Guy N. Woods in His GA Commentary on John, my material on this in **The Bible None Like It**, the MSOP Lectureship volume from 1989, pp. 407-431, my material in Goebel Music's Easy-to-Read Version volume, pp. 672-692 followed by the Music comments on what this word meant and how it should be translated, pp. 692-702).

Conclusion

In these six verses John has deepened, ripened and enhanced our faith in the Eternal Word who

became Emmanuel or God's only begotten Son in the developing and culminating scheme of human redemption. Thank God we have these six verses in John's Precious Prologue.

Endnotes

- 1 All quotations are from the KJV.
- 2 Robert R. Taylor, Jr., **Studies in the Gospel of John** (Abilene, Quality Publications, 1998), pp. 11-15).

Robert R. Taylor, Jr.



A graduate of Freed-Hardeman, David Lipscomb and George Peabody College for Teachers. Preaching since 1949. Author of various excellent volumes. Involved in radio, television and prison works. Annually speaks in about a dozen meetings and two dozen lectureships. For over thirty years he has worked with the Ripley, TN church. Irene and Robert have two children and four precious grandchildren.

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Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:

John 4:23-24

This Chapter Written By

Curtis A. Cates

Introduction

How critically needed is an investigation into what the Bible teaches about worship! From the beginning of time, when Cain in worshipping Jehovah *“did it his way”* (Gen. 4:1-8), until and including today, mankind has most often rejected God’s prescribed worship and substituted his own; and, as was Cain’s, his worship has thus been rejected.

Some things in worship are unauthorized. Though every human being is one of God’s offspring (Acts 17:29) and is one whose spirit was created in him by God, *“the Father of spirits”* (Heb. 12:9), the vast majority of men and women, boys and girls who have reached the age of accountability have not been born into God’s spiritual family, the church/kingdom (1 Tim. 3:14-15; John 3:3-5). Very often, many who claim to worship Jehovah have little true spirituality: their lives and their worship show very little reverence for God.

Inasmuch as Jeremiah exclaimed, *“O Jehovah, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps”* (Jer. 10:23), and

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inasmuch as one's seeking to direct his own way (having rejected revelation and inspiration—God's Word) always and inevitably ends in his becoming "vain" in his "reasonings" and in his "senseless heart" becoming "darkened," we make a fatal mistake when we live by our own presumptuous, self-centered, and stubborn wills and when we worship in ways dictated by our own subjective and speculative desires and motives.

The motivation of man through the ages has not been generally to please his Creator. Most often, God has not been the object of people's worship. Man's motivation has not been generally to worship in God's prescribed manner. Some have been under the false impression that proper and Scriptural worship depends only upon one's attitude of heart. However, the Lord has ever revealed to man the authorized time to worship, the authorized place of worship, and the authorized acts of worship. Man has not been free to choose the when, the where, or the how of his worship to God!

For a person to have a right relationship with his Maker, worship must be a central and vital part of his life. In this way, one shows his love for, pays homage to, and develops a close fellowship with God. There is nothing magical about simply sitting in a building, or just going through the motions, or of even acting piously. Thus, worship is a basic Bible concept which each of us must understand; to worship God "*in spirit and in truth*" is imperative (John 4:24).

Christ Gave Imperatives Relative To Worship In John 4:23-24

First, the Christian Dispensation would be

characterized by the new covenant, the last will and testament of Jesus Christ (Heb. 9:11-17), not by the law of Moses [the old covenant] (Col. 2:14-17; Rom. 7:4; et al.). *“But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth”* (John 4:23).

Second, God is the true object of worship—*“worship the Father”* (4:23)

Third, the Father seeks certain type worshippers—*“for such doth the Father seek to be his worshippers”* (4:23). These are the *“true worshippers,”* whereas there are vain, false, insincere, uninformed worshippers.

Fourth, the worshipper must worship God *“in spirit”* (4:24), for God *“is Spirit.”* One praises God from and with the heart, not with machinery; our minds and spirits are attuned to God.

Fifth, the worshipper must worship God *“in truth”* (4:24)—according to God’s prescribed pattern (17:17; Col. 3:17). To worship otherwise is vain (Matt. 15:9), for it is man’s way.

Man Needs To Worship

The history of mankind records that in every generation and in every civilization, man has been a worshiping, religious being. By his very nature, he is a worshipful creature. Every nation of the past and present has worshiped something or someone; every civilization has had its own god(s) and altar(s). Even the atheistic humanist has his religion; he worships man. Man may determine that he is not going to worship the God of Heaven, but he is going to worship something. There must be something to fill the vacuum in his heart and life.

Be assured of this – man becomes like the object of his worship. Whereas the righteous become increasingly like Jehovah, Whose likeness is revealed in His Divine, inerrant, verbally-inspired revelation, the adherents of idolatry become increasingly like the objects which they adore. He who abandons God's appointed Word and way becomes more and more perverted, ending up in perverted, vile religions (Rom. 1:18ff).

Who or what is a person's "god"? It is that which he makes supreme in his life; the object of his worship is that which he gives top priority, reverences, loves, and obeys. Man needs to worship (Psa. 96:1-9). God "*hath set eternity in their heart*" (Ecc. 3:1, ASV); man has the yearning to worship. He has a feeling for the sacred. The conscience and the "*oughtness*" of man evidences the existence of the All-wise, All-powerful, and Perfect Creator.

Being made in God's image, though, and thus having the power of volition, man can refuse to worship God. Like the Israelites, even God's people can today long to be like, to imitate the nations about us (the denominations) and assume the lifestyle and the worship of the Canaanites. We too can "*remove the landmark*" (Hos. 5:10), abandon "*truth*" and "*knowledge*" (4:1), "*play the harlot...and leave off taking heed to Jehovah*" (4:10), "*trust in [our] way, in the multitude of [our] mighty men*" (10:13), be "*bent on backsliding*" (11:7), and die spiritually (13:1-2). When this happens, the false teacher is always there to say "*Peace; and there is no peace*" (Eze. 13:10).

What Does It Mean To Worship?

The English word "*worship*" originally came

from the Anglo-Saxon **weorthscipe**, from **weorth** (worthy, honorable), and **scipe** (ship), developing later into worship (attributing worth to a thing or person). Of course, only God is worthy of and is to receive supreme honor, for He alone has superlative worth.

One can see how the Hebrew in the Old Testament considered his approach to God's august presence in the word ηισηταξηαωαη (σηαξηαη), literally indicating "a bowing down," "to prostrate" oneself. Genesis 24:52 records, "And it came to pass, that, when Abraham's servant heard their words [that Rebekah would become Isaac's wife, Curtis A. Cates], he bowed himself down to the earth unto Jehovah ['he worshipped the Lord,' KJV]."

And all the children of Israel looked on, when the fire came down, and the glory of Jehovah was upon the house [the temple, Curtis A. Cates]; and they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and gave thanks unto Jehovah, saying, for he is good; for his lovingkindness endureth for ever (2 Chron. 7:3).

The corresponding Greek word is προσκυνεο (to kiss toward), indicating "to do obeisance," "to prostrate," "to show deep respect,"

Scriptural worship, therefore, is composed of certain specified, specific, prescribed activities (the faithful child of God has no reticence to calling them "acts" or "avenues" of worship) in which the Christian draws near to and communes in heart and spirit with his Creator (John 4:24). Man's own spirit reaches out to God, Whom he praises as the embodiment and

source of life, strength, righteousness, love, and grace. Those who are redeemed praise and magnify God for His great and matchless gift of His only begotten Son (John 3:16), whereby they are saved. The Christian longs for and seeks out every opportunity to pour out the deepest gratitude of his adoring, reverential attitude of heart. Though he must worship according to the Divine pattern, that worship is not "*mechanical*" nor is it "*material*" and with "*machinery*." The very nature and design of Scriptural worship appeals to the spirit, not to the flesh.

Man Is To Worship The God Of Heaven

God is "*a jealous God,*" and He seeks and demands our worship (Exo. 20:5; John 4:23). If we forget God and "*walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish*" (Deut. 8:19). God alone is worthy of worship. Why!

God Is the Only True God

Whereas idols are nothing (1 Cor. 10:19), "*There is a God in heaven*" (Dan. 2:28), and He alone is Deity (Deut. 6:4; cf. Matt. 4:10; Deut. 6:13-14; Exo. 3:14). "*I am Jehovah thy God...Thou shalt have no other gods before me*" (Exo. 20:2-3).

God Is Holy and Is Due Our Worship

"*Great is Jehovah, and greatly to be praised...Ascribe unto Jehovah the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts. Oh worship Jehovah in holy array*" (Psa. 96:4, 8-9). "*Exalt ye Jehovah our God, And worship at his holy hill; For Jehovah our God is holy*" (Psa. 99:9).

God Is the Creator

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen. 1:1); He also created man in His image (Gen. 1:26-27). He is our Father; we are His offspring (Heb. 12:9), and He sustains us (Acts 17:25-29). "Know ye that Jehovah is God: It is he that hath made us, and we are his;...Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, And into his courts with praise: Give thanks unto him, and bless his name" (Psa. 100:3-4).

God is Love

He furnishes man with every good physical and spiritual blessing.

Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning (James 1:17).

What great love to give the Christ (John 3:16) and for Christ to give His life (Rom. 5:8) for you and me (Heb. 2:9)! *"We love him, because he first loved us"* (1 John 4:19).

God Deserves Our Worship

Through the Psalmist He urged,

Oh come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before Jehovah our Maker...Today, oh that ye would hear his voice! Harden not your heart (Psa. 95:6-8).

The angel told John, *"Worship God"* (Rev. 22:8-9). Question. How can we please God, if He desires and deserves our worship and we reject what He says about worship?

But, Some Will Not Worship God!

Man apart from God and from His Word worships objects which are not worthy of praise.

1. Some have chosen to worship rocks, trees, rivers, and other inanimate objects.

2. Others have worshiped the sun and other heavenly bodies (such as planets). Job refused to kiss the hand (do obeisance) toward the sun or the moon, for to do such (practice astrology) would be to "*deny God*" (Job 31:26-28).

3. Still others have worshiped men, such as the emperor or the king, in certain countries. Peter refused to be worshiped (Acts 10:25-27), as did Paul and Barnabas (14:15), and as did the angels (Rev. 22:8-9).

4. Others have worshiped demons, the departed spirits of wicked men.

5. Yet others have worshiped their houses and lands (Luke 12:15ff; 1 Tim. 6:6-10; Col. 3:5; Matt. 6:24-26); family members, such as children, parents, or mates (Luke 14:26); their own lives (Matt. 16:24-26); gods of wood, stone, or metal (Exo. 20:4; Acts 17:16; 24-28); and even Satan himself, in a formal way.

Some of the forms or rituals of false worship have included; sacrifices (both animal and human), dances, chants, prayers, sexual perversion, food offerings, incense, exorcism, adoration of medals and images, bowing down literally to images and/or men, and so forth. Anything between us and God must be renounced and abandoned. "*And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your tradition*" (Mark 7:9). "*Little children, guard yourselves from idols*" (1 John 5:21).

What Must Be The Worshipper's Attitude?

Great responsibility has always rested upon the worshiper, in the Old Testament as well as in the New. Not only must one have the right object, but he must have certain attitudes.

First, the True Worshiper Feels the Desire To Worship

Both young men, and virgins; Old men, and children: Let them praise the name of Jehovah; For his name alone is exalted; His glory is above the earth and the heavens (Psa. 148:12-13).

These things I remember, and pour out my soul within me, how I went with the throng, and led them to the house of God, With the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude keeping holyday (Psa. 42:4).

David exclaimed, *"I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go unto the house of Jehovah"* (Psa. 122:1). Man needs to realize his need for his maker and thirst for Him. Job cried, *"Oh that I knew where I might find him! That I might come even to his seat"* (Job 23:3)!

Second, the True Worshiper Feels Profound Gratitude for the Wonderful Grace of God

He seeks every opportunity to acknowledge his dependence upon God and his awareness that without God's blessings, he could not live. *"O praise Jehovah, all ye nations; Laud him, all ye peoples. For his lovingkindness is great toward us"* (Psa. 117:1-2). *"What shall I render unto Jehovah For all his benefits toward me"* (116:12)?

Third, the True Worshiper Feels Reverence in and Worships God from the Heart

It is genuine: the emotions are involved.

These things I remember [what God has done for me and that my soul pants after God, Curtis A. Cates], and pour out my soul within me (Psa. 42:4).

Glory ye in his holy name; Let the heart of them rejoice that seek Jehovah (1 Chron. 16:10).

We actively lift up praise and adoration to God within His prescribed way out of a heart filled with reverence, gratitude, confession, praise, and supplication.

Fourth, the True Worshiper Realizes that God Is Close at Hand

Unlike many who think that God is so remote that He cannot see, know, or be concerned with our needs, thoughts, prayers, and joys, men need to realize that *"...they should seek God, if haply they might feel after him, and find him [through His Word, of course, Curtis A. Cates], though he is not far from each one of us"* (Acts 17:27). He is with His people in the worship (Matt. 26:28-29; 1 Cor. 10:16-21; 11:23ff).

What Are The Characteristics Of The True Worshiper?

True worshipers in every age of the world have been a people of God's own possession, a peculiar people (1 Pet. 2:9).

They Are Wise, Inasmuch as They Listen to God

"The fear of Jehovah is the beginning of knowledge; But the foolish despise wisdom and instruction" (Prov. 1:7). His Word is their chart and compass. They are poor in spirit (Matt. 5:3); they readily acknowledge that *"the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps"* (Jer. 10:23).

They Draw Near to the Lord Not Only in Heart, but Also in Life

Since sin separates from God (Isa. 59:1-2), man must return to God through humble obedience and reformation of life, blessed by God's grace. God will not hear one who persists in sin and regards sin in his heart.

Come, and hear, all ye that fear God, And
I will declare what he hath done for my
soul. I cried unto him with my mouth,
And he was extolled with my tongue. If I
regard iniquity in my heart, The Lord will
not hear (Psa. 66:16-18).

We must daily walk with the Lord. How could sincere, reverent praise flow from corrupt hearts and lives? How could God accept their *"worship"*? A life with God produces a heart more and more *"attuned for praise."* Rebels do not/cannot praise God acceptably.

**What Are The Characteristics
Of True Worship?**

Without question or dispute, God has always defined what constitutes acceptable worship; this has not been left to man's discretion. Man apart from

God (and thus apart from His Divine revelation) has always been perverted. Furthermore, human reason has always produced perverted religions and perverted worship. Those who professed/profess to be people of God have been united only when they adhered strictly to His Divine pattern in thought, words, teaching, and practice.

The verdict upon Cain was that God had "*not respect*" for his presumptuous offering; it was rejected (Gen. 4:5). God's verdict upon Aaron and the people of Israel when they fashioned the golden calf was, "*Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them*" (Exo. 32:10). His verdict upon Nadab and Abihu when they offered strange fire, "*which He had not commanded them,*" was, "*...there came forth fire from before Jehovah and devoured them, and they died before Jehovah*" (Lev. 10:2). The Lord's verdict upon Jeroboam's false religion and worship was, "*Behold, the altar shall be rent, and the ashes that are upon it shall be poured out*" (1 Kings 13:3). His verdict upon Israel's insincere worldly lives and perverted worship was, "*Woe unto you...*" (Amos 5:18; 6:1; cf. Amos 7:1ff; Joel 2:13). God's verdict upon the sectarian Pharisees, hypocrites, was, "*But in vain they do worship me, Teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men*" (Matt. 15:9). He would/shall root up every perverted religion (Matt. 15:13).

To worship in any way other than according to God's pattern was under the old law, and is today under the law of Christ, to disregard the Truth of God and to violate His precepts. "*Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is truth*" (Psa. 119:142). To worship other than according to the Truth, God's law, is perverted worship. "*Thou art*

near, O Jehovah, And all thy commandments are truth" (v. 151). Not to worship according to the Divine pattern is to engage in unacceptable worship (John 4:23-24; 8:32; 17:17); it is to reject God's authority and to sin. It is to be rejected. The one who failed/fails to worship God on His terms fails to respect His name.

An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt-offerings, and thy peace-offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen; in every place where I record my name I will come unto thee and I will bless thee (Exo. 20:24).

Since God puts His name (authority) on the things commanded (Col. 3:17), to do things in worship not authorized by God or to omit things He commands is to sin and to be rejected, lost eternally unless one repents, ceases the practice, comes out of the perversion, and practices pure and undefiled religion.

Conclusion

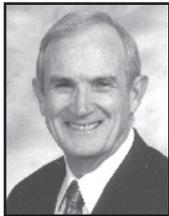
Worship to God has always been an indispensable part of the life of the child of God. This study has sought to discuss the principles of acceptable worship.

Man must worship. He must worship God, in the God-prescribed manner, with the right attitude of reverence. He must worship in the way God said worship, because God has all authority. Worship which is unauthorized will cause a person to be lost, and not worshipping God will cause a person to be lost.

JOHN 4:23-24

“Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness” (Psa. 30:4, KJV).

Curtis A. Cates



Brother Cates has been faithfully preaching the gospel for almost fifty years. Holds various degrees from respected universities. Served as Director of the Memphis School of Preaching (1982-2007). Author of various superb volumes. Mission work in Singapore, Malaysia, and Russia. Annette and Curtis have two sons (both are faithful gospel preachers) and four grandchildren.

Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:

John 5:28-29

This Chapter Written By

Dave Miller

Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation (John 5:28-29).

What may be done for a people who have moved so far away from God that they seem unable to be reclaimed? Answer: give them the Gospel—the good news of God’s love shown in the sending of His Son. But what may be done for a people who have become obsessed with the idea that God is so loving and His grace is so great that He will accept most people and condemn but few?

Before answering that question, let us make certain that we have assessed current conditions correctly. Is it not the case that the denominational world now generally feels that all who profess to be Christian (by simply acknowledging Jesus) will be saved? Yes. Is it not also the case that a sizable number of members of the church have embraced

the same notion? Yes. And is it likewise the case that many now also believe that God's love and acceptance of people is such that He will save many Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, et al.? Yes.

Back to the question: what may be done for such people, who have misdefined, misassessed, and misrepresented the love, mercy, and grace of God? Answer: they must be confronted with the wrath, retribution, and judgment of God. They need corrective spiritual surgery in order to come to an accurate understanding of who God is. They have been adversely influenced by the popular misrepresentation of deity that recasts and refashions God into essentially a different deity than the One depicted on the pages of the New Testament. They think God is unconcerned about obedience, and that He will forgive just about everybody unconditionally. But that is not the God of the Bible, nor the Jesus of the New Testament.

It is possible for a people to become so alienated and out of touch with the Truth that the higher, more noble motivation for submitting to God (love and gratitude) is no longer effective. Instead, such immature, carnal, unbalanced people must be threatened with punishment. They must be confronted by fear, terror, and the inevitability of hellfire. Sadly, even this appeal can be ineffectual if the population has strayed too far from spiritual reality. Noah tried for over a century to reach his contemporaries – all to no avail (Gen. 6:3). When God, through the prophet Jeremiah, set before the people "*the good way,*" they said, "*We will not walk in it*" (Jer. 6:16). When He gave them spokesmen who tried to point them down the right pathway, they said, "*We*

will not listen" (Jer. 6:17; cf. 2 Chron. 24:19). May I humbly suggest that many in America, and in the church in America, are at that precise juncture.

Though God's love for the human race is the greatest motivation that God has provided for mankind, the fact is that most of the time in world history, He has had to appeal to fear to motivate people to obey Him. Jesus made clear in John 5:28-29 that where one spends eternity will be directly determined by one's conduct on Earth. The rest of the New Testament is punctuated by numerous warnings concerning the coming Judgment:

- Jesus said: *"But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment"* (Matt 12:36).

- When Paul stood before Governor Felix, he *"reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come"* (Acts 24:25).

- After a lengthy listing of sins, including homosexuality, Paul stated: *"But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things. And do you think...that you will escape the judgment of God?...But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God"* (Rom. 2:2-5).

- *"For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ"* (Rom. 14:10).

- *"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men"* (2 Cor 5:10-11).

JOHN 5:28-29

• *“But the heavens and the earth which are now preserved by the same word, are reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men”* (2 Peter 3:7).

May we live in such a way that we may be included in the resurrection unto life, rather than being resurrected unto condemnation.

Dave Miller



A native of Arizona, Dave is the Executive Director at Apologetics Press • His formal education includes 3 masters degrees and a Ph.D. from Southern Illinois University. His book, ***Piloting the Strait***, deals with the changes affecting churches of Christ. His seminars on **Islam** and **The Silencing Of God** are superb. Deborah and Dave have 4 grown children, 3 grandchildren and reside in Montgomery, Alabama.

Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:

John 8:31-32

This Chapter Written By

Dave Miller

Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, 'If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.'

Since Jesus came to Earth to atone for human sin and point people to God, we should fully expect that He would have conversed with His contemporaries on a regular basis. Sure enough, that is what we find. In fact, Jesus was the Master Controversialist. He frequently sparred verbally with His contemporaries, many of whom were antagonistic to Him. Such is certainly the case in John 8.

After affirming His deity by claiming to be "*the light of the world*" (vs. 12), Jesus had an exchange with the Pharisees in the temple treasury regarding His divinity as demonstrated by His relationship with the Father (vss. 13-20). In verses 21-29, He again pressed His hearers hard with affirmations of His divine identity, twice explicitly identifying Himself as the great "*I AM*" (vss. 24,28; cf. Ex. 3:14), while prophesying His crucifixion (vs. 28).

It was in this setting and on this occasion that some of the Jews, we are told, “*believed in Him*” (vs. 31). Their belief undoubtedly consisted of their realization and acceptance of Jesus’ deity. They were convicted with the fact that Jesus is God. But Jesus insisted that the only way for their belief to count for anything, the only way for them to be His disciple, is if they would abide in His word. Faith alone is insufficient. Obedience is equally essential (cf. John 14:15; 15:14). This side of the cross, the only way to become a “*disciple*” of Christ is to obey the gospel plan of salvation, culminating in water immersion for the remission of sins (Matt. 28:19-20). Only by knowing and obeying the Gospel may a person be made free from sin (vs. 32).

Interestingly, the Jews bristled at Jesus’ allusion to being free. They insisted that, as descendants of Abraham, they had “*never been in bondage to anyone*” (vs. 33). But this claim is ludicrous. The children of Abraham experienced numerous periods of bondage—from Egyptian bondage, to Assyrian and Babylonian captivity, to the Roman bondage they were even then enduring. Rather than call attention to this fact, Jesus redirected their thinking to clarify the freedom to which He was referring: the spiritual freedom from slavery to sin that is available only from deity—the Son of God (vss. 34-36).

Yes, Jesus’ contemporaries were, indeed, physical descendants of Abraham (vs. 37). But, in the words of John the Baptizer, “[D]o not think to say to yourselves, ‘*We have Abraham as our father.*’ For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones” (Matt. 3:9). They failed to manifest the faithful obedience that Abraham manifested (Gen. 26:5). The

fleshly connection to Abraham, in which they gloried, did them no good, since they had set themselves against the Christ and were, even then, entertaining murderous thoughts against Him (*“you seek to kill Me”* – vs. 37,40). Why? What had Jesus done to evoke such animosity? He simply had told them the truth (vs. 40), even as Paul chided the Galatians with the penetrating query: *“Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?”* (Gal. 4:16).

Let us explore the question: *“Why were these Jews so antagonistic toward Jesus?”* If a person is confident and pleased with his own beliefs and actions, why would he become angry with those who do not agree? Jesus pinpointed the heart of the matter with an immediate answer: *“because My word has no place in you”* (John 8:37), and *“[b]ecause you are not able to listen to My word”* (John 8:43). Folks, there’s the problem that we all face everyday – whether to allow God’s word and God’s way to direct and inform our decisions, or whether we will push God’s word out of our minds and do what we want to do.

Why did Cain become furious with, and then kill, his own brother? The Bible gives no indication that Abel had done anything to Cain. Abel simply complied with God’s directives, while his brother chose of his own accord to make adjustments in those directives. When God rejected his actions, why did he vent his anger at his brother? Is it not the case that when people deliberately choose to disobey God by stubbornly pursuing their own sinful desires, they do not want anyone saying or doing anything that calls attention to their determined course? You see, it’s not really that they mind if the righteous do their own thing. It’s that what the righteous, by

definition, do inherently contradicts, judges, and condemns what the unrighteous choose to do (cf. 1 Cor. 6:2; Heb. 11:7).

Vivid instances of this phenomenon include, for example, the behavior of the citizens of Sodom. You remember that they manifested an angry, intolerant, *"in your face"* attitude when Lot gently admonished them with the words, *"Please, my brethren, do not do so wickedly!"* (Gen. 19:7). The text records their response: *"This one came in to stay here, and he keeps acting as a judge; now we will deal worse with you than with them.' So they pressed hard against the man Lot, and came near to break down the door"* (19:9). This very attitude is being repeated across this nation under our very noses, as thousands of militant homosexuals conduct marches in major American cities, flaunting their sexually perverse appetites. It is likewise manifested by Muslims and illegal immigrants who exploit the liberal judiciary by insisting that their *"rights"* are being violated. The Hollywood crowd manifests the same flagrant disdain for moral sanity.

Insightful Bible passages anticipated precisely what we are seeing. They lay bare the inmost human motivation. Take Jesus' declaration in John 3:

And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God (John 3:19-21).

And remember John's penetrating explanation for Cain's behavior, when he warned his readers to love each other, rather than be like Cain: *"not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous"* (1 John 3:12).

Observe that when we choose to follow our own desires, rather than subordinate our desires to the will of God, we are placing ourselves under the will of Satan. Jesus spotlighted this fact by alluding to the Jews' *"father."* At first they insisted that Abraham was their father – which Jesus quickly squelched by retorting, *"If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham. But now you seek to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this. You do the deeds of your father"* (vss. 39-41). Then they insisted that God was their father, to which Jesus responded: *"If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God"* (vs. 42). Here was yet another claim to eternity and divinity.

Jesus then *"cut to the chase"* by pinpointing explicitly who their father was – Satan – noting that, like the Jews, Satan is a murderer (having murdered Adam and Eve spiritually, thus bringing death into the world – Rom. 5:12), as well as a liar (having deceived Eve with his lie). Though Satan has no supernatural ability to interfere with our free will and cause us to sin, he nevertheless becomes our father when we choose of our own accord to behave contrary to God's will.

Notice the extent to which Jesus spoke bluntly, sharply, and directly when He dealt with those who were hardhearted and unwilling to acquiesce to

the truth. *"You are of your father the devil" (vs. 44), "therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God" (vs. 47), "if I say, 'I do not know Him,' I shall be a liar like you" (vs. 55).* Such pronouncements run contrary to our cultural sense of etiquette. They seem harsh and mean-spirited. Granted, there are those in the brotherhood who are sinfully brutal, ugly, unkind, demeaning, and hateful. They purport to read hearts and know the innermost thoughts of their victims. They apparently think their venomous tirades are sanctioned by God as they feign themselves to be *"contending for the faith."* Their unspiritual behavior notwithstanding, we must recognize that Jesus met belligerent error with forthright affirmations of the truth.

Jesus issued a sobering thought to His contemporaries: *"There is One who seeks and judges"* (vs. 50). The Bible is filled with the idea that all humans are living their lives under the scrutiny and judgment of Almighty God. John alludes to this notion repeatedly (5:22,27,30; 8:16,26; 9:39; 12:31,48; 16:8,11). It would seem that fewer and fewer Christians and Americans live their lives cognizant of this certainty. It was not always so. Even the Founders of American civilization were so conscious and attentive to the watchful eye of God that they wrote into the Declaration of Independence: *"appealing to the Supreme Judge of the world for the rectitude of our intentions."* We would do well to drop the hype and eliminate the entertainment-oriented worship that has swept across the church, Christendom, and American culture, and reclaim a sober, cautious, humble attitude of resignation before the One Abraham identified as *"the Judge of all the earth"* (Gen. 18:25).

Next, Jesus declared: *"if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death"* (vs. 51). His listeners' superficial reception of that statement caused them to think in terms of physical death. Denouncing Him as demon-possessed, they insisted that such a statement could not be true since the righteous people of the past, including Abraham and the prophets, had died. Reaffirming once again His own divine connection to the Father, Jesus dramatically announced: *"Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad"* (vs. 56). Jesus was saying that Abraham had listened to the Messianic promise that through his seed all the nations of the world would be blessed, and believed God in that regard. The Jews, however, were thinking carnally, persisting in their adamant refusal to acknowledge the divine identity of the One who stood before them. They mockingly derided Him by insisting that He was not even 50 years old, while Abraham lived 2,000 years earlier. How could Abraham have seen Jesus' day? Once again, Jesus "cut to the chase" and articulated the foundational premise on which all are obligated to build their lives: *"Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM"* (vs. 58).

My friends, Jesus is the great "I AM" of time and eternity. He shares complete equality and deity with God.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He

is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence.... For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power (Col. 1:15-18; 2:9-10).

"He is Lord of lords and King of kings" (Rev. 17:14).

Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:9-11).

God help us to devote our entire lives to submitting ourselves to the will of Christ, *"bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ"* (2 Cor. 10:5). May we love Him, honor Him, adore Him, and try with all of our might to follow and serve Him.

Dave Miller



A native of Arizona, Dave is the Executive Director at Apologetics Press • His formal education includes 3 masters degrees and a Ph.D. from Southern Illinois University. His book, ***Piloting the Strait***, deals with the changes affecting churches of Christ. His seminars on **Islam** and **The Silencing Of God** are superb. Deborah and Dave have 4 grown children, 3 grandchildren and reside in Montgomery, Alabama.

Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:

John 14:1-3

This Chapter Written By

James W. Watkins

In the gospel according to John, chapter fourteen, verses one through six, you recall that the Lord said,

Let not your heart be troubled: believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again, and will receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go, ye know the way. Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; how know we the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one cometh unto the Father, but by me.

A most meaningful and interesting passage of Scripture. The Lord was anticipating His death, which soon thereafter occurred. He has informed His disciples of that very fact. When you just stop to think of it on a worldly standpoint, the death of a loved one is an occasion of great sadness. They are not looking forward to this at all. From a human standpoint, death is a tragedy! In other words, it

JOHN 14:1-6

terminates a number of precious relationships and a mentor. A loving person is gone. There's an empty chair at the table. I understand how they felt about the announcement of the Lord, but He had said, "*I go to the Father,*" and you're sorrowful.

In other words, we're dealing here with Christ and His death. He said "*I go to prepare a place*" for you. That's an interesting thought. "*Let not your heart be troubled.*" Do you recall the apostle Paul's statement in 1 Thessalonians 4:13?

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

The Bible never treats physical death lightly. When loved ones die it is a sad occasion. It brings sadness, and heartache. There's always weeping.

But listen, Paul said, "*we would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope*" (1 Thess. 4). It is possible that we misunderstand the importance of the termination of this earthly existence. Too many people in the world generally think that death is it, that's the end, that it's all over. No, no! That's where it starts. That is what Christianity is really all about. It exemplifies the attitudes, the conditions, the teachings of Christ, the tabernacle and the flesh. We do that so that we can live with the Lord forever, eternally. This is all physical. All of this will pass.

Let's get back to Paul's words in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14:

We would not have you to be ignorant, brethren ... that you sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep will God bring with him.

That is not understood by most people in this world today. There are those who are Christians, who when a faithful child of God dies, all they know is mourning, all they have is heartache. Friends, that should not be the case! Yes, there is the lost of a loved one, there is sadness. But, the passing of a faithful Christian is a homecoming; that is a most joyous occasion. Jesus said in John 11:25-26:

I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.

The Lord said he that "*liveth*" and "*believeth*" in me shall never die. You need to understand that you are an immortal spirit. I am going to live forever. The only way I am going to understand this principle is through the knowledge and application of God's word. God deals with me as one made in His image and His likeness; an immortal spirit possessed of free moral agency. I must make the decisions. Whether or not I will respond favorably to His instruction or reject them. "*I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day that I place before you life and death, the blessing and the curse, therefore choose*" (Deut. 30:19) Choose life that thou mayest live by my seed, but the choice is yours and mine. Friends, you are an immortal spirit. "*Now we would not have you to be*

JOHN 14:1-6

ignorant, brethren, concerning this which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope" (1 Thess. 4:13). If a person dies out of Christ, he is eternally lost. If one understands who he really is, and the consequences of disobedience to the Lord, and this one dies, that is an occasion of sorrow. There is no light at the end of the tunnel. There is no source of happiness and joy.

The passing of a faithful child of God is naturally an occasion of sorrow. Physically, it is a temporary arrangement, but we know that everything is fine for that person.

"We would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others, which have no hope" (1 Thess. 4:13). Jesus is saying in John 11:25, *"he that liveth and believeth on me shall never die."* Is The Lord saying that I will not pass physically? No, no! Everything dies physically. It comes into existence, serves its purpose, and passes. So what is he saying? The faithful child of God who understands that he is an immortal spirit, physical death for him is just a transition. The body without the spirit is dead (James 2:26). The reason the body is dead is because the person who lived there moved out. Where did he go? At death, the body returns to the dust as it was; the spirit back to God who gave it (Eccl 12:7). Somebody says, *"The old body goes back to the dust and that's the end?"* No,

Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation (John 5:28-29).

Those old bodies are going to come out of that tomb. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:25 that Christ is reigning, and He must reign till all His enemies have been placed under His feet, and the last enemy to be abolished is death. Death will be abolished when there is no one dead. That is after the resurrection at the last day (John 11:24).

So what the Lord is saying in verse 26 is that when one understands who he is he can say with the apostle Paul, *"For me to live is Christ, to die is gain"* (Phil. 1:20). To die is gain? Well, sure, that is what you are living for. That is what it is all about. It is at that point that you go to be with the Lord. If we could get this concept across to the world generally.

Notice the full statement there in 1 Thessalonians 4 beginning in verse 13:

But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words (vs. 13-18).

JOHN 14:1-6

"Comfort one another with these words." What is the only source of comfort in physical death? The fact that the one who has passed is a child of God. You need not worry about a thing. Everything is fine! The Lord takes over from that point. *"He that liveth and believeth on me shall never die"* (John 11:26).

Luke 16. You remember the story, of course.

There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments (vs. 19-23).

These men died? Somebody says, *"Well, that's it."* No, no! The poor man went to Abraham's bosom. Christ called it *"paradise"* (Luke 23:43). The rich man went to Tartarus, that place in the Hadean realm for the reception of the departed spirits of the ungodly. He is in punishment — in the flames! Instantly — at death! Death is when it starts.

"Don't let your hearts be troubled." He understands human emotions. He understands they are going to be sorrowful, because He is not going to be with them physically, and He has been a source of comfort and strength to them. He has been a protection for them. He has been a source of instruction, He has demonstrated in His conduct and His teaching

the kind of life they should assure. From a human standpoint they are going to be sorrowful, but the Lord said do not let that take dominance, do not let that be the preeminent concept of your life, in connection with what's about to take place.

"Let not your hearts be troubled, ye believe in God believe also in me, in my Father's house there are many mansions." Friends, there are room in heaven for every person who will yield his life in humble obedience to the Lord. The greatest desire of God Almighty is for your salvation. That is why He gave His Son. The golden text of the Bible – John 3:16: *"For God so loved the world."* That world is you and me: sinners. And that little adverb "so" – there is no way to fathom the depths of its meaning. God so loved sinners such as you and I that He gave His only begotten Son – pure, guiltless, innocent, sinless Son – to die the horrible death of crucifixion. To prepare, make available to sinners, such as I, the hope of eternal life. God wants you to be saved and in His house there are many, many rooms. In the mansion of the Father, there is joy and happiness beyond the ability of man to imagine in the presence of the Almighty. And it is available to you and to me.

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you (John 14:1-2).

That is an interesting thought. Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people. But how do I prepare for heaven? Friends, it is a matter of faith. Divest your mind and your heart of all concepts, go to the

JOHN 14:1-6

Scripture, read God's word, and find out just what kind of person God desires of me. That is going to take sacrifice and commitment to live as God desires.

How wonderful to know that God loved us so much that He willingly gave His Son. How wonderful to know that Christ loved us so much that He willingly died on the old cruel cross. How wonderful to know that we are invited to come to Him for redemption so desperately needed. How wonderful to know that when we live righteous, godly lives - an eternal mansion awaits us - that we will enjoy throughout eternity!

James Watkins



Began preaching in 1949 • Holds the B.S. and M.A. degrees from the Alabama School Of Religion • Served churches in Georgia, Tennessee and Alabama • Married Foye Dooly in 1948 and they have four children, two daughters and two sons • Speaker on the television program **Preaching The Gospel** which is heard throughout the world • Speaks in a number of gospel meetings each year.

Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:

John 17: 20-21

This Chapter Written By
David Sain

A benchmark in dealing with human conflicts is the moment recorded in the book of Genesis when Abraham and Lot had to deal with a conflict among their herdsmen. The divine record reads,

And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle...And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren (Gen. 13:7,8).

This serves as a powerful example of the attitude that should characterize every child of God anytime that there is a conflict with his brethren. There should be no strife among us *"for we be brethren."* However, divine injunctions notwithstanding, this is not always the case.

Instead, division is so common among us that few congregations of the Lord's church that have been in existence for more than a few years have been spared of the heart-wrenching, spirit-draining, and soul-smothering experience of discord and division.

And, regrettably, not only is strife experienced within many local congregations, but our entire brotherhood is being shaken by division over "*issues.*"

We are so fragmented as a brotherhood that any plea for unity today has a hollow sound to it. With so many different kinds of "*Churches of Christ,*" what reasonable and effective plea can be made to the denominational world? The spirit of denominationalism has infiltrated the Church of Christ and preachers who once condemned the sectarian spirit now lead in the practice of such.

Adapting the terms often heard in the political arena, we have brethren who are to the "*far left*" doctrinally (usually identified as liberal), and we have brethren who are to the "*far right*" doctrinally (often referred to as radical). And those who are in between these two extremes are divided into dozens of classifications according to how they worship, what they teach about remarriage, whom they fellowship, where they "*stand*" regarding a current "*hot topic*" in the brotherhood, etc.

Sadly, this divided state has far-reaching and long-lasting effects:

(1) It damages the souls of countless Christians. In discouragement over strife and discord, thousands have laid their faith aside and turned back to the world.

(2) Our evangelistic efforts are stifled. There is little time or motivation for teaching the lost when we are consumed with internal battles. And, the efforts that we do make are hindered by the perception that people have of us as they observe our splintering.

What a sad and miserable state of affairs. Oh, how this must grieve the heart of our heavenly

Father, and it is time for us to be grieved by these conditions.

It is time for us to determine to accomplish the will of God regarding peace among those who believe in Christ. It is time for us to be impressed more than ever with what the scriptures teach about unity and division.

The Sinfulness Of Division

Even a casual reading of the New Testament will impress the reader with the fact that the Lord's disciples are warned about division, and that division is condemned.

The apostle Paul wrote to the Christians in Galatia,

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19-21).

Christians are given a divinely inspired injunction to, "*...mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them*" (Rom. 16:17-18). In other words, we are commanded to identify and call attention to those who disrupt the unity of God's people.

The New Testament also teaches us that strife and discord have absolutely no place in the Lord's

body. Paul judged those who are guilty of causing strife and division as being worthy of death (Rom. 1:29ff). And, later in the same epistle, he exhorted the brethren not to engage in strife (Rom. 13:13), and he classified those who do engage in strife as being carnal in their behavior (1 Cor. 3:3).

Furthermore, Paul's charge to the Philippians is emphatic and clear, "*Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves*" (Phil. 2:3).

Timothy was warned about the one who is, "*proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife...*" (1 Tim. 6:4).

Also, in studying what the Bible teaches about division, we must consider the words of the revered apostle to the Corinthians. Paul said that he had heard of division among them in a situation that might be described as "*preacheritis*." He clearly dealt with the matter, commanding,

Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment (1 Cor. 1:10).

Finally, regarding division and strife, let me add that thousands of Christians have experienced the painful reality of the words of James 3:16. There the brother of our Lord declared, "*For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.*" Nothing delights the devil more than to have God's children fussing with each other.

Divine Teaching About Unity

A proper beginning point in a study of the Lord's will about unity is the text of this study. Just before he was crucified for our sins, Jesus prayed.

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me (John 17:20-21).

This scripture is often misapprehended and misapplied. That for which Jesus prayed in this scripture was that all of his disciples should be one in faith, in practice, in aim, in purpose, and in love. It does not advocate or permit "*unity in diversity*" that is so popular among churches today (including some Churches of Christ).

The oneness for which Jesus prayed was outlined by the words of the apostle Paul when he penned his epistle to the Ephesian saints. He wrote,

There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all (Eph. 4:4-6).

Just prior to his declaration of spiritual oneness, Paul charged Christians with the responsibility to,

...walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep

JOHN 17:20-21

the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace
(Eph. 4:1-3).

In other words, it is our duty to do and say those things that promote and preserve the peace and harmony of the Lord's spiritual body. We must never allow Satan to use us to stir up strife and discord among God's people.

Remember that Jesus taught that there is strength only where there is unity (Matt. 12:25), and we are never weaker than when we are in conflict with each other. To the contrary, in the prayer cited above, note the power of unity in that Jesus taught that the world is led to believe in him by the unity of his disciples (John 17:20-21).

Furthermore, we are taught to be aggressive regarding peace and unity. The divine record teaches us to "*seek peace, and ensue it*" (1 Pet. 3:11), and to "*Follow peace with all men...*" (Heb. 12:14). The words "*ensue*" and "*follow*" in these scriptures come from the same Greek word, *διωκω*. As here used, the words mean, to run after, to run swiftly in order to catch a person or thing, teaching us that peace and unity do not happen accidentally. We must work at it if we are to achieve peace and unity.

The paramount lesson to learn from all of these scriptures regarding unity is that achieving and maintaining unity in the church is the duty of every child of God!

Clarifying Unity

Obviously, unity is taught as the will of the Lord, and it is essential if we are to be pleasing to the Lord, but what is unity?

People generally equate religious unity with union, or a consolidation of different parties, regardless of their faith. This school of thought says that people should unite in spite of differences instead of uniting because of agreement. However, unity is not achieved by merely agreeing to disagree. Rather, it means oneness – a state of being one.

Regrettably, however, the idea of unity in diversity is not only popular in the denominational world but is now also being embraced by many of our brethren. Many of our brethren are reaching out to our denominational friends with an ecumenical appeal to come together upon common ground. They emphasize that, even though we disagree about some doctrinal matters, we do have something in common, viz., faith in Jesus as the Son of God. The appeal that is usually made is, *“Let us lay aside our doctrinal differences and come together in unity upon this common ground, and recognize each other as brothers and sisters in Christ.”*

However, to make an appeal to *“set aside our differences”* is to say that our differences do not matter, and that is the same as saying that what the Bible teaches (relative to that about which we disagree) does not matter. It amounts to setting aside the teaching of the Word of God for the sake of union with others, which, in effect, says that union with others is more important than agreement with God.

Regarding the matter of establishing fellowship with one whose teaching is not in harmony with the Word of God, we would do well to take a sober look at what is taught in 2 John 9-11.

Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.

The Biblical truth is that any unity with one another that does not grow out of unity with God is not a valid unity (cf. 1 John 1:7)!

What Is Behind The Concept Of Unity In Diversity?

There are a number of factors that seem to be influential when brethren are willing to *"lay aside our differences and come together upon common ground with our religious neighbors."*

First, our market-driven culture is influencing a lot of churches and church leaders to set aside Biblical truth for that which is more acceptable to the *"consumer."* In an effort to be user-friendly, they are ready to change or remove anything that hinders them from ACCEPTANCE AND SUCCESS.

In the quest for church growth, it sometimes becomes obvious that it is difficult to convert some people because of certain things we teach and practice. For example, having only vocal music in worship, and teaching that baptism is essential to salvation are viewed as being very unpopular and unappealing, and therefore are viewed as huge barriers to church growth. So, in the absence of dedication to the truth, some decide these are not

matters to be made a test of fellowship.

Second, I am convinced that peer pressure is an influential factor in this and all the current liberal trends. Most people, adults and children, cannot stand to be disliked and unaccepted by our peers. It seems that some of us just cannot stand to be religiously different or thought of as being narrow-minded!

Only a brief analysis is necessary to realize that most of the “*changes*” currently being effected in the churches of Christ are changes that make us less different and more like the churches around us.

Sadly, there is a growing number of preachers who apparently think more of public image than God’s approval. They seem to be more concerned about being accepted by religious neighbors than being approved of God, and, are willing to compromise Biblical truth. They know what to preach and what not to preach to satisfy the desires of a society engulfed in pluralism and relativism! They know how to preach inoffensively and grow a user-friendly church, and some are doing it with great boldness!

Third, regarding the appeal for unity in diversity, I am persuaded that a major factor is the philosophy of tolerance that characterizes our culture—a culture that advocates, “*No one has the right to judge another person or to force his opinion upon another person.*”

Consequently, that which is advocated in the secular world is advocated in the religious realm. We are told, “*No one has the right to tell anyone else that he is wrong or that he must believe any certain doctrine.*”

Some Diversity Is Allowed

In Christ, some diversity is allowed and even expected because of the very nature of the gospel of Christ.

In the letter to the saints in Ephesus, Paul wrote that God made it possible for both Jew and Gentile to be in Christ Jesus by the blood of Christ. He called Jesus "*our peace*," and said that the precious Savior abolished the law, breaking down the wall that divided the Jew and Gentile. He made both to be one, reconciling both unto God in one body by the cross. He declared that Jesus "*came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh*" (Eph. 2:11-22).

In Christ there are people from all nations (Matt. 28:19). In Christ, there is equality of all races, and gender does not matter (Gal. 3:28). In Christ, there is a blending of people from all educational levels, economic levels, and social levels. As human beings, we are all different. We are different in personality, personal tastes, personal interests, and emotional makeup. In Christ, there is equality of blue-collar workers and white-collar workers. In Christ, CEO's and people on welfare are of equal value.

The church is a melting pot for all types of people, and all can walk together and have fellowship with one another if they have fellowship with God (1 John 1:7). Our fellowship in Christ is not to be contingent upon nationality, race, gender, or status in life.

So, we conclude that there is a type of diversity expected and allowed simply because, as the beloved hymn declares, "*The blessed gospel is for all.*"

However, as discussed earlier, there is a type of diversity that is not allowed. Allow me to further explain...

The Diversity That Is Not Allowed

The fact that we have an obligation to strive for unity in Christ does not warrant or justify the conclusion that men can be pleasing to God while agreeing to disagree on matters which, according to Biblical teaching, are not optional but obligatory. Let it be clearly understood that while some things are matters of judgment, there are some matters that are required by the Word of the Lord. AND THOSE MATTERS THAT ARE REQUIRED BY THE LORD ARE NON-NEGOTIABLE AT THE RELIGIOUS UNITY TABLE.

Of course, there are some matters that, according to Biblical teaching, are matters of option or expediency. That is, they are matters about which God has not decreed, in which case human judgment can be exercised with God's approval. In those matters, there can be disagreement without the breaking of fellowship.

But, such is not true in matters that are specified and required by the Lord. In matters required by the Lord, we must hold to the same view and practice the same thing (1 Cor. 1:10-13).

May God help us to always remember: (1) that in matters required by the Lord there must be unity, (2) that in matters of expediency there must be liberty to exercise human judgment and choose one of two or more optional matters (in which case diversity is allowed), and (3) that in all things there

JOHN 17:20-21

must be love – love for God, love for those who are in Christ, and love for the souls of all men.

The Boundaries Of Fellowship

Relative to the matter of unity in diversity let it be clearly understood that the child of God cannot scripturally extend Christian fellowship to any one who is not in fellowship with God. When two people attain fellowship with God, they attain fellowship with each other (1 John 1:3-7). If either of them does not have fellowship with God, the one who is in fellowship with God cannot have fellowship with one who does not have fellowship with God (Matt. 18:15-17; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; 2 Thess. 3:6-15; Eph. 5:11; 2 Cor. 6:14-18).

God has a law of inclusion: No man should be regarded as a child of God if he has not been born of water and the Spirit (John 3:3-5; Acts 2:38).

God has a law of exclusion: Some people who have been baptized into Christ should, because of their unfaithfulness to God, be excluded from the fellowship of the faithful Christian.

No Christian can be faithful to the Lord and the Word of God if he does not observe God's law of inclusion and God's law of exclusion.

The Proper Foundation For Unity

The heart of the matter, dear reader, is the matter of authority in religion. For there to be unity, we must first agree upon what shall be our standard of authority.

What shall be our standard for determining truth? By what standard shall we resolve our

disagreements? Will we be guided by what our parents taught? Shall we follow the tradition of our spiritual fathers? Or do we make consensus our guide?

I submit to you that the only feasible, workable and acceptable basis for unity is the teaching of the New Testament. It is inspired of God and is all-sufficient as our source of truth (2 Tim. 3:13-17). It is the only basis for truth that is mutually acceptable to all.

We can never be united on the creeds, theories, and speculations of men, but when we come to respect God's word like we ought (1 Thess. 2:13), phrases like "*I believe...*" and "*My church teaches...*" will give way to "*The Bible teaches...*"

If each of us will lay aside our opinions and personal desires and objectively seek the truth of God's inspired Word, we can come to know and understand the truth (1 Tim. 2:4) and be one in Christ (Gal. 3:28).

An Appeal

The plea that characterized the Restoration Movement is still valid. That plea was: Let us go back to the Bible. Let us speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent. Let us believe, teach, and practice only those things that are authorized by the New Testament.

That is the beginning point of unity, and it is the only basis for unity!

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Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:

Acts 2

This Chapter Written By

Jim Dearman

When one considers that the hub of anything is its center, around which everything else revolves, *"The Hub of the Bible"* becomes an extremely appropriate designation for the second chapter of Acts. Its contents reveal the culmination of God's plan for saving mankind through the establishment of the kingdom, the church of Christ, purchased with the blood of God's only begotten Son.

The scope of this study will not permit an exhaustive examination of all forty-seven verses comprising this great chapter. However, we will highlight its major points using two crucial questions found in the chapter itself, in verses 12 and 37. The first is, *"Whatever could this mean?"* (NKJV); and the second, the world's most important question, is *"... Men and brethren, what shall we do?"*

The events recorded in Acts 2:1-11 prompted the question, *"Whatever could this mean?"* in verse 12. Oh, if only all men everywhere would accept the scriptural answer to this question! These first eleven verses reveal, first of all, that the keys to the kingdom were about to be used to admit some 3,000

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souls into that glorious institution about which the prophets spoke and which Jesus promised to build. In that promise, Jesus made clear that the church and the kingdom were one and the same, when He declared:

And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven (Matt. 16:18-19, NKJV).

During their earthly ministries, both John the baptizer and Jesus the Christ proclaimed that the kingdom was at hand (Matt. 3:2; Mark 1:15). The phrase, "*at hand*," meant the kingdom, the church, was about to come into existence. In fact, Jesus told those present with Him on one occasion that some of them would not die until they had seen the kingdom of God "*present with power*" (Mark 9:1).

The phrase, "*present with power*," is significant because it tells us the kingdom would come into existence with power. "*Whatever could this mean?*" Acts 1:6-8 is the passage that provides the answer:

Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel? And He said to them, it is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

We have thus far learned that the church and the kingdom are the same (Matt. 16:18-19); that this kingdom, the church, was soon to be established (Matt. 3:2; Mark 1:15); that some who were alive when Jesus was on the earth would survive to see the kingdom come with power (Mark 9:1); and that the power would come when the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles (Acts 1:6-8). In Acts 2: 1-4, we learn that the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles on the first Pentecost following the ascension of Jesus to heaven. Therefore, we know the kingdom, the church of Christ, came into existence on that day.

"Whatever could this mean?" It means the prevalent doctrine of premillennialism is false from its premise to its conclusion. The kingdom, as the premillennialists contend, is not future and does not involve a literal reign of Christ on earth for a thousand years. The events of Acts 2 also counter the contention that the church was an afterthought in the mind of God, distinctive from the kingdom, and that it was established only after the Jews rejected Christ and, by so doing, thwarted His plans to set up an earthly kingdom. This theory clearly contends that the determination of Deity was denied by humanity. Who can believe it? Tragically, there are many who do, despite scriptural proof to the contrary.

For example, in the chapter now under consideration, Peter says:

Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death (Acts 2:23).

In the next verse, Peter declares:

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Whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it (Acts 2:24).

Now, consider these statements in conjunction with the Lord's promise in Matthew 16:18-19 that He would build His church and that the gates of Hades would not prevail against it. Without doubt, Jesus was referring to His spirit's being in Hades, specifically Paradise. However, He was also declaring that His spirit would be reunited with His body and that He would be raised to reign over His kingdom, the church! We read of the beginning of that reign in Acts 2.

The specific manifestation of the power promised by Jesus to His apostles is revealed in these early verses of Acts 2. The apostles began to speak in tongues. *"Whatever could this mean?"* First, it means only the apostles spoke in tongues because the clear antecedent of the pronoun *"they"* in verse one is found in the final verse of chapter one. The apostles are the only ones mentioned in that verse; therefore, it is the apostles who spoke in tongues, not the one hundred and twenty mentioned in Acts 1:15.

Secondly, the tongues with which these apostles spoke were languages they had never learned. This is evident from a comparison of verses four, six, eight, and eleven. In verse four, the word *"tongue"* is used. In verse six, the word *"language"* is used to describe this miraculous phenomenon. *"Language"* is used again in verse eight, and the word *"tongues"* is used in verse eleven. There can be no doubt that what these Jews *"from every nation under heaven"* were hearing were the languages, or tongues, in

which they were born (verse 8). *"Whatever could this mean?"*

First of all, it means there is no similarity between the events that occurred on Pentecost and present day *"Pentecostalism"*! The so-called tongue speaking of today is incomprehensible. To call it *"Pentecostal"* is a misnomer of the greatest magnitude. It is the product of a *"better felt than told"* religious experience rooted in emotionalism rather than evidence. The baptism of the Holy Spirit upon the apostles was for confirmation and communication. While the word of God was in earthen vessels, there was a need for miraculous confirmation and inspired communication. Now, that which is perfect, or complete, has come (1 Cor. 13:8-13). The revelation of God has been fully communicated and confirmed. The visible sights and sounds of that significant Sunday morning long ago were unmistakably from God to convict and convert the gathered multitude. The apostles, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, announced the terms of admission into the kingdom for the first time in such a way as to leave no doubt, in the minds of honest hearers, about the authenticity of their message. The heavenly origin of these occurrences was undeniable to such hearers, and some 3,000 of them ultimately asked the question: *"Men and brethren, what shall we do?"* Let us now turn our attention to the words that prompted this question.

After dismissing the accusation of some in the crowd that the apostles were drunk, Peter presented the truth about the amazing events of this Pentecost Day. In verses 16-21, Peter quoted Joel's prophecy from Joel 2:28-32 and applied it to the occurrences

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of that day. The details of the prophecy clearly show that its fulfillment was not completed on that Day of Pentecost, but that it began to be fulfilled on that day. For example, the reference to *“all flesh”* involves Jew and Gentile and the blessings, including miraculous gifts that both these groups would ultimately possess. However, on this Pentecost when the prophecy was quoted by Peter, only Jews were present, demonstrating that a portion of the prophecy would have its fulfillment in the days and years following this Pentecost Day. We see the further fulfillment of this prophecy at the house of Cornelius, the first Gentile convert, and in passages such as Acts 21:9, where we learn that Philip had four virgin daughters who prophesied. Joel, in his prophecy, also revealed something crucial about conversion: He declared that, beginning on Pentecost, and for all time to come, *“whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”* Again, we ask, *“Whatever could this mean?”*

It is obvious that knowing what it means to call on the name of the Lord is essential to man’s salvation. Joel prophesied that whoever called on the name of the Lord, beginning with the fulfillment of his prophecy on Pentecost, would be saved. Therefore, no one can be saved without calling on the name of the Lord. Those who were saved on Pentecost, some 3,000 souls, had to be saved by calling on the name of the Lord. Therefore, when we observe what they did, we will know exactly what all people today, and until the end of time, must do to call on the name of the Lord.

The first requirement is found in verse 22; it is the hearing of the Word. Peter told them:

Men of Israel, hear these words, Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in our midst, as you yourselves also know.

They could not deny the miracles of Jesus. They were widely known and well documented. Then Peter continued:

Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death (verse 23).

If Peter's sermon had ended here, all his hearers might have left unconvinced and unconverted. Despite their knowledge of Christ's miracles, the multitude might easily have concluded that Jesus was, in the final analysis, an imposter who could not fulfill His own prediction that He would rise from the dead. However, Peter continued to prove to his audience that God had raised up Jesus, citing both the prophetic words of David as powerful proof of his claim (verses 25-31; 34-35) and the eyewitness testimony of all the apostles (verse 32).

The climactic conclusion of this portion of Peter's address is found in the words of verse 36:

Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.

Peter's inspired indictment cut some of his hearers to the heart, producing a faith that caused them to cry out: "...Men and brethren, what shall we do?" The

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obvious import of the question was, "*What shall we do to be saved?*" They had now heard the Word, and some had believed. What would Peter tell them?

He would not tell them not to pray, but to obey. No sinner's prayer is called for here, but rather a call for repentance, a complete change of mind, and baptism for the remission of their sins.

Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit' (Acts 2:38).

While few would contend that salvation is obtained before repentance, far more argue that one is saved before baptism. Yet, Peter, by inspiration, placed both repentance and baptism before remission of sins in the divine plan; therefore, both are required before salvation is obtained. It is impossible to separate these conditions, to make one of them necessary to salvation but not the other.

Some say the phrase "*for the remission of sins*" actually means "*because of remission of sins*," arguing that the preposition "*for*" should be translated "*because of*" in this passage. This argument can be shown to be invalid by examining another passage in which the exact phrase, "*for the remission of sins*," is used. In Matthew 26:28, while instituting the Lord's Supper, Jesus, in reference to the cup, said: "*For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.*" Who would contend that Jesus shed His blood "*because of remission of sins*"? He shed His blood to procure forgiveness of sins; otherwise, His death would have been in vain. Yet,

the identical expression is used in both Matthew 26:28 and in Acts 2:38. Does the phrase mean one thing in one passage and the opposite in the other? The New Testament teaches, both by precept and example, that remission of sins is obtained after one hears, believes, repents, confesses Christ, and is baptized.

While confession is not specifically stated in Acts 2:38, we know those who obeyed on this occasion would have confessed Jesus to be the Christ as part of their compliance with the commands of the gospel. We learn from other New Testament passages that confession is an essential part of God's plan of salvation, and we realize it is the sum of God's Word that is truth and not some of it.

The gift of the Holy Spirit was promised to those who would heed Peter's words and obey the gospel. While there has been much discussion as to the nature of this gift, it is this writer's opinion that the gift of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:38 refers to the miraculous gifts evident in the early church that were essential to the confirmation of the gospel until that which was perfect—that is, the complete written revelation, had come (1 Cor. 13:8-13; Eph. 4:11-16). Strong supporting texts for this view are Acts 8:14-17 and Acts 19:1-7.

The first reference, Acts 8:14-17, reveals that Peter and John came to Samaria to lay hands on newly baptized believers to impart to them "*the Holy Spirit*," as verse 17 states. The text also states that, prior to this time, the Holy Spirit had fallen upon none of them; they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 8:16). This indicates that all believers did not receive the gift of the Holy Spirit

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at the time of their baptism; otherwise, why would these Samaritans not have received it then? It was only after the laying on of the apostles' hands that many of the early disciples received this obviously miraculous gift for the benefit of the whole church. Since the scripture in Acts 8 makes no distinction between a miraculous and non-miraculous gift, we conclude that the gift of the Spirit in Acts 2:38 is identical to that gift in Acts 8:14-17.

The same conclusion may be reached from an examination of Acts 19:1-7, where Paul encountered twelve disciples at Ephesus. The conversation between the apostle and the twelve on this occasion revealed that these disciples had been baptized with John's baptism at a time when that baptism was no longer in effect. Paul discovered this by asking whether or not they had received the Holy Spirit when they believed. Upon learning they had not even heard of the Holy Spirit, Paul taught them about the one baptism by the authority of Christ; and "*they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus*" (Acts 19:4). Paul then laid hands on them and the Holy Spirit came upon them and they spoke with tongues and prophesied (verse 5).

Again, in Acts 19, as with the Samaritan believers in Acts 8, no distinction is made between the non-miraculous and the miraculous gift of the Holy Spirit. Paul simply asked if they had received the Holy Spirit when they believed. Then, when they received the Spirit by the laying on of Paul's hands, the gift was miraculous. This provides powerful evidence that the gift of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:38 was miraculous. Of course, today, the Holy Spirit operates only through the Word and "*dwells*" in

the Christian as do God and Christ—by faith. The all-sufficient Word of God, the sword of the Spirit, thoroughly equips us for every good work (2 Tim. 3:16, 17).

Peter's words in Acts 2:39 also reveal something about the nature of inspiration. He foretold something he did not fully understand at the time. He was speaking by the Spirit of God about the blessings of the gospel that would ultimately come to the Gentiles as well as the Jews. However, it would be several years later, at the household of Cornelius, before Peter would personally realize what he prophesied in this passage—that the gospel truly is for all, that God is no respecter of persons, "*but in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him*" (Acts 10:35).

Acts 2:40 reminds us that Peter's entire sermon is not recorded in this great chapter. He testified and exhorted with many other words, urging those present to turn from their sins in repentance and to complete their obedience in baptism for the forgiveness of their sins. The following verse reveals some 3,000 precious souls gladly received Peter's word, were baptized into Christ, and then were added by the Lord to the kingdom, the church of Christ. Their terrible guilt had prompted the question, "*Men and brethren, what shall we do?*" Upon hearing Peter's inspired answer, the goodness of God that leads to repentance filled and changed their minds and led them to a glorious transformation from guilt to gladness. The fruits of this transformation are seen in Acts 2:42-47.

The final verses of this great chapter provide a pattern for the church in every generation. The statements found here describe those who truly

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had been “called out” from the world and who were walking worthy of that calling. They continued steadfastly in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in partaking of the Lord’s Supper, and in prayers. The goodness of God had produced in them unspeakable joy and unsurpassed peace, and they expressed their gratitude for these blessings through loving and loyal obedience to His will. They loved God and each other, and the world around them knew it.

Now, after studying this description of the church in Jerusalem, let us ask once more, “*Whatever could this mean?*” The meaning is unmistakable: the church in every century must be the church of the first century – called out and completely transformed by the goodness of God that has changed our guilt to gladness.

Jim Dearman



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Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:

Romans 12:1-2

This Chapter Written By

Bobby Liddell

Introduction

Commentators agree that Paul's epistle transcends from the doctrinal to the practical with the transition (as shown by the word "*therefore*") in these verses. Paul implored his brethren in Rome to live as Christians ought, as living, holy, and well pleasing sacrifices, in holy service to the God of Heaven; thus, to His honor and glory. Reminiscent of the animal sacrifices offered upon the altar, given in keeping with God's commands under the Old Law, but instead of, as in time past, offering the bodies of dead animals, their sacrifice, and ours, must be our own living bodies (in reference to the entirety of ourselves).

As in the acceptable sacrifices under Moses' Law; that is, those that were well pleasing as to the desire of God, and were proper as to the desire of the one making the offering, so ours must be the best we have to offer. Likewise, we must relinquish all claims to ourselves, giving ourselves wholly, and as holy sacrifices. Why? The reason for offering such sacrifices is man's obedient response to the tender

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kindness, the undeserved favor, the marvelous mercies, and the gracious compassion of God, especially as demonstrated by the sacrifice of His Son for our sins. The living sacrifice, to which Paul calls believers, he declares to be our reasonable, rational, or logical, service. What could be more reasonable than that we glorify God by the voluntary offering of our very lives as living sacrifices?

As God's creation, if we would know the fullness of life for which God made us, we must be aware of God's will for us. We must go beyond simply being aware of God's will, to the point of understanding what God's will is. Having been made aware of, and having gained an understanding of, God's will, then we must be submissive in obedience to the will of God.

God's Will Demands A Change A Change Of Masters

Learning the will of God should produce a change in our lives. No one can ever be the same, as he was before, after he has learned God's will. He will either be better, or he will be worse, but he will not be the same! God's will demands change. First, the will of God demands a change of masters: "*And be not conformed to this world*" (Rom. 12:2). No longer are we to follow the will of self. Man's way is not in himself. Therefore, man cannot, by himself, from himself, or of himself, direct his way as he should go:

O LORD, I know that the way of man is
not in himself: it is not in man that walketh
to direct his steps (Jer. 10:23).

If we follow our own wills, we will find the end to be death:

There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death (Prov. 14:12).

No longer are we to be formed (conformed) by the world of sin. John wrote:

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever (1 John 2:15-17).

We must not let the world mold us to fit it, but we should be in accordance with God's form. Paul penned:

Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness (Rom. 6:16-18).

No longer are we to be fashioned by the wickedness of society. To be a friend of the world is to be the enemy of God (James 4:4). Why lose our

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relationship with God, and forfeit the wonderful blessings that can be ours just to please men? Paul wrote to the brethren in Galatia:

For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ (Gal. 1:10).

We should learn from the example of the people of Israel, who disobeyed God because of their desire to be like the sinful world around them. They said to Samuel:

Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations. But the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the LORD. And the LORD said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me, that I should not reign over them (1 Sam. 8:5-7).

A Change Of Manner

The will of God demands a change of manner: *"but be ye transformed"* (Rom. 12:2). Not only should our masters change, but our manner of life must also change to the point that we are pleasing to God. Bible writers call our manner of life our walk, or conversation. The will of God brings a new concern in our living. Our desire must be as that of Jesus; that is, that God's will be done in our lives. He said, shortly before His crucifixion,

O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt (Matt. 26:39).

Again, He said,

For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me (John 6:38).

No longer are we to be concerned about worldly things, but spiritual things have become our priority as we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matt. 6:33); and, as we set our affections on things above, not on things on this earth (Col. 3:1-2).

The will of God begets a new creature. Note:

Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures (James 1:18).

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new (2 Cor. 5:17).

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature (Gal. 6:15).

Obedience to God transforms our lives, bringing a "*newness*" found only in Christ (cf. Rom. 6:16-18 as quoted above).

Not only does the will of God bring a new concern, and beget a new creature; the will of God also builds a new character. Peter wrote of the eight

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“Christian Virtues” of godly character necessary for entrance into heaven.

Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:4-11).

John wrote of the character that manifests one as a child of God.

He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God

are manifest, and the children of the devil:
whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of
God, neither he that loveth not his brother
(1 John 3:8-10).

A Change Of Mind

The will of God effects a change of masters and a change of manner because it demands a change of mind: *"by the renewing of your mind"* (Rom. 12:2). Only when we change our minds to serve God, and no longer serve sin, will we make a change of masters and manner. This change of mind is intellectual; that is, God's will appeals to man's intellect. This fact should not be surprising since God is the divine Architect of the human mind. Jesus spoke of the appeal of God's will:

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me (John 6:44-45).

God's will appeals to the other aspects of our being, but it also appeals to the intellect because of its truthfulness, accuracy, and evidence.

This change of mind, brought about by the will of God, is inward (cf. Rom. 12:1-2). Paul wrote of the Holy Spirit's teaching coupled with the inward man's obedient response: *"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God"* (Rom. 8:16). Having learned the will of God, no longer are we to be governed by the outward man of the flesh.

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For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal. For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad (2 Cor. 4:16-5:10).

Now, the flesh is to be governed by the inward man of the spirit.

This change of mind is also influential; that is, the thinking of our minds influences every aspect of our lives, both in word and in deed. *"For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; but his heart is not with thee"* (Prov. 23:7). Someone said, *"One may not be what he thinks he is, but what he thinks, he is."* Jesus said,

O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh (Matt. 12:34).

For our actions and words to be those of new creatures, we must have renewed minds (hearts).

God's Will Presents A Challenge A Challenge To Examine

Learning the will of God presents a challenge in our lives: *"that ye may prove"* (Rom. 12:2). The word *"prove,"* means to examine with the expectation of thus approving. The will of God challenges us to examine the evidence. We are not asked to believe and live by that which is not supported by evidence, but to examine the evidence that has been presented.

And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name (John 20:30-31).

We should make a thorough examination, as did the noble Bereans of old (Acts 17:11). We should make a thoughtful examination, meditating on (thinking of and thinking on) the *“law of the Lord”* (Psa. 1:2). We should also make a truthful examination:

But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God (2 Cor. 4:2).

A Challenge To Enquire

The will of God challenges us to enquire. Before we can prove, or approve, we must enquire into God’s will. We should enquire by daily searching, like the Bereans, who *“received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so”* (Acts 17:11; cf. Psa. 119:97). As we need daily bread, so we need the bread of life daily. We should enquire by diligent seeking. Our enquiry should not be haphazard, spasmodic, or half-hearted (Psa. 1:1-2; John 5:39). We should enquire by dedicated studying (2 Tim. 2:15 [give diligence]). Our study must be dedicated; therefore, must be regular, in-depth, and with the goal of better understanding God’s will that we may be more pleasing to Him.

A Challenge To Endorse

The will of God challenges us to endorse that which we have examined, and that about which we have made enquiry. This endorsement is made by acceptance of God’s word. In Jerusalem,

They that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls (Acts 2:41).

We make this endorsement by approval of God's will, as shown by the writing of the psalmist.

Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee. Blessed art thou, O LORD: teach me thy statutes. With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth. I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches. I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways. I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word (Psa. 119:11-16).

Again, *"My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments are righteousness"* (Psa. 119:172). Likewise, we endorse the will of God by application of God's way to our lives. It should be the case that we all can honestly say: *"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path"* (Psa. 119:105), and that is the way in which we walk.

If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have

not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us (1 John 1:6-10).

God's Will Presents A Charge A Charge That Is Profitable

Learning the will of God presents a charge we must obey. This charge from God is profitable: "*what is that good*" (Rom. 12:2). Man profits because of riches that are real. One who obeys the will of God knows the blessings that are found only in Christ.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ (Eph. 1:3).

It is only in Christ,

In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace (Eph. 1:7).

Thus, Paul wrote:

Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ (Eph. 3:8; cf. Heb. 11:26).

Man profits because of a relationship that is right.

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the

temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord (2 Cor. 6:14-18).

John declared:

That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ (1 John 1:3; cf. 1 Peter 2:17; Rom. 5:1-2; 6:16-18).

Man profits because of the reward that is reserved.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time (1 Peter 1:3-5).

Jesus promised that the faithful will have an eternal home in heaven, where they will enjoy life eternal (Matt. 25:46). Thus, Paul looked forward, in hope, to *"a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous*

judge" would give to him, and to all who *"love his appearing"* (2 Tim. 4:7-8).

A Charge That Is Pleasing To God

This charge from God is pleasing to God: *"acceptable."* Its purpose pleases God; that is, the salvation of men's souls. As Jesus came *"to seek and to save"* lost souls, and to give His life a *"ransom for many,"* so we are to fulfill the purpose of God's will in our lives (Luke 19:10; Matt. 20:28). Its promise pleases God; that is, the abundant life both now and hereafter. Jesus said:

The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly (John 10:10).

Paul said he lived, *"In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began"* (Titus 1:2). As the purpose of this charge pleases God, and the promise does so as well, its preaching also pleases God.

For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe (1 Cor. 1:21).

A Charge That Is Perfect

This charge from God is perfect: the *"perfect will of God"* (Rom. 12:2). God's will is perfect in that it is full, lacking nothing:

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for

reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue (2 Peter 1:3).

These things being true, what then does man lack?

Not only is God's will perfect in that it is full, but it is also finished; that is, completed. Jude wrote of the faith, the revelation from God, which had been once for all delivered:

Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints (Jude 3).

Thus, no one has the right to add to, or to take away from, what God has revealed in His will.

For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book (Rev. 22:18-19).

In addition, this perfect will of God is final,

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because it is the once for all delivered, perfect, absolute, unchanging standard of final authority by which man will be judged at the last day. No one will be able successfully to argue against God's will, or to plead for judgment by another authority on that final day. Jesus said:

He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day (John 12:48).

Conclusion

The will of God demands a change in our lives: a change of master, a change of manner, and a change of mind. God's will presents a challenge to examine, to enquire, and to endorse the will of God. The will of God presents a charge that we must obey: a charge that is profitable to man, pleasing to God, and perfect. No one can ever be the same after he has learned the will of God.

Bobby Liddell



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Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:

Galatians 6:1-2

This Chapter Written By

Jimmy Clark

The final chapter of the book of Galatians contains very practical information for the church. The first order of business in the chapter is the burden of restoring the erring (cf. Gal. 6:1-2). The emphasis of this same subject is found in many other books of the New Testament. James wrote,

Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins (James 5:19-20).

Jesus himself said of his work, *"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost"* (Luke 19:10). Matthew's chapter on true greatness in the kingdom addresses the subject of the proper handling of brethren who err.

Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.

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But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican (Matt. 18:15-17).

Paul wrote to Corinth about the brother who had been disciplined and wanted to be restored,

Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one should be swallowed up with overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you that ye would confirm your love toward him (2 Cor. 2:6-8).

One can see by these few references in other places in the Bible that this subject is of prime importance to God and God's people.

The Galatian brethren were being persuaded to leave the gospel of Christ (cf. Gal. 1:6-9; 5:7-8). Those who might be overtaken in the persuasion or any other fault needed to be brought back. There are at least three things to be strongly considered in bearing the burden of restoring as seen in Galatians 6:1-2.

Facing The Fact Of A Fault

While the word "*if*" in the text is from the Greek word denoting the possibility that one of the brethren could be guilty of a trespass, and so be overtaken, needing to be restored, the fact that

some brethren do depart from the faith is clearly verified by many other passages. Paul wrote to the Thessalonian brethren,

Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition (2 Thess. 2:3).

Paul exhorted Timothy,

Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme (1 Tim. 1:19-20).

Again, it is written by Paul to Timothy,

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils (1 Tim. 4:1).

Other passages clearly indicate that it is possible for one once in grace (cf. Gal. 1:6) to fall from grace (cf. Gal. 5:4). It is possible for a believer (cf. Heb. 11:29) to lose his faith and become an unbeliever (cf. Heb. 3:18-19) as certain Israelites did who came out of Egypt. Therefore, restoring the erring begins with the admission by the erring that there is a sin problem to be overcome by the one who has erred. Those not guilty of the fault are then called upon to properly handle the matter.

One of the problems at times in the matter of restoration is that certain do not recognize that there is a problem. The congregation at Corinth is a good

example of this very fact. Paul wrote of a certain case,

It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you...Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? (1 Cor. 5:1-2, 6).

This is likely the case mentioned later in 2 Corinthians 2:3-11 where restoration is stressed to be given to the brother who desires to be right with God and the brethren again.

Today's age of tolerance, even among religious people, has caused some to take a light view of sin and thus negates the work of restoring the erring. In other words, why would the erring need restoring if they have not erred? Additionally, the doctrine of the impossibility of apostasy would make restoring erring brethren an unscriptural position. Restoring the erring is a tough enough burden to handle where sin is admitted. What is to be said of those cases where people not only tolerate sin but defend a person's right to continue in it? Facing the fact of sin is the first step toward restoration.

Focusing On Spiritual Principles Being Applied

Once the erring has repented and been converted again to a right relationship with God, the work of the brethren to restore is demanded. There are

several principles involved in restoration that are fundamental to this good work. None of the aspects can be ignored.

First, a spiritual mind is required by the brethren in order for restoration to be achieved. Paul addresses the brethren with the words, "*ye which are spiritual*" (Gal. 6:1). When Paul wrote to the Corinthian brethren, he stated, "*And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ*" (1 Cor. 3:1). The immaturity of the brethren at Corinth produced all kinds of problems for the church there. He states further, "*For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?*" (1 Cor. 3:3). Imagine finding the attitudes of envy, strife, and division in the hearts of those who are charged to restore one who has erred. Spiritual minded people think about others, not themselves. They are more interested in pleasing God, not men. Spiritual minded people have what Paul mentioned at the end of Galatians chapter 5.

And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another (Gal. 5:24-26).

Is it not easy to see why the next statement would refer to those who are spiritual (Gal. 6:1).

Second, the spiritual are to be active in restoring. The Greek word for "*restore*" is in the present active. Hence, restoring is a continual extension of the fellowship that had been lost due to the sinful

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condition of the erring. When looking back at Paul's statement in 2 Corinthians chapter two, the brethren were to forgive and comfort (cf. 2 Cor. 2:7). The effect of that restoration was to relieve the sorrow of heart upon the penitent. The word picture from the word "*restore*" is from the mending of nets or even the mending of broken bones. There is to be the putting back together that which has been damaged. There is to be no burying of the wounded here.

Third, the spiritual are to consider their own attitudes and spiritual weaknesses. Paul closed the passage with the words, "*in the spirit of meekness: considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted*" (Gal. 6:1). Meekness is one of the attributes of the fruit of the Spirit in the previous chapter (cf. Gal. 5:23). It is a term that denotes gentle, mild, easily working to get along with others in spite of the circumstances. It does looking out for the good of another. When thinking of a doctor mending the broken bone of another, one would certainly hope the doctor would be gentle in the process. The thought of considering oneself shows that no one is above being overtaken in a trespass. Even Christians are told that sin is still an ongoing problem to be faced in each life. John wrote, "*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us*" (1 John 1:8). Therefore, the spiritual know that they are sinners saved by the grace of God through the obedience of faith. They know that their weaknesses are to be considered in view of dealing with the weaknesses of others. The principle of what is called "*the golden rule*" comes to mind here (cf. Matt. 7:12). The Lord God provided a way that his banished not be cast away from Him forever (cf. 2 Sam. 14:14). Therefore,

man should respond in that same mind when dealing with restoration.

Fulfilling The Law Of Christ

When the next passage states, *"Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ"* (Gal. 6:2), one can easily see how restoration would fit into that category. While the burdens of this verse would include many aspects of human suffering, consider the special aspect of restoration. Sin places the greatest burden upon the heart and soul of man. While every person must face the individual responsibility for his/her own sin (cf. Ezek. 18:4), children of God as brethren one with another can sympathize and comfort others of like spiritual needs. Paul stated of true comfort,

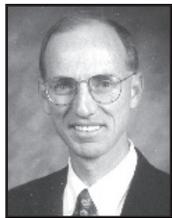
Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God (2 Cor. 1:3-4).

Think of these passages as having more stress upon spiritual comfort than upon the physical. Christians comfort fellow saints with the comfort that they have been given from God. Forgiveness from God is the background of forgiveness toward others (cf. Col. 3:13). The bearing aspect is addressed specifically in another book of the Bible as a characteristic of true love. *"Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth:"* (1 Cor. 13:7-8). This law of Christ mentioned in Galatians

GALATIANS 6:1-2

6:2 is surely tied to that same divine quality of love. Jesus himself said, *"This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you"* (John 15:12). It is written again, *"These things I command you, that ye love one another"* (John 15:17). While Jesus is specifically speaking to his apostles in John 15, John writes to brethren, *"For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another"* (1 John 3:11). Think of the need for all of the apostles to restore Peter back to a right relationship in view of his denial of the Lord three times. Think of all the apostles needing to restore each other back into a right standing after they had all forsaken Him as He said. Their restoration in the spirit of meekness considering themselves in view of temptation would aid them tremendously in the work of redemption and reconciliation. Fulfilling the law of Christ by extending the love of God in Christ toward the fallen is one of the highest acts of a child of God. It is not a matter of if a Christian will be called upon to mend the broken relationships. It is simply a matter of when. All want to be restored when they have erred greatly. How much more show that great divine quality of love toward those who desire to come home!

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Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:

Ephesians 6:10-18

This Chapter Written By

Gary McDade

In the book of Ephesians the church of Christ is variously described as the body of Christ (Eph. 1:23), the household of God (Eph. 2:19), the holy temple (Eph. 2:21), the family of God (Eph. 3:15), the bride of Christ (Eph. 5:23), and the army of Christ (Eph. 6:10-18). It is this last figure that will be the focus of our study. Have you ever wondered why the one body of Christ is referred to by so many different figures of speech in the Bible? Like a precious gem when the light hits it from different angles more aspects of its beauty are revealed. Even so the value and beauty of the church of Christ is seen in the ranging varieties of figures of speech the Lord used to describe it. A grouping of the same three questions applied to each of the figures describing the church would bring forward an interesting study on the church of Christ and its membership. The suggested questions are (1) what is the nature of the figure? (2) what is the purpose of the figure? and (3) what is the relationship to Christ involved in the figure? Take the holy temple for example. What is the nature of the holy temple? A holy temple is a

sacred precinct where the creature is privileged to communicate with the Creator. What is the purpose of the holy temple? A holy temple is a sacred place where required acts of obeisance are performed for the pleasure of deity. What is the relationship to Christ involved in the holy temple? The holy temple is the place where the servants of Christ display the adoration they have for Him through the authorized avenues of worship He requires.

“What Is The Nature Of The Army Of Christ?”

Now let's continue this approach except this time let's take a look at the army of Christ. *“What is the nature of the army of Christ?”* The army of Christ is a massive host of beings who have the single purpose of doing the will of their Commander. An ancient world leader by the name of Nebuchadnezzar, one familiar with what an army is, following an experience that vastly broadened his knowledge of God commented concerning the heavenly army,

And at the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honored him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? (Dan. 4:34-35).

As the Captain of the Lord's host, Jesus Christ commands this massive army (Heb. 2:10). In the book of Revelation the apostle John draws back the veil and allows the residents of the earth to see into the celestial regions where in the area immediately around the throne upon which the Commander sits multiplied millions are assembled. John reported,

And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands (Rev. 5:11).

These immortal beings are exceedingly powerful and have the ability to move swifter than a Titan rocket. For an illustration of this fact we may look back to the sixth century B.C., when the prophet Daniel is understandably disturbed having been shown by God the traumatic, coming corridors of history and has been mourning for three full weeks (Dan. 10:2), heaven dispatched an angelic being to the place where he was with orders to comfort him. About it Daniel wrote,

Then said he unto me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words (v. 12).

Although the angel's passage was not instantaneous, it was very swift. The awesome power of these angels is legendary from the defense of Israel by the slaughter of 185,000 Assyrians in one night by one of them. 2 Kings 19:35 tells us,

EPHESIANS 6:10-18

And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the Lord went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses.

Ephesians 6:10-18 presents the figure of the church of Christ as the army of Christ. Let us consider the text.

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.

The church of Christ addressed in this book is being urged to see themselves as the army of Christ in this

text. Three general observations may be made about this text. One, Christians should be strong soldiers serving under their Captain, Jesus Christ. Two, as strong soldiers Christians must "*put on the whole armor of God*" and "*take unto you the whole armor of God.*" Three, no effort should be spared in standing as a strong soldier under Christ. Therefore, the nature of the army of Christ would include not only angelic beings but also human beings. In summary, the nature of the army of Christ is that it is led by Jesus Christ Himself who has under His charge or command an innumerable angelic host (Heb. 12:22) and that force is augmented by human beings who are members of the church of Christ.

"What Is The Purpose Of The Army Of Christ?"

Next, let's consider "*what is the purpose of the army of Christ?*" Nebuchadnezzar's comments are valuable in this connection, for remember that he said,

He doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? (Dan. 4:35).

The stand taken by the army of Christ is against the devil and his "*wiles*" or tricks. The combat indicated in the text by the word "*wrestle*" is a formidable spiritual conflict. Soldiers of Christ fight "*against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.*" The list of armor utilized by the soldiers of Christ is both for personal defense as well as

for offense. A large measure of the success of a particular battle may be attributed to communication between the soldiers and the Commander. Prayer as the communication link between the soldier and the Commander, Jesus Christ, can never be broken by static interference from the atmosphere or equipment failure. Jesus Christ is the mediator between God and man (1 Tim. 2:5). And, *"he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come to God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them"* (Heb. 7:25). An excellent purpose statement for the army of Christ appears in 1 John 3:8,

He that committeth sin is of the devil;
for the devil sinneth from the beginning.
For this purpose the Son of God was
manifested, that he might destroy the works
of the devil.

"What Is The Relationship To Christ Involved In The Figure?"

The third question with which we have been exploring the figure of the army of Christ is *"what is the relationship to Christ involved in the figure?"* This relationship has already been briefly described as the relationship of an inferior to a superior, of a soldier to a Commander. But, let's examine the relationship a little bit more closely. The Congress of the United States of America has the power to establish a draft, but no one in the Lord's army has been drafted. His is an all-volunteer army. That says something about the relationship of the army to Christ. They have enlisted out of a desire to serve Christ. What Jesus has done for them has drawn them to him.

The Lord said, *“And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me”* (John 12:32). Those who are drawn to Christ know that he can benefit them in ways no other person or power can. Again, Jesus said,

Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light (Matt. 11:28-30).

Soldiers in the Lord’s army are *“strong in the power of his might.”*

The Christian’s Armor

Now that we have emphasized the church of Christ as the army of Christ, let’s focus our attention on the Christian’s armor. *“Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth.”* Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary tells us that,

when a man was ready to work, he put a belt around his waist; then he tucked up his robe so his legs would not be hindered. This is the meaning of ‘girded up his loins’ (1 Kings 18:46). To ‘gird up the loins of your mind’ (1 Peter 1:13) means to prepare for strenuous mental activity.

The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia says the loins are *“the seat of strength and vigor.”* As one begins to don the Christian armor, the starting place is to be encircled, wrapped up, and surrounded by the truth.

Pontius Pilate had the embodiment of truth standing before him in the person of Jesus Christ. Jesus had said, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me"* (John 14:6). And yet, Pilate asked the question, *"What is truth?"* (John 18:38a). Truth is the means by which we are made free from sin (John 8:32). Truth is the means by which we are sanctified or set apart as holy before God (John 17:17). The truth is the word of God (Psa. 119:142; John 17:17). In asking the question, *"What is truth?"* Pilate illustrates agnosticism. Agnosticism is the philosophy that truth cannot be known. Agnosticism is a philosophy that falls of its own weight because the agnostic says, *"The only thing that I can know for certain is that I cannot know anything for certain."* And, to remain an agnostic one must be certain that this is so. Many are like Pilate, contentious and will not obey the truth (Rom. 2:8). Sometimes people are hindered by others and will not obey the truth (Gal. 5:7). Those who cannot receive a love of the truth cannot be saved (2 Thess. 2:10-12). In order for men to be saved they must come unto the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4). Our souls are purified in obeying the truth (1 Pet. 1:22). The first order of spiritual business is to *"Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth."*

The Breastplate Of Righteousness

Also known as the cuirass, the breastplate provided protection to the vital organs of the warrior allowing him to participate in the battle longer. New Unger's Bible Dictionary describes the Egyptian breastplate.

The earliest material used to protect the body was probably the skins of beasts, which were soon abandoned for coats of mail. The cuirass of the Egyptians consisted of about eleven horizontal rows of metal plates, well secured by brass pins, with narrower rows forming a protection for the throat and neck. Each plate, or scale, was about an inch in width. In length the cuirass may have been a little less than two and one-half feet, covering the thigh nearly to the knee; in order to prevent its pressing too heavily on the shoulder it was bound with a girdle about the waist. Usually, however, that part of the body below the girdle was protected by a kind of kilt, detached from the girdle. Such was the covering of the heavy-armed troops. With the light-armed infantry, and, indeed, among the Asiatic nations in general, the quilted linen cuirass was in much demand.

Protection for the heart of the soldier was afforded by the breastplate. In Ephesians 6:14, the breastplate was "*of righteousness.*" Paul would speak of it as "*of faith and love*" in 1 Thessalonians 5:8.

The heart of the soldier is protected by righteousness. David said, "*If I regard iniquity in my heart Lord will not hear me*" (Psa. 66:18). Jesus said,

O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. But I say unto you, That

every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned (Matt. 12:34-37).

The wise man declared, *“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life”* (Prov. 4:23). Righteousness is obedience to the gospel (Rom. 5:21-6:23; 1 John 3:7). Obeying from the heart the form of doctrine delivered by the apostles of Christ makes one a servant of righteousness. Paul discussed this in Romans 6:16-18.

Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.

Feet Shod With The Gospel

The runner coming across the Judean hills approaching Jerusalem with the announcement of the redemption of Jerusalem is said to have beautiful feet as he publishes peace and brings good tidings of good as he publishes salvation and says, Thy God reigneth! (Isa. 52:7). *“Feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace”* draws from this imagery. In the book of Romans Paul said,

How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall

they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! (Rom. 10:14-15).

The gospel is the gospel of peace because it is the exclusive means by which sinful man may attain peace with God. Paul explained this in Romans 5:1, *"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."* On the strength of these observations, we conclude that in the Christian's armor *"having feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace"* means every Christian should be carrying the message of the gospel to all who will hear.

The Shield Of Faith

We are again dependent upon the New Unger's Bible Dictionary for a description of the ancient shields used in carnal warfare.

The ancient soldier's chief defense, his shield, was various in form and material. The shield of the Egyptian was about one-half his height and generally about twice as high as broad. It was probably formed of a wooden frame covered with rawhide, having the hair outward, with one or more rims of metal and metal studs. Its form resembled a funeral tablet, circular at the top and square at the base. A rare form of Egyptian shield was of extraordinary size and pointed at the top. The shields of the Assyrians in the more ancient bas-reliefs

are both circular and oblong, sometimes of gold and silver, but more frequently of wickerwork covered with hides. The shield in a siege covered the soldier's whole person and at the top had a curved point or a square projection like a roof at right angles with the body of the shield. This was to defend the combatants against missiles thrown from the walls.

"The shield of faith" certainly is the Christian's chief defense against the *"fiery darts of the wicked"* (Eph. 6:16).

Earlier we saw that it was necessary to define *"truth;"* now, we wish to define *"faith"* and show how it may be obtained. The Bible definition of faith appears in the Hebrews 11:1 where the writer says, *"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."* Contrary to the view of many, faith is not feeling or fancy. Faith is not dependent upon how we feel, nor is faith subject to whatever we may fancy. Faith emerges from substance and evidence. Even in the presence of divine substance and evidence faith is not automatic. Paul spoke of some who had heard the gospel presented authoritatively and accurately and yet that message was not *"mixed with faith in them that heard it"* (Heb. 4:2). Faith is an unswerving conviction and an unflinching confidence in the word of God. The apostle wrote, *"So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God"* (Rom. 10:17). Paul did not just say take the shield of faith; he said above all, taking the shield of faith. This language points to more than a casual reading of the Bible. The word translated *"study"* in 2 Timothy 2:15 is **spoudason** and

means to be eager, to be diligent to present oneself approved unto God and that is done by handling aright the word of God. Fiery darts of the wicked may be aimed at your heart right now, so you must keep the faith (2 Tim. 4:7; Rev. 14:12), continue in the faith (Acts 14:22; Col. 1:23), live by the faith (Gal. 2:20), stand fast in the faith (1 Cor. 16:13), remain sound in the faith (Tit. 1:13), and contend earnestly for the faith (Jude 3).

The Helmet Of Salvation

In Isaiah's day when it appeared that "*truth had fallen in the street*," God armed Himself in order to recompense His enemies. Isaiah wrote,

For he put on righteousness as a breastplate,
and an helmet of salvation upon his head;
and he put on the garments of vengeance
for clothing, and was clad with zeal as a
cloke (Isa. 59:17).

Since God used the breastplate of righteousness and the helmet of salvation to defend His purposes, we are encouraged to take advantage of these implements of war in our own defense. The direction we take is determined by our head; may our head always be directed toward salvation.

The Sword Of The Spirit

The sword of the Spirit is the word of God. It is the offensive weapon in this list of armor. It is a sharp two-edged sword. It is capable of dividing asunder soul and spirit and joints and marrow. It is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb. 4:12). It is the word of Christ (Col. 3:16). When

on the Isle of Patmos John saw Jesus Christ, he fell down at his feet as dead (Rev. 1:17). What did Jesus look like?

And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength (Rev. 1:13-16).

The word of God is living, active, and powerful (Heb. 4:12). It will not return to God void but will accomplish his purposes (Isa. 55:8-11). It will be the standard in the judgment (John 12:48-49; Rev. 20:12). It is not the word of men but of the living God (1 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 3:16). It will remain when the world is on fire! (Matt. 24:35).

People are very careful around cutlery. I have known several people who have lost digits in cutlery accidents. The blade is sharp and the steel is unforgiving. The sword of the Spirit has no sheath to protect the guilty from its edge. The sword of the Spirit is not carried about in a scabbard but wielded openly. It is not a surgeon's scalpel with its razor edge directed by nimble fingers nor a battle axe with imprecise strokes of brute force. The sword of the Spirit has the power to cut sin out of the hearts and lives of men and women (Acts 2:37, NKJV) and point them to heaven (Psa. 73:24).

The Conquering Christ

The closing words of the Bible picture the conquering Christ. It would do the church well today to be reminded that Jesus Christ has never relinquished His position as Captain of the Lord's host. The cruel, raging battle between the Savior and Satan will come down to the end of the world. Among the final scenes of the world's existence will be the descent of Jesus Christ from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God and have not obeyed the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (Matt. 16:27; 2 Thess. 1:7-9). If we anticipate standing with Him in victory over His foes at the last day, we must put on the whole armor of God today! Look at Jesus Christ through the prophetic eyes of the apostle John as he saw Him from Patmos.

And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath

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on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS (Rev. 19:11-16).

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Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:

2 Timothy 3:1-7

This Chapter Written By

Barry Gilreath, Jr.

Introduction

Since the dawning of the Creation, the grains of sand have steadily moved through the hourglass of time. Generation after generation have appeared for what was yet a brief moment, only to give way to yet another period of time and people. Though the hours of the ages give way to some changes, in other respects they do not. Babies are born and men die. Some things are reliable as the sun that warms the grass on a summer day. The pages of life quickly turn to yet another chapter in the book of humanity steadfastly approaching the end of all things on this side of eternity when the sands of time will give way to the timeless ages of eternity.

The measurement of man's earthly existence can be divided into three main sections. Each one is unique in some respects and represents a significant block of time in God's dealing with humanity. There is the Patriarchal Age that compassed the Creation unto the crossing of the Red Sea. This age is followed by what is termed the Mosaical Age. The block of time represented the events that transpired from the

giving of the Law of Moses at Sinai unto the death of Jesus Christ at Calvary. With the Resurrection of the slain Lord and the preaching of the Gospel at Pentecost in Acts 2, the final age of man's allotted time was ushered into existence in preparation for the Last Day in which the judgment of all men and their eternal appointed habitation would be revealed.

The last day should in no way be confused with the last days. Jesus promised a resurrection from the dead in the last day (John 6:40). The beloved Martha expressed her confidence in the resurrection of man in that last day (John 11:24). Our Lord and Savior affirmed that His word would be that standard of judgment in the last day. Referencing that final day on this side of eternity, Peter wrote that it would come as a thief in the night, and all would be taken by surprise (2 Pet. 3:10).

In comparison the last days refers to the span of time also described as the Christian Age. The prophets of old referenced this block of time in the long ago (Isa. 2:2; Mic. 4:1). The Apostle Peter related the pouring out of the Holy Spirit and the events that followed on Pentecost as the fulfillment of a promise made by God of things which would occur in the last days (Acts 2:17). The Hebrew prior to the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70 affirmed that God speaks to mankind in these last days by his son Jesus Christ (Heb. 1:2). Peter wrote in one of his epistles that during this age of time scoffers would arise questioning the validity of the Second Coming of Christ (2 Pet. 3:3-4) since things seemingly continue from the beginning of Creation until now. Such discussion by the Apostle Paul of this last age or last days is the context of the scriptures that have

been assigned for this lecture (2 Tim. 3:1-7).

For purposes of organization this lecture will be divided into four main sections. Each of the segments discusses prophetic promises of the Apostle regarding the Christian dispensation of time. Section one will deal with the promise of a perilous period (3:1). The second main point of consideration is the promise of a pestilent people (3:1-4). The third section covers the promise of a poisonous plot (3:5-6). The final section discusses the promise of a pernicious product (3:7).

The Promise Of A Perilous Period (3:1)

Though the coming of the Christian Age brought with it many precious promises, it would also bring forth the promise of a perilous period of time for the righteous. The Apostle Paul knew indeed that such an age of opportunity would also bring out the very worst in humanity. Evil times, evil teachers, and evil men would abound. Though God would not permit such to have unbridled rein without limits (3:8-9), the danger of apostasy would be immense, intense and imminent.

Here we stand beside Paul the prophet as he looks into the future and sees the state of the church. He is concerned about what is ahead as well as what one finds at the moment. He was in a like manner concerned when he stood with the elders at Ephesus (Acts 20:17-35).

Joseph foresaw the coming famine and would counsel certain measures to be taken. In the chapter, Paul will not mince words about the coming apostasy. Of this fact, he has no doubt. He will describe the

nature of that apostasy, but he doesn't stop at that point. He will speak to their needs in view of that apostasy. Paul wanted these people to survive what was to come.

From the reading in verse five it is clear that Timothy was indeed living in the age of perilous times, for he was told to turn away from those who would bring about this destruction upon the souls of men. David Lipscomb wrote,

The whole representation points to the immediate as well as to the remote future. Probably such "grievous time" would more than once occur, and the last occurring before the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ may be the worst in the wide extent and terrible character of its error and sin.

Indeed inspired writers such as the Apostle John forewarned of such a time in which many antichrists would arise (1 John 2:18). These "last days" would bring no relief to God's faithful children as the Devil himself would be working overtime in view of the end of all things. So here "in the last days" known also as the Age of the Gospel, perhaps in a time least expected by some, there would be perilous times.

The Promise Of A Pestilent People (3:1-4)

During the Christian dispensation of time pestilent people would abound. These men and women would serve the purposes of the Prince of Darkness by entering into homes and leading many souls into apostasy (3:6). Certain notable characteristics are attributed to these perverse agents of eternal ruin. The Apostle spells out their

identifying marks with no ambiguity. They are to be identified and avoided (3:5). Apathy towards these who have a form of godliness yet deny its power would result in certain spiritual bondage (3:6). Christians must heed these inspired BEWARE signs or risk inevitable doom!

For men shall be "*lovers of their own selves*". The idea behind the inspired thought is that men will be consumed with their own self-interest. The Pauline promise of a pestilent people would result in an age dominated by self-consumed, self-centered, self-absorbed, self-obsessed people. Motivation for life would not be centered upon the two Great Commandments (Matthew 22:37-38). Selfishness would be the catalyst for the "*Me Generation*".

Such an age would bring forth lovers of money. Indeed that is the precise meaning of the word "*covetous*" that Paul uses to describe the self-consumed agents of destruction. Though money in and of itself is not sinful, it is the love of money that will corrupt the hearts of men (1 Tim. 6:10). One who is a lover of money is one whose emphasis in life is money. Such does not have reference to one who is a banker, stock broker or businessman. One can handle money everyday and still not be a lover of money. A lover of money is one who places money above God-identified priorities. This devilish characteristic can be ascribed to any man who embraces the material over the spiritual. It is erroneous to conclude that one must be rich to be covetous. Some living on a fixed income are covetous. Some middle income families are covetous. Some who are rich are covetous. Covetousness is not dependant upon a vast amount of material surplus.

It is dependant upon an inordinate desire for surplus. Such a disposition towards material possessions will prompt one to loose their soul (Eph. 5:5; 1 Cor. 6:10). Paul warns that in the last days of the Gospel age, servants of Satan will demonstrate covetousness.

Another quality of the unrighteous is that such men would be boasters. The Greek word is found only here and in Romans 1:30 in the New Testament. It is a word that means an "*empty pretender*". One who is a braggart is one who thinks of himself or wants others to think of himself above what his own life merits. The boaster not only places his own soul in jeopardy, but as Paul notes in 3:6, the souls of others are also placed in a precarious place. Such a warning is not given by Paul to Timothy as some unknown revelation. Indeed even uninspired men are knowledgeable about the calamity that can befall the boaster and his followers as noted by the Pharisee Gamaliel (Acts 5:36-37). Paul's exhortation is meant to serve as a inspired reminder of the folly of boasting and giving heed to the man who is so full of himself that he cannot contain the pride that is in his heart and is overflowing with it (Obadiah 1:3-4; Prov. 13:10; 16:18).

To blaspheme is to speak evil of another. It is to rail against a person. It involves slanderous and abusive speech towards other men. Paul forewarns that in the last days, men will be characterized by such hateful speech. However, the question arises whether he is referencing blasphemy towards God, Christians or men in general. Since such is not specified, it would seem that Paul is addressing the subject in general terms as it would apply to all above. In the last days blasphemy would be

commonplace. Certainly such ungodly speech was found in Timothy's day and age, but such case could also be made as descriptive of the present day as well. Is it not blasphemy towards Jehovah when governments legalize perverse relationships under the guise of marriage? Is that not holding a fist up in the face of God in rebellion? Is such not blasphemy towards God when schools of learning teach the ludicrous theory of evolution as fact and attempt to silence those who would seek to present the Biblical account of Creation? Is it not blasphemy towards our fellow man when we give ear and credibility to the funnels of gossip and innuendo, injurious communication whether by the printed page or by modern technological means of communication? Is it not blasphemy towards others when men are bound to create harmful news and stir doubt in an attempt to gain something of advantage? Paul warned that in the last days, there would indeed be those who would arise and engage in such behavior.

Another quality that would describe the pestilent people is that their offspring would likewise become perverse. Such an age would demonstrate a population that would be disobedient to parents. Such a quality is often dismissed as a minor and even insignificant factor to a society's function, but such couldn't be the furthest thing from the truth. God doesn't look upon rebellious children as a light matter (Deut. 21:18-21). Disobedient children are a hindrance to the furtherance of the Gospel and are characteristic of perilous times. A child who will not learn to submit to authority at the most basic level is a threat to the well-being of a society. Such a child will not respect authority in the school. He or she

will not respect the authority of civil government. Ultimately such a child will not respect the authority of God in the church. Paul warns of the powerful influence of unruly children upon the well-being of mankind.

He also notes that the perilous times will produce the unthankful. Unthankfulness is a trait that is generally demonstrated by those who have learned to expect everything to be handed to them by another. A belief of entitlement replaces a sincere appreciation for assistance. This trait begins to develop when people are very young, and if not corrected, it can go with them throughout their life, eventually catching up with them in the Judgment. The Bible addresses such diabolical and soul-damning attitudes. Paul wrote, "...that if any would not work, neither should he eat" (2 Thess. 3:10). Christians must be sober because our adversary the Devil walks about seeking to devour the souls of men (1 Pet. 5:8). Paul warns that one such diabolical method is through men who possess the quality of unthankfulness.

To be unholy is to be out of step with Jehovah God. For God is holy. Isaiah wrote "...Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory" (Isa. 6:3). Not only is God holy, but anything associated with God must likewise be holy. When Moses came in the presence of Jehovah God at the burning bush, he was told to take his shoes off because even the dirt he was standing on was holy (Ex. 3:5). Those who served in the service of God were to wear holy garments (Ex. 29:29). Jerusalem is called holy because of its association with Jehovah God (Obadiah 1:16). Christians are described as a holy nation because of their connection with the

Lord God (1 Pet. 2:9). So when Paul says that in the last days men shall become unholy, he is describing the state of a society that has gravitated away from God's supreme standard.

Timothy was also forewarned that in these perilous times, there would be those who would be without natural affection. Only here and in Romans 1:31 is the Greek word found. When God created the world and all things within it, there was a natural order that was instilled. It was never God's desire that sexual relationships would be practiced by the same sex. Such is contrary to nature and thus without natural affection. Likewise, when God created the institution of the home and commanded the procreation of the world, he never intended for mothers to willfully seek to abort the child that he has blessed them with. Abortion is a scourge that is an example of unnatural affection. It is unnatural for a woman to seek to murder her unborn child. Perhaps other examples could be added to these to demonstrate the application of an age characterized by unnatural affection.

Such a perilous time would manifest the presence of many trucebreakers. The same word is translated "*implacable*" in Romans 1:31. It references those who will not abide in the covenants in which they agreed. There have been times in history in which in general a man's word was his bond. My grandfather grew up in a generation in which thousands of dollars could be passed through business deals which were sealed only by a shake of the hand. Those days are unknown to our generation. Covenants now require that one has a team of lawyers to go over every little word in an agreement to insure that rights are protected.

Pestilent people will use any loophole found to get out of the obligations made in such covenants.

Paul also warned of false accusers. A false accuser is one who is prone to slander. The same word if used in Revelation 12:10 describing Satan who falsely accuses Christians. Slander reveals itself through various methods and means. Sometimes slander rears its ugly head by blatant lies against another party. Sometimes slander is achieved by mixing some truth with lies. This is the Devil's attempt to brew a harmful substance that will harm the reputation of the Lord's faithful servants. At other times, slander is created when Satan's servant is able to create doubt in the absence of any facts by salacious suggestions. False accusations are often found in the realm of politics as a means to gain advantage over an opponent at any cost. Sadly, such is also found within the realm of the Lord's church as practiced by factious men seeking personal gain. Paul said that such would characterize the last days in which he and we live.

The word translated as "incontinent" in verse three describes one who possesses no self-control. Self-control is a trait of godliness (Gal. 5:22; 2 Pet. 1:6). A lack of this fruit of the Spirit is the evidence for ungodliness reigning in the lives of men. During this final age of humanity, described also as the last days, men would arise whose life would demonstrate no restraint or self-control. Such is true of our generation in which men murder other men over religious disagreements, or prey on little children to satisfy perverse sexual cravings. These despicable examples demonstrate a lack of temperance and an age of time in which perils truly abound.

Paul also told Timothy that the last days would produce men who were fierce. The word translated as "*fierce*" is found one time in the Greek New Testament in this passage. It could be translated as "*savage*" or "*brutal*". Albert Barnes notes, "*It means ungentle, harsh, severe, and is the opposite of gentleness and mildness. Religion produces gentleness; the want of it makes men rough, harsh, cruel...*". To a great degree agreement with Barnes is held. However, exception would be noted in one regard. Religion does not necessarily produce gentleness. The world is full of harsh men who engage in ghastly acts in the name of religion. Two numbers says it all for our generation today, 9-11. False religion is the product of the Devil and causes division, despair, and destruction. On the other hand, true religion always produces a gentle trait in the hearts of those who hold it dear. Paul warns Timothy that during the last days, savagery or fierceness would dominate the world about us. Such an ungodly society would naturally produce an infestation of those who would be despisers of those that are good. Goodness is the antithesis to evil. Eventually the goodness of God will crush the evil of men. Nevertheless, Paul forewarns Timothy that it will get worse before it gets better. He would be despised as a doer of good. Christians in every generation can expect the same. Our Lord said, "*And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved*" (Matt. 10:22).

Traitors would abound during these perilous times. A traitor is one who is a betrayer. Benedict Arnold is forever known as a traitor to the country in which we live. Others have also assumed this pathetic role. The ultimate example for Christians of

such betrayal was the kiss of Judas that identified Christ as the Lord to his tormentors (Mark 14:45). Paul reveals that a characteristic of some during these last days would be their lack of loyalty to the cause of Christ and His Gospel.

These men would also possess the distinction of being heady. The word means to be reckless or rash. Vincent says that the word carries with it the idea of *"headstrong in the pursuit of a bad end under the influence of passion."* Self-willed men committed to a path of destruction, fueled by their lusts and desires would confront God's faithful during these last days. These men were confronting the church during the time of Timothy and he was to turn away from them (3:5). The spiritual offspring of the self-consumed troublers of God's children are yet walking about in our modern age. We must heed the ever-timely warning of the Apostle and turn away also from such heady men.

Such a dreadful and dreary description by the servant of the Lord concerning these last days is yet compounded by the promise of high-minded men. A man who is high-minded is one who could be figuratively pictured as enveloped by smoke. The smoke that robs him of his vision is his own conceit. His pride will not allow him to see the truth: not yet does he desire to see it. In light of such a sobering prophecy of jeopardy and risk that would beset us in these last days, it is easy to understand why the age would be described as perilous. Such arrogance on the part of a willfully blind man will prompt him to have no regard for Jehovah God nor his fellow man.

At last the Apostle reveals the infectious poison that

is pumped throughout the mind, body, and spirit. It is carnal to its core. The toxicity of the venom invades the thinking and longing of the heart. The mindless and irrational pursuit of earthly pleasures controls the behavior of the infected which in turn contaminates the spirit of the man. Such a one is described by Paul as a lover of pleasures more than a lover of God. How ironic that the lover of temporal pleasures in this life forfeits the eternal pleasures in the life to come, but such is the sad plight of those Paul describes.

The Promise Of The Poisonous Plot (3:5-6)

A “*plot*” is defined as a secret plan for accomplishing evil or unlawful ends. In this section, the Apostle Paul provides a prophetic promise of a poisonous plot. He notes that these pestilent people would have a “*form of godliness,*” but would deny the power thereof. Though some might ascribe this portion of the text to the characteristics of such people as noted in the previous section, such could equally be ascribed to the poisonous plot that will be unveiled. The plot would employ deceitfulness, subtlety, and precision. This deadly trio would aid the enemy in achieving their goal.

Notice first the ploy of deceitfulness. Satan does not present himself as a roaring lion, though indeed he is such. He will always show himself as something harmless and innocent. In so doing the tendency on the part of the prey is to let down one’s guard. It is then that he roars and pounces, and the prey is consumed. Likewise Paul says that such men would

have an appearance of godliness, but there would be no substance. It is a façade. It is not real. They are wolves in sheep's clothing. What appears to be righteousness on the surface is unrighteousness in disguise. Lipscomb writes,

All who so live while claiming to be Christians have the 'form,' the profession of godliness, while they fail to live according to its laws...These claiming to be Christians, wearing the name of Christ, but by their lives denouncing his name, do the gravest injury to his cause.

Secondly, notice the subtlety of the plot. The text says that these men "*creep into houses*". They will not enter the homes of saints with guns a blazing. They are subtle in their approach. As the Serpent was to Eve in the beginning, so the servants of the Prince of Darkness are to God's children in the last days. They creep in little by little and step by step. They have an agenda to promote and its fruits are eternal ruin.

Additionally, their plot is precise. These pestilent people survey the landscape of men's hearts as a lion peruses a migration of antelope looking for prey that is easily overtaken. Paul refers to such prey as "*silly women*" who are laden with sins. It would seem from the fact that Paul is warning Timothy of such temptation, a man himself, that the depiction is used for illustrative purposes, and is not intended to portray women as the sex who would fall prey to the perils of the last days. The Apostle's assertion is based upon general views held of the differences between males and females. Such an illustration no

doubt has at its root source, the fall of mankind in the Garden of Eden. It was Eve who was deceived. Adam on the other hand sinned with his eyes wide open. Though some men are more easily deceived than some women, the trait under consideration was typified by Mother Eve in the beginning, and thus it is used to describe the perils of the last days. Some Christians are like "*silly women*" that are easily deceived by their emotions. They would become prey for the deceivers, led captive by their desire for carnality and thus led into chains of eternal darkness.

The Promise Of A Pernicious Product (3:7)

Though the deceived would believe that the carnality of the perilous times would be without consequence, the eternal principle of truth states that a man will reap what he sows (Gal. 6:7). So it shall be. In this final section of our consideration the Apostle Paul promises that the product of the pestilent people would be pernicious. Their works would leave behind a highly destructive fruit that would do injury to the souls of men. Specifically, Paul notes that the consequence would be that men would be ever learning, and yet never coming to a knowledge of the truth. The pernicious product is doubt.

Doubt is the opponent of faith. Without faith it is impossible to please Him (Heb. 11:6). When doubt reins, faith diminishes, and thus the possibility of pleasing God. The consequence of giving heed to such teachers is that one will never come to a

knowledge of the body of truth. For truth has been rejected. Truth is ascertained in the divine standard of God's word. When one rejects the holy scriptures of truth for the pursuit of the poisonous promises of men, the end result is that man is left unsatisfied, and will drift from one teacher to the next searching for that which the pestilent people do not provide. Thus, Paul's warning to Timothy and all Christians is to stay anchored to the bedrock of truth during these perilous times. Resist the temptation to give heed to the seducing spirits of men. From such turn away, having identified these workers of iniquity by the traits that Paul himself has provided in this powerful epistle.

Conclusion

Paul wrote of unsafe times. He wanted Christians to "*know*" that these things should be expected in the last days. Timothy had the responsibility to warn others of the danger that lie ahead. Indeed we yet live in this same treacherous span of time. Though separated by geography and over 2000 years, we yet walk in these same last days and await the coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. We can not afford to let our guard down during this perilous period. We can not give space to such pestilent people for even a moment. We must beware of their poisonous plot, and turn away from the ungodly, lest in the end we become an example of their pernicious product of doubt and destruction that Paul promised would happen to some.

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2 TIMOTHY 3:1-7

Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:

1 Thessalonians

4:13-18

This Chapter Written By

Curtis A. Cates

Introduction

One of the most profound thoughts that ever entered the mind is the fact that this life is not all there is. The precious old song praises God thus: *"'Tis a sweet and glorious tho't that comes to me, I'll live on, yes, I'll live on."* Death is not a *"dead-end street"*! The living do not accompany the earthly remains of their loved ones to the cemetery having said *"Good-bye"* forever.

Christianity, the only true religion, is unique inasmuch as its Founder, the Lord Jesus Christ, promised His disciples, *"I will come again"* (John 14:3). He *"shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven,"* the two men in white apparel assured the apostles (Acts 1:11). What blessed assurance Paul gave the Philippians when he wrote,

For our citizenship is in heaven; whence also we wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, according to the working whereby he is able even to subject all things unto himself (Phil. 3:21)!

1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-18

Peter assured, *“And when the chief Shepherd shall be manifested, ye shall receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away”* (1 Pet. 5:4). Likewise, John wrote,

Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is (1 John 3:2).

What a contrast this is to the *“world religions”*!

The peerless apostle Paul addressed in 1 Thessalonians the fact that Christ is coming again (4:13-5:11). In our text, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, he made very clear that Christ’s coming will be impartial; the living will have no advantage over the dead. In 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 he placed emphasis on the fact that since the Lord’s coming would be *“as a thief in the night,”* most people would be surprised and unprepared. Only the sober Christians, *“whether we wake or sleep, [would] live together with him.”* They were to build one another up regarding the Lord’s second appearing.

Exegesis Of 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

Verse 13: What About the Departed Saints?

But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning them that fall asleep; that ye sorrow not, even as the rest, who have no hope.

The word *“but”* indicates in the Greek that Paul is changing subjects, being now very concerned with comforting the Thessalonian brethren concerning those Christians who had passed from this life. They were mourning the departing of their brethren, loved

ones and relatives.

Often in approaching a new and vital subject, the apostle would use the phrase *"We [I] would not have you ignorant."* (See Rom. 1:13; 11:25; 1 Cor. 10:1; 12:1; and 2 Cor. 1:8). He did not wish for the Thessalonian brethren to be ignorant (**agnolin**, from **a** and **gno-**), not to have knowledge concerning the condition of the dead saints. As in all other inspired writing, real significance exists in every phrase and formula. Paul desired for them to know the realities of the Second Coming, for ignorance spawns anxiety and lack of comfort—fear. They had special fear for their departed loved ones. Note the tenderness of the apostle; he addressed them as *"brethren,"* a term of affection and endearment; he loved the brotherhood. Of course, those brethren where he established the church had a special place in his heart. He had been *"gentle in the midst of you, as when a nurse cherisheth her own children";* he had dealt with them *"as a father with his own children"* (1 Thess. 2:7,11).

The Thessalonians had no doubt been instructed concerning the second coming of Christ, while Paul was personally with them. He wrote,

For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of glorying? Are not even ye, before our Lord Jesus at his coming (1 Thess. 2:19)?

Naturally, though, Paul was limited relative to how many problems with which he could deal while still in their presence. Some would come to their minds after his departure. They had begun now to wonder about the believers who were dead; would they see the Lord? Would they be less blessed than the living, disadvantaged in some way? Did the fact that some

had died reflect on the reality of the Second Coming itself? This would increase sorrow.

Paul was writing to give assurances "*concerning them that fall asleep.*" Evidently, the Thessalonians had embraced the erroneous idea that Christ would return in their lifetime. Of course, the apostle had not understood or taught that Christ's second appearing would happen in that generation; but, they had simply misunderstood Paul's teaching. (This is also evidence for the early date of 1 Thessalonians). The state of those who had fallen asleep was difficult for them thus to understand; would they miss their reward? Their loved ones had come out of paganism to embrace Christianity, often at great personal sacrifice and persecution, now perhaps to have died too soon to receive the promised reward. Likely, Timothy had brought Paul news concerning the great anxiety of the Thessalonians about the dead saints. They needed to know how the second coming of Christ would impact the life and death of the Christian.

The present participle was used by Paul, indicating that the dead not only included those then sleeping but also those who would from day to day pass from the walks of men, the repetition idea. The word sleep (**koimoneon**) is from the root **koimao**, meaning "*to put to sleep.*" The word "*cemetery*" (**koimeterion**) means a "*place to sleep.*"

Our Lord used this same word ("*sleep*") to represent death:

These things spake he: and after this he saith unto them, Our friend Lazarus is fallen asleep; but I go, that I may awake

him out of sleep. The disciples therefore said unto him, Lord, if he is fallen asleep, he will recover. Now Jesus had spoken of his death: but they thought that he spake of taking rest in sleep. Then Jesus therefore said unto them plainly, Lazarus is dead (John 11:11-14).

The metaphor "*sleep*," a gentle figure for death, is found in the Old Testament as well as in the New. In bemoaning his birth, after his having by Satan been destroyed, Job cried, "*For now should I have lain down and been quiet; I should have slept; then had I been at rest*" (Job 3:13). Daniel prophesied,

And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt (Dan. 12:2).

The Old Testament also refers to patriarchs and others as those who "*slept with their fathers*." "*...But when I sleep with my fathers*," Jacob told Joseph, "*thou shalt carry me out of Egypt, and bury me in their burying place*" (Gen. 47:30). David was told,

When thy days are fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, that shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom (2 Sam. 7:12).

Job would come forth from his "*sleep*" when the Lord "*...wouldest call, and I would answer thee: Thou wouldest have a desire to the work of thy hands*" (Job 14:12, 15). Indeed, if a man die, he will live again! Job had that assurance.

The phrase "*them which are asleep*" has very

special significance also to the Christian, for Christ has overcome that terrible tyrant.

Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, he [Christ] also himself in like manner partook of the same [flesh and blood]; that through death he might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver [through the resurrection] all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject unto bondage (Heb. 2:14-15).

But now hath Christ been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of them that are asleep. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits [which guarantee and symbolize the full harvest]; then they that are Christ's at his coming [in judgment] (1 Cor. 15:20-23).

What shall happen then to the dead?

We all shall not sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruption must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is

thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?
(1 Cor. 15:51-55).

Christ will awaken the faithful out of sleep, just as He awoke Lazarus (John 11:11) and the daughter of Jairus (Mark 5:39-42).

What is the significance of “*sleep*,” a metaphor used for death 15 times in the New Testament? First, those who sleep in Jesus are not annihilated; they are not in extinction. Some see “*annihilation*” every time they see death. Such does not follow. A dead boy was feeding hogs (“*this my son was dead, and is alive again.*”) (Luke 15:24). Was an annihilated boy feeding pigs? The dead do not cease to exist but are only in rest, as in sleep; it is not “*soul sleeping.*” The dead continue to exist, just as the sleepers continue to exist when their bodies sleep; they are simply in a place separate from their bodies. The living cannot communicate with them there. The body is simply resting in the grave. It is like sleeping at the end of a hard day of toil. One’s spirit continues to exist (Eccl. 12:7).

Second, one is not unconscious in death. In Revelation 6:9-11, souls (immortal nature of man) are spoken of as crying out, “*How long, O Master, the holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?*” The rich man, Lazarus, and Abraham still existed and were conscious in the intermediate state (Luke 16:19-21), as was Paul when he was caught up into the third heaven, paradise (2 Cor. 12:1ff). The dead are “*at home with the Lord,*” though they are “*absent from the body*” (2 Cor. 5:8). Though asleep to the things on earth (Eccl. 9:5-6), the spirit is very much aware and conscious of its

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own realm of existence (Luke 23:43; Phi. 1:21-23; Rev. 7:15-17; 20:4).

Third, the sleep of death is temporary. One generally does not sleep for an extended period of time; it is but a brief suspension of the work and struggles of life. Fourth, one awakens from sleep; likewise, the body will be awakened by the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:55-57). This awakening will be with great glory. Fifth, in the resurrection, the body will awake with rejuvenation and strength; in fact, it will be changed into a glorified, immortal body.

Paul wrote, *"That ye sorrow not, even as the rest, who have no hope."* The "rest" of whom he spoke, were those who were not Christians. They were those described in 1 Thessalonians 4:5, *"as the Gentiles who know not God,"* those who *"are without"* (4:12), those outside of Christ (Gal. 3:26-27; 1 Cor. 12:13; Rom 6:3-4; Eph. 1:3; 3:21; et al.). Paul did not wish for his beloved brethren to grieve as the heathen do. Very often the heathen's sorrow is uncontrollable, for they have no hope; death is the end. Christians are not thus to weep.

Did Paul forbid all weeping and sorrow? No. Their sorrow was not to be of the same kind as the heathen. Compare:

This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord,
that ye no longer walk as the Gentiles also
walk, in the vanity of their mind (Eph.
4:17).

The present tense indicates a continuing to mourn. Upon Stephen's having been stoned to death, *"... devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him"* (Acts 8:2). To bemoan such a great loss was

natural, though these Christians did not weep over Stephen's being with the Lord. Indeed, the Christian does weep over his own personal loss. Christ wept at the scene of Lazarus' passing, not for Lazarus but for those left behind; He was "*groaning in himself*" (John 11:35,38). However, His groaning was not that of the heathen characterized by deep and dark despair. To the child of God, death is not the end; it is a new and better beginning. A reunion is seen through the eye of faith. Yet, death does bring grief. Paul was grateful for the recovery of Epaphroditus,

For indeed he was sick nigh unto death:
but God had mercy on him: and not on
him only, but on me also, lest I should have
sorrow upon sorrow (Phil. 2:27).

God's medicine for sorrow is far superior to that of the heathen, "*which have no hope.*" How tragic to part with children, spouses, parents, never to meet again! That was/is the dark despair of the unbelieving Jew (the Sadducee), the humanist, the infidel, and the heathen. In the Old Testament, the uncontrollable grief of the heathen was shown in shaving the head and cutting the flesh.

Ye shall not round the corners of your
heads, neither shalt thou mar the corners of
thy beard. Ye shall not make any cuttings in
your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks
upon you: I am Jehovah (Lev. 19:27-28).

Ye are the children of Jehovah your God;
ye shall not cut yourselves, nor make any
baldness between your eyes for the dead.
For thou art a holy people unto Jehovah

thy God, and Jehovah hath chosen thee to be a people for his own possession, above all peoples that are upon the face of the earth (Deut. 14:1-2).

God's people did not howl loudly and make excessive lamentations for the dead; the heathen would even hire professional mourners to help them to mourn. Such grief was forbidden by the apostles, for it was not consistent with the righteous being in the paradise of God and with the hope of the resurrection (John 5:28-29). Though some isolated heathen religions had some faint belief in a future state, likely descended from some Hebrew influence very much earlier, or perhaps back to the flood and the tower of Babel, they knew nothing of the glorious reality of Christ's return, of His raising the dead with glorified, immortal bodies, and of His receiving the redeemed unto Himself (John 14:1-6). To meet again with the departed saints, never to be separated again, was the assurance of Paul to the Thessalonian brethren. The separation is but temporary; they would recognize one another in the future state. He would recognize the Thessalonians "*at his [Christ's] coming. For ye are our glory and our joy*" (1 Thess. 2:20).

Note the strangeness of these glorious promises to the heathen. The Epicurean and Stoic philosophers of Athens called the preaching of Jesus and the resurrection the setting forth of "*strange gods.*" They accused Paul thus,

For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean. Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some

mocked; but others said, We will hear thee concerning this yet again (Acts 17:18, 20, 32).

Unlike the heathen, the Christian is sustained by the precious promises of God. Through the eye of faith, he can see the graves opening; death is not a dead-end street. Nowhere does the glorious light of the Gospel shine more brightly than when the Christian looks into the casket and when he follows the earthly remains of a loved one to the grave site, to be lowered into mother earth, to await the resurrection! There is only one hope, dear reader; that hope is to die in the Lord (Rev. 14:13).

Verses 14-15: What is the Foundation of Christian Hope?

For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say by the word of the Lord, that we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep.

The foundation of the hope of the Christian is solid. It is based upon Christ's death and resurrection. These are two cardinal doctrines of Christianity – the vicarious death of Christ and the bodily resurrection of Christ.

The words "*For if we believe*" could as well be translated, "*Since we believe.*" He was saying that since the death and resurrection of the Lord are true, God will bring those who sleep in Jesus with Him. Paul and the Thessalonians knew that Christ had

1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-18

died and arisen from the dead, just as Paul knew it. The faith of the Thessalonians did not exclude knowledge, as some incorrectly aver; Bible faith, saving faith, is based on testimony, the testimony (inspired, trustworthy, authoritative, and valid) of witnesses, including the testimony of Paul. On the road to Damascus, the apostle Paul saw and heard the risen Lord; his was empirical evidence. He believed on the Lord—and yet, knew. Knowledge does not exclude faith, nor faith knowledge. One does not assume the Truth; he rather knows the Truth (John 8:32; 17:17).

John wrote,

I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and because no lie is of the truth (1 John 2:21).

Were the Thessalonians comforted by assuming, or rather by knowing? They were blessed by reality. They knew Christ died and arose just as Paul did. Paul's assurance was based on neither speculation, assumption, nor myth; there was absolutely no uncertainty! The fact of the resurrection of Christ is amazingly powerful; Paul wrote of the abundance of witnesses (over 500 at one time, most of whom were still living when Paul wrote 1 Corinthians), and Paul saw Him last of all (1 Cor. 15:5-8). The disbeliever will be lost (Rom. 10:9).

Our Lord is not described as sleeping, but as dying. He was killed, the result of a ruthless, criminal act. He endured it for man's salvation; it gave Him great joy, though He despised the shame (Heb. 12:2). By His death, He changed the prospects of death

and took away its horror for His saints; for them, death is sleep. Thus, *“even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with him.”* Likely, the *“in Jesus,”* or *“through Jesus,”* describes the falling asleep. It is through being a child of God that death loses its sting and becomes *“sleep.”*

Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; for their works follow with them (Rev. 14:13).

When Christ returns, God is going to raise the dead. Specifically, in this context, Paul was limiting his discussion to the dead in Christ, those for whom the Thessalonians were concerned.

But if the Spirit of him [God] that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you, he that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall give life also to your mortal bodies through his Spirit that dwelleth in you (Rom. 8:11).

Since the *“body apart from the spirit is dead”* (Jam. 2:26), God will cause Christ to bring the spirits of the departed righteous with Him, having taken them from Paradise (Luke 16:19-31), at His second advent. Note the statement of Paul in 1 Thessalonians 3:13, *“...at the coming of our Lord Jesus, with all his saints.”* In the *“twinkling of an eye,”* the souls will be reunited with their own bodies, the bodies will be changed from corruptible to incorruptible, and the glorified saints will meet the Lord in the air (1 Cor. 15:35-49, especially 50-57). The Thessalonians would not need to worry about those who sleep in Jesus; they will

be especially blessed! Note Paul's firm assertion: *"since we believe, even so,..." "When Christ, who is our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also with him be manifested in glory"* (Col. 3:4).

What Paul said is authoritative; *"For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord."* Just as Paul quoted a statement of the Lord in Acts 20:35, *"It is more blessed to give than to receive,"* though unrecorded by either Matthew, Mark, Luke or John, he likely also here quoted what Jesus spoke in His personal ministry. Many of His signs and words were not recorded (John 20:30-31; 21:25). Whatever the case, he spoke them through inspiration; trace the countless averments of the prophets and others who spoke the *"Word of the Lord."* It is absolutely authoritative and trustworthy!

When Paul spoke of *"we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord,"* he was speaking in general terms describing those saints who are alive at the Second Coming. Paul did not know when Christ would return; He would come as a thief (5:2-3). Thus, Paul was not thinking he would still be alive. Why, Paul expected to be resurrected, thus implying his death. *"... and God both raised the Lord, and will raise up us through his power"* (1 Cor. 6:14). So, the criticism that Paul was misinformed and mistaken is false (see also 2 Cor. 4:14). In this context, Paul was contrasting the saints who have departed and the saints who are still living at the Second Coming; he was not contrasting believers and unbelievers, as per the teaching of the premillennialists. The Bible knows of but one resurrection of all of the dead (John 5:28-29).

Those saints who are living when Christ

returns will have no advantage over the saints who sleep. The word “*prevent*” in the King James Version (1611), when it was translated, meant “*to come before.*” The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 1970, p. 1038, defines the word thus, “*Middle English preventen, to anticipate, from Latin praevenire, to come before, anticipate: prae-, before + venire, to come.*” The American Standard Version (1901) translates it “*precede.*” The writer is saying in strong, forceful words, those who are alive will not go ahead of the dead in meeting the Lord. Furthermore, there will be saints on the earth when Christ returns (Matt. 24:40-50).

Verses 16-18: What Shall Happen When the Lord Shall Appear?

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

Though the righteous dead will have priority when Christ returns, there are some events which must transpire first. To the troubled apostles just before the Lord’s crucifixion, He promised,

And if I go and prepare a place for you,
I come again, and will receive you unto
myself; that where I am, there ye may be
also (John 14:3).

With great emphasis, Paul affirmed, “*For the Lord*

himself shall descend from heaven"! He will not send a substitute or come through another, but He will be "this same Jesus" (Acts 1:11, KJV). He whom they love and serve—He shall come; and, be assured, "The Lord knoweth them that are his" (2 Tim. 2:19). At this coming, when He comes with His holy angels, He shall recompense rest to the troubled but also recompense tribulation to those who trouble the saints (2 Thess. 1:6-9). In this immediate context, Paul deals only with the former.

The Lord shall descend; He shall descend as He ascended (Acts 1:9-11; Eph. 4:9). His appearance shall be sudden and visible to all (Rev. 1:7), when He shall come with the clouds. He shall descend from Heaven, for He is there at the right hand of God reigning over His kingdom, until His return (Acts 2:32-36; 1 Cor. 20:28; Dan. 7:13-14; 12:2-3; et al.). Paul told of three sounds accompanying these events. One, He shall descend *"with a shout."* As the Lord *"cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth"* (John 11:43), He evidently will give a shout to bring the dead from the graves in the resurrection. This accords with the fact that the dead *"shall hear his voice, and shall come forth"* (John 5:28-29). The word **keleusma** means command, or order, a military command as in commanding horses or men; Christ will come issuing commands.

Two, He shall descend *"with the voice of the archangel."* Michael, God's warring archangel, is the one described here, not God's messenger angel, Gabriel. Michael is spoken of as *"the archangel"* (Jude 9). He will be voicing commands as His angels (Rev. 12:7) go forth doing the bidding of the Lord (Matt. 13:41-43, 49-50).

Three, He shall descend *"with the trump of God."*

In the Old Testament, the trumpet and the shout were often together (Jos. 6:5; Jud. 7:21-22). When the trumpet of God was sounded at Sinai, the people trembled (Exo. 19:16-19; Heb. 12:19). How startling will be the loud trumpet at the last day! When it is sounded, *"the dead shall be raised incorruptible"* (1 Cor. 15:52), now having bodies changed to ones like the Lord's (Phil. 3:21). Beloved reader, no amount of quibbling by the modernist can take these blessed assurances away!

Those dead in Christ who are raised at the trumpet of God will be united with those who are alive, *"that are left,"* and they *"together"* will be *"caught up in the clouds"* (1 Thess. 4:17). When Paul said the dead would rise first, he was not speaking of two resurrections; such is faulty hermeneutics. The words *"shall be caught up,"* **harpagesometha** in the Greek, from **harpazo**, *"to seize,"* is sometimes rendered in the Latin **rapio**, *"to carry off."* From this Latin term is built a whole erroneous doctrine, termed *"the rapture,"* of which the Bible knows absolutely nothing.

The dead shall rise before the living meet the Lord, and then both the resurrected saints and the living saints *"shall together...be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."* That meeting in the atmospheric region shall be never-ending. We shall ever be in the Lord's presence in Heaven, the new heavens and the new earth. The earth and the universe shall have forever been destroyed, dissolved, with all their elements (2 Pet. 3:10-13). That Christ will ever set foot on earth again to reign is the futile, vain figment of extremely fertile imaginings of infidel minds. Notice the longings of Christ:

Father, I desire that they [His disciples] also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory (John 17:24).

Through His marvelous grace, we have this hope; death cannot take this assurance away! The Lord with open arms will welcome us to Him, as a distinguished dignitary is welcomed officially and royally (**eis apantesin**, to meet). Could any greater reward possibly be anticipated and received?

For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us-ward (Rom 8:18).

What is the Christian's response to such guarantees? *"Wherefore comfort one another with these words"* (1 Thess. 4:18). Keep everyone in the church encouraged; in the early church, when one sorrowed, they all sorrowed. They loved one another. Of course, the fleshly families grieved when they suffered loss. *"Rejoice with them that rejoice; weep with them that weep"* (Rom. 12:15). Theirs was true comfort, and the comfort of the indestructible, inexhaustible Word continues and will continue to soothe the broken heart and *"build you up, and give you the inheritance among all them that are sanctified"* (Acts 20:32).

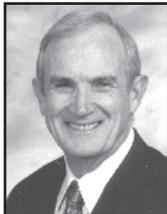
Conclusion

The Humanist and the liberal, who are marching to the Devil's drum beat, would rob man of hope in Christ. They would have man to wallow in dark, deep despair upon the passing of the dearest to his

heart. His extreme suffering would not be assuaged nor his deepest concerns and fears abated. The deepest longings of his heart would go unfulfilled, and his greatest dreads become reality. Is man totally, absolutely devoid of hope as some so strongly aver in their unbelief?

The Christian has every assurance. His life is characterized by peace known by but few and filled with noble purpose and pursuit. His future is faced with optimism, no matter what the opposition and foe. His life has deep significance, and he is a blessing to society. He is chaste and pure, and he lives in dignity. He lives in hope, even when—especially when—faced by threats of bodily harm, disease, and death. He holds to the hand of his Lord, who also holds the world in His hand. His present—and future—is secure.

Curtis A. Cates



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1 THESSALONIANS 4:13-18

Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:

Titus 3:4-7

This Chapter Written By

Dave Miller

For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another. But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life (Titus 3:4-7).

God inspired men to write the Bible in such a way that the average human can understand it and arrive at the meanings God intended. One of the characteristics of the Bible is the fact that it is deliberately repetitive. Central doctrines are alluded to repeatedly and summarized over and over. Such is certainly the case with the various aspects of God's plan of salvation. He reiterates several times the

specific actions that He expects humans to perform in order to accept His offer of forgiveness.

This fact is evident, for example, in the book of Acts where case after case of conversion is reported. While every story may not include every single detail, one can get a complete picture when all of the reports are examined. The same may be said for the individual aspects of the plan of salvation as they are noted throughout the New Testament. For example, faith and confession are mentioned in Romans 10:9-10, but not repentance or baptism. Repentance is mentioned in Romans 2:4 and 2 Corinthians 7:10 to the exclusion of other prerequisites to salvation. Baptism is mentioned in 1 Peter 3:21 to the exclusion of the others. Obviously, God expects every person to read and study His Word in order to fit it logically together in order to arrive at the truth. He will not excuse those who come to incomplete conclusions that result in pitting the Bible against itself (e.g., the *"faith only"* advocates).

It is fascinating how the Bible will occasionally condense and package together several aspects of a subject into a cohesive whole. To some extent, this phenomenon is seen in Hebrews 10:22 where faith, repentance, and baptism are all referenced. The assigned text of Titus 3 is another fine example of this feature. In verse 3, Paul alludes to our pre-Christian, worldly life—when we were foolish and disobedient. But, he says, *"after that"* we have been exposed to an alternate existence. Verses 4-7 identify the components of salvation both from the vantage point of what God has done for us as well as what response He expects from every person who desires to access salvation.

God's Offer

Observe first what God has done for us in hopes of reclaiming us and enabling us to be with Him for eternity. Four powerhouse terms are used in four verses to spotlight and expound the tremendous expression of concern that God has manifested toward humanity: kindness, love (vs. 4), mercy (vs. 5), and grace (vs. 7). These four terms embody the essence of God's redemptive work as well as providing us with an intimate glimpse of His very nature. Indeed, God is love (1 John 4:8,16).

Even the most calloused, hard-hearted person desires to be shown kindness, love, and mercy. Few who sit on death row eagerly call upon the State to implement justice by deserved punishment—most want forgiveness and mercy. Here we see the heart of God. He does not desire that anyone be lost (1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9). The loss of even one soul gives God “*no pleasure*” (Ezek. 33:11). Indeed, God has done everything He can possibly do in order to make it possible for human beings to be saved eternally in heaven.

It is most unfortunate, then, that humans have distorted the role that God plays in the scheme of redemption. Perhaps the premiere flaw in denominational theology for the past five centuries pertains to the grace of God. The Bible certainly teaches that every accountable human being needs the mercy and forgiveness of God—for the simple reason that all have sinned (Rom. 3:10,23). Once a person sins, there is nothing he or she can do to rectify, i.e., atone, for that sin. Even if the person were never to sin again, that one sin makes the

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perpetrator a lawbreaker (James 2:10), earning for that person just condemnation to eternal death in hell (Rom. 6:23). The sinner is “*without strength*” (Rom. 5:6), “*having no hope*” (Eph. 2:12). No human being has the power to achieve propitiation for himself or anyone else (Rom. 3:25; 1 John 2:2). Even subsequent righteous acts will not undo, nullify, or offset sin already committed (cf. Isa. 64:4; Luke 17:10). Micah made this point vividly:

With what shall I come before the Lord, And bow myself before the High God? Shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, With calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, Ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? (Micah 6:6-7).

Imagine a person taking his child and killing that child with the intention of the child’s blood atoning for the parent’s sin. What greater sacrifice could one make in this life? What higher price could a person pay? Yet such an action not only could not cleanse the sins of the parent, the parent would be guilty of committing an abominable act in God’s sight that never entered God’s mind to have a person actually commit (Jer. 32:35).

So the grace of the Bible pertains specifically to the offering of God’s Son on our behalf as the one and only atonement for sin—an act that no other person has the ability to perform. And the Bible goes out of its way to insist that this gracious act was made for “*all men*” (Titus 2:11). If God’s grace has been extended to all men, then it is unbiblical

to refer to people being in the “*grip of grace*.” Such a characterization leaves the impression that people have no choice in whether they will be saved. It leaves the impression that a person’s beliefs and behavior have no ultimate affect on one’s spiritual status. In fact, it implies that all people will be saved. So, to be honest, true, and fair with the Bible, one must maintain a clear distinction between the grace of God, i.e., God providing the sacrifice for sin (Rom. 5:8), and the essentiality of humans making the decision to access the benefits of that grace by obeying the Gospel.

Man’s Reception/Acceptance

A person must be baptized for the remission of sins – not because in so doing, the individual atones for his own sin or earns salvation – but because God designated water immersion as the final action to be taken by a penitent believer in order for God to apply Christ’s blood to that person’s sin. When a person declares, “*There’s nothing you can do to save yourself*,” he would be correct if he meant that no person can enact a sacrifice that would cleanse himself of his sin. But that is not what people typically mean when they say, “*You cannot save yourself*,” or “*There’s nothing you can do*,” or “*Salvation is a free gift*.” They mean there are no human actions that precede salvation. But that is a false, unbiblical notion. God has stipulated several specific actions that a human must perform in order to receive the free gift of salvation (cf. Acts 2:40; Phil. 2:12).

Only one of these actions is actually mentioned in Titus 3. We know, of course, that God is not

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obligated to include an explicit reference to every prerequisite to salvation in every passage where the subject is under discussion. Many times the Holy Spirit chose to use the figure of speech known as synecdoche in which He mentions only one of the actions, intending for that term to stand for all of the necessary actions. For example, when the Jewish Christians heard that the Gentiles had been permitted by God to become Christians, they concluded, “Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life” (Acts 11:18). “Repentance” clearly includes faith, confession, and baptism. This same stylistic feature is especially frequent in the use of “believe” and “faith” (e.g., Rom. 5:1-2). “Faith” and “believe” are often intended to be catch all terms that include everything a person must do to access God’s forgiveness. A similar usage is seen in the expression “call on the name of the Lord” (e.g., Isa. 55:6-7; Acts 9:14; 2 Tim. 2:22).

The action that is mentioned in Titus 3 is “the washing of regeneration” (vs. 5)—an unmistakable allusion to water immersion. How so? How can a person know that the “washing of regeneration” in Titus 3:5 refers to water baptism? Some years ago, Wayne Jackson developed a chart that clarifies the meaning of Titus 3:5 by comparing it with other verses that teach the same thing:

John 3:5	Spirit	Water	Kingdom
1 Cor. 12:13	Spirit	Baptized	Body
Eph. 5:26	Word	Washing/Water	Cleansed Church
Titus 3:5	Renewal of Spirit	Washing of Regeneration	Saved by Mercy

Notice that these four verses are parallel passages. They all teach the same thing, with slight wording differences. This chart proves conclusively that water baptism is the moment in time when the penitent, confessing believer obeys the word of the Holy Spirit (the Gospel) and is thus washed, cleansed, regenerated, saved, and placed in the body of Christ.

Consider carefully these concluding observations about the marvelous teaching given in these verses in Titus 3:

1. "*Renewing of the Holy Spirit*" (vs. 5) is a reference to the salvation that is available to the person who submits to God's plan of salvation. The Holy Spirit "*renews*" a person by providing the instructions necessary for that person to be saved. The Holy Spirit authored the Gospel that the apostles were commissioned to preach worldwide. The final act in those instructions—the point at which a person is actually "*renewed*"—is water baptism.

2. The "*pouring out*" of the Holy Spirit (vs. 6) undoubtedly refers to the miraculous, inspired guidance that the Holy Spirit extended to the apostles beginning on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, as Jesus predicted in John 14-16. We must not, we dare not, minimize the critical role that the third person of the Godhead, the Holy Spirit, played in the divine scheme of things. Providing the initial emissaries ("*ambassadors*"—2 Cor. 5:20; cf. Rom. 10:15) of the Gospel with the words to speak and write, that would then be committed to writing for all people for all time, was no minor assignment. Human salvation depends on the revealing of the components of the "*glorious gospel*" (1 Tim. 1:11). No wonder Paul

declared that *“God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God”* (1 Cor. 2:10).

3. Baptism must not be classified as a *“work of righteousness which we have done”* (vs. 5). Perhaps the number one allegation advanced by those who discount the necessity of baptism for salvation involves a misuse of Ephesians 2:8-9. The claim is, *“Baptism is not necessary to salvation because Ephesians says we are saved by grace, not of works lest any man should boast.”* Notice that the line of reasoning is based on the assumption that baptism is a work, and since we’re not saved by works, baptism does not precede salvation. But Titus 3:5 clarifies and corrects this misconception.

Look carefully at the contrast made by Paul: *“not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration.”* God did not save us by our works of righteousness—but He did save us through baptism! If God saved us *“through baptism,”* then baptism cannot be seen as a work of righteousness that we have done to save ourselves.

4. Further, observe that Paul is saying that baptism is a work of God—not man. Humans did not invent the act of baptism in the plan of salvation. God did! It is His requirement—not ours. The opposition to water immersion as a prerequisite to forgiveness is, in reality, a jab at God—since He authored it. Baptism is a work of God in the same way that Jesus said faith is a work of God (John 6:29). Both are works, i.e., acts performed by humans, that God requires in order for the individual to be counted

faithful and obedient. Greek lexicographer Joseph Thayer alluded to this very point when he defined “work” (**ergon**) as “an act, deed, thing done” and then pinpointed John 6:28 as an instance where “works” means “the works required and approved by God” (p. 248). Arndt and Gingrich identify the same works as “the deeds that God desires” (p. 308). The salient point to grasp is that even when we perform a righteous deed that God says we must perform before He will save us, we still have no basis by which to claim that we saved ourselves or atoned for our own sin.

Conclusion

Verse 7 summarizes the tremendous salvation available in Christ: “having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” How are we justified by His grace? By heeding the instructions of the Holy Spirit to be immersed in water for the remission of sins. It is truly astounding and tragic that the bulk of Christendom has rejected the clear teaching of the Bible on what is necessary to become a child of God. No one can stand before God on the Day of Judgment and legitimately claim that his failure to be baptized for the remission of sins was justifiable. Titus 3, and a host of other verses, make God’s will plain for all who are willing to seek it.

The overall impression that these verses ought to make on us is that of awe and deep gratitude. All three members of the Godhead took an active role in orchestrating redemption on our behalf: God the Father (“the love of God our Savior toward man appeared” – vs. 4); God the Holy Spirit (“renewing of the Holy Spirit” – vs. 5); and God the Son (“abundantly

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through Jesus Christ our Savior” –vs. 6). Because of deity’s great love for us, we have “become heirs according to the hope of eternal life” (vs. 7). To God be the glory!

Dave Miller



A native of Arizona, Dave is the Executive Director at Apologetics Press • His formal education includes 3 masters degrees and a Ph.D. from Southern Illinois University. His book, *Piloting the Strait*, deals with the changes affecting churches of Christ. His seminars on **Islam** and **The Silencing Of God** are superb. Deborah and Dave have 4 grown children, 3 grandchildren and reside in Montgomery, Alabama.

Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:

James 1:12

This Chapter Written By

Jimmy Clark

Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him (James 1:12).

The world's concept of happiness does not coincide with the Biblical viewpoint. Happiness is a byproduct of true, demonstrated love for the Lord. Since genuine love is distorted by worldliness, happiness is as elusive to the world as catching a vapor. The prospect may appear to be present, but the reality of long term success fades with time. The inspired writer, James (cf. James 1:1), writes about true happiness in life in spite of the trials that are faced. While trials come to all born of woman (cf. Job 14:1), only those who love the Lord will receive the blessings of God's promises. Happiness is just one of the great blessings that comes to the child of God now and ultimate happiness in eternity.

Proving Endured

The first part of the verse addresses the enduring

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of temptation. The word "endureth" is from the Greek word υπομενω that means "to remain i.e. abide, not recede or flee; to persevere, to endure, bear bravely and calmly" (Thayer 644). The Greek word πειρασμος which is translated "temptation" in the passage means "an experiment, attempt, trial, proving; specially, the trial of man's fidelity, integrity, virtue, constancy, etc." (Thayer 498). James had already addressed the attitude needed to endure.

My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing (James 1:2-4).

The word translated "temptations" in James 1:2 is the same Greek word as in James 1:12 for "temptations." The word translated "patience" in James 1:3-4 is the noun form of the same Greek word translated "endureth" in James 1:12. Thayer states further of the noun form of the term translated "patience" in James 1:3-4 with following details: "υπομονη is the temper which does not easily succumb under suffering; it is opposed to cowardice or despondency" (Thayer 387). The tense of the verb "endureth" in James 1:12 is in present tense which denotes a continual action. Therefore, the blessed man is one who will keep on abiding under the pressures of trials with an optimistic view of life and the future.

Jesus addressed this same aspect of blessedness in his earthly ministry.

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom

of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you (Matt. 5:10-12).

Again, Jesus stated,

Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock (Matt. 7:24-25).

It is interesting to note that James addresses a similar thought in James 1:25.

There are various passages in the New Testament about enduring that give insight to this principle in James 1:12. Jesus said to his disciples, *"And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved"* (Matt. 10:22). When Jesus addressed the time of the fall of Jerusalem, he stated, *"But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved"* (Matt. 24:13). Jesus stated of the kind of heart that brings forth fruit by saying,

But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience (Luke 8:15).

Luke records Jesus saying concerning the time of the fall of Jerusalem, *"In your patience possess ye your souls"* (Luke 21:19). Paul wrote to the brethren

at Rome,

And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: (Rom. 5:3-4).

Again, Paul wrote, *“Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer;”* (Rom. 12:12).

Again, he wrote,

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope (Rom. 15:4).

Paul states of love, *“Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things”* (1 Cor. 13:7). Paul wrote of his own life,

But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses (2 Cor. 6:4).

Paul stated of his apostleship,

Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds (2 Cor. 12:12).

Paul wrote of his desire for the Colossian brethren,

Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness (Col. 1:11).

Paul wrote concerning the Thessalonian brethren,

So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God, for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure: which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer (2 Thess. 1:4-5).

Paul wrote to Timothy,

But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness (1 Tim. 6:11).

Timothy was aware of Paul's life in such qualities, where he wrote,

But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me (2 Tim. 3:10-11).

Paul stated earlier in this same book to Timothy,

Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory (2 Tim. 2:10).

Paul wrote concerning older man, "*That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience*" (Titus 2:2). It is written in the book of Hebrews,

Wherefore, seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses,

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let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God (Heb. 12:1-2).

When addressing the matter of a disciplined life, it is written,

If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? (Heb. 12:7).

Peter wrote,

For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God (1 Peter 2:20).

Peter wrote in another book,

And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; And to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness (2 Peter 1:5-6).

Jesus stated to the church at Ephesus,

I know thy works, and thy labor, and thy patience, and how thou canst not bear them which are evil: and thou hast tried them which say they are apostles, and are not, and hast found them liars (Rev. 2:2).

Jesus also commended the congregation at Thyatira

for their patience (cf. Rev. 2:19). Each of these passages along with a host of examples from both the Old and New Testament reveal the richness of enduring the pressures of living for the Lord. The next step in the process of enduring is seen in the outcome that results. It is interesting to note that not all who started a life of endurance finished that way.

Passing The Test

James addresses the blessed man being “ tried” (James 1:12, KJV). The New King James Version gives a different rendering.

Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him (James 1:12, NKJV).

The tense of the Greek verb in the phrase “*has been approved*” (NKJV) or “*is tried*” (KJV) is aorist tense denoting a past action. The verb in the clause is from the word that means “*to become*” (Thayer 115). The term “*tried*” (KJV) is from the word meaning “*proved, tried: in the N.T. one who is of tried faith and integrity [R.V. approved]*” (Thayer 155). The stress of the expression is that one has continued to show himself accepted of God through the suffering of the trials and not giving up. Peter states something similar to this in these words,

Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin (1 Peter 4:1).

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Peter stated of trials at the beginning of the book of First Peter,

Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, If need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honor and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 1:6-7).

Paul stated is this way,

Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is (1 Cor. 3:13).

The writer of the book of Hebrews recalled the early life of those brethren where this tried quality was present.

But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly whilst ye became companions of them that were so used (Heb. 10:32-33).

The problem was that some were not staying with the faith (cf. Heb. 10:25) and drifting back into Judaism. The exhortation states,

Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after

ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise (Heb. 10:35-36).

James writes early in the history of the early church that trials would come as Jesus said. Jesus said to the apostles,

These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world (John 16:33).

Luke recorded of the apostle Paul's own words,

Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22).

Passing the test of hardships is summarized in Paul's closing words of his own life, *"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:"* (2 Tim. 4:7). It is no wonder that he told Timothy,

Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God (2 Tim. 1:8).

Promised Blessing Given

The final thought concerning facing hardships is that there is a *"crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him"* (James 1:12). The Greek word translated *"crown"* in this passage is from a word that has the picture of *"a crown as a*

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mark of royal or (in general) exalted rank; the wreath or garland which was given as a prize to victors in the public games" (Thayer 587). Metaphorically, Thayer states that it refers to *"the eternal blessedness which will be given as a prize to the genuine servants of God and Christ"* (Thayer 587). Various other passages in the New Testament use this same word.

Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing (2 Tim. 4:8).

Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life (Rev. 2:10).

And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away (1 Peter 5:4).

Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown (Rev. 3:11).

Therefore, victory comes through the steadfast continuance of faith to the end of life.

The love of the faithful toward God is stressed as the prime motivation for enduring to the end. This kind of love is not superficial or self-centered. The faithful love God in spite of the difficulties of life that must be endured. Such was the case with Job.

Satan himself challenged God through the person of Job. Satan said of Job,

Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse thee to thy face (Job 1:9-11).

The Lord allowed Satan to take away his possessions and even his ten children. Job endured the test and was found approved, as it is written, "*In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly*" (Job 1:22). When Satan took away Job's health, it is stated of him, "*In all this did not Job sin with his lips*" (Job 2:10). The book of James emphasizes Job as an example of such endurance.

Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy (James 5:11).

The goodness of the Lord is demonstrated at the end of the book of Job to reveal the truth about God in the midst of severe hardships. It is a blessing to live for God in this troublesome world as well as to live unto God toward the life to come. Paul stated of the greatness of God's promises,

For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and

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of that which is to come. This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance. For therefore we both labor and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, specially of those that believe (1 Tim. 4:8-10).

There is no greater happiness in this life than such hope.

Jimmy Clark



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Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:

James 4:6-10

This Chapter Written By

Bobby Liddell

Introduction

Man can, and must, resist the Devil. James, inspired penman, wrote, in the book that bears his name, that if one resists the Devil, *“he will flee from you.”* In the context (James 4:6-10), James shows how to resist him. (1) Resist pride, (2) Submit to God, (3) Draw nigh to God, (4) Mourn over sin, and, (5) Humble yourselves.

Resist The Devil By Resisting Pride

“But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble” (James 4:6). *“Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall”* (Prov. 16:18). *“When pride cometh, then cometh shame: but with the lowly is wisdom”* (Prov. 11:2). Throughout God’s book, He contrasts pride and humility, condemning arrogant men, and praising humble men. The Devil, who tempts man through his pride, and whom we must resist, is the very one whose pride preceded his fall (1 Tim. 3:6). Augustine said, *“It was pride that changed angels into devils; it is humility that makes men as angels.”*

Maturity in Bible knowledge and in Christian living (the theme of the Book of James) promotes humility. *"The Christian is like the ripening corn; the riper he grows the more lowly he bends his head"* (Thomas Guthrie). Yet many manifest ungodly pride, influence others in the deadly way of arrogant sin, and serve Satan in so doing. What a contrast with the ones who, submissive to the Father's will, quietly and effectively work to save themselves and a lost world. Humble men bring glory to God as they heed the Savior's admonition:

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven (Matt. 5:16).

God is love and love is of God (1 John 4:7-8). He loved man first, and He loved man enough to send His only begotten Son to die for man (1 John 4:8-10; John 3:16; Rom. 5:8). Thus, God, who loves man so, is supremely just in His dealings with man, and is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34-35). Man responds to God's love by accepting, or rejecting, God's grace and by choosing to submit, or not to submit, to God's will. God responds to man based upon the needs, attitudes, and actions of man. In His response to man, He unfailingly rewards each man according to that man's true heart and life (2 Cor. 5:10; cf. Eccl. 12:14). God shall charge none with the sins of another, nor shall He reward any for another's righteousness (Ezek. 18:4-20).

The proud, wicked in the sight of the Lord, forfeit God's blessings reserved for the faithful. The humble, submissive to His will, rejoice in God's bountiful grace. Upon them He freely keeps on giving

His grace that they may be fortified to resist sin and Satan (Rom. 5:20). No man can truly say that God has ever been unfair in His treatment of mankind. No unrighteous man shall stand justified before God based on excuses of God's supposed injustice. Therefore, when God gives grace to the humble, He does so in response to that man's submission, and when God resists the proud, He does so in righteous response to that man's arrogance.

What right-thinking man honestly desires the God of Heaven and Earth to stand against him? God resists arrogant men, setting Himself to war against them! He clearly condemns haughty, self-exalting men. Peter's pen plainly points to this truth:

Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves to the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble (1 Pet. 5:5).

Of those things which the Lord hates, first on the list is "*a proud look*" (Prov. 6:16-19).

Those who pose on the peaks of pride stand against God and stand, whether knowingly or not, with Satan. The more they elevate themselves, the farther they are from Heaven. Selfishly desiring their own way, they resist God and His Word. Those who elevate God in their lives, and humbly bow before Him, stand with God and in opposition to Satan. God stands with them, blessing them with spiritual blessings in Christ as His dear children (Eph. 1:3). He gives them more grace to help them overcome.

When David faced Goliath, he believed that God, whom he trusted and humbly served, would

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deliver him then, as He had before. Goliath put his faith in his great size, mighty strength, and strong armor, and proudly defied the God of Israel. Who could defeat him? Not even God, he thought. David said:

Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield: but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied (1 Sam. 17:45).

God stood with the young man, for he submitted to Him. Thus, David could affirm:

And all this assembly shall know that the Lord saveth not with sword and spear: for the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hands (1 Sam. 17:47).

He could not overcome the giant by himself, but David knew God was on his side, and with such an ally none could defeat him! The boasting giant lost his life at the hands of God's humble servant that day. Trust in God brings confidence, that enables saints to resist the Devil, and to overcome him; thus, gaining the victory in Christ!

Not all will bow before Him now, but all will someday. Only then it shall be too late for those who would not serve Him here. Men who walked so proudly on earth shall be humbled before the judgment throne, and punished eternally in that place of everlasting fire, outer darkness, unbearable pain, and unquenchable thirst. Yes, God resists the proud, but He gives grace to the humble. Those who realize they are God's creation, and but for His grace

would be helpless and hopeless, humble themselves before Him and cry out for God's mercy. They seek simply to do His will in their lives, that is, to make His will theirs. Willingly, they give up the world and pride for abundant grace now, and eternal life hereafter (Mark 10:30). They do not base their hope upon pretentious pride, but upon God's great grace, and their obedient service.

Resist The Devil By Submitting To God

"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). The word *"therefore"* shows a connection with the foregoing. Since God resists arrogant men and gives grace to humble men, one should submit himself to God. This means giving up running one's own life in order to place oneself under God. Wise men will submit, but conceited men, thinking themselves above others, will not. In their foolish pride, they do not submit to the righteousness of God (Rom. 10:3), but God's Word rings out: *"be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble"* (1 Pet. 5:5).

The perfect example of humble submission is Christ. Peter exhorted his brethren to be submissive as he pointed to Christ who *"also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps"* (1 Pet. 2:21). Paul wrote by inspiration about how Christ left Heaven and *"humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross"* (Phil. 2:3-8).

Neither the power of mighty men, nor of Satan himself, overcame Jesus, but His powerful love overcame sin and death in order that we might also gain the victory (1 Cor. 15:55-57). Nails did not hold

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the Savior to that cruel cross, but His love for lost and dying mankind did. As the song *"Ten Thousand Angels,"* by Ray Overholt says, *"He could have called ten thousand angels to destroy the world and set Him free...but He died alone for you and me."* Despised and rejected, shamed and mocked, He humbled Himself to bear our griefs, sorrows and stripes; to be wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities (Isa. 53). Sinless, He suffered for our sins. We deserved to die, not Jesus. Man could not save himself by dying for his own sins, but the Son of God humbled Himself to die that man might live. It was no accident. He came to die (Heb. 2:9). In view of such a submissive sacrifice, surely man should humble himself in order to live for Christ and to resist the Adversary.

As He faced death, Jesus prayed,

O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt (Matt. 26:39).

Again, He said,

for I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me (John 6:38).

What a perfect example for man! Not our will, but God's be done in our lives. Pride precludes such a life of submission. Proud men fight and war because of their selfish desires and evil means of fulfilling their lusts (James 4:1-2). Such men are too proud to bow themselves to God's will and to ask Him for the blessings which He freely bestows on His loving children. They are spiritual adulterers whose

friendship with the world makes them the enemies of God (James 4:4). What a sobering thought! Pride makes one the enemy of God! And, the servant of Satan!

The very first sin involved pride. The serpent told Eve the tree would make them as gods, knowing good and evil. She saw it was "*a tree to be desired to make one wise,*" so she took of the fruit and gave also to her husband (Gen. 3:4-6). Note the similarity of the appeal of the world to that of the serpent and the relationship of: (1) friendship with the world; (2) pride; and (3) enmity with God as recorded by the apostle John, the apostle of love (1 John 2:15-17).

One is known by that against which he stands as much as, or more than, that for which he stands. Christians must hate and actively oppose sin. Those who submit to God naturally, as a consequence of their submission, resist Satan. Why? He is the enemy of God and His children, the father of lies, a murderer from the beginning, and the adversary of man, who "*as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour*" (1 Pet. 5:8). Many believe the Devil has such power that men cannot resist him. The real problem is not that men cannot resist the Devil, but that men do not want to resist him so long as they desire the pleasures of sin which he offers. Such offerings are deceitful, for Satan presents sin as beautiful, pleasurable, desirable, and even good for man. His greatest tool for temptation is the deceitfulness of sin (Heb. 3:13), but we must not be ignorant of his craftiness (2 Cor. 2:11). Should men look beyond the pleasures of sin for a season (Heb. 11:25), they would see the horrible end of deadly, debilitating, destroying, and damning sin.

James traced the progression that leads to

spiritual death. Every man is tempted when he is drawn away by his own lust and enticed. When lust conceives, sin is born, and when sin is finished, spiritual death follows (James 1:14-15). No man can truthfully say that he is tempted by God to sin (James 1:13). God would not have any to perish because of sin, but would have all come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9). He allows no man to be tempted above that which he is able to bear, but provides a way of escape (1 Cor. 10:13). He provides armor to ward off Satan's attacks and a weapon, the sword of the Spirit, with which to fight, but man must clothe himself with the Christian armor (Eph. 6:10-18).

No man can serve two masters (Matt. 6:24); thus, none can serve God and, at the same time, serve self or Satan. Those who fail to resist the Devil become his servants. Paul asked the Roman brethren if they did not know that the one to whom they yielded in obedience was the one to whom they became servants (Rom. 6:16). Men can resist Satan. Jesus did, and He did so with the Word of God (Matt. 4:1-11). Satan fled from Him, and he will flee from us when we, firm in faith and armed with the Word of God, stand against him. To Christians, the only course of action is resistance against the Devil. Jonathan Edwards said, *"Nothing sets a person so much out of the devil's reach as humility."* Compromise, even in one point, gives the Devil the advantage and the ultimate victory in that one's life.

**Resist The Devil By
Drawing Nigh To God**

Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh
to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners;

and purify your hearts, ye double minded
(James 4:8).

The brother of Arrogance is Aloofness. Proud self-sufficient men see no need to draw nigh to God. They reason that God should seek them, if He desires their company. To seek nearness with God would be, to them, a sign of weakness, a symbol of dependency, and a token of flawed manhood. What folly is wrought by haughty men who forfeit the precious promise of God's nearness. If one would have God near, he may. How? By humbly drawing near to God in purity and holiness. The priests of the Old Testament had to be clean and pure before drawing near to God (Exo. 30:17-21; Lev. 8). So must Christians, God's royal priesthood of the New Testament (1 Pet. 2:9), cleanse themselves in order to be near Him (2 Cor. 7:1).

Purified through obeying the truth, the Christian so lives that the acts manifested outwardly (hands), and the thoughts held inwardly (hearts), are clean and pure. Paul, speaking to the Athenians, about "*The Unknown God*," said:

That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us (Acts 17:27-28).

David told his son Solomon:

If thou seek him, he will be found of thee;
but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee
off for ever (1 Chron. 28:9).

God does not cast off those who would be near.
He rejects none who humbly seek His presence.

JAMES 4:6-10

Christ invites all who are weary and heavy laden to come to Him, and whosoever will may take the water of life freely (Matt. 11:28-30; Rev. 22:17). *"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ"* (Rom. 8:35)? God allows nothing to force man, against his will, to leave God (Rom. 8:36-39). Man may choose to allow things to come between him and God, but it is man's choice, and he may choose not to do so. Some will not come that they might have life (John 5:40), but those who do come, He will in no wise cast out (John 6:37). No man can say that, against his will, he remained lost when he wanted and sought salvation according to God's Word.

When men are far from God, they are the ones who have moved. The account of Luke 2:41-52 shows Joseph and Mary separated from Jesus. They assumed He, then twelve, was with their company as they journeyed back from Jerusalem after keeping the Passover feast. At the end of a day's journey, they discovered He was not with them. Upon their return, they found Him right where they had left Him. This does not show Joseph and Mary to be unfit parents, but there is a point we may learn. Too many assume God is with them, when He is not. God has not initiated the action of leaving either nations or individuals, but they have left Him. Should they seek His presence again, they shall find that He is right where they left Him.

There are no shortcuts to one's drawing nigh to God. Those separated from Him must return to Jerusalem (spiritually), and through an understanding of, belief in, and obedience to His revealed will, the New Testament of Christ, draw near to Him. God, as a loving Father, stands with open arms ready to

receive the penitent prodigal home again (cf. Luke 15:1-32).

Some desire the presence of God with them, but only as somewhat of a good luck charm, or emergency help. They would wear God on the outside of their lives as an amulet, or talisman, to ward off disaster, disease, and death, but they do not want God in their hearts. They want Him to be ready to help, but they do not want Him otherwise to bother them with His rules, or cramp their style of living. By their sin, they have separated themselves from God (Isa. 59:1-2). The iniquities of man forever stand as a barrier to fellowship until removed by humble submission in obedience to God's will. Pride prevents one's drawing near to God, and resisting the Devil.

Resist The Devil By Mourning Over Sin

Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness (James 4:9).

Sin cost the sinless Son His life. Its fruit is despair and degradation, and its wages are death (Rom. 6:23). How could one look upon it without the uttermost sorrow? How could any make light of that which robs billions of their souls? At the foot of the cross, in the darkness at midday, looking upon the blood-stained Savior, see sin in its true light. Surely, the realization of one's sin should cause godly sorrow, and work repentance to salvation (2 Cor. 7:10). Will tears not flood the way of that man's return to God? The Devil would tempt man to stay, but God awaits to restore. Truly, "*Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted*" (Matt. 5:4).

Around the world, people hear the wonderful story of love proclaimed. They react, either positively or negatively, to the simple message of a loving Savior and His redeeming blood. The power of the gospel moves those who have tender hearts. They react in realization of their wretched, undone condition in sin. Such grieves them to their very core, and tears of remorse flow down their cheeks. Knowing, in their dreadful state, they are not ready for eternity, they cry out, *"What shall we do?"* They wonder if God will forgive them after all they have done against Him. The burden of their sin is unbearable. There is nowhere to go but to God. Humbly, they ask, *"What must I do to be saved?"* From God's Word the answer comes, and as they bow their wills to His, as they obey according to His word, they resist Satan and draw nigh to God. Still, many cling to Satan, continue in sin, and reject God's call.

The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts (Psa. 10:4).

Resist The Devil By Humbling Yourself

"Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up" (James 4:10). Mankind has missed the truths that (1) *"The way up is first down,"* and (2) *"A man stands tallest when he is on his knees."* Today's society has not changed radically from those revealed in history. Men still clamor for position, power, and prestige. To be number one is the all encompassing goal of the majority. Worldly men measure success in bigger barns (Luke 12:16ff), but God calls such men *"fools."* Christ said,

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you (Matt. 6:33).

On one occasion, the mother of Zebedee's children requested that her two sons might sit, one on the right hand and the other on the left hand of Christ in His kingdom,

But Jesus called them unto him, and said...whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many (Matt. 20:25-28).

God's promise is true. He will lift up those who humble themselves. He replaces tears with rejoicing, sorrow with gladness, darkness with light, and separation with His loving presence. Preceding such honor is humility: *"Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honour is humility"* (Prov. 18:12). Jesus said,

Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 18:4).

Again, He said,

And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted (Matt. 23:12; cf. Luke 14:11).

David, in pleading penitence, said,

The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise (Psa. 51:17).

The world does not acclaim the humble servant of God. Those who impress with their loud and much speaking and their ostentatious displays receive the world's recognition, but one's recognition by the world will be worth less than nothing before the God of the Universe. In the words of David's song:

And the afflicted people thou wilt save: but thine eyes are upon the haughty, that thou mayest bring them down (2 Sam. 22:28).

In Hell, there will be the sad and eternal reminder of a wasted, self-centered, Satan-serving life. Peter admonished:

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time (1 Pet. 5:6).

Conclusion

Arrogant conceit in resisting God is seed for a harvest of eternal tears. God holds out His loving arms to receive those who humbly seek Him. He offers His grace and requires their active response. They must (1) submit to God; (2) resist the devil; (3) draw nigh to God; (4) cleanse their hands; (5) purify their hearts; (6) be afflicted, mourn and weep over sin; and (7) humble themselves in the sight of the Lord. Such is God's recipe for restoration, and His plan for resistance of the Devil.

Bobby Liddell



A native of Alabama, has preached for over thirty years, in Alabama, Florida, and Tennessee, as well as preaching in lectures and meetings, radio and TV, and missionary trips abroad. Written extensively, edited monthly papers and lectureship books, and directs the Memphis School of Preaching Lectures. Bobby serves as Director of the Memphis School of Preaching. He and Joan have three children and four grandchildren.

Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:

2 Peter 1:20-21

This Chapter Written By

Gary McDade

The work for the master that you are doing here at the East Hill Church of Christ is becoming better known all over the country through the Gospel Broadcasting Network. Your contributions to the Gospel Broadcasting Network and programs like "A Better Life" are really making a difference in this world of ours. One of the programs you produce here at East Hill called "Voices From the Past" includes videos from the Spiritual Sword Lectureship featuring speakers like V. E. Howard, Andrew Connally, and Bill Jackson, men who have gone on to their reward. We at Getwell appreciate the attention you are bringing to the long and illustrious history of the Lord's work through the Spiritual Sword. You are providing people living today, many of them young people who never knew some of these great men, with an opportunity to be blessed by Bible scholars of previous generations. And, I want to thank you for the invitation issued me to be here today and speak on this program. The Truth In Love Lectureship theme "Modern Applications of Ancient Texts, New Testament" points up the challenge to modern man

2 PETER 1:20-21

which is the application of ancient texts to modern living. The selection of the text that I have been assigned coming from 2 Peter 1:20-21 constitutes one of the most basic lessons from the Bible we can study. It points to the origin, the transmission, and the preservation of the actual text of the Bible. Allow me to set the text before you.

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost (2 Pet. 1:20-21).

Why Do Religious People Attack The Bible?

The leading affirmation of this text is that God is the author of the Bible. If you ever wonder why there is so much religious division and sin, in general, in our world, I would encourage you to look back down through history at the disrespect for and attacks on the Bible as an underlying cause of the current problems that we have religiously, socially, and politically today. About 150 years ago there emerged in Europe a group of scholars who set out to challenge the authorship of the Bible. Their first attack was on the authorship of the Pentateuch. The late George W. DeHoff in his Bible Handbook wrote about what took place.

Satan has always attempted to destroy the Pentateuch, and especially the book of Genesis. Genesis is God's account of the origin of the universe, the origin of the

earth, the origin of man, and the origin of sin. Satan attacks the Mosaic authorship, the scientific accuracy, the testimony to the fall of man, and therefore, his need for redemption. Modern critics have attempted to present the idea that the Pentateuch is a composite work of various schools of priests made about the eighth century B.C. and based on oral traditions. The principal redactors of which are called "J," "E," and "T." [Various additional sources were imagined by these sophists such as "P" for priestly source, "D" for Deuteronomic editor, et al.]. Critics have never agreed as to which section should be assigned to these respective editors. They agree on only one thing – that the idea of the Mosaic authorship must be destroyed (p. 13).

A scholar among the churches of Christ by the name of John William McGarvey became one of the greatest defenders of the faith of his generation by writing a book entitled **The Authorship Of The Book Of Deuteronomy**. In the section entitled "*The Suspicious Source of This Theory*" McGarvey said,

Those who had wrought it out were unbelievers, and were moved in their labors by hostility to the Bible and the Christian religion. Especially is this true of the two scholars to whom, above all others, the present form of the theory owes its completion and defense, A. Keunen, now deceased, and Julius Wellhausen, who is still living. They unhesitatingly reject as incredible all accounts of supernatural events, including those connected with the

career of Christ. These statements are freely admitted by the advocates of the theory, and some of them strive, as best they can, to ward off all suspicions thence arising (pp. xv-xvi).

The scholarly work of J.W. McGarvey and others of his generation helped to stem the tide of theological liberalism in their day. Subsequent generations must defend the origin of the Bible including our own generation. This fall at the Spiritual Sword Lectureship in Memphis we have planned for a thorough study of the book of Deuteronomy including a defense of its authorship and date.

Why Do Religious Schools Attack The Bible?

The need for expertise and experience in the area of defending the origin of the Bible within our own generation is becoming more apparent as even among us theological descendents of radical liberalism are holding professorships in major universities still connected with churches of Christ. Two in particular that are becoming increasingly militant on this issue are Abilene Christian University in Abilene, Texas and Oklahoma Christian University in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. For example, in their book, **God's Holy Fire**, authored by professors from their so-called College of Biblical Studies the authors rip the prophet Daniel from his sixth century B.C. setting and plop him into the second century B.C. even though the prophet Ezekiel specifically affirmed his contemporary place along with him in the sixth century B.C. (Ezek. 14:14, 20). Kenneth L. Cukrowski,

Mark W. Hamilton, and James W. Thompson wrote, "*Daniel was primarily concerned to show that God had acted in the past and would act again among Jews groaning under the misrule of the Greek-speaking Seleucid kings of the second century B.C.*" (pp. 143-144). Search in vain if you will to find where these "scholars" believe Daniel actually lived in the sixth century B.C. and his material known as the book of Daniel was handed down through oral tradition and codified in the second century B.C. You cannot deny Daniel and keep Ezekiel. And, the news is out, you cannot deny Daniel and keep the hope of eternal life because Jesus Christ the Savior said, "*When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand)*" (Matt. 24:15). Have the brain children of theological liberalism, also known as German Rationalism, at ACU not considered the fact that if Jesus Christ knew not whereof He spoke in Matthew 24:15 when He affirmed that Daniel, the sixth century B.C. prophet of the book bearing his name, "*spoke*" then Jesus was wrong and is, thereby, disqualified to serve as the Savior of the world? What is to me even more amazing is that members of the churches of Christ seem so apathetic about this all-out, frontal attack on the inspiration of the Bible, and they sit silently by as these wolves without even the shroud of sheep's clothing pillage and plunder the precious body of Christ! Like the critics of old, Mark Hamilton is announced by ACU to be the editor of a soon-to-be-released set of commentaries that denies the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch!

Also, a former professor of Bible at Oklahoma Christian University, Glenn Pemberton, "*vigorously*

advocates" the multiple authorship of Isaiah heresy (The Christian Courier, pp. 1-3). (Pemberton has since taken a position as Chair of the Bible, Missions, and Ministry at ACU). The "*multiple authorship of Isaiah*" heresy holds that more than one person wrote the book of Isaiah. Two and as many as three different authors are credited with posing as one single author named Isaiah. The dual authorship position divides the book into chapters 1-39 and 40-66. However, Isaiah uniquely refers to God as "*the Holy One of Israel*" in both of these supposed sections (Isa. 1:4; 17:7; 37:23; and 45:11; 55:5; 60:14). Therefore, if one author did not write this book, multiple authors evidently were endeavoring to perpetrate a fraud by posing as one man. And, since the multiple authorship idea originated 1870 years after the personal ministry of Christ who knew nothing of it in the first century, then Jesus knowingly or unknowingly assisted in the perpetration of a fraud by quoting from the book and attributing it to Isaiah! Jesus Christ attributed the words in both sections 1-39 and 40-66 to the prophet Isaiah! (cf. Matt. 13:14—Isa. 6:9; Matt. 15:7; Mark 7:6—Isa. 29:13; and Matt. 12:16-21—Isa. 42:1-4; Luke 4:16-21—Isa. 61:1-2). Jesus said from the cross, "*It is finished*" (John 19:30) meaning the fulfillment of all the prophets taught concerning His life and personal ministry. After His resurrection Jesus said,

These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me (Luke 24:44).

"All things must be fulfilled" concerning Him, even the things written in the Messianic prophet Isaiah's book! So, down goes the challenge to the authorship of Isaiah "world without end"!

Why Do Religious Papers Attack The Bible?

Do not expect help in defending the inspiration of the Bible from the so-called **Christian Chronicle**, the public relations arm of OCU, because the school thinks it has shielded itself from the false teaching of this paper (circulation ca. 100,000 per month) by establishing an independent board of directors and editor. Lynn McMillon, the Editor, President, and CEO of it, has started inventing words to justify the advocating of damnable doctrine carried in the paper from time to time for which he directly and personally is responsible. In a recent edition he combined the words *"advertisement"* and *"editorial"* to form the non-word *"advertorial."* For years he has tried to disclaim responsibility for error taught in the paper by saying it is *"journalism"* and only items under the heading of editorials are his responsibility and nothing else in the paper constitutes *"teaching."* Well, not even he is satisfied with that foolishness any longer because he now is down to inventing words to be able to live with himself for all the false teaching coming out of OCU and its infamous paper. Somebody needs to read 1 Timothy 6:3-5,

If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is

proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, [obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, NKJV] whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.

Even if people in colleges and universities choose not to honor and respect the words of the Bible, surely they ought to give some credence to the words of the dictionary lest they betray the attempt to appear intelligent! Friends, the inspiration of the Bible, "*the word of Christ*," must be believed and defended!

It appears that these erring brethren denying the authorship of the prophets in general and of the Pentateuch in particular have spit in Moses' face and are not even being shut out of the camp for seven seconds much less seven days (Num. 12:14)! Has the thought been considered by anyone of why the local congregations, in which these professors worship and some even serve in the elderships and pulpits of these local congregations, have never withdrawn fellowship from these men? Possibly what has happened over the years is that the unwillingness and even failure to apply the teaching of the Bible practically in the area of withdrawal of fellowship has generated growing disregard, disrespect, and even disdain for the Scriptures themselves! It may well be that we have reached a point in the brotherhood where the gargantuan financial and political power enjoyed by the so-called Christian schools has hamstrung the local congregations into submission to the whims of these loose-cannon professors.

Unwilling to submit to their departures, we hesitate not to urge independent, autonomous local churches of Christ to employ the means of heaven's design to protect and promulgate the church of Christ by confronting and when necessary – and it will be necessary – withdrawing from these college professors (2 Thess. 3:6, 10) marking them for everyone to see and avoid both in the local congregations and on the college campuses (Rom. 16:17-18). The eternal word of God mandates in Titus 3:10-11 that *“a man that is an heretic [factious, ASV; divisive, NKJV] after the first and second admonition reject; Knowing that he that is such is subverted [perverted, ASV; warped, NKJV] and sinneth, being condemned of himself.”* Brethren, the attack on the church of Christ and the word of God is documented and known by every informed member of the church; the time has come for elders, preachers, and members to move into action! The GQ Buzzer has sounded; get out from under your rack!

How Does Peter Affirm The Authority Of The Bible?

The text before us of 2 Peter 1:20-21 was written by a close personal associate of Jesus Christ, the apostle Peter. The context in which this passage is couched gives us the assurance of the authority with which Peter spoke. Beginning with verse number 12, the apostle Peter speaks of his responsibility to communicate the message of Christ in order to establish Christians in *“the present truth.”* He wrote,

Wherefore I will not be negligent to put
you always in remembrance of these things,

though ye know them, and be established
in the present truth.

Peter viewed the purpose of his life to be the communication of *"the present truth"* as verse 13 affirms where Peter said, *"Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance."* To underscore this fact Peter next says, *"Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me"* (v. 14). The solemnity of the statement regarding Peter's purpose in life is all the more meaningful in view of his apparently imminent death. Peter knew that the powerful hand of Providence would preserve *"the present truth"* far beyond his personal life span, or he said, *"Moreover I will endeavor that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance"* (v. 15). The passage itself now open before us having been preserved for these long centuries and even now the almost two millenniums since it's writing by the apostle Peter serves as an incontrovertible proof of the accuracy and insight of Peter's inspired statement.

Peter based his argument for the credibility of his message on two proofs. Number one, the clarity of what he saw as an eyewitness, and number two, the certainty of inspired prophecy. As an eyewitness Peter wrote,

For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice

to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount (vv. 16-18).

As an inspired apostle he wrote,

We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost (vv. 19-21).

How Does Peter Affirm The Author Of The Bible?

The apostle Peter is adamant about the origination of prophecy in this verse. He is clear to tell us that prophecy does not come from man but from the eternal recesses of the infinite mind of God Almighty. The Majority Text Greek New Testament Interlinear spends some time with the word translated "*interpretation.*" The original word is **epilysis** and concerning it we read that it is a

Noun used only here in the NT, meaning interpretation, analysis. The adjective **idios** which modifies **epilysis** here refers to the interpreter of prophecies, thus indicating that Scripture is not for arbitrary or isolated interpretation. Cf. the cognate verb **epiluo**, interpret, explain, used only in the NT at

Mark 4:34 ["But without a parable spake he not unto them: and when they were alone, he expounded all things to his disciples"] and Acts 19:39 ["But if ye inquire any thing concerning other matters, it shall be determined in a lawful assembly"]. In the latter version apparently means settle, decide (but even there could mean explain) (p. 812).

The observation is astute which says, "*God says what He means and means what He says.*" "*Scripture is not for arbitrary or isolated interpretation.*" The unlearned and the unstable will wrest the Scriptures, but they will do so to their own destruction (2 Pet. 3:16). It was the wise man who said, "*Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar*" (Prov. 30:6).

"Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit." David was a "*holy man of God,*" and he said, "*The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue*" (2 Sam. 23:2). Moses was a "*holy man of God*" to whom God spoke face to face.

And the Lord came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood in the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam: and they both came forth. And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold:

wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses? And the anger of the Lord was kindled against them; and he departed (Num. 12:5-9).

In every age of human existence God has always been displeased when mere men presume to speak for Him. Moses' law contained provisions for the death penalty for those who claimed to be prophets but what they prophesied did not come to pass (Deut. 18:20-22). Jeremiah weighed in on the subject from his historical perspective,

Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the Lord (Jer. 23:16).

Those prophets could have spoken the counsel of God and because they did not God was angry with them (vv. 20-22). The consequences of their lies were devastating to the people of God. Jeremiah wrote,

I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed. How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? yea, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart; Which think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbor, as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal (vv. 25-27).

The Holy Scriptures are God-breathed. Paul wrote, *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God*

2 PETER 1:20-21

*[literally God-breathed from **theopneustos**], and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness"* (2 Tim. 3:16). The church at Thessalonica was commended by Paul for its correct understanding of the word of God. Paul wrote to them,

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe (1 Thess. 2:13).

The word of God contains all the power necessary to accomplish the purposes of God in this world (Heb. 4:12). The reason is it is not the word of mere men, but *"holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost"* (2 Pet. 1:21).

Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost (2 Pet. 1:20-21).

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Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:

1 John 3:1-3

This Chapter Written By

Robert R. Taylor, Jr.

John wrote five books and fifty chapters of the New Testament—Gospel of John, 1,2,3 John and Revelation. All his books were written after the other seven New Testament writers had gone on to their rewards. Likely, 1 John was written from Ephesus and perhaps around A.D. 90. It is not addressed either to a particular congregation or a particular individual. Its theme is loving God and brethren. The two cannot be severed. John was an aged saint at the time he wrote 2 and 3 John as we have seen in the opening declaration of both books. Quite likely, 1 John was written about the same time these shorter missives were penned.¹

John, frequently, has been called the “*apostle of love*” and 1 John has been called “*the epistle of love.*” Love, in its various forms, is used fifty-one times in 1 John according to the late and lamented J. Noel Merideth. Love is the very heartbeat of this eloquent epistle in general and this chapter in particular. Chapter three, from which our text is taken, delineates dynamically God’s great love to us and how we are to reciprocate it. His love is not to be an unrequited love

or a love not paid back. Genuine love permeates this chapter as much as apostolic inspiration, apostolic authority and apostolic infallibility all do. In 1 John 3:1-3 we have the marvelous majesty of God's lavish love.²

Amazing Love (1 John 3:1)

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

"Behold" is a favorite word with John (John 1:29, 36; 19:5, 26-27). It forms a request for apt attention to be riveted on the topic at hand. It requires a seeing, a beholding and a willingness to be impressed with what is said as an item of intent and tremendous truth. John promptly seeks to impress his readers with the kingly nature, the glorious quality and the immensity of Jehovah's lavish love bestowed upon His precious people. It is a love we do not **deserve**, yet God's amazing grace has conferred it nevertheless.

It has not been a hidden or concealed love but a revealed, a giving and a forgiving love. We, as God's children, are its rich recipients. Its stately scope is sonship to Heaven's Gracious God. Its stately aim is our good here and on into eternity. This is not masculine love with feminine love excluded. It is generic and refers to all the children of God—men, women, boys and girls. A gospel preacher once walked the streets of his hometown with a cheerful countenance and a beaming smile. A passer-by said, *"Preacher, you look like you own the*

world this morning." To which the pleased preacher replied, "*Sir, my Father does own it.*" He was happy, eminently so, in being a child of the very Sovereign of the Universe.

Among the accountable, there are only two categories of sons – sons of God or sons of Satan. In John 8:44 Jesus labels His enemies as being sons of the devil. Sons of Satan denied the parental placement but their works decreed their sonship location.

John next affirms that the world knows us not. The world knows we exist, that we serve God, that we sever ourselves from the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye and the pride, or vainglory, of life and that we have a different allegiance, than they do. The world does not love us as the children of God. They do not understand the other-world emphasis to which we give priority. They do not appreciate our regal role as sons of God. If the people of the world did love, understand, appreciate and approve the joys of being sons of God, they would cease sonship to Satan and become sons of God, servants to Jesus Christ. For the most part the wicked world around us views Christians as joyless people who live a drab, uninteresting, uneventful and most unhappy life. Such a warped view underscores how little the world knows of Christ and what a joyful, meaningful and exhilarating life we have in God, Christ and the Holy Spirit. In the very shadows of Calvary Jesus told His disciples not to be troubled and that they would know a joy the world could never extinguish (John 14:1-3; 16:22). Joy is **in** Jesus – never **out** of Him. An attractive acrostic of Joy is:

J – esus
O – thers
Y – ou

In general, the world's attitude of disapproval of Christians is triggered largely by an explanatory word from John. The world does not delight in or approve of Christians because the world knows not God. God is not acknowledged as King of the Universe, nor the rightful ruler of every human heart. The passage in John 15:18-19 offers the finest commentary we could possibly give. It reads,

If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you.

We Shall Be Like Him (1 John 3:2)

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

Note the deep delight and the abiding affection that John felt toward his brethren. They are his beloved. John was the apostle of love. He knew how to love his brethren. He loved them in word and in deed. Another endearing term he had for them was "*little children*." The second chapter of this epistle is begun with, "*My little children*." John had heard Jesus use this same expression in John 13:33 while they were assembled in the Upper Room. It must have made a profound impression upon John in that solemn setting.

Their spiritual status was, "*now are we the sons*

of God." Our spiritual status, if we have obeyed the gospel and are now walking in the light as the Lord is in the light, is the same as was theirs—sons and daughters of God. Right **now** we are God's children. We became such when we were born again or were born of water and the Spirit (John 3:3, 5). We became such when we obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine delivered us (Rom. 6:17-18). We became such when we were obedient to the faith (Acts 6:7). We became such when we were delivered from the power of darkness and were translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son (Col. 1:13-14). We became such when we, as hearing, believing, repenting and confessing people, were baptized **into** Christ (Gal. 3:26-27).

Knowledge of what the heavenly status will be specifically is not yet given. All the Bible gives about our heavenly habitation provides only a partial picture of just how great, good and glorious that realm of royalty will be.

John assures us of a trio of fundamental facts. (1) Christ is coming again. More than three hundred New Testament verses so affirm. (2) We shall then be like Him. More and more like Jesus should be our constant goal in this life. (3) We shall see Him as He is. John saw Him during His ministry, as he was transfigured, after His resurrection and in glorified form on Patmos in Revelation 1. John yearned and we yearn to see Him in heaven at last. This, in and of itself, is a most precious portrait of what Heaven will be like. This was an inspired apostle's anticipation and description of that land of fadeless day. What an intense inheritance this will be for all stationed on His right hand on judgment day.

Hope In Motivational Form (3:3)

“And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.” John was no Calvinist in the making. He knew, and knew well, that **every** man could be a possessor of this hope. Christian hope is not for the selected few with the unlimited many excluded regardless of what they do. Calvinism is a cold, cruel and calloused religion as it saves some and damns the many regardless of what they do or do not do.

Hope is a key word in both testaments. Christians have it; non-believers are total strangers to it because of their own choice relative to the matter. John Stuart Mill, 1806-1873, was an English philosopher and economist. He had one of the most brilliant minds of his day. I recall reading that he once said, *“I would give all I have and ever expect to have if for one hour of the day I could look up at the sky and call it heaven as I did when a boy.”* He had lost what philosophy and world renown could never replace. Life really has no purpose if all hope is gone. No HOPE! How dreadful beyond description these two words are.

John had hope. By faith he could look beyond the first heaven and know there is a third heaven where Deity and angels are and the redeemed shall be one day. There is a world of difference between first century John who believed and the nineteenth century John who disbelieved. John’s readers had hope. It was the hope of seeing Jesus and being with Him in heaven. Hope provided a marvelous motivation to keep them pure even as the Lord is pure. In such the Lord is our marvelous model. He is our powerful pattern of purity. The Greek tense here is continuous action—Christians keep on purifying

themselves even as he is pure. This does not mean sinless purity or absolute perfection with no flaws or faults. Passages in 1 John 1:8-10 and 1 John 2:1-2 make this crystal clear. If we continue to walk in the light as the Lord is in the light, the blood of Christ continues to keep us purified. We are active in this walk while the Lord also is active in the cleansing process.

Conclusion

By far the richest treasure we have on earth is sonship to Jehovah God. Compared to it all other earthly matters pale into utter insignificance. Thank God for this tremendous trio of verses in 1 John 3:1-3.

Endnotes

1 All quotations are from the KJV.

2 Robert R. Taylor, **Studies in First, Second and Third John** (Pulaski, TN: Sain Publications, 1994), pp. 27-28).

Robert R. Taylor, Jr.



A graduate of Freed-Hardeman, David Lipscomb and George Peabody College for Teachers. Preaching since 1949. Author of various excellent volumes. Involved in radio, television and prison works. Annually speaks in about a dozen meetings and two dozen lectureships. For over thirty years he has worked with the Ripley, TN church. Irene and Robert have two children and four precious grandchildren.

1 JOHN 3:1-3

Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:

2 John 9-11

This Chapter Written By

Barry Gilreath, Jr.

Introduction

A paradox can be defined as “something (as a person, condition, or act) with seemingly contradictory qualities or phases”. Paradoxes can be found in all venues of life. There are mathematical, scientific, economic and philosophical paradoxes. There are also paradoxes that are associated with literature including the Bible. One example is the teaching of the New Testament regarding baptism. One must die to sin in baptism so that one can be raised to life through baptism. Such a comparison is a paradox. The Bible is a source for many more.

The passages of scripture that will be addressed in this lecture can also serve as an example of a paradox. By examining this assigned section in this fashion, there is the opportunity to gain a greater appreciation for the beautiful truths contained in these verses. There are several seemingly contradictory qualities that will be presented in this lecture, yet as will be noted, they are in perfect harmony with one another. Such is the nature of the paradoxical approach.

Broad Yet Precise

"Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God..." (v. 9). The matter under consideration is broad in its application. The word *"whosoever"* means exactly that! Though John is writing specifically to Christians in this brief letter to warn them of deceivers and antichrists who would rob them of their reward (2 John 1-8), the amenability of all men to the doctrine of Christ can not be dismissed. In fact the very reason that John must warn these Christians of the diabolical deceivers is because men had not embraced the doctrine of Christ that would purify them unto the coming of the Lord. The very doctrine of Christ that Christians were to render subjection to in their daily lives, alien sinners were to be subject to as well.

Though the body of teaching was broad in its appeal to all men everywhere, it was yet paradoxically precise in its scope. All are amenable to the collection of teaching. No one is exempt. That is narrow. The doctrine of Christ is not all encompassing of anything and everything that a man may choose to embrace. It is Christ's doctrine and it alone is authoritative. Religious authority does not rest in the doctrine of Mohammed or the Dalai Lama. Men are not amenable to the teaching of Pope Benedict or Joseph Smith. Such men are more modern examples of those John noted who were the deceivers and antichrists in his day. All authority is in the possession of Jesus Christ the Son of God (Matt. 28:18). This is why the Lord said,

He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word

that I have spoken, the same shall judge
him in the last day (John 12:48).

Some have questioned the extent of the parameters of the doctrine of Christ by suggesting that such only referenced the doctrine about Christ as opposed to that which Christ taught. Such an interpretation does grave harm to the teaching of the passage and seeks to expand the constraints of the body of doctrine necessary for one's fellowship with God and His people. Brother Guy N. Woods writes,

The 'teaching of Christ' here is not teaching about Christ, or teaching which is Christian in substance or nature; it is the teaching which Christ did personally and through those whom he inspired. It is the teaching of Christ, because he is, in the final analysis, its author, and from him it was issued. It is thus an infallible standard, and no deviation from it is possible without apostasy.

The attempts that are made to cut away most of the teaching of Christ are the very things that the deceivers would have practiced in John's day. There were at that time those who believed in Christ's deity, yet rejected his lordship in their lives (John 12:42-43). The ancient, Jewish historian Josephus acknowledged the deity of Christ in a very public forum through His uninspired writings, yet Josephus rejected the lordship of Christ in his life. It would be false to assume that Josephus was in fellowship with Jehovah simply based upon a public confession that was lacking in submission to the whole of Christ's doctrine. Confession of Christ encompasses both our words and deeds. To focus on one aspect and

ignore the other is to fall prey to the trap of Satan. Brother Robert Taylor writes,

The doctrine of Christ here is the teaching of Christ since doctrine and teaching mean the same. It is not the doctrine of teaching about Christ contemplated here but the doctrine or teaching that Christ gave personally at first and later through his inspired apostles and prophets. The Deity of Christ is very much included in the doctrine or teaching of Christ but also included is all he taught personally and through his inspired representatives - the apostles and prophets.

Thus, the Apostle has demonstrated that the instruction is broad in its application in that it applied to everyone under the sun, yet the mandates were precise in their scope in that such obligation was limited to the doctrine of the Son of God as contained in the New Testament of Christ.

Condemning Yet Saving

Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son (v. 9).

Notice the paradoxical contrast between condemnation and salvation. Actions constituting a transgression (or as the phrase means to go beyond) or actions of obedience (referenced as abiding) in the doctrine of Christ would determine one's eternal home. The very same doctrine of Christ justifies one and condemns another. Like unto the water referenced

by Peter in 1 Peter 3:21 so it is with the doctrine of Christ. The very same water that destroyed the man of sin in Noah's time was also used to preserve the man of God. The doctrine of Christ will both judge the righteous and the unrighteous. It will condemn and yet save.

An interesting example relative to this paradox is penned by Paul in his first epistle to Timothy. Paul notes certain widows who will have damnation of their souls because they "*cast off their first faith*" (1 Tim. 5:12). Immediately following he specifies what portion of the doctrine of Christ they have cast off (v. 13). They become tattlers and busybodies. On the one hand it is the doctrine of Christ that saves them (1 Tim. 4:16), and yet on the other hand, it is the doctrine of Christ that will condemn them by the disregard of that precise teaching, casting off their faith.

Inclusive Yet Exclusive

If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds (10-11).

The doctrine of Christ is inclusive of all men. All men can partake of its truths. God would have all men to come to that knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4). He is not willing that any perish, but that all come to repentance (2 Pet. 2:9). This is indeed why the Gospel was commanded to be preached unto all nations (Matt. 28:18-20). For in every nation he that fears him and works righteousness is acceptable

to him (Acts 10:35). John says that if there come *“any”* unto you. Any man has the right to enter into fellowship with God and His people so long as one seeks to enter on God’s terms. No one is refused fellowship simply based upon their color, age, sex, race, or economic standing. These trivial factors have no influence upon what is about to be written by the Apostle. Had any of these matters been a dividing line, it would have been noted by the man of God.

The line of division is addressed in his continued statement. Though the doctrine is inclusive in that all can partake of its truths, it is also exclusive. It excludes those who would desire fellowship with God and His people apart from Christ’s doctrine. Of such men, the Apostle says that we can not receive them into our home, nor can we bid them God speed. The idea is that one who does provide such means or concessions embraces the man who carries a doctrine other than Christ’s. John is not teaching Christians to act unkind or inhospitable, but he is teaching Christians not to give any support or recommendation to the man who does not hold fast to the doctrine that has been delivered by the Holy Spirit (Gal. 1:6-9).

The final verse of consideration in this lecture offers a stern warning to those who would compromise on this teaching presented by John. As inclusive as is the doctrine of Christ towards men in respect to race, gender, sex, age, and economic standing, it is exclusive of those who do not value its precepts. Though God desires that all men be in His fellowship, such can not be granted apart from the reception of the doctrine of Christ. The doctrine

BARRY GILREATH, JR.

of Christ is the doorway to fellowship with God and His people. It is comprehensive in that it would include what the New Testament teaches concerning the basics of salvation, but it would also include those things that address our perfecting in Christ. The child of God who disregards this teaching concerning the basis of fellowship and extends the hand of union to the violator of Christ's doctrine, such a man becomes equally guilty of the sins of the perpetrator. He has broken the parameters of the body of teaching that saves and continues to save by ignoring Christ's doctrine as it relates to others.

Conclusion

2 John 9-11 is a short section of scripture housed in a short book of the New Testament. Yet as is often the case, small things can pack a powerful punch. John's brief epistle provides the opportunity to consider several powerful paradoxes concerning the doctrine of Christ. The doctrine of Christ is broad, yet precise. It is condemning, yet saving. It is inclusive, yet exclusive. May we all seek to abide in that doctrine of Christ so that we may enjoy the fellowship of God and His people, not only in this life, but most certainly in the life to come.

Barry Gilreath, Jr.



Barry serves the Highland congregation in Dalton, Georgia as their evangelist, as well as one of the five elders. Faithfully preaching the gospel for several years, he serves as the excellent host of the television program **Fabric Of The Family** on the **Gospel Broadcasting Network** (DISH and Direct networks). Barry and his good family are an asset to the brotherhood.

Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:

3 John 1-4

This Chapter Written By

James Boyd

This study will be to glean the divine message of the first four of the fourteen verses of the one chapter of the shortest book of the Bible according to word count. That book is Third John in the New Testament which is just a few words shorter than Second John though it has one more verse.

The author of this brief epistle is the same as the author of all the rest of the Bible; the Holy Spirit (2 Tim. 3:16, 17). The Holy Spirit used the vocabularies of a number of different inspired people to communicate God's message to the mind of mankind. In the instance of Third John there is strong evidence that the writer was John, the son of Zebedee, brother of James, and an apostle of Christ, although his name is not specifically mentioned. This conclusion is determined by the internal evidence of the book, the style of writing, the vocabulary and format of the letter, specific phrases and the theme of the book. Its frequent similarity to First and Second John as well as the Gospel according to John makes this conclusion reasonable. If the writer used by the Holy Spirit is not John the apostle, it

seems certain that the same writer wrote the four books just mentioned, plus the Book of Revelation. This matter is not of utmost importance, however, to learning the message God reveals in these fourteen verses.

The writer only identifies himself as "*the elder*." This could refer simply to one of advanced aged or possibly one who served in the office of an elder in the church. The term "*elder*" is used both ways in Scripture in different passages. It is most unlikely that the term is used to denote a title, especially since titles are not looked upon with pleasure in the Lord's church. "*Elder*" is not a title even when referring to the work of an elder, pastor, bishop, etc. There is no indication that the writer had any jurisdiction over the church attended by the recipient of the letter as an "*elder*" in that sense and elders had authority only over the flock among them. Furthermore, there is indication that the writer realizes his authority was much broader than a single congregation inasmuch as he speaks of matters brought "*before the church*" by brethren from different places (verse 5).

The Recipient Of The Letter

The one to whom the letter was sent was a man named Gaius. This was a common name often found among people like the name Bill or Joe is found among people today. There are several other people in the New Testament named Gaius but we have no reason to think this Gaius was any of the others. It is evident he was considered a spiritual child of the writer who may have made great contribution toward the conversion of Gaius to Christ, much like Paul considered Timothy as his son in the gospel

(1 Tim. 1:18). As Second John was written to a faithful Christian lady, this epistle is written to a faithful brother and is designed to both encourage and congratulate Gaius for being the kind of person he was.

The writer refers to him as Gaius the beloved. The word "*beloved*" is used four times in this short book and twice in the first two verses. It conveys a tender address of brotherly love for a fellow Christian. Gaius was loved for truth's sake, his good life, his faithfulness in teaching, his helpfulness of brethren and Christ-like manners. The concepts of love and truth are found often in this writing as they are in the other books assumed to have been written by John. While this short letter contains words of rebuke regarding another, it shows a positive stamp of approval by John for Gaius. Such a commendation would be cherished by anyone.

That which seemed to have triggered this writing was a report John had received concerning Gaius. He had heard the same report about him more than once which shows that what is reported was a constant quality rather than a singular situation. The truth was in him, his religion sincere, he was devoted to God, a man of charity, liberality and beneficence toward his brethren in supplying their needs, his exhibited kindness to the poor and hospitality to Christian strangers. He showed his faith and love by his deeds. (The "*strangers*," mentioned in verse five, were likely brethren who were traveling about spreading the gospel and who would often stand in need of hospitality and care by other brethren.) All this was noteworthy testimony regarding the man Gaius. Those who gave this report were not

unmindful of the good qualities of Gaius and did not hesitate to let John know what a fine brother in Christ he was. Gaius was appreciated. Should not good brethren be appreciated by us all today? He stood in great contrast to Diotrophes.

To Prosper

John's wish for Gaius was that "*thou mayest prosper.*" The word "*prosper*" literally means to be led along a good road, to get along well and succeed. John was interested in his material and spiritual prosperity. From this we can learn that it is not wrong to prosper in temporal affairs and material matters. We should want that for ourselves and our brethren. Do we not wish to avoid being a burden upon others for our physical provision and care? Do we not want good physical health? There should be concern for both body and soul. While we know that "*bodily exercise profiteth little*" compared to spiritual good health, it is proper that we aspire to good physical health also. We must always keep in mind which is the more important of the two. We read much in Scripture where there have been those who were materially prosperous but spiritually bankrupt. We make a serious mistake to think that material prosperity is a measure of our standing before God spiritually. Some of the more wicked people on earth are materially wealthy beyond measure. Some of the finest servants of God have been and are those who have been deprived of material things even to the point of suffering. Did not Christ teach concerning those who fail to lay up treasures in heaven but "*layeth treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God?*" (Luke 12:21). Some things we might consider good

and bad are not really that way. Wealth can be the ruin of us if we do not learn to be righteous stewards. Paul had a *“thorn in the flesh”* that made him humble and increased his ability to be an effective servant of God. Doubtless, the prosperous estate of the soul is of primary importance.

When is the soul in good health? The soul that prospers presupposes regeneration and forgiveness of sins by obedience to the commands of the gospel. It means being in a saved relationship with Christ. The soul prospers when there is a constant concern for the welfare of the inward man, growth in spiritual qualities, laying up spiritual treasures, attending to spiritual matters as the work and worship assigned the Christian. A soul prospers when it grows in the grace and knowledge of Christ and magnifies His name by living a righteous life. It is evident in the way and manner one deals and treats his brethren and all others around him. When people can see Christ in a person because of his imitation of Him then this indicates the prosperity of the soul. This is that for which John desired for Gaius and at the time of this epistle the soul of Gaius was prospering because he walked in truth. To walk in truth is to be a disciple of Christ who obeys His teaching in his daily life.

This letter emphasizes the Christian’s relationship with Christ and his other brethren. It shows that Gaius possessed that which the Lord desired for His disciples. *“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another”* (John 13:35). Gaius was a living demonstration of the *“new commandment”* of which John had written in other writings.

What John learned about Gaius brought him great joy. This we can easily understand. It is always a joy to learn of the faithfulness of good brethren. It is a source of encouragement and satisfaction. As suggested earlier, John may have contributed greatly to the conversion of Gaius and how pleased he must have been to discover how Gaius was remaining true to the faith and growing and serving as a child of God. Gaius was not *“wood, hay or stubble”* but *“gold, silver, and precious stones”* (1 Cor. 3:12). It is true even yet that when we have been so fortunate as to have some influence in bringing another to Christ, or be associated with some good brother, then be removed from them possibly for an extended time, and then be able to renew association and find out how loyal and dedicated to the way of God they have been through the years. That brings a profound and deep joy of heart.

An Immeasurable Joy

John wrote, *“I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth”* (3 John 4). Thinking of this verse in the sense of our own fleshly children, can there be any more wonderful and consoling blessing we can enjoy in this life than the knowledge that they are walking in truth? Is there a blessing of greater import for us than this? Is not this a harvest of bounty for that father and mother who have reared their children in the ways of the Lord and the children stay solidly in the paths of truth?

To be able to enjoy this blessing takes a huge measure of toil and prayer. The rearing of our children is of utmost supremacy. But the toils of the road will seem nothing if they walk the ways

of truth. We should work and pray that brethren everywhere may reap the benefit of joy of which John speaks with such fervor and certainty.

John underscores for the reader the magnitude of Christian fellowship, brotherly love, the necessity of living in the truth, loving each other, and rejoicing in the result.

What We Can Easily Learn

This account about John and Gaius was not written just so we could know about this relationship. While it deals with actual people of the long ago who were Christians, and that within itself stirs interest in our minds, this passage is for our learning as is true of all the Scriptures. It conveys to us certain teaching of the will of Christ that we need to know and make application in our own lives and in our own day. After all, we serve the same Master as did they. We seek the same eternal home as they. What do we learn from this?

1. Do we not see the glory of brotherly love in Christ? Is not this a demonstration that teaches us how we are to be disciples of Christ and are to be known for the love we have for each other? Love is one of the marks of identification of a disciple of the Lord

2. We can know there is such a thing as truth. Not only that, but we can walk or live according to that truth. That fact necessitates our knowledge of the truth. How could we walk in the truth if it did not exist and we could not know it? This refutes the skeptic.

3. John tells us that having material and physical prosperity is not evil but something we should desire for ourselves and the brethren. It is right to want good

things for our brethren even in this life. Of course, such prosperity is to always be compatible with the Lord's guidelines regarding material things.

4. Spiritual prosperity is far more important than earthly wealth and gain. Sadly, there are those whose emphasis in life seems to be on the material side of life even to the neglect of the soul and a saved relationship with God.

5. Some brethren carried a good report to John about Gaius. That was a noble action on their part. Obviously Gaius had worked hard to develop a good reputation among the brethren. Both are to be commended for the encouragement they gave each other and the appreciation they had for one another. We should be of the same mind.

6. Can we measure the extent of joy that rises in our hearts when we know others are striving to live a life according to the truth? Especially is this true when the one walking in truth is very near and dear to us, such as our own children.

So much good and benefit for us is found wrapped up in these four short verses of this short epistle. It goes a long way toward accomplishing its goal; namely, that we be faithful followers of the Lord who bought us with His blood.

James Boyd



James was born April 15, 1930 ~ Reared in Donelson, TN ~ Attended David Lipscomb College; Vanderbilt University; Alabama Christian School of Religion ~ Began preaching in 1952 ~ Local work in Indiana, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi ~ Married Rosalyn Hale ~ Four children; nine grandchildren ~ Lives in McMinnville, TN (since 1985).

Modern Application Of An Ancient Text:

Titus 2:3-5

This Chapter Written By

Sarah Richey

Andrew Dickson White once said -

If the time should ever come when women are not Christians and houses are not homes, then we shall have lost the chief cornerstone on which Christianity rests.

Christian ladies have a great influence in the home, in the church and in the world. We are important to God's work. God has given us the honor and privilege of serving Him in special ways, that of wife, mother and grandmother. We were created for a special purpose. There is great joy and contentment to be found in doing the work God has planned for us.

The Bible gives us many good examples to follow -

- Mary and Martha showed hospitality to Jesus (Luke 10:38-39).
- Dorcas was "*full of good works*" (Acts 9:36).
- Priscilla helped her husband teach (Acts 18:26).
- Timothy's mother and grandmother taught Timothy the way of the Lord (2 Tim. 1 & 3).

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- Ruth and Naomi are examples of a good relationship (Ruth 2 & 3).
- Moses' mother went to great lengths to care for her baby boy (Exo. 2:1-10).
- Jesus' mother, taught Him as a child to know the law of God (Luke 2).

We, too, teach by our example. What is in your life may be reproduced in others' lives. Our example will teach one way or another—for good or for bad. You teach far more by your actions than by what you say.

A good example can teach someone

- to go the *"second mile"*.
- to live close to God every day.
- to tell the truth, at all costs.
- how to be in the world but not *"of the world"*.
(Rom. 12:2, 1 John 2:15-16)
- how to get along with others.
- how to accept responsibility.

Our text is Titus 2:3-5. In the beginning of this chapter, Paul gives Titus some guidelines for the older men. Then in verse three, he turns his attention to the older women. Clearly the apostle Paul understood the power of a good example. He wants the older Christian women to be good examples for the younger women.

...the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things—that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their

children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers,
good, obedient to their own husbands, that
the word of God may not be blasphemed
(Titus 2:3-5, NKJ).

Love For Our Children

Paul says the older women should teach and encourage the younger women to love their husbands and love their children. Must we actually teach a young mother to love her children? Doesn't the love for a child come natural to a mother? Unfortunately, it doesn't always. Parents do not always love their children in the way they should. Consider the father who sexually abuses his young daughter. Or, consider the mother who drowns her children in a bathtub. These things do happen! Even in good homes, too often we see some form of abuse. There is often verbal abuse. There are selfish parents who think they have no time in their lives to do things with and for their children. Neglect is abuse!

Children need us! They need our time and our love! If we have a sincere love for children, we will care about them as a soul and we will spend time helping them learn about God. I believe children today need us more than children ever have needed us. The world in which our children live is a more frightening place than ever we dreamed possible when we were children!

Children need someone! They need someone to be a pure, positive and powerful influence. They need someone to care enough about them to teach them about God, showing them the way to Heaven. Our children are precious gifts from God. They are growing up in a world where there are millions of

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alcoholics and drugs are everywhere. We live in a world that says it's against the law to kill an unborn eagle but it's not against the law to kill an unborn child. It's a world where millions of babies now living were born out of wedlock. The world thinks nothing of divorce! In today's world, living together without marriage is no longer called "*living in sin*"; it is now called "*co-habitation*." The world tells us that pornography is not sin; it's adult entertainment. Opposing such things is no longer considered a good thing in our politically correct society. Instead, when we oppose such, we are often labeled as intolerant, bigoted and hateful. The world has become so twisted in thought that evil things are called good things. Our children can be fooled and will suffer the consequences!

We have so much in the world and yet we have so little! I believe the greatest need we have today is to teach our children the word of God. Nothing is more important! How sad it is to see our children grow up and turn away from God.

Every child is a blessing from God and deserves the very best we can give them!

Our children are not just children. They are the future church. They are future elders, deacons, preachers, Bible class teachers, husbands, wives, fathers and mothers. They are the future church! The life of the church depends on our children and how well they know God. If we fail to teach our children, we fail in everything.

No wonder Paul says in Titus 2 that the older

women should teach the younger women to love their children because in loving their children, they will take proper care in rearing those children. Their lives will be founded on the principles of Christianity. They will do honor to the gospel (1 Cor. 10:31). The word of God will not be blasphemed (Titus 2:5).

Choosing Our Words Carefully

Another thing we learn from Paul in Titus 2 is that Christian women are not to be slanderers. We are not to be talebearers, false accusers or malicious gossipers (James 3). Our words are powerful! We must be very careful as we choose our words. What we say can tear down or build up. Don't you want to be on a construction team rather than a demolition team? If you say only good things about others, you will never need to whisper, as does a talebearer or gossip.

Being overly critical of someone can crush that person's spirit. I've heard it said that it takes a hundred times of praise to offset one unjust criticism. We need to love more and judge less. Don't judge a person by the clothes they wear. Don't judge by their inappropriate behavior. Often those that seem to deserve our love the very least need our love the very most.

Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring. One act of goodness surpasses a thousand *"best wishes."* We should be eager to help, strengthen and encourage others. Galatians 6:10 teaches us to do just that *"as we have opportunity."*

Reverent In Our Behavior

Paul also emphasizes in Titus 2 that as women, we are to be reverent in our behavior. We are to be sober, discreet and chaste.

To be sober is to be full of self-control. Our moral judgment will be sound. We will be alert and ready to guard against Satan's attacks.

To be discreet means we will use good judgment in our conduct and speech. We will have a calm disposition. We will be kind. Anger can be your worst enemy. It is bad for your heart and spirit and can cause hardening of the attitudes. Kindness is a language that the deaf can hear, the blind can see and the mute can speak.

To be chaste is to be inwardly pure. This purity will affect our outward conduct. We will be innocent of sexual impurity in desire, action and imagination.

None of us would deny that it's a tremendous challenge to be a Christian lady in today's society. The world today would have us play by entirely different standards than Paul gives us in Titus 2. The world tries to tell us how to dress—to get attention. The world encourages us to lie or cheat—to get ahead. The world says we should "*have a good time*"—in ways that God condemns.

Our society places so much emphasis on youth and physical beauty. God places emphasis on inner beauty. 1 Peter 3:3-4 says "*Do not let your adornment be merely outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold or putting on fine apparel—rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.*" Let us never forget—goodness is always beautiful and

sin is always ugly. Your self-worth is not determined by the way you look nor is it determined by your age. What is important to God is how you live your life.

As Christian ladies, trying to live for God, we may be like a car in that we may need a *"tune-up"* now and then. We might not need a *"major overhaul"* but a spiritual tune-up is in order. The tools we need for this *"tune-up"* are Bible study and prayer. No matter how busy our life is, we must take time to talk to God. We must allow time for God to talk to us through His word. Too often, we give God the leftovers of our time. Through Bible study and prayer, God will help us when we are tempted. We will make better decisions. We will find strength when we are weak and comfort when we are troubled. As Christian ladies, we make many decisions every day. Some of these decisions are difficult and some are even frightening. We need God's help every day. Bible study and prayer will bring us closer to God.

Will we get discouraged along the way? Absolutely, we will. One of Satan's most powerful tools is discouragement. Satan knows that if we get discouraged, it's very possible that we will defeat ourselves. Even Jesus became discouraged. Surely He was discouraged when the twelve He had chosen to do His work after His death didn't even understand who He really was and what He really was about. Judas betrayed Jesus. Peter denied Him. Thomas doubted Him. What did Jesus do at such times? Often, He went somewhere to be alone and He talked to His Father. What can we do when we are discouraged? We can spend time alone and

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talk to our Father in heaven. Remember, when you lose your grip on life, God doesn't lose His grip on you!

Will we be criticized? Absolutely, we will! We get tired. We get discouraged and we fall victim to unjust criticism. The only way to avoid criticism is to say nothing, do nothing and be nothing! Criticism is inevitable when you're doing good things. The important question is how should we handle criticism? We should always try to learn from criticism and then we should forget it. Criticism will either make you bitter or better. The choice is ours.

Christian ladies doing their best to serve God will become discouraged. We will be criticized and we will have trials and sorrows. We don't choose our circumstances but we do choose our attitudes toward these circumstances. Bad things do happen to good people. The book of Job proves that. The Lord may allow things in our lives that are much too hard for us to understand. We haven't been promised an easy life. Plain and simple, life is not always fair.

Struggles, temptations and trials come in many forms. Perhaps there's a parent who has Alzheimer's or a child who has gone astray. Maybe someone you love has a short time to live. There could be an unfaithful spouse, the death of a small child, a tragic accident or maybe you have lost your home. Do we always understand such tragedies? Sometimes we simply don't understand.

We may not face such tragedies as those just mentioned but rather there may be in our lives an unreasonable person, an unforgiving person, unfair judgment or extreme physical pain. Emotional pain or

physical pain can change who we are. It can take away our sense of humor. It can wipe out our faith. Pain can kill your determination to endure. Unrelenting pain can be unbearable. We must determine that there's not enough sorrow, pain or grief in this life to take us away from God! Sometimes, God is all we have left. Why would we even think of leaving Him? What a tragedy it would be to quit in "*the heat of the battle.*" The Israelites knew the blessings of God and they knew the curse of not following God. God gives us love, mercy, grace, strength, comfort and courage so we can endure our battles. We have to choose carefully, think wisely and act forcefully.

I like to think of it this way—real peace doesn't come from the absence of suffering. Real peace comes from the presence of God when you are suffering. Sometimes God calms the storms in our lives but sometimes He lets the storms rage and He calms His child. Do we have enough faith and trust in God to allow Him to take care of us according to His will; to do what He thinks best with our lives? The trials we have may be just what we need to make us stronger and ultimately help us to reach our goal. God's way is always best—even when we don't understand.

Do we talk to God about our problems? Often times, the biggest problem in our lives is not unanswered prayers but unoffered prayers! If your problems aren't big enough to pray about, they certainly aren't big enough to fret or worry about.

Even if we don't always understand, we must be willing to allow God to use whatever comes our way for a greater good that we might not understand now. Perhaps we need to stop thinking about how

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big the storm in our life is and remember just how big our God is.

We are assured in Romans 8:28 that “...*all things work together for good to those that love God*” and in Romans 8:18 “...*the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed to us.*”

Indeed as the beautiful old song says -

Heaven will surely be worth it all,
Worth all the sorrows that here befall;
After this life with all its strife;
Heaven will surely be worth it all!

Sarah Richey



For years Sarah conducted **Teacher's Workshops** throughout the country. Speaker on many ladies day programs. Author of **Creative Bible Teaching** (two volumes) and **Singing With Visuals**. Compiler of children's songs (cassette tape). An inspiration to all. Sarah is married to Elbert Richey (48 years). They have four daughters with indescribably precious grandchildren.