

MISAPPLIED SCRIPTURE

“But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another” (Galatians 5:15).

What is the apostle Paul referring to in this verse? Paul was writing to the churches of Christ in Galatia. The Galatians were a high strung, Celtic people. False teachers (commonly referred to as “Judaizers”) had inflamed these Gentile brethren claiming that one needed to keep the Law of Moses as well as the Law of Christ—the gospel. This “leaven” had infected the church and caused the brethren to forget brotherly love and to be bitter against one another. He was afraid that their mistreatment of each other would destroy the church.

For over a generation religious liberals within the church have misused this verse to castigate conservatives who **scripturally** point out their error. “*The witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith*” (Titus 1:13). In return, liberals often resort to “ad hominem” attacks or attacks against one’s character or person. As the old saying goes, “attack the messenger rather than the message”. The Lord’s critics in His day resorted to such name calling when they could not refute His arguments, calling Him “*a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!*” (Luke 7:34).

Lately some brethren who like to think of themselves as “sound” have resorted to such tactics as well. If a brother rebukes them for **fellowshipping** marked false teachers or fellowshipping those who do they pull out Galatians 5:15 and accuse them of being “mean spirited” and “divisive”. They seem to desire to compromise the truth of the gospel for the sake of “friendship” or old school ties or family ties or even, God forbid filthy lucre’s sake.

Sometimes we must get a bit rough with God’s children to get their attention and perhaps save their souls.

I am reminded of Nehemiah the governor of post-exile Jerusalem in the 6th Century B.C. When he discovered that some of his Jewish brethren had married foreign women and had families by them contrary to the Law, he did not hold back in his rebuke. “*And I contended with them, and cursed them, and smote certain of them, and plucked off their hair, and made them swear by God, saying, Ye shall not give your daughters unto their sons, nor take their daughters unto your sons, or for yourselves*” (Nehemiah 13:25).

I am not suggesting we should use hair pulling or physical force with brethren. Yet, was Nehemiah “unloving” in his rebuke? Did he seek to “bite and devour” his brethren? No! He manifested a **zealous love** for God and his nation. I imagine he lost quite a few friends but gained favor with God. “*Remember me, O my God, for good*” (Neh.13:31).

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BELVEDERE BEACON
Ye are the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14)
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Morning Worship 11.00 am.
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BE OF GOOD COURAGE

Of all of Satan’s weapons, his favorite may be discouragement. It is certainly one of his most effective weapons. He has used it on the Lord’s finest servants to try to neutralize their effectiveness. Paul well knew what it meant to be discouraged and depressed. He was so discouraged about preaching in the wicked city of Corinth that the Lord saw fit to speak words of encouragement directly to him, assuring him He had many people in that city whom Paul needed to seek (Acts 18:9–10). After Paul had written the first letter to Corinth and had received no response, he became both anxious and discouraged. He was encouraged greatly by the report Titus brought him in Macedonia (2 Cor. 7:5–7). After being unjustly imprisoned for a long period in Caesarea, Paul was finally shipped to Rome by the Imperial authorities. An extremely perilous voyage must have left him both physically and emotionally exhausted. What a welcome sight it must have been when the brethren from Rome met him some forty miles from the city. Luke described what this did for the discouraged apostle: “He thanked God, and took courage” (Acts 28:15).

Discouragement comes to all, small and great. Even the sinless Son of God must have been greatly discouraged when he wept over Jerusalem (Mat. 23:23; Luke 19:41). It is not abnormal to become discouraged, but those who will be remembered are the ones who did not let it defeat or destroy them. When a brother or sister accepts an assignment and then neglects it, it is discouraging. When you do your best at work or school or in congregational responsibilities and are still criticized, it is discouraging. When you contend earnestly for the faith and brethren question your motives, it is discouraging. When you oppose error, its advocates, and those who defend them and you are accused of trying to destroy good works, it is discouraging.

It is not always easy to keep on going when others around us have thrown up their hands and quit or when others oppose our righteous efforts. However, let us not become so disappointed in a brother or sister that we let it destroy us. Let us not allow the pessimistic, cynical spirit of others to cancel our initiative. Those who eventually accomplish great things in any area of life (including the Lord’s kingdom), are the ones who persevere in spite of discouragement.

Have you noticed that the more we try to do as a congregation or as individuals, the harder it seems to get it done? We may work very hard in preparation for Gospel meetings. We may place teaching articles in the news- paper week after week, month after month, and even year after year and see little immediate results. The devil does not worry much about a church that is self-satisfied and doing nothing. He gets concerned only about the Lord’s people who are serious about the Lord’s work. The more we do and attempt to do, the more we can expect him to try to discourage us. It must bring a special delight to his malevolent heart when he can enlist some of the Lord’s own people in his nefarious efforts of discouragement.

With Moses and Joshua of old, we say, “Be strong and of good courage” (Deu. 31:6; Jos. 1:9).

Dub McClish, Denton, TX

GIVING AS WE HAVE BEEN PROSPERED

In writing to the Corinthian brethren, Paul wrote: “*Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come*” (I Corinthians 16;1-2). God commands a Christian to give “*as God hath prospered him.*” However, there are brethren that will acknowledge that they are to give and give regularly, in accordance with God’s command, but yet they fail to give as they have been prospered.

Some have set an arbitrary figure, for example \$50.00 a week. That figure was set years ago and although their income has increased, they still give the same amount even though inflation has eaten away at the value of that amount. Others will give sufficiently to be sure that the church has enough money to “pay its bills.” Some receive extra income but do not include this in determining the amount that they give, they still give the same amount that they always give. How does one determine what they should give, by gross income or net income (before or after taxes), by what they have left after they have paid their own bills?

Brethren, is God pleased when we ignore His command to give as we have been prospered? Is God pleased when we give the same amount week in our week out without regard to how we have been prospered? Is God pleased when our standard of giving is to give simply to ensure that the churches bills are paid? The budget of the church is set in order to see how much we need in order to pay our necessary bills but if our giving is limited to that, what do we give for the furtherance of the Gospel and to meet legitimate benevolent needs? Is God pleased when we receive addition income but leave our contribution at the same level even though we have been additionally prospered? Is God pleased when we determine what we give after we have taken care of what we consider our “necessary” expenses rather than giving “off the top” as we have been prospered?

Surely, we can recognize that God is **NOT** pleased when we treat the matter of giving to the Lord’s work in this way. Ananias and Sapphira thought that they could get away without giving as they had been (Acts 5:1-11). They found out, to their cost, that God was **NOT** pleased! We also note that as a result of God’s judgment on these two both the church and all that heard were overcome with “*great fear*” (Acts 5:11). Christians today need to have some of this “*great fear*” when they fail to give to the Lord’s work as they have been prospered.

Will the work of the Lord continue as it should if we do not give as we have been prospered? Will the work of the Lord grow if we fail to give as we have been prospered? Remember, the contribution that we give is not simply to be used to “pay the bills” but is to be used to preach the gospel and to provide benevolence to those who need it.

Ken Chumbley

NEWS AND NOTES

Keep in your prayers the following: Helen Culpepper, Pam Gossett, Lavonne McClish, Linda Chumbley, and Rachel Fitzpatrick’s aunt (Eula Baker) who has cancer, Maomi Aaron’ sister who is having health problems, Myrtle Grimsley, Lanny Niver together with his daughter, and Tim Smith. Myrtle Grimsley was sick and unable to be out Sunday.

Lanny Niver had tried to get out Sunday but was involved in a minor accident with his vehicle and was unable to get to services.

Steven Wilson had surgery July 4 but is now home and improving. Keep him and Ron and Janice in your prayers.

Kathy Treadway should be back home late tonight after her vacation.

MISAPPLIED SCRIPTURE Continued from page 4

Was Jesus “mean spirited” when he called His fellow Jews “*hypocrites*” (Matthew 23:15) and a “*generation of vipers*” (verse 33)? Was He being overly aggressive when he TWICE drove the money changers out of the temple? **No!**

When the apostle Paul confronted Barnabas, the Jewish brethren, and Peter at Antioch for not eating with the Gentile brethren and “*withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed*” (Galatians 2:11), was he seeking to “bite and devour” them? **Of course not!** He knew that the “*truth of the gospel*” (verse 14) was at stake.

Brethren, we must treat each other respectfully and with brotherly kindness. But we must not presume that our brother/sister should be allowed to proceed down the road to Hell in a good humor. The bond of fellowship between brethren is a most precious thing. It was made possible by the precious blood of Jesus Christ (Acts 20:28). It should be fought for and defended with all the “tough love” and courage we can muster. It is far preferable to upset them in this life, where they have an opportunity to repent, than to have them upset on the Day of Judgment with no chance of repentance. “*Open rebuke is better than secret love*” (Proverbs 27:5).

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