

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

THE LENEXA EDIFIER

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

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LOVERS OF PLEASURE OR GOD

Jim Stauffer

Lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, is a passage leading to the conclusion of a long list of traits of men who in the last days will be found, holding a form of godliness, but having denied the power thereof; from these turn away. (2 Tim. 3:1-5)

Maybe this is an over simplification, but it seems these two opposites generally describe all those who reject the discipleship of Christ. They cannot commit to taking up their cross and following Christ. The reason is Jesus demands we be lovers of God and not be devoted to pleasing ourselves. He says we must do the opposite. We must sacrifice our lives in order to attain to the life He gives as the bread of life (**John 6**) and the living water of **John 4**. Yes, heaven is a wonderful place and we would all love to be there when this life is over, but do we value eternal life with God and Christ more than this life which provides pleasure for the flesh?

Giving themselves to pleasure is the charge issued against these in **2 Tim. 3**. There is an obvious warning in this text. It is accomplished with stark contrast. If we are not lovers of God rather than pleasure, we will become base people who seek satisfaction as, *...lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, haughty, railers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3 without natural affection, implacable, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, no lovers of good, 4 traitors, headstrong, puffed up, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God;....* If we are lovers of God, we will see the results in our lives of which Paul encourages Timothy toward, **2 Tim. 3:10** *But thou didst follow my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, patience, 11 persecutions, sufferings; what things befell me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: and out of them all the Lord delivered me. 12 Yea, and all that would live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.*

There is no denying the difficulty of developing the proper discipline in life to serve the Lord out of love. There is a popular quote attributed to Confucius which says, "Choose a job you love, and you will never have to work a day in your life." It simply puts into words something we all recognize. When we are doing the things we love, energy and effort seem endless. I can remember as a youth I could play baseball all day with

the guys, but barely muster the endurance to cut the grass.

Brethren, we must recognize that serving the Lord requires us to love Him. **Deut. 10:12** *And now, Israel, what doth Jehovah thy God require of thee, but to fear Jehovah thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve Jehovah thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul,.* Our responsibility to serve leads us to the sentiment offered by the prophet. **Mic. 6:8** *He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God?* The pattern of life suggested by the prophet becomes easier if we can develop a genuine love of God. **1 John 2:5** *but whoso keepeth his word, in him verily hath the love of God been perfected. Hereby we know that we are in him:*

I am certain many brethren fight daily to resist the temptations of the fleshly world in which we live. Jesus is our example in just such battles. He repeated the phrase, *it is written* in reference to God's instruction every time He was tempted in the wilderness. (**Mat. 4:1-11**) He was able to recite this not only because He had the knowledge, but because He loved His Father and He then responded from His heart.

The Apostle Paul described the man who determined to serve *Jehovah thy God with all they heart and with all they soul*, and was determined to, *do justly, and to love kindness and to walk humbly with thy God*, and to be one, *whoso keepeth his word, in him verily hath the love of God been perfected*, when he spoke of himself. **Gal. 2:20** *I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me.*

We too can grow to this point. We too can have the love of God perfected in us. But that must be our goal. It will not happen without a commitment to sacrifice the pleasure necessary to be a true lover of God. **Heb. 11:24** *By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; 25 choosing rather to share ill treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season;.*

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

by Randy Harshbarger

The matter of authority is basic, not only to religion, but to everyday concerns of life. For example, when you go to the grocery store and ask for one pound of hamburger meat, you have faith that the scales used by the grocer to weigh the meat are correct. You recognize that the State of Texas has an Office of Weights and Measurements, and this office has the task of ensuring that the scales used to weigh meat are accurate. The scales may need to be checked and calibrated from time to time, but you believe you are getting what you paid for. Now a question for you: Why do people see the need for correct scales, that is, scales that conform to a standard of authority; but these same folks will say that when it comes to the matter of serving the Lord, it really doesn't matter what one believes, or that you even need to try to go by the Bible? Why is that?

When we speak of the church of Christ, we speak of people who are in a covenant relationship with Christ, their spiritual head. Men and women are drawn to the Lord through His word. In turn, these same people are brought together as one, based upon the commonality of the gospel. Yet, to think that you can be of Christ and His spiritual family presupposes the need for a standard of authority. In this case, it is the authority of Christ that matters most of all. Jesus claimed to have all authority; and as our head, His authority is expressed in what He says we are and in how He wants us to respond to Him in our work and worship together (**Matt. 28:19; Eph. 1:20-23**).

Some of the leading religious people of Jesus' day questioned Him once about His teaching and activities. Specifically, they asked Him about the baptism of John — was it authorized by heaven or by men (**Matt. 21:25**)? In spite of their bad attitudes for asking, that is not a bad question. It is basic and fundamental because it focuses our attention on the all-important question of authority. If something is of God, then it must be accepted without question. If it is not of God, then it must be rejected, whether we like it or not.

Jesus Christ is our source of authority. His will for His people in these last days is expressed through the New Testament (**Heb1:1-3; John12:48; 2John9**). The source of authority is not the Old Testament. While all of God's word is important, the Old Testament does not constitute the basis of authority for New Testament Christianity. Some are confused about this as evidenced by appeals to Old Testament scriptures in order to justify such practices as Sabbath day keeping, burning incense in worship, and instrumental music in worship. The Old Law was a good law in that it did what God wanted it to do, namely, it brought men to the Christ (**Gal. 3:23-25**). Jesus did not destroy the Law. He fulfilled it and then nailed it to His cross (**Matt. 5:17, Col 2:14**).

To make proper use of God's word we must begin with the understanding that all authority belongs to Deity and to Deity alone. With this foundation we are then ready to proceed in our efforts to understand and

implement God's word in our lives each day. Only then are we truly the church that belongs to Christ. "Let God be found true, but every man a liar..." (**Rom. 3:4**).

AN EXAMPLE OF SUCCESS: NEHEMIAH

by Gilbert Alexander.

We hear of people who have winning ways, people who seem always to succeed. What makes a person truly successful? What enables one to accomplish good things in God's service? I believe that we can find the key in the life of Nehemiah.

Nehemiah's people were in great distress. A remnant of them had returned from captivity with permission of the Persian King and under the leadership of Zerubbabel, and Ezra a little later. They had set to work to rebuild the temple and the city of Jerusalem, but their enemies managed to get their work stopped several times over several years. Finally they had finished the temple, but the city was still much in ruins, with no protective wall around it. They were easy targets for their enemies.

Nehemiah was still back in Babylon (Elam) in Shushan, serving as the king's cupbearer. When certain Jews came from Judah and told Nehemiah (when he asked) about the sad plight of the remnant, Nehemiah's winning character began to come to light.

Nehemiah cared a lot about his people. When he heard the news, he sat down and wept and fasted for certain days. He cared enough to do something. The first thing he did was to pray to God for help. When he went before the king to do his duty, the king asked why he was so sad, and he told the king about the plight of his people. The king said: "For what do you make request?" Nehemiah prayed before he answered. When he responded to the king, he had a plan. He asked permission to go to Judah to repair the walls of Jerusalem and to rebuild its gates. He asked the king for letters of authority so he would have safe passage through countries whose rulers might be hostile toward him. He also asked that the king's forester provide timbers to build the gates. All this plus a military escort were provided: and, having set a time of return, he departed.

When he got to Judah, he surveyed the work to be done before he told anyone why he had come. Then he told the leaders, urged them to the work, and they made up their minds to do it. The work was organized, with different gates and portions of the wall assigned as tasks for different families. With his good leadership and encouragement, the people accomplished much, for they had a mind to work.

Three enemies, Sanballat, Tobiah, and Geshem, tried to stop the work in several ways, but Nehemiah would not let them trick him or distract him. They tried threatening war, circulation of rumors that he wanted to be king, plot of treachery on the plain of Ono, and telling him to hide because his life was in danger. None of their efforts worked, because Nehemiah trusted in God,

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stayed alert, and refused to listen to their calls for councils to discuss things that were none of their business. So the wall was finished in fifty-two days.

And last, Nehemiah stood for what is right. When some of the Jews oppressed their own people and took their property away from them, Nehemiah insisted that they give it back and stop charging their own people usury. When he discovered wrong marriages with those of other nations, he made them swear to stop such practices and cleansed them from all strangers. He stopped trade on the Sabbath. He cleansed the temple, throwing out Tobiah's stuff. He led in the restoration of proper worship and service, and assemblies for reading and hearing the law explained. He led a great thanksgiving celebration. Through all of this great work, Nehemiah prayed often.

Did you see the strengths of Nehemiah? He cared a lot. He prayed a lot. He acted with a plan. He showed strong leadership. He trusted in God. He didn't let his enemies distract him. And he stood for what is right. Can we not be like Nehemiah?

DID GOD CREATE EVIL?

Question: Please explain **Isaiah 45:7** where God says, "I create evil." Does not only good come from God?

Answer:: We read in **Isaiah 45:7**: "I form the light, and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil; I am Jehovah, that doeth all these things." This verse raises the question: did God actually create only good?

God's original creation was very good (**Gen. 1:31**). Also, we are told that God "cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempteth no man" (**Jas. 1:13**). Since God is moral (sinless), moral evil is contrary to His very nature. God, then, does not create moral evil.

In what sense does God create evil? The NASB translates **Isaiah 45:7**: "The one forming light and creating darkness, causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the Lord who does all this." The word rendered by the NASB, "calamity," is the Hebrew word *rah*, which basically means "evil" (either moral or misfortune evil). God is addressing Cyrus (**v. 1**), the Medo-Persian king who was later to "subdue kingdoms." Specifically, he would capture Babylon because of the wickedness that prevailed in that city. God was using Cyrus as His instrument to inflict this punishment. The prophecy was uttered more than a hundred years before Cyrus was born, but it was all literally fulfilled. So, in view of the meaning of the Hebrew word in the verse, and the context of the verse, the word "evil" which God creates refers to the calamities as punishment upon wicked nations. God, therefore, does not create moral evil, but calamities or misfortunes come upon man as a result of his sin (**see Ezek. 18:20; Rom. 5:12; 6:23; Jas. 1:14,15**).

There are instances in the Old Testament when God brought calamity upon people as a result of their moral evil or wickedness. Because of wickedness, God destroyed the earth with water, sparing only Noah and his family (**Gen. 6:5-8**). God afflicted the Egyptians with ten plagues because of the hardness of Pharaoh's heart

(**Ex. 7-12**). God smote the Philistines with a great discomfiture and tumors while the ark of the covenant was among them (**1 Sam. 5:9**). Hell is created by God for those who are disobedient to His will (**Matt. 25:41; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; Rev. 21:8; etc.**) These are examples of evil which God created -- calamity, adversity, misfortune -- all punishment as a result of moral evil. He did not create the moral evil. God created man a free moral agent. When man violates God's moral law, it is man, not God who is responsible for moral evil. In **1 Samuel 16:14**, we are told, "Now the Spirit of Jehovah departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from Jehovah troubled him." This verse has posed a problem for some in that they assume that this is a cause of moral evil coming directly from God. But actually, Saul's sin broke fellowship with God, and God allowed the evil spirit to trouble him. Again, this serves as an example of the evil consequences that come upon those guilty of sin or moral evil. The same truth is illustrated again in Saul's case (**1 Sam. 18:10**). God is the author of moral law and He is also the author of consequences which follow because of the violation of that law (**1 Jn. 3:4**).

Not all physical disasters today such as floods, tornadoes and earthquakes are due to sin (**Lk. 13:1-5**). Christians suffer in such calamities along with the wicked. Neither is it to be supposed that all suffering or affliction is the result of sin (**see Jn. 9:2**). In fact, Christians may suffer affliction as a means of chastisement (**Heb. 12:7-9**). Persecution is an example (**2 Tim. 3:12**). Chastisement of Christians should motivate them to greater faith. We all suffer misfortunes in life -- illness, disappointments, loss of loved ones and many more, but the Christian looks forward to heaven where none of these exist. Men do often blame God for consequences which result from their moral evil.

A simple solution is not always found for the problem of evil in the world, but we do know that God does not create moral evil and we can always be assured that whatever God does is right and in harmony with His moral character (**Gen. 18:25**).

by Hoyt H. Houchen (---In Guardian of Truth; February 19, 1987; Vol. XXXI, No. 4; p.101.)

There'll be no Halloween in heaven
No costumed tricksters will call
But those who have heeded the Teacher
Will enjoy treats aplenty for all

There'll be no gun control in heaven
Where there'll be no need to be armed
We'll know only peace and contentment
And no one will ever be harmed

by Grant Clothier

Eph. 2:19 So then ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, 20 being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone; 21 in whom each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord;

1Pet. 2:9 But ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

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

HOURS OF WORSHIP

Sunday A.M. 9:30 Bible Study

Sunday A.M. 10:20 Assembled Worship

Sunday P.M. 5:00 Assembled Worship

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

Visitors welcome

We conduct in home Bible Studies

We offer Correspondence Courses

Evangelist and Editor Jim Stauffer

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NEWS AND NOTES:

PLEASE REMEMBER THE FOLLOWING IN YOUR PRAYERS: GRANT CLOTHIER, J.R. DANIEL, MARY CZIRR, JAN PATRICK AND SUZANNE WIMP.

A HEARTY WELCOME BACK TO THE STATES FROM DUTY IN AFGHANISTAN FOR OUR BROTHER DARRIN RAWSON.

OUR CURRENT STUDIES ARE: SUNDAY MORNING: GIVING ANSWERS TO DOCTRINAL QUESTIONS AND WEDNESDAY: THE BOOK OF JEREMIAH



What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear the gospel - Romans 10:17

Believe in Jesus Christ - Hebrews 11:6

Repent of sins - Acts 17:30

Confess Christ as Lord - Romans 10:9,10

Be Baptized for remission of sins

Acts 2:38

Be Faithful unto death - Revelation 2:10