

Expository Files

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Front Page

Children of God By Faith By Jon W. Quinn

The Scriptures state the following: "For you are all sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." (Galatians 3:26-27).

These verses tell us that God's children are "in Christ." Jesus is the basis of our relationship to God as His children. Simply put, to be "outside of Christ" is to be outside of God's spiritual family. God's purpose to save sinners includes the essential ingredient of a Savior - and Jesus is that Savior - the only one (Acts 4:12). The Scriptures teach that redemption, forgiveness, hope and eternal life are all "in Christ."

Also, the passage says that those who are God's children by faith have "clothed" themselves with Christ. Faith is a living and active response to God. Faith expresses itself by responding in a positive and obedient way to God's word (Romans 10:17 and Acts 18:8).

Finally, this passage says we "are children of God by faith" when we are "baptized into Christ." Baptism is said here to be the act of faith by which God puts us "into Christ" where we are children of God. It is just this important to be baptized into Christ.

Galatians 3:26,27 again: "For you are all sons of God by faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ."

Our Adequacy is From God
"Such confidence we have through Christ"
2 Corinthians 3:4,5
By Jon W. Quinn

There was a movie several years ago about the early days of NASA and the men selected to be astronauts. The movie was called "The Right Stuff", the title referring to the qualities needed to be successful as astronauts. We, too, want to have "the right stuff" for our lives: for our loved ones; family and friends. For our jobs. For the various problems we face in life. Hopefully, most important of all, we want to have "the right stuff" in relation to our God and our souls and eternity. In fact, many of these other concerns in life relate to whether we have "the right stuff" with respect to God. Note the source of confidence for early disciples of Jesus, as expressed by Paul: "Such confidence we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God," (2 Corinthians 3:4,5).

We do not like failing. We do not like to feel insufficient. This is especially so concerning the things most important to us. People sometimes fail to act because they are afraid of failure and its consequences. We want to have "enough" of all the things in life that matter. The fear of failure is really the fear of insufficiency or inadequacy.

Thank God, the only time the Christian really needs to fear "failure" is when he or she fails to trust God for his or her adequacy - when he tries to "go it alone" and distance himself or herself from God. This may not be a complete falling away from God. It could be that a regular "church-goer" keeps God too distant from the daily routines of his life.

Notice Paul's attitude - especially remarkable in view of the hardships in his life -(2 Corinthians 1:8-11; 12:7-10; Philippians 4:12,13). In these passages we learn that our adequacy does not come from an absence of problems and obstacles we must face in life. But rather, and even in the midst of trials, our adequacy to survive and ultimately to conquer is from God. This principle applies to many important needs.

"I Need That!"

Financial "security" is important - we do not want to be destitute or to have to be dependent on others. Anxiety is both physically and spiritually unhealthy. In fact, it is sinful. God has promised to supply our needs - "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." (Matthew 6:33; see vss. 25-34).

This promise is a truism; something that is ordinarily the way things work. Righteous living means hard and honest work, and that is usually rewarded with adequate compensation. Of course, there are exceptions. A righteous person could be thrown into prison for his faith. He could be deprived of life's basic needs as a result of persecution. But under normal circumstances, righteous honesty promotes a good measure of financial security.

Most of us have much more than what is necessary. Even if we complain about bills and not all our plans turn out, we must admit that. Faith in God helps us to defeat anxiety in good times and bad. That is good for us in every way.

Health and a Long Life

God cares for His people - (Philippians 2:25-27; 3 John 2). Notice this truism: "Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth." (Ephesians 6:2-3). Again, there are exceptions. An obedient child can be involved in an accident. There are horribly bad parents in the world that actually hurt their children. But those are exceptions. Usually, it is the case that parents love their children, want what is best for them, and will help them make good decisions for themselves.

Faithful men and women have lost their health and lives for their faith. Even this does not take away our sense of adequacy from God! Why not? Because of the resurrection and hope of eternal life (Matthew 10:28-31; John 5:28-29; 11:25).

They Like Me!

Some are driven by a desire for fame, while others aspire to power and influence. Some much too much!

All of us, however, want to be respected by those who are important to us. None of us wants to be a "nobody" - we all feel sorry for the fellow whose funeral no one attends. Right away, a joyful fellowship with others in Christ as expressed in the local congregation ought to be an esteem builder. To be surrounded by caring brethren who value you is helpful. We should all desire and work to build one another up, and to be built up in Christ.

Those of faith are those to whom the Lord grants "favor" - (Genesis 39:2-4; Exodus 3:21). God will see to our "exaltation" - (James 4:10; 1 Peter 5:6,7). This will be the most important moment in history; as eternity begins. When the Lord chooses those who have lived by faith with whom to share His glory, all the esteem will belong to His chosen ones, from that point, and forevermore.

Adequate for Life and Death and Life Again!

There are so many facets of the adequacy with which the Lord grants His servants. There is strength to resist temptation. If one is concerned about being adequate to live the Christian life, be assured of God's help! There is nothing God wants us to do that He will not help us do. He is on our side - (John 10:28,29; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Jude 24).

We have the ability to serve in God's purpose for our lives. God will supply our wisdom - (James 1:5). Remember our text! God will supply our adequacy - (2 Corinthians 3:4,5. Cf. 1 Corinthians 3:7). God will bestow His grace upon us to do His work - (2 Corinthians 8:1,2; 9:6-11; Philippians 4:19).

We are adequate to make a response to God that will result in His saving us by grace. God does for us what we cannot do for ourselves - (Romans 5:6; 8:31,32). Through Christ, the Christian overcomes - (John 16:33; 1 John 5:4,5; Revelation 12:7-11; 19:11-16)

Conclusion

We will never have a genuine need that God cannot fill. Most of us will not really learn that God is all we need until we are faced with a situation in which God is all we have. We worship a God who is "able" - (Ephesians 3:20,21). We must be willing to trust Him!

The Power of Influence
Deuteronomy 13:6-18
By Ethan R. Longhenry

Perhaps one of the less emphasized matters of concern in the life of a Christian is the power of influence of other people. In many ways, we would like to think of ourselves as above the fray-- able to be around all kinds of negative influences while remaining pure. Power of influence is more of a problem for teenagers, perhaps, but not for adults.

Yet God knows better. God recognizes the power of influence, and how it can work either for evil or for good.

This is especially clear when it comes to His expectations for Israel. When God chose Israel and brought them near to the land that He was going to give them, He set forth how they should live. In His ideal, Israel would be a nation that served God. Its cities would be full of the people of the LORD, and serving Him and doing His will would be a given among the people.

Such was God's ideal, but God knew better. He recognized the power of influence. Hence, He made the following commandment:

"If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, that is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, 'Let us go and serve other gods,' which thou hast not known, thou, nor thy fathers; of the gods of the peoples that are round about you, nigh unto thee, or far off from thee, from the one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth; thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him: but thou shalt surely kill him; thy hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people. And thou shalt stone him to death with stones, because he hath sought to draw thee away from the LORD thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. And all Israel shall hear, and fear, and shall do not more any such wickedness as this is in the midst of thee" (Deuteronomy 13:6-11).

We moderns read such a commandment and our mouths begin to gape. How could God ever utter such words? Granted, we know that Israel should not serve other gods, but to execute even one's wife or children by your own hand because they would even suggest such a thing? How barbaric, we think!

If such is our mindset, what about the next command?

"If thou shalt hear tell concerning one of thy cities, which the LORD thy God giveth thee to dwell there, saying, 'Certain base fellows are gone out from the midst of thee, and have drawn away the inhabitants of their city, saying, "Let us go and serve other gods," which ye have not known; then shalt thou inquire, and make search, and ask diligently; and, behold, if it be truth, and the thing certain, that such abomination is wrought in the midst of thee, thou shalt surely smite the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, destroying it utterly, and all that is therein and the cattle thereof, with the edge of the sword. And thou shalt gather all the spoil of it into the midst of the street thereof, and shalt burn with fire the city, and all the spoil thereof every whit, unto the LORD thy God: and it shall be a heap for ever; it shall not be built again. And there shall cleave nought of the devoted thing to thy hand; that Jehovah may turn from the fierceness of his anger, and show thee mercy, and have compassion upon thee, and multiply thee, as he hath sworn unto thy fathers; when thou shalt hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep all his commandments which I command thee this day, to do that which is right in the eyes of the LORD thy God" (Deuteronomy 13:12-18).

To destroy a whole city, even the poor cattle, when some worthless fellows try to stir up trouble? Has God entirely gone off the deep end here?

It might seem that way until we consider the power of influence. Israel was a chosen people, one who would be distinct on their belief not just in the One True God but to serve Him without any graven images (cf. Exodus 20). They were surrounded by (and even lived in the midst of) people who served many different gods, and did so with graven images that they believed represented those gods. The power of their influence would be very great.

Temptations to sin are strong, and they are even stronger when those whom we love are involved. If one's own wife, or children, want to go and serve other gods, there's a strong pull for us to do so also. Likewise, when a few people start talking about doing some different things, others may go along with them.

God wants His people Israel to be holy, to be His people, no matter the cost. The temptation to turn away from Him must be obliterated, even if that temptation involves one's dearest family members. No city of Israel can tolerate even the hint of service to other gods, lest the idea become popular. As God establishes in Deuteronomy 13:6, His point is for Israel to fear Him, and not allow such wickedness to continue in the land.

The sad reality is not that Israel carried out these commands, but that they did no such thing. Within only a few generations of Moses saying these words, Israelites will be indignant with Gideon for destroying an altar for Baal and an Asherah, and desire to kill him for it (Judges 6:28-31)-- when God commanded the exact opposite! They all should be executed for serving other gods! Such indicates the power of influence. They entered a land full of idols and ended up serving them.

We are under a new covenant enacted under better promises with a better witness (Hebrews 8:6). We are not to overcome evil with evil (Romans 12:21), and strive to do good to all men, even those who are our enemies (Galatians 6:10, Luke 6:32-35). If there are Christians in our midst who go after the world and no longer serve God, we are to disassociate from them, but by no means kill them (cf. 1 Corinthians 5).

Nevertheless, God is still concerned about the power of influence.

Be not deceived: Evil companionships corrupt good morals (1 Corinthians 15:33).

We need to recognize that what was written in the Old Testament was provided for our learning (Romans 15:4), and there is much to learn from Deuteronomy 13. Temptations to sin will not just come from those outside, but could even come from within our own family. We can never equivocate God's will, even if our wives or our children would try to get us to do so.

We must be on guard for the temptation to worship "other gods" whom we have not known. We must recognize that we, like Israel before us, are a chosen people, and peculiar (1 Peter 2:9). While we are no longer in the midst of people who go about and serve gods represented by graven images, we live in no less of an idolatrous society. People all around us worship money, celebrity, America, individualism, naturalism, sports, sex, comfort, happiness, and all sorts of similar idols. People-- even within our own family, even those who might be supposed children of God-- may not understand our devotion to the

LORD of Hosts and why we strive to serve Him in all matters (Matthew 6:33, Colossians 3:17). Just like Israel of old, when God's people who believed in YHWH also served other gods because others around them were doing so, so many Christians today try to serve both God and these other idols, and they fail miserably (Matthew 6:24). But it's easier to justify their divided loyalties when others are doing the same.

We should not ascribe evil motives to such people, but it is part of the conscious and unconscious aspects of the power of influence. Focusing on the will of God as the greatest priority in life is not the easiest choice, and those who would do so must be continually on guard against the powers of influence of the "nations among us" and even unfortunately our own brethren at times.

Yet there can be a positive value in the power of influence-- the power of positive influence of godly people upon each other. God presupposed that Israel would be a holy nation, and that they would mutually build each other up in their particular faith, and any aberration from that faith would be duly punished so that all would fear. Christians as spiritual Israel ought to mutually build each other up (Hebrews 10:24-25), and encourage each other for good. A little leaven still leavens the whole lump (Galatians 5:9, 1 Corinthians 5:6), and God will have a holy and spotless church on the last day (Ephesians 5:23-28).

The power of influence is vast-- so vast that God was willing to have His people Israel kill even the most beloved people in their lives if they acted as tempters away from God's will. Whole cities could be leveled because of a few bad apples promoting false religion. We are not bound to follow their example, but the gravity of the concern should give us pause. Are we being tempted to serve "other gods whom we do not know" because of the influence of others around us, both of the world and perhaps even in our own family? Is the church brought down because some "worthless fellows" have brought in "other gods"? What can we do to withstand negative spheres of influence and to promote positive spheres of influence?

The power of influence is too strong for us to ignore, the teenager and the adult alike. Let us wholeheartedly serve God, and not serve any other!

1 Tim. 6:3-5

Attention Pulpit & Pew

Preachers need to spend a lot of time in first and second Timothy and Titus. The apostle Paul wrote to these two evangelists, instructing them about their work, their conduct and the content of their preaching. Every preacher today needs this knowledge.

But not just preachers! Everybody who listens to preaching needs to know what the Bible says about good preaching. It was never intended by God that preaching be just anything people want. To fulfill divine purposes, preaching must be as directed by God. Men in the pulpit need to read and study the letters to Timothy and Titus. People in the pew need the same information. Here's part of that information.

“If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, whose suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself,” (1 Tim. 6:3-5).

There Is One Message

Preachers deliver a message. Where they get their message is critical. There is a unified communication delivered in the New Testament, the gospel of Christ. When preachers deliver a message that isn't in the New Testament, they are guilty of advocating a different doctrine. Preachers and audiences need to operate on this conviction – **there is only one source for right preaching . . . the right book!**

I'm aware, this is not the modern view. Most people today seem to think, there are all kinds of denominations, doctrines and traditions. You can preach any you want; take your pick. Audiences should tolerate anything the preacher says. Tolerance is held higher than truth in most auditoriums. This is common thinking.

Paul teaches there is only one doctrine, and if anyone advocates a different doctrine, “from such withdraw yourself.” In the New Testament

there is a unified body of instruction – one message sealed by the death of Christ, revealed through the apostles and written in the New Testament. “If anyone advocates a different doctrine,” we should have nothing to do with that: don’t listen to it, don’t agree with it, don’t support it. Help others see the folly of it.

This Singular Doctrine (New Testament) Is Godly

Observe the expression, “the doctrine which is according to godliness.” The NIV has it: “If anyone teaches false doctrines and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching.” Mark that well. “Godly Teaching.”

You don’t want ungodly teaching do you? Do you want to listen to preaching that is humanistic, unscriptural and lends support to ungodliness?

If God gives instruction, as we participate in learning and using that instruction, we can become godly people, thanks to Jesus Christ. But if the instruction we learn and use is not from the New Testament, it cannot nurture godliness.

Godly people are godly because they have listened to the gospel of Christ and obeyed Him to be forgiven of ungodliness. Godly people are godly because after baptism, they continue to learn and use what the New Testament teaches. And they reject everything else.

If you want to be like God, listen to what He said. And “God, who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son...,” (Heb. 1:1,2a).

What About The Men Who “Teach Otherwise?”

They are “...proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, whose suppose that godliness is a means of gain...”

These assessments are not complimentary. **Pride is combined with ignorance, immaturity and greed.** At a minimum, it will not contribute to your spiritual welfare to listen to this kind of preacher. First, he is not giving you God’s message. Second, by listening to him you expose yourself to the deadly spiritual disease he has voluntarily contracted!

The NIV says these kind of preachers have an “unhealthy interests in controversy.” There is a healthy interests in controversy (see 1 Tim. 1:3, 18-20; 2 Tim. 2:1-26, etc.). But these men who do not deliver “the words of our Lord Jesus Christ,” have a morbid, immature, party spirit and corrupt militance that unnecessarily divides and agitates. Gordon Fee calls this: “sickly craving to engage in controversy and carry on words battles” with “devastating effects,” (p.#142, New International Biblical Commentary, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus – by Gordon Fee.)

And these false teachers have their eye on their own gain. They “suppose that godliness is a means of gain,” that is, **inordinate, personal gain.**

When it is clear that a preacher is guilty of what Paul describes here, there is only one thing to do: “withdraw yourself!”

Conclusion

This passage needs the attention of both pulpit and pew. Men who occupy the pulpit must be men devoted to the truth of the New Testament: “the words of our Lord Jesus Christ,” which is “the doctrine which is according to godliness.” People in the pew should have that same commitment.

Relevant Quotation

What about the role of the preacher of God's Word?

Preachers are not called to preach what's popular according to the polls . . . People already know all that. What life does that bring? We're not called to preach merely moral exhortations or history lessons or social commentaries . . . We are called to preach the Word of God to the church of God and to everyone in His creation. This is how God brings life. Each person . . . is flawed and has faults and has sinned against God. And the terrible thing about our fallen natures is that we are greedy for ways to justify our sins against God. Every single one of us wants to know how we can defend ourselves from God's charges. Therefore we are in desperate need to hear God's Word brought honestly to us, so that we don't just hear what we want to hear but rather what God has actually said.

All of this is important . . . because God's Holy Spirit creates His people by His Word.

This is why Paul told Timothy to "form a committee." Right? Of course not! . . . "Take a survey"? No! . . . "Spend yourself in visiting"? No! . . . "Read a book"? No! Paul never told young Timothy to do any of those things.

Paul told Timothy, straight and clear, to "Preach the Word" (2 Tim. 4:2). This is the great

imperative. This is why the apostles earlier had determined that, even though there were problems with the equitable distribution of financial aid in Jerusalem, the church would just have to find others to solve their problems, because, "We . . . will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the Word" (Acts 6:4). Why this priority? Because this Word is "the word of life" (Phil. 2:16). That is the great task of the preacher: to "hold out the word of life" to people who need it for their souls.

- *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* (Crossway, 2000, p. 38-39.)

“And He Gave Some To Be ...”

Jim McDonald

“... *apostles; and some prophets, and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers* ...” (Eph. 4:11).

In this verse and the two which follow, the apostle tells of gifts which Christ gave when he “*led captivity captive.*” As verse twelve reveals, these gifts were for “*the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministry, unto the building up of the body of Christ.*” Some of these gifts were temporary; others of them were designed to be permanent.

“*He gave some ... apostles.*” Likely, the first thing which comes to mind when the word “*apostle*” appears is of the twelve whom Jesus chose and such is its significance here. The word “*apostle*” means “*one sent*” and is found in a broader sense than just the twelve in the Word. Jesus is the “*apostle and high priest of our confession*” (Heb. 3:1). Because Paul and Barnabas were sent out on a preaching tour by the church in Antioch of Syria, they were called “*apostles*” (Acts 14:14). The twelve were chosen by Christ and sent out to “*teach all nations*” (Mt. 28:13-20). Because to be an apostle required that one have accompanied “*with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John, unto the day that he was received up ...*” there are no apostles in that sense today, for there are none alive who could so qualify (Acts 1:21f). These men received the Holy Spirit to guide them into all truth, who helped them to confirm, by signs and wonders, the message they preached.

“He gave some to be prophets.” The word *“prophet”* means to “bubble up, like a fountain” and always includes the thought of inspiration. Prophets played a significant role in the history of Israel and Judah and had it not been for their efforts, it would have been extremely unlikely that the remnant of faithful would have survived. Old Testament prophets did point to the future, both of their nation and then of the coming Messiah, but they also sounded constant warnings to Israel not to depart from the old paths, being constant in their work by “rising up early and late.” Prophets in the New Testament filled a subordinate role to the apostles and their work was eclipsed by the Apostles, yet did function and occasionally they appear, performing their tasks. Such a one was Agabus, who told of a great dearth which would come upon Judaeen churches, as well as to spell out, in a very graphic way, the imminent imprisonment of Paul (Acts 11:27f; 21:10f). Luke mentions *“prophets and teachers”* in Antioch and Paul spoke of prophets in the Corinthian church (Acts 13:1f; 1 Cor. 14).

Apostles and prophets were a part of the first century church but their work was temporary and ended during that century or shortly after the turn of that century, while the latter three *“gifts;”* evangelists, pastors and teachers might have been empowered in their work by spiritual gifts conferred by the apostles, need for their work continues to the present day. On the other hand, the continuing influence of the apostles and prophets continue through the ages through their works which survive them, for, like Abel, they *“being dead yet speaketh”* (Heb. 11:4). The rich man, who begged that Lazarus might go back and warn his brethren not to come to *“this awful place”* was told, *“they have Moses and the prophets. Let them hear them”* (Lk. 16:29). We likewise have the apostles and prophets, and we ought to hear them. Peter wrote the things he did for that very purpose (2 Pet. 1:15).

On the other hand, the living church needs the benefit of the labors of evangelists, pastors and teachers. Who is there of God’s people today who cannot say, “I have been benefited by the labors of evangelists, pastors and teachers?”

From The Gospel Teacher

Lufkin, Tx. 6-1-08

Qualities Needed in the Local Church
Topical Page
By Ed Barnes

The Apostle Paul established more churches than any other apostle or first century evangelist. He was chosen to write more New Testament books than any other inspired writer. More about Paul's life is revealed on the pages of holy writ than any person other than our Lord. He is known even today as the all time most successful champion of the faith. Yet, he was constantly under pressure from false teachers and mis-guided brethren to defend his authority as an apostle. Most of the books which bear his name contain sections in which he speaks "foolishly" (2 Cor 11:16) i.e. defending his authority as an apostle of Christ and his right to instruct churches (a position and duty for which he was ironically rejected and persecuted).

First Thessalonians, possibly the first book written by Paul, contains one of these "foolish" self-defense sections. Chapter two and verse one points out that Paul's work in Thessalonica had been declared a failure (in vain) by some and Paul is forced to respond to the unfair and false criticism. Within the course of his response the apostle points out not only that much had been accomplished for the cause of Christ in Thessalonica, but the successful work was carried out in such a way that revealed great teaching and leadership qualities on the part of Paul. Of course he was not bragging on himself as a great leader, but his innocent recollection of his behavior among them reveals such qualities. It is the purpose of this article to point out these qualities as worthy of our emulation as we seek to influence others for Christ within the context of the local church and do our part to help that work grow.

Ready to Sacrifice

There are other more well known passages which cite leadership qualities that are needed in the Lord's church, such as the list of qualifications given to elders and deacons in 1 Timothy and Titus, but here we look not to a list but to an example. Paul's example was one of sacrifice. As he states in 2 Cor 12:15, he was willing to "spend and be spent" for the sake of those whom he desired to be saved.

Before coming to Thessalonica, Paul had suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, but that was not enough to send him packing. He then "dared" to preach the same mis-aligned gospel in Thessalonica. He showed nothing less than great bravery in taking the gospel to others. How much opposition (either from within ourselves, or without) are we willing to overcome and endure to

get the gospel message out to the throngs of people surrounding us? If we expect to grow as a group of the Lord's people, we must be willing to sacrifice ourselves, spend and be spent, and work our way through challenges and obstacles. Such would be in keeping with the example of Paul.

Approved

Paul was personally chosen and approved by God as an apostle (Gal. 1:15,16). An obvious reason for that approval by God was Paul's zeal and dedication to personal purity. He was striving to please God who looks on the heart (Rom. 8:27). There was no "error", "impurity" or "deceit" on Paul's part as he delivered the gospel in Thessalonica. Later in verse 10 Paul writes, "You are our witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous, and blameless we were among you who believed." Had there been dishonesty or deceit on Paul's part and the accusations against his motives been accurate, he would have accomplished nothing good for the cause of Christ.

We also must first be pure (James 3:17) if we expect God to approve our ministry. To be intrusted with the gospel is a sacred honor. We must strive to uphold it with purity both in word and example. Let there be no sin named among us (1Cor.5:1) that would cause a new convert to stumble or a prospective convert to turn away in disgust. Let there be no one among us who uses flattery, greed, hypocrisy, or a men-pleasing spirit as we seek to bring others to Christ and carry on the work of the church.

Able to Care

As an apostle, Paul could rightly have expected and pressed the saints in Thessalonica for more financial support. He insisted that he had this right (foolish talk again!), but usually refused to take advantage of it (1 Cor 9:3-14; 2 Cor 11:7-11). On the contrary, he was to them as a mother - gentle and caring. Among those of the church who were weak, Paul emphasized his capacity for care rather than authority or dominance. The nursing mother referred to in this context may not have been the natural mother, but possibly a surrogate mother, who nonetheless grew close to the children in her care. She often formed a bond with the children which was closer than that of the biological mother. Regardless, Paul uses terms of endearment such as gentle, nursing, cherishes, affectionately longing for you, well pleased to impart to you, dear to

us, and devoutly in describing his attitude and actions toward those saints at Thessalonica.

Unafraid of Work

Apparently Paul had to remind the saints in Thessalonica of how he had laboriously preached the gospel among them. Maybe this remembrance would prove to them that his motives were pure. He brings to their attention the long hours of extreme toil and hardship, working night and day, supporting himself through secular work (along with additional help from the church in Philippi - Phil.4:16) as he preached and sought to establish them spiritually. He later points out that he worked in such a manner due to the fact that they needed to see an example of personal sacrifice (2 Thess 3:7-10). Are we willing to work as hard for the growth of the church? When we can truthfully say that we are working as hard in the Lord's church as Paul did in Thessalonica, then, and only then, will we see the church grow.

Eager to Encourage

Earlier Paul compared his service in their presence to that of a mother who loves and cares for her children. He now reminds the Christians at Thessalonica that he also behaved toward them as a concerned father. He uses such words as encouraged, comforted, and charged (implored) as he sought to guide them into lives worthy of the God who had called them into his kingdom and glory. Is this not a great sermon for those of us who have earthly children in our homes, as well as to those of us who seek to reach others with the gospel? Are we as concerned about the welfare and success of our fellow Christians as we are of our own children? How eager are we to edify brethren and convert sinners?

There is indeed a great need for such qualities among the members of the Lord's church, not just in elders and influential evangelists, but in all Christians who love to save the lost and encourage the saved. If we are willing to add to our lives the qualities that Paul exemplified in reaching, teaching and strengthening the Thessalonians with the truth, we are likely to see growth in the church as surely as they did in Thessalonica!

Plan of Salvation

By Jon W. Quinn

Plan #1

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

Acts 2:36-38

"Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ -- this Jesus whom you crucified." Now when they heard this, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?" Peter said to them, "Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

(Acts 2:36-38).

Plan #2

On the back page of a tract, sinners 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

Heb. 1:1-4

Do You Know Him?

The essence of the pure religion of the New Testament is the person and work of Jesus Christ. He is at the center of everything. Any honest reading and study of the New Testament will see this quickly, and every personal effort to embrace the message will keep Christ centered in heart and life.

The New Testament is not just instruction for wise living, though it is. It is more than just accurate history, though it is. It was written and circulated for all men to learn of Him, believe in Him and act on that belief.

Consider, even if the alien sinner should cease all practice of sin and do everything the New Testament teaches, without being pardoned by God through the blood of Christ, there would be no eternal benefit. Thus, only redeemed people can effectively learn and apply instruction for good living. And redemption is granted by the blood of Christ, individually received when faith in Him is activated. It is essential to know Him!

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs. Heb. 1:1-4, ESV

Warren E. Berkley