

Bible Lessons



And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but
the greatest of these is charity.

—I Corinthians 13:13

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Quarterly Bible Lessons for Adults and Young People

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Publishing Bible truths in the interest of Jesus Christ and His Church.

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THEME FOR BIBLE LESSONS FOR THE 3rd QUARTER, 2024

Charity

Charity, or godly love, is necessary for all mankind. Without it, the rest of God's gifts will not work. It is the oil that eases the inevitable friction one with another. Charity carries away the spiritual toxins and waste that would otherwise build up to lethal levels. Charity keeps us going when nothing else will. This series of lessons can only attempt to scratch the surface of what charity means to us. May God grant us understanding to grasp more and more of this wonderful gift!

“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity” (1 Corinthians 13:1-13).

—Bro. Clifford Cole

JULY 7, 2024

CHARITY SUFFERETH LONG

I Corinthians 13:4

1 Peter 3:1 Likewise, ye wives, *be* in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives;

2 While they behold your chaste conversation *coupled* with fear.

6 Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.

Genesis 26:18 And Isaac digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father; for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham: and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them.

19 And Isaac's servants digged in the valley, and found there a well of springing water.

20 And the herdmen of Gerar did strive with Isaac's herdmen, saying, The water *is* ours: and he called the name of the well Esek; because they strove with him.

21 And they digged another well, and strove for that also: and he called the name of it Sitnah.

22 And he removed from thence, and digged another well; and for that they strove not: and he called the name of it Rehoboth; and he said, For now the LORD hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land.

Genesis 50:18 And his brethren also went and fell down before his face; and they said, Behold, we *be* thy servants.

19 And Joseph said unto them, Fear not: for *am* I in the place of God?

20 But as for you, ye thought evil against me; *but* God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as *it is* this day, to save much people alive.

MEMORY VERSE: Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. —James 5:7

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Sarah, Isaac, and Joseph displayed true charity in very difficult circumstances. The end result was peace rather than continued conflict. Sarah could have been bitter against Abraham, her husband, on more than one occasion. She chose, however, to trust God to work in their circumstances, and work with her husband's faith. In the end, Sarah's husband became a man of great faith! In Isaac's difficulties, God "made room" for him and his family. Joseph could have been consumed with bitterness and revenge but chose to allow God's gift of charity to help him forgive his brothers.

WORD DEFINITIONS

1 Co 13:4 "**Charity**": brotherly love, affection, good will, love, benevolence.

1 Co 13:4 "**Suffereth long**": to be long-spirited, forbearing, patiently enduring.

1 Pe 3:1 "**Conversation**": behavior (*Strong's*).

Gen 26:20 "**Esek**": strife or contention.

Gen 26:21 "**Sitnah**": opposition or hatred.

Gen 26:22 "**Rehoboth**": room (*Albert Barnes and F.B. Meyer*).

LESSON BACKGROUND

Abraham, the father of faith, did not attain such a high plane of faith overnight; there was a process that both he and his wife, Sarah, went through. Their journey of faith included two times Abraham referred to his wife as his sister because he feared for his life. Sarah could have become completely disenchanted with her husband, but she chose to commit these circumstances to God's care. Sarah had charity with longsuffering toward her husband, and God eventually made their posterity "as the sand of the sea for multitude." Job's wife, on the other hand, finally told Job to "curse God and die." Job's wife suffered much, almost to the point of breaking completely, but God evidently worked with her and carried her past her bitterness. Job and his wife later "saw his sons, and his son's sons, even to four generations" (Job 42:16).

Isaac, Abraham and Sarah's son of promise, faced great difficulties with the Philistines after the death of his father. The Philistines stopped up the wells his father had dug—essentially

dooming any prospects of success Isaac hoped to have in the land. Since water was necessary for the welfare of the flocks, he unstopped these wells, perhaps hoping this would be the end of his difficulties. Later, when his servants dug another well in the valley, the herdsmen of Gerar claimed it as their own. Isaac's servants dug yet another well, and the herdsmen of Gerar strove for that one also. The third new well Isaac's servants dug brought no opposition. With great thankfulness, Isaac named the third well Rehoboth, meaning "The Lord hath made room for us."

Joseph was a favored son, thereby incurring the great jealousy of his ten older brothers. When sold as a slave by his brothers, he may well have lost all hope of seeing his father and younger brother again. Instead of dwelling on the negative aspects of his circumstances, Joseph chose the better route of a positive outlook on life. He lived with a thankful heart toward God and strove to do his best with whatever God allowed to come his way; thus, Joseph prospered in the house of his master, Potiphar. When falsely accused by Potiphar's wife, Joseph chose the high road of "suffering long." God prospered Joseph yet again – even though he was now in prison. We know the wonderful ending of Joseph's story and are so thankful for it! His eventual position as second-in-command in Egypt was only achieved through "charity that suffered long."

DISCUSSION:

1. Why does charity, coupled with longsuffering, have such a lasting effect on others?
2. How can an unbelieving husband be affected by his wife's charity with longsuffering?
3. What enabled Sarah to be longsuffering with her husband when he misstepped?
4. Considering Isaac's options when the Philistines kept claiming his water wells, what most likely would have been the result if he had not chosen the path of charity with longsuffering?
5. How could a less-than-charitable reaction on Isaac's part have impacted his posterity?
6. What feelings did Joseph most likely struggle with during the times in which he was treated uncharitably?

7. How could Joseph have justified revenge against those who treated him badly?
8. Who benefited from Joseph's charity with longsuffering?
9. What could have happened if Joseph had sought revenge against Potiphar's wife and/or his ten brothers?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Many are the examples of men and women who have prayed years for their unsaved companions. The Lord helped the saved companion to have charity with long suffering, eventually winning their husband or wife to Christ – sometimes at the very end of their lives. Patience with charity, day after day, worked where nothing else would.

In legend, the North Wind and Sun had a conversation wherein they talked about a man walking down a road wearing a warm coat. The North Wind and the Sun both claimed they could get the man to take off his coat. The Sun allowed the North Wind to try first. With great zeal, the North Wind began to blow and howl against the man. With every cold blast the man gripped his coat tighter about him, tightened the hood over his head, and struggled on down the road. The more the wind blew, the more the man clung to his coat. At last, the North Wind said to the Sun, "I'm worn out from my great effort! It's your turn to try." The Sun began to cast his warm rays on the man. Brighter and brighter, hour after hour, the Sun shone down on the man. As the man warmed up, he loosened his coat, unbuttoned it, and finally took it off. Where the North Wind had failed in its fierceness, the Sun had won by its steady warmth.

"Dear Lord, help me to have charity with longsuffering. May I allow your graces to work in my life, helping to win the lost around me. Help me to be patient with those who want to see a real example of your love in the difficulties of life. Amen!"

REFLECTIONS

It seems significant that long-suffering, aka patience and kindness, is the first characteristic mentioned regarding charity. The book *Love Dare* says, "Love is built on two pillars: patience and kindness."

Bible commentaries remind us that patience cannot be exercised without trial. The grace of God working in and with the trial is the means of exercising and increasing patience. Patience is considered a conquering grace, as well as a cardinal virtue. The difference in a grace and a virtue is that grace is a divinely influenced disposition; virtue is a habit. Cultivate patience as both a disposition and a habit. There are different kinds of patience: bearing patience (involving others), waiting patience (involving situations), and enduring patience (suffering long).

C.W. Naylor in *Heart Talks* wrote, "Salvation and sanctification do not destroy our natural temperament. Patience is one of the qualities of natural temperament. People of different temperaments react differently based on their nature and not their heart. When we have a pure heart, our will is set to do right. Through our will, we regulate our actions so they are right. Our feelings respond involuntarily to circumstances. The degree of response depends on our temperament and how much we have cultivated patience. Grace helps supply us with patience but will not always be sufficient. It must be cultivated. The Bible says 'add patience.' Therefore, not all patience comes from grace but also by works. We are not told to "feel" but to "be" patient. When impatient feelings come we either yield or resist them. Resist impatient feelings, but don't feel condemned for what you can't help feeling. Do all in your power to cultivate patience."

—Sis. Diane Doolittle

JULY 14, 2024

CHARITY IS KIND

I Corinthians 13:4

2 Chronicles 10:6 And king Rehoboam took counsel with the old men that had stood before Solomon his father while he yet lived, saying, What counsel give ye *me* to return answer to this people?

7 And they spake unto him, saying, If thou be kind to this people, and please them, and speak good words to them, they will be thy servants for ever.

8 But he forsook the counsel which the old men gave him, and

took counsel with the young men that were brought up with him, that stood before him.

9 And he said unto them, What advice give ye that we may return answer to this people, which have spoken to me, saying, Ease somewhat the yoke that thy father did put upon us?

10 And the young men that were brought up with him spake unto him, saying, Thus shalt thou answer the people that spake unto thee, saying, Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou *it* somewhat lighter for us; thus shalt thou say unto them, My little *finger* shall be thicker than my father's loins.

11 For whereas my father put a heavy yoke upon you, I will put more to your yoke: my father chastised you with whips, but I *will chastise you* with scorpions.

16 And when all Israel *saw* that the king would not hearken unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David? and *we have* none inheritance in the son of Jesse: every man to your tents, O Israel: *and* now, David, see to thine own house. So all Israel went to their tents.

17 But *as for* the children of Israel that dwelt in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them.

18 Then king Rehoboam sent Hadoram that *was* over the tribute; and the children of Israel stoned him with stones, that he died. But king Rehoboam made speed to get him up to *his* chariot, to flee to Jerusalem.

19 And Israel rebelled against the house of David unto this day.

Luke 6:27 But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you,

28 Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.

29 And unto him that smiteth thee on the *one* cheek offer also the other; and him that taketh away thy cloke forbid not *to take thy* coat also.

30 Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask *them* not again.

31 And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.

32 For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them.

33 And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank

have ye? for sinners also do even the same.

34 And if ye lend *to them* of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again.

35 But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and *to the evil*.

36 Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.

Luke 10:30 And Jesus answering said, A certain *man* went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded *him*, and departed, leaving *him* half dead.

31 And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

32 And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked *on him*, and passed by on the other side.

33 But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion *on him*,

34 And went to *him*, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

35 And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave *them* to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.

36 Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?

37 And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

MEMORY VERSE: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. —Ephesians 4:32

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Kindness is a very important part of charity. It is the outward manifestation of an inward choice to show mercy and love toward others. Often, those to whom we show kindness deserve it, but there are other times we must choose to show kindness, by

God's grace. God's divine love will help us show the kindness we should.

WORD DEFINITIONS

2 Ch 10:9 **“Yoke”**: a curved wooden apparatus fastened to the neck of an animal for the purpose of pulling large loads. Figuratively speaking, a yoke refers to human servitude.

2 Ch 10:11 **“Scorpion”**: a scourge or knotted whip (*Strong's*).

LESSON BACKGROUND

According to *Smith's Bible Dictionary*, Solomon enslaved over 160,000 people to work in the forests of Lebanon. There were probably many others that suffered under Solomon's reign as well, judging from the plea to Rehoboam to “ease somewhat the yoke.” It is remarkable that King Rehoboam would have been perceived as kind if he had lessened the hardship of the people only a little. He could have left some of the taxes in place and continued with some of the other policies his father had instituted – but if he had only lessened the burden, he would have been thought of as kind. We know the unfortunate outcome of the people's pleas, however. Rehoboam promised the people would suffer much more than they did under Solomon's reign. No wonder ten tribes revolted from the kingdom!

In Luke 6, Jesus taught that kindness should go far beyond “being less cruel.” He taught that kindness should go above and beyond what is normally expected. Blessing those who curse you and praying for those who spitefully use you is not “normal” behavior; this level of kindness can only come from a divine love. Those who receive kindness of this magnitude usually realize God is behind it.

The parable of the Good Samaritan is synonymous of unexpected kindness from someone who would not be thought of as unkind if they deferred to those who should step up to the responsibility. The priest and Levite had excuses to not help the wounded man, but the Samaritan ignored the fact that no one expected him to help. He could have reminded himself that he was a Samaritan, and that the Jews did not want his help!

DISCUSSION:

1. What value did king Rehoboam's older counselors see in kindness?
2. How difficult would it have been for king Rehoboam to show a little kindness to the people?
3. What would have been the effect of this kindness?
4. Why do you think king Rehoboam preferred the advice of his young friends?
5. Compare how costly unkindness is to how invaluable kindness can be.
6. How can our words, tones, or actions express unkindness in everyday life?
7. Referring to the previous lesson's reflection, discuss how being impatient unkind.
8. Who benefits the most from kindness?
9. Is Jesus' definition of kindness "too extreme"? Why or why not?
10. How can we follow Jesus' example in the memory verse?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Lieutenant Friedrich Lengfeld was leading his few remaining men back from a reconnaissance mission during the WWII Battle of Hurtgen Forest in November of 1944 when he heard the cry of someone in great pain. The sound of the injured came from a nearby minefield. The severely injured soldier was American, and he lay in the middle of the minefield in "No Man's Land," which separated the German and American lines. Apparently, the injured soldier had been left behind by his retreating comrades during a recent firefight, because no one else was around except for Lt. Lengfeld and his men.

Lt. Lengfeld felt a sudden wave of compassion for the injured American and sent word to the machine gun unit guarding the road to hold their fire if American paramedics came for the soldier. After several hours, Lt. Lengfeld could still hear the soldier pleading for help in the distance. His voice was getting steadily weaker, and he knew the injured American would soon succumb to his wounds and the bitter cold. Finally, unable to bear it any longer, Lt. Lengfeld ordered his own paramedic team to form a rescue squad. While

leading his men to the American, Lt. Lengfeld stepped on one of the mines and was severely injured. His men rushed him to the Medical Aid Station, but unfortunately Lt. Lengfeld died from his wounds that evening. Lt. Lengfeld was twenty-three years old at the time of his death. Nothing is known of the fate of the injured American he died for in his efforts to save.

On October 7, 1994, a monument was erected in honor of Lt. Lengfeld. He is the only German soldier of WWII with a monument erected in his honor by Americans. Part of the inscription on the monument reads: "No man hath greater love than he who layeth down his life for his enemy."

Adapted from an article in <http://www.warhistoryonline.com/www.warhistoryonline.com> by Micheal Chimaobi Kalu – 1/21/19.

"Heavenly Father, help me to be kind, even when it is more convenient to avoid kindness. Amen!"

REFLECTIONS

Kindness is a fruit of the Spirit. When we are filled with the Spirit of God, the fruit of kindness will become a natural way of reacting to the difficult circumstances of life. The Spirit of God so envelops us and makes us able to be kind while suffering adversity. Because of the "love of God shed abroad in our hearts..." we can be kind even to those who treat us unkindly. Our very desire is to show kindness to those who do not care about our well-being. It should be a law that governs our behavior, as in Proverbs 31:26.

We see examples of this level of love and kindness in the Bible. Jesus, our example, asked God to forgive those who were crucifying him while He was on the cruel cross. Amazingly, He even said that they didn't know what they were doing! Also, Stephen asked God not to lay the sin to the charge of the people who were stoning him to death. Joseph showed love and kindness to his brothers who had sold him. He suffered thirteen years because of their hatred for him, yet, God's divine love enabled him to requite kindness and love for the hatred his brothers had shown him. He wanted them to come to Egypt so he could nourish them and their little ones. Even after his father passed, Joseph continued to show the same level of kindness to his brother and reassured them of his commitment to them.

—Sis. Doris Clay

JULY 21, 2024

CHARITY ENVIETH NOT

I Corinthians 13:4

1 Samuel 17:55 And when Saul saw David go forth against the Philistine, he said unto Abner, the captain of the host, Abner, whose son *is* this youth? And Abner said, As thy soul liveth, O king, I cannot tell.

56 And the king said, Enquire thou whose son the stripling *is*.

57 And as David returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, Abner took him, and brought him before Saul with the head of the Philistine in his hand.

58 And Saul said to him, Whose son *art* thou, *thou* young man? And David answered, I *am* the son of thy servant Jesse the Bethlehemite.

1 Samuel 18:1 And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking unto Saul, that the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.

2 And Saul took him that day, and would let him go no more home to his father's house.

3 Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul.

4 And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that *was* upon him, and gave it to David, and his garments, even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his girdle.

1 Samuel 19:1 And Saul spake to Jonathan his son, and to all his servants, that they should kill David.

2 But Jonathan Saul's son delighted much in David: and Jonathan told David, saying, Saul my father seeketh to kill thee: now therefore, I pray thee, take heed to thyself until the morning, and abide in a secret *place*, and hide thyself:

3 And I will go out and stand beside my father in the field where thou *art*, and I will commune with my father of thee; and what I see, that I will tell thee.

4 And Jonathan spake good of David unto Saul his father, and said unto him, Let not the king sin against his servant, against David; because he hath not sinned against thee, and because his works *have been* to thee-ward very good:

5 For he did put his life in his hand, and slew the Philistine, and the LORD wrought a great salvation for all Israel: thou sawest *it*, and didst rejoice: wherefore then wilt thou sin against innocent blood, to slay David without a cause?

1 Samuel 20:30a Then Saul's anger was kindled against Jonathan, and he said unto him, Thou son of the perverse rebellious *woman*, do not I know that thou hast chosen the son of Jesse to thine own confusion?

MEMORY VERSE: Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love *is* strong as death; jealousy *is* cruel as the grave: the coals thereof *are* coals of fire, *which hath a* most vehement flame. —Song of Solomon 8:6

CENTRAL THOUGHT: David and Jonathan had an unlikely and admirable friendship. David, a young shepherd boy, and Jonathan, the oldest son of King Saul, should have been bitter rivals for the throne, but Jonathan refused to entertain even an ounce of jealousy for David, even when he realized David would one day be king of Israel. Instead, Jonathan's heart was knit with David's heart in one of the greatest friendships ever recorded.

WORD DEFINITIONS

1 Sa 18:1 "**Knit**": to tie physically or mentally in love, or a league; to join together (*Strong's*).

LESSON BACKGROUND

By the time King Saul and his army faced the Philistines across the valley at Shochoh and heard the taunts of Goliath, he had wandered far from God. No longer having a relationship with God, King Saul was filled with fear and doubt. When Goliath thundered his daily challenge, Saul knew he could not face the giant and live.

David finally came on the scene, and God delivered Goliath into David's hand. Saul soon learned who David was and would not let him go home to his father's house.

Jonathan met David for the first time when David was introduced to his father, the king. Instead of entertaining thoughts of

jealousy, Jonathan loved David as his own soul. Jonathan and David made a covenant at that first meeting. That covenant was never broken, despite King Saul's repeated efforts to destroy their relationship.

DISCUSSION:

1. When David felt inspired to face Goliath, how much do you suppose he thought about making Jonathan, or anyone else, jealous?
2. How is it that jealousy or envy can sometimes come unbidden or unexpectedly?
3. What thoughts did King Saul expect his son to have toward David?
4. Why did Jonathan love David instead of envy him?
5. What happens to charity when envy is allowed into a relationship?
6. How does charity drive envy away?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The LORD commanded Moses to gather seventy men of the elders of Israel to help in the administration of the people. The seventy men were to meet at the tabernacle to be consecrated to their new duties. Two men of this group were found in the midst of the camp, prophesying, rather than gathered with the rest at the tabernacle. A young man ran up to Moses and said, "Eldad and Medad do prophesy in the camp." Joshua, one of Moses' helpers, said, "My lord Moses, forbid them." Moses answered, "Enviest thou for my sake? Would God that all of the LORD'S people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit upon them" (Numbers 11:1-30)!

Moses absolutely refused to entertain envy. He had asked the LORD for help after the people wept in the doors of their tents, complaining about the manna. The LORD heard his plea and arranged for seventy elders to help him. The LORD "took of the spirit that was upon him and gave it unto the seventy elders: and it came to pass, that, when the spirit rested upon them, they prophesied, and did not cease." This could have tempted Moses to become very jealous. The

LORD had given his spirit to Moses, and now he was “sharing” the LORD’S spirit with seventy others!

When two of the seventy seemed to be acting in disobedience by prophesying in the camp instead of meeting with the others at the tabernacle, others came to the defense of Moses, assuming he would be envious of the two who prophesied. This event illustrates so well that those who love us most can take up our cause and be envious for us, making it harder for us to keep clear of envy.

David’s men told him he had the perfect opportunity to kill King Saul in the cave. The men quoted the words of the LORD that seemed to give David the right to “do to him as it shall seem good unto thee.” David refused, however, to slay the king, saying, “The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD’S anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he *is* the anointed of the LORD” (I Samuel 24:1-7).

Sadly, there are circumstances recorded in the Bible where envy replaced charity with disastrous results. King Saul envied David. We know how that ended. Miriam and Aaron envied Moses (Numbers 12). Miriam became leprous because of her envy. If Moses had not pled for her, she would have died a miserable death.

“Dear Lord, help me to choose charity, even when I am tempted to envy for what might seem to be a just cause. Help me to have charity even when others are envious for my sake. Amen!”

REFLECTIONS

We choose to envy-not because we commit ourselves to the Lord and submit ourselves under the almighty hand of the Lord until He lifts us up. I can choose to be glad that God’s work is being done even if it seems that He is choosing and blessing someone else who has lots of obvious flaws instead of choosing me. We believe that in due time He will exalt us to the place of blessedness and give us the sense of fulfillment in His kingdom for which our heart is aching. Be willing to patiently wait for the Lord to give you the earthly things you feel deprived of although some of your peers are getting theirs far in advance of you. Sometimes He chooses to fulfill our deep heart cravings by means other than what we thought necessary.

The most useful vessels must go through an extensive purging process. This often includes having those who we deem to be more

carnal than ourselves being exalted and riding over our heads. Choose to do good to and for those you are tempted to envy. Choose to rejoice with them even though the Lord seems to be withholding from you the desired opportunities they are receiving. Let's embrace God's process of replacing our envy and all our other internal weaknesses with his genuine love.

—Bro. Jeremy Booher

JULY 28, 2024

CHARITY VAUNTETH NOT ITSELF

I Corinthians 13:4

Isaiah 42:1 Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, *in whom* my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.

2 He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street.

Numbers 12:3 (Now the man Moses *was* very meek, above all the men which *were* upon the face of the earth.)

Daniel 4:28 All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar.

29 At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon.

30 The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?

31 While the word *was* in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, *saying*, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom is departed from thee.

32 And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling *shall be* with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.

33 The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles'

feathers, and his nails like birds' *claws*.

34 And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom *is* from generation to generation:

35 And all the inhabitants of the earth *are* reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and *among* the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?

36 At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me.

37 Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works *are* truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.

Daniel 6:1 It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom;

2 And over these three presidents; of whom Daniel *was* first: that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage.

3 Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit *was* in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm.

MEMORY VERSE: So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do. —Luke 17:10

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Nebuchadnezzar, unlike Jesus, Moses, and Daniel, vaunted himself to such a degree that God took all reasoning from him. Nebuchadnezzar was driven from the palace and lived as an animal, eating grass like an ox for seven years. When the LORD restored his sanity and kingdom, Nebuchadnezzar praised and honored the King of heaven.

WORD DEFINITIONS

1 Co 13:4b “**Vaunt**”: to boast of one’s self; a self-display; employing rhetorical embellishments in extolling one’s self excessively (*Thayer*).

LESSON BACKGROUND

The prophecy of Jesus in Isaiah foretells our Savior coming in a humble manner, completely opposite of how the religious rulers thought the Messiah would come. They looked for Him to come with pomp and circumstance in military might to deliver them from the Romans. Instead, Jesus came as a babe, “wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.” The lowly shepherds were His first visitors, not those of high estate (Luke 2:6-16).

Moses, the meekest man “upon the face of the earth,” did not start out that way. As a prince of Egypt, he felt drawn to his people, the Hebrews. When he tried in his own strength and understanding to deliver them, he only managed to kill an Egyptian task master for beating one of the Hebrew slaves. After another forty years had passed, Moses no longer thought of himself as anyone special. When God called him to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt, Moses declared and felt himself totally incapable of the task.

Nebuchadnezzar had a very high opinion of himself. Even after being warned about his pride, he boasted of all he had accomplished, giving all the glory to himself. Thankfully, after being given a second chance to honor the LORD, he did so. God restored his kingdom and his court once again respected him as their king. While he was living like an ox in the fields, who do you suppose helped run the kingdom? The Bible is silent on the matter. Could it be that Daniel stepped in for a while? Evidently, everything ran quite smoothly during those seven years, because there is nothing recorded otherwise. It could be that Daniel simply didn’t see any need to say or write anything at all about it, because he did not regard what he did as noteworthy. It was simply his duty to do what he could.

DISCUSSION:

1. What did the prophecy say of the way Jesus would conduct

himself in Isaiah 42:1-2?

2. If Jesus had set up His kingdom in the manner the religious elite expected Him to, what would it have looked like, what would it have accomplished, and what example would it have set for us?
3. Moses was “the meekest man upon the face of the earth.” How is it possible for a spiritual leader to be so meek?
4. What is the effect of a spiritual leader *not* being meek?
5. How would Moses most likely have reacted to his brother and sister’s jealousy if he had entertained any inclination to vaunt himself?
6. How much easier would it have been for Nebuchadnezzar if he had humbled himself?
7. Assuming Daniel helped run the kingdom while Nebuchadnezzar lived in the fields, why do you suppose Daniel never bothered to mention his role while the king was out?
8. What room does our memory verse give us to vaunt ourselves?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus (519-430 BC), a statesman and military leader of the early Roman Republic, refused to vaunt himself, even when given the opportunity—not once, but twice. In 458 BC, when the Roman Republic was threatened with overwhelming forces, the Senate nominated Cincinnatus in absentia to the role of emperor. When representatives from the Senate found Cincinnatus plowing in his field, he accepted. He led a hastily assembled army of all the remaining men of military age and defeated the enemy. After accepting the surrender of the opposing forces, Cincinnatus resigned as emperor and returned to his farm – after only fifteen days.

A few years later, in 439 BC, Cincinnatus again served as emperor during a national crisis. He served as emperor this time for twenty-one days (*Condensed from Wikipedia.org*).

George Washington, greatly inspired by the selfless example of Cincinnatus, refused to be made king of the new nation he fought for. He also rejected the chance to serve more than two terms as president. President Washington’s example helped set the precedent for our nation that no one should hold power for too long and should never hold office for personal gain.

“Heavenly Father, help me to follow your perfect example of not vaunting yourself when you had so many opportunities. Thank you for many other examples of selflessness in the Bible, and throughout history. Amen!”

REFLECTIONS

In Matthew 4:8-10 and in Luke 4:5-8, we read how that Satan tempted Jesus by showing Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, offering to give Him all the power and glory of them if He would but fall down and worship him. Jesus was unpersuaded.

Again, in John chapter 6, after Jesus had fed the multitude, when He “perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone” (verse 15).

Jesus had no interest in exalting Himself or in receiving honor from men (John 5:41). He also told the Jews, “How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?” (John 5:44).

He bids us all to follow His example. In Luke 22:25-27, He says, “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? is not he that sitteth at meat? but I am among you as he that serveth.”

It was God, His Father, who finally exalted Jesus and gave Him a name which is above every name, after He had humbled Himself and “became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (see Philippians 2:3-11).

“Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time” (1 Peter 5:6). “For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself” (Galatians 6:3). “For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?” (2 Corinthians 4:7). (See also Psalms 39:4-5.) Therefore, “... he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord” (2 Corinthians 10:17).

—Bro. Harlan Sorrell

AUGUST 4, 2024

CHARITY IS NOT PUFFED UP

I Corinthians 13:4

1 Corinthians 4:4 For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.

6 And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of *men* above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another.

7 For who maketh thee to differ *from another*? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive *it*, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received *it*?

1 Corinthians 4:17 For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church.

18 Now some are puffed up, as though I would not come to you.

19 But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power.

20 For the kingdom of God *is* not in word, but in power.

21 What will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and *in the spirit of meekness*?

1 Corinthians 5:1 It is reported commonly *that there is* fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife.

2 And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.

Colossians 2:18 Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worshipping of angels, intruding into those things which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,

19 And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.

3 John 1:9 I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not.

10 Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he

doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth *them* out of the church.

Mark 1:5 And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.

6 And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey;

7 And preached, saying, There cometh one mightier than I after me, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to stoop down and unloose.

8 I indeed have baptized you with water: but he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost.

1 Corinthians 15:9 For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

10 But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was *bestowed* upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

11 Therefore whether *it were* I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed.

MEMORY VERSE: Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. —Ephesians 3:8

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The Apostle Paul cautioned against being “puffed up” in our own mind, esteeming our opinion above others. A puffed up mind is natural for those who have not taken on the mind of Christ, but salvation and sanctification helps our carnal fleshly mind to be put under the blood of Jesus and the influence of the Holy Spirit.

WORD DEFINITIONS

1 Co 4:6 **“Puffed up”**: to inflate, blow up, proud, haughty, lofty (*Strong’s and Thayer*).

LESSON BACKGROUND

The Apostle Paul's first epistle to the Corinthian church dealt with carnal tendencies carried over from their past when they engaged in idolatry and all manner of evil practices. Corinth's sinful culture was a constant influence for the new congregation of believers. Paul's epistle to them addressed the carnality that was coming out among them in various ways. To summarize their condition, some of the Corinthian church was puffed up in their carnal thinking.

Paul's caution to the church in Colossians 2 dealt with the natural carnal thinking, which always leads to being puffed up. Puffed up thinking results in not regarding the head of the church, Jesus Christ, in the proper way. This attitude, in turn, leads to spiritual destruction.

The Apostle John had great concern with "Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence." It is a dreadful and hurtful thing to think our opinion matters so much—at the expense of everyone else! Diotrephes "cast out" those who attempted to receive brethren from other places.

John the Baptist was the greatest prophet that ever walked the face of the earth, according to Jesus. Despite this, John never wore fancy clothes, he ate the simplest of foods, and he spoke in plain words to his audiences. When Jesus asked John to baptize Him, John did not feel worthy, but he complied. John had the right attitude. Had he allowed the fact he had "baptized Jesus" to puff him up, he may not have been able to withstand what he endured in prison. Jesus did not forget John in his darkest hour, but sent him the few words that took him through to the other side.

It is interesting to learn what influential people think of themselves. We can garner from what little Paul said about himself that he did not regard himself very highly – only an unworthy servant, doing what he felt compelled, by the grace of God, to do. Paul was approachable by anyone who wanted to talk. His only quarrel was with those who subverted the cause of Christ – and then he withstood them only through the inspiration and power of the Holy Spirit, but not with the carnality he exhibited when he persecuted the church. We also glean more understanding of the

Apostle Paul when he wrote, “For *his* letters, say they, *are* weighty and powerful; but *his* bodily presence *is* weak, and *his* speech contemptible” (2 Corinthians 10:10). Paul did not puff himself up, nor did he allow others to lift him up.

DISCUSSION:

1. What sort of situation did Paul deal with in 1 Corinthians 4?
2. How can being “puffed up for someone” lead to showing partiality?
3. Did Paul accept being called anyone’s “favorite teacher or preacher”? Why or why not?
4. What would have been the result if he had gone along with someone(s) puffing him up?
5. What did Paul mean when he asked the Corinthian church if he should “come with a rod, or in love and meekness”? Which method tends to foster folks being “puffed up”?
6. In Colossians 2:18, what does Paul mean by “being puffed up in your fleshly mind”?
7. The Apostle John described Diotrephes as someone who cast some out of the church that attempted to receive certain brethren from other places. How could matters have gotten to this state?
8. John Baptist remained a very simple and plain man to the day of his death. Why did he not puff himself up the least bit, nor did he allow others to do it for him?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

There is a saying I heard some time back, “Don’t take yourself too seriously, because no one else is.” It is very easy to esteem ourselves higher than others regard us. The Lord knows it is best to adopt the attitude of John Baptist and the Apostle Paul. We are not worthy of any praise or recognition – that belongs to the Lord alone. We are who we are by the grace of God and ONLY by His grace.

We do well to not allow others to puff us up either. Bro. Isaac Chandler preached a stirring message years ago at the Monark Springs National Camp Meeting. After the message someone came up to him and said, “Bro. Chandler, that was the best sermon I ever

heard!” Bro. Chandler replied, “The devil told me that also.” [*I probably do not have all of the words exactly correct, but the intent survives.*]

“Dear Lord, help me to not puff myself up in my own estimation. Help me to not allow others to do it for me, either. Amen!”

REFLECTIONS

“Puffed up” means to be inflated, to appear larger or of more substance than what is reality. True charity would have us not be a stumbling block to others—by our being puffed up and hindering them from seeing Christ properly. We need the Lord to help us have the proper estimation of ourselves. In reality we are each very fragile and heavily dependent on God’s mercy and blessings. We don’t know what the future holds for us or anyone else. Our health and/or abilities could be taken from any one of us in an instant through sickness or some accident. Jesus said that without Him we can do nothing (John 15:5b).

As humans it is natural to want others to think well of us. We desire their approval and respect. I remember several years ago hearing Sis. Angela Gellenbeck bring out the thought about a number line. In the middle is 0, to the left are negative numbers, and to the right are positive numbers. It is not good to overvalue ourselves and estimate our worth as some big positive number; to do so can really get in the way and hinder or cause damage. But neither is it good nor healthy to undervalue ourselves and estimate our worth as something negative. Our proper place is to be right in the middle at “0”—to where Christ can shine through us. Our goal should be that we simply become and remain good “conduits” for Christ—that His light and love can be transmitted through us without any blockage or hindrance on our part. We don’t need to be seen—Christ needs to be seen, and He should get the glory! After all, it’s not about any one of us—it’s about Christ and His kingdom.

—Bro. Ron Cole

AUGUST 11, 2024

CHARITY DOTH NOT BEHAVE ITSELF UNSEEMLY

I Corinthians 13:5

1 Samuel 18:5 And David went out whithersoever Saul sent him, *and* behaved himself wisely: and Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people, and also in the sight of Saul's servants.

11 And Saul cast the javelin; for he said, I will smite David even to the wall *with it*. And David avoided out of his presence twice.

12 And Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with him, and was departed from Saul.

13 Therefore Saul removed him from him, and made him his captain over a thousand; and he went out and came in before the people.

14 And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and the LORD *was* with him.

15 Wherefore when Saul saw that he behaved himself very wisely, he was afraid of him.

16 But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came in before them.

29 And Saul was yet the more afraid of David; and Saul became David's enemy continually.

30 Then the princes of the Philistines went forth: and it came to pass, after they went forth, *that* David behaved himself more wisely than all the servants of Saul; so that his name was much set by.

1 Samuel 25:2 And *there was* a man in Maon, whose possessions *were* in Carmel; and the man *was* very great, and he had three thousand sheep, and a thousand goats: and he was shearing his sheep in Carmel.

3 Now the name of the man *was* Nabal; and the name of his wife Abigail: and *she was* a woman of good understanding, and of a beautiful countenance: but the man *was* churlish and evil in his doings; and he *was* of the house of Caleb.

18 Then Abigail made haste, and took two hundred loaves, and two bottles of wine, and five sheep ready dressed, and five measures of parched *corn*, and an hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred

cakes of figs, and laid *them* on asses.

19 And she said unto her servants, Go on before me; behold, I come after you. But she told not her husband Nabal.

23 And when Abigail saw David, she hasted, and lighted off the ass, and fell before David on her face, and bowed herself to the ground,

24 And fell at his feet, and said, Upon me, my lord, *upon me let this iniquity be*: and let thine handmaid, I pray thee, speak in thine audience, and hear the words of thine handmaid.

25 Let not my lord, I pray thee, regard this man of Belial, *even Nabal*: for as his name *is*, so *is* he; Nabal *is* his name, and folly *is* with him: but I thine handmaid saw not the young men of my lord, whom thou didst send.

26 Now therefore, my lord, *as* the LORD liveth, and *as* thy soul liveth, seeing the LORD hath withholden thee from coming to *shed* blood, and from avenging thyself with thine own hand, now let thine enemies, and they that seek evil to my lord, be as Nabal.

27 And now this blessing which thine handmaid hath brought unto my lord, let it even be given unto the young men that follow my lord.

28 I pray thee, forgive the trespass of thine handmaid: for the LORD will certainly make my lord a sure house; because my lord fighteth the battles of the LORD, and evil hath not been found in thee *all* thy days.

32 And David said to Abigail, Blessed *be* the LORD God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me:

33 And blessed *be* thy advice, and blessed *be* thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to *shed* blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand.

35 So David received of her hand *that* which she had brought him, and said unto her, Go up in peace to thine house; see, I have hearkened to thy voice, and have accepted thy person.

Daniel 5:10 Now the queen, by reason of the words of the king and his lords, came into the banquet house: *and* the queen spake and said, O king, live for ever: let not thy thoughts trouble thee, nor let thy countenance be changed:

11 There is a man in thy kingdom, in whom *is* the spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of thy father light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him; whom the

king Nebuchadnezzar thy father, the king, / say, thy father, made master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, *and* soothsayers;

12 Forasmuch as an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, and shewing of hard sentences, and dissolving of doubts, were found in the same Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar: now let Daniel be called, and he will shew the interpretation.

Daniel 6:1 It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom;

2 And over these three presidents; of whom Daniel was first: that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage.

3 Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm.

MEMORY VERSE: And David behaved himself wisely in all his ways; and the LORD was with him. —1 Samuel 18:14

CENTRAL THOUGHT: David, Abigail, and Daniel are among many we read of in the Bible that “behaved themselves wisely,” had “good understanding,” or had an “excellent spirit.” The way God worked through their lives is a good reminder of what He will do for us today when we have the same purpose to please God with all our heart.

The apostle Paul taught the young church in Corinth that part of true godly charity is to not behave oneself unseemly. David, Abigail, and Daniel are good role models in this regard. Except for the few times David made missteps and had to repent of those grave errors, these three exhibited the quality of a godly and wise spirit by behaving themselves appropriately when under great pressure. Behaving in this manner is an act of great charity to all who are affected by it, as it draws them to God.

WORD DEFINITIONS

1 Sa 18:5 “**Behaved himself wisely**”: circumspect, considerate, prudent, of good understanding (*Strong’s*).

1 Sa 25:3 “**Nabal**”: dolt or stupid person. (*Strong’s*).

1 Sa 25:3 “**Abigail**”: joy of my father (*Strong’s*).

1 Sa 25:3 **“Of good understanding”**: discretion, knowledge, prudence, wise (*Strong’s*).

Dan 6:3 **“Excellent spirit”**: exceedingly good spirit (*Strong’s*).

LESSON BACKGROUND

David went from being a shepherd boy to a respected leader among those in King Saul’s army, almost overnight. The king, when seeing how popular and loved David was, soon became inflamed with jealousy—to the degree he tried to pin David to the wall with a javelin!

Abigail, Nabal’s wife, was about as opposite from her churlish and foolish husband as one could get. He was totally consumed with himself, stingy to the core, and without reason. He had to have known that it was not wise to make David and his men angry by depriving them of a little food, yet he did anyway. He had the bully mindset that he could get away with it. David and his men set out with the intent of wiping Nabal and all his male servants from the land of the living. Abigail, when approached by one of the servants who knew what Nabal had told David’s men, instantly realized the grave danger Nabal and his servants were in. She wasted no time in gathering food sufficient to feed David and his men. When she met David, she even asked him to place the blame on her, so she could in turn ask for mercy. As a result of Abigail’s wise behaviour, she successfully made a friend out of an enemy, satisfied 600 hungry and angry men, and saved Nabal’s entire household and estate.

Daniel, endowed with God’s blessings and presence throughout his lifetime, beginning in his youth, did not arrive at this level of a relationship with God without first “purposing in his heart” to not defile himself with the king’s meat. We see the full end of Daniel’s purpose in his “excellent spirit.”

DISCUSSION:

1. As a young man coming into King Saul’s court and army, David behaved himself wisely in all his ways. Why did this endear himself to the people?
2. If David had been “stuck on himself,” would the people have loved him so much?

3. Why does not “behaving oneself in an unseemly manner” have such positive ramifications?
4. Abigail was willing to assume blame in order to smooth things over with David. How would David have felt if she had declared how innocent she was and tried to look good in his eyes?
5. How did Abigail’s humility and generosity melt David and his men’s hearts?
6. What could have happened if Abigail had not done everything the way she did?
7. Daniel’s reputation of possessing an excellent spirit included a God-given ability to do many different things. What were these things?
8. To whom does God entrust gifts and abilities such as he gave to Daniel?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Have you ever known an individual that could “do everything, and do everything well?” I know one man that fits this description. David, a young man in his early thirties, came to work at Hawk Engineering a year or so after I started working there, and was already accomplished in many different areas. He never rattled off a list of his abilities, but freely talked about his varied interests with anyone who brought them up. David soon became an excellent project engineer with our company. On the side, he owned and edited the local newspaper, was the sound man for a local singing group, and overhauled automobile engines. There are many other things David could do, and do well, but perhaps one of his most outstanding qualities was his ability to handle people—and handle stress.

I worked side by side with David for about a year in Birmingham, Alabama, on a feed mill conversion to a pet food manufacturing facility. We worked twenty-two days straight, twelve hours a day. The company flew us back home every three weeks so we could work a week in the home office in southeast Kansas before starting the cycle all over again. I was newly married and not allowed to take my wife with me. This situation wore on my wife and me, but God gave grace. Thankfully, about six months into the project, our boss allowed us to have Sundays off. I was able to attend services with the saints in Warrior, Alabama, an hour or so north of Birmingham. This fellowship was a real blessing to me.

Toward the end of our time working in Birmingham, I marveled at how David never complained or seemed agitated at the long grueling hours. His unruffled attitude left a lasting impression on me. I'm sure David was as tired as I was of the long hours, and of everything we needed to accomplish, but I never heard one word or saw one action—not even a facial expression—that hinted at him being disgruntled with the demands of the job. David was a Christian, and I have no doubt his relationship with God was very real. David behaved himself wisely and had an excellent spirit under very difficult circumstances. He was a joy to be around.

“Heavenly Father, may your graces be alive and working in my life so those I rub shoulders with will see your love shining through. Amen!”

REFLECTIONS

In 1 Thessalonians 5:22 we have the advice to saints to, “Abstain from all appearance of evil.” In Romans 14:16 we also have the advice, “Let not then your good be evil spoken of.” Looking at our world today it seems more and more people are judging us by our reputations, by appearances, by our actions—often as these are relayed by others, not based on what they themselves have seen.

How easy is it to take a group of young people caught in an unwise decision or situation and to paint the entire group with one brush. If a particular member has a reputation for not being wise, folks will often comment, “I’m not surprised they were involved.” But if a particular member had been generally behaving themselves wisely, not acting unseemly, the comments generally are more along the line of, “I’m really surprised to see they were involved.” If these two extremes had to go before a judge for the matter, the reputation difference could mean significant differences in sentences or penalties handed down.

We should live in such a way as to not bring disgrace on our Lord and Savior. If we are testifying with our mouths that we are following the leadings of the spirit of God in our lives, our actions should clearly show that we are indeed being careful in how we live and act.

—Bro. Eric Doolittle

AUGUST 18, 2024

CHARITY SEEKETH NOT HER OWN

I Corinthians 13:5

Ruth 1:11 And Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with me? *are* there yet *any more* sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands?

12 Turn again, my daughters, go *your way*; for I am too old to have an husband. If I should say, I have hope, *if* I should have an husband also to night, and should also bear sons;

13 Would ye tarry for them till they were grown? would ye stay for them from having husbands? nay, my daughters; for it grieveth me much for your sakes that the hand of the LORD is gone out against me.

14 And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her.

15 And she said, Behold, thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister in law.

16 And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, *or* to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people *shall be* my people, and thy God my God:

17 Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, *if ought* but death part thee and me.

18 When she saw that she was stedfastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her.

(Also read Ruth 2:1-7)

Ruth 2:8 Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearst thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens:

9 *Let* thine eyes *be* on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them: have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? and when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of *that* which the young men have drawn.

10 Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I *am* a stranger?

11 And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law since the death of thine husband: and *how* thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore.

12 The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.

Ruth 3:1 Then Naomi her mother in law said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee?

2 And now *is* not Boaz of our kindred, with whose maidens thou wast? Behold, he winnoweth barley to night in the threshingfloor.

3 Wash thyself therefore, and anoint thee, and put thy raiment upon thee, and get thee down to the floor: *but* make not thyself known unto the man, until he shall have done eating and drinking.

4 And it shall be, when he lieth down, that thou shalt mark the place where he shall lie, and thou shalt go in, and uncover his feet, and lay thee down; and he will tell thee what thou shalt do.

5 And she said unto her, All that thou sayest unto me I will do.

6 And she went down unto the floor, and did according to all that her mother in law bade her.

7 And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of corn: and she came softly, and uncovered his feet, and laid her down.

8 And it came to pass at midnight, that the man was afraid, and turned himself: and, behold, a woman lay at his feet.

9 And he said, Who *art* thou? And she answered, I *am* Ruth thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou *art* a near kinsman.

10 And he said, Blessed *be* thou of the LORD, my daughter: *for* thou hast shewed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning, inasmuch as thou followedst not young men, whether poor or rich.

11 And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest: for all the city of my people doth know that thou *art* a virtuous woman.

(Also read Ruth 4:1-13)

Ruth 4:14 And the women said unto Naomi, Blessed *be* the LORD, which hath not left thee this day without a kinsman, that his

name may be famous in Israel.

15 And he shall be unto thee a restorer of *thy* life, and a nourisher of thine old age: for thy daughter in law, which loveth thee, which is better to thee than seven sons, hath born him.

16 And Naomi took the child, and laid it in her bosom, and became nurse unto it.

17 And the women her neighbours gave it a name, saying, There is a son born to Naomi; and they called his name Obed: he *is* the father of Jesse, the father of David.

MEMORY VERSE: And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, *or* to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people *shall be* my people, and thy God my God: Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, *if ought* but death part thee and me. —Ruth 1:16-17

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Ruth, a young widow from Moab, refused to leave her mother-in-law, Naomi, who had decided to go back home to Bethlehem. When they arrived in Bethlehem, Ruth gleaned grain in one of the nearby fields. Boaz, the owner of the field, noticed Ruth, inquired about her, and found out about her selfless decision to stay by the side of her mother-in-law. Boaz recognized what a sacrifice it was for Ruth to leave her native country and family to live in a strange land.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Rth 2:8 **“Glean”**: It was a custom in Israel to allow the poor to follow along behind the reapers to gather up the small remnants of the harvest missed by the reapers.

Rth 3:10 **“Thou hast shewed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning”**: Boaz felt it remarkable that Ruth would be willing to have him as her husband, rather than any other of the young men around. He also realized that Ruth was willing to follow their custom of a near kinsman perpetuating the family lineage, ensuring the family lands stayed in the family.

LESSON BACKGROUND

Naomi, her husband, Elimelech, and their two sons, Mahlon and Chilion, left Bethlehemjudah for Moab. Elimelech made the decision for the family, but Naomi ended up bearing the brunt of his decision when he died, followed shortly by death of their two sons.

Brokenhearted, Naomi, along with her two young daughters-in-law, finally decided it would be best to journey back to Bethlehem. Naomi had received word that the famine in the land, that had prompted their original exodus, had been replaced by prosperous harvests again. On the road back to Bethlehem, Naomi began to have misgivings about bringing her two daughters-in-law back with her. Naomi finally persuaded Orpah to return to her father's house, but Ruth refused to leave Naomi – unless death separated them.

DISCUSSION:

1. Why did Orpah finally agree to return to her father's house?
2. What could have been some of the reasons Ruth refused to follow Orpah's example?
3. What did Ruth most likely expect to happen to Naomi and her once they arrived in Bethlehem?
4. What did Ruth's decision to glean among the poor in the fields say about her character?
5. By the time Boaz saw Ruth among the gleaners in his field, what had he heard about her?
6. When Ruth, upon the advice of Naomi, followed the custom of asking Boaz to fulfill his part as a near kinsman, what was his reaction?
7. Why did Boaz tell Ruth, "Your kindness at the last is better than at the first because you have not sought after the younger men"?
8. Were there instance(s) in the story of Ruth where she acted selfishly?
9. How did her attitude and faith work out in the end?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Bessie Rigdon reached for another stick of firewood. That's when she briefly saw and heard the rattlesnake. Before she could get out of

harm's way, the snake struck and bit her ankle. After killing the snake with her ax, Bessie realized she needed to "get busy quick" and get things in order so her four-year-old daughter could have enough to survive on, along with her younger brother, until her husband got back from town.

John and Bessie Rigdon lived as homesteaders in Colorado in the 1880's. Life wasn't easy, but they were getting by. John had left the day before for town to get supplies. He was due home that evening. When the snake bit Bessie, she decided to build up a hot fire, show Kitty how to keep it going, and baked – a lot. Standing near the cooking fire on a hot day, Bessie sweated profusely as she resolutely kept up the tasks that would help keep her two young children nourished until her husband got home. She told her daughter, "Momma will soon be taking a long sleep."

Despite seeing spots before her eyes, feeling faint, and sweating more than she probably ever had in her life, Bessie kept on – and on. By the time her husband, John, got home that night, Bessie was doing much better with the snake bite. Evidently, her drive to provide for her children as her last act of love saved her own life. Her extreme perspiration that day helped eliminate the deadly snake venom! Had she gone into the house and made herself as comfortable as possible, the result likely would not have been so positive. Bessie, however, never considered making herself comfortable in this situation, but chose to do all she possibly could for those she loved. (From a story told me by my Grandma McMillian over forty years ago and confirmed recently at: [History: Rattlesnake bite didn't stop Bessie Rigdon \(coloradoan.com\)](https://www.historycolorado.com/history/rattlesnake-bite-didnt-stop-bessie-rigdon))

"Dear Lord, help me to live more and more for others, and less and less for me. Amen!"

REFLECTIONS

Marriage provides many opportunities to act either selfishly or selflessly. My husband and I had a point on which we did not agree. We didn't ever speak crossly with one another about it, but I didn't change my habit which I knew didn't please him. In my opinion, it wasn't that important, and it inconvenienced me to change. This situation went on for some time and my husband would remind me of his wishes occasionally, which I continued to disregard. That is,

until the Lord spoke to me in this manner: “How much do you love your husband if you will not alter your behavior to please him, but grieve him by disregarding his wishes?” These words convicted me and I changed my habit. It was a little thing, but every time I did it my way, it was saying to my husband that I didn’t love him enough to change and please him.

Love is more often shown through little deeds than grand ones. If we aren’t giving of ourselves in the small things, it’s not likely that we will in a matter that requires real sacrifice.

—Sis. Sarah Herron

AUGUST 25, 2024

CHARITY IS NOT EASILY PROVOKED

I Corinthians 13:5

Numbers 12:1 And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman.

2 And they said, Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us? And the LORD heard *it*.

3 (Now the man Moses *was* very meek, above all the men which *were* upon the face of the earth.)

4 And the LORD spake suddenly unto Moses, and unto Aaron, and unto Miriam, Come out ye three unto the tabernacle of the congregation. And they three came out.

5 And the LORD came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood *in* the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam: and they both came forth.

6 And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, *I* the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, *and* will speak unto him in a dream.

7 My servant Moses *is* not so, who *is* faithful in all mine house.

8 With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?

9 And the anger of the LORD was kindled against them; and he departed.

10 And the cloud departed from off the tabernacle; and, behold, Miriam *became* leprous, *white* as snow: and Aaron looked upon Miriam, and, behold, *she was* leprous.

11 And Aaron said unto Moses, Alas, my lord, I beseech thee, lay not the sin upon us, wherein we have done foolishly, and wherein we have sinned.

12 Let her not be as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed when he cometh out of his mother's womb.

13 And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee.

14 And the LORD said unto Moses, If her father had but spit in her face, should she not be ashamed seven days? let her be shut out from the camp seven days, and after that let her be received in *again*.

15 And Miriam was shut out from the camp seven days: and the people journeyed not till Miriam was brought in *again*.

16 And afterward the people removed from Hazeroth, and pitched in the wilderness of Paran.

MEMORY VERSE: And Moses cried unto the LORD, saying, Heal her now, O God, I beseech thee. —Numbers 12:13

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Miriam and Aaron, Moses' older sister and brother, grew jealous of Moses and spoke against him "because of the Ethiopian woman he had married." God heard every word they said and was angry with them. He called Moses, Aaron, and Miriam to the tabernacle and told them that he chose to speak to Moses "mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches." After God finished speaking, and the cloud departed, Miriam was "leprous, white as snow." Aaron pled for his sister to Moses, who in turn prayed to God, saying, "heal her now, O God, I beseech thee." God told Moses that Miriam would be put out of the camp seven days before she could return to the people.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Num 12:1 "**Ethiopian woman**": a Cushite woman (Strong's). Most scholars believe this was Zipporah, the wife Moses married after fleeing Egypt years before.

Num 12:3 **“Very meek”**: gentle, humble, poor in spirit (*Strong’s*).

Num 12:8 **“Speak mouth to mouth, even apparently”**: without the intervention of a third party, and not in a dream or vision – but plainly and openly (*Albert Barnes*).

LESSON BACKGROUND

Miriam, the oldest of the three siblings, bravely watched over her infant brother Moses as he floated on the Nile in the little basket their mother had prepared for him. When Pharaoh’s daughter discovered Moses floating among the reeds, Miriam was there to suggest a good nurse for her. Miriam, young as she was, played a very important role in Moses being spared from the infanticide Pharaoh had decreed.

Eighty years later, Miriam led the whole camp of Israel in songs of praise to God for miraculously delivering them from the Egyptian army that had pursued them through the path in the Red Sea.

Aaron, a few years older than Moses, was appointed by God to be the public mouthpiece for Moses, since Moses was too self-conscious to speak in public. God also named Aaron as the high priest, and his sons as priests under him.

While Moses was the one God spoke with “mouth to mouth,” Miriam and Aaron played very important roles also. Their offices lightened Moses’ load considerably and probably gave him much-needed comradery. They, above all people, knew best how to sympathize with and provide a word of comfort to Moses when the people complained about the various circumstances they encountered.

DISCUSSION:

1. Miriam and Aaron first complained about Moses’ wife, but what did their complaints soon escalate to?
2. How did Moses respond when his brother and sister questioned his choice of companion and God’s calling on his life?
3. If a person cannot be goaded into defending who they chose to marry and they can’t they be goaded into defending God’s call on their life, how probable is it of provoking them in any other way?

4. Moses found grace to not be provoked, but how angry did God become in defense of Moses?
5. How serious is it to talk against the calling God gives someone else?
6. What enabled Moses to pray for God to heal his leprous sister after all her harsh criticisms?
7. Is it better to defend ourselves or let God be our defense?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

The discussion between young George Washington and the older gentleman, William Payne, became so animated that the older gentleman suddenly struck George Washington with his walking stick, knocking him to the ground. Under most circumstances, this incident would have quickly escalated into a duel, with George Washington being given the choice of weapons.

For many years throughout Europe and in the early American days, it was socially acceptable to settle disputes with a duel—especially if the grievance involved points of honor, dignity, or reputation. Many thought this was simply the best way of settling matters, even when legislation was passed making it illegal. For years, the law usually turned a blind eye to duels. Many famous men met their end in a duel: Alexander Hamilton lost his duel with Aaron Burr. Congressmen, newspaper editors, Button Gwinnett, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, and many others fought to the death in public duels.

In the case involving George Washington and William Payne, young George called Mr. Payne to a meeting the next day. Instead of demanding a duel, George simply took the blame for the argument and apologized. The two men shook hands, and that was the end of the dispute. Other accounts of this situation claim that the two became fast friends after their handshake.

<https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/duel-104161025/>

“Heavenly Father, thank you for the many examples of those who chose not to become provoked to wrath. Thank you, that you are more than able to defend me, should the need ever arise. Help me to not take it upon myself to defend my own honor and reputation. Rather, help me to live before you in such a way that you will gladly take my part. Amen!”

REFLECTIONS

Here is food for thought: have you ever considered why charity is not easily provoked? Today's lesson reminded me of a story shared by a good friend of mine when we were younger. As the youngest in his family, he often felt frustrated in not being able to provoke his older brothers to do his bidding, becoming angry when they would laugh at his feeble attempts to control them. To his chagrin, he found little sympathy from me, as being the eldest in my family, I related more with his brothers than him. There was a security I felt in the fact of being bigger and stronger than my brothers. As long as we were playing fair, there was little they could do to harm me, and their many antics often amused me.

Almighty God, who is love, does not feel threatened by mankind; but, secure in His identity, He daily sends rain on the just and the unjust. Jesus was called illegitimate, of the devil, and a winebibber, yet loved His antagonists enough to weep over Jerusalem. Seeing Heaven opened to him, Stephen was so secure in knowing he was pleasing his Master that he could forgive his tormentors just as Jesus did. Therefore, I submit to you that those who have God's love in them feel secure enough in Him to withstand provocation. Does the charity you have within allow you to do this?

—Bro. Fari Matthews

SEPTEMBER 1, 2024

CHARITY THINKETH NO EVIL

I Corinthians 13:5

Genesis 22:1 And it came to pass after these things, that God did tempt Abraham, and said unto him, Abraham: and he said, Behold, *here I am.*

2 And he said, Take now thy son, thine only *son* Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.

3 And Abraham rose up early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him, and Isaac his son, and

clave the wood for the burnt offering, and rose up, and went unto the place of which God had told him.

4 Then on the third day Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off.

5 And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.

6 And Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid *it* upon Isaac his son; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife; and they went both of them together.

7 And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here *am* I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where *is* the lamb for a burnt offering?

8 And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering: so they went both of them together.

9 And they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood.

10 And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.

11 And the angel of the LORD called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here *am* I.

12 And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only *son* from me.

13 And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind *him* a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son.

14 And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovahjireh: as it is said *to* this day, In the mount of the LORD it shall be seen.

MEMORY VERSE: And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father: and he said, Here *am* I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood: but where *is* the lamb for a burnt offering?

—Genesis 22:7

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Abraham had ample time and opportunity to “think evil” of God’s directive to take his son of promise into the land

of Moriah and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains. Despite the human emotions that surely flooded through him, Abraham refused to ascribe any ill motive to God. He simply obeyed – and trusted. He did not spread discontent or unbelief to his son, either.

Isaac, on his part, was not ignorant of the fact that one key component in their journey to “offer a sacrifice” was missing. When Abraham replied, “God will provide himself a lamb,” Isaac let it go at that. When, however, Abraham bound his son, what enabled Isaac, a young man in the prime of physical strength, to submit to this turn of events? Isaac had to completely put out of his mind any evil motive from God and his father. If he had entertained even the slightest notion that either his father or God were behaving in an “evil” manner, he would have resisted, thus missing out on the blessing of God intended for he and his father. We also would have missed out on the example Isaac left us of his faith and obedience.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Gen 22:1 **“Tempt”**: test, prove, or try (*Strong’s*).

Gen 22:2 **“The land of Moriah...one of the mountains”**: The land of Moriah refers to the mountains in the area where Jerusalem now stands. Mount Calvary is the highest of these mountains and is the place of Jesus’ crucifixion many years later (*Adam Clarke*).

LESSON BACKGROUND

Abraham’s faith was tried many times in the fifty-plus years leading up to the test of offering up his son as a sacrifice. First, God called Abraham to leave his home country to journey to a place not yet revealed to him. Once Abraham reached the place God said would be his new home, a famine broke out. Abraham journeyed south into Egypt, so that his household and flocks could survive. While traveling toward Egypt, Abraham began to worry about his beautiful wife – to the extent he convinced himself and his wife that she should claim to be his sister. God was merciful when Abraham’s deception was revealed, but there were consequences. One of the consequences was the addition to his household of an Egyptian maid, Hagar, given to Sarah by the king of Egypt.

Hagar played a pivotal role when Abraham and Sarah grew weary of waiting on their promised son. Thinking she was helping the situation, Sarah gave Hagar to Abraham as a wife. Ishmael was born the next year. Twenty-five years after God first promised them a son, Isaac was born. Abraham was a hundred years old by now, and Sarah was ninety. While Isaac was still a child, the family dynamics became unbearable for Sarah, so Abraham sent Hagar and Ishmael away.

One of the most important aspects of Abraham's journey of faith was the way he and his wife handled failure. At any point in the situations mentioned above, Sarah could have become embittered and cynical against her husband and God. Likewise, Abraham could have blamed Sarah for being too impatient. Perhaps there were words exchanged between them from time to time dealing with their difficulties, but the fact their son Isaac chose to "think no evil" as he was being offered as a sacrifice reinforces the premise that Abraham and Sarah handled each other's failures with grace, love, and forgiveness—choosing to "think no evil," and taught Isaac the same way. Anything less would have impacted Isaac negatively, making it very difficult for Isaac to trust his father—and God—when it came time to submit to being bound and offered as a sacrifice.

DISCUSSION:

1. How did Abraham likely feel when God called for him to offer Isaac as a sacrifice?
2. What trouble could Abraham have had if he tried to rationalize what God told him to do?
3. In what way can our human emotions tempt us to "think evil" of God or others who, from our perspective, cause us pain?
4. How easy is it for us to assign evil motives to the one hurting us based on the evidence we see?
5. If we let God be the one to determine the true motives in those who hurt us, how does that release us to "think no evil" in the circumstance? If we do not allow God to judge all motives, how successful will we be in not thinking evil?
6. If we do think evil in our troubles, how will that affect us and others? When we choose to let God carry the heavy weight of our trouble, and we "think no evil," what does that free God to do?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Job suffered immense loss in a short span of time. His flocks and herds were decimated, his children died tragic deaths, he suffered great anguish with boils all over his body, his reputation was lost, his friends assumed the worst about him, and his wife lost hope of ever seeing a better day. “Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die” (Job 2:9). Despite the immense pressure Job must have felt to take his wife’s advice, Job refused to “think evil” of God. “But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips” (Job 2:10). True, Job did complain about his lot in life, even regretting the day he was born, but in the end he chose to trust God rather than give up.

Joseph had many opportunities to think evil of those who caused him great distress. His brothers, after all, hated him, and sold him as a slave. What further evidence did he need to feel justified in thinking evil of them? Years later, though, Joseph told his brothers, “But as for you, ye thought evil against me; *but* God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as *it is* this day, to save much people alive” (Genesis 50:20).

Job and Joseph, as well as many others who remained faithful, wisely chose to not assign ill motives to those whose faces seemed to be behind their troubles. They refused to think evil of others, but, rather, allowed God to sort out all their difficulties. This attitude allowed God to work His perfect plan in the high’s and lows of their circumstances so that His perfect plan could come to pass in the end. God blessed Job with twice as much as he had before his great trial. He lived to see “son’s sons, even four generations” (Job 42:16). Joseph was put in charge of storing the fruits of the seven years of plenty, making him largely responsible for saving the lives of countless people in the seven years of famine that followed.

“Dear Heavenly Father, I thank you for taking full responsibility for all the difficulties I pass through. Thank you that I do not have to assume the great weight of thinking evil of you or of others in order for me to rationalize these difficulties. Amen!”

REFLECTIONS

In the mist of our trials and tests of life, it is certainly not easy to ‘think no evil’ as mentioned in the lesson. Romans 8:28 reminds us: “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” Our challenge as human beings is transforming God’s word from our heads to our hearts and applying it in our daily lives. Thankfully, God can and will supply us with whatever we need to fully comprehend, believe, and obey his word for continual spiritual growth.

When we look back and consider others’ experiences from the biblical examples that we read, we have the advantage of knowing how the story will end. These and other examples should inspire us. God has been and will continue to look down in love from His throne on high. His faithfulness will remain throughout all generations. There is no respect of persons with God (Romans 2:11). Whatever difficulties God allows us to face are meant to increase our faith, trust, and confidence in him. God is perfect, His love is perfect and perfect love is void of evil.

—Bro. Tavis Browne

SEPTEMBER 8, 2024

CHARITY REJOICETH NOT IN INIQUITY BUT REJOICETH IN THE TRUTH

I Corinthians 13:6

Exodus 32:30 And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the LORD; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin.

31 And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold.

32 Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written.

33 And the LORD said unto Moses, Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book.

34 Therefore now go, lead the people unto *the place* of which I have spoken unto thee: behold, mine Angel shall go before thee:

nevertheless in the day when I visit I will visit their sin upon them.

35 And the LORD plagued the people, because they made the calf, which Aaron made.

Deuteronomy 9:13 Furthermore the LORD spake unto me, saying, I have seen this people, and, behold, it *is* a stiffnecked people:

14 Let me alone, that I may destroy them, and blot out their name from under heaven: and I will make of thee a nation mightier and greater than they.

15 So I turned and came down from the mount, and the mount burned with fire: and the two tables of the covenant *were* in my two hands.

16 And I looked, and, behold, ye had sinned against the LORD your God, *and* had made you a molten calf: ye had turned aside quickly out of the way which the LORD had commanded you.

17 And I took the two tables, and cast them out of my two hands, and brake them before your eyes.

18 And I fell down before the LORD, as at the first, forty days and forty nights: I did neither eat bread, nor drink water, because of all your sins which ye sinned, in doing wickedly in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.

19 For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure, wherewith the LORD was wroth against you to destroy you. But the LORD hearkened unto me at that time also.

20 And the LORD was very angry with Aaron to have destroyed him: and I prayed for Aaron also the same time.

21 And I took your sin, the calf which ye had made, and burnt it with fire, and stamped it, *and* ground *it* very small, *even* until it was as small as dust: and I cast the dust thereof into the brook that descended out of the mount.

22 And at Taberah, and at Massah, and at Kibrothhattavah, ye provoked the LORD to wrath.

23 Likewise when the LORD sent you from Kadeshbarnea, saying, Go up and possess the land which I have given you; then ye rebelled against the commandment of the LORD your God, and ye believed him not, nor hearkened to his voice.

24 Ye have been rebellious against the LORD from the day that I knew you.

25 Thus I fell down before the LORD forty days and forty nights, as I fell down *at the first*; because the LORD had said he would

destroy you.

26 I prayed therefore unto the LORD, and said, O Lord GOD, destroy not thy people and thine inheritance, which thou hast redeemed through thy greatness, which thou hast brought forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand.

27 Remember thy servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; look not unto the stubbornness of this people, nor to their wickedness, nor to their sin:

28 Lest the land whence thou broughtest us out say, Because the LORD was not able to bring them into the land which he promised them, and because he hated them, he hath brought them out to slay them in the wilderness.

29 Yet they *are* thy people and thine inheritance, which thou broughtest out by thy mighty power and by thy stretched out arm.

MEMORY VERSE: Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth: Lest the LORD see *it*, and it displease him, and he turn away his wrath from him.

—Proverbs 24:17-18

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The Lord was so grieved with the people's sin in creating and worshiping the golden calf that He determined to destroy them and create another people from Moses' offspring. While deeply offended at the people's sin as well, Moses pled for the children of Israel. He was willing for his own name to be blotted from the list of those who were to enter into the Land of Canaan, if the Lord was not willing to forgive the people and grant them entrance.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Ex 32:32 "**Blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written**": Adam Clarke states that Moses most likely meant that if the people at large were to have their name blotted out from entering into the Land of Canaan, he wished to have his name blotted as well. He did not want to enter Canaan with only his family, and bear the grief of seeing the rest of God's people miss out entirely.

LESSON BACKGROUND

God called Moses to Mount Sinai to give him the commandments and statues for the people of Israel. After Moses had been absent from the camp for almost forty days, the people grew restless and “gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him” (Exodus 32:1). Unfortunately, Aaron went along with their mutiny, and made a golden calf out of the jewelry he collected from them for that purpose.

The Lord told Moses what the people had done. He said, “Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation” (Exodus 32:9-10). Moses pled for the people, reasoning with the Lord that the Egyptians would hear of Israel’s destruction and claim that He had this in mind all along.

As Moses descended from the mountain, he finally reached a point where he could see the people dancing around the golden calf. Utterly disgusted with the people’s idolatry, Moses threw down the sacred tablets given to him by the Lord, shattering them. When Moses reached the camp, he melted the golden calf, pounded it out thin, ground it into powder, scattered it upon the water, and made the children of Israel drink of it (Exodus 32:20 paraphrased).

Moses then talked with Aaron, questioning him how this could have happened under his watch. Aaron side-stepped Moses’ wrath, and told of the people’s mischief, also claiming that when he cast the people’s golden jewelry into the fire that “there came out this calf” (Exodus 32:21-24).

Standing in the gate of the camp, Moses then asked, “Who is on the Lord’s side? Let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him” (Exodus 32:26). Moses then commanded the Levites to “go throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbor. And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses; and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men” (Exodus 32:27-28).

The next day, Moses spoke to the people, saying, “Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the LORD; peradventure I shall

make an atonement for your sin” (Exodus 32:30). Moses went back up Mount Sinai and interceded for the people. It was at that time that he told the Lord that he would rather have his own name blotted out of His book and not enter the Land of Canaan rather than see all Israel barred from Canaan.

DISCUSSION:

1. Moses fasted forty days during the time the Lord gave him the Ten Commandments and many other statutes on Mount Sinai. When the people sinned with the golden calf, Moses went back to Mount Sinai for another forty days, fasting and praying for the people. Why was Moses willing to fast again?
2. The Lord told Moses that he was going to destroy the people of Israel and start over with the lineage of Moses. What was Moses’ response?
3. Moses could have said, “I agree with you, Lord, that this people is stiff-necked and deserve to die.” Why didn’t he?
4. What did Moses believe the Egyptians would say if the Lord destroyed the people of Israel?
5. If Moses had agreed to let the Lord start another new nation with his family, how would that have constituted Moses “rejoicing in iniquity?”
6. With Moses’ decision to intercede for the children of Israel, how was he “rejoicing in truth”?
7. How is “rejoicing in iniquity” and “rejoicing in the truth” a decision we must make regarding difficulties we face today?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Moses understood the great evil of Israel’s rebellion. He also understood the Lord’s decision to destroy Israel and start over with his lineage. Instead of rejoicing that Israel was about to get what they deserved, Moses pled their cause – to the degree he was willing to forgo entering the Promised Land himself. Moses reminded the Lord of all His past promises to Israel, restating the truth of His love, power, compassion, and forgiveness. The Lord honored Moses’ love and intercession for Israel by allowing the descendants of the rebellious Israelites to enter the Land of Canaan forty years later

rather than destroy them all.

Jonah, in sharp contrast to Moses, struggled with the concept of not rejoicing in the destruction of the wicked. When the Lord spoke to Jonah about going to Ninevah and crying against it, he went the other direction, trying to flee from the presence of the Lord. Thankfully, Jonah seemed to come to the proper understanding of how to regard Ninevah by the end of the book of Jonah.

Adopting Jonah's initial attitude regarding iniquity and truth will result in "fleeing from the presence of the Lord" (Jonah 1:3). God does not dwell near an attitude of "those evil people are going to get what they deserve"! Rather, God dwells in love, mercy, and rejoicing in the truth of His longsuffering and forgiveness.

"Dear Lord, thank you for your love and mercy. Help me to see iniquity and truth more and more as you see it, rather than through my human emotions and understanding. Help me to not rejoice in the punishment of those caught in iniquity, but in the truth of your love and forgiveness. Amen!"

REFLECTIONS

"Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth" (Proverbs 24:17). Were you the one behind the door trying to fight back a grin when a sibling was getting punished, only to find yourself in a whirlwind of trouble a few minutes later? What is it that causes one to take pleasure in the pain of another?

In Jonah 4:5, Jonah sat outside the city to see—to see what? To see the destruction; people fleeing for their lives, a modern-day Sodom and Gomorrah, fire and brimstone.

In Luke 9:54-55, the disciples said, "Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them?" Jesus said, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." David put people under saws and axes of iron (II Samuel 12:31); Joseph's brothers considered not the anguish of his soul (Genesis 42:21), and the Romans would gather to see the Christians destroyed. Do we know what spirit we are of?

As a little boy, Uncle Jewel Johnson taught us not to take eggs out of a bird's nest. Do you kill a centipede when he is not close to you, not close to your house, nor a danger to you? Or a turtle trying

to cross a four-lane highway: will each one give him mercy, or will someone veer over to hit him?

In Psalms 85:10 the psalmist declares, “Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.” In Micah 6:8 it says to do justly, love mercy and walk humbly with thy God.

—Bro. E.E. Gracey

SEPTEMBER 15, 2024

CHARITY BEARETH ALL THINGS

I Corinthians 13:7

Proverbs 10:12 Hatred stirreth up strifes: but love covereth all sins.

Proverbs 17:9 He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth *very* friends.

Genesis 18:20 And the LORD said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous;

21 I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not, I will know.

22 And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom: but Abraham stood yet before the LORD.

23 And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?

24 Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that *are* therein?

25 That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

26 And the LORD said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes.

27 And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which *am but* dust and ashes:

28 Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous: wilt thou destroy all the city for *lack of* five? And he said, If I find there

forty and five, I will not destroy *it*.

29 And he spake unto him yet again, and said, Peradventure there shall be forty found there. And he said, I will not do *it* for forty's sake.

30 And he said *unto him*, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: Peradventure there shall thirty be found there. And he said, I will not do *it*, if I find thirty there.

31 And he said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord: Peradventure there shall be twenty found there. And he said, I will not destroy *it* for twenty's sake.

32 And he said, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy *it* for ten's sake.

33 And the LORD went his way, as soon as he had left communing with Abraham: and Abraham returned unto his place.

MEMORY VERSE: And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins. —1 Peter 4:8

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Godly charity does not stir up strife by “repeating a matter” to others. Rather, charity “covers all sins” by confining the matter to only the smallest necessary number of people.

WORD DEFINITIONS

1 Co 13:7a “**Beareth**”: (*steg’-o*) to roof over, to cover with silence (*Strong’s*); to conceal or to contain (*Clarke’s*); to draw a veil over (*Matthew Henry*).

LESSON BACKGROUND

The LORD visited Abraham, before destroying Sodom, and told him plainly that the sin of Sodom was “very grievous.” He revealed to Abraham that he planned to pay Sodom a personal visit. Abraham understood the implication and pled with Him to spare the city if there were fifty righteous in it. Abraham quickly changed the number to forty-five, then forty, thirty, twenty, and finally ten. The LORD promised Abraham that he would not destroy Sodom if there were

only ten righteous in it.

Twenty years earlier, Lot had chosen the well-watered plains of Jordan, and “pitched his tent toward Sodom.” Abraham took what was left, harboring no resentment toward his nephew for choosing the best grazing grounds.

It is evident from Abraham’s intercession with the LORD to spare Sodom for the sake of a few that he still regarded his nephew as righteous – even though Lot seemed to act in his own self-interest when choosing his half of the land years before. Remarkably, there is no record of Abraham even mentioning to the LORD that Lot had chosen unwisely, leaving him the less desirable portion. It is, however, likely that Abraham prayed about Lot’s selfish decision when it happened, but he left his burden with the LORD, effectively putting boundaries around the hurt.

DISCUSSION:

1. Abraham gave Lot the choice of which land to choose. After Lot chose the best land, Abraham had to choose how he reacted to Lot’s choice. What was his choice?
2. If Abraham had not chosen to regard Lot’s choice as a weakness that needed to be covered by prayer rather than rejection, what would Abraham’s likely reaction have been when the LORD told him of Sodom’s imminent destruction?
3. Why is “beareth all things” (cover with silence, conceal, or contain) part of the definition of charity?
4. When we are hurt or offended by someone, how natural is it to tell someone else about it?
5. The word “bear” in 1 Corinthians 13:7 means to roof over or cover with silence. How is this best done?
6. When an offense is immediately “covered with silence” by God’s grace and love, how far does the offense spread?
7. Suppose an offense is not immediately “covered with silence,” and godly charity, and others learn of the situation. After some time passes, by God’s grace the situation is resolved and the two parties are reconciled. However, what can the others who heard of the situation before the hurt was reconciled be left to battle?

8. If someone becomes offended at a minister and speaks of their offense to someone else, maybe even one's own children, what will that individual most likely deal with when the next time they hear a message delivered by that minister?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

One of the most solemn scriptures in the Bible is: "Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble *you*, and thereby many be defiled" (Hebrews 12:15). If an individual does not avail themselves of the grace of God to "cover with silence" an offense, they will soon spread that offense to others—often to those not able to bear it. If the individual, or individuals, privy to the offense are to live a victorious Christian life, they will have to battle through second-hand knowledge of someone else's grievance to get victory over their own bitterness from hearing of the original offense. They will never be truly "whole" until they get victory over the offense that was spread to them by the one that did not "cover" it with charity in the beginning.

When the original offense is spread to the children of the offended, especially if the children are young, the children will grow up with a warped understanding of what true Christianity is supposed to look like. They will view everything from the viewpoint of their offended parents.

As a child, I remember picking up my father's glasses and seeing the world through a distorted perspective. In the same way, life is "blurry and distorted" to children who view life through the lens of their parent's unhealed hurts. These children will not have the proper understanding of how God wants to help them navigate the difficulties in life—because the way their parent dealt with their own problems became "normal" to them.

When anyone, even an established Christian, hears of a problem someone else failed to "cover over or contain," it creates a battle. As an example with no spiritual implications, I occasionally read reviews of motels and restaurants in an effort to find good ones in the area we are traveling through. There are the usual good reviews for these establishments, but there is almost always at least one bad review in the mix. The bad review(s) may or may not have merit, but they put a

question mark in my mind; I wonder if there is any truth to the complaint. If it is important enough to me, I have to pursue the truth, but that takes time and effort.

“Heavenly Father, please help me to bear all things with charity, covering each circumstance with the appropriate silence, and containing it all with your grace. Help me to not spread anything to anyone else that could cause them to stumble in any way. Amen!”

REFLECTIONS

When one thinks of the term "love/charity," one doesn't necessarily think of the phrase "beareth all things," as stated in 1 Corinthians 13:7a. Both Clarke and Barnes' commentaries state that, "...this love conceals everything that should be concealed; betrays no secret fault or failures; retains the grace given; and goes on to continually increase." This verse should be taken to heart between offended brethren.

Joseph exhibited the essence of this verse when he was mistreated by his ten brothers. His older, jealous brothers stripped him of his special coat, threw him in a pit, and eventually sold him into slavery. Joseph possessed a love that didn't make him bitter, but he was full of love and mercy. He didn't discuss the circumstances precipitated by his brothers' malignant deeds but attributed them to the divine providence of God.

Joseph didn't attempt to defame or slander the names of his brothers, nor did he degrade their character or make them suffer publicly; however, he did test them to see if their hearts had changed. Above all, he chose to allow his love to "bear all things."

Possible consequences of charity not bearing all things could include irreparable damage to reputations and situations which could become explosive and involve more innocent victims, thereby jeopardizing all parties' relationships with God. Human nature does not want us to bear all things, but rather to explain our side, validate our position, and justify our actions. God's grace and love are needed to be QUIET. Self (*our pride*) must be allowed to die on our cross. Let us behave in a manner that always glorifies and magnifies our Heavenly Father.

—Anonymous Contributor

SEPTEMBER 22, 2024

CHARITY BELIEVETH AND HOPETH ALL THINGS

I Corinthians 13:7

Luke 15:11 And he said, A certain man had two sons:

12 And the younger of them said to *his* father, Father, give me the portion of goods that falleth to *me*. And he divided unto them *his* living.

13 And not many days after the younger son gathered all together, and took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living.

14 And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty famine in that land; and he began to be in want.

15 And he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country; and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

16 And he would fain have filled his belly with the husks that the swine did eat: and no man gave unto him.

17 And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee,

19 And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants.

20 And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.

21 And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.

22 But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put *it* on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on *his* feet:

23 And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill *it*; and let us eat, and be merry:

24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry.

25 Now his elder son was in the field: and as he came and drew

nigh to the house, he heard musick and dancing.

26 And he called one of the servants, and asked what these things meant.

27 And he said unto him, Thy brother is come; and thy father hath killed the fatted calf, because he hath received him safe and sound.

28 And he was angry, and would not go in: therefore came his father out, and intreated him.

29 And he answering said to *his* father, Lo, these many years do I serve thee, neither transgressed I at any time thy commandment: and yet thou never gavest me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends:

30 But as soon as this thy son was come, which hath devoured thy living with harlots, thou hast killed for him the fatted calf.

31 And he said unto him, Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine.

32 It was meet that we should make merry, and be glad: for this thy brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.

MEMORY VERSE: Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

—Luke 15:10

CENTRAL THOUGHT: The parable of the prodigal son illustrates the belief and hope of a heartbroken father for the return of his wayward child. The prodigal's brother, however, resented the celebration surrounding his return and acceptance back into the family.

WORD DEFINITIONS

Luk 15:20 "**Yet a great way off**": The prodigal son's father saw him while still far away, as if he was in habit of daily watching for his son's imminent appearance.

LESSON BACKGROUND

The Pharisees and scribes in Luke 15:2 "...murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." Jesus responded by

telling them three parables that illustrated God’s great love for sinners, His efforts in finding them where they are, and His joy in rescuing them.

The parable of the prodigal son challenges us to not have the attitude of the prodigal’s brother but to have the same care and hope as the Father – believing that his brother could and would return.

DISCUSSION:

1. How might the prodigal’s brother have felt when his brother took half of their father’s goods and left for a far country?
2. What hardships could the prodigal’s brother have had after the departure of the prodigal?
3. How did the prodigal’s father regard his son’s departure?
4. What was hope and expectation of the prodigal’s father?
5. If the prodigal’s father had not had the belief and hope of his erring son’s return, what would he have thought about the “poorly dressed beggar approaching from the distance”?
6. If I do not have belief and hope that a prodigal from God’s fold can and will return, what will my prayers for them be like? How effective will my prayers be?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Confess *your* faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit. Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins (James 5:16-20).

As James pointed out, we all have faults that need the prayer of others – who often can see our shortcomings better than we can ourselves. Part of the process of healing from our faults is to confess

them to others. The other part is to pray for each other. The process of confessing our faults and praying for each other makes an eternal difference, but it requires belief and hope that God will perform that which we are incapable of working through our own strength and understanding.

The other option we have, besides praying with belief and hope for God to effect a change in the situations we are concerned about, is to abandon belief and hope – relegating the situations we are concerned about to “whatever works out.” There is a scripture that admonishes us to be proactive rather than passive in our concern for the well-being of others: “Thus saith the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask me of things to come concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands command ye me” (Isaiah 45:11). The Lord considers our prayer of belief and hope and does many wonderful things – often beyond our expectation!

“Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for your great gift of belief and hope that you can and will make a difference in the lives of those I love. Help me to remain firm in the confidence that you hear my prayers and are working. Amen!”

REFLECTIONS

Barnabas, the son of consolation, was prone to believe in others and in God’s purpose for them. He demonstrated this by seeking out Paul who had been quite a troublemaker for the saints. He also believed in and demonstrated hope in John Mark who had gone AWOL during their previous tenuous missionary journey.

Shouldn’t we share this same attitude of hope toward others that God demonstrates toward us and all mankind? God’s attitude is to believe that there is hope for each of us instead of berating us for our failures and unpromising propensities.

We can still prayerfully hope that backsliders and those who have failed the Lord will repent, be restored, and resume a purpose for the Lord. God help us to show hope in those whose failures have hurt us. If after diligent, loving investigation, we find that a brother has lost his victory, let us replace our damaged belief in him with a hope for his restoration.

—Bro. Jeremy Booher

SEPTEMBER 29, 2024

CHARITY ENDURETH ALL THINGS

I Corinthians 13:7

Luke 23:33 And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.

34 Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.

Acts 7:54 When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with *their* teeth.

55 But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God,

56 And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.

57 Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord,

58 And cast *him* out of the city, and stoned *him*: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.

59 And they stoned Stephen, calling upon *God*, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.

60 And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

Philippians 1:12 But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things *which happened* unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;

13 So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other *places*;

14 And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

15 Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will:

16 The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds:

17 But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.

18 What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

2 Timothy 2:10 Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

MEMORY VERSE: Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of *our* faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. —Hebrews 12:2

CENTRAL THOUGHT: Jesus set the perfect example of enduring hardship for the right reason – the good of souls. He could have called “twelve legions of angels” to deliver Him from the agony of the cross, but He chose crucifixion over His own comfort so you and I might be saved.

Stephen caught the same spirit of enduring hardness for the good of others. As he was dying, he prayed a prayer that had a profound effect on a certain young man bound by religious pride. A few years later, this same man, the Apostle Paul, endured many things for the sake of the gospel.

When you and I face our difficulties, we can also pray for grace to “endure hardness as a good soldier.” It will work good for our own souls and the souls of many others. Enduring with charity for the sake of the gospel has an “eternal weight of glory” with a rich harvest at the end.

WORD DEFINITIONS

2 Ti 2:10 “**Endure**”: to remain; to have fortitude; to patiently suffer (*Strong’s*).

LESSON BACKGROUND

Jesus understood the whole world was lost in sin. Only the blood of sacrifices could roll our sins forward to the time of His great sacrifice, but these sacrifices could never truly deliver us from a sinful state. While in the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed three times

to be delivered from the cross, saying, “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matthew 26:39). “And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground” (Luke 22:44). Jesus endured all things for our sakes with the hope and expectation that it would make a difference.

Because of Jesus’ example to Stephen, who in turn showed the same example in his death, Paul also endured many things for the love of souls and left us yet another example of endurance. It is impossible to know this side of eternity how many lives the ministry of Paul touched.

DISCUSSION:

1. When Jesus “endured the cross, despising the shame,” He recognized the “joy that was set before him.” What was His joy?
2. How can we have the same joy Jesus had when we endure our cross for the sake of someone else’s eternal benefit?
3. Why did God set up His plan of redemption through the avenue of suffering for someone else?
4. What is the other option to “enduring all things” when we are faced with difficulties?
5. How does our decision regarding “enduring all things” affect others and ourselves?

COMMENTS AND APPLICATION

Real love is sacrificial. I heard a story of a mother hen that saw a large fire approaching. Realizing that she and her chicks were unable to flee the flames, the hen called her young, hid them under her wings, and stayed put while the fire burned through the area. After the fire had passed, someone happened to see the mother hen burned to death. Under her wings, however, the baby chicks were protected. The mother gave her life for her little ones. Perhaps she could have made her escape alone, but she knew her chicks could not. She therefore traded her life for the life of her chicks – because she loved them more than her own life.

At a Sunday evening church service, the pastor introduced a guest minister to his congregation to share whatever was on his

heart that evening. The elderly guest stepped to the pulpit and began to speak. "A father, his son, and a friend of his son were sailing off the Pacific Coast when a fast-approaching storm blocked any attempt to get back to shore. The waves were so high that even though the father was an experienced sailor, he could not keep the boat aright, and the three were swept into the ocean as the boat capsized." The old man hesitated for a moment, making eye contact with two teenagers who seemed interested in the story. He continued, "Grabbing a rescue line, the father had to make the most excruciating decision of his life ... to which boy would he throw the other end of the lifeline? He had only seconds to make his decision.

The father knew that his son was a Christian and he also knew the son's friend was not. The agony of his decision could not be matched by the torrent of the waves. As the father yelled out, 'I love you, son!', he threw out the lifeline to his son's friend. By the time the father had pulled the friend back to the capsized boat, his son had disappeared beneath the raging swells of the ocean."

By this time the two teenagers were sitting up straight in their pew, anxiously waiting for the next words to come out of the old man's mouth. "The father," he continued, "knew his son would step into eternity with Jesus, and he could not bear the thought of his son's friend stepping into eternity without Jesus. Therefore, he sacrificed his son to save the son's friend. How great is the love of God that He should do the same for us. I urge each of you to accept His offer to rescue you and take hold of the lifeline He is throwing out to you."

With that the old man sat down and the pastor delivered a brief sermon with an invitation but no one responded to the appeal. Within minutes after the service ended, however, the two teenagers were at the old man's side. "That was a nice story," politely stated one of boys, "but I don't think it was very realistic for a father to give up his son's life in hopes the other boy would become a Christian." "Well, you've got a point there," the old man replied, glancing down at his worn Bible. A big smile broadened his narrow face and he once again looked at the boys and said, "It sure isn't very realistic, is it? But I'm standing here today to tell you this story is but a glimpse of what it must have been like for God to give up His Son for me. You see, I was that father and your pastor is my son's friend."

<https://www.argusleader.com/story/news/brandon/2015/03/24/story-father-sacrificed-son/25192005/>

“Dear Heavenly Father, thank you for the sacrifice of your Son. Please help me to remember the eternal weight of glory attached to whatever I endure for a season. Amen”

REFLECTIONS

To endure is to undergo hardship without impairment or yielding, to bear without resistance, to bear with patience without sustaining loss. Love in action will meet the challenges of life, in the worst of circumstances, and will not be stopped in showing itself intensely active. Such activity showed in Stephen’s life—true charity, enduring to the very end, even to death.

Someone once told me that they would place their religion on the shelf and then get even or ahead. Enduring love does not take a break, a vacation day, or a sick leave day at any time.

We are not to lose on any aspect of Christian grace but gain or grow in them through all hardships. The Father allows us to meet hardships for the purpose of growth, strength, and experience. We are not to stop short, as Lot did because of ease, but go through to complete fruition.

In God’s hands hardships will establish the production of growth, strength, experience, and fruition. The fruition of Stephen’s love was sincere forgiveness. The fruition of Christ’s love was the salvation of the thief on the cross, forgiveness for His persecutors, and the means of salvation for all mankind. Look at the enduring love of Christ. He looked beyond our faults and saw our need. In spite of ill-treatment, lies and false accusations, and feeling forsaken by His Father, His love endured all.

What we see in Stephen, Paul, the disciples, and many others is the quickening power of the Holy Spirit, inspiring and inflaming their love, moving in action. Many stop short or avoid going through the things that such love endures.

Could Joseph have been used by God as he was, if it were not for enduring love, bearing all things? Could Ruth have been as committed as she was to Naomi without charity? Do we have an intensely active, love in action, working in us?

—Bro. Paul Phillips

