



The Reflector

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Keep Both Eyes Open

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Many religious people have a one-eyed approach to religion. They can only fully see one or the other side of a two-sided proposition. One needs to open both eyes so he can bring both sides into focus into one big picture. There are several areas where we need to keep both eyes wide open.

The Goodness and Severity of God

“Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God ...” (Rom. 11:22). Too many people only have one eye open when looking at this picture. Those who can see only the goodness of God live without the fear needed to serve God. While those who focus only on the severity of God live with an inordinate amount of fear of God.

God has amply demonstrated his goodness toward us. He created us in His image (Gen. 1:27). He sacrificed his Son to save us (John 3:16). He has offered all men salvation from sin (Mark 16:15, 16). He has blessed Christians with all spiritual blessings in Christ (Eph. 1:3). He is the author of eternal salvation for those who obey him (Heb. 5:8,9).

God has also adequately demonstrated his severity in the punishment for sin. In the Old Testament, because of sin he drove Adam and Eve from the garden and the tree of life, sent the great flood upon the earth, destroyed Sodom and Gomorah, consumed Nadab and Abihu with fire, and did not permit Moses to enter the promise land. In the New Testament, He killed Ananias and Saphira for lying, and caused Herod to be eaten of worms.

We must understand that while God abundantly rewards obedience, he also severely punishes the disobedient.

Faith and Works

Many of the Protestant reformers had a one-eyed approach to salvation. Perhaps they were over-reacting to the old medieval church’s elaborate system of working out one’s salvation. As a result most Protestant churches teach salvation by faith only. They have difficulty opening the other eye and seeing that a certain kind of works also plays a part in salvation. “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a

man is justified, and not by faith only.” (Jas. 2:14-24).

Our salvation is not by faith only or by works only. It is by faith that works by love (Gal. 5:6).

Grace and Law

A goodly number of people have one eye so focused on the grace of God that they cannot see that Christians are under any kind of law. After all does not John 1:17 say that “the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.” Does this mean that the law given by Moses was totally without grace? And that the system of Jesus Christ is totally without law? Hardly.

There was some room for grace even under the law of Moses. “Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found **grace** in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find **grace** in thy sight: and consider that this nation is thy people. And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest. And he said unto him, If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence. For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found **grace** in thy sight? Is it not in that thou goest with us? So shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth. And the LORD said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found **grace** in my sight, and I know thee by name. And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory. And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy. (Exodus 33:13-19).

John 1:17 is not teaching that there was no truth nor grace under Moses. When one views the context he can see that Jesus is talking about truth and grace in their fullness. “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. John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is pre-

ferred before me: for he was before me. And of his **fulness** have all we received, and grace for grace (vv. 14-16) (All emphasis mine - eob).

The system of Christ is not grace without law, but grace within law. We are “not without law to God, but under law to Christ” (1 Cor. 9:21). We will be judged by law – the law of liberty, but law none the less (Jas. 2:12). We must strive to keep the law of Christ, but wherein we fail we have access to the grace of Christ (1 John 2:1). We should not expect to be covered by the grace of God while continuing to wilfully sin (Rom. 6:1-2; Heb. 10:26-29).

Sharpness and Gentleness

Brethren sometimes have a one-eyed approach to dealing with brethren who err. With some it must always be with gentleness. With others, the only way is with sharpness. The Bible teaches that both approaches are needed, depending on attitudes and circumstances. We are told in some cases to restore with gentleness or meekness (Gal. 6:1), and in other cases to “rebuke sharply” (Tit. 1:13). Gal. 6:1 is dealing with one “overtaken” or surprised rather one who wilfully walks headlong into sin. According to Vine “overtaken” suggests one caught of guard as opposed to premeditated sin. In this case gentleness is called for. But for the one who is deliberately and wilfully in sin sharpness is called for.

We are told to “warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all. (1 Thess. 5:14) In many cases the overt action of the sin may be the same, the method of dealing with it may differ widely depending on the circumstance. Let us say there is a sister in the congregation who is not attending services as she should. If it is determined that it is because she is unruly – she knows her duty but (demonstrates a “spirit of insubordination” – Vine), then she should be sternly warned and if after sufficient warning she does not repent withdraw from her (2 Thess. 3:6). However, if she is merely weak in the faith and is willing to learn she needs support and teaching. If

because of the difficulty she has in dealing with a husband, who opposes her every effort to attend the services and may even mentally and physically mistreat her, she has become very discouraged (fainthearted). She is wondering if it is worth all the abuse to attend faithfully. She needs comforting.

This is the principle taught by Jude: “And of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh. (vv. 22, 23).

Security and Danger

Some professed Christians see no danger in being lost, while others feel no assurance of salvation. In each case, they need to open both eyes and see the total picture. There is a danger that children of God can depart or fall away from Him and be lost and they are so warned. Thus, they are told to “take heed” lest this happen (1 Cor. 10:12; Heb. 3:12).

Yet, one must not let the possibility of this happening rob him of the assurance that he should have in Christ. We are assured that God will help us in overcoming temptation so that we will not fall. He will provide for us a way of escape (1 Cor. 10:13). We must be willing to take the escape route. He promises us that if we do certain things that we will never fall (2 Pet. 1:10) and that by being faithful unto death that we will receive the crown of life (Rev. 2:10) He has also assured us that if we will confess our sins that we will be forgiven (1 John 1:9).

If one has an eye open only to the danger of falling (not seeing the promises) his life as a Christian will be miserable. On the other hand, if he only has an eye open to the promises (not seeing the dangers) his life will be one of false security. He must be aware of both.

So, let us keep both eyes open and see the total picture.

“Render Unto Caesar”

Amy Russell

Then they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Him in order to trap Him in a statement. They came and said to Him, “Teacher, we know that You are truthful and defer to no one; for You are not partial to any, but teach the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to pay a poll-tax to Caesar, or not? “Shall we pay or shall we not pay?” But He, knowing their hypocrisy, said to them, “Why are you testing Me? Bring Me a denarius to look at.” They brought one. And He said to them, “Whose likeness and inscription is this?” And they said to Him, “Caesar’s.” And Jesus said to them, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” And they were amazed at Him. (Mark 12:13-17)

We often use Jesus’ teaching in the passage above

to show that we have both the authority and the duty to pay taxes to civil government. As Christians we do not want to neglect our duty to our government. However, Jesus’ statement implies that we have an even greater obligation: Render ... to God the things that are God’s.

The Roman coin Jesus used to teach the lesson bore the image of Caesar, indicating that ultimately it belonged to Caesar. Similarly, we bear the image of our Creator thus, belonging to Him. Just as the Roman government demanded taxes of its citizens, God demands that we fulfill certain obligations to Him.

While all things belong to God by virtue of his Creatorship, human beings are created in the image of God, distinct from all other creatures (Ps. 24:1; Gen. 1:26-27). Christians belong to God in another sense as

well. We are His not only because He made us, but also because He bought us (I Cor. 6:20; I Pet. 1:18, 19). God paid the price for our redemption, enabling us to take on the image of His Son (Col. 3:10; Rom. 8:29). Having been created and re-created by God, we must do our best to meet the obligation embodied in our relationship to Him.

At the very least, we owe to the Creator our praise, adoration, and worship. The very act of creation entitles Him to adoration and exaltation (Ps. 148:5-6; 139:14). Like the Psalmist, we should be constantly aware of the wonders of our existence and, as Christians, conscious of our redemption. Being mindful of what the Lord has done for us causes such gratitude and love that praise for Him will be a natural part of our daily lives (Heb. 13:15).

Our salvation also makes us debtors to others. Paul felt this obligation and it motivated him to preach the gospel (Rom. 1:14-15). A similar feeling of duty led the early Christians to help their needy brethren (Rom. 15:26-27). Having received abundant spiritual blessings from our Father, we should be willing to share both our spiritual and temporal blessings with those in need. To do so fulfills a responsibility to God as well as to our neighbor (Heb. 13:16).

Our gratitude and love for God also inspire our faithful obedience to Him (1 Jn. 5:3; Jn. 14:15) Jesus taught that the entire old law hinged on love for God and for others (Matt. 22:36-40). Likewise, a Christian's love for God and Christ is the essential element in her life; as new creature in Christ, she lives to do the will of God (2 Cor. 5:14-17). Jesus taught in Luke 17:10 that even if we do all that God commands we are still "unworthy slaves." In our efforts to give to God those things due Him we should be constantly seeking for ways to serve Him.

How we are able to offer up praise and worship, to share with others, and to faithfully obey the Lord each

day? The answer is found in our original text, "Render ... to God the things that are God's." When we became Christians we gave ourselves to be bondservants (slaves) of God (Rom. 6:16-17). By constantly reaffirming our commitment to Him, we equip ourselves for further service. The saints at Macedonia were able to give "beyond their ability" because "they first gave themselves to the Lord" (2 Cor. 8:3-5). The process involves both our minds and our bodies – we "present [our] bodies as living sacrifices" as we renew our minds, bringing our way of thinking into accordance with God's (Rom. 12:1-2).

We are reminded often of the taxes we are required to pay to the government. Similarly, we must make a conscious daily effort to give to the Lord what is His due. The penalties for our delinquency in this area are much more severe, but the rewards for fulfilling our responsibility are far greater.

[The writer of this good article is our granddaughter-in-law (wife of Stephen).]

[Via South Brundidge Street Church of Christ, Troy, AL Website](#)

