

Rom. 14:19

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

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

THE LENEXA EDIFIER

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NEEDED: ENTHUSIASM FOR THE GOSPEL

Jim Stauffer

How often do we lament the lack of fire we see in the hearts of people today for spreading the “good news”, the gospel of Jesus Christ?

We read the Bible and see occasions where thousands were convicted in their hearts that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God come down from heaven to provide salvation for sinful man.

Yet, we look around us and fail to see results similar to that in our society today.

I submit to you the problem is we have hitched our wagon to the very society we just mentioned. We have become the opposite of what Jesus described His disciples to be in **John 15:19**. *If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.*

We seem to abhor the concept of being hated by the world. Is it because we have become so much a part of it as Jesus decried? John further defines an affinity for the world as being opposed to God.

1 John 2:15 *Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. 17 And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.*

As we try to explain our conduct relative to that of the world, let us remind ourselves that there are places in this world today where the gospel is being readily accepted into the hearts of men and women. One such place is the Philippines where some American gospel preachers have spent and continue to spend much time helping the local preachers prepare themselves to continue to sow the seed of the gospel in their communities.

It brings to mind the parable of the sower as Jesus used it to teach us concerning the condition of the hearts of those who receive the word of God. There is one particular type of soil that comes to mind clearly as I attempt to evaluate why we as brethren seem to lack the same enthusiasm as our brethren in other parts of the world possess.

It is the thorny soil mentioned in **Luke 8:14**. Jesus says they, *are those who hear but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life and their fruit does not mature.*

1) They become preoccupied with the cares of life. Excessive worry, concern or even anxiety over their own or the personal welfare of loved ones can distract them from something even more important and that is the spiritual welfare of those same people or the souls of those who are lost. On another occasion Jesus promised us if we *seek first the kingdom and his righteousness*, these earthly cares and concerns will be taken care of.

2) Those of the thorny soil also pursue possessions or riches and become so engrossed in ensuring success in this area, they have little time to be concerned about their own spiritual welfare or that of others. Jesus' analysis of these people is apparent. **Luke 6:24** *But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.* Just another area of their lives that has gone out of control and diverted their attention from those things eternal.

3) The pleasures of life itself become more of a problem to a wealthy society than to others simply because they have both the financial capability to enjoy those pleasures but also the time to devote to them as they languish in their complacency due to the wealth mentioned above. Now it is very true that poor people can be given to the pleasures of life as well as the wealthy, but it obviously is easier for

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those of wealth due to accessibility. The comments of Christ to the rich man ring loudly in our ears as we think our comfort here is secure and we need to take the time to enjoy it. **Luke 12:19** *And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry." 20 But God said to him, 'Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?'*

There is nothing wrong with an appropriate concern for our own lives and that of our loved ones. And there will be those who become wealthy due to honest hard work and nothing is wrong with that. There are even some pleasures of life that people should enjoy with family, friends and brethren in Christ. The problem is one of priority. When we allow those things to become central in our lives we cease to be disciples of Christ and become followers of those worldly passions and the apostle tells us those are things of the world and not of the Father.

It is then we see a lack of enthusiasm and passion for spreading the word, sowing the seed. It is then we see a society become lax in standing for what is right in the sight of God rather than what they suddenly believe they have a right to enjoy,

When that happens you find a land where the teaching and preaching of the word of God is dismissed and ignored to such an extent that the moral fiber, the willingness to stand for principle gets in the way of the cares, riches and pleasures of this earthly life.

Those who claim to be disciples of Christ need to reevaluate their lives and make sure they are following Him and not the world. When we do, we will begin to emphasize the gospel to friends and family and all who will hear in search of that good soil that bears much fruit.

Blasphemy Against the Holy Ghost

In **Matthew 12:31,32**, Jesus said, *"Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come."*

Down through the years, this passage has been the occasion of great concern to devout, God-fearing people. This concern is the result of a gross misunderstanding of what our Lord was actually saying. It is the sequel to a perversion of His

teaching and is productive of the usual effect of such perversion in depriving men of the peace, contentment, and happiness of soul and mind, and the joy that God intends for us to have in Christ. It would, in the very nature of the case, be impossible for one to *"rejoice in the Lord always"* (**Phil. 4:4**) if there was the slightest possibility of his having sometime inadvertently committed a sin that could not be forgiven.

All Sins Forgivable

John said in **1 John 1:7**, *"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another {He with us, and we with Him, CGC), and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."* I do not consider this passage to be in conflict with **Matthew 12:31,32**. Nor do I consider **Matthew 12:31,32** to set forth an exception to John's promise. In order to the forgiveness of sins -- all sins -- there are certain conditions, divinely ordained, that must be met. If a sin -- any sin -- is not forgiven it is because the conditions have not been met. One may fail to meet the conditions either because of his unwillingness to do so or because he is unable to do so. Both of these reasons might be involved and it is my contention that such is the case with all those about whom our Lord spoke in **Matthew 12**. It is possible for one to reach such a state of depravity that he has no willingness to accept the truth and be governed by it, no matter how strong the evidence, and sink so low in the mire of degradation that he is unwilling and even unable because of his degenerate attitude to submit to that which is right.

Anyone, therefore, who is interested in truth and righteousness or who is concerned about his soul's well being has not committed the "unpardonable sin."

The Case in Context

An understanding of the passage under consideration is dependent -- as is almost always the case -- upon the context in which it is found. Jesus has just healed a man possessed of a demon which caused the multitudes to marvel and be amazed. But there were others of the Pharisees and Scribes who heard of it and being unable to deny that a miracle had indeed been performed sought to explain it away by attributing the power by which it was accomplished to "Beelzebub." The claim was made by them that Christ was not exercising divine power but rather Satanic or diabolical power. Christ then proceeded to disprove their contention with a number of arguments which are irresistible:

Argument Number 1: First, He showed that which is evident on the surface, that Satan would not work against his own interest because in doing so, he would destroy himself and be brought to an "end."

Argument Number 2: His next argument to disprove their contention was based upon their purported claim that their disciples, "sons," cast out demons. If it was true that they did cast out demons (which Christ did not admit) and that demons were cast out only by "Beelzebub," then it would follow that their "sons" exercised diabolical power. This He argued to show the absurdity of their contention from their own premise.

Argument Number 3: He next submitted that since He could not possibly be casting out demons by the power of the Devil, it must of necessity be by the power of God and that such exercise signaled the arrival of the kingdom of God.

Argument Number 4: His final argument in this regard was to the effect that He had entered Satan's house (the body of the demoniac) and had spoiled Satan's goods (the evil spirit in the man) and, therefore, instead of being in league with the devil, He had contested him and defeated him. The conclusion based on these arguments is that these Scribes and Pharisees were wrong in their charge that Christ was working miracles by the power of Satan rather than by the power of God. Their charge was not against the power of God, the Holy Spirit, but rather against Christ -- that He was in league with the Devil and not with the Holy Spirit. This, Christ disproved and sought to correct their misconception.

Misunderstanding the Charge

Contrary to popular opinion and acceptance, Christ did not say that these Jews had committed the sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, but He did say in substance that they had blasphemed against Him and He emphatically says that such will (or can) be forgiven. The circumstances surrounding the incident, however, do suggest to the mind of Christ a need for a warning to these people of the danger of the course they are following. They had said that He was casting out demons by the power of "Beelzebub" (the Devil). If they persisted in this contention and in the light of all the evidence became convinced that the power exercised was of God but nevertheless was still evil because it worked through Christ, whom they hated and refused to accept, then they would become guilty of the sin against which Christ warned. In this they would be charging the Holy Spirit with being a devil or being equivalent to the Devil. Certainly, they were not now saying that the Holy Spirit was a devil or that He was as bad as the Devil. They were not denying that the Spirit is holy or affirming that the Spirit is evil. They were simply denying that the Holy Spirit had anything to do with Christ's miracles.

If they were affirming that the Spirit of God was not holy but rather was as evil as the Devil, this would, of, course, have been blasphemy against the

Spirit and there would have been no point in Christ's having attempted to correct them by presenting the arguments that He did. They would have been beyond argument and beyond the hope of correction. They were getting on dangerous ground, however. They were approaching the point of no return. They were getting near to a condition of heart and mind which would damn their souls and Christ was simply warning them to stop before they had gone too far; not to allow their hatred and their contemptuous attitude toward Him to cause them to defame the Spirit of God. To take that step and affirm that the Holy Spirit is not holy but is evil and only evil continually, that He is a devil and on a par with Satan is to sink beyond all hope. Such a frame of mind on the part of anyone would be beyond all correction. Thus, the conditions of correction and forgiveness given by the spirit have no place in the man's heart.

The Good Tree

Jesus said, *"Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt" (vs. 33)*. If the product of the working of the Spirit is good, the Spirit, Himself, is good and holy, *"for the tree is known by his fruit."*

**by Charles G. Caldwell, Jr. Via Truth Magazine
XXI: 49, pp. 781-782, December 15, 1977**

The Preacher and the Atheistic Barber

A preacher and an atheistic barber were once walking through the city slums. Said the barber to the preacher; "This is why I cannot believe in a God of love. If God was as kind as you say, He would not permit all this poverty, disease, and squalor. He would not allow these poor bums to be addicted to dope and other character- destroying habits. No, I cannot believe in a God who permits these things."

The preacher was silent until they met a man who was especially unkempt and filthy. His hair was hanging down his neck and he had a half- inch of stubble on his face. Said the preacher to the barber; "You can't be a very good barber or you wouldn't permit a man like that to continue living in this neighborhood without a haircut and a shave."

Indignantly the barber answered; "Why blame me for that man's condition? I can't help it that he is like that. He has never come in my shop; I could fix him up and make him look like a gentleman!"

Giving the barber a penetrating look, the preacher said; "Then don't blame God for allowing the people to continue in their evil ways when He is constantly inviting them to come and be saved. The reason these people are slaves to sin and evil habits is that they refuse the ONE who died to save and deliver them."

The Barber saw the point. Do you?

Author Unknown

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.*

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SUNDAY MORNING SERMON: RESISTANCE TO THE TRUTH



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