

StraitWay



May 1999

The Preacher's Attitude Toward His Money (2)

As we continue our thoughts on this subject, consider the following.

I NEED BOOKS AND COMPUTERS, ETC. SO MY FAMILY WILL HAVE TO KEEP THE FINANCIAL BELT TIGHT. Preachers furnish many of their working tools. Their support is not their salary. Their support minus expenses for doing the work of an evangelist is the real salary. Expenses may include an automobile, books, computers, office supplies, telephone, etc. How much of these things are WANTED rather than NEEDED cannot always be determined by others. But, preachers must balance these wants and needs with the wants and needs of his family. He should not neglect his family just to have a better computer or another book. Many have been the times I have wondered if preachers spent less time with modern gadgets and books written by denominational writers, and more time with their head in the word of God, would churches not be better off? Now, before you think I must be living in the woods all by myself, let me tell you that I have three computers. A communications critic and professor named Neil Postman has written several books. Two of them I have read, AMUSING OURSELVES TO DEATH and TECHNOLOGY. Postman suggests that in this age we can gather a lot of material we have NOT LEARNED. And brethren that goes for preachers, too. Why is it that with the multiplication of translations of the Bible and new information storage techniques, we have so much Biblical illiteracy and so many doctrinal problems in the brotherhood? I am not against progress, but we know that the government's mentality of throwing money at a problem does not solve it. Why do we think that throwing more money at spiritual work and problems in the church is the solution? Is our emphasis in the wrong place? It is not wrong to have books, computers, etc. but are these modern gadgets making us any more effective? Mr. Postman said that Marshall McLuhan was the author of the expression, "The medium is the message." Ask yourself, Is the computer the message? Is the overhead projection the message? Or, the computerized presentation the message? Is the preacher the message? Or, are we just busy doing something that does not really need to be done? This is very definitely connected with our attitude toward our money. Study carefully. --Editor

Hear Glenn Melton at the Buckhorn church of Christ in Randolph, Mississippi, July 18-23, 7:30 PM.

Word Studies

In studying the Old Testament, we often come across references to "the stranger" in Israel. While we generally understand this to refer to a person who was not of the twelve tribes, a few references to the stranger are somewhat perplexing as we read our English Bibles. Sometimes distinctions are drawn that are difficult for us to understand. For example, Deuteronomy 14:21 contains a prohibition of Israelites eating anything that died of itself, but gives some unusual orders as to the disposal of such animals: "Ye shall not eat of any thing that dieth of itself: thou shalt give it to the stranger that is in thy gates, that he may eat it; or thou mayest sell it to an alien: for thou art an holy people to the LORD thy God." (King James Version). What is the difference between a stranger and an alien?

Instructions regarding who would eat the feast of passover are found in Exodus 12:43-49. In verse 43 we read, "There shall no stranger eat thereof..." and in verse 45, "A foreigner and an hired servant shall not eat thereof." Then in verse 48, "And when a stranger shall sojourn with thee, and will keep the passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then he shall come near and keep it..." Could a stranger eat or not? What is the distinction drawn between a stranger and a foreigner?

Leviticus 25:47-55 stated that an Israelite who sold himself into slavery to a sojourner or a stranger could be redeemed at any time or else would be released in the year of jubilee. How could this law be enforced upon outsiders? Actually, the stranger was not "an outsider." The word "sojourner" here translates the most common word for "stranger" found in Hebrew scripture, "ger" (pronounced "gayr"). It is derived from the verb "gur," meaning "to live among those not blood relatives." [Harris, Archer, and Waltke; Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, Volume I, page 155]

The "ger" was the recipient of the benefits of the poor tithe in Deuteronomy 14:28, 29. He bore a special relationship to Israel and to the Law. "The stranger within the gates" was among the Israelites by choice because of his faith in the true God. These strangers were often poor and subject to oppression because they were not landholders, since the land was parceled out to the families of Israel as a perpetual possession. Thus, they were often mentioned with the fatherless and widows in Israel. The Lord warned the people not to oppress the stranger, but to remember that they had been strangers themselves in Egypt (Deut. 10:18, 19).

God placed certain requirements on the "ger," but he was not obligated to keep all the law. He was required to hear the solemn reading of the law (Deut. 31:12) and to observe the prohibition of leaven during passover week (Ex. 12:19). It was he who could eat the passover feast if he submitted to circumcision (Ex. 12:48), but God did not require it. Those forbidden to eat the passover in the same passage were foreigners who did not serve the true God.

The sabbath laws applied to the "ger" as well as to the native according to Exodus 20:10 and 23:12, as did the laws of chastity in Leviticus 18. He was to observe the day of atonement and the feast of tabernacles (Lev. 16:29; Deut. 16:14). He suffered the death penalty for idolatry and was not to eat blood (Lev. 17:8-13). He was the one who could be given and could eat an animal that died of itself in Deuteronomy 14:21, but afterward he was to be ritually cleansed (Lev. 17:15). Recall that an Israelite could sell the carcass to an "alien." This was the foreigner who had no part with Israel.

The "stranger within the gates" was a believer who worshipped exclusively the God of Israel and obeyed the law of Moses to the extent that it applied to him. From the facts cited we can see that in the Mosaic period Gentiles were not required to be circumcised and become Jews to come to God. God loved the stranger (Deut. 10:18), and through Isaiah (56:3-8) foretold the day when the foreigner who came to serve Him would be a full-fledged member of God's household, with no such distinctions made. Although the Jewish Christians had trouble comprehending and accepting it, those distinctions were taken away in Jesus Christ. (Acts 15:8,9). The Gentile converts did not need to become Jews, or strangers, or proselytes, or anything but Christians, "sons of God," and "Abraham's seed, heirs according to the promise." (Gal. 3:26-29).

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First Principles
THE NATURE OF OBEDIENCE

Faith obeys. That's one of the things we noted in our article in this space last month. Ponder this. What makes a real Christian such a different person from others? It is obedience. Peter wrote, "As obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts in your ignorance; but as He who has called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy'" (I Pet. 1:14-16). The difference, "obedient children." It can truly be said of such a person that he marches to the sound of a different drummer, that he is possessed of a different spirit, much like Caleb of whom it is written, "My servant Caleb, because he has a different spirit in him has followed Me fully...." (Num. 14:24).

THE NATURE OF OBEDIENCE. Obedience in its more general usage is from a word formed from "hupo" (under) and "akouo" (to hear). The idea is that of giving ear, therefore, of subjection, of listening and submitting. Look at several passages where the word is used: Rom. 1:5; 15:18; 16:19,26; Philem. 21, Acts 6:7. In two of those Paul spoke of the "obedience of faith" and "obedience to the faith."

Obedience, then, is a hearing and responding accordingly. Thus, children are instructed to be obedient to their parents (Eph. 6:1; Col. 3:20; cf. Prov. 1:8). Citizens are to recognize and submit to the powers of civil authority (Rom. 13:1; I Pet. 2:13-14). And so for one who would be God's child, there is a hearing, learning, and obeying. Jesus said, "No man can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, 'And they will all be taught by God.' Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me" (John 6:44-45). Paul could gladly proclaim, "God be thanked that though you were servants of sin, yet you have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered" (Rom. 6:17). And Peter echoing the sentiment said, "Seeing you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit...." (I Pet. 1:22).

Because of its very nature, obedience is not accidental. True, what one does unknowingly or incidentally may be right; and it may please another who is worthy of that one's obedience. A child may do what seems right in a given situation with no knowledge of his parents' desire in the matter; and a citizen in a given circumstance, without knowledge of the law affecting that circumstance, may do what the law requires. Though their actions were proper, could they be said to be obedience? Obedience is a hearing and responding to what is heard out of deference to the one whose will has been heard.

And so, my friend, if you would be God's child, learn that gospel obedience encompasses a hearing of His will and a submission to it. Have you "purified your soul in obeying the truth"? Have you obeyed from the heart the "form of doctrine unto which you were delivered"?

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Personal Work

“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear:” (1 Peter 3:15) Brethren this tell is that we must be prepared to give an answer to every one that asked about eternal life. But many are not prepared. Why? We are so busy with the things of this world that we don’t have time to study. Members of the church in times past were known as talking Bibles. If people had a Bible question and didn’t have a Bible handy, they would ask a member of the church. It is not that way today. Many in the denominations know more about the Bible than members of the church. Because of this lack of knowledge in God’s word is one of the reasons many do not do personal work. When we become so busy that we don’t have time to do God’s work, we are too busy.

I am afraid that we don’t see the consequences of not doing personal work. Personal evangelism is a responsibility God has put upon all Christians to perform to the best of their ability. This responsibility is not optional. Upon every one who has learned, the Lord has placed the responsibility of telling others what he has learned. When to the apostles He said, “Teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you...” the command to “go” was passed on to those who should obey the gospel. From that moment it has been the responsibility of the baptized disciple to follow that command.

The vast majority of Christians have never dreamed that the command is personal, individual to every child of God; that it is his responsibility to go into his own personal world and declare the soul-saving message of the gospel to every creature. It is out of this misconception that the popular but utterly unscriptural phrase, has been coined, “If we cannot go, we can send someone in our place.” But are we ever told “either to go or to send?” NEVER! We are commanded to do one thing only, and that is to go. That command cannot be obeyed by proxy; it can be obeyed only in person. This lays upon the heart of every Christian the sublime obligation to serve God as an individual herald of the gospel within he own personal world.

Jesus said in John 15:2,8 ; “Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.” “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.” If we want to go to heaven, then we had better get to work for the Master.

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EVIDENCE

A Creation Day

Some religious folks have accepted the six days creation in Genesis 1 and 2 as allegorical, representing vast time periods. This is more acceptable to the scientific community and theistic evolutionists. The Bible says God spoke matter into existence. Adam was created a mature, functioning being. The universe began as a complete functioning system. The first six days were days, as was the seventh day.

CREATION'S TINY MYSTERY (Earth Science Associates, Knoxville, TN, 1992) by Robert V. Gentry is an excellent book on creation's six days. Gentry is a physicist with impressive credentials having worked at the Atomic Lab at Oak Ridge for thirteen years, until June 30, 1982. Gentry is "one of them," not to be lightly dismissed by the scientific community as "just" an engineer, biologist etc. Scientists who do not share Gentry's belief in the Bible have a high regard for his scientific research.

On page 13 Gentry recalls reading Exodus 20:11 during his college days. He accepted Genesis 1 and 2 as allegorical, but Exodus 20:11 suggests six literal days of creation and one literal Sabbath day. His theistic evolutionary ideas were shaken. The billions of years which science assigned as the earth's age were not reflected in the text. Gentry set out to look for hard, scientific, evidence in nature. Were the six days of creation literal days or eons of time? "Where did the allegory end," he asked?

An element's chemical nature is due to the particles in the nucleus of the atom and surrounding electrons. Radio active elements such as uranium 238 change into other elements by throwing off sub-atomic particles from their nuclei altering the electron count. Some of these particles being thrown off into three dimensions of space in molten rock, leave a spherical scar where they stop. When molten rock cools this microscopic, spherical scar is captured. When cut across the spherical scar looks somewhat like an onion sliced between the roots and the blades. The onion layers form circles about the center. In rock these circles are called radio haloes. The circle's distance from the center identifies the element(s) producing the halo. The time required for half of a material to decay and change into another element is called its half-life. Uranium 238's half-life is 4.5 billion years resulting in lead (which is) Pb 206.

Scientists believe that a period of several billion years was required for granite to cool. Gentry found haloes of polonium 218 in pre-cambrian granite. Polonium 218 has a half-life of 3 minutes. Some haloes were found in the absence of uranium. This is significant for uranium decay produces several isotopes of polonium including polonium 218. Polonium 218 was assumed to have come from uranium. Gentry's hypothesis, based on many observations, is that the earth did not begin as a molten mass. He quotes Psalms 33:6-9 that God spoke and immediately created matter. These polonium 218 haloes were present within 3 minutes of the creation! The haloes did not arise from uranium as had been assumed! Gentry called them primordial haloes. This hypothesis stands having survived critical, scientific analysis.

Dr. G. B. Dalrymple, Assistant Chief Geologist of the U.S. Geological Survey at Menlo Park, California, testified at Little Rock in December, 1981. The ACLU sued to ban creation science from Arkansas' public schools. On page 122 he said, "And also in Gentry's work, he's proposed a very tiny mystery, which is balanced on the other side by an enormous amount of evidence." [scientifically unproved theories, rll] On page 132 he continued, "This is why I say it's just a tiny mystery. We have lots of these in science, little things we can't quite explain.—I suspect eventually there will be a natural explanation found for it." His "*tiny mystery*" {italics mine, rll} is part of Gentry's book's title.

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Issues Among Brethren

MARRIAGE-DIVORCE-REMARRIAGE

Few subjects of our generation are more controversial than marriage, divorce and remarriage. The controversy has even spilled over into the church. One of the popular arguments of some brethren is that since Mt.19:9 is part of the gospel, it applies to Christians only. They take this position because they contend that at the time of Adam's sin God put in force what they speak of as "God's universal moral law." This law, they contend, will be in force until the end of time. According to this doctrine all men are accountable to "God's universal moral law" until they become Christians. It is only after they become Christians that Mt.19:9 and the rest of the gospel applies to them. Before becoming Christians they can marry, divorce and remarry freely. Only those who are Christians can violate the Lord's teachings of Mt.19:9 and thus sin against God. In this article we will raise some questions about this teaching and seek answers from the Word of God.

The first question raised is, "Where in the Bible do we find the terms of "God's universal moral law" revealed? Brother Homer Hailey wrote, "The specific words in which the precepts of that law were expressed were not recorded and preserved,"(A Commentary on Isaiah, p.58). If "God's universal moral law" is binding on all non-Christians until the end of time, specifically, what commandments pertaining to marriage and divorce must be kept under this law? How can man know when he is guilty of sin under this law? The Bible gives no answer to such questions. This being true, common sense tells us that God would not hold men accountable to some law which He had not clearly revealed to them.

The next question to be considered is this. Does Mt.19:9 apply to Christians only? Notice what the Lord teaches in the verse. "Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery." The Lord said, "Whosoever." This term is not limited to Christians who marry Christians but includes all("whosoever") who enter into the marriage covenant. The "whosoever" of Mt.19:9 is just as inclusive as the "whosoever" of 2 Jn.9, where we read, "Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God." God has included this verse as part of the gospel message and who would contend that it applies to Christians only?

Another significant thought is this. Since Mt.19:9 is, admittedly, a part of the gospel of Christ, both Christians and non-Christians are subject to it because Jesus commanded, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature," Mk.16:15. Notice that Jesus said the gospel is to be preached to every creature, not to Christians only.

Too, if all men, except Christians, are subject to what is referred to as "God's universal moral law" and are not subject to the gospel, how can they become Christians and be saved? The Bible informs us that the gospel is the "power of God unto salvation," Rom.1:16. No man today can be saved without obeying the gospel of Christ.. Those who contend that men are under "God's universal moral law" condemn men to eternal condemnation because they teach that the gospel applies to Christians only. If men are not subject to the gospel of Christ, what power has God provided to save us? NONE!

Showing their inconsistency advocates of the above doctrine teach that lost sinners are subject to that part of the gospel that teaches the lost sinner to believe, repent, confess and be baptized for the remission of sins. It's strange what pains men will go to in an effort to teach some doctrine out of harmony with God's word. False teachers always fall into pits from which they cannot escape!

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The New International Version (2)

Last time we discussed the first part of Mt. 5:32, but not the last part. We will consider that first along with the last part of Mt. 19:9 and Luke 16:18. The last part of these three texts deals with the “put away” party. The NIV renders these verses as “..anyone who marries a woman so divorced commits adultery” (Mt. 5:32), omits this statement in Mt. 19:9, and in Lk. 16:18 reads: “...and the man who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.” These are not as clear and precise as they need to be.

In the Majority Text, the essentials of the statements are the same, but they take different forms: Mt. 5:32, whosoever should marry one having been put away commits adultery, Mt. 19:9, one marrying one having been put away commits adultery, Lk. 16:18 and every one marrying one having been put away from a husband commits adultery.

To me the proper translation of the Majority Text, and I believe other Greek Texts, would put more emphasis, and clarity, on the fact that the Holy Spirit condemns marriage to one who has been put away. In contrast, when Luke 16:18 is translated as the NIV does (“...and the man who marries a divorced woman commits adultery”) it could include a woman who divorces her husband for fornication for she is a divorced woman isn't she?

Next we turn to the NIV's treatment of Luke 1:34: "How can this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" The Majority Text reads more like this: "But Mary said to the angel, 'How shall this be, because I know not a man?'" The NIV is more like a commentary than a good translation.

In John 3:16 the NIV reads, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life." Monogenes "...denotes the only son of God or one who in the sense in which he himself is the son of God has no brethren." (Thayer, p. 417). He is the only being so begotten. Why not then continue to render monogenes as "only begotten," for He is the only one so begotten. Also, the mood of the verbs "perish" and "have" is the subjunctive mood. Concerning the subjunctive mood we quote several authorities: (1) "I have ventured in my Short Grammar to call the subjunctive and optative the modes of doubtful statement, while the indicative is the mode of positive assertion and the imperative that of commanding statement." Grammar, Robertson, pp. 927,928. (2) "It is the mood of doubt, of hesitation, of proposal..." Grammar, Robertson, p. 928. (3) "The subjunctive mode is a mode of doubtful statement, of hesitating affirmation, of contingency." Beginner's Greek Grammar, W. H. Davis, p. 74. (6) "The Subjunctive Mood expresses a thought or wish rather than a fact." A Short Syntax of New Testament Greek (Fifth Edition), H. P. V. Nunn, p. 61. How did the NIV deal with the verbs in question? "...shall not perish but have everlasting life." That is a positive statement which should have been translated: "might not perish but might have everlasting life." The passage teaches that the one believing in Christ might not perish, but does not guarantee that the one who believes will not perish. Also, that the one believing in Christ might have everlasting life, but is no guarantee that the one believing in Christ will have everlasting life. Why is that so? Because the believer is the one who has the right to become a child of God (John 1:11,12). One does not become something he already is. So the NIV's treatment of John 3:16 is not good.

In the NIV John 8:24 says, "I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am [the one I claim to be], you will indeed die in your sins." In this rendition there is an addition to the text, although it is put in brackets in an effort to note its addition. However, such explanations are the purpose of commentaries rather than translations.

The NIV renders John 14:30, "I will not speak with you much longer, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no effect on me..." The Majority Text reads: "I shall not speak much longer with you, for the prince of the world comes, and has nothing in me." Once more the NIV is more like a commentary than a translation.

If you want the NIV on your bookshelf, a good place to put it would be among the commentaries. Study carefully.

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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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