

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.

**October  
28  
2018**

## LIVING WITH AND BECAUSE OF CHRIST

*by Jim Stauffer*

In **Eph. 2:1-3**, the apostle Paul reminds the Ephesians and as a result all men, we at one time were *dead in our trespasses and sins*. This condition resulted from our desire to walk according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit now working in the sons of disobedience. His use of the past tense makes us aware this is no longer the case. If it is no longer the case, we have as the Lord promised to the faithful, passed from death to life (**John 5:24**). A close look at each of these passages lets us know Christ and the apostle are speaking of spiritual life.

The prophet explains our sin separates us from God. James teaches us physical death is when the spirit departs the body. Since we are physically alive during the time referenced we realize our death was indeed a spiritual death.

The Bible is replete with details of this spiritual life. How it is obtained? By that we mean, what does this faithfulness referenced by Christ involve? He says, *he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life.* (**John 5:24**). When we combine this with other passages that explain just what believing in God and Christ entails we soon learn just what we need to do to gain this eternal life by way of our reconciliation to God.

The Hebrew writer says this of Jesus Christ, *"Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation,"* (**Hebrews 5:8,9**). James then explains what obedience is when he says this about Abraham, *"Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered up Isaac his son on the altar? You see that faith was working with his works, and as a result of the works, faith was perfected; and the Scripture was fulfilled which says, 'AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED GOD, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM*

*AS RIGHTEOUSNESS,' and he was called the friend of God."* (**James 2:21-23**)

This describes to us the person who is reconciled to God. It is the one who obeys the commands God has given him. We who live today are only able to be reconciled to God from our sinful lives by the covenant mediated by His Son, Jesus Christ (**Gal. 3:16,19; Heb. 7:22; 9:15**).

The question then remains, what has this new covenant commanded we obey to obtain this eternal life by demonstrating we believe in He who sent Christ. We must become as the apostle says, dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. (**Rom. 6:11**) That is the condition for which we strive, now we look at the verses prior to that for the explanation of how we become dead to sin and alive to God. We must put to death the old man of sin. Paul says in **Rom. 6:4-6** we do this by being, *buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.* "For if we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin;"

Now we understand how we pass from death to life while living here on earth. We also understand why such passages about baptism as something necessary to salvation is taught so frequently in Scripture (**Acts 2:38; Gal. 3:27**). It is the method God has chosen for us to be united in the death of His Son and beneficiaries of His resurrection.

Those who have done so are described this way in **Rom. 6:17,18**, *"But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness.*

## THE WORK OF THE CHURCH

If the church of the Lord is sufficient to accomplish what the Lord intends for it to do, then no other organization or arrangement is permitted or needed. The church is adequate for accomplishing God's will as expressed through inspiration. The efforts of men to improve upon God's ways always fail. God still knows what is best and we must yield to His direction (**Jer. 10:23; Isa. 55:8-9**).

Men sometimes confuse the work of the church with the work God has given to the Christian as an individual. It is true that the Christian functions in various capacities in the ordained institutions of God (i.e., *civil government, the home, the church*). But, a failure to recognize the distinctions of each creates confusion and often leads to a perverting of the mission of the church.

The Christian must be in subjection to the higher powers (**Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17**). The Christian is a person who will obey the laws of the country in which he lives. The family relationship is an important one; to fail as fathers, mothers, children, etc., means that we are not faithfully serving God as we should (**Ephesians 5:22ff; 1 Tim. 5:8**). The church is a spiritual relationship (**1 Pet. 2:5**), and the Christian often acts in concert with others who sustain the same relationship to the Lord. To be a Christian means that one will be a better servant of civil government, a better family member, a better neighbor, etc. The outgrowth of being a Christian is that in each relationship he strives to honor God and upholds principles of truth at all times.

We must remember though, that just because the Christian acts in different capacities, it does not mean that the church and the home are the same, any more than the church and civil government are the same, or that the home and government are equal. Paul clearly distinguishes between the church and the home when he said: *"What, have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? Or despise ye the church of God, and put them to shame that have not? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? In this I praise you not ... If any man is hungry, let him eat at home; that your coming together be not unto judgment. And the rest will I set in order whensoever I come."* (**1 Cor. 11:22,34**). A Christian could campaign for his favorite political candidate but that is not the church doing it. A Christian can own and operate a business but that is not the church doing the same. Parents have obligations to care for their children, physically and spiritually. Wisdom teaches us that wholesome entertainment with other Christians encourages and cements good relationships among our young people. That does not mean that the church has authority to provide gyms, trips to Six Flags, ski trips to Colorado, etc., for the young people. There is no more authority or obligation for the church to engage in the recreation business than for the church to enter the

political arena or launch out into some business enterprise.

**Randy Harshbarger**

## THE CHURCH MUST TAKE A STAND, 3

To flesh out what was said in last week's article we must look at another couple of passages in the scriptures. I made the point that the goal of the actions outlined was the salvation of the soul in question, not "getting rid of undesirables". In accord with this we look at Paul's words in **2 Thessalonians 3:14f**, *"If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of that person and do not associate with him, so that he will be put to shame. Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother."* Many of us have family situations where a member of the family is involved in something the rest of the family is shamed by. He does not cease to be a member of the family but stands are taken and lines are drawn and the family is eager to receive them back when the bad behavior is eliminated. So it is here. The goal is the re-unification of the family, if possible, or the protection of the rest of the family, if not.

Another passage to observe is our Lord in **Matthew 18:15-17**, *"If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother. But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector."* In all cases the goal is to win back the erring brother.

**Cleveland Reddinger**

## "Their Heart Was Hardened"

**Mark 6:47-52**

**Hal Hammons**

Throughout Scripture, the word "heart" is used in reference to that part of a man that either accepts or rejects God. The Jews at Pentecost were *"pierced to the heart"* (**Acts 2:37**); Jesus exhorted His listeners to be *"pure in heart"* (**Matthew 5:8**); Paul said of the Gentiles at large that *"their foolish heart was darkened"* (**Romans 1:21**). Most famous of all, of course, is the heart of Pharaoh, which the text says was hardened by God (**Exodus 4:21**) and also by Pharaoh himself (**Exodus 8:14**). Is this a contradiction in the Scriptures? No, it simply illustrates the working of God's message in the hearts of men. Identical ovens heated to identical temperatures in identical circumstances will harden clay and melt beeswax. We



wouldn't send such ovens back to be repaired; we would accept the results as a consequence of the nature of the two elements being heated. The gospel working in the hearts of man should be viewed in the same way. It softens some while hardening others. There is no question that God *"hardens"* the hearts of many, but blaming Him for that makes as much sense as blaming the oven for baking the clay instead of melting it.

The real issue at hand is not the nature of the gospel, but rather the nature of the heart. The material available for spiritual construction is described in **1 Corinthians 3:10-15**. The builder (i.e., preacher) works as diligently as he knows how with the material at hand. Sometimes outstanding temples to the Lord are built; that is because of the high quality of the souls in that proximity. As Paul said, the preacher deserves little credit for this -- *"God was causing the growth"* (verse 7). Other preachers might preach in territory with few if any souls interested in the gospel; the churches that result from such work are compared to *"wood, hay, straw"* in verse 12. The fires of trial will reveal the church for what it is in due course of time.

The same principle works in the lives of individuals. We either are or are not receptive to the gospel. That tendency can change, but it tends to remain the same and in fact becomes increasingly the same way. Many in the world are sent *"a deluding in influence so that they might believe what is false"* (2 Thessalonians 2:11), not because God wants them to be lost but because they themselves have set their hearts to be lost, and every stimulus put in their path is going to tend to push them further in that direction.

Generally we think of hardening in the way described above – bad people becoming worse. However, in our text we find Jesus' closest disciples being hardened (verse 52). Had they ceased believing in the Lord? Of course not. This just tells us that their hearts had not become as softened to the truth as they should have. We are reminded of the words of the father of the demon possessed boy in Mark 9:24 – *"I believe; help my unbelief."* No matter how long we have followed the Lord, we can still lose our faith at critical times in our life. This happened more than once to the disciples; usually it was because they got the Lord's plans confused with their own. Many aspects of Jesus' ministry (including His total command of the elements, as was demonstrated when He walked on the water) were still foreign to the apostles. We should be warned: If it can happen to the closest of Jesus' confederates, it certainly can happen to us.

The story of the walking on the water is prefaced by the feeding of the 5,000, which we will not detail here. We remember the basics of the story; certainly you would think it must have made a tremendous impact on the disciples. But we see in the storm on the lake that they had not been softened to Jesus' teaching as completely as should have been the case.

They should have learned, for instance, that Jesus cares about His followers. He cared enough about total strangers to provide food for them that very day. Does it make sense that He would abandon His closest friends to a watery grave? If not, we should be comforted that He will not forget about us in our hour of trial, either. He has a vital interest in our welfare, and we can count on Him acting on that interest.

They should have learned that Jesus can do much with little. All it took was a handful of food to feed thousands of people. Should it not have been enough for them, in their hour of weakness, to see the Lord walking on the water, completely unphased by the adverse conditions? Verse 48 says *"He intended to pass by them"*; evidently Jesus thought He had given them all the encouragement they needed simply by being seen. Unfortunately, as is often the case when faith fails, the occasion was used by the disciples to make their mental state worse -- they thought He was a ghost (verse 49). And are we better? Do we demand that the Lord minister to us in the way we choose, rather than accepting what encouragement He offers through the agency of His word and our brethren?

Also we see the lesson that nature's laws mean nothing to Jesus. We can twist the laws of physics and common sense alike to our hearts' content and never come up with a rational explanation for the miraculous meal the disciples served that day. They should have known that the way Jesus taunted nature's basic rules of order was a reflection of His Divine nature, and that He could do similarly inexplicable things at His discretion. We should not think that Jesus will break the rules for us in the way that He did then, but we should be able to put our full confidence in the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, with the full knowledge that He is fully capable of carrying our soul safely through this life and on into the next.

And yet we see the disciples astonished at Jesus' power. Why? Because *"their heart was hardened"*. They had chosen, consciously or unconsciously, to ignore the lessons Jesus had taught them. But if we make the decision to soften our hearts to receive Jesus' message, nothing will astonish us. We will see Him forgive the unforgivable, give spiritual life to the spiritually dead, bring joy to the cynic, turn pessimists into optimists, and grant hope to the hopeless – and all the time simply smile and say, "That's our Savior!"

***via e Good News; Tulsa, Oklahoma; Taken from Market Street Messenger***

*"Afterward He appeared to the eleven themselves as they were reclining at the table; and He reproached them for their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they had not believed those who had seen Him after He had risen. (Mark 16:14)*

**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 P.M. 5:00 Assembled Worship

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7845 Cottonwood Dr.

Lenexa, Kansas 66216

913-764-9170

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ALL MEN ARE EQUAL IN HIS  
SIGHT



## **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