

StraitWay



June 1999

The Preacher's Attitude Toward His Money (Conclusion)

A MEANS TO AN END. Money is a means of transacting business. It is a means of obtaining things we either need or want. Within itself money is not of great value. The value comes in that which is accomplished by its judicious use.

Why did Paul make tents (Acts 18:1-3)? Why did the church at Philippi, and other churches, send once and again to his necessity (Phil. 4:15ff; II Cor. 11:8,9)? Why did Paul not only help supply his own needs, but the needs of those who were with him (Acts 20:34)? In First Thessalonians 2:1-12, we learn the answer. Especially in vv 3-6, where Paul wrote, "For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile: But as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts, For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloke of covetousness; God is witness: Nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the apostles of Christ." Paul's purpose was to so preach that he would please God rather than men (vv 3,4). Paul did not use flattering words nor a cloke of covetousness. What is a cloke of covetousness? Did he not mean that his preaching was not used as a cloke (cover) to hide a covetous heart. Sincerity was a mark of his preaching. Neither did he seek glory of men. This could very well include financial support, for he proceeds with the idea of not being burdensome. Paul's requiring them to support him would have been a burden on the new and struggling disciples. Paul had no ulterior motives in preaching the gospel. His one, and all consuming, desire was to persuade lost men to flee the wrath to come by believing and obeying the truth, so that they could stand faultless before the throne of Jesus Christ.

We believe most preachers use their support (wages) in a prudent manner, which results in their being able to give their time to doing the work of an evangelist (II Tim. 4:1-5), without the distraction of having to support themselves. However, it is possible for a preacher to view his salary as a means of supporting himself while he pursues other means of making money (on the side as some say). Under such circumstances the work of an evangelist goes wanting. But, may I remind you that it is well within the bounds of right for a man to help support himself when the necessity arises. But when a man is fully supported, he ought to give his full time to his work. Brother, never give the church, or anyone else, occasion to doubt that your priorities are in the right place.

Brethren, as evangelists, let us view our wages as a means to giving our entire life to the work of preparing immortal men to stand holy and without blame before the appointed judge of all men, for He will send every man to an eternal punishment or to an eternal bliss (Matt. 25:46) from which sentence there will be no appeal.

What is your attitude toward your money? Study carefully.

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Word Studies

Attitude toward material wealth is a very prominent Bible subject. Psalms and Proverbs contain many references to the vanity of riches and the generally wicked character of the rich. Jesus frequently warned men of the spiritual dangers presented by wealth and the desire to have it. When asked to intervene in an inheritance dispute, He said, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses." (Luke 12:15).

What is "covetousness"? It seems that we have trouble grasping the concept and explaining the meaning of the term. I sometimes wonder whether the difficulty may be due to men's attempts to define the word so as not to condemn their own attitudes toward money, but a more likely source of difficulty is the fact that several Hebrew and Greek words with varying meanings are translated "to covet." Except for the King James Version's rendering of "zeloo" in 1 Corinthians 12:31 and 14:39, the word "covet" in the Bible generally refers to desiring something improperly.

The tenth commandment given at Mount Sinai (Exodus 20:17) forbade an Israelite to desire that which was his neighbor's and to which he thus had no right. As we read the items specified, we readily see that one could never rightfully take another's wife from him, but other possessions, like a servant or animal, could be lawfully purchased. We might take the commandment to mean that one must not desire another's possessions to the extent that he would do wrong to acquire them. I have heard the commandment explained that way, but there is more to avoiding coveting than this.

The principle of contentment, being "content with such things as you have" (Hebrews 13:5), is taught in the tenth commandment. Consider the case of a farmer who desired to have his neighbor's team of oxen and went to his neighbor to try to purchase them. If the neighbor did not desire to sell, what should the farmer do? He could worry and fret and search for some legal means to get possession of the oxen, but if he honored the Mosaic law he would forget his neighbor's animals and be satisfied with what he had or seek to buy elsewhere. The story of King Ahab and his desire for Naboth's vineyard is a prime example of this. Jezebel took the initiative in falsely accusing Naboth and having him killed, but it was the covetousness of Ahab that produced this sorry episode. When Naboth refused to trade his property, Ahab should have thought no more about it. (1 Kings 21).

Among the qualifications of a man who would be an overseer in the local church, Paul included the requirement that he be "not covetous." (1 Timothy 3:3). The Greek word here is "philarguros," which could be literally rendered "not loving silver." This refers to simple love of money. A man who is honest but miserly is guilty of covetousness. The Pharisees had this problem. (Luke 16:14). Not thieves, they were very religious, paying their tithes and offering their sacrifices, but they loved money. Christ's story of the rich man and Lazarus was directed toward them to warn them of their greed.

Christians need to be warned often of this spiritually-debilitating problem, also. Paul covered the whole range of covetousness in 1 Timothy 6:6-10, starting with the need for learning contentment: "Now godliness with contentment is great gain...And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content." The right attitude toward money must always begin there. One cannot avoid coveting without first learning to be content. The "desire to be rich" is covetous desire, which leads to all manner of foolish and harmful lusts, drowning men in destruction and perdition.

If there was ever a people who needed this message, it is modern, prosperous, greedy America. "The love of money" ("philarguros," 1 Timothy 6:10) is leading our nation into all kinds of evil. Note that the apostle stated that "some have strayed from the faith" because of it. How many today are straying because of covetousness? Preacher, if you are preaching to Americans, you are preaching to wealthy people. Avoid the love of money in your own heart and take seriously this charge given to Timothy: "Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God..." (1 Timothy 6:17).

First Principles

THE SPIRIT OF OBEDIENCE

A person of genuine, Biblical faith, is a person who truly wants to obey God, the rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. Understanding obedience should be of great benefit to us. To that end, in this space last month, we gave attention to the nature of obedience. Being from a compound word made up of "hupo" (under) and "akouo" (to hear), the idea of giving ear, listening, submitting, and being in subjection thus derives. The desire of "obedient children" (I Pet. 1:14) should be to bring "every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5). That being true, let's consider the spirit of obedience.

NEGATIVELY CONSIDERED: The spirit of obedience is not selective, picking and choosing what of God's desires and commands it will fulfill. This is true even if some of the things required are not pleasant. To illustrate, Paul charged the Corinthians to deliver to Satan the incestuous person among them; for "if anyone who is called a brother and is a fornicator...not even to eat with such a person" (I Cor. 5:5-11). He later stated that one of his purposes for so writing was "that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things" (2 Cor. 2:9). Having to withdraw from a brother or sister who have fallen into disreputable behavior is never pleasant, but necessary nonetheless.

The spirit of obedience does not determine by personal tastes and preferences what it will perform. Saul, Israel's first king, was commanded to go and "attack Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and do not spare them" (I Sam. 15:3). It is interesting to observe that Samuel prefaced this command by calling upon Saul to "heed the voice of the words of the LORD" (vs. 1). Saul "attacked the Amalekites" (vs. 7), and "utterly destroyed all the people with the edge of the sword" (vs. 8b), but "he took Agag king of the Amalekites alive" (vs. 8a). He "and the people spared Agag and the best of the sheep, the oxen, the fatlings, the lambs, and all that was good, and were unwilling to destroy them. But everything despised and worthless, that they utterly destroyed" (vss. 8-9). Look at the words "unwilling", "despised and worthless." Their personal tastes and preferences became the determinants of what they would do. Thus, there was in reality no obedience (see vss. 19, 22-23).

The spirit of obedience does not seek to offer minimal service. Paul commended his beloved friend, Philemon, saying that he had "confidence in your obedience...knowing that you will do even more than I say" (Philem. 21). Jesus said, "whoever shall compel you to go one mile, go with him two" (Mat. 5:41).

The spirit of obedience does not seek to substitute for what is required. A classic illustration of one who sought to do so was Cain who "brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD" (Gen. 4:3). But to that offering, given instead of an animal sacrifice, God had not respect. Nor should we expect Him to look any more favorably upon substitutions in our day.

POSITIVELY CONSIDERED: The spirit of obedience will obey whether another does or not. It is not a matter of "I will if you will." A person coming to understand his sinfulness and God's truth should obey that truth whether his/her mate does or not.

The spirit of obedience will act whether the requirements appear reasonable or not. Did marching around Jericho sound militarily reasonable as a means to taking a city (Josh. 6)? Or dipping in the Jordan as a means to cleansing from leprosy (2 Kings 5)? To many the command to "repent and be baptized" may seem unreasonable regarding the procuring of "the remission of sins," but that is exactly what Peter called on people on Pentecost to do (Acts 2:38). To receive remission of sins is to receive salvation; and salvation is in Christ (2 Tim. 2:10). Baptism is into Christ (Gal. 3:27).

The spirit of obedience, being a response of faith, will overcome obstacles to its fulfillment. One of faith will obey even though parents were not Christians or others may mock and ridicule. "Faith is the victory" (I John 5:3). Friend, have you the spirit of obedience?

Personal Work

Brethren, we can take this old world for Christ any time you are ready! When God's people become vitally concerned about winning souls, God becomes vitally interested in seeing them succeed. There is no more urgent need in the church today than for Christians who can and will talk to people about their souls need and about the Christ of the gospel who satisfies that need.

The church as a body has a work to do. Even this is impossible without various individuals doing their part. The group activity of the church necessarily involves arrangements for the accomplishment of certain aims. Yet, the action of the church as a group does not rule out the duty of individual Christians to act in the matter of evangelism. There are some duties we have, not just because we are part of a group, but because of our personal relationship to God.

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 can't go, we can send someone in our place." But we are never told to "either to go or to send." We are commanded to do one thing only, and that is to GO. That command can't 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 on the gospel within his own personal world.

All may not become as efficient as some others, but each can do personal work in his own way and in his own world. Let the one who excuses himself reflect upon Peter, the fisherman, who, after three years with the master cursed and swore, indicating that such may have been habitual with him before Jesus called him; yet he became a great rock and power in the kingdom of Christ. likewise let him remember that under Jesus' teaching and guidance, John, "the son of thunder," became the great apostle who so often said, "love one another," or let him consider Paul, the persecuting Pharisee, who under that same divine guidance, became the powerful preacher and compassionate soul-winner for the Master. If the Lord could so mold and use them, He can mold and use every one in some place today, though that one be small and obscure in his own sight. With God as the Great Master Potter, all things are possible. The urgent need of the hour is for men who will say, "Here am I send me." "The night is far spent and the day is at hand," let us be about our Masters business. If you really want to go to heaven, then take someone with you.

EVIDENCE GOD CREATED FULLY FUNCTIONING SYSTEMS

To accept the record of Genesis 1 and 2 one must first consider some facts concerning God's mind, character and his unlimited power. God created all things and yet he *"dwelleth not in temples made with hands."* Zophar begins a series of rhetorical questions in Job 11:7 with, *"Canst thou by searching find out God?"* God is not discovered by observing nature. He was in none of the natural phenomena that Elijah witnessed in 1 Kings 19:11-12. Elijah drew no conclusions from this frightful experience concerning what God would have him to do. God spoke to him in words he could understand, even as he had spoken to him to come to the place of the experience.

The angel Gabriel explained to Mary, in Luke 1:37, concerning Jesus' virgin birth, *"For with God nothing shall be impossible."* Gabriel's statement reveals the complete power of God. Paul will write later on in Romans 13:1, *"For there is no power but of God."* David, in Psalms 33:6, capsulated the creation record: *"By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth."* This is consistent with Genesis 1:3 *"and God said, Let there be light."* God spoke the universe into existence. Extensive periods of time were not factors in the creation.

Those who accept the hypothetical scientific assertion of eons of time cannot accept the immediate appearance of fully functional physical and biological systems. If one finds a motorized vehicle in the woods with the engine running there are several necessary inferences. Since the engine is running there has been a being recently present capable of starting the engine. How long it has been there could be estimated by finding the rate of fuel consumption. It is obvious that the system was assembled before it was capable of running as discovered. All of this makes very good sense. It is completely logical. The logic is based upon knowledge of the machinery and mechanics of the vehicle. Over time, orderly thought and skilled labor produced this machine. All of this deals with man's material view of things.

God used 5 days to provide fully functioning systems necessary to sustain man. Adam was created on the sixth day as a fully functioning man both biologically and spiritually. Eve was made from Adam and was also fully mature, biologically and spiritually. Could God have done it in less "time?" What God MAY HAVE DONE is not at issue. The believer takes WHAT GOD DID OR SAID. Speculation leads to doubt. God DID create the heavens and earth *"and all things therein"* in six days. Light immediately was present in all the universe apparently traveling at the mean rate we know today as 186,000 mps. How is light coming from bodies which are apparently millions of light years from earth explained? The conclusion drawn is that since the light required several million years to reach us that it has necessarily been traveling all those years. This is not necessarily so. When light was spoken into existence did it begin at one point and fill the universe? The language does not suggest that it did. Genesis 1:21 says of the creatures of the sea: *"—every living creature that moveth, which the waters brought forth abundantly—."* Other translations use "teeming or swarming etc." One is reminded of the undersea photographs of shoals of fishes like flocks of birds. Barely visible macroscopic life was present along with microscopic invisible to the naked eye. All of this came about immediately as God spoke. Uniformitarianism was not a part of God's miraculous creation.

When baptized one is cleansed from sin. Little time is required. Would a psychologist suggest such a radical and quick change? No. But with God all things are possible. The living, when Christ returns will be changed *"in the twinkling of an eye,"* very quickly. God does what is impossible with man.

Issues Among Brethren

FEMINISM IN THE LORD'S CHURCH

Feminism is defined as : “the theory that women should have political, economic and social rights equal to those of men.” While such an idea has its merits, the feminist movement has taken it too far. Feminism is even making inroads into the church. Some among us are advocating that women in the church are equally entitled to hold all religious offices, works and leadership roles that men do. As a result some congregations have women leading the singing, leading in prayer, serving the Lord's Supper, and even working as deacons, preachers and elders. But, is such in harmony with the Scriptures? This is a question that needs to be answered from the Word of God

What Bible verses are used as authority for giving the above-mentioned roles to women? The favorite among the feminists is Gal.3:28. This verse reads, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ.” This verse is the “mother of all verses” to the feminist. After giving their New Hermeneutic some assistance by twisting the verse out of context they reach the conclusion that men and women are to function equally in the same capacities both in the church and in the home. To the feminist Gal.3:28 legalizes the woman to do everything the man may do in the church. Is this the message God was revealing to us when Paul wrote Gal.3:28?

To properly understand any verse of Scripture the verse must be considered in its context. What is the context of Gal.3:28? Notice Gal.3:26-27, which reads, “For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ..” These two verses prove beyond doubt that the matter under consideration is “salvation in Christ.” That is the context in which Gal.3:28 is found. Whether one was a Jew or a Gentile, a slave or a freeman, a man or a woman made no difference. The gospel was for all lost sinners. When anyone, Jew or Gentile, slave or freeman, man or woman put on Christ in baptism, he enjoyed the same salvation from sin as did every other child of God. All spiritual blessings were his, equally, with all other Christians. He sustained the same spiritual relationship with God as did all others who were saved. As the Bible emphasizes, God is no respecter of persons, Acts 10:34-35.

Feminism dislikes the idea of woman's “subjection” to man. To the mind of a true feminist to be in “subjection” makes woman a “slave” of man. But, woman's “subjection” to man is the work of God. All women who resist this “subjection” rebel against the will of God..

The Bible tells us “the head of the woman is man,” 1 Cor.11:3. 1 Cor. 11:8 reveals one reason why God has made man to be the head of the women. The verse tells us, “For the man is not of the woman, but the woman of the man.” This is a reference to the time of creation. At that time God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make a help meet for him, ”Gen 2:18. Based on that decision God proceeded to make woman from a rib of man. God has placed woman in “subjection” to man because man was made first and, then, the woman was made to be man's helper and companion.

A second reason for woman's “subjection” to man is given in Gen.3:16. As part of her punishment for sin God told Eve, “thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.” This has been the law of God since the time of the Garden of Eden

All God-fearing women will with holy reverence humbly work to fulfill the roles God has given them and never become guilty of usurping the authority God has given to men.

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The New International Version (3)

Thank you for studying with us. The NIV has become very popular, but popularity does not guarantee reliability. With this study, we conclude our investigation of this modern version.

John 20:30 (NIV) says, "...miraculous signs..." The Majority Text and the KJV have the word "signs." "Miraculous" is an unnecessary addition and again puts the NIV in the category of a commentary.

In Acts 2:4 (NIV), "All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them." "...as the Spirit gave them utterance" (KJV) is far superior to "...enabled them." According to Mr. Thayer the word translated "utterance" is used of elevated speech such as the apostles engaged in on the day of Pentecost. So once again, the NIV proves itself inferior.

In Acts 2:38 (NIV) "...so that your sins may be forgiven" expresses purpose: "so that" equals "in order to." In Romans 5:20 (NIV), does "...so that..." express purpose? In the place of "so that" the KJV has "that." In the Majority Text, the construction is "hina with the subjunctive," which expresses either purpose or result, depending on the context. If "so that" in Acts 2:38 expresses purpose in the NIV, does it also express purpose in Rom. 5:20? "That" is often the translation of "hina with the subjunctive": "...that the scripture might be fulfilled..." (John 19:24, KJV). Did the soldiers do what they did in order to fulfill prophecy or was the fulfillment of prophecy the "result" of what they did? The soldiers may not have even known about the prophecy, so "result" is the correct concept. Considering such verses as Ex. 20:20, it seems reasonable that "result," not "purpose" is the meaning in Rom. 5:20.

In Romans 8:3-9 (NIV), "sinful nature" is the translation of the word "flesh" (sarx). This is probably the most "blatant blunder" of the NIV, the religious bias of Calvinism. Even the words "sinful flesh" (Rom. 8:3) of the KJV do not teach the Calvinistic concept of Total Depravity with the result that man inherited a "sinful nature." "Sinful flesh" indicates only that the body of man is used as an instrument in committing sin. The flesh, or body of man, does not have a mind of its own. It functions according to the dictates of the mind. The Bible does not teach the concept that the "spirit of man" serves God, but the body serves sin. If that were so, it would mean that the body had a mind of its own (cf. Rom. 7:25 in the NIV).

Gal. 3:27 (NIV) reads, "for all of you who were united with Christ in baptism have been clothed with Christ." This changes the force of the original: "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." The verse plainly teaches that one is baptized "into" Christ. This helps in establishing the "purpose or design" of baptism. Once again, the NIV proves itself to be very, very inferior.

I Cor. 13:10 (NIV): "but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears." "Perfection" translates "to teleion," which is neuter gender and means "that which is perfect," or "the perfect thing." It cannot mean the perfect one, referring to Christ. To do so it would have to be in the masculine gender. Actually that which is "perfect" is contrasted with that which is "in part" (ek merous). That which was in part was "miraculous." In contrast, when the perfect (complete) revelation came, they would no longer need confirming miracles. "Perfection" in the NIV is ambiguous. What did the translators have in mind?

Hebrews 11:1 (NIV) states, "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." Closer to the original is "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

Finally, the NIV casts doubt on the inspiration of Mark 16:9-20.

Why be satisfied with a version which has been so careless with the original text? Some answer, It is more easily understood. Understandability is to be considered, but it is not the most important consideration when deciding what version to use in daily reading and study. Accuracy seldom comes to mind, but must be given a very, very important place in our thinking. Does the version I use convey the meaning of the original? Give me the meaning of the original and let me decide what that means. Study carefully.-Glenn Melton, 322 Gray St., Henderson, TX 75652; (903)657-9089; glennmelton@juno.com

Religious Debate

Proposition One: “The Scriptures teach that salvation is at the point of faith before and without water baptism.”

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

Deny: Mr. Carl A. Allen of South Loop Church of Christ, Crockett, TX

July 26, 27, 1999 (Monday & Tuesday) 7:30 PM
North Loop Missionary Baptist Church, Crockett, Texas

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

Affirm: Mr. Carl A. Allen of South Loop Church of Christ, Crockett, TX

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

July 29, 30, 1999 (Thursday & Friday) 7:30 PM
South Loop Church of Christ, Crockett, Texas

EVERYONE WELCOME

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