

StraitWay



April 1999

The Preacher's Attitude Toward Money (1)

In the garden of Eden, Adam was "...to dress it and to keep it" (Gen. 2:15). God intended man to work. Paul instructed the Ephesians, "Let him that stole steal no more... let him labour, working...the thing which is good, that he may have to give..." (Eph.4:28).

A preacher has the right to be supported (I Cor. 9) for the "...labourer is worthy of his reward" (I Tim. 5:18). Paul was supported by churches, "I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service" (II Cor. 11:8,9). Again, Paul said, "Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity" (Phil. 4:15,16). At other times, Paul's hands "...ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me" (Acts 20:34) for he "...coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel" (Acts 20:33).

Every preacher needs money. But, Paul warned Timothy (I Tim. 6:10,11):
"For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while come coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness." How well do we do that? Consider these attitudes toward money.

I WON'T PREACH UNLESS I AM PAID. Men have made great sacrifices to preach, often preaching meetings not knowing what, if any, money they will get. If you are of the mind to preach only if you get paid, why not work at something else and leave preaching to those who will preach because they greatly desire to convert eternity bound sinners and teach the converted their duty. These preachers see souls when they are preaching. The hireling does not need in the pulpit.

I'LL PREACH WHERE I WILL BE PAID THE MOST MONEY. Churches differ in ability to support a preacher. But, should the preacher seek to preach only in those places that can and will support him far, far above the average salary of the church members? "...not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved. Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (I Cor. 10:33; 11:1). Whose welfare do we have at heart? --Editor

Hear Jerry Fite at the South Loop Church of Christ in Crockett, Texas, May 2-7, 7:30 PM.

Word Studies

The inaugural issue of StraitWay contained my general introduction to the Word Studies column, pointing out the value of and need for biblical word studies. As an illustration of how words changed in meaning I mentioned that the Greek word "psallo," which appears in Ephesians 5:19, once meant to pluck a stringed instrument, but that its meaning had changed by New Testament times so that instrumental music was no longer implied by the word. Inasmuch as at least one StraitWay reader has disagreed that such a change took place, I feel that a study of the word is in order here.

"Psallo" appears five times in four verses in the Greek New Testament. In Romans 15:9 and twice in 1 Corinthians 14:15, it is translated "sing" in the King James Version and other standard translations. In James 5:13 our word is rendered "sing psalms." In Ephesians 5:19 Paul gave the command to communicate by singing: "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." Here "psallo" is rendered "making melody," while the word "singing" is translated from the Greek verb "aido."

Consulting Greek lexicons (Thayer; Gingrich and Danker), we learn that "psallo" originally meant "to pluck," and this led to its use in reference to playing stringed instruments such as the harp and lyre. Thayer's entry gives the absolute meaning of the word to be "to play on a stringed instrument, to play the harp, etc." This may cause one to wonder why the scholars exclude that meaning when translating the Bible into English. Are they biased against instrumental music in worship? To the contrary, virtually all of the translators of the ASV, the RSV, the NASB, the NKJV, and the NIV were members of religious bodies which use instrumental music in their assemblies. Even so, their translations unequivocally render "psallo" as "sing" or "make melody," with not so much as a footnote to suggest that instrumental accompaniment might be involved.

Gingrich and Danker in their Greek-English lexicon (Second Edition, 1979; p. 891) comment upon the process of change that took place in the use of "psallo" over time, pointing out that even in the Septuagint it might reference singing with instrumental accompaniment, but that more often it was used of unaccompanied singing. Examples given are Psalms 7:17; 9:12; and 108:3 (English Bible references; the Septuagint's reference numbers, given in the lexicon, vary from these.). "Psallo" in ancient times referred to making music by the twanging of cords. The human voice makes music through vibrating cords, and it is not surprising that the word came to refer to singing as well as to playing stringed instruments. This process of change continued, say Gingrich and Danker, until in Modern Greek (fifteenth century A.D. to present), it means "to sing" exclusively, never carrying the idea of playing.

During this process of change, how would one know whether a speaker or writer using "psallo" referred to singing or playing, since it might be either? It became necessary to indicate the instrument or method of playing in the context if one meant to include music other than singing. This is the consistent usage of the translators of the Septuagint. In 1 Samuel 19:9, for example, we read that "David played ('psallo') with the hand." In 1 Kings 3:15, a "minstrel played." "Minstrel" means a player on stringed instruments. In the many Old Testament passages containing "psallo" with no separate contextual reference to playing an instrument, our English Bibles read "sing." That is what it meant when the Septuagint was translated from the Hebrew in the second and third centuries B.C., and that is what it meant in the first century A.D. when the books of the New Testament were penned.

In Ephesians 5:19, Paul commanded "making melody in the heart." Is there contextual information to include a harp here? No, the instrument of "psalloing" is specified: the heart! There is no room in the passage for a musical instrument of man's devising. The supposition that we may use them because the word "psallo" at one time implied playing is totally without foundation. Thayer's conclusion was that it means, "in the New Testament to sing a hymn, to celebrate the praises of God in song." (p. 675)

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First Principles

WHAT FAITH CAN DO

Previously from Heb. 11 we have considered the relationship between one's faith or convictions and his manner of life, the fact that one who would be pleasing to God must believe that He IS and that He is a REWARDER of believers who diligently seek Him. Let's now notice, from the same chapter, some things which faith can do for its possessor.

Faith understands things which without faith one would not comprehend. Notice verse 3, "By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible." Believers start with God who spoke the worlds into existence (Gen. 1:1). Unbelievers starting with lifeless matter offer one conjecture after the other as to the origin of things.

Faith changes things. "By faith Enoch was translated so that he did not see death..." (11:5). Enoch was a great man of faith, and God made an example of him. That's for our benefit, we, who acting in faithful obedience, are "delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Col. 1:13-14). Through our faith not only is our relationship changed, but so is our view of life, death, and the hereafter.

Faith brings one into the heirship of righteousness. See verse 7, "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not yet seen, moved with fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith." We are not saved by works of personal righteousness (Tit. 3:5); but as Paul reasoned in Romans 4:22-25 one's faith, just as was Abraham's, is counted to him for righteousness. "It shall be imputed [to us] if we believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead..." (v. 24).

Faith obeys. "By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out into the place which he would afterward receive as an inheritance. And he went out not knowing where he was going" (11:8). And later his faith obeyed the command of God to offer up Isaac, for he was "accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which also he received him in a figurative sense" (11:17-19). It is only an obedient faith that justifies before God (cf. Jas. 2:21-22).

Faith will sacrifice. Look again at Hebrews 11:17, "By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac...." Here was a trial that brought a father's love into conflict with a divine command, but faith won the victory. It was triumphant, Abraham believing the blessing would come though he might not understand how. There are likewise elements of sacrifice required of our faith. There are things for which the wrath of God comes on the children of disobedience that must be put to death, our "members which are upon the earth" (Col. 3:5-6). Former associations sometimes have to be sacrificed, and their ridicule endured when one turns from a former, ungodly way of life (I Pet. 4:3-4).

Faith sees that which is unseen. Remember that "faith is...the evidence of things not seen" (11:1). Of those ancient worthies it is said, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them..." (vs. 13); and further of Moses it is said that "he endured as seeing Him who is invisible" (v. 27). And so of Christians, "we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18), looking unto "a better and enduring possession in heaven" (Heb. 10:34).

These benefits of faith by no means exhaust what it can do for its possessor, but we trust that they will help you to determine to "not cast away your confidence, which has great reward" (Heb. 10:35).

Personal Work

Wouldn't it be wonderful if during this year you could have a direct part in leading a lost soul to Jesus Christ, the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world? Just think, if every Christian would convert just one soul this year, we would have twice as many Christians next year. Will you do your part? The eternal destiny of your soul depends on doing the Lord's will.

We want to talk about some excuses made by Christians for not doing personal evangelism. Making excuses is an old practice. It began with Adam and Eve in the garden. Let us not make excuses this year, but work with all our might for the Master. Now let us look at some excuses.

"I cannot do it." Did the Lord require the impossible? If so we thus reflect on His wisdom and goodness. The remedy is to TRY and you will find out that you can.

"people do not want to study the Bible." True in many cases, but it is not true in all. The success of active personal teachers reveal the fallacy of this. Any of us who have ever personally led another to Christ stands in the way of this excuse. We just need to find the ones that do want to study. If you talk to one hundred people and find one that is willing to study, your time has not been wasted. Remember what Paul said in 1 Cor. 15:58, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."

"I do not know how to do it." That may be true. That's why we have classes. Have you ever learned to do something you had not done before? Changed a tire, fixed a leaky faucet, cooked a meal, or learned a new job? How did you learn? Are material things which will pass away within our grasp, but things of the soul, which are immortal, impossible for us? If we do not know how, then we need to learn. If they ask a question that you can't answer, then tell them you don't know, but that you will find out the answer. Get some preacher, elder or some one to help you with the answer. Don't be afraid to say, "I don't know, but I will find out and let you know."

"I don't have time." We have time to do what we want to do, thus this excuse is in reality an admission that we just don't want to do it. Remember what Jesus said in Matthew 6 :21,33. If you are too busy to do the Lord's word, then you are too busy to go to heaven.

"I'm already doing my part." Are any of us? If you are doing more than others, is that the standard of excellence? See Luke 17:10

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My Favorite Book

On Tuesday evening of this week (Feb 16, 1999), one of our daughters informed us her teacher had sent a homework assignment home for parents. Either Mom or Dad were to write about their favorite book. Rebekah selected to give the assignment to me. I have been reading constantly since I learned "see Spot run". I am the guy you see reading the labels on the candy beside the checkout register. I read because there are words in front of me. So, this assignment was right up my alley.

Now you may ask, why would you put a book report for a second grade class in your bulletin? Well, of all the books, papers, magazines, labels, etc I have read one stands above the rest. In all the world there is only one book that can always be turned to for help. I don't know if the public school system is ready to hear it, but this book should be required study for everyone entrusted with shaping the minds of our future leaders. Read my book report and see if maybe my favorite book is yours also.

My favorite book is actually a collection of many books contained in two major divisions. Although written by forty men who lived in diverse situations and different parts of the world over a period of about 1500 years there can be found no contradiction and one constant theme. Found within its pages are stories of history, romance, poetry, adventure, and mystery along with civil, criminal and religious laws and regulations. Of all the books that have been written this is the only one which contains all Truth. This book of books is of course The Bible which reveals the unerring Word of God Himself.

The first sentence of the Bible introduces us to the story. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Genesis 1:1) This one sentence gives us the who, what, when, and where necessary to understanding the story as it unfolds. Sometime between 6,000 and 10,000 years ago the story of the Earth and man began with this creation. From here Moses, God's history writer, tells us of the beginning of God's grand scheme for man. We read the story of Noah and the great deluge. (Genesis 6) This story reminds us God is in control and will hold us responsible for our actions. Continuing in Genesis we find the story of Abraham, the "friend of God" (James 2:23), and the beginning of God's special people, the Israelites. The books following Genesis tell the story of God fulfilling the promises He had made to Abraham. Abraham's descendants become a great nation and are given the land Abraham walked as a stranger. The first section of the Bible, the Old Testament, gives us this story and tells how the people of God and the world are prepared for the fulfillment of God's plan through His third promise to Abraham.

The second section of the Bible, the New Testament, completes the story by telling of the fulfillment of God's grand scheme of redemption for man. The first four books, the Gospels, tell the good news that Jesus, the Savior, has come. The rest of the New Testament tells of the completion of God's eternal plan in the church. Through the Scriptures God calls all people to Him. God no longer reserves His blessings for Abraham's children alone. Now through Jesus, the Christ, all peoples and nations can come to God and be blessed.

Why is the Bible my favorite book? In the Bible we have everything needed for life and godliness. (2Peter 1:3) In the pages of God's Holy Scriptures we can find everything needed to make us "wise unto salvation" and prepare us for all good works. (2Timothy 3:15-17) This one book contains everything anyone needs to live here on Earth and be prepared for the life after death. I can go to the Bible and read what God expects of me and since He is The Creator and I am the creature I want to please Him. I encourage everyone to spend time with my favorite book, the Bible - The Word of God.

Have you read the Bible lately? Jesus told the Jews *"the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."* John 12:48 Peter, when asked if he would leave Christ, stated *"Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life."* John 6:68 Paul told Timothy *"the holy scriptures... are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."* 2Timothy 3:15 Take some time out of your day and read my favorite book. I guarantee it will help if you apply its teaching to your life.

--Daniel Lee Henderson Via Seeking His Righteousness February 1999 daniel@hendersons.net

Issues Among Brethren ROMANS 14

In an effort to heal some of the wounds among us some brethren use Romans 14 as an unfailing remedy for all that ails us. To them Romans 14 is a cure-all for our disagreements on marriage-divorce-remarriage, fellowship, instrumental music and such like. They read Romans 14:1-3, which says, "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another who is weak eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him." After reading the passage they conclude that God is telling us to forget about any differences which might arise among us. Just apply the Romans 14 remedy and all will be well between us and God. Is that what God wants us to learn from a study of Romans 14? Let us reason together.

There's no doubt that Paul was writing to correct a serious problem in the church. It concerned despising a brother, v.2; judging a brother, v.10; putting a stumbling block in a brother's way, v.13; grieving a brother, v.15 and destroying him, v.15. But, what caused the problem in the first place? It concerned itself with whether it was right or wrong to eat meat, vs. 2, 15, 20. For one reason or another some thought it was wrong to eat meat and ate herbs. Others saw no wrong in eating meat and ate freely. A similar problem arose over the observance of days, v.5. To help correct the problem Paul instructed, "Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him." Paul was telling the two who were squabbling over the eating of meat to be at peace with one another and for each to have a good attitude toward the other because both the meat-eater and the non-meat-eater had been "received" by God. How could this be? Paul answers, "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink," v.17. In other words, whether we eat meat or not is no part of God's plan of salvation for lost sinners. God looks with neither favor nor disfavor upon the meat-eater or the non-meat-eater, as such.. It is entirely a matter of indifference . The Christian is free to choose as to what he does in such matters. However, Paul warns the meat-eater not to use his right to eat meat in such a way as to offend his brother and put a stumbling block before him that would cause him to sin.

Each of the problems dealt with in Romans 14 is a matter of indifference. They can be done or left undone as far as God is concerned. Those involved should respect the feelings of others and show tolerance, patience, kindness and forbearance in such matters.

On the other hand there are matters of faith, things clearly commanded or forbidden in the New Testament. In these matters a Christian has no choice but to obey God. These are matters dealing with one's eternal salvation. Marriage-divorce-remarriage, fellowship, instrumental music and such like fall into this category. When problems and differences arise over these matters, the cure cannot be found in Romans 14. We must find help to heal our disagreements in other passages which teach on the subject. involving the problem. If the problem concerns marriage -divorce-remarriage, find the remedy in such verses as Mt.19:9. If one needs to know whom to fellowship, a clear answer is found in 1 Jn.1:7. The problem over instrumental music can be solved by heeding the words of Eph.5:19 and Col.3:16. If a brother is found living in an adulterous marriage, if fellowship is extended to those outside the Lord's church, if one insists on bringing in instrumental music to be used in the worship service of the church, the error must be opposed. The truth must be defended. To attempt to solve such problems with the use of Romans 14 is to pervert the passage and make the one who so uses Romans 14 a false teacher.

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The New International Version (1)

What about the NIV? Is it a reliable translation of the Word of God? Is it such a version of the Bible that we could give it first place?

In the Preface there is a list of the “denominations” represented by members of the translating scholars. That the “church of Christ” should be listed as a denomination among denominations is regrettable. Also, from the Preface we learn that the Greek text used in the translation was what is called an eclectic text, which means that the translators made their own selection from differing texts. The text underlying the King James Version is called the TEXTUS RECEPTUS and the text underlying the Revised Standard Version is the WESTCOTT - HORT TEXT. The New King James Version is based on the MAJORITY TEXT. If you would like to do more reading about these texts, look for these sources: (1) THE SEVENTEEN PREPOSITIONS USED IN THE KOINE GREEK OF THE NEW TESTAMENT, a booklet compiled by the late Luther W. Martin, (2) The introduction to the Majority Text by Zane C. Hodges and Arthur L. Farstad, the introduction to the Wescott-Hort Text, and the introduction to the Nestle-Aland Text, and (3) you might consider reading the introduction to several versions of the Bible.

There is a lot of literature, versions, manuscripts, copies, etc. from which translators work.

There are different concepts of translation, two of them are: (1) Word for word, and (2) thought or Dynamic Equivalence. Now, consider what the NIV says in the introduction: “Therefore their concern has been the accuracy of the translation and its fidelity to the THOUGHT (emphasis mine, gm) of the New Testament writers. While they have weighed the significance of the lexical and grammatical detail of the Greek text, they have striven for MORE (emphasis mine, gm) than a word-for-word translation” (p IX). The King James Version and the American Standard Version are examples of word-for-word translations.

One of the dangers of the Dynamic Equivalence concept of translating is that it leaves a lot of room for theological bias. A great deal of theological bias can be seen in the NIV, as we shall see by examining several passages.

First, look at Matthew 1:25 in the NIV which says, “But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus.” The Majority Text reads something like this: “And he knew her not until she brought forth her firstborn son. And he called his name Jesus.” In the first statement, the NIV reads more like a commentary than a translation.

Next, Matthew 5:32 (NIV) reads, “But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to commit adultery, and anyone who marries a woman so divorced commits adultery.” The Majority Text reads something like this: “But I say to you that whosoever should divorce his wife, except upon fornication, causes her to commit adultery, and whosoever should marry one having been put away commits adultery.” What is marital unfaithfulness? It is not an acceptable translation of porneias (porneias), which is best translated fornication. Fornication covers all manner of immorality. Some might consider desertion, drunkenness, etc. as marital unfaithfulness in this context, but such would not be so. So again, the NIV is more commentary, and not a very good commentary at that. --Glenn Melton, 322 Gray Street, Henderson, TX 75652-2734, 1-903-657-9089 email: glennmelton@juno.com.

Editor’s note: Debates this year -- David Bonner and a Missionary Baptist (Henderson, TX, May 17, 18, 20, 21), Carl Allen and a Missionary Baptist (Crockett, TX, July 26, 27, 29, 30), and David Bonner and Jeff Asher (Amarillo, TX, August 2, 3, 5, 6, and Lufkin, TX, August 23, 24, 26, 27). Other debates in other states are being negotiated at the time of this writing.

You are Cordially Invited To A

Religious Debate

May 17, 18, 20, 21, 1999 (Monday-Tuesday-Thursday-Friday) 7:30 PM

Proposition One:

“The Scriptures teach that salvation is by grace at the point of faith without further acts of obedience.”

Affirm: Mr. Bobby L. Sparks of Emmanuel Missionary Baptist Church, Greenville, Texas

Deny: Mr. David D. Bonner of Fourth & Groesbeck Church Of Christ, Lufkin, Texas

Proposition Two: “The Scriptures teach that water baptism is for (in order to) remission of past sins.”

Affirm: Mr. David D. Bonner of Fourth & Groesbeck Church Of Christ, Lufkin, Texas

Deny: Mr. Bobby L. Sparks of Emmanuel Missionary Baptist Church, Greenville, Texas

Henderson Community Center (Monday, Tuesday, and Friday)

(High Street (South) at Fair Park Avenue (East)

Henderson, Texas

(Thursday Night the debate will be at the Hwy 79 Church of Christ)

Directions To The Community Center: From Hwy 79, turn on Main Street (Gabriel/Jordan Chev/Olds/Cad is on the corner of 79 & Main) and go toward downtown Henderson. As you approach downtown, High Street is one block before the first signal light, turn left (south) on High Street. High Street makes one turn to the left then back to the right. The community center is several blocks down High Street, on the left.

EVERYONE WELCOME

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