

LENEXA EDIFIER

“and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” (John 8:32)

October 2, 2022

Selling Our Birthrights

Matt Bassford

We know from the story of the anointing of David that God does not see as man sees. In the case of David, God saw potential where no one else did. However, God is equally likely to judge more harshly than we do.

We see an instance of this in Genesis 25:27-34. It's one of a frustrating series of stories in this portion of the book featuring Jacob the trickster and Esau the sucker. Repeatedly, Jacob uses his cleverness either to get something valuable belonging to Esau or to protect himself from Esau's very reasonable indignation.

In this case, Jacob swindles Esau out of his birthright, the double portion of the inheritance from Isaac that was due to the firstborn. Esau has returned from hunting, unsuccessful and starving. A decent brother would have fed him out of kindness, but Jacob demands the birthright in exchange for a bowl of stew. Esau takes the deal and loses the double portion.

In this story, Jacob is the villain, right? He schemes to take advantage of his own flesh and blood in a moment of need. However, that is not how the story is treated in the New Testament. In **Hebrews 12:16**, we are not warned against imitating Jacob. We are warned against imitating Esau!

For all of his questionable morality, Jacob possesses one vital attribute that Esau does not. Jacob looks to the future and does what he must now to receive good things later. Though he is not commended explicitly by the writer here, he falls into the same category as some other sketchy characters who are commended, like Rahab the harlot and the unrighteous steward of **Luke 16**. We are not to imitate them in sharp practice, lying, or embezzling, but we are to imitate them in looking to the future and acting accordingly.

Esau, by contrast, is so focused on his immediate desires that he forgets what fulfilling them will cost him. For this reason, the Hebrews writer condemns him as

immoral and irreverent. This may seem harsh to us, but Esau has failed to keep his eyes on the prize, the very thing that everyone who hopes to inherit eternal life must do.

Certainly, Esau's foolishness was exploited by a trickster, but every one of us is the target of a deceiver who makes Jacob look naive by comparison. Constantly, the devil takes advantage of our moments of weakness to try to get us to give away our birthrights as children of the King. We shake our heads at the short-sightedness of the man who traded away his inheritance for a bowl of lentils, but everyone who surrenders their soul in exchange for earthly pleasure is making a far worse bargain!

When we are tempted, then, we should remember Esau. No matter what delights the evil one is dangling in front of us, they don't amount to a hill of beans next to what we would surrender. Only a Jacob-like focus on our ultimate reward will keep us safe.

*~via Family Matters Jackson Heights;
Columbia, Tennessee*

Our Duties to the Local Congregation

It is certainly true that we are converted to Christ, not to the church. However, it is also true that the church is a vital part of God's plan for His people (**Ephesians 3:9,10**), and we know that membership in a local congregation is crucial for every disciple (**Acts 9:26**). Therefore, all Christians should be committed to the local congregation where they are members.

With these facts in mind, what are our duties to the local church? Consider these:

1. The congregation's reputation in the local community is very important. We cannot expect people to visit, investigate, study, and ultimately be converted if they

know that individual members of the church are not living up to the standard they proclaim. If others see hypocrisy among the members of the local church, it will not prosper. Each and every individual Christian must be 'salt' and 'light' among the lost (**Matthew 5:13-16**).

2. No organized group can progress without good leadership. This is definitely true of a local church. But, good leaders need supportive and cooperative followers. Thus, as the elders lead and guide according the God's truth, each member has a duty to submit and obey (**Hebrews 13:17**).

3. There are certain financial obligations that must be met with regularity. Consequently, the members need to sense their obligation to give generously, regularly, and consistently (**1 Cor. 16:1,2**). Though circumstances may force one's absence occasionally, extra effort should be made to make sure one's financial support to the congregation is always honored.

4. Ultimately, the very existence of any congregation depends upon the attendance of its members. The very life of the church is dictated by attendance. For this reason, every saint should feel a duty to be present at every possible service, Bible study, special meeting, etc. (**Hebrews 10:25**). Each one should realize that an unexplained, unjustifiable absence strikes a blow to the energy, enthusiasm, and efficiency of the congregation.

5. The growth of the congregation depends upon new people being converted. If this is to happen, the members must grasp the importance of sharing their faith with others who are in their sphere of influence. Neighbors, co-workers, family members – to name a few – should be among those that we seek to win for Christ (**Matthew 28:19,20**).

6. It is critically important that the members feel a sense of love and loyalty to every other member and to the group as a whole. Just as one would not 'turn their back' on their physical family, neither should they callously turn away from their spiritual family. This means that there will be a concerted effort to maintain peace with others (**Ephesians 4:1-3**). Genuine concern should be shown for those with special needs, both physical and spiritual. The brotherly love between individual saints should be open and obvious – it is, after all, a sign of our discipleship (John 13:35). When a Christian leaves a local church without good reason, it is an indication that he did not have a sense of loyalty that is so necessary if the church is to succeed.

by Greg Gwin

Perry Hall on Evangelism

Saturday's Special - My Mentor?

Each week, a group gathers online to discuss the Challenges in Evangelism. Last session involved a good number of contributors speaking of men and women who influenced, instructed, and spurred them on in spreading the word. Many of the men mentioned also were part of my circle from my 30's on up. While they spoke, I stayed silent. Finally, the moderator said, "Perry, you are uncustomarily quiet." So I spoke. "I didn't have a mentor growing up teaching me about evangelism."

"I'm not saying there weren't good influences, such as my parents who were very hospitable. But going out to seek the lost, I generally was on my own. I remember one time, but...."

Now let me pause. This is not saying others were not also seeking to evangelize. It is saying no one regularly involved me. A side lesson here is, involve others!

And yet I frequently spoke to friends about what I believed, even baptizing my neighbor. Another friend who was Catholic said, "Perry, if you were the Pope, you would change everything in the Catholic Church!" I responded, "Yep, and then I would step down from being the Pope!" Another said, "If you were in a war and the enemy jumped into your foxhole, you would ask them to study the Bible." I say all this not to put me on a pedestal (you don't want to know my flaws!), nor to reflect on no one being my friend in evangelism. There is a greater point to be made.

Why did I talk to others about what I believed? "And since we have the same spirit of faith in keeping with what is written, *'I believed, therefore I spoke', we also believe, and therefore speak*" (**2 Corinthians 4:13**). "*I believed, therefore I spoke*" is taken from a messianic psalm (**Psalms 116:10**).

Jesus believed, therefore He spoke. I believe, therefore I speak and spoke.

What these means is,

I believe what I believe.

I believe what I believe is true.

I believe what I believe is needed.

I believe what I believe is distinctive.

I believe what I believe is worth speaking about.

I believe, therefore, I speak! Do you? Can I help you?

Can you help me be even a better spokesman for Jesus?

WHERE IS GOD?

“Therefore, the law is ignored, and justice is never upheld. For the wicked surround the righteous, therefore justice comes out perverted” (Habakkuk 1:4). Repeated warnings from God’s servants, the prophets, failed to bring any real or lasting reforms. God’s people were slipping away from their Creator. The pagan Babylonians invaded the land, ushering in seventy years of captivity. It was not without warning that God’s own people, blessed people, would face the rigors of trial and persecution. Led by the wicked Jehoiakim, justice and righteousness were ignored; the innocent were exploited; selfishness dulled the hearts of God’s chosen (**2 Chronicles 36:5-8; Jeremiah 22:13-19**). Nebuchadnezzar looted the land of Promise; people and artisans and treasures from the temple were taken to Babylon. Yes, the Babylonian Empire would eventually fall (539BC); but, when? How long? Why not do something now? Lord, do you even know what is happening to Your creation? It seems so unfair.

When we are being oppressed or mistreated or even being severely persecuted, we ask: God, why are you allowing this to happen? Job asked similar questions; yet despite his horrors, he did not turn from God. The Psalms give voice to our doubts and questions. *“I have seen a wicked, violent person spreading himself like a luxuriant tree in its native soil” (Psalm 37:35).* Lord, what about this wicked man who is blessed and prosperous; he cares nothing for You? It is not fair! Why do I have to struggle to even exist; the wicked that have an abundance, often gained from cheating and stealing? Remember, though, that your rich enemies will die, too. *“Do not be afraid when a person becomes rich, when the splendor of his house is increased; For when he dies, he will take nothing with him; His wealth will not descend after him” (Psalm 49:16-17).* Envying the wicked can trip us. *“But as for me, my feet came close to stumbling, my steps had almost slipped. For I was envious of the arrogant as I saw the prosperity of the wicked” (Psalm 73:3-4).* Even when we face our own sins, are we as bad as everyone else?

Habakkuk asked: Lord, are you going to do something about the wickedness that surrounds us? Yes, the Lord says. In fact, I am doing something right now. You may not see what I am doing, but I set things right. I do not overlook sin. I am sending the Babylonians into the land. These invaders are wicked, vile, and cruel. No one will stand before them. Yet,

they are My instruments, in My hands, to bring judgment into the land. Lord, what about the sins of these people? How can you use such sinful people? We have sinned; but surely we are not as bad as these people. After all, they worship idols.

We must tread lightly when questioning God. Job’s wife said: Go ahead, curse God and die. Just get it over with. We might feel that way, especially in the throes of pain and suffering. Habakkuk calls for faith and trust in God. We must believe that God cares and knows what He is doing. *“Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, ‘My plan will be established and I will accomplish all My good pleasure’” (Isaiah 46:10).* While God is not obligated to explain Himself to us and His ways are often inscrutable, let us listen to Habakkuk and “live by faith.” *“Oh, the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!” (Romans 11:33).*

Randy Harshbarger

WHAT AND WHO ARE SAINTS?

Many believe there is a special category of God’s people called saints. In fact a greater question is who gave authority to the church to determine who is a saint?

Paul refers to the Christians at Ephesus, Rome, Colosse and Philippi as saints. Each reference is made in the very beginning of those letters. They are referred to as *faithful in Christ Jesus, called, faithful brethren and saints in Christ Jesus.*

The words saint and sanctified come from the same root words in Greek. This family of words means to consecrate, or be consecrated, to purify or be pure, to make holy or to be holy.

This sanctification or process of becoming holy is not accomplished by deeds done on earth that bring admiration and subsequent recognition by the church granting someone sainthood.

It comes when the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses the soul of man from sin (**1 John 1:7**). When we are redeemed from sin and transferred from Satan’s kingdom to that of Christ (**Col. 1:13,14**). We receive our righteousness/just condition from God through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and our faith in and obedience to him (**Romans 3:24-26; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 5:8,9**).

Read God’s message about saints. Then you will know.

Jim Stauffer

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.

HOURS OF WORSHIP

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

OUR ADDRESS IS:

7845 Cottonwood Dr.
Lenexa, Kansas 66216
913-620-0563

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SUNDAY MORNING BIBLE CLASS:

1,2,3 JOHN - BILL MILLER

WEDNESDAY EVENING BIBLE CLASS:

EXODUS TO SINAI - JIM STAUFFER

SUNDAY SERMON:

GOSPEL MEETINGS THIS WEEK IN THE AREA:

ROAN RIDGE CHURCH OF CHRIST
SOUTHSIDE CHURCH OF CHRIST
(BLUE SPRINGS, MO.)

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