

Expository Files



Jon W. Quinn, Warren E. Berkley - Editors

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The Front Page

Our Trip to the Oriental Institute
By Jon W. Quinn

After a 20 minute drive in several cars, members of our church and some friends boarded a Metra train on into the city of Chicago which was about a 40 minute ride. After disembarking the train we walked about six blocks through a nice neighborhood to arrive at the Oriental Institute, a museum on the campus of the University of Chicago. We arrives at about the time it opened (10:00 AM). It has a fine collection of ancient artifacts, all from the areas where early Biblical history took place. Many of these have Biblical significance, and that was where our main interest was focused.

The many examples of artifacts we saw included pottery from Egypt during the time that Abraham and Sarah traveled there (ca. 1900 B.C.) and visited the Pharaoh (Gen. 12:10-20). We also saw figurines and many other items from Egypt during the time of the Israel growing into a nation there and the exodus under Moses (Latter part of Book of Genesis and the Book of Exodus - ca. 1400-1300 BC). These included children's toys with which the Egyptian and Hebrew children would play, and also spear and arrow heads which would have tipped the weapons of the army Pharaoh sent out to chase down the Israelites.

We also looked at altars that the Canaanites were using to worship Baal and other gods as Joshua led Israel into Canaan and conquered it beginning with Jericho (Books of Joshua; see also Books of Judges, Kings and Chronicles; ca. 1200 BC – 600 BC). We saw some household Canaanite gods El and Baal. Sometimes even Israel would worship these instead of Jehovah! (Books of Joshua, Judges, Kings and Chronicles). We recall the Bible words concerning king Ahab and Jezebel; "Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD more than all who were before him. It came about, as though it had been a trivial thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he married Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and went to serve Baal and worshiped him. So he erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal which he built in Samaria." (1 Kings 16:30-32).

We also recall the contest between the prophet Elijah and the prophets of Baal on mount Carmel; "Elijah came near to all the people and said, "How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him." (1 Kings 18:21)

We saw an altar built during Solomon's reign at His fortress city of Megiddo. Though probably used in worship of Jehovah, it was not Scripturally correct to do so, God had designated Jerusalem for such activity. "Now Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of his father David, except he sacrificed and burned incense on the high places." (1 Kings 3:3).

We saw a casting of the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III which shows the Assyrian king receiving tribute from King Jehu of Israel. Though this particular tribute is not mentioned in the Bible, the Biblical historical record does confirm that Israelite kings did this (2 Kings 17:3). Some think Jehu as an usurper, was trying to buy aid from Shalmaneser III to battle Hazael (2 Kings 10:31-ff; 823 BC).

We saw several artifacts, including massive statues that were a part of the retinue that stood guard at King Sargon II's palace. Sargon carried away many of Israel into Assyrian captivity. This was in accordance with the words of Isaiah, who was contemporary with Sargon, as well as other prophets back to Moses who had warned that if Israel committed idolatry that they would suffer captivity. (Isaiah 20:1) 722 BC.

We were very fortunate to see the six-sided clay prism used as a propaganda tool by Sennacherib, King of Assyria, son of Sargon. Israel had been conquered, and Sennacherib set his sites on Judah. The prism brags of his siege of Jerusalem and Hezekiah, the King of Judah. He claims to have "shut up Hezekiah in Jerusalem like a bird in a cage." That was true until God delivered his people. It does not mention the failure to take the city nor why. (2 Ki. 18,19; 2 Chron. 32; Isaiah 36-37) 704-681 BC

As is the case with most propaganda, Sennacherib's scribes seek to put the best face on their failure to take Jerusalem. They claim complete victory and withdrawal. Greek historian Herodotus says they had to retreat due to a plague of rats destroying their weapons. The Bible says it was the angel of death sending plague on their troops and many thousands died. Sennacherib was later killed by two of his own sons as he worshipped in the shrine of his god Nisroch (2 Kings 19:37; Isa. 37:38).

The Processional Gate in Babylon was also known as the Ishtar gate. Daniel, Shadrach, Meschak and Abed-neggo would have been familiar with this gate, passing through it frequently as they served in the court of King Nebuchadnezzar. (Book of Daniel; ca. 600 BC). We were able to see one of the original mosaic lions gracing the entrance of the gate. Daniel would have seen these lions.

Babylon fell to the Persians under Cyrus who permitted a remnant of Jews to return home and rebuild Jerusalem, in fulfillment of prophecy. Darius, a successor of Cyrus as the Persian monarch, continued that policy. We saw a column came from the audience hall of his palace, as well as several other items. You might recall that it was he who was tricked into issuing a decree that resulted in the aged prophet Daniel, now serving in the Persian court, being thrown into the den of lions. (Daniel 6:15-ff. ca. 520 BC).

We also saw some artifacts taken from the palace of Xerxes who was Darius' son and successor. He is also called "Ahasuerus" in the Bible. The palace was located at Persepolis. (Ezra 5,6; 4:6; 522-465 BC). One of those artifacts was a huge "Man-bull" which was originally one of many used to support columns in a hall called "Tripylon" in Ancient Persia during the reign of Xerxes.. You might recall that it was he who was displeased with his queen, and replaced her with a new queen, a woman by the name of Esther. What did Xerxes' new queen, Esther, think as she walked past these

monstrosities to see the king without a proper summons? She was risking all for her people. (Book of Esther) 486-485 BC.

If you are ever in the Chicago area, and wish to see some of the tourist attractions, this is one that, because of your interest in Biblical things, you will not want to miss. It is not on most "must see" lists like Daley Plaza or the Field Museum or Sears Tower and so forth. But interested Bible students will appreciate this wonderful opportunity. Photos are permitted, so bring your cameras! For a photo essay of our trip see the following web site:

www.bradleychurchofchrist.com

They Will Still Yield Fruit in Old Age
(Psalm 71)
By Jon W. Quinn

“I don't know... I just do not feel like I am a part of the congregation anymore.” This statement, or something very similar to it, has been made to me on more than one occasion in different churches by different brethren whom I love and respect very much. In each case, it surprised me because each had done so much to advance the cause of Christ in times past. None of them were perfect, but they each had done what they could.

So, why had this feeling developed? Well, they all had one thing in common that had led them to this conclusion. They were advanced in years. Frailties and responsibilities were weighing heavily upon them, and they were not as directly active in the efforts of the local churches where they were members as they had once been.

First, this is not a feeling exclusively found in the realm of the local church and participation in the efforts there. Even non religious older folks many times feel the same way concerning whatever realms they may have once been more active in.

But life brings changes. God knew it would be this way, and He has something to say about it. We cannot do better than to see what the Lord has to say.

Not All of Us Are Like Moses

“Although Moses was one hundred and twenty years old when he died, his eye was not dim, nor his vigor abated. (Deuteronomy 34:7). Moses was an exception to the rule, and that is why this Biblical statement was noteworthy. We'd all like to be physically healthy as Moses was in our advanced years.

But typically, we more often fit the description of the writer of Ecclesiastes. After, in a rather mournful poetic way he described failing eyesight and losing ones teeth, he urges us to remember always the Lord; “Remember Him before the silver cord is broken and the golden bowl is crushed, the pitcher by the well is shattered and the wheel at the cistern is crushed; then the dust will return to the earth as it was, and the spirit will return to God who gave it.” (Eccl 12:6-7; see vss 1-7).

An Aged Psalmist Writes

Though we may not have Moses' vigor, we can still have his faith. There is an interesting Psalm written by an elderly man of faith. It shows us several things about a man of strong faith as he deals with life's issues and struggles in his advanced age. Without repeating the whole Psalm here, note a few lines from it.

First, what this gentleman does have is God as his refuge and fortress. Every man and woman of faith at whatever age always has this! “In You, O LORD, I have taken refuge; Let me never be ashamed. In Your righteousness deliver me and rescue me; Incline Your ear to me and save me. Be to me a rock of habitation to which I may continually come; You have given commandment to save me, For You are my rock and my fortress. (Psalm 71:1-3).

But this wonderful assurance does not mean that there are no ordeals to overcome. Some are related to age, some are not. For example, then as now, there are people who would trick and con the elderly. The Psalmist writes, “Rescue me, O my God, out of the hand of the wicked, Out of the grasp of the wrongdoer and ruthless man,” (Psalm 71:4).

Others watch and were amazed at how this grey-headed (later in the Psalm we learn of his hair color) man of faith deals with life's issues with a strength and grace that are his because of his faith in God. He will not stop declaring his confidence, peace and joy. “I have become a marvel to many,

For You are my strong refuge. My mouth is filled with Your praise And with Your glory all day long.” (Psalm 71:7-8).

After speaking of how God had been with him from birth, the Psalmist speaks of his continued need for God in the evening of life. He pleads for God's continued presence, “Do not cast me off in the time of old age; Do not forsake me when my strength fails.” (Psalm 71:9).

The Psalmist sees his advancement in age as continued opportunity to show others God's strength, though perhaps in different circumstances than he did when he was a young man “O God, You have taught me from my youth, And I still declare Your wondrous deeds. And even when I am old and gray, O God, do not forsake me, Until I declare Your strength to this generation, Your power to all who are to come.” (Psalm 71:17-18).

And finally, the Palmist sees ultimate revival and victory in spite of the problems he faces in his final time on the earth. “You who have shown me many troubles and distresses. Will revive me again, And will bring me up again from the depths of the earth. May You increase my greatness And turn to comfort me.” (Psalm 71:20-21).

Some Things the Lord Has Said

The Lord urges respect for the elderly. This needs to include self respect for those who are advanced in years. Concerning the righteous elderly, the Lord speaks of their usefulness in His service, “They will still yield fruit in old age... to declare that the LORD is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.” (See Psalm 92:12-15). For those who have lived their lives in righteous service of the Lord, the Bible says, “A gray head is a crown of glory; It is found in the way of righteousness.” (Proverbs 16:31).

Services to be Rendered

So, what can one do? The first thing to remember is that in the local church there are many different things to do by different people with different abilities and opportunities. Not everyone is young or old (hopefully) but there are things for everyone to do as they are able. No one ought to feel that they are any less a part of the body due to the inability to do everything they would like to be able to do (1 Corinthians 12:13-27). So, what can an elderly disciple do who is now infirmed or otherwise incapacitated due to the restraints of age?

Be good examples. When outward strength fades, show inner, spiritual strength and let it increase. “Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day.” (2 Corinthians 4:16). Be the cause of others “marveling” because of your grace and inner strength and confidence. When Paul was aged, he did this from a prison (Philemon 9)!

Give counsel with Scriptures and proven experience. As you are able, speak of the blessings and victories that God has given you (Titus 2:2-4).

Pray. Anna was 84 and prayed “night and day” (Luke 2:37). Age does not diminish the effectiveness of the prayers of righteous men and women (James 5:16b). Pray for the church, the elders, the teachers, the preacher, the sick, the lost, the young, the old.

Do not let anyone diminish the importance of these three areas of service. And these are not exhaustive, you can perhaps think of many more. The church needs all these services, and those who involve themselves in these things are rendering wonderful service to God and His church and a blessing to their fellow members in the body.

Working at the End
(1 Peter 4:7-11)
By Ethan R. Longhenry

In our reading of the New Testament we will find that the motivation to work for today and to keep up laboring in the vineyard is often found in the expectation of Christ's return at any moment. Peter expresses this motivation well in 2 Peter 3:11-18:

Seeing that these things are thus all to be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy living and godliness, looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God, by reason of which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? But, according to his promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for these things, give diligence that ye may be found in peace, without spot and

blameless in his sight. And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given to him, wrote unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; wherein are some things hard to be understood, which the ignorant and unstedfast wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. Ye therefore, beloved, knowing these things beforehand, beware lest, being carried away with the error of the wicked, ye fall from your own stedfastness. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and for ever. Amen.

Peter here urges us to live in a holy and godly manner since so great a destruction is on the horizon. He tells us further that we ought to be steadfast in the faith and remain pure so that we may be found righteous and holy on that day.

These thoughts are very good; are there, however, other activities for Christians to keep in mind owing to the nearness of the end? Certainly! Peter tells us further about the actions that befit a Christian living in these times. Let us now read this text, 1 Peter 4:7-11, and then examine what Peter has said:

But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore of sound mind, and be sober unto prayer: above all things being fervent in your love among yourselves; for love covereth a multitude of sins: using hospitality one to another without murmuring: according as each hath received a gift, ministering it among yourselves, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God; if any man speaketh, speaking as it were oracles of God; is any man ministereth, ministering as of the strength which God supplieth: that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, whose is the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Let us begin with verse 7:

"But the end of all things is at hand." Peter here is making a declarative statement which is made evident in his and Paul's writings: Christ will return, and will do so soon. This is an ever-present concern that ought to be held by all men.

"be ye therefore of sound mind, and be sober unto prayer." Peter here begins to make some conclusions on the basis of the previous declarative statement:

"therefore, do these things." We are told first to be of a sound mind, an idea seen in 1 Thessalonians 5:4-8:

But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief: for ye are all sons of light, and sons of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness; so then let us not sleep, as do the rest, but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep in the night: and they that are drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, since we are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet, the hope of salvation.

Paul relates to us that Christians are to be of the day, and to set aside the works of the darkness. Christians must always be alert, at any moment ready for the Lord's return! There is no room for slackening off while we walk upon this earth.

Peter continues his thought with "be sober unto prayer." Why would we be sober unto prayer? Prayer is seen as our avenue of communication with God (Matthew 6:4), and if we are going to approach the Almighty God and petition Him with our concerns and cares, we had better be in a proper frame of mind to do so! Prayer must always become a greater and greater part of our lives, especially as we see time continuing on to its inevitable close.

And now, verses 8 and 9:

"above all things being fervent in your love among yourselves; for love covereth a multitude of sins."

Peter here gives the ultimate priority for the Christian in the end times: fervent in love among yourselves. This same point is emphasized by Paul in 1 Corinthians 13, and John speaks in 1 John 4:7-8:

Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.

Love, therefore, must be an integral part of the life of the Christian, and what better power of witness is there than to demonstrate such great love for one another? Christians ought to be people known by and peculiar because of their great love, not only for themselves, but for all men!

Peter also mentions that love covers a multitude of sins, a thought reminiscent of James 5:20, where we learn that helping to restore a fallen brother to the faith covers a multitude of sins. Our love for one another will find great approval in the eyes of our Father, and He will reward us in kind.

"using hospitality one to another without murmuring." Why would Peter ever discuss hospitality in a discussion of the end times? We may look at the world around us and see why-- hospitality is lost on many. This should not be so for the Christian! Paul, in Romans 12:13, says that the Christian should be "given to hospitality." Being hospitable is required of elders (1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:8), and is one of the requirements a widow would have to meet to be placed on the "list" (1 Timothy 5:10). The Hebrew author tells us in Hebrews 13:2:

Forget not to show love unto strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

Christians are to be hospitable people-- this is one impression that can be left on an unbeliever or a member of a denomination that will not be easily dismissed. We must be given to hospitality even more now that the day is approaching, so that the love of Christ may be manifest even more as the wickedness of the world may increase.

Peter further commands us to be hospitable "without murmuring," or, in more understandable English, "without complaint." If you, as a Christian, cannot stand to be hospitable to people on Earth, what are you going to do when you spend eternity with these people? If you believe that it is simply "too much work" to be hospitable, what would you do if the Father considered it "too much work" to prepare a place in Heaven for you (Matthew 25:34)? What if the angels of the Lord desired to be in your presence? Then what would you say? Hospitality may not be easy, but it is commanded of us for our own good, to make sure that we are continually edified and encouraged so that we may resist the evil one.

Verse 10:

"according as each hath received a gift, ministering it among yourselves." Have we all received some form of a gift? Absolutely! As Paul says in Romans 12:6-8 and 1 Corinthians 12:7-11:

And having gifts differing according to the grace that was given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of our faith; or ministry, let us give ourselves to our ministry; or he that teacheth, to his teaching; or he that exhorteth, to his exhorting: he that giveth, let him do it with liberality; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness.

But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit to profit withal. For to one is given through the Spirit the word of wisdom; and to another the word of knowledge, according to the same Spirit: to another faith, in the same Spirit; and to another gifts of healings, in the one Spirit; and to another workings of miracles; and to another prophecy; and to another discernings of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; and to another the interpretation of tongues: but all these worketh the one and the same Spirit, dividing to each one severally even as he will.

Even though some of the gifts listed above are no longer dispensed to Christians, we certainly all may find in these lists some gifts that God has given us. What are we to do with these gifts? Use them! We have been commanded to use them for the benefit of the whole body, so that all may receive the edification and the encouragement they need to fight off evil and remain righteous. It is a terrible thing to allow the gifts of God to waste away!

"as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." Jesus relates to us a parable in Matthew 24:45-51 about the good servant and the wicked servant and their respective rewards. We must work diligently to be found as one of the servants who treated his master's property well, having received so great a salvation at so great a cost. We must not be found lacking in our stewardship of the works of God!

Finally, let us examine verse 11:

"if any man speaketh, speaking as it were oracles of God." We read in the Old Testament concerning the men of God who spoke to Israel and the importance of the transmission of the message of which they were given. False prophets speaking falsely were sharply condemned for leading people astray. Although the office of prophet is no longer filled in these times, the importance of the transmission of the message of God-- the Gospel of the

Lord Jesus Christ-- is great indeed. Those of the body who speak must be diligent to confirm that what they say is truly the will of God, knowing that he is speaking as the oracles of God. It would be a most fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God if you had claimed to be speaking His truth but had actually led many astray. Let us give heed to ourselves and our teachings!

"is any man ministereth, ministering as of the strength which God supplieth." Jesus relates to us the following in John 13:12-16:

So when he had washed their feet, and taken his garments, and sat down again, he said unto them, "Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me, Teacher, and, Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye also should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, a servant is not greater than his lord; neither one that is sent greater than he that sent him.

Jesus commissioned His disciples to serve others. His life is an example of servitude; perhaps no Scripture emphasizes this as well as Philipians 2:5-9. If Christ completely emptied Himself and suffered humiliation on our behalf and thus served us, should we not ourselves serve others? And since God demonstrated amply through the Son that he who serves is greatest, does He not supply the strength needed for men to serve?

We live in a world where everyone not only desires but even expects to be served, and there seems to be little room for the servant. We must decry this trend by emptying ourselves and becoming lowly servants of God, doing whatever whenever we can to serve our God and to assist all men in discovering the truth about Jesus Christ. Service is the only way to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

Peter concludes this portion of his message to us with the following: that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, whose is the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Our ultimate aim in all that we do is to glorify God and the Lord Jesus Christ, for the power and the glory lie only with them. We have no power to

save, nor do we have the power to sacrifice ourselves for the sins of others. We have all sinned, and we have all required the sacrifice performed on our behalf.

As the end nears, let us be diligent in applying ourselves to the message of the Gospel, to love, be hospitable, to exercise our abilities and to minister to others. Let us do all of these things to glorify our God who has saved us from all unrighteousness. Let us strive for these things while there is still time to do so in order to be found as the profitable servant who has guarded the house of the Master well!

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Beware of Sinful Anger John Hagenbuch

“They angered Him also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses on account of them; because they rebelled against His Spirit, so that he spoke rashly with his lips.” - Psalm 106:32-33

The 106th Psalm actually records the historical accounts of the different rebellions and transgressions of the children of Israel as they were walking with God in the early part of their existence. In the verses above, the psalmist talks about a particular incident, saying: “They [the children of Israel] angered Him [God] also at the waters of strife, so that it went ill with Moses on account of them; because they rebelled against His Spirit, so that he spoke rashly with his lips.” Some translations (particularly the Old King James Version) says that they “provoked His Spirit, and he spoke rashly with his lips.” Because of the Hebrew word that has been translated as “rebellion,” or “provocation” here, there has been a disagreement with various scholars as to whether or not the rebellion that is spoken of here was a provocation against God’s Holy Spirit, or whether it was a provocation against Moses’ spirit.

But I believe when you read this in its context – if you keep in mind what the Psalmist is bringing to our attention as it relates to the event which is

also recorded in Numbers 20:1-13 – it is not difficult to understand that it was **MOSES** who spoke rashly with his lips!

If that is the correct understanding, then that tells us that Moses became angry with the Israelites to the point of sinning. The result of this rebellion was the fact that Moses spoke rashly. (See Numbers 20)

Anger has the potential of doing great harm when it's not controlled. Moses said things that he would normally not say. He may have been provoked by a faithless group of people, but he wound up speaking words that did **not** bring glory to God! Instead, his words wrongfully brought glory to himself and Aaron. When Moses spoke to the children of Israel on this occasion, he said: "Hear now, you rebels! Must **we** bring water for you out of this rock?" (Numbers 20:10; Emphasis Mine: JH). Because of their anger, Moses and Aaron both did things that they normally would not have done: they disobeyed God's directives: they struck the rock instead of directly speaking to it.

There is a great truth that we need to learn from this, and apply to our lives: not *all* anger is necessarily sinful.

In fact, there are times when a *righteous* anger is something that is appropriate, just as long as it doesn't give opportunity for Satan to lead us to sin. When you read the Psalms you will often find that there are psalms which will begin with the writer calling down God's wrath upon his enemies; those writings manifest a kind of anger. They are sometimes referred to as the "imprecatory psalms," and what they are simply doing is expressing the anger of the individual who is beseeching God to come down upon His enemies in His holy righteousness and judgment.

But in Psalm 4:4, the writer plainly says: "be angry, and do not sin. Meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still." Paul refers to this passage in the Ephesian letter, in which he also is dealing with the problem of anger, telling people how they may properly react to challenging situations of conflict.

Paul does say that there are times that are appropriate for a righteous kind of anger to be manifested... he writes, (quoting from Psalm 4, in verse 4): "Be angry, and do not sin" (Ephesians 4:26). But then he goes on to say...

“do not let the sun go down on your wrath, **nor give place to the devil**” (Emphasis Mine: JH).

There are times when righteous anger is the appropriate response to things that may be happening. But we need to be aware of the fact that, if anger raises up in us, and we allow it to turn into thoughts of rage... if that leads us into speaking words and doing things that are not in keeping with the will of God, we will actually be guilty of dishonoring God. And by dishonoring God, we obviously are not glorifying Him. Instead, we may actually be harming other people and hindering the godly influence we are suppose to have; that’s when anger can becomes sinful.

We have to be aware of this kind of sinful anger. It is inevitable that, when this kind of anger has the opportunity to take hold, even if it is just for short moment, (perhaps even an instantaneous moment), it will throw us off of our mental balance. And if we speak rashly with our lips, we will dishonor God.

What Manner Of Persons Ought We To Be?
2 Peter 1:5-11
Jay Taylor

The second epistle of Peter is filled with rich reminders throughout the letter. For example, in 2 Peter 1:5-11, Peter emphasizes certain truths that are essential to spiritual growth. He then continues in verses 12-15 telling them why they should remember such things. First, the apostle says that he thinks it is right as long as he is living to remind them of such things (2 Pet. 1:12). Second, he states that he will soon depart in death and he will no longer have the opportunity to remind them personally (2 Pet. 1:14). Third, Peter hopes that even after his death, his readers would be able to call these truths to remembrance (2 Pet. 1:15).

The battle-worn apostle closes his second epistle by reminding his readers what type of persons they ought to be. After discussing the destruction of all material things, Peter writes, “*Seeing that these things are thus all to be dissolved, **what manner of persons ought ye to be...***” (2 Pet. 3:11). This is an excellent question for every Christian to consider. Peter does not leave us guessing as to what manner of people we ought to be. He has already written that we have “*escaped from the corruption that is in the*

world” (2 Peter 1:4). He has established the fact that the child of God is “bringing in” various characteristics “along side” their faith (2 Pet. 1:5-7). Therefore, it should be no surprise when Peter states that we should “*give diligence that*” we “*may be found in peace, without spot and blameless in his sight*” (2 Pet. 3:14). This is the answer to the question “*what manner of persons ought ye to be?*” Let us take a closer look at each aspect of Peter’s answer.

People of Peace

God desires for His people to be people of peace. The thought here is that Christians are people who are in harmony with the will of God. When we submit and obey God the result will be peace with Him. The apostle Paul makes a contribution to our study when he states that Christ “*came and preached peace to you that were far off...*” (Eph. 2:17). We were once “*far off*” and separated from God because of our sins. We lived in harmony with what we thought was right in our own sight. Paul explains this as walking according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, and living in the lusts of our flesh (Eph. 2:2-3). Through Jesus Christ, however, we are brought nigh to God through His blood (Eph. 2:13). A mighty transformation takes place when the old man of sin is buried in baptism. The old man dies and a new man comes forth to walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:3-4). This “newness” of life is a result of people who now live in harmony with the will of God. The careful student will observe that this must be a constant process. We must live in harmony with the will of God in order to be pleasing unto Him. This is the type of person God would have us to be.

People Without Spot

God also desires that we are to be without spot. It is interesting that Peter characterized those who are opposed to Christ as having “*spots*” and “*blemishes*” (2 Pet. 2:13). They are individuals that have been stained due to their rebellion against Christ. In total contrast to these soiled teachers who “*walk after the flesh in the lust of defilement*” (2 Pet. 2:10) stands the Christ, whom Peter describes as “*without spot*” (1 Pet. 1:19). Jesus lived a perfect life of holiness and we are told to follow His example. In 1 Peter 2:21-23, Peter states, “*For hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow his steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.*” How can we live without spot?

The word of God instructs us to follow the example of Jesus and commit ourselves to God. We sin when we fail to follow the supreme example of Christ. When we do sin it is important that we repent and begin following His example again. Let us make the all important decision to forsake the ways of sin and live lives without spot.

People Without Blame In His Sight

What will be the result of living in harmony with the will of God and living spotless lives? Peter states that we will be “*blameless in his sight*” (2 Pet. 3:14). This is our goal. We want to be right in the sight of God. The good news is that the Bible reveals how we can accomplish this goal. We do not have to guess. We do not have to submit to human wisdom. We must simply listen to God’s word as He tells us what we must do to be blameless in His sight.

The lifestyle that God desires of us does not come easy for some. It takes diligence (2 Pet. 3:14; 1:10). As we are diligent in our holy and godly living the fruit that is produced is glory, honor, and praise toward God and Christ. The question of the hour is “*what manner of person are you?*”

Why Do You Believe? ***(Topical Page)*** ***By Jon W. Quinn***

When asked to defend your faith in God, are you able to offer good, sound reasons for believing as you do? None of this “I just feel it in my heart and I cannot explain it.” nonsense. That is no answer. I cannot think of a single instance where any disciple in the New Testament responded in such a way. In fact, they were told to equip themselves so they could do better than that. “...but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence...” (1 Pet. 3:15).

If we are willing (and we ought to be, shame on us if we are not) to put forth the effort to prepare ourselves, it will be of tremendous benefit. First, for our own conviction's stake. If I am fully and reasonably persuaded that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life it will help me to be faithful. It will also help me confidently convey this truth to others. If I am unable to defend my reason for believing to someone who asks, then, in their minds, I

will confirm their unbelief. I may not ever be able to answer every question to everyone's satisfaction, but I should be able to give a reasonable account for my faith.

Two Extremes

1. *Faith has nothing to do with reason.* One extreme view is that if something is by faith then it is not by reason because the two are somehow mutually exclusive. Where this view was once extreme, it is becoming more typical today. Some will point to Paul's statement in his first Corinthian letter: "For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe." (1 Corinthians 1:21). Paul was not contrasting preaching the gospel with using the intellect here. By the word "wisdom" he is talking about Greek philosophy. God did not choose to save the world through the message of the Greek philosophers, but through the gospel. Preaching the gospel calls upon people to use their intellect and reason (Romans 10:17; Isaiah 1:18; Mark 12:30).

2. *Intelligent people will always accept the truth.* The second extreme is to suppose that if you do adequately give answer, then the intellectual will accept it and become a Christian. That is not so either. Some suppose that if "smart" people believe something, then it must be so, and if they do not, then it must be wrong. Human prejudice is simply too strong and human pride many times too stubborn to allow a "smart fellow" to say, "I have been wrong." Especially when it comes to Jesus, accepting the truth about Him calls upon a person to make great changes and commitments. Many are simply unwilling to accept this. "For the word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God... but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block, and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men." (1 Corinthians 1:18; 23-25).

Some Questions and Answers

1. *What about a person who has never heard of Jesus?* Is he lost? While there are some things God has not revealed to us, there are some things He has. The Scriptures inform us that God is just (Deuteronomy 32:1-4) and that He loves all of us (John 3:16). We also see that no one is condemned because they have not heard of Jesus. Sinners are condemned because of

their sin. If one has never sinned, then he or she does not need a Savior. Sin is what causes a person to be lost (Romans 2:12-16; 3:9; 23).

Jesus is the only antidote for sin, which is a violation of God's law (1 John 3:4). Every human being has enough information about God to begin to search for Him (Psalm 19:1; Jeremiah 29:11-13; Romans 1:19,20). God will answer such searching by sending the message of His Son (Matthew 7:7).

2. *Is Jesus the only way to God?* There are sincere worshippers in other faiths. But neither sincerity nor the intensity of belief make a wrong idea right. The real issue is not how strongly a thing is believed, but is it correct? If Jesus is who he claimed to be, then He is the only way to God no matter how strongly some may feel otherwise. "Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me." (John 14:6).

3. *Why do innocents suffer?* If God is all good and all powerful, why is there suffering? If He can stop it, why doesn't He?

Job wondered the same thing. He asked the Lord about it and the Lord did not answer him. Instead, He assured Job of His love and care, reminded Job of His power, and told Job to trust Him (Job 38-42). God simply has not revealed all the information we may like to have, but again, He has told us some things about this. Each case of suffering is either directly or indirectly related to our living in a fallen world. Before the fall, there was no suffering or death, but a warning that there would be if man disobeyed God (Genesis 2:17). The consequences of the fall are briefly summed up in Genesis 3:14-19. Why doesn't God step in and stop it? He will! (2 Peter 3:8-13). But first, He wants to redeem more of us back from our own ruin.

4. *Do you really believe in Biblical miracles?* How could Jesus walk on water? How could the Red Sea be parted? How could the sun stand still? How could the earth be covered by flood?

The root of the problem is not how God did these things that we know to be contrary to natural order and law. We need not explain the physics involved in walking on water. That's not the point.

If God exists at all, then all these things are possible. If He is the Creator, then He can intervene in that which He has created. He who created

water, bodies, gravity, and so forth can do with them what he wants to do. The root question, then, is not "If miracles happened, then how?" but rather "Does God exist?"

Very briefly, some of the answers which suggest the existence of God include: Design in nature (Romans 1:20); Cause and effect (Genesis 1:1); and the fact that His Son came to our world for a visit (John 20:30,31).

If you believe in God, that is good. Far better to know why you believe as well.

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## **The Plan of Salvation** **By Jon W. Quinn**

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Plan #1

Announced by the apostles, inspired by the Holy Spirit, to new believers in Christ who asked what they must do:

"Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."
(ACTS 2:38)

Plan #2

On the back page of a tract, sinner were urged to pray this prayer to be saved. This prayer is not found in the Bible; nor were alien sinners commanded to pray for their forgiveness.

The Sinner's Prayer:

"O' Lord, I accept that I am a sinner and that Jesus died for my sins. I now accept Him into my heart as Lord and Savior asking for your mercy and forgiveness in His name. Amen."

The editors of Expository Files are happy with plan #1 and thankful to the God of all grace for it. We cannot recommend Plan #2 at all, but will change our minds when this prayer can be shown to us in the Bible.

Final Page

Early Morning Attitude Choices

Warren E. Berkley

It may be that the single most significant decision I can make on a day to day basis is, my choice of attitude. In those first few moments after you wake up in the morning, take an inventory of your frame of mind; your attitude. What is it?

“Well, I don’t feel good but I have to get up, get dressed and go to work. No telling what kind of problems I’ll face in traffic, then with all those stupid people at the office. Because of the incompetence of others, I’m up against three impossible deadlines. What in the world is there to be happy about?” *If you make the choice to think in terms like this during the first few moments in the morning, it will hinder your ability to act as a Christian the rest of the day.*

Consider this: “God has given me another day, how can I thank Him? How can I please Him more today? Let’s see, what can I do to help people who need Christ, or cheer up somebody? How can I use the problems and challenges of this day to grow, to learn, to glorify God?”

Immediately you see the difference. “Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.”

John Homer Miller said, “Your living is determined not so much by what life brings to you as by the attitude you bring to life.”