

Expository Files

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The Front Page

It Makes a Difference

By Jon W. Quinn

Whether God exists or not is certainly life's most important question. It makes a difference as to whether you and those you love are special creatures who bear the Creator's image and here by purpose, or they are simple mobile masses of molecules that have come together by chance. If God exists, then we are His offspring. If He does not, then we are in the same category as mold and mildew - things that are alive for no particular reason. The Bible affirms that we are the offspring of God (Acts 17:28).

To deny that God exists one must ignore the abundant evidence that suggests that He does exist. We find this evidence in many different areas including the existence of the universe itself. We see it in nature's complex designs, in man's moral nature, and in the power that true Christianity has demonstrated in the lives of the faithful. We see it in fulfilled prophecy.

Also, to deny the existence of God robs us of any real sense of value of human life. How much of the violence and cold-blooded killing goes on today because people have lost their sense of value as human beings? There is a struggle in our hearts between good and evil, and without some sort of appreciation of the fact that we are creatures

of God, the line between good and evil becomes blurred; people become things to be manipulated, and love becomes an empty word with no real meaning.

God is real, and accepting that will make a difference in one's life. The Scriptures put it this way; "Fear God, and keep His commandments; for this is the whole duty of man." (Eccl. 12:13).

Whether Jesus was raised and lives today also makes a difference. It makes a big difference! Jesus' executioners had pronounced Him dead. His body was finally removed from the cross and laid in a tomb. He was dead and buried, but not gone. On the third day Jesus arose to live forevermore. One of the accounts of the resurrection is found in Luke 24:1-48.

Everything we know comes from one of two sources: either our own experience or the testimony of others. When it comes to historical events that occurred before we were born, everything we know comes from the testimony of others. But how do we determine what testimony to believe and which to reject? Not all testimony is true.

We would consider the honesty and motives of the witnesses. We would ask if their testimony was hearsay or did they possess first hand knowledge. We would want to know if they were in a position to know the facts for sure, and we would compare the testimony of multiple witnesses if we had it. When it comes to the resurrection of Jesus, all these criteria point to the truthfulness of the testimony. These were honest people. They were willing to give up everything, even life itself, teaching Jesus and His resurrection. They sacrificed possessions and suffered hardship. They did not get rich - and they taught and lived by the highest ethical and moral standards. They died by stonings, beheadings and crucifixions. They were willing because they knew what they were teaching was true. They had watched Him die, crushed and perplexed of spirit. When He had arisen, they had walked and talked with Him as they had done for three years prior to His death. They were willing to die for Him because He had been

willing to die for them and us. They knew He would bless them with eternal life. Death had lost its sting.

Can God Trust You With His Gospel?

"...approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel ."

1 Thessalonians 2:1-6

By Jon W. Quinn

Can you be trusted? Now that question is not the same as asking if you are honest. There is a difference, though honesty is a part of being trustworthy. There are honest people that are not trustworthy in certain circumstances. For example, though I am honest, I would not be trustworthy as a brain surgeon, airline pilot or as a center on a pro basketball team. See the difference?

But there are things we can do to make ourselves more worthy of confidence and trust. In addition to honesty, we can study and prepare ourselves for certain situations. Many people study life saving techniques such as CPR so that they can be depended on in a medical crises.

So, what does it take to make one trustworthy with the gospel? Again, honesty is certainly needful. Love for God and others, knowledge and courage are some attributes that also come to mind. This is important, because you see, God has entrusted us with His gospel Consider the answer.

*1 For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain,
2 but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition.*

*3 For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit;
4 but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts.*

5 For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed -- God is witness --

6 nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority. (1 Thessalonians 2:1-6)

The Effort Had Not Been in Vain

The efforts of Paul and others accompanying him on what we call the second missionary journey had born fruit in Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 2:1, see also 1:6). It was a busy city, linked to all the important cities of Macedonia by road. Paul had first gone to the synagogue, as he often did, and proclaimed the gospel of Christ there on three straight Sabbaths. As a result, a number of Jews and proselytes believed, including a number of prominent women (Acts 17:1-4).

But others of the Jews became jealous of Paul, and went to the marketplace and began to stir up trouble for him. They formed a mob and incited it to action against Paul (Acts 17:5-10). There were actually two accusations made against Paul and Silas. They charged that the pair had "upset the world" and say that "there is another king, Jesus." Now that is a fairly serious charge, to having upset the world. The council received a pledge from the brethren and released them, while Paul and Silas left Thessalonica for Berea.

It would be a misunderstanding of the well known verse about the Bereans being more noble-minded than those at Thessalonica when they heard the gospel to assume that no Thessalonian was "noble-minded" (Acts 17:11). Actually, there were some very noble-minded folks there in Thessalonica. In fact, in the persecution against the few who had responded to the gospel we find them to be very noble and courageous. But as a whole, the people of that city were not very noble.

Some Things We Need To Be Trustworthy With the Gospel

What is it that made Paul and Silas trustworthy with the gospel with which they had been entrusted? There are at least four suggestions in the text (1 Thessalonians 2:1-4).

1. Boldness (2:2)- Opposition to the point of a very real physical danger did not bring about a hesitance to proclaim Jesus. We are to speak the truth, as it has been given to us by God, all the time. Our

task is too important to allow ourselves to be intimidated into either changing the message or hesitating to tell it to others.

2. Approved by God (2:4) - Paul and Silas had already been tried and had passed the test. Their approval was from God. This approval comes to us today in much the same way. If we walk in the light of the gospel, being loyal to the Lordship of Jesus in all things, not allowing trying circumstances to dissuade us, then we are approved by God. But if we deny the Lord or become ashamed of living by His gospel, then we have failed the test (2 Corinthians 13:5; Philippians 1:10).

3. Speak to please God (2:4)- Our aim ought always be to please God in the things we do or say. He is the one we serve. This will often result in our being out of step with society's views and attitudes. God is right. His "opinion" is the only one that really matters (Romans 3:4).

4. Consciousness that God examines our hearts (2:4) - We are aware that God sees our hearts. He not only knows all we do, he knows why we choose to do it. The hidden thoughts of man are known to God. If we understand this, then we will be more likely to keep our motives pure.

Some Things We Need To Avoid To Be Trustworthy With the Gospel

When a Christian fails to be trustworthy in matters relative to the gospel, there are reasons. In our text, we find several listed (Thessalonians 2:3-6).

1. Error (2:3)- The gospel Paul taught was free from misleading statements and false doctrines. There were (and are) false teachers in the world, but Paul was not one of them. We must be sure that our teaching is true. If doctrine matters to God, then it does matter, period (2 Timothy 3:13-15; 1 Timothy 6:3).

2. Impurity (2:3) - Paul's preaching did not come from moral or spiritual impurity. His motives were clean. His ethics were always the

highest, and so must ours be. He expected no less of himself than he did of others.

3. Deceit (2:3) - Paul was without ulterior designs. He was not a trickster, nor was he treacherous. He was much more a giver than a taker of good things.

4. Flattery (2:5)- Flattering words often cover up evil intent. Paul was not a “men-pleaser”! That is obvious from the treatment he received at Thessalonica. Paul spoke plainly and lovingly.

5. Greed (2:5)- There were some who were false teachers seeking material rewards by their work at the expense of others. Offering false hopes may gain something in a material way, but it will cost the teacher and perhaps the listener their souls.

Can God trust you with His gospel? Make yourself a trustworthy servant of the gospel!

Advice
Proverbs 12:15
By Karl Hennecke

Most newspapers carry syndicated columns offering advice. Governmental leaders have people around them to give them advice about policy. All of us have had the opportunity to receive advice and to give advice. Proverbs says that the “fool is right in his own eyes but he that is wise listens to counsel” (Prov. 12:15). Fortunate is the man or woman who has a wise counselor to give them advice. But not all advice is good. Someone said, “Good advice costs nothing and it’s worth the price.” While it is true that some advice is worthless it is also true that some advice is priceless.

The books of Psalms and Proverbs (the wisdom literature of God), many times contrast good counsel with bad counsel. We need to recognize that God’s counsel is not optional but commanded. And so we need to think seriously about the counsel of God. Some will admit

that their course of action is sometimes not wise. My question would be, when would it be a benefit to do that which is unwise? If we choose to do what God says in unwise what is the justification? Are seeking to please God or self?

But there is another aspect of this matter that we need to consider, and that is our personal responsibility to offer good advice to our family, friends and brethren. In 1 Thes. 5:14, 15, Paul encourages “pursuing what is good.” We need to offer that same advice to those over whom we have influence. Paul says that we are to be able to “admonish one another” (Rom. 15:14). In order to do this we like Paul need to “prove what is good and acceptable and the perfect will of God” (Rom. 12:2), and “understand what the will of the Lord is” (Eph. 5:17).

The advice that we give and the advice we accept, must be in accordance with God’s will. When we ask for advice we may say, “What do you think?” Rather, we should be asking, “Help me understand what God would have one do in a situation like this,” or “What would Jesus have done?”

There are many examples in the Bible of “bad advice.” Consider the advice that Satan gave to Eve in the garden. Satan’s advice was that Eve should eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Eve listened to the advice and ate the fruit, disobeying God. Why did Eve take that advice? She took it because it was what she wanted to do. She saw that the fruit was good for food and desirable to the eyes and Satan promised that it would make her like God (Gen. 3:1-6).

Reheboam, the son of King Solomon, ascended to the throne following his father’s death. He had some important decisions to make. He had before him the choice of listening to the old advisors or the young advisors. In this case we see that bad advice came as a result of immaturity and the good advice as a result of maturity. Reheboam was foolish enough to listen to the young men, leading to a division in the kingdom (1 Kings 12:6-11). One’s own opinion is often reinforced by the advice of those around them, but that advice is not always right. In

fact in most cases if you search long enough you can find someone who will support almost any decision you desire. Paul warned Timothy, “they will not endure sound doctrine but will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts” (2 Tim 4:3). We should seek out the advice of those whom we trust will not just be “yes men” but those who are truly concerned about the will of God.

There are many examples of good advice in the Bible. One of my favorite stories is that of the leper Naaman, who came to a prophet because he believed the prophet could cure him of his disease. He left the prophet in a rage because he didn’t like what the prophet told him to do. But we see a happy ending because Naaman listened to the advice of his servant and dipped in the Jordan seven times as Elisha instructed and was healed (2 Kings 5). Often we find ourselves in an emotional state that makes it difficult for us to think straight. We should be thankful to God in such instances for those who will give us good advice.

We need to be careful that the advice we give does not weaken or diminish the commandment of God. One who is already in a weakened condition, who is looking for an out, may listen to bad advice. We cannot apologize for God’s word. We cannot suggest that it is impossible to do His will. I have heard people advise others, who had a hard choice before them, that God wouldn’t expect them to do this or that. In fact, God does expect us to do some things that are difficult to do. For example, broken marriages often require the disciple of God to live a celibate life. God does expect one to do that if fornication was not the cause. But some, wanting to enter into a new marriage are willing to listen to bad advice and end up marrying again without God’s approval. God’s word is powerful and forceful and we have no right to water it down or misrepresent God. Others claim that their present marriage situation is unbearable. Their friends will tell them, “God wouldn’t expect you to stay married.” Yes, He does expect you to stay married unless your spouse is guilty of fornication (Mt. 19:9). “Whatsoever God has joined together let not man put asunder” (Mt. 19:6).

The examples of bad advice one hears today are endless. Women are told, "You don't have to be in subjection to your husband." God says you must (Eph. 5:22). Parents are told, "You shouldn't spank your children." God says you should (Prov. 23:13-14). Others are told, "If someone did that to me, I'd never forgive them." God teaches that we must be willing to forgive (Mt. 6:15). Christians are told, "Don't worry about missing the assembling of the saints, it's just a tradition." God teaches that it is an important and vital tradition to provoke our brethren to love and good works in the assembly (Heb. 10:24, 25). Mothers are encouraged, "You need to get out of the home and go to work to better yourself." Paul through the Spirit instructed Titus that women need to be workers at home (Titus 2:4, 5).

The one who gives advice is responsible for that advice. He must ask himself does this advice encourage, support and most importantly is it according to God's word? It is better not to give advice than to give the wrong advice. Recognizing that the only infallible advice is that from above, the one receiving advice must be able to distinguish between that which is right and that which is wrong. In order to do that each of us is responsible to study God's word in order to become knowledgeable of God's will (2 Tim. 2:15) and pray for wisdom to make the application (Js. 1:5). That is the advice of God.

Rust As A Witness

(Jas. 5:1-6)

Warren E. Berkley

Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you! Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days. Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. You have lived on the earth in pleasure and luxury; you have fattened your hearts as in a day of slaughter. You have condemned, you have murdered the just; he does not resist you. (James 5:1-6)

There is a common mistake we may be tempted to make about this passage and others like it. I want to address that right up front; we don't want to get started in this passage with a distorted presumption.

To read this passage, and without much thought or study, conclude that James takes a dim view of wealth or that James has some axe to grind against rich people **is not correct**. Therefore, that idea is not the right starting place for a good study of this.

People may think: *Now James said something about rich folks back in chapter one. He said something else about the rich in chapter two. Now here again - James must take a dim view of rich people.*

Well, that's not it at all! Let's Review:

- **In James 1** – his point was, the rich who depend upon their riches will be humiliated.
- **In James 2** – nothing critical of the rich; NO, James is critical of brethren who show preference to the rich, and shun the poor.

So let's not jump to an unjustified conclusion about James and the rich. He is not upholding poverty over riches; he is not sounding an alarm about all people who have more than we have. There is no encouragement here to justify any prejudice people might have against those who have more than they have. But, there is something James *is* against and that **God is against**, and that we need to know about.

It Is This: Oppressing People, In Order To Be Rich!

We cannot just read a couple of verses or phrases out of this paragraph and accuse James of hating the rich. That's a sloppy way to handle the Word of God.

We should read the entire paragraph, think about what it says, include all relevant Biblical, contextual information, and get our hands on the point the writer is making. The point is not – rich people are all bad. The point is not to recommend perpetual poverty, as a spiritual value. The point is: **It is wrong, to oppress people in order to become wealthy!!**

A close look into this passage will show, James is talking about a very specific group of wealthy people. This is not about somebody's level of income; NO, it is about somebody's level of character!!

Let's use the text to put the spotlight on the kind of people James is talking about: **Wealthy landowners, who were building their empires of wealth and luxury, on the backs of their workers.**

It is not a sin to own land. It is not a sin to hire workers. It is not a sin to make a good profit. The sin is: Making your money and building your empire on the backs of workers; workers you oppress. Workers who become victims of the greed and fraud of the landowners.

If I may be so plain: **The Fat Cats Make All The Money** while the laboring people suffer. Either they don't get paid, or they are not paid a just wage. That's what James has in his sights.

James really sounds like one of the prophets here. That's certainly not a stretch since we believe he was an inspired writer; and in the New Testament – the apostles and prophets are inspired. But I see James in more of a prophet role here for two reasons: ONE – the Old Testament prophets were hard on the greedy, abusive rich. TWO – James actually predicts the punishment of these landowners. He says: their corruption would be a witness against them. **The rust and corrosion of their things became a witness against their greed.**

The cries of the reapers were heard by the Lord and so these corrupt rich landowners stood condemned. James wants to open everybody's eyes to what was happening, and he wanted to make it clear – This kind of wealth acquisition is corrupt, and would be punished!

Now, we need to walk across a bridge from the historic context of this passage to present application today.

We need to talk about what this means for us today. We have, in this readership, no wealthy landowners who abuse people and who perpetuate corruption. My assumption is, no such people are reading this. (People obsessed with greed and oppressing their fellows are not typical readers of EF.)

I'm relatively sure, if you have employees, you are not holding back their wages. [Now if you are – you need to be convicted by this passage, and everything else the Bible says about paying just wages, and treating people right.] But it may well be we have nobody here who fits the category of the corrupt rich in James 5. That would be my assumption.

Here's what we do with this → **We find the principle, and we apply it in our lives so that we never become corrupt, greedy and oppressive.**

The underlying principle is: We must never advance our interests at the expense and suffering of others. Now, if you make only enough money to get by – still, you must acknowledge and live by this principle now.

If you own no land; if you have no workers – still, this demands your personal application of heart. The principle crosses through all cultures, income levels, social status and category. We must never advance our interests at the expense and suffering of others. This should be our commitment of character today.

There is a popular mentality in our society, that we cannot have any part in - - Climbing your way to the top, but walking all over people to get there!! [Note – private ownership, competition, the free market place – as a system of production – I like. But when the pursuit of wealth takes us to a place where we treat people as means to enrich

ourselves and we don't care how they suffer, we have crossed the line of a just system into the corruption James exposes.]

This happens in show-business, politics, business, in religion, and wherever there are people and competition and prizes to be had. It is selfish ambition; it is greed, corruption and indifference to God and man.

It's the attitude that says, "I don't care who gets hurt . . . what happens to people under me . . . or anything about God . . . I'm getting to the top, and I'm going to stay there."

To whatever extent we may have this attitude we need to give it up. People are important. People are made in the image of God. Jesus perfectly illustrated the attitude we are to have toward people. Peter said – **Honor all people**, 1 Pet. 2:17. We must never adopt an attitude of indifference toward the value of people.

See, this is not just a matter of paying just wages because God says we should. Though that is certainly true. But involved is, not letting our self-interests hurt people. And I remind you, the tone in this passage is prophetic. It predicts the misery of the corrupt rich.

And it echoes the preaching of the prophets, that oppressing people is sinful, and God takes it very seriously when we abuse people.

The message to the corrupt rich of all ages may be – If inflation doesn't get you . . . if the market doesn't crash . . . if the workers don't strike, **YOU ARE STILL NOT SECURE**. God can end it all for you . . . and God, if He wills, can turn your fancy clothes into moth-eaten rags.

I want to conclude with **PERSPECTIVE**, that I hope will lead to **GRATITUDE AND BETTER STEWARDSHIP**.

In his book, **Jesus Wants to Save Christians**, Rob Bell offers some startling statistics about America's affluence:

America controls nearly 20 percent of the world's wealth. There are around six billion people in the world, and there are roughly three hundred million people in the U.S. That makes America less than 5 percent of the world's population. And this 5 percent owns a fifth of the world's wealth.

One billion people in the world do not have access to clean water, while the average American uses four hundred to six hundred liters of water a day.

Every seven seconds, somewhere in the world a child under age five dies of hunger, while Americans throw away 14 percent of the food we purchase.

Nearly one billion people in the world live on less than one American dollar a day.

Another 2.5 billion people in the world live on less than two American dollars a day.

More than half of the world lives on less than two dollars a day, while the average American teenager spends nearly \$150 a week.

Forty percent of people in the world lack basic sanitation, while forty-nine million diapers are used and thrown away in America every day.

1.6 billion people in the world have no electricity.

Nearly one billion people in the world cannot read or sign their name.

Nearly one hundred million children are denied basic education.

By far, most of the people in the world do not own a car. One third of American families own three cars.

One in seven children worldwide (158 million) has to go to work every day just to survive. ...

Americans spend more annually on trash bags than nearly half of the world does on all goods.

Rob Bell, *Jesus Wants to Save Christians* (Zondervan, 2008), pp. 122-123

Let's thank God for what we have . . . use what we have unto Him . . . while we trust and obey Jesus Christ.

“Do Not Give the Devil a Foothold” Jacob Hudgins

“Do not let the sun go down while you are angry, and do not give the devil a foothold” (Eph 4:26-27, NIV)

Every Christian is engaged in a fierce, life-defining battle with Satan. He is our *“adversary”* (1 Pet 5:8), and he has crafted elaborate *“wiles”* (Eph 6:11) and *“devices”* (2 Cor 2:11) to gain ground and win us to his side. In his instruction on dealing with festering anger, Paul warns us: *“do not give the devil a foothold”*—don't make it any easier on him!

This statement teaches us that we must give no ground. The smallest ground, the tiniest foothold, the briefest opportunity is to be zealously guarded against falling into his hand. In this text, unresolved anger that continues to poison our minds and harden into bitterness and malice gives the devil an opening. We will struggle enough with the devil without willingly placing ourselves within his grasp. *“But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts”* (Rom 13:14). Toeing the line of sin or cozying up to temptation to see how close we can get gives ground to the devil, and dramatically increases the chances that we will fall into sin. Don't give the devil even a foothold!

Further, we have power to resist the devil. *“Do not give a foothold”* emphasizes that this is something within our power to control. The devil can only come as close as we allow him. *“Resist the devil and he will flee from you”* (James 4:7). Though powerful and cunning, the devil can never control our will or force disobedience. Yet active resistance

is essential! Satan is not one to lay down his arms and take mercy on us out of pity or generosity. He only flees from those who have the courage and faith to resist him and turn to God's promise and power.

This phrase emphasizes that we need sobriety and vigilance. If we were at war, we would not think of turning our back on the enemy until the battle was won. Negligence in this battle is far more costly. Every advance must be thwarted, each temptation resisted, each subtle lie countered. Not even a foothold can be spared. *“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour”* (1 Pet 5:8). This fearful description is motivation for our increased alertness. Practically, we need to watch for people who will turn our hearts to the devil. We need care to ensure that we do not compromise what we know is right for some “gray area” pleasure. We need sobriety to think clearly when our senses are enticed to sin—to see consequences rather than pleasure or convenience.

“Do not give the devil a foothold” is a call to arms—to engage in the battle that will define our lives. Are you ceding ground? Are you watchful? Are you winning?

“Let Freedom Ring”!
Topical Article
By Jon W. Quinn

Think about this for a moment. It will be a little disturbing but can have very positive results.

Picture yourself at the point where you are standing before God. Earth time has past, and so has the earth itself. All the hustle and bustle of busy days; all the activities of man have ceased. The universe has been removed, the elements themselves having melted out of existence at the word of God. The day has come!

The temporal realm has fulfilled its purpose and, according to God's eternal plan, is being replaced by a new heavens and a new

earth; a special place prepared for God's people. It is now time to hear the pronouncement of the ages: Will this be your home, or will it be the outer darkness for you?

Now it is too late to fix whatever needed fixing during those last seconds of the old era of the earth. It is too late to serve the Creator. It is too late to overcome sin. You are in the presence of the Almighty's glory and power and splendor.

It has been said, "It is a tormenting thing to fear what one cannot overcome." If you are facing God yet in your sins and have not availed yourself of His grace though you had countless opportunities to do so, then you know what the eternal outcome of this unique event will be. Every day of your life, at any moment of the day, you could have turned to God and sought for salvation. Others had done so, but you did not. Now you await certain judgment and all it entails. You know it and there is no absolutely nothing that can be done about it, not now.

Sin is slavery. It is bondage cruel and harsh. It promises much more than it can deliver to its slaves, and hides its consequences until it is too late. While the consequences of sin begin here in our time and realm, the ultimate wages paid will be eternal separation from God beginning at the judgment. This separation and the soul's existence in that state is called "the second death" ; it is "the wages of sin" (Romans 6:23).

Without Christ, man would be hopelessly and helplessly in the bondage of sin. The Old Law was given to place those faithful to God under it in a kind of protective custody until Jesus. The Savior was coming to pay the ransom for the sins of the world. Paul wrote, "For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am of flesh, sold into bondage to sin." (Romans 7:14). His hope did not lie in the Law, but in the Savior to Whom the Law pointed. The Scriptures explain to us that Jesus died so that He " ...and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives." (Hebrews 2:15).

Back to the hour of judgment. I want to enter into that hour free in Christ. As I stand before the throne I wish to be able to say that I belong to Christ; He is my Savior, and sin is not my master. It was once, but no longer. I have been redeemed and I am free.

The Gospel is A Gospel of Freedom

The gospel of Christ is “good news” to all of us because it is a message of freedom. But “freedom” or “liberty” does not mean that it has no requirements. It means that in it we are freed from the bondage and eternal consequences of sin. We are delivered from death.

Please do not think for a moment that freedom has not responsibilities or requirements. For example, we have a responsibility to stand firm in the gospel and not to return to sin; “It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery.” (Galatians 5:1). We must exercise our freedom in a responsible way. This would include our willingness, and even eagerness, to serve one another “For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” (Galatians 5:13).

Even as our nation was founded on the principles of personal civil liberty, and has a constitution meant to protect those liberties, it was and is still only due to our own vigilance and willingness to meet freedom's responsibilities that this freedom will endure. So it is with our spiritual liberty in Christ. If we are lazy and take it for granted, we will likely lose it. What will that aforementioned hour of judgment be like for those who have neglected their faith and its responsibilities? Remember: “For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?” (1 Peter 4:17).

God is the God of Deliverance

“I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.” (Exodus. 20:2). It is appropriate to

see the parallels between what God did in bringing Israel out of Egyptian slavery and His bringing sinners out of bondage to sin. The New Testament does this rather frequently (i.e. 1 Corinthians 10: 1-12; Hebrews 3:1-19).

Sin, like slavery, oppresses and degrades man (John 8:34). But God loves us and has come to our rescue much as He did for ancient Israel. To us, He provides freedom in Christ, who like Moses, is our deliverer. Even Moses, as a prophet, was given a message from God which foresaw another deliverer from bondage like himself and wrote, "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him." (Deuteronomy 18:15).

Freedoms Found in Christ

In Christ we are offered freedom from the eternally destructive power of Satan. (Acts 26:18). We find in Christ separation from the guilt of our sins in the past (Acts 2:38). We are given protection from the power of sin (1 Corinthians 10:13). We find incentives to overcome and stay free from sin through the inherent protections the gospel supplies the faithful (1 John 5:18). When we fall short, we have grace in Christ whereby, confessing our sins to God, He will forgive us (1 John 1:8-2:1). We find freedom from the fear and sting of death (1 Corinthians 15:56,57).

In view of the beauty of freedom in Christ, it is amazing (and ironic) that anyone would reject Christianity because it is too "confining." May all who do so come to realize how mistaken they are while there is yet time to overcome sin.

We began by saying, "Picture yourself at the point where you are standing before God. Earth time has past, and so has the earth itself. All the hustle and bustle of busy days; all the activities of man have ceased. The universe has been removed, the elements themselves having melted out of existence at the word of God. The day has come!"

And now we add: But you are free in Christ. You have accepted seriously the responsibilities as well as the privileges of freedom. And now, by the grace of God the Deliverer, your freedom is eternal.

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:

"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

Thoughts About Dealing With Our Diversity

Warren E. Berkley

In the second *Federalist* paper, John Jay wrote his understanding of the American people: “Providence has been pleased to give this one connected country to one united people – a people descended from the same ancestors, speaking the same language, professing the same religion, attached to the same principles of government, very similar in their manners and customs.”

However accurate Jay’s description was in 1788, this is not true today. Whatever opinion one may hold about how our diversity came to pass, it is our reality in America today.

When Jay wrote this, almost everyone was a Protestant; half of all Americans were of English stock, with another fifth from elsewhere in the British Isles. Perhaps his summary was not totally accurate, as historians would argue with reference to Indians & slaves. And in fact, Jay’s ancestors were French and Dutch!

Nevertheless, the founders lived in a world unlike our time. There were fewer races, religions and ethnicities compared to our time.

However we got here, the question is **How Will Christians Deal With This Reality?** I would hope, (1) we would pray for our nation, (2) that we would take seriously the command of Peter to “honor all people,” {1 Pet. 2:17; see also James 2:1-13}, (3) that we would shun prejudice and violence, and (4) that we would reach out to all people with the gospel.

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘The just shall live by faith’.” (Rom. 1:16,17)

Worried about this nation? Take the gospel to all.

Source: What Would The Founders Do? by Richard Brookhiser