

DECEITFUL SERVICE

Scripture Reading: Romans 16:17, 18

Often we hear from those who do not want to obey God's Word, "Doctrine isn't important; we just need to love one another." But God says otherwise, "*Mark* them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine ye have learned and *avoid* them." Those who oppose this truth apparently think they know more than God and consider obedience to this verse unloving. Make no mistake; some are to be *marked* and *avoided*.

The question is sometimes asked, "Why do you have to mention people by name? Can't you just preach truth and forget about others?" Such a question must be responded to with another question. "How can you mark someone unless you know who he is?" Paul certainly marked people who endangered the saints (e.g. Hymenaeus, Philetus, Alexander, etc.). Can you imagine Paul saying, "Brother Hymenaeus has some serious doctrinal problems, but he is a dear brother and loves the Lord; so I am asking all the brethren to invite him in for a week of meetings. Perhaps we can encourage him in the truth"? No! Paul would say, "Have no company with him, that he may be ashamed."

Some have emphasized that Satan doesn't have horns and a forked tail. The point is that he is a beautiful, enticing creature; even though he is a hateful, ruinous brute. So also is deceitful service. It comes not with rough talk and coarse behavior, but with "good words and fair speeches." Deceitful service divides, offends and deceives. Let's be obedient to God's Word.

Jon Bekemeyer

Notes:

THE KINGDOM CHURCH AND THE CHURCH THE BODY OF CHRIST

Scripture Reading: Acts 2:42-47, Colossians 1:18-25

During the earthly ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, He was occupied with the building of His church—the Jewish church which anticipated the future kingdom of heaven. He said to the Apostle, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock [which can **only** be the Lord Himself] I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18). Those who contend that Christ was speaking of the Church which is His Body are overlooking the fact that Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, had not even appeared on the scene at that time. Paul established the Church the Body of Christ on the basis of the mystery which was first and exclusively revealed to him by the heavenly-seated Lord Jesus Christ. This mystery (secret) had "from the beginning of the world [past] been hid in God"—not in Scripture, but **in God** (Ephesians 3:9).

The church of which Christ spoke to Peter was the center of activity at Pentecost. This church "continued stedfastly in the **apostles' doctrine**" (Acts 2:42). Note that they were continuing in an established doctrine in an established church—not the doctrine of grace which was introduced years later by the apostle Paul. The Lord added to this Acts 2 church daily (verse 47), well before Paul is even saved.

Paul claims establishment of the Body of Christ "according to **my gospel**...according to the revelation of the mystery" (Romans 16:25).

Robert E. Hanna

Notes:

THE TWELVE APOSTLES OF ISRAEL & THE ONE APOSTLE OF THE GENTILES

Scripture Reading: Matthew 10:2-6, Romans 11:13

The typical number relative to Israel is twelve. Jacob (whose name God changed to Israel) had twelve sons. They formed the twelve tribes. Jesus Christ appointed twelve apostles, to whom Jesus declared, "Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon **twelve thrones**, judging the **twelve tribes** of Israel" (Matthew 19:28). Twelve from each of the twelve tribes were sealed against the day of God's wrath. The Apostle John wrote in the Book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ, "I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel" (Revelation 7:4). (Twelve times twelve equals one hundred forty-four thousand.)

The number relative to the Body of Christ is **one**. God appointed **one** apostle (Paul). The theme of the church the Body of Christ is unity (oneness). Paul urges its members to "Keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is **one** body, and **one** Spirit, even as ye are called in **one** hope of your calling; **one** Lord, **one** faith, **one** baptism, **one** God and Father of all, and in you all" (Ephesians 4:3-6). He further encourages us to "stand fast in **one** Spirit, with **one** mind striving together for the faith of the gospel" (Philippians 1:27).

REH

Notes:

THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN FOR ISRAEL & THE HEAVENLIES FOR CHRIST'S BODY

Scripture Reading: II Samuel 7:10-13, II Corinthians 5:1-8

Though the kingdom which is promised by God to the nation Israel is **of heaven**, it is to be established on the earth. It will be occupied by citizens of flesh and blood with natural bodies. Physical activity will take place. "But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Micah 4:1-2). "Moreover I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as beforetime" (II Samuel 7:10).

We who are saved into the Body of Christ, however, are assured of heaven itself as our eventual destination. "For we know that if our earthly house of God, an house not made with hands, **eternal in the heavens...**" (II Corinthians 5:1). "But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even-when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ...and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together **in heavenly Places** in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:4-6).

REH

Notes:

GRACE IN A DISPENSATION & THE DISPENSATION OF GRACE

Scripture Reading: Psalms 84:11, Ephesians 2:8-9

There was never a time when God did not exercise grace in dealing with His people. "For the Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly" (Psalms 84:11). God has bestowed His grace in many specific instances and to accomplish certain goals in accordance with His plan and purpose. "And now for a little space, grace hath been shewed from the Lord our God, to leave us a remnant to escape, and to give us a nail (a sure abode) in His holy place, that our God may lighten our eyes, and give us a little reviving in our bondage" (Ezra 9:8). "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace" (Zechariah 12:10).

Today, we live in the **dispensation of grace**. Although salvation was always by grace through faith, there was in past dispensations an additional ingredient: Certain works were required in order to prove genuine and sincere faith. Note this statement by Jesus Christ as he dispatched His apostles: "He that believeth **and is baptized** shall be saved." How different is the salvation formula today! "For by grace are ye saved **through faith**; and that not of yourselves: **it is the gift of God**; NOT OF WORKS, lest any man should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9). "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us" (Titus 3:5).

REH

Notes:

THANKS TO GOD THROUGH CHRIST

Scripture Reading: Colossians 3:17

Were it not the Word of God, we might consider the following statement to be extreme and impossible: "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him" (Colossians 3:17). But far from being extreme and impossible, this admonition is in fact the key to a victorious life in the Lord's service.

Actually, everything about the Christian life is impossible. So what should we do? Should we accept defeat and live our lives in conformity to the world? No, all admonitions can be successfully heeded by recognizing a very basic truth. This truth is found in Colossians 1:27, a truth very basic to the mystery: "Christ in you the hope of glory." Why shouldn't we do the impossible? The Lord Jesus Christ is in us!

The circumstances of life are often cruel and harsh. Life is filled with pain, heartaches and bitter disappointments; yet, we are told to give thanks to God. Another verse says that we are to give thanks in *everything* (1 Thessalonians 5:18). How can this be? The answer is right in our text: "*by Him*." The word "by" is used in the sense of instrumentality. We give thanks *through the means of* the Lord Jesus Christ.

This leaves us with a choice. Either we can look at life through human perspective and feel sorry for ourselves, or we can let the Word of Christ dwell in us richly (Colossians 3:16) and give glory to the Lord. The admonition to rejoice in the Lord is worth repeating often because it is the only "safe" way to live (Philippians 4:4).

Jon D. Bekemeyer

Notes:

UNTO THE PRAISE OF HIS GLORY

Scripture Reading: Ephesians 1:14

God the Holy Spirit has much to do with the Body of Christ and the members in particular. It is God the Holy Spirit who quickens and regenerates us. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost" (Titus 3:5).

It is God the Holy Spirit that seals us (Ephesians 1:13). This sealing is permanent. When the Spirit of God takes up His abode in a believer, He never leaves him in life or in death, until presented faultless in the presence of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. The seal of the Holy Spirit is accomplished at salvation.

God the Holy Spirit is also the earnest of our inheritance. When I was a boy, my mother would let me lick the mixing bowl and spoon. This was not the cake but merely a taste of good things to come. We all know what earnest money represents. It is a little down payment which assures we will pay more. God has "blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3); "made us accepted in the beloved" (Ephesians 1:6); given us "redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace" (Ephesians 1:7); and given us His Spirit; but there is so much more to come. That is just a little down payment, a taste of good things to come. "That in the ages to come He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:7). All of this is to the praise of His glory. Think of it! Every saint of God, every redeemed one, every sinner saved by grace, will add to the glory and the satisfaction of God throughout eternity!

John N. Baker

Notes:

THANKS FOR VICTORY

Scripture Reading: I Corinthians 15:57

We are often very hypocritical in our giving of thanks. We thank God for a meal, then complain about the food. We thank God for His every supply of our needs, then worry about our needs. We can do the same as we read I Corinthians 15:57. We can thank God for giving us the victory, then not appropriate this victory in our daily life.

The context has reference to death. Looking forward to the glorious future, we can realize that death is to be swallowed up in victory at the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. We can already claim by faith the conquest over it and exclaim, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." The resurrection is a triumphant answer to the sting of death. It is sin which gives, not only occasion, but its sting to death; and the law, however righteous, could work no deliverance for the guilty. God's matchless grace, not the law, is the strength of holiness. (See Romans 6:14.)

Therefore, the apostle Paul breaks forth with thanksgiving as he sees God giving us the victory so completely through our Lord Jesus Christ. His resurrection is our pledge, the witness of our salvation, our pattern of deliverance, and our blessed hope in the midst of our labors, trials and suffering for Christ. "Therefore"—because these things are true—"my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (I Corinthians 15:58). So let us not be hypocritical; and let us appropriate the victory we have in the Lord Jesus Christ and heed the admonition to be steadfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

JNB

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