

Expository Files



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The Front Page

Some Thoughts on Unity By Jon W. Quinn

The foundation, or basis of unity in Christ is Divine truth; the revealed Word.

John 17:17-21

17 "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth.

18 "As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.

19 "For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.

20 "I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word;

21 that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.

This is the word of truth delivered by the Holy Spirit as promised by Jesus.

John 16:13

13 "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.

This fits with what Paul is describing in the unit text of Ephesians 4:1-16. Note especially verse 15:

Eph 4:15

15 but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ,

In and through this body of revealed truth, the New Testament Scriptures, we will achieve the kind of unity for which Jesus prayed. He did not pray for unity based on something else (Democratic vote; compromise).

“Love” is not the basis of unity, rather the Word is. But love is one of the attitudes with which we teach and apply the truth, and the Word commands it, along with other godly attitudes.

Eph 4:2-3

2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love,

3 being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

There are seven areas of Divine truth that Paul lists as the basis for preserving the unity of the Spirit.

Eph 4:4-6

4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling;

5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism,

6 one God and Father of all who is over all and through all and in all.

There is only one of each of these foundational basis' for unity. Also, we are talking not just being “one” in quantity but also in quality – i.e. it is not enough to be of one faith, we must be one in “the faith”. It is not enough to worship one God, but must worship the true and living God.

Unity among Christians would include accepting as one standard for all the truth as revealed and confirmed by the Spirit through the apostles and prophets. Note that we are not to accept “every spirit” or “teaching” but only that given through the apostles and prophets.

1 John 4:1-6

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God;

3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.

4 You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.

5 They are from the world; therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them.

6 We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

When all submit to the Lord's authority, there can be no division. There will be unity. When unity does not exist, someone is not truly submitting to the lordship of Jesus.

Are You Helping The Son Build His Temple?
(1 Chronicles 22)
By Jon W. Quinn

It was something that David had wanted to do so very much. But sometimes things just do not work out exactly the way we want them to. David had the spiritual strength to do his best for the Lord even when things did not go his way. It takes spiritual courage to accept disappointment and to remain committed to the Lord's cause. David was not perfect, but he was loyal to God. When he failed to be what he ought to be, he diligently searched for his way back to the Lord God of Israel.

The thing that David had especially wanted to do was to build the temple at Jerusalem. Before he died, he wanted to build a magnificent structure where Jehovah would be praised in accordance with the teachings of the Law. He had such vision for the structure!

But the Lord told David that it would be his son Solomon, and not David, who would build the temple. The reason? "You have shed much blood, and have waged great wars; you shall not build a house to My name, because you have shed so much blood on the earth before Me." (1 Chronicles 22:8). Through no fault of his own but a simple matter of timing, David had been a man of war. There were enemies on every side during his reign which forced him to do battle to secure a homeland for God's people. It was not as a punishment that God forbade David to build the temple, but rather because of association. It was important that the temple not be associated with the brutality of war. It was to foreshadow a spiritual temple of peace and reconciliation; the church of Christ.

Preparation for the Son

"And David said, 'My son, Solomon, is young and inexperienced, and the house that is to be built for the Lord shall be exceedingly magnificent, famous and glorious throughout all lands. Therefore, I will make preparation

for it.' Therefore, David made ample preparations before his death.” (1 Chronicles 22:5).

David appointed workers and gathered materials (vss 1-4; 14-16). He wanted his son to be successful in this awesome task. But it would be Solomon who would be directly responsible for the building. As David promises, “Then you shall prosper, if you are careful to observe the statutes and the ordinances which the Lord commanded Moses concerning Israel. Be strong and courageous, do not fear or be dismayed.” (1 Chronicles 22:13).

Though there are differences, of course, there are also many similarities between the building of the physical temple by David's son Solomon and the building of the spiritual temple by Jesus, the Son of God. Jesus said that “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work” and “For I came down out of heaven not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.” (John 4:34; 6:38). Jesus had been sent to this world on a mission. Even as David had encouraged his son to put the will of God first in his life, so Jesus put the will of the Father first in His life. He trusted the Father in everything. Like the son of David and the Son of God; so let the sons and daughters of God be today; let us put our trust in the Father's care; His plans and His providence as we put His will first in our lives.

The Son Given Control

“Now, my son, the Lord be with you that you may be successful, and build the house of the Lord your God, just as He has spoken concerning you. Only the Lord give you discretion and understanding and give you charge over Israel, so that you may keep the Law of the Lord your God.” (1 Chronicles 22:11,12).

Solomon was placed in charge of the task of building the temple. Success depended upon the Lord being with him, and as always, discretion and understanding means having the wisdom to “keep the Law of the Lord your God.” The wise and acceptable way to serve God is to apply His law to our lives and allow His word to be our authority. Solomon was a wise man, but not so “wise” that he took it upon himself to build the temple according to his plan and not God's.

Likewise, Jesus has built the spiritual temple, the church, according to God's eternal plan (Ephesians 3:10,11). In describing this spiritual temple

the New Testament says that disciples “having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.” (Ephesians 2:20-22).

Jesus has promised to build His church and was granted authority to do so from the Father (Matthew 16:16-18; 28:18-20). As David commanded the builders in Israel to listen to his son, so also the Father commands us concerning His Son Jesus, “This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!” (Matthew 17:5b).

Building Materials for the Son to Use

“Of the gold, the silver and the bronze and the iron, there is no limit. Arise and work, and may the Lord be with you.” (1 Chronicles 22:16).

In addition to the above mentioned materials, there was also large cut stones (verse 2) and large quantities of cedar logs (verse 3). Specific instructions regarding how the temple was to be assembled were given. After David's death, Solomon would begin the construction of the temple on Mount Moriah at Jerusalem. The account of this building process is given in 2 Chronicles 2-5 and the dedication of the temple is given in chapter 6.

Of course, the temple that Jesus built is not made with silver and gold, iron, stone and wood. The Scriptures inform us that Christians are the “stones” out of which the spiritual temple of God is constructed. “You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 2:5). The church of God at Corinth was told, “Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” (1 Corinthians 3:16).

The important point of this is to realize that it is the people of Christ that form God's spiritual temple today; people in whom God dwells by faith. “Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.” (1 Corinthians 6:19,20).

Will You Help the Son Build the Temple?

“David also commanded all the leaders of Israel to help his son Solomon, saying, “...Now set your heart and your soul to seek the LORD your God; arise, therefore, and build the sanctuary of the LORD.” (1 Chronicles 22:17-19).

Of course those loyal to God, to David and Solomon, would lend their strength to the task at hand of building Jehovah's house. And, as history and the Scriptures record, build it they did. Though subsequently destroyed, a wall of the temple which had been underground survived and still stands today, now known as “The Wailing Wall”.

And this brings us to our responsibility to the Father and the Son with reference to the spiritual temple. Jesus said, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore, beseech the Lord of harvest to send out workers into His harvest.” (Matthew 9:37,38). Will you help the Lord gather His harvest? Will you help the Son build His house? “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.” (1 Corinthians 1:18). Will you help the Son build His house? “Therefore those who had been scattered went about preaching the word.” (Acts 8:4). Will you help the Son build His house? “For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith toward God has gone forth...” (1 Thessalonians 1:8). Will you help the Son build His house? What will the Father say if you say “no”?

Wisdom That Is From Above
(James 3:17,18)
By Carey Dillinger

Two constant demands of a child of God are a positive attitude and appropriate action. However, it is an application of “wisdom from above” that drives these demands. Note James 3:13: Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. “Meekness of wisdom” calls for the proper attitude towards power (meekness) accompanied by the proper attitude towards knowledge (wisdom). The truly wise Christian will demonstrate both of these characteristics as they go about their daily lives.

Wisdom from above is in direct contrast with wisdom that proceeds from an envious and self-seeking heart (James 3:14,15).

The wrong kind of wisdom is earthly, sensual, and devilish. Earthly in that it measures its successes in worldly terms and its aims are worldly aims; sensual in that its source is our animal instinct not our spiritual man; and devilish in that its source is Satan and is designed to produce results that he would delight in.

The wrong kind of wisdom is arrogant and designed to create factions and produce jealousy (James 3:16). Instead of bringing people together wrong wisdom drives them apart; instead of producing peace it produces strife; and it is particularly designed by Satan to agitate personal relationships.

The wrong kind of wisdom is exemplified in numerous Bible accounts such as:

The Tower of Babel (Gen. 11:1-9).

Abraham's decision to go to Egypt (Gen. 12:10-20).

King Saul's decision to put his armor on the young David (1 Sam. 17:38ff).

The disciples thought the crowd should be dismissed to find their own food (Mt. 14:15).

The centurion (under the helmsman's advice) determining to leave port against Paul's warning (Acts 27:9-11).

Wisdom from above has its origins with God, not man. Its character is heavenly and not earthly. It is God's gift and must be received from Him.

Note James 1:17: Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning. For Solomon's view on wisdom from above see Prov. 2:1-6. "Above" is where Christians are always looking. Consider:

- Their citizenship is there (Phil 3:20).
- Their Father is there (Mt. 6:9).
- Their treasures are laid up there (Mt. 6:19ff).
- They are reborn to gain entrance there (Jn. 3:1-7).
- Their home and hope are there (Jn. 14:1-6)
- Their affections and attention are aimed there (Col. 3:1-4).

There is no real surprise that true Christians seek their wisdom from above and not from man.

What is the Christian's Wisdom?

- Jesus Christ is our wisdom (1 Cor. 1:24, 30) ... Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God... In Him "are hid all treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (Col. 2:3)
- The Word of God is our wisdom (Read: Deut. 4:4-6) It is only from the scriptures that we can become "wise unto salvation." (2 Tim. 3:15)
- This wisdom can be accentuated through believing prayer. (James 1:5) If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

Characteristics of "wisdom that is from above" (James 3:17,18)

Pure – from a Greek word meaning: pure enough to approach the gods. Originally meaning ritually pure, it came to mean morally pure. This is the purity that Paul feared the Corinthians would lose: "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve in his craftiness, your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity and the purity that is toward Christ." (2 Cor. 11:3 ASV) And James feared lack of this purity would lead his readers to spiritual adultery "Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God." (James 4:4) While much worldly wisdom would obviously not want to be scrutinized by God, true wisdom has had its concealed motives excised and is prepared to be seen by God.

Peaceable – in a right relationship with God and man. True wisdom will always bring men closer to one another and to God at the same time. When peace rules (arbitrates) in our lives tranquility will prevail and contentment will be in power. (Col. 3:15: "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful."). This peaceable attitude is in contrast to:

- Arrogant wisdom which separates man from man by setting up rivalries (James 4:1,2).
- Cruel wisdom that finds pleasure in hurting others with clever or cutting words.

- Depraved wisdom which seduces men from their loyalty to God.

Gentle – from a word that cannot be directly translated from the original. (It also appears in Phil. 4:5 and 1 Tim. 3:3) It has been defined as “justice and better than justice;” and as “that which steps in to correct things when the law becomes unjust.” Matthew Arnold called it “sweet reasonableness.” It’s the ability to apply the Golden Rule. The man who can apply this principle is able to forgive when justice gives him the perfect right to condemn. A spiritually sick friend needs the same consideration given to a physically sick friend. Gentle wisdom teaches a man: how to make allowances, when not to stand up for his rights, how to temper justice with mercy, and to remember that man-made rules are not an end-all in God’s eyes. However, a true Christian will not compromise the truth to keep the peace.

Willing to yield – might mean either “ever ready to obey” or “easy to persuade.” I can see it either way. A truly wise man is ready to listen and obey whenever God’s word is spoken, and should be easily persuaded (not almost persuaded) by God’s word. He is ready and willing to abandon a course once it shown to be wrong. As James said earlier in his epistle: “...let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath...” (1:19).

[Note: the previous characteristics point to our attitude of heart; the following characteristics are our call to action.]

Full of mercy and good fruits - This the same injunction made by Christ in Lk. 6:36: Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.

In Christian thought mercy:

- Indicates mercy for the man even if his troubles are of his own making. Our mercy must reflect God’s mercy in this respect. Godly mercy expects no reward (The Good Samaritan).

- Indicates that good fruits must be a result of the mercy. Here is an action word showing us that practical help for those in need must be available. There is no true pity without helping the one pitied! What has James already taught in 1:27 and 2:15,16? “Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble...” and “If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, ‘Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,’ but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?”

Undivided – (without partiality). Not wavering or vacillating. Choosing a course and keeping to it. Many who say they are keeping an open mind are just refusing to make up their mind; in the spiritual realm this is fatal! True wisdom is based on the certainties laid down for us from God through Christ. The fundamentals of faith are not obscure but are easily grasped. Our convictions are based on our faith in Christ and in God's word.

Sincere – (without hypocrisy) it is neither an act nor deception. It is pretending to be nothing that it is not and does not have its own ends in sight. Hypocrisy in attitude is just as fatal to our spiritual lives as hypocrisy in deeds. Those without hypocrisy are: sincere, open in their dealings, and without deceit.

The Results

Worldly wisdom produces trouble – envy, strife, and disorder that comes from instability and works that are worthless and of no account (James 3:16). Not only must we avoid worldly wisdom as individuals but must also avoid it as a congregation of God's people. Battles among so-called Christians, church splits, operating the church according to business principles instead of God's word and the absence of purity and peace point out that “something” is wrong – would not that “something” be the absence of true wisdom?

God's wisdom produces blessing (James 3:18) – “And the harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.” (RSV) Remember, this peace includes a right relationship between man and man. The seed can only be sown and flourish when this peace exists between the one sowing the seed and the fertile ground. Nothing good will grow in an atmosphere where men are at variance with one another. Mt. 5:9 reads: “Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God.” With our verse under consideration is it any wonder that the peacemakers have such a close relationship with God the Father? Peace is a fruit of righteousness and it becomes the field in which righteousness and all that comes from righteousness flourishes. Christ is our peace through whom we are reconciled to God. (Eph. 2:14: “For he is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility.” RSV) His peace is available through keeping his commandments and includes peace within ourselves, with one another and with God.

We are what we live and what we live is what we sow! Living by man's wisdom will sow sin and strife and we will reap confusion and worthless works. Living by God's wisdom will sow righteousness and peace; we will reap God's blessings.

God hates a troublemaker! (Read Prov. 6:16-19) Lot followed the wisdom of the world and his holdings literally went up in smoke. Abraham based his decision on God's wisdom and his choice eventually led to blessings upon the whole world!

Prov. 3:13: "Happy is the man who makes discovery of wisdom, and he who gets knowledge." (BBE)

The main points made in this article were supplied by consulting the following sources:

Warren Weirsbe's The Bible Exposition Commentary, Volume 2, pp. 362-66.

Guy N. Woods' Commentary on the Epistle of James, pp. 190-97.

William Barclay's Daily Study Bible Series (James and Peter – volume 14), pp. 93-98.

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The Assurance & Motivation Of True Fellowship

1 Cor. 1:4-9

Warren E. Berkley

*⁴I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus, ⁵that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge, ⁶even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, ⁷so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, ⁸who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **1 Cor. 1:4-9***

These verses are from the opening words of Paul in his letter to the church at Corinth. Can you imagine hearing this read? You are a member of a church torn apart by division; destroyed by immaturity; confused by questions and

questionable behavior, even with some who deny the resurrection of Christ – and you hear these words written by Paul: “I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus?”

Obviously Paul is not thanking God for their misbehavior. He is expressing his reverent gratitude to God “for the grace of God,” which was given to these people “by Christ Jesus.” Though flawed and fallen Paul didn’t just mark them off. He was still thankful they had heard the gospel and had responded. It was the grace of God in Christ that rescued them the first time. By that same grace they could be re-rescued.

This speaks directly to Paul’s character. He would need to write to them strongly about their errors, even shame them for their sin. Nevertheless, he was constantly thankful to God for people who had obeyed the gospel. They were God’s people, not his own (4:14-21).

Paul’s attitude toward these people presents a model for us to follow. Even when brethren are torn apart and acting like children, we should be thankful to God for their initial reception of His grace and prayerful there will be a fresh response to Deity. All our attitudes and deeds toward them should serve that high purpose.

Consider their advantage (imparted by God’s grace): **“that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge.”** The problem in Corinth was not any level of excusable ignorance. It wasn’t that they didn’t know how to act right. They had been taught and “enriched in everything,” and this enrichment was from God: “By Him,” and it was adequate: “in all utterance and all knowledge.” The advantage of knowledge they enjoyed was one expression of God’s grace they now needed to return to.

And “even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you,” means – the instruction they had received was confirmed as to origin (see 2 Cor. 12:12).

So the people in this troubled church had responded to God’s grace, being advantaged participants in knowledge and testimony from heaven, confirmed as having that origin. “So that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.” **This reaffirms the adequacy of their instruction.** Spirit-inspired teachers guided them into all the truth, putting them in position to entertain the full measure of hope:

“eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ.” They could expect such adequacy of spiritual resources to continue: “who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.” They suffered no inferiority and would experience no lack as long as they lived.

“God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”

One of the reassuring truths to keep in mind when face to face with any human unfaithfulness is, **the absolute faithfulness of God.** This simply means, you can count on Him to carry out every promise, to provide every resource, to help in every way that is in keeping with His will. Christians live “in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began,” (Titus 1:2). In this fact there is a combination of reassurance and motivation, to be what we ought to be – individually and collectively. (1 Thess. 5:24)

The members of the church at Corinth had been “called into the fellowship of” Jesus Christ. The work of gospel preaching should be thought of in terms of being called. When you hear the gospel of Christ, you are being called out of sin into fellowship with God (2 Thess. 2:14). When you are baptized, you are accepting that call, thus entering “into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ.” The old man of sin was living in relation to the world and the devil. The new man (washed by the blood of Christ) is living in relation to Deity and others who share that fellowship. This also affords reassurance and motivation. **As faithful Christians, our reality is, “the fellowship of His Son.” It is our present possession “which will be more fully enjoyed in heaven,” (Mike Willis). That is both comforting and motivating.**

Writing to a church torn up by men, the apostle Paul supplies assurance and motivation still needed today. “God is faithful,” and by Him (through preaching, 2 Thess. 2:14), we are “called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.” Everything about that should influence everything about us, to a refreshed perspective of what we have and what we can keep.

Resources:

Truth Commentaries, 1 Cor., Mike Willis

The First Epistle To The Corinthians, Gordon Fee

Who Is Jesus? (Rev. 1:5)

Jay Taylor

It is an awe-inspiring task to meditate upon the incomparable greatness of Jesus Christ. In the book of Revelation, for example, we are presented with an exalted picture of Jesus. He is the one who has loved us and loosed us from our sins by His blood (Rev. 1:5). He is the one who is in the midst of the churches, always aware of their conduct (Rev. 1:12-3:22). He is the great Lion/Lamb who is worthy of our worship (Rev. 5). He is the victorious warrior King who triumphs over all (Rev. 19:11-16). Such descriptions humble us as we think about who He is and what He has done for us.

Who is Jesus? The apostle John gives us three descriptions that convey a picture of who Jesus is. These three descriptions cover the period of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. In Revelation 1:5, John wrote that Jesus Christ is "the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth." These descriptions are filled with rich thoughts that help us appreciate who Jesus is.

The Faithful Witness

A witness is one who has been a spectator of an event or events. Having been a spectator, a witness can then testify as to what they have seen or learned. Jesus is the faithful witness of God. He is therefore qualified to speak about God, God's will, and God's love.

Jesus is qualified to be the faithful witness about *God* because He is God. The prologue to the gospel according to John records that Jesus was in the beginning with God and was God (cf. John 1-18). Isaiah spoke of the Christ as the "mighty God" (Isaiah 9:6). Jesus said, "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30).

Jesus is qualified to be the faithful witness concerning *God's will*. The Hebrew writer declared that God speaks in His Son (cf. Hebrews 1:1-2). On many occasions, Jesus revealed that His teachings came directly from God. In John 8:26, Jesus said, "...and I speak to the world those things which I have heard of him" (cf. John 8:28; 12:49-50; 14:10, 24; 15:15; 17:8,16). Possessing all authority, Jesus is qualified to be the faithful witness concerning God's will (Matt. 28:18).

Finally, Jesus is the faithful witness concerning *God's love*. Looking to Jesus is all that is necessary to see the love of God. The sacrifice of Jesus upon the cross is the great manifestation of God's love. In John 3:16, we learn that "God so loved that world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life." Truly, Jesus is the faithful witness of God in all things!

The Firstborn Of The Dead

Suffering and persecution was the experience of many Christians living in the late first century. In fact, the book of Revelation addresses those who were being persecuted for the cause of Christ (cf. Rev. 1:9; 2:13; 6:9-11). However, Jesus was aware of their trials and sent them a wonderful message... "I am the firstborn of the dead!" What a great word of encouragement! Jesus had raised several from the dead in order to demonstrate the fact that He was the Son of God. Jesus, however, rose triumphantly from the dead never to die again! This is why He is great and preeminent. The apostle Paul wrote, "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence" (Col. 1:18).

What does His resurrection mean to us? First, we should be impressed with the fact that we serve a LIVING Savior. His body is not in the tomb suffering decay and destruction. Rather, Jesus reigns in heaven as Lord of lords and King of kings. Second, the resurrection of Jesus from the grave guarantees our resurrection (cf. 1 Cor. 15). How wonderful to know that we serve a risen, living, and loving Savior!

The Ruler Of The Kings Of The Earth

For many people in the late first century, it appeared as if the Caesar was the most powerful ruler in existence. He ruled over the mighty Roman empire and enforced worship that declared him to be "Dominus et Deus Noster - Our Lord And God." However, long before Caesar Domitian was born, Jehovah God declared, "Yet I have set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will tell of the decree: Jehovah said unto me, Thou art my son; This day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a

potter's vessel" (Psalm 2:6-9). This Psalm speaks of the coming rule of the Messiah. Luke writes specifically of the rule of Jesus when he records the visit of Gabriel to Mary. Gabriel said concerning her Son, "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:32-33).

Jesus has every right to be ruler because of His resurrection from the dead. Both Acts 13:33 and Romans 1:4 show that His resurrection declare Him to be the Son of God. Being the Son of God, Jesus has all authority to rule. Speaking of the death and resurrection of Jesus, Paul wrote, "Wherefore also God highly exalted him, and gave unto him the name which is above every name; that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of the God the Father" (Phil. 2:9-11).

Who is Jesus? In His life, He is the faithful witness. In His death, He is the firstborn of the dead. In His resurrection, He is the ruler of the kings of the earth. These descriptions magnify His greatness and help us understand the importance of rendering obedience to the Son of God.

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Jehovah's Advice on How To Be A Good Friend
Topical Study
By Jon W. Quinn

The Old Law said, "You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord." (Leviticus 19:18). Following this advice would not only help the citizens of Israel get along during the time of the Law, but it would help citizens of spiritual Israel, the church, get along as well. In fact, we are reminded of Paul's discussion about not taking vengeance (Romans 12:19) and his instructions about putting away wrath, bitterness and malice (Ephesians 4:31).

We are also aware that Jesus referred to this very passage and said that this commandment about loving one's neighbor as himself is the second greatest commandment, second only to fully loving God (Mark 12:29-31).

God evidently has determined that it is an important matter for His people to learn how they ought to interact with others. He has provided instructions on how to be a good friend, and what to look for in a friend. We are often influenced by our friends, and Satan would like nothing better than for us to nurture friendships with people who would take us away from our best friend, Jesus. Satan would also enjoy tempting us to be less than what God says we need to be as friends of others.

The book of Proverbs is full of practical advice for living. It is not so much law as it is advice based on righteousness and the wisdom of God, and is compatible with keeping the commandments of God successfully. "Do not be deceived: 'Bad company corrupts good morals.'" (1 Corinthians 15:33).

Choose Friends Carefully

There are several types of people to avoid when we consider developing friendships. We need to avoid heavy drinkers and gluttons. "Do not be with heavy drinkers of wine, Or with gluttonous eaters of meat..." (Proverbs 23:20; cf vss. 17-21). It is suggested that such will lead to poverty.

We are told to avoid the selfish (Proverbs 23:6,7) and the hot tempered (Proverbs 22:24,25) and, of course, the violent man (Proverbs 3:31). We are advised to avoid friendships with liars (Proverbs 6:12-15).

There are positive things to look for in choosing friends. We ought to choose friends who have respect for God. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; Fools despise wisdom and instruction." (Proverbs 1:7; see also 9:10 and 15:33).

We ought to look for others who are seeking to live righteously before God. It makes sense to make friends of good people. "So you will walk in the way of good men, And keep to the paths of the righteous." (Proverbs 2:20; see also 4:10-19 and 10:29-30).

Steadfastness

We have heard of “fair weather friends” who stick around only during good times. You don't want friends to be like that; and should not be one either. Some of the Proverbs are a little sarcastic. Note this one: “The poor is hated even by his neighbor, But those who love the rich are many.” (Proverbs 14:20). Of course, we know that the “love” of the rich here is not genuine at all.

The Proverb writer uses a little comedy to describe “fair weather friends.” He says, “Like a bad tooth and an unsteady foot Is confidence in a faithless man in time of trouble.” (Proverbs 25:19). If you have ever had the opportunity to run to answer the phone while your foot is asleep, you'll understand this Proverb!

God says that a true friend “sticks closer than a brother” and “loves at all times” and is “a brother born for adversity” (Proverbs 18:24 and 17:17) . You want this kind of friend, and you ought to be one as well. “Do not forsake your own friend or your father's friend...” (Proverbs 27:10).

Honesty

One important part of friendship is to have someone to confide in and to share your problems with. You would want someone then who is trustworthy and honest with you. You do not want (or rather, you ought not to want) someone who will agree with you even if you are wrong. You desire help, not necessarily agreement. “Oil and perfume make the heart glad, So a man's counsel is sweet to his friend.” (Proverbs 27:9).

Good friends are those who can level with each other without becoming angry because they know that they each have one another's best interests at heart (Proverbs 27:6; 28:23). These kinds of discourses will make both friends better. “As iron sharpens iron, So one man sharpens another.” (Proverbs 27:17).

Tact

In friendship, kindness and truth go together. A good friend will be honest, but will use tact. He will speak the truth to his friend kindly. “Do not let kindness and truth leave you; Bind them around your neck, Write them on the tablet of your heart. So you will find favor and good repute In the sight of God and man.” (Proverbs 3:3,4).

Generosity

The man or woman of God looks down on nobody (Proverbs 14:21). A generous friend will be an unselfish friend. Again, not only should we look for friends like this, but become such a friend to others (Proverbs 3:28 and 21:26) .

Restraint

It needs to be noticed here that while too often we spend too little time in the company of good friends (as God defines a good friend), it is also true that we could err in the opposite extreme. We need to make sure our friends have time for privacy and not monopolize their time “Let your foot rarely be in your neighbor's house, Lest he become weary of you and hate you.” (Proverbs 25:17). My mother used to say, “Don't wear out your welcome!” I always thought that I was so much fun to be around that this would be difficult to do. But the Lord and mom say otherwise.

Another area of friendship in which we ought to show restraint is we need to be careful not to amass too many friends. That may sound strange, but it could become difficult to distinguish between true friends and false ones. “A man of many friends comes to ruin, But there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.” (Proverbs 18:24).

God gives us good advice on friendship. We won't find a better Friend than Him. We would do well to heed His words. Our friends will appreciate it.

Plan of Salvation **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, 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.

***The Final Page***  
***Warren E. Berkley***

### **What Are You Looking For?**

*Warren E. Berkley*

*When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. Acts 2:1-4*

It is likely – if you sit down and read this paragraph with some of your friends in the evangelical, denominational or Pentecostal community - the substance of the discussion will be something like this:

*“This is dramatic and exciting and powerful. **THIS IS WHAT I WANT!** To be in a room and hear a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind. To see these divided tongues, as of fire. Then, to be filled with the Holy Spirit; and to begin to speak with other tongues. This is it.”*

**Why is it Galatians 5:22,23 doesn't generally provoke the same reaction?** Paul said, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

Against such there is now law.” This passage is about the Holy Spirit! But you may not hear people say – “Wow, that’s what I need; that’s what I want.”

In reading Acts 2 many modern readers immediately fasten their attention on the sensation, the excitement, the drama. The sights and sounds of this text provoke excitement and desire on the part of many in our time.

That raises this question that will be worthy of some thought – ***In reading the Bible, what are you looking for?*** Do you want to know the truth about God and His plan so you can be a participant as an obedient child of God? Or, do you want drama, the high of emotion, the fun of something sensational (that is often imposed on the text by perception and experience)?

I say to you, reading the second chapter of Acts should yield one overwhelming response: **Who is Jesus Christ and what is my response to Him?** He is at the center of everything in Acts chapter 2. And once the truth about Him is presented we can repent and be baptized; then continue steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine. This is what it is all about. It is about Him and our response to Him, as revealed by the Holy Spirit.

**This event recorded by Luke in Acts 2:1-4 has already happened.** It didn’t happen every day to everybody. When you read about Christians in the book of Acts and the epistles, they are not having this experience every day or every time they meet. They are not getting up everyday seeing divided tongues and hearing the sound from heaven. They are not all filled with the Holy Spirit in the same way the apostles were. They are not all speaking with other tongues. Christians in the book of Acts are busy; faithful Christians are excited and involved, but the Pentecost event was not a permanent or repeated fixture.

What are the Christians in the book of Acts doing? They are continuing steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine (Acts 2:42). They are together and sharing (Acts 2:44). They are continuing daily with one accord in the temple, “and breaking bread from house to house,” eating their food with gladness and simplicity of heart (Acts 2:46). They spend a lot of time suffering for righteousness’ sake (Acts 4:3). It was so bad for them, they would come together to pray about it, asking God to be with them (Acts 4:24-31).

**Don't just read about the baptism of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2:1-4 – and start coveting excitement!** Let this account find its place within the larger context of history, apostolic power, the Great Commission and the reality of what Christians were doing under the instructions of the apostles. They were not getting up everyday to enjoy another emotional experience like Pentecost. They were engaged in the tough grind of life. They were following the instructions of the Spirit-filled apostles. They were preaching the gospel and suffering for it. They were coping with daily stress as sojourners, getting up everyday trying to do what is right. ***There is our pattern!***