



The Bulletin

A Publication of the church of Christ at Colonial Heights

“Seeking Bible
authority for
all things.”

Volume 8, Number 1

February 15, 2015

BE SOBER, BE VIGILANT!

By Rodney Pitts

I present the above title as an exhortation for everyone who is seeking to be a disciple of Christ. I do so in connection with the warning of 1 Peter 5:8 that states, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” In this passage Peter is telling us that the world we live in is a dangerous place. This is true not because Islamic terrorists seek to harm our physical lives, but because Satan himself wants to personally destroy each and every soul, especially those of Christians. Knowing this to be true, it would be quite foolish to live our lives flippantly, giving little thought to the enemy that wars against us and the perils he places before us! So, with this in mind I want to consider what is involved in this aspect of our service to Christ.

Sobriety and Diligence

As a member of Christ’s body and a “good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2 Timothy 2:3), we are to take Peter’s command to be sober and vigilant very seriously. **Sobriety** is defined as to “be free from every form of mental and spiritual ‘drunkenness’, from excess, passion, rashness, confusion, etc., be well-balanced, self-controlled” (*BDAG*, p. 538). In other words, mental sharpness and clarity of thought as to one’s situation and duty in Christ are continually needed for a Christian to remain unharmed by Satan’s assaults. **Vigilance** is defined as to “keep awake...be on the alert, be watchful...keep one’s eyes wide open” (*BDAG*, p. 167). From these words we learn that Christians are not only think clearly about their spiritual situation, but must also put that sober thinking into watchful action. A soldier who is on guard duty or out on pa-

trol is of no value to the cause if that soldier is drunk, distracted, or has little appreciation for the gravity of his position and how it relates to the safety of those whose lives depend on him! And, the same is true for a soldier of Christ. Paul told Timothy, “Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you” (1 Timothy 4:16). Therefore, a Christian who has little knowledge of what the will of Christ is, and who is not being diligent to study the word that he might fulfill his duty properly, in all truthfulness has no real appreciation for the battle he is fighting and is going to be easy pickings for Satan and his army to “devour” (2 Timothy 2:15; Ephesians 6:10-17).

Know that the world is a spiritually hostile place

Without a thorough understanding of the conditions in which one lives and fights for the cause of Christ, it is far less likely that the effort Christ demands will be applied to the exercising of sobriety and vigilance in one’s life. So, just as a soldier must be constantly reminded by his commander to watch for the dangers that lurk about the battlefield, we too must be reminded not to become complacent, understanding that the world we live in is a spiritually hostile place. We cannot trust the world to be friendly toward righteousness, seeing that it is under the power of Satan. John states, “We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies *under the sway of the wicked one*” (1 John 5:19). Unfortunately, this approach must also

(Continued on page 2)

be taken towards those of the world that claim to be followers of Christ, seeing that not all who claim to be are, in fact, true disciples. Jesus warned, “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves (Matthew 7:15) and ‘Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven” (Matthew 7:21). So, not everyone is who they claim to be. How, then, do we determine whether a person truly knows God and is one of His people? John says, “Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him” (1 John 2:3-5).

To illustrate the need for constant sobriety and vigilance in our spiritual warfare, I would like to share a recent discovery I made while working with a computer Bible program called **theWord** (www.theWord.net). Although the program represents countless hours of work sacrificed by its creator(s), is provided free of charge, and can be quite helpful in one’s study of the Scriptures in that it allows very convenient access to various translations of the Bible as well as the definitions of both Hebrew and Greek words, even in this setting Satan has his hand. For, as I was examining Acts 3 for a study I was to attend, I noticed that the word “that” in the phrase of Acts 3:19 translated “**that** your sins may be blotted out” is the Greek word “eis,” which is also found in Acts 2:38, where it is translated as “for” in the phrase “**for** the forgiveness/remission of sins.” What caught my eye, however, was the definition of this word found in the abbreviated *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon* provided free of charge with the program. For, after giving the standard definitions of “into, unto, to, towards, for, among” that are actually found in the hard copy of *Thayer’s* in my library, the definition went on to say that *eis* in the Greek “could have two meanings. If you saw a poster saying ‘Jesse James wanted for robbery’, ‘for’ could mean Jesse is wanted so he can commit a robbery, or is wanted because he has committed a robbery. The later sense is the correct one. So too in this passage, the word ‘for’ signifies an action in

the past. Otherwise, it would violate the entire tenor of the NT teaching on salvation by grace and not by works.” So, there you have it—a nifty little illustration about Jesse James given by Joseph Henry Thayer himself to show how “eis” does not actually mean *into, unto, to, towards, or for*, but is to instead be understood to mean “because of,” and that it actually “signifies an action in the past”! Well, there are only two problems with this illustration. First, Henry Thayer never put this illustration in the lexicon bearing his name! I have checked it out, along with others, and there is no mention of Jesse James whatsoever. Second, the illustration gives a meaning to *eis* that is not even hinted at in the extensive treatment given this word in *Thayer’s Lexicon*. The truth is that someone added these words because they knew the damage this word’s proper definition can do to the prevailing view of baptism in connection with the Calvinistic view of “salvation by grace through faith.” For, the author(s) of this spurious illustration and explanation go on to explain their motivation for adding these words by saying, “*Otherwise, it would violate the entire tenor of the NT teaching on salvation by grace and not by works.*” So, even within what is supposed to be an unbiased biblical study tool, you have dishonest people trying to pawn off their doctrine as being the words of someone trusted in the field of Greek scholarship. And, what is even more disturbing is the number of people that likely accepted this illustration as true and were led into false doctrine! So, my friends, take the world and all its claims with a grain of salt. And, be ever aware of Satan’s attempt to deceive and destroy you. Never, ever forget God’s warning to “Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called ‘Today,’ lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end” (Hebrews 3:12-14). Sound harsh? Maybe. But, the battle for our souls is harsh. It is a struggle between eternal life and death. Do not attempt to fight it unaware and unprepared! ■

Practice Hospitality