



December 6, 2009

PURITY IN WORSHIP Jim Stauffer

The title of the article is not to be confused with the personal purity in the lives of each worshipper. That certainly is an important aspect of our lives but we will discuss the purity of our worship relative to God's instruction.

Paul raised the question of the object of our concerns in Gal. 1:10 when he asks, "For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ." He raises this question concerning his preaching of the gospel, but is the principle any less valid when speaking of our worship to the Originator of the gospel?

Jesus deals with this issue when he exposes the teaching of the scribes and Pharisees in Mt. 15:9 by saying, "But in vain do they worship me teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men."

It is imperative we set our hearts to please God in our worship. Clearly the way to accomplish that is by following the instruction to and observing the examples of the church in New Testament times.

It will always be a temptation to please men in an effort to draw people to our assemblies. It is incumbent upon leadership to avoid that temptation and allow our devotion to God in worship to attract those who desire to worship God. This attitude is in sharp contrast to creating an atmosphere that attracts people to us.

You will remember the people of Israel under the temporary leadership of Aaron worshipping the golden calf. Moses was in the mountain receiving the law from God at the time. When he had made the calf, Aaron said this is the god who led you out of Egypt and then proceeded to have the people offer sacrifices to Jehovah while

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MEETING TIMES
 Sunday - Bible Classes: 9:30AM
 Worship Services 10:20AM & 6:00PM
 Wednesday - Bible Classes 7:00PM

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worshipping the calf. (Ex. 32:4-6) God was angered to such an extent He threatened to destroy them and raise a new people from Moses. (Ex. 32:9)

Can you imagine the anger of God if we were to inject the ideas of men into our worship as many do at this season. There will be many who will worship God according to the "precepts" of men this season and will in essence be worshipping their "golden calf" while offering that worship to God. Let us have the courage to follow His commands and worship Him as He has taught us.

Paul says we live in the world and cannot leave it to avoid its influence. God repeatedly warned the Israelites to avoid the influence of the idolatrous nations they were driving out of Canaan. In Dt. 12:29-32 He warns against becoming curious about their gods and sums it up by telling them not to add to or diminish from His commandments. The purity of our worship will be sustained by following His teaching and worshipping Him in Spirit and truth as he has directed.

The Last Fight

On the ruins of a theater in Ephesus there is a memorial to an athlete of the 2nd century A.D. which reads: "He fought three fights, and twice was crowned." Watch out for that last step! You see, those "athletes" fought to the death. A man's last fight was always fatal. So, the crown meant only that one changed opponents; and sooner or later the last would slay him.

What a difference in this crown, and that of the apostle Paul:

"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day..." (II Timothy 4:7,8).

Paul did more than fight "unto death" -- he fought unto life, eternal. If his fight of faith cost him his earthly life, it only meant he was now free to claim the crown that counted most (Revelation 2:10, II Cor. 5:6ff.). How different from those who die without hope.

Paul sought an enduring victory -- one that could not be taken from him. He exhorted Timothy, "*Lay hold on eternal life...*" (I Timothy 6:12). This called for training, perseverance, and above all, self control (I Corinthians 9:24-27). The athlete trained his body only to prolong the day when it would fail him; but Paul trained his that it might the better serve the Lord, and thus serve his eternal purposes.

We are all engaged in some sort of battle, and in a very real sense it is "unto death." The fatalist, the fool, resigns himself to shortchange. Though he fights 3,000 times, he can expect but 2,999 temporal crowns, not one of which he can take with him beyond that last fight. The futility of it all is enough to make a man throw in the towel.

The Faith gives purpose to life. The Christian fights, hard and often. But he who has

submitted himself to God's will, "*strives lawfully*" (II Timothy 2:5), and his fight is never in vain. Jesus Christ has provided for him a crown, and not for him only, "*but unto all them also that love his appearing.*"

• ***by Robert F. Turner***

SAME ENEMY—DIFFERENT OBSTACLES

I realize every discussion has two sides. They are not, however always equal sides. You may disagree with the point of this article but please do not dismiss it out of hand.

Peter says our adversary is the devil and he goes about seeking whom he may devour. This had been true since the dawn of time. How could he successfully tempt Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, an actual paradise? The answer is Satan found a way.

In New Testament times Satan tempted and tried the servants of God with physical hardship and public ridicule. (1 Cor. 4:9-13)

This has been true throughout history. Foxe's Book of Martyrs is a list of men slain while maintaining their fidelity to God.

It seems to me our generation in America is a unique diversion for Satan. Oh, he is just as active as ever. He has just found the object of his temptations facing different circumstances. We have an excess of this world's goods compared to most men in history and no one is going to burn us at the stake because of our beliefs. We will not be beaten and even rarely scorned.

What Satan has resorted to with us is to give us pleasure to occupy our leisure. We have so much that is produced with comparatively little effort that he sees the time we have to spend in pleasure is greater than at any time in history.

His plan then is to give us pleasure. He will tempt our flesh with excess food and drink. He will make sensual temptation available at every turn. It will be available in such quantity on television that many rarely watch anything other than specialty shows that are limited to their specific interests such as science, history, sports, etc. But he knows that some will continue to turn on the same channels and find that temptation. He knows that provocative and even pornographic material will be available to anyone on their computers, even children because he has corrupted the minds of those in power and they will insist on the rights of the evil at the expense of the good. He will encompass us with a world that says anything that feels good is good. He reasons there is no need to break them with denial of necessities. He will instead tempt us through our luxury by allowing us free access to all sin to fill the ample time on our hands. As Paul says, be armed to combat world rulers of this darkness.

by Jim Stauffer