

Rom. 14:19 So then let us follow after things which make for peace, and things whereby we may edify one another.

John 8:32 and ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.

THE LENEXA EDIFIER

DECEMBER

29

2019

TRUE DISCIPLES STICK TO IT

by Jim Stauffer

Last week we attempted to reflect on the past year with attention given to our attempts to grow by way of Bible Study and our efforts to communicate the gospel message to others.

As the apostle Paul felt near to the end of his life on earth, he made the following statement. *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing."* (2 Tim. 4:7,8) He not only looked back at the previous year, but at his life in its totality. His consummate expression concerning his efforts to grow and communicate the gospel to others was he had *fought the good fight*.

Living a life of walking in the steps of our Lord is not an easy thing to do. Paul says it is a fight. He is saying it requires that we contend, compete, labor if you will in order to win the fight or struggle. We will spend a great deal of time in conflict with those who do not follow in His steps.

As he fought this fight, he mentioned another aspect of it. He not only was willing to take up the fight, but he was able to sustain it in order to *finish the course*. It is not only necessary to be willing to fight against the enemies of the cross, it is imperative that we persevere. That we run the race, if you will, to its completion. The course is our lifetime. Accomplishment is the same as he expressed. It is finishing. There is no accomplishment unless we sustain our effort all the way to the end of the course.

Paul uses three phrases in this text that while expressing the idea in different terms do so with equal value. Fighting the fight and finishing the course are equal to having *kept the faith*. He continued in, guarded over, preserved or sustained the faith all the way through the course of his life. We look at his life and we concur with his analysis expressed in this text. We therefore also conclude he followed the admonition of **Jude 3**, *"Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt*

compelled to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to God's holy people."

He has provided us with a portrait of faithfulness. There are so many examples in our daily lives of faithfulness that we understand clearly while often failing to apply those examples to our spirituality. We have our favorite vehicle that we praise for its faithfulness in transporting us as we go about our duties. We praise it because it starts each time we turn the ignition switch. If it were a 50/50 chance it would start each day we would not be happy at all. Our description of that vehicle would not be of our trustworthy car or truck. We would complain about its unreliable nature.

We must then judge our faithfulness by the same standard. Are we ready and active in each situation the Lord provides? Do our brethren depend upon us when in time of need because of our reliability? Is the Lord pleased because we have *fought the good fight, finished the course, kept the faith*? Or are we the one our brethren are always calling to see where we were when it was time for worship or time to attend to the needs of one of our brothers, or teach someone who was in need of instruction in His word?

Paul looked at his life of service from an objective angle and concluded *there is in store for me the crown of righteousness*. That crown of righteousness was waiting for him because he had *fought the good fight*. He had been one who could be called faithful.

God has called us through the gospel (**Mat. 11:28-30; 2 Thess. 2:13,14**). The redeemed are the recipients of the grace of God, which is the result of His mercy that emanates from His great love for us, His creation (**Eph. 2:4-6**). We are, as a result of His grace, privileged to be called the children of God (**1 Joh. 3:1**). Peter tells us we have been redeemed to walk in the steps of Jesus, *"For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps,"* (**1 Pet. 2:21**) Are we keeping the faith, brethren?

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The 'Absolute'

One of the things buzzing about in my mind for the last several weeks is what I call, "The Absolute Nature" of God. My dictionary tells me that the word 'absolute' means: "1. Perfect 2. complete; whole 3. Not mixed; pure 4. Not limited: unrestricted: as an absolute ruler 5. Positive, certain 6. Actual; real 7 Without reference to anything else". All of these help us to understand God's nature and to understand this is to begin to understand several things written in the Scriptures about our God.

In Genesis God told Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, *"Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die"* (3:2,3). To men today this looks like a drastic penalty for such a small thing but that is failing to appreciate the gravity of the situation. God had but finished speaking the Universe into existence, an act of Absolute Power. He had but breathed into man the breath of life, an Act of Absolute Charity. He was setting down the Basis of Rule for the Whole of Time, an act of Absolute Necessity, by making an Absolute Prohibition and decreeing a Penalty for Sin of Equal Absoluteness. When in the New Testament God speaks of Heaven and Hell in Matthew 25:46, *"And these shall go away into eternal punishment: but the righteous into eternal life."* He is simply reflecting the nature of the offense, Absolute Rebellion against God, and the Fact that the Blood of Christ makes possible the Absolute Forgiveness of Sin. It is the Absolute nature of this Forgiveness which men so fail to understand and truly appreciate. It perfectly reflects God!

Cleveland Reddinger

GOD'S REASON FOR COMING TO HIM

by **Berry Kercheville**

Can you remember why you became a Christian? Let's think of some typical reasons:

- I didn't want to go to hell.
- I knew getting baptized was something God asked me to do.
- I was feeling uneasy because I was getting to an age where baptism was expected.

Consider another question: what do you remember being taught that caused you to become a Christian? Again, here are some typical answers:

- I was taught about the consequences of not obeying God.
- I was taught the importance of being obedient.
- I read the stories in the book of Acts on how people became Christians.

Now a third question: why do you continue to obey the Lord? What motivates you to keep serving him?

Typical answers:

- I know this is the right church that follows God's commands.
- Living a life of sin isn't appealing to me any more. I see the benefit of living morally and going to church.
- I want to go to heaven. Heaven seems to be the only real choice. I certainly do not want an eternity in hell.

Most Christians would probably recognize that some of the above answers fall short of a good reason to become a Christian or remain a Christian. Some of the answers are fine as far as they go, but none are answers God is desiring from us.

God's Invitations

We have a tradition of giving an "invitation" at the end of a period of worship. Our invitations focus on being called to salvation. God also gave invitations to his people calling on them to make a choice about serving him. **Joshua 24:14-15** is typical: *"Now therefore fear the Lord and serve him...and if it is evil in your eyes to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve..."* When we read all of Joshua's speech we realize that God's invitations have a repetitive pattern. God's begins with what he has done for his people. Once God has explained his graciousness toward them, only then does he ask for a response. Prior to Joshua's invitation he gave a speech in which he listed all the good things God had done for the people and then concluded with, *"Be very careful, therefore, to love the Lord your God"* (23:11). Therefore, please consider the primary reason God wants us to follow him and become his disciple.

No One Comes to Me Unless the Father Draws Him (John 6:44)

Here is the reason Jesus said that one would become his disciple: the Father *draws* him. The word *draw* carries the implication of a lover wooing a woman to be his wife. Do you know how I drew my wife to me and caused her to love me? When we first met, I gave her a long list of commands and said, "This is what I expect from the woman I will marry." Her response was to fall hopelessly in love with me. Even more amazing is that her love just keeps growing because I give her a new list of commandments every morning. Are any of you believing this story? As the saying goes, "Don't try this at home!"

In the same way, that has never been God's approach. God has never led with a list of commands. Instead, God *acts in love toward us* in order to draw us into a covenant with him. Only then does he give us the terms of the covenant. **1 John 4:19**, *"We love him because he first loved us."*

Recently a new Christian reminded me of our beginning Bible studies when he asked what the "essential

commands” were? I frustrated him by answering, “All of God’s commands are essential.” I never said, “Here, look at this verse; you need to be baptized.” I knew if I had done that, he would have been baptized, but he would not have done it because he knew God or loved God and I would not have fulfilled the Great Commission by “making a disciple.” This problem has often been repeated: a person, in some cases a child, is convinced of baptism, but has not really been drawn to Jesus by God. Even if he never “falls away” in the classic sense of the phrase, his life as a disciple does not result in the life God intended.

Simon and the Sinful Woman (Luke 7:36-51)

The differences between Simon and the sinful woman illustrate the differences in how a person comes to God. Before we rashly condemn Simon, we need to consider how much we are like him. Simon keeps the rules. He is moral. He is a temple goer. He most likely has a fine wife and family. Simon even threw a little dinner party for Jesus. Simon is not a bad guy. I dare say, there are plenty “Simons” throughout churches today. There is something else notable about Simon. Simon “grew up in the church.” Yes, just like I did and just like many of you did. While growing up like Simon should be a wonderful blessing, Simon turned the blessing into a curse. You see, when we grow up like Simon, too often our *primary* teaching has been to follow the rules that are visible and obvious (just the essentials, as my new Christian friend said), but with little emphasis on knowing God, and how wonderful he is (**Isa. 9:6**).

So what is the problem of knowing the rules? Well, that’s not the problem! The problem is, when we do not know God, we are unable to truly compare our life with his glory and cannot be transformed into his image. When we do not know God we do not make accurate comparisons, and therefore are not impressed with the severity of our sins. Knowing the rules without knowing God causes us to think of God in human terms and therefore justify our less visible sins, the sins of our heart, and the sins defined by what we ought to be instead of what rule we have broken. To make this point, Jesus quoted **Hosea 6:6** twice to show what God desired: *“For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.”* Do you see what God desires? Faithful love and the knowledge of God. Keeping the “rules” of obeying a burnt offering is meaningless unless the burnt offering is generated from faithful love toward God and knowing him in such a way that the offering is made out of deep appreciation for who he is.

When we compare Simon to the sinful woman there is a major difference. The woman loathes herself for her sins and transgressions. As a result, when Jesus forgives her, she loves much; she cannot do enough to show Jesus how much she adores him. Simon, on the other hand, has obeyed the rules, but he does not love God deeply because he is not impressed with what God has done for

him. His response to Jesus is unimpressive. Now why does Jesus want us to come to him? God is looking for people who *love him deeply*. It is the kind of love that the Lord described when he spoke of Christ and the church: *“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh” (Eph. 5:31)*. Please do satisfy yourself by thinking, “I love God because I keep his commandments.” Jesus did not say it that way. Jesus said, *“If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (John 14:15)*. A relationship with God begins with love. ***berrykerch@gmail.com***

Fellowshipping or Combating Error?

by Joe R. Price

J. W. McGarvey is recognized as one of the outstanding Bible scholars of the restoration movement of the 1800’s. He was in the prime of his life (1829-1912) when the controversy over the use of instrumental music in church worship divided brethren in this country. While McGarvey personally opposed instrumental music in church worship, history tells us that he tried to combat it by tolerating its practice. Nearing the end of his life, he gave the following assessment of this approach to dealing with error among brethren to a young preacher.

It is worth repeating:

“You are on the right road, and whatever you do, don’t let anyone persuade you that you can successfully combat error by fellowshipping it and going along with it. I have tried. I believed at the start that was the only way to do it. I’ve never held membership in a congregation that used instrumental music. I have, however, accepted invitations to preach without distinctions between churches that used it and churches that didn’t. I’ve gone along with their papers and magazines and things of that sort. During all these years I have taught the truth as the New Testament teaches it to every young preacher who passed through the College of the Bible. Yet, I do not know of more than six of them who are preaching the truth today. It won’t work.”

The New Testament also teaches us “it won’t work.” Accommodation with error does not promote unity (**Eph. 4:3-6**). It promotes compromise, corrupting those who attempt to fellowship error (**2 Cor. 6:14-18; 11:2-4**). It produces the loss of fellowship with God as it causes one to partake in error (**2 Jn. 9-11**). Yet, brethren still try to use this approach with error today - the social gospel, divorce and remarriage, evolution, denominationalism and many more. It won’t work today, either. Do not bury your head in the sand! Error will not go away! It must be opposed for the sake of truth and the salvation of our souls (**Jude 3-4; Gal. 2:4-5**)!

Psa. 1:1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers: 2 But his delight is in the law of Jehovah; And on his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, That bringeth forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also doth not wither; And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. 4 The wicked are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous; But the way of the wicked shall perish.

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Sunday A.M. 9:30 Bible Study

Sunday A.M. 10:20 Assembled Worship

Sunday P.M. 5:00 Assembled Worship

Wednesday P.M. 7:00 Bible Study and Worship

Visitors welcome

We conduct in home Bible Studies

We offer Correspondence Courses

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SUNDAY BIBLE CLASS: A STUDY OF AUTHORITY -
BILL MILLER TEACHER

WEDNESDAY BIBLE CLASS: THE BOOK OF JOB -
JIM STAUFFER TEACHER

SUNDAY MORNING SERMON:
GUEST SPEAKER: ERIC STAUFFER



What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear the gospel - Romans 10:17

Believe in Jesus Christ - Hebrews 11:6

Repent of sins - Acts 17:30

Confess Christ as Lord - Romans 10:9,10

Be Baptized for remission of sins - Acts 2:38

Be Faithful unto death - Revelation 2:10