

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.

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THE MEANING OF RESPECT OF PERSONS

Jim Stauffer

We will never reach a time when men will not pervert the gospel of Jesus Christ, whether in what we may perceive as major matters or even minor.

I am amazed when excellent students of the Bible come to very wrong conclusions because of some existing bias that leads them astray.

Moses properly expresses the biblical sentiment of the phrase, *respector of persons*. **Deut. 1:17** *Ye shall not respect persons in judgment; ye shall hear the small and the great alike; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man; for the judgment is God's: and the cause that is too hard for you ye shall bring unto me, and I will hear it.* It is limited to the area of justice, whether the justice of men judging one another or of God's justice in the judgment of the faith and obedience of mankind.

This is illustrated even more clearly in the New Testament when Peter explains to the household of Cornelius that God will grant the same opportunity for salvation to Gentiles as has been offered to the Jews (**Acts 10:34**).

Paul makes the same point in **Rom. 2:11**. Again Paul explains to the Ephesians, God is the Master of both the earthly servant and his master and will show no preference between the two in eternal judgment (**Eph. 6:9**). He tells the Colossians that punishment for wrongs done will be distributed without partiality (**Col. 3:25**). This principle is clearly expressed by the apostle Peter, *And if ye call on him as Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to each man's work, pass the time of your sojourning in fear: (1 Pet. 1:17)*. The reason God is no respecter of persons is He offers no advantage for spiritual gain as men do in temporal matters. **Jude 14** *And to these also Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, Behold, the Lord came with ten thousands of his holy ones, 15 to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their works of ungodliness which they have ungodly wrought, and of all the hard things which ungodly sinners have spoken against him. 16 These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their lusts (and*

their mouth speaketh great swelling words), showing respect of persons for the sake of advantage.

Now let us try to make clear the appropriate application of these principles. First we must understand the principle of respect of persons with God is limited to spiritual judgment. He does not guarantee fairness in temporal dealings and relationships. He just teaches it is the right thing to do. What He does guarantee is justice in the judgment of our faithfulness to His teaching and fairness in the determination of our obedience to his commands. As He does this, all men have equal opportunity for eternal salvation because He is both *just and justifier of him that hath faith in Jesus (Rom. 3:26)*.

Take a look with me at some false ideas promulgated today as a result of misunderstanding God's refusal to show respect of persons.

Some would say God does not answer the prayer of a righteous man, as He has promised, even when it is in accord with His commands. This, they say, would show preference for one over another. Look at a couple of examples:

- 1) God will not grant wisdom in answer to prayer as He has promised (**Jas. 1:5**), because that would show preference for one over another.
- 2) God will not grant recovery from illness, as He has promised (**Jas. 5:14**), because this would show preference over another who remains sick.

These false positions have been reached because one fails to understand what it means for God to be no respecter of persons.

We must be clear that God does make His rain to fall on the just and the unjust and this along with the goals and attitudes and efforts of men determines the accumulation of wealth and earthly treasures. As a result, the temporal fortunes of men vary from pauper to King. What God has promised is to honor equally the faith and obedience of pauper and King. He will judge their righteousness equally by the man He has chosen (**Acts 17:31**). Therefore, God truly is no respecter of

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persons. He allows men to create their own temporal fortunes, while promising to grant equality in eternal judgment.

Many false ideas are promoted because men fail to understand principles God has set forth. To adopt a false idea concerning the promises of God to answer prayer, because we fail to understand the teaching He has advanced concerning eternal judgment, is truly a sad situation that will cost men their souls.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND THE FIRE

"And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire" (Matthew 3:10-13). While the OT says some things about the Holy Spirit of God, most will agree that the NT gives fuller definition to the person and work of the Spirit. All human beings have a *soul or spirit*; human beings have been given *life* by the power of God. Some in the OT (**Saul, Gideon, Ezekiel; 1 Samuel 10:6; Judges 6:24; Ezek. 2:2**) were enabled by the power of the Spirit to do what God called them to do. But God's power, not their own, was the impetus for their activities. God intervened into their lives; they did not naturally possess the Holy Spirit.

John told the Pharisees and Sadducees that if they really wanted to escape the wrath of God, they would need to genuinely repent of their sins. Fruit worthy of repentance was needed; anything short of that would be a façade. Even claiming Abraham as their father would not save them. The ax was being laid to the root of suspicion, hypocrisy, and ostentation. John's warning became ominous when he said that someone would soon *"baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire."* This statement anticipates the Day of Pentecost. Who would deny that the baptism of the Holy Spirit took place on that day? Peter explained the events of Pentecost by appealing to **Joel 2:28-32**; Joel's prophecy is the background for **Acts 2** and **Matthew 3**. The Messiah, John says, will come in judgment. Judgment came on the Jewish nation when the message of salvation was revealed in its fullness on Pentecost. There, the Holy Spirit enabled Christ's chosen ambassadors to preach repentance and remission of sins in the name of the risen Savior for the first time. Holy Spirit baptism had direct application on Pentecost on the Apostles. Other passages, such as **Acts 1:4-8** corroborate this fact.

The question remains: What was the baptism of

fire, and to whom did it apply? The *"winnowing fan"* is a figure easily understood by a 1st c. audience. Farmers would winnow or cleanse the grain by throwing both chaff and grain into the air; the wind carried the chaff away while the grain fell to the ground. The chaff was then swept up and burned; the threshing floor was cleansed. An application can be made to the Jews who came out to hear John preach. Would these "chosen people" who claimed Abraham as their father, truly repent and prepare their hearts for the kingdom that was near? Could it be today, though, that we feel secure in our own religiousness, in our status as the true people of God, in our kingdom citizenship? How could God cast us into the judgment of fire? Maybe we need to be gathering up the chaff of our own lives and repent and turn to Christ and endeavor to be true kingdom citizens.

Randy Harshbarger

"Preparation"

Preparation is essential to every endeavor. Folks prepare for retirement, a trip they are planning on taking, for the children's college, for a job and the list goes on. Few seem to see the need for making preparation for the greatest of all events: that of life after death!

1) Preparation Requirements: Preparation for eternity falls into two areas: First, primary preparation involves hearing the gospel preached (**Ac. 2:22**); believing or faith (**Jn. 8:24; Heb. 11:6**); repentance which involves a change of mind that results in a change of life (**Mt. 21:28; Ac. 17:30**); a public confession of faith; confessing that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (**Mt. 10:32; Ac. 8:37**) and being baptized into Christ (**Gal. 3:27**) for the *"remission of sins"* (**Ac. 2:38**); into the one body (**I Cor. 12:13**); to be added to the Lord's church (**Ac. 2:47**). After making the initial preparation, one is now ready to continue to make preparation for eternity. Salvation has to be worked out (**Phil. 2:12**). Stedfast faithfulness is required of each member (**I Cor. 15:58; Rev. 2:10**). This includes faithful "church" attendance (**Heb. 10:25**); worshiping *"in spirit and in truth"* (**Jn. 4:24**); being *"ready to every good work"* (**Tit. 3:1**); *"fighting a good fight, finishing the course, and keeping the faith"* (**2 Tim. 4:6-8**).

2) Heaven Prepared For The Prepared: No one will go to heaven by accident; but by preparing to go. The parable of the wise and foolish virgins teach us that only *"they that were ready went in..."* (**Mt. 25:1-13**). As Jesus was about to leave His apostles he proclaimed: *"Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, that where I am, there ye may be also"* (**Jn. 14:1-3**).

3) Prepare To Meet God: As God challenged Israel of old, He demanded: "...*prepare to meet thy God, O Israel*" (**Amos 4:12**). We will meet God prepared or not! So, don't let your life slip away without making the proper preparation to meet God in judgment and plan to live with Him throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity (**Mt. 25:46**).

By Johnie Edwards-- Via The Ellettsville Church Bulletin, April 2007

THE PURSUIT OF PEACE

Peace is the absence of hostility. Peace seems to be an evasive goal. It is something almost everyone wants, but many do not have. Isn't that strange? Were I to ask you if you desired to be at peace with all men, undoubtedly you would say yes. We desire peace. We do not appreciate conflict. We hate violence and fighting, as we should. The Bible teaches us that peace is a pursuit worthy of our attention. In **Hebrews 12:14** the writer commands, "*Pursue peace with all men.*"

We should pursue peace with all men, because that is what God desires of all of us, a cessation of conflict, an elimination of opposition. But I'm suspicious that if Jesus were to ask us the question "Are you at peace with all men?" most of us, if not all of us, would respond with a resounding "NO!" Why is that?

It is funny isn't it? The overwhelming population of mankind desires peace with one another. God commands us to pursue peace with every person; He desires us to have peace as well. If everyone wants it, why don't we have it? I can't answer that question. At least not in a specific way. There are far too many possibilities for one "catch-all" answer.

Maybe I don't have peace because I lose my temper and thereby create strife. Even though I desire peace, an out of control temper will lead me into an abundance of conflict. People at peace have a good temperament. According to **Proverbs 15:18**, "*The slow to anger calms a dispute.*"

Maybe I don't have peace because I'm bitter. **Hebrews 12:15** teaches us to, "*see to it... that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble.*" When problems are left unresolved and transgressions left unforgiven bitterness gestates in our hearts. Even those issues which seem minor can grow into divisive disputes threatening our peace. To have peace, I must be willing to forgive and cleanse out of my life any root of bitterness.

Maybe I don't have peace because I'm too proud to admit I was wrong and ask for forgiveness. When I've made a mistake inciting men to anger, I must have the humility to see my fault and request forgiveness. That is the pathway to peace. **Proverbs 28:25** warns us, "*An arrogant man stirs up strife.*"

Maybe I don't have peace because I fail to demonstrate the selfless kind of love called for in **1 Corinthians 13**. We are called to have a love that bears all things and believes all things, a love that does not take into account a wrong suffered. Maybe peace eludes me because I refuse to love in the way **1 Cor. 13** demands.

If you are not at peace with all men I can't tell you exactly why that is. There is a vast multitude of possible explanations. It could be my fault. It could be the fault of another. What we do know is that it is my responsibility to pursue peace (**Hebrews 12:14**). We ought to be running after it, chasing it down and constantly striving to have it in our grasp. Although, sometimes no matter how hard I try, it will elude me. Some are not willing to do what is necessary to have it. Some would rather be angry and bitter. Some would rather cut you out of their life and prolong contention than join in the pursuit with you. Regardless, my job is the same. I should pursue. I should do everything in my power to achieve peace with all men.

And what a marvelous example we have in our savior Jesus Christ, who Himself is called the Prince of Peace (**Isaiah 9:6-7**). He, because of His love, left heaven to do the Father's will. He humbled Himself to the point of death on a cross, so that we could be forgiven of our sins. God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit did everything in their power to bring peace between God and man. That was what Jesus accomplished with His sacrifice on the cross. That was what Jesus proved with His resurrection from the dead. That was the example Jesus left for us to follow. Paul writes to us in **Ephesians 4:31-32**, "*Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you.*"

by Jonathan Banning

Interesting quotes from C.S. Lewis:

"To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you."

"The Christian does not think God will love us because we are good, but that God will make us good because He loves us."

"We are not necessarily doubting that God will do the best for us; we are wondering how painful the best will turn out to be."

"If we find ourselves with a desire that nothing in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that we were made for another world."

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

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PECK - WEDNESDAY BIBLE
CLASS: THE BOOK OF JAMES
- JOE HURD

SUNDAY MORNING SERMON
- BE STRONG IN THE LORD -
EPHESIANS 6:10FF



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