

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

THE LENEXA EDIFIER

John 8:32

“And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free”

MAY 2, 2021

HAVE YOU BEEN CHOSEN?

by Jim Stauffer

“For many are called, but few are chosen.”

(Matthew 22:14) Jesus teaches on many occasions about the rigid nature of being a disciple of His. He reminds the young men of **Luke 9:57-62** just how difficult it will be and the discipline demanded of His followers. In this particular text He is illustrating the need for one to prioritize life in order to put Christ first.

We come to understand through a study of the Scriptures one will understand this discipline when he is chosen. We are told in **2 Thess. 2:14**, we are chosen by the gospel. The gospel Paul says, *is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.* **(Rom. 1:16)** The gospel of Jesus Christ then is that which we must obey to receive the salvation He offers, *“Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;”* **(Hebrews 5:8-9)**

On another occasion Jesus describes those who obey Him as choosing the more difficult pathway, *“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”* **(Matthew 7:13-14)** Of those that follow Jesus, He says, *If ye love me, keep my commandments* **(John 14:15)**

Jesus commanded His disciples to preach the gospel to the entire world indicating it was for all. After all He did promise eternal life to all who believe Him **(John 3:16)**

As we then contemplate these verses which are the inspired message of the Holy Spirit as He reveals the mind of God **(1 Cor. 2:10-13)**, we are forced to conclude

that while the gospel is for all (many are called) there will be few chosen, that is very few will actually accept the gospel message unto salvation.

This very rigid discipleship is predicted by John the Baptizer in **Matthew 3:11,12** when he speaks of the Lord baptizing with fire and holding the fan in His hand as He separates the wheat from the chaff and burns the chaff with unquenchable fire.

Yes, Jesus died for all mankind, but the promise of salvation is to those who obey His commands. Those who are willing to sacrifice this life for the one to come. That is the discipline demanded by the *strait gate and narrow way*. And those who follow that way are those who are chosen by the gospel of Christ that has the power to save.

Have you accepted that gospel? Will you do so before it is too late?

“How Can I Blaspheme My King?”

Kyle Pope

In the middle of the second century a Christian named Polycarp served as a bishop for the church in Smyrna. Polycarp was young when the apostle John and others who had known Jesus before His ascension were still alive. Polycarp knew them and learned from them (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 5.24). By the time of Polycarp, Christians had already faced a localized persecution under Nero (AD 64—), and more widespread persecutions under Domitian (AD 81—), Trajan (98—), and Hadrian (117—). In 138 the Roman emperor Antoninus Pius began yet another persecution

that would extend (in one form or another) into the time of his successor, Marcus Aurelius who began his own persecution in 161. Sometime during these dark days, Polycarp was arrested on the charge of being a Christian.

To these pagan worshippers of false gods, Christians were considered atheists because they only worshipped Christ and refused to sacrifice to or address the emperor as “Lord.” To be a Christian meant that you discouraged the worship of the gods recognized by the Greeks and Romans, and discouraged honoring the emperor as if he was a god. To be found guilty of being a Christian—especially a teacher and preacher of Christ—was a death sentence. There was no question about the fate that awaited Polycarp. He was a Christian and did not deny it. He was sentenced to death for his faith.

Before his execution, as an old man, Polycarp was given an opportunity to renounce his faith and spare his life. The proconsul urged him to swear by Caesar and declare “Away with the atheists!” As Polycarp stood in the stadium, in defiance he waved his hand, motioning towards the watching crowds and said, “away with the atheists!” In frustration, the proconsul again gave him the chance to renounce Christ. Bravely, Polycarp replied, “Eighty and six years have I served Him, and He never did me any injury: how then can I blaspheme my King and my Savior?” (*Martyrdom of Polycarp*, 9).

The proconsul then threatened him with wild beasts and fire. An account written by members of the church in Smyrna records his reply: *You threaten me with fire which burns for an hour, and after a little is extinguished, but are ignorant of the fire of the coming judgment and of eternal punishment, reserved for the ungodly. But why do you tarry? Bring forth what you will* (Ibid., 11).

The proconsul then had a messenger announce to the crowds, “This is the teacher of Asia, the father of the Christians, and the overthrower of our gods, he who has been teaching many not to sacrifice, or to worship the gods” (Ibid., 12). Like the crowds that yelled for Jesus’ death, with anger they shouted that he should be thrown to the lions. Apparently it was past the time of the day for executions using wild beasts, so Polycarp’s execution had to come through fire.

When the pile for the fire and stake to which he would be fastened was set, they started to nail his hands to the stake. Reportedly he said, “Leave me as I am; for He that gives me strength to endure the fire, will also enable me, without your securing me by nails, to remain without moving in the pile” (Ibid., 13). He then is said to have offered the following prayer: *O Lord God Almighty, the Father of your beloved and blessed Son Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the knowledge of You, the God*

of angels and powers, and of every creature, and of the whole race of the righteous who live before you, I give You thanks that You have counted me, worthy of this day and this hour, that I should have a part in the number of Your martyrs, in the cup of your Christ, to the resurrection of eternal life, both of soul and body, through the incorruption [imparted] by the Holy Ghost. Among whom may I be accepted this day before You as a fat and acceptable sacrifice, according as You, the ever-truthful God, have foreordained, have revealed beforehand to me, and now have fulfilled. Wherefore also I praise You for all things, I bless You, I glorify You, along with the everlasting and heavenly Jesus Christ, Your beloved Son, with whom, to You, and the Holy Ghost, be glory both now and to all coming ages. Amen (Ibid., 14). In the hope of eternal life in Christ, Polycarp bravely yielded to being burned at the stake, dying by the thrust of a dagger. Hope in Christ carried him through this ultimate test of his faith (Sources: *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*; Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*; Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*).

Jesus promised His disciples, *“you will be hated by all for My name’s sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved”* (Matt, 10:22, NKJV). As Polycarp confessed to the proconsul, Jesus had warned, *“And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell”* (Matt. 10:28). Christians near the end of the first century were told, *“Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life”* (Rev. 2:10).

We are fortunate to live in a time and place when the threat of death for being a Christian is something far removed from our experience. However, as we are coming into a time when Christians are increasingly demonized, slandered, and mocked we would do well to remember that it has not always been so safe to be a Christian. The time may come when we too, like men and women in the second century faced death for the charge of being a Christian. If so, would we be found guilty? If so, would we have the faith and courage to endure death for our faith? Peter wrote: *But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people’s matters. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter* (1 Pet. 4:15-16).

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Jesus did not come to destroy the Law of Moses

Jesus said, *"Do not think that I came to destroy the Law of the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill"* (Matthew 5:17). So did Jesus take away the old law, the law given through Moses? Was the Old Testament taken away?

Well, it cannot be taken away because it is a reality in history. It exists as a part of human existence. Jesus was being accused of breaking and violating the law of Moses. So he speaks clearly his respect for the law of Moses. He says that he did not come to destroy it. Rather, he emphasized that even the most insignificant parts of the Law would not pass away until ALL was fulfilled. Jesus said that breaking the least of the commandments was an offense. He emphasized that the people needed to do *better* than the best law-keepers of the day (Pharisees) or they would not enter the kingdom. Jesus respected and upheld all the law given through Moses.

Still, in this text, he speaks of the fulfillment of the law. He is not only talking about the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies; he speaks of fulfilling the law. Jesus came to fulfill (v.17). Nothing would pass from the law until all is fulfilled (v.18). God's purpose in and use of the law given through Moses would fully and completely be accomplished. Fulfilled.

Did Jesus teach that the law would be set aside when all was fulfilled? Would that covenant no longer be in effect? Consider Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well. She asked Jesus, *"Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship. Jesus said to her, Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father..."* (John 4:20-24).

Jesus taught that the time was coming soon that the instructions about worship in the law given through Moses would no longer matter. The law was designed to bring humanity to Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:19-25). When God fulfilled that purpose, that law would then be nailed to the cross (Colossians 2:14). Jesus knew that time was coming soon and taught people to prepare.

Don Bunting

Receiving a Reward Like the Farmer

This warm, sunny weather has me wanting to plant a garden! It reminds me of the passages in the Bible about farming. Why do people plant crops? To reap the food at

the end of the season, of course! Raising crops is a lot of hard work, sweat and sometimes disappointment if bugs or bad weather destroy your work. Even if everything goes as well as possible, taking care of the crops has to continue through the whole growing season. This requires enduring through the heat, work, and hardship until the harvest is ripe.

God uses this common experience to show what being a Christian is like. James 5:7-8 says *"Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. (8) You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand."* Just like it is worth the reward to plant and care for crops, it is even more worth it to endure life as a Christian to be able to go to Heaven! Paul, who was beaten multiple times, put in prison often, and rejected by his own people, said *"Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. (17) For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, (18) while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal."*

(2 Corinthians 4:16-18)

2 Timothy 2:6 also points to the fact that the farmer (and Christian) has a reward: *"The hardworking farmer must be first to partake of the crops."* In Matthew 10:22 Jesus says *"And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved."* Make sure you are following the truth and endure till the end! If we at Brentwood can help you come closer to God in any way, let us know!

Matt Hodge

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Evangelist at the Lenexa church of Christ
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Lord as He has instructed in His word.

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

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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