

The Broadmoor Bulletin

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The Prince of Peace Brought a Sword

Now as [Paul] reasoned about righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and answered, "Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you."

Acts 24:25

Does the truth about God disturb us? It should. This is so because the truth about God will have to include an account of our rebellion against Him, and this part of the story can't be anything but disturbing to anyone who loves God.

The "good news" of the gospel is not that we are fine in our present condition and that we simply need to accept our "authentic" selves. No, it is rather the good news that *pardon* is available at the justice bar of God, a pardon that justice itself would have said was impossible. But the news of pardon can only be good news if we're first willing to accept the painful reality that we *need* to be pardoned! The gospel has to do with the forgiveness of our sins (**Acts 26:18**), and it is not so frivolous as to suggest that we can be forgiven without *repentance* (**Acts 17:30**). Repentance, the decisive *turning away* from our sins, is not a warm and fuzzy procedure. It is a soul-wrenching process produced by a thing the Scriptures call "godly sorrow" (**2 Corinthians 7:10, 11**).

Even if we were not deeply disturbed by the truth about what we've done to our God, how could we not be disturbed to hear of the price He had to pay to *atone* for what we've done? How can we deal with the gospel of Christ and not be "cut to the heart" (**Acts 2:37**)? Either we are not listening or the preacher is not preaching. When Paul explained the truth to Felix, this Roman official was not moved out of his complacency enough to do anything about the truth, but Paul's presentation of the gospel was such that when Felix even *listened* to it seriously, he was "afraid" (**Acts 24:25**).

How different Paul's preaching must have been from what has become fashionable today! Malcolm Muggeridge was not exaggerating when he said, "The church, like most institutions of our society, is scared and is anxious to ingratiate itself with people, rather than to tell them the truth." We preach the Prince of Peace, and it's entirely right that we emphasize the peace that He wants to give us. But this Prince brought a sword (**Matthew 10:34**), and among its other functions, this sword must sever us from *our self-righteous selves* -- a most disturbing thing indeed.

"If Christianity has never disturbed us, we have not yet learned what it is." Sir William Temple

Gary Henry

Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. **2 Peter 1:5 - 8**

A Study of Debt

Most Americans are characterized for sure by two features: they love money, and they are in debt. The Bible is plain regarding the love of money. "For the love of money is the root of all evil..." (I Tim. 6:10). There are many attendant problems associated with the love of money (I Tim. 6:5-11). Having said this, money is vital to and in our lives. How can one obey the command to provide for one's own without an awareness, appreciation, and acquisition of money (I Tim. 6:10, Eph. 6:2)? Regarding debt and money, there is a relevant command that seems to have been almost forgotten. Paul wrote thus to the Christians at Rome: "Owe no man anything, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law" (13:8). Let us now focus more on the subject of debt under two headings.

All accountable men have a debt (something owed to another). The debt is sin, and sin, I submit, is universal (I John 1:7-10). Jesus taught, "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" (Matt. 6:12). Commentator Albert Barnes makes some excellent comments on the thought and concept of the "debt" mentioned by Jesus. Please consider them:

"Debtors are those who are bound to others for some claim in commercial transactions....Literally there can be no such transaction between God and us. It must be used figuratively. We have not met the claims of law. We have violated its obligations. We are exposed to its penalty. We are guilty, and God only can forgive, in the same way as none but a creditor can forgive a debtor. The word 'debts' here, therefore, means 'sins' or offences against God - offences which none but God can forgive" (Barnes Notes on the New Testament, Vol. 1, Matt. 6:12).

God will forgive man his debt of sin, and God expects each man to forgive those who have personally sinned against him (Matt. 6:12, 18:23-35). Not only does the teaching of Matthew 18:23-35 contain the glorious thought that God will forgive man of his sin, but the text also presents sin or debt comparatively viewed. The comparison is between man's sins against God and man's sins against man. From this comparison, we learn that man's sins against his fellow man are small in debt compared to man's sins against God (see vs. 23-35). In fact, the enormity of the debt of sin owed to God is such that the record states, "And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay..." (vs. 24, 25, ten thousand talents was an amount totally out of the reach of the average man to pay, regardless of the different possible currency considerations). Man, on the other hand, is seen owing man a much smaller debt (vs. 28).

Man's spiritual debt to God cannot be paid by man's meritorious efforts; this is another paramount lesson in Matt. 18:23-35. The forgiveness from God must be "out of compassion" and not because we have paid off the debt (vs. 27, 32, 33).

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A Study of Debt

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In the language of Paul, man cannot work and earn salvation or freedom from spiritual debt (Rom. 4). However, this is not to say that "Jesus did it all on the cross; therefore, man is totally passive." Man resolves his spiritual debt by appropriating God's grace (Eph. 2:8, 9). Involved in this appropriation is belief, repentance, confession of Jesus' deity, and water baptism for the forgiveness of sin (Acts 2:36-38, Rom. 10:9, 10). The Christian continues to contact Jesus' blood (the means of the debt being retired) by "walking in the light" and "confessing his sins" (I Jn. 1:7-10). In the matter of debt to man, Paul experienced a great feeling of debt, to preach the debt releasing gospel to all men (Rom. 1:14-16).

What a thought: we are, as far as our own means are concerned, hopelessly in debt to God and facing ultimate condemnation throughout all eternity, but God has made our forgiveness possible through the blood of his Son (Matt. 26:28).

The matter of financial debt. According to one survey, the average American owes \$6,000.00 in credit card debt. Some of the debt involves such an exorbitant interest rate that many of these people will never be able to recover. The Christian is to "make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fall, they may receive you into everlasting habitations" (Luke 16:9, see vs. 1-13). I am convinced that Jesus is teaching the proper use of money in this parable. One can correctly make use of money by visiting the fatherless and the widows in their affliction (James 1:27), assisting the needy in general, and contributing into the treasury of the local church (Eph. 4:28; cp. I Cor. 16:1, 2).

Financial debt can and does contribute to spiritual failure. Financial worries constitute a portion of the "cares of this life" that result in not bearing fruit to God's glory (Luke 8:14). Marriage failure, mental, and emotional problems are all often connected to financial indebtedness. Families are deteriorating often because both the mother and father are so deeply in debt that they are working long hours just to try to keep from going under or experiencing bankruptcy.

Paul said: "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law" (Rom. 13:8). I do not think that Paul necessarily means to say that purchasing on time or taking out credit is automatically a sin. When one charges a purchase, one is promising to pay by installments. If the installment is not paid, one has not fulfilled the promise. In fact, the word "owe" on Romans 13:8 is the Greek *opheilo*, which means a moral obligation. Credit is taken too lightly today and bankruptcy is too readily available to enable people to escape their debts.

Some ways to avoid, meet, and control debt. In the first place, many of the "things" for which people incur debt are not things that man really needs. Americans have come to think that they must have it all and maintain a certain lifestyle. We have too often forgotten the basic necessities of life: food, shelter, and clothing (Matt. 6:25-34). Covetousness and lack of contentment are rampant (Heb. 13:5).

In many cases, by being diligent and industrious in labor we can avoid objectionable debt. The Christian is to be the opposite of sloth and laziness (Col. 3:22, 23). The teaching of the wise man

is always applicable: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might..." (Eccl. 9:10, contrast with Prov. 6:6-11).

Many are living beyond their means. Plastic money is a temptation some cannot resist; hence, they financially overextend themselves. In doing local preaching, I have too many times encountered families that were in financial bondage. "We cannot help or participate in different acts because we are so in debt," I have heard. I have always found that such problems are the result of being too fond of material things (I Tim. 6:6-10).

Lack of money management is often the cause of people's financial problems. One simple way to track and channel expenditures is to keep a log or record of where your money is being spent. When some have done this, they have been shocked at the percentage going for "recreation." Keeping a log can help us assess our financial priorities and make the necessary adjustments (Matt. 6:33).

Husbands and wives should work together in financial management. This is especially true when both the husband and wife are involved in secular work. Separate check books, credit cards, etc. can and often do lead to financial embarrassment if they are not monitored. The family should be working together in such matters, not going their own separate ways (see Prov. 31:10-31).

Many are in financial want because they ignore hard, honest work and seek after the easy, fast money. Increase in gambling is reflective of such an attitude, I believe. "If I could only win the lottery," some repine. Constancy over a period of time is always the practice that pays great dividends.

The bottom line in the matter of financial debt is self-control. Credit is much too available and many do not seem to be able to resist it. I was speaking to a young person just the other day and asked, "When was the last time you went home?" She answered and I mentioned that I was sure the cost of travel was a big factor. "Oh, no," she replied, "When I want to do something and I do not have the money, I just charge it to my credit card."

In conclusion, God's great love is willing to release us from the debt of sin and spiritual bondage (Rom. 5:6-10). As a result, we should appropriate God's debt release and ever be ready to forgive those who sin against us (Matt. 18:23-35). We are admonished to, "Owe no man anything..." and we need to also beware of excessive debt to man, viewing such as a moral obligation to be taken seriously. **Don Martin**

Self-Control

The Bible clearly teaches that Christians are to exercise temperance or self-control (2 Peter 1:6) if we are to make our calling and election sure (2 Peter 1:10).

There are those who profess to being Christians that do not exercise self-control, and, as a result, they lose their temper, they use speech not fitting for a Christian to use, or they engage in actions unbecoming to a follower of Christ.

How can we develop self-control? Paul gives us the answer in 2 Corinthians 10:5; "...bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." When our every thought is controlled by the desire to be obedient to Christ in all things, we will be able to exercise the self-control expected of followers of Christ. **James Hahn**

For an additional study on self-control, visit the site http://www.executableoutlines.com/fs/fs_17.htm to view an outline by Mark Copeland.

Add to Your Faith

When one becomes a child of God, he is born again spiritually (John 3:1-5) becoming a spiritual babe who is to grow (1 Pet. 2:1-2; 2 Pet. 3:18). One grows spiritually by feeding upon the word of God (Acts 20:32), developing a spiritual appetite in order to hunger and thirst after righteousness (Matt. 5:6).

2 Peter 1:5-11 tells of the necessity and nature of such growth. "But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

"Virtue" is the determination to do right. "Knowledge" is knowledge of God's word because it is the only source which tells what is right. "Self-control" is the application of that knowledge in your life using it to govern your thoughts and actions. "Perseverance" is remaining steadfast to the Lord and His cause. "Godliness" is being like God, as He would have you to be. "Brotherly kindness" is tender affection toward brethren in Christ. "Love" is devotion to God, Christ, and your fellowman which is expressed in obedience to God and service to man.

If you are to be fruitful in your service to Christ, these things must abound in your life. If you lack them, you are blind as to what your life in Christ should be. **Gene Taylor**

Preparing For Tomorrow's Crisis

Since the church began, there have been many crises. Some one has said that, at least in this country, serious trouble seems to come about each third generation. Must this be?

One generation, fighting its way out of the last problem, studies the Bible independently and reaches conclusions for which most of the members have sound Bible reasons. The second generation accepts the conclusions, with their accumulated terminology, and holds to them firmly—but doesn't understand the Bible reason for them. They simply *inherit* the conclusions, and often have little appreciation of their importance.

The third generation will likely hold to the terminology --- by now it represents orthodoxy -- but they grasp neither the reasons for, nor the applications of these conclusions. They condone all sorts of changes as long as they are couched in familiar words.

They will accept organizational bondage if they are assured that this is "congregational independence," and would play a horn if someone could think of a way to call it "singing."

Usually a few members know better than this, or are driven to rebellion by the sheer audacity of the innovators. They begin to make serious, independent Bible studies, seeking God's answers for the mess; and eventually reach sound scriptural conclusions. But in the process the creed-bound majority (third generation) is antagonized, tempers flare, and we start all over again.

Apposite to sectarian "party-ism", some folk are horrified if a material "split" takes place; (favorite expression is "torn asunder the precious body of our Lord") nor would I take such drastic action lightly. But the real "tearing asunder" takes place long before brethren quit meeting together; and is by far the more serious separation.

It is too bad folk won't be more concerned about the love for TRUTH and Spirituality that binds the body of Christ: together in the first place.

Must this vicious circle of crises (and sometimes apostasy) continue? Are we so destitute of character, so resigned to carnality, we can not end this devilish maelstrom?

Restrictive clauses in our property deeds will not do it. These creeds only catalog the problems we have had in the past. They are not needed in the first generation, and the second and third generation won't apply them.

So, we must go deeper than that. Obvious needs are more thorough Bible knowledge and understanding of basic principles underlying our conclusions. We must not be satisfied with stock answers to Bible questions but must demand a rewording -- making the answer our very own, and avoiding the development of "party" terminology.

We must ask, "Why?" over and over again; and never be satisfied with a "Church of Christ" ("we've always done it that way") answer.

But more important than all these, we must work on the heart. Within a few years after the massive Wall of China was built; it was breached by the enemy. Note: the Wall did not fail, but the gatekeepers were bribed. Our preparations for the next crisis will fail unless we learn to control ourselves. Except we learn whole-hearted dedication to the Lord, we must taste, again and again, the bitter fruits of the flesh.

Ours is an awesome responsibility, But preparation for future crises can not wait. Our children are growing; the years fly away; already we feel the gentle pressure of conformity; and -- say a prayer -- *it is soon the second generation.*

Plain Talk, April 1964

<http://www.cedarparkchurchofchrist.org/ptalk/v1/n4a.htm>

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. Everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

1 Corinthians 9:24 – 27

Times of Service

Sunday Bible Class	9:00 a.m.
Sunday Morning Worship	9:55 a.m.
Sunday Evening Worship	5:00 p.m.
Wednesday Evening Bible Study	7:00 p.m.

Visit us on the web at <http://www.broadmoorchurch.com>