

StraitWay



September 1999

Preacher's Attitude Toward Those Whom He Condemns

How did John the Baptist refer to those who came to his baptism? "When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" (Mt. 3:7; cf. Lk. 3:7).

How did Jesus deal with those with whom He came in contact? In cases where people were humble, seeking to be obedient, Jesus was gentle with them, as in John 8:1-11 and John 4:1-26. When Peter rebuked Jesus, Jesus rebuke him saying, "Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." Jesus rebuked Peter in front of the other apostles. When people were self-righteous Jesus said, "But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" (Mt. 23:13). In Revelation 2:20, Jesus called a woman in the church at Thyatira, Jezebel.

How did the apostles and inspired writers deal with those who sinned? When a man and his wife lied to the Holy Spirit, Luke recorded their names: Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-11). He also identified the Athenians as those who just liked to hear or tell some new thing (Acts 17:21). Paul identified Demas as one who had forsaken him (II Tim. 4:10) and "...Jannes and Jambres..." who "...withstood Moses...." (II Tim. 3:8). Further, Paul identified "Alexander the coppersmith..." and warned Timothy to "...be thou ware also..." (II Tim 4:14,15).

What attitude did John the Baptist, Jesus, the apostles, and inspired writers have toward those whom they identified and condemned? Since Jesus never sinned (I Pet. 2:22), we know He loved and respected the soul whom he identified and condemned. Also, we know Jesus desired the salvation of all men (Lk. 19:10). In Galatians, Paul condemned them for being "...removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel..." (Gal. 1:6). Did Paul hate them or was he mean to them? No, for he later said, "Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" (Gal 4:16; cf. II Tm 2:10).

To the Ephesians, Paul wrote, "But speaking the truth in love..." (Eph. 4:15). Why did Paul speak and write the truth even when men did not like it? He loved God, he loved the truth, he loved the soul of the sinner, he loved his own soul. That is speaking the truth in love.

In identifying a person, or group of people, with whom one disagrees, does God ever allow one to "make fun of," "sneer at," "falsely accuse," "ridicule," etc.? Absolutely not! Our preaching and teaching must be done with this thought in mind: "And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil..." (II Tim. 2:24-26a). Caution: "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue...this man's religion is vain" (James 1:26). Study carefully.

Glenn Melton, 322 Gray Street, Henderson, TX 75652-2734 (903-657-9089) glennmelton@juno.com

Did you receive this paper from a friend? Would you like to receive your own copy by mail? Send your name and address to: StraitWay, 322 Gray St., Henderson, TX 75652 or straitway@hendersons.net

Word Studies

Quietness

Paul urged the Thessalonians to "aspire to lead a quiet life..." (1 Thessalonians 4:12). The quietness of which he wrote was not a dull existence with speech only in hushed tones, but rather refers to a life characterized by minding one's own business, working with his own hands. The Greek word for "quiet" found here, "hesuchadzo," is a word that seems to imply a condition of submissiveness, acting in one's proper realm, not going outside the bounds of one's recognized position or role.

The noun and adjective forms of "hesuchadzo" appear in 1 Timothy 2:11, 12. "Let a woman learn in silence with all subjection. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence." It is notable that Paul uses a different word for silence here than that found in 1 Corinthians 14:34, "Let your women keep silent [Greek, 'sigao'] in the churches..." There he forbade a woman to become a speaker in the assembly, even though she may have had a spiritual gift. Her speaking is proscribed by revealed law.

The passage in 1 Timothy 2, however, emphasizes the woman's own recognition of her place in the scheme of things: She adorns herself in a manner that befits a woman professing godliness (verses 9, 10); she sees that Adam was created before Eve, and that Eve was deceived (13, 14); she knows that God has placed her in the role of childbearing (15). This leads to a quietness of obedient submission. It is not just a "silence" imposed upon the woman at the assembly, it is the "quietness" of spirit described by Peter in 1 Peter 3:3, 4: "Do not let your adornment be merely outward--arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel--rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God."

The difference between these two words for silence seems to be well-illustrated in Luke's account of Paul's arrest in Jerusalem after his third journey. A violent mob was shouting, "Away with him!" as Paul asked the commander to allow him to speak to the people. There was "great silence" after Paul motioned with his hand. (Acts 21:40). This is from the Greek "sige," the noun form of the word found in 1 Corinthians 14:34. The people were quiet because of Paul's nonverbal request, but Luke tells us that "they kept all the more silent" upon hearing the apostle speak in the Hebrew language. (Acts 22:2). Here Luke changes to the other word, "hesuchia," apparently because the quietness this time grew out of greater respect for Paul when they heard that he spoke the revered language of their forefathers.

Luke applied this word to himself and those with him in Acts 21:14. On the approach to Jerusalem, Paul was being warned of the trouble that awaited him there. His travelling companions and the brethren at Caesarea pleaded with him not to go, but Paul insisted that he would continue even in the face of death "for the name of the Lord Jesus." Luke wrote, "So when he would not be persuaded, we ceased [Greek, 'hesuchadzo'], saying, 'The will of the Lord be done.'" Note that when they saw that their pleading was contrary to the Lord's will, Paul's friends knew that they were out of place, and they stopped, even though they did not actually become silent. A similar use is found in Acts 11:18, where we find that Jewish believers, having learned of God's signs indicating His acceptance of Gentiles into Christ, "became silent," even though the sentence goes on to say that they spoke something!

This quietness of life is not a goal for women only. Our prayers should be toward the end that we all "may lead a quiet and peaceable ['hesuchios'] life." (1 Timothy 2:2). Here, "quiet" refers to freedom from outside turmoil, while "peaceable" points to the tranquility that arises from within one who sees his proper place in the world and willingly fills it. We all need that!

Steve D. Walker 302 Beard Avenue Dumas, TX 79029 sdwalker@nts-online.net

Visit StraitWay Online at hendersons.net/straitway/ for all articles and announcements found in previous issues. There you will also find access to Bible Correspondence Courses and links by which you may email the writers.

First Principles

A Three-Fold Reason For Loving Christ

That God loves us is abundantly attested in the pages of revelation (Jno. 3:16; I Jn. 4:9-10,16) as well as from observation of His gracious provision for us in the natural world (Acts 14:17). And as with the Father, so with the Son of whom Paul could say, "who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). The "kindness and love of God our Savior toward man" (Tit. 3:4) is calculated to melt the stony heart of sinners so that "the goodness of God leads you to repentance" (Rom. 2:4). Truly, His love for us should prompt our love for Him. "We love Him because He first loved us" (I Jn. 4:19). While many reasons may be offered as to why we should love Him, consider these three.

WE SHOULD LOVE HIM BECAUSE OF *WHAT HE DID* FOR US. (1) He became poor-"though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich" (2 Cor. 8:9). Though "being in the form of God," He "emptied Himself by taking the form of a servant, and coming in the likeness of men" (Phil. 2:6-8). Though the devil in tempting Jesus offered Him "all these things" of the kingdoms of the world (Mat. 4:9), Jesus said during His sojourn, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no where to lay His head" (Lk. 9:58). (2) He left us an example showing us how to walk (I Pet. 2:21; 4:1-2). (3) He died for us and then triumphed over death. God "made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21). But he "was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification" (Rom. 4:25). (4) He then gave His terms of pardon for those who would come to God by Him (Mk. 16:15-16).

WE SHOULD LOVE HIM BECAUSE OF *WHAT HE IS DOING*. Let us not think that just because the day of miracles is in the past that He is doing nothing for us. (1) Through His word, He is inviting sinners to receive rest from the burden of sin (Mat. 11:28-30). (2) He is saving those who accept His invitation and come to Him. "He is able to save to the uttermost those who come to God by Him..." (Heb. 7:25). He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (Jn. 14:6). (3) He is adding the saved to His church, the relationship of the saved, His body (Acts 2:47; Eph. 5:23). (4) He who appears in the presence of God for us (Heb. 9:24) is our advocate and His blood cleanses us from our sin (I Jn. 1:7-2:2). (5) He is preparing a place for us (Jn. 14:1-3; cf. Mat. 25:34).

WE SHOULD LOVE HIM BECAUSE OF *WHAT HE WILL DO*. (1) He will come again, appear a second time, and that without sin, for salvation of those who eagerly wait for Him (Heb. 9:27-28). In words intended to comfort, Paul told the saints at Thessalonica, "The Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord" (I Thes. 4:16-17). (2) He will raise our dead bodies. Jesus said, "Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth-those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation" (Jn. 5:28-29). This will mean salvation for some (Heb. 9:28), but condemnation for others (2 Thes. 1:8). (3) He will give the faithful, those who have sought for glory, honor, and immortality, eternal life (Rom. 2:7). (4) He will present us to the Father who will ever be with us. (I Cor. 15:24; Mt. 10:32; Rev. 21:4).

So, kind reader, do you love Him? Have you responded in faith to the terms of pardon? Would you abide in His love? Keep His commandments (Jn. 15:10).

Personal Work

The birthright of every man is his freedom of choice. Man has the ability to determine his destiny. He can do what he wants to do and can be what he wants to be. Attached to each selection is a consequence. Man's destiny, for good or bad, will depend upon the choices he makes in this life.

The introduction of sin into the world was a result of the first pair choosing the wrong action. The consequence was fixed to the action. They determined their destiny only by their decision to eat or not to eat of the forbidden fruit.

The choices one makes will be his own. We are influenced by others, but the choice we make will ultimately be ours. Joshua could not make Israel's choice for them (Josh.24:14,15). The decision to be a soul-winner rests with each one of us. Offering excuses demonstrates that we are in the process of making a bad choice. The consequences of such a decision are far-reaching. It will result in condemning ourselves and causing others to be lost by withholding from them the soul-saving gospel.

Sometimes young preachers are so busy studying, writing articles for bulletins and papers, that they don't have (or take time) time to do personal work. As Christians we are to set an example for others. What kind of example are we setting, if we don't do any personal work? Habits are hard to break, so let us not get in the habit of not doing personal work. We sometimes think that someone else will do it. We will suffer the consequences if we fail to teach others.

What we are now and what we are capable of becoming will be determined by what we think of ourselves. If our concept is essentially negative, every decision made will be negatively influenced. Remember that we have opportunities and the power of choice. One of the most common weaknesses of man is the habit of leaving his mind open to the negative influence of others. Positive thinking is the key to success.

A great problem in the church is the inactivity of those who have knowledge, but fail to turn it into action. The church is in need of those who are dissatisfied with things as they are and are striving to make them better. This kind of person does not sit around and wait until he is asked to do something nor does he have to be told to do something. Self-motivation is an inner need or drive which impels or incites an individual to action, and a desire held in expectation with the belief that it will be realized. Self-motivation is within the reach of each one of us.

A person has a tendency to be conditioned by the persons with whom he associates and the objects he contemplates. If bad habits are formed this way, then certainly good attitudes and habits are formed the same way. By beholding the glory of the Lord we will come to imbibe His sentiments, catch His feelings and be molded into the image of His own purity. Dear brother/sister if you are not in the habit of teaching the gospel to the lost, then start working on your attitude. If we don't teach the lost, they will not be taught. Are you working for your Lord and Master?

EVIDENCE THE CREATOR AND HIS CREATION

Romans 11:33 states that God's judgments are unsearchable and that his ways are past finding out. Biblical scribes agree concerning the Creator. The preacher wrote in Ecclesiastes 12:1: "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth—" The prophet wrote in Isaiah 40:28 that "the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding." In 1 Peter 1:19 those who "suffer according to the will of God" must "commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator."

That God is the Creator underlies the admonitions and encouragements in these passages. This is a fact to be believed and has not, to this point in time, been satisfactorily explained to the majority population of the so-called scientific community. Paul challenged the thinking of the philosophers on the Areopagus in Acts 17:24. He reminded them that the God of whom he spoke "made the world and all things therein," this being the case "he is Lord of heaven and earth."

The foregoing is well known Bible to students who revere the Bible because it is "the word of God." There are those among us who appeal to the atheist and to the scientific minded (one does not necessarily imply the other). Their tact seems to be to approach the infidels on their level, with their view of things. God may be referred to as one of intelligent design. This brings to mind a radio campaign some years back. It was called "Heart Beat" or something rather ethereal like that. It was a work of liberal churches of Christ. Poetry and prose with a "spiritual" and "morally philosophical" flavor were aired. Scriptures were not used. The church was not mentioned.

We hear of a popular Bible School Program which purports to demolish the theory of evolution. Yet the program teaches that the six days of creation may not be so. An ancient age for the earth is taught, consistent with the evolutionist's time table. When Solomon, Isaiah, Paul and Peter referred to the Creator, and; when Mark and John the Revelator, along with the inspired quartet previously mentioned, referred to the creation, what did their hearers or readers understand? Did they think the creation was many years in the making? Surely they understood it from the perspective of Exodus 20:11 which states, "For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day—" The seventh day which was the Sabbath day is not subject to interpretation with reference to time. It was a day as were the other six days. The context is the same. An indeterminate period of time, preceding the seventh day which an evening and morning and which God blessed and sanctified and upon which he rested, is not indicated in Genesis 1:31-2:3.

Whence cometh these recent surmisings? Has the Bible become unclear? Has new Biblical evidence surfaced? No. It is because that some of secular education have difficulty coming to grips with what the scriptures say. Paul referred to the conflict between worldly wisdom and the revealed wisdom of God in 1 Corinthians 1:18 saying that "the preaching of the cross" is foolishness to some. Verses 25-26 are instructive: "Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men (men's wisdom.)—For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called—" No textual adjustments for unbelievers are evident. The whole counsel of God's word preached in or out of season is the work of an evangelist. The creation is concrete evidence of the Creator who spoke it into existence. We who are Christians are God's spiritual creation, and; if we remain steadfast shall, in the resurrection, be changed in "the twinkling of an eye!" —immediately.

Ron Lloyd 122 Emerald Dr. Clute, TX 77531 (409) 265-2933 rlloyd@brazosport.cc.tx.us

Issues Among Brethren **ACCEPTABLE BAPTISM**

Can a lost sinner be baptized and saved from past sins without understanding that he is being baptized for the remission of sins? This idea is currently circulating within some churches of Christ. Do the inspired scriptures support such an idea? Let us, “Prove all things and hold fast to that which is good,” 1 Thess.5:21.

First, let’s notice the example of Acts 2. Peter preached about the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Some of the hearers believed and asked what to do to be forgiven of past sins. Peter’s answer was, “Repent and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit,” Acts 2:38. Remember, Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit, Acts 2:4, Who was guiding Peter in all the truth, Jn.16:13. At that moment the Holy Spirit was leading Peter to tell lost sinners exactly what they needed to know and do to be saved. To emphasize the importance of both repentance and baptism Peter told his audience that both were to be done by the authority of Jesus Christ and in order to receive the forgiveness of sin. These words “in the name of Jesus Christ” and “for the remission of sins” added power to the preaching of the gospel. Upon hearing and understanding the exact words of Peter the audience was much more inclined to obey. If Peter had simply said, “Repent and be baptized,” the likelihood is far less than 3,000 would have responded. But the Holy Spirit guided Peter to inform lost sinners why they should repent and be baptized, because the Lord requires it, and what blessing, the remission of sin, they would receive.

The forgiveness of sin is a major part of the “goods news” of the gospel. Can you imagine God wanting to withhold from a lost sinner information about how to be forgiven of his sins and when his sins are actually forgiven? Ananias instructed Saul, “Arise, and be baptized, and wash away they sins,” Acts 22:16. The Holy Spirit guided Ananias, just as He did Peter, to tell the lost sinner why he needed to be baptized. It was only after his baptism that the eunuch “went on his way rejoicing,” Acts 8:39. Evidently, Philip taught the eunuch that he needed to be baptized for the remission of his sins. Upon his obedience to the gospel and knowing his sins had been washed away in the blood of the Lamb, the eunuch had reason for great rejoicing.

Suppose a lost sinner is being taught that Jesus is his Savior. Has that sinner been properly taught if he is not told that Jesus suffered and died on the cross to pay the penalty for his sins? Absolutely not! The death of Christ for man’s sins is the most convincing proof of God’s love for lost sinners. It is the most heart-touching fact of the gospel. It tells the lost sinner how God can “be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus,” Rom.3:26. It moves the lost sinner to accept Jesus as his Savior.

Christians do not walk by “blind faith” as some accuse. For every command to be obeyed God has revealed His purpose for man’s obedience to that command. Consider the commands of God that must be obeyed to become a Christian. Jesus said, “If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins,” Jn.8:24. Again, the Lord said, “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish,” Lk.13:3. The Lord’s statement, “Whosoever, therefore, shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven,” Mt.10:32, gives the sinner real reason for confessing his faith in Jesus as Lord. The need for baptism was made evident, when the Lord said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved,” Mk.16:16. Paul covers the entire field of obedience when he writes, “Be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord,” 1 Cor.15:58. No one is ready to obey any of God’s commandments until he is taught God’s purpose for his obedience. How can he “obey from the heart,” Rom.6:17, if he is ignorant of why he is obeying a command of God?

How A Church May Use Its Money (3)

In Romans 12:17b, Paul admonished, "Provide things honest in the sight of all men." In II Cor. 8:21, he also said, "Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men." It was Paul's intent to be honorable in all dealings. So we, individually and collectively, must be honorable before God and man. That involves our obeying God in all things. The church must obey God by using its benevolent funds in a scriptural way. How may the church scripturally use its benevolent funds? What does the word of God say?

"And fear came upon every soul....And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need" (Acts 2:43-45). The distribution was to those "believers" (saints) who had need.

"And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. Neither was there any among them (saints, GM) that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man (saint, GM) according as he had need" (Acts 4:33-35).

"And in those days, when the number of the disciples (saints, GM) was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business" (Acts 6:1-3). The Jerusalem church took care of its own needy saints.

"And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren (saints, GM) which dwelt in Judea: Which also they did, and set it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul" (Acts 11:27-30).

The collection in I Cor. 16:1,2 was "...for the saints...." Paul again mentioned this in Romans 15:25-27: "But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things." Here again, the ministration was for the poor among the saints.

"For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God" (II Cor. 8:12). The Corinthian contribution supplied the want of the saints.

A congregation may relieve its own needy as Jerusalem did in Acts 2, 4, 6, or, one church may help another church which has more needy in it than it can relieve as Antioch (Ac. 11:27-30) and the churches of Macedonia and Achaia (I Cor. 16:1,2; II Cor. 8,9; Rom. 15:25-27) did. But, there is no authority for a church to use its benevolent funds for the relief of nonsaints. James 1:27 is an individual matter, not congregational. Gal. 6:10 does not refer to benevolence at all, but rather to the restoration of men to God (read Gal. 6:1-10). Nor is there authority for a church to contribute benevolent funds to a human institution such as a children's home. Study carefully.

--Glenn Melton, 322 Gray St., Henderson, TX 75652; (903)657-9089; glennmelton@juno.com

The People Read Him Gladly

An old saying goes something like this: "Water, water, everywhere and not a drop to drink." Could that be true of words? There a lot of words, how many of them do we understand or use well?

Of Jesus it was said (Mk. 12:37b), "And the common people heard him gladly." He spoke "...words easy to be understood..." (I Cor. 14:9).

Many words are written. Can people read our writings without having to reach for the dictionary? In a recent issue of the Dallas Morning News, the Profile Section featured a man who has produced several books concerning words: pronunciation, definition, and usage. He said, "Build your vocabulary to make yourself a better reader; choose simple words whenever possible to make yourself a better writer."

How about the word cognizant? Would "aware" or "know" do? Either would be easily understood. Do we want a word to get in the way of what we are saying? If a reader has to stop and think about the terms we use, his ability and willingness to follow our line of thought will be hindered. Consider the word "allude." To allude to a thing is to refer to it. "Refer" is more easily understood.

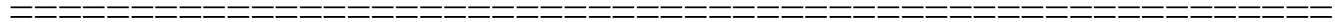
I am certainly not trying to dictate the terms to be used in speaking and writing. But, if we want to be understood, we must use words easily understood (I Cor. 14:9). But, someone says, Educate up. Using words that people have to look up educates. That is true, but did Jesus do that? He is the Master Teacher.

Advertisers want messages readily understood. Their messages are simple: "Coke Is It." Brethren, we have the greatest message known to man. It needs to be easily understood, a good reason to choose our words wisely and think about how we express ourselves.

"The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and that which was written was upright, even words of truth. The words of the wise are as goads, and as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one shepherd" (Eccl. 12:10,11).

Do people read us gladly? Study carefully.

--Glenn Melton, 322 Gray St., Henderson, TX 75652; (903)657-9089; glennmelton@juno.com



StraitWay
P. O. Box 39
Colmesneil, Texas 75938

Editor: Glenn Melton

U.S. Bulk Rate
Postage Paid
Permit # 12
Colmesneil, Texas 75938

Address Correction Requested
Delivery Address

StraitWay is free to the recipient. Send names and address changes to:
StraitWay 18 Rosewood Dr. Jasper, TX 75951 or straitway@hendersons.net