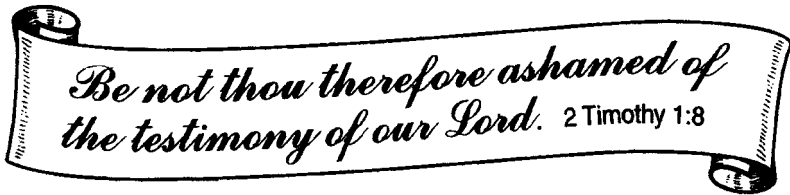


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In the parable of the marriage feast, a certain king made a marriage for his son and sent his servants to invite the guests. But the guests would not come. They made light of the invitation, "and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise" (Matthew 22:5).

This parable represents the Gospel invitation and the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7). All are invited to share in this joyous occasion. But today, as in the parable, many have no desire to be present. Imagine—to be invited to the most honorable wedding, and refuse to attend! Those who refuse have wrong priorities. They are placing a higher value on lesser things.

Could this happen to us? We must receive the warning of the parable as spoken to us today, lest we be blinded by deception. From the parable of the sower, we learn that "the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things entering in" (Mark 4:19) can choke our spiritual interests and the effectiveness of the Word. Even appropriate occupations can become a snare. If we pursue misplaced priorities, we will not be anticipating our Lord's return. We, too, will have ultimately rejected the invitation.

"One to his farm, another to his merchandise." These words of our Lord Jesus should certainly arrest our attention today. How can we be sure that our farms or our businesses are not taking too high a priority? We must be applying the practical teaching of the Scriptures to everyday living. What directives has our King given us?

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God" (Matthew 6:33). Does our enterprise enable us to give time to church work and mission work? Or does it hinder us? It is normal and proper to allow some time for a business to become established. However, the danger is in desiring to be "well set" before we can give time or support to the work of the church.

Our goal should always be to serve and support the kingdom of God to the best of our abilities. Putting the kingdom first is an act of faith, trusting God's promise that "all these things [the necessities of life] shall be added unto you."

"Set your affection on things above" (Colossians 3:2). We must guard our hearts lest we set our affection on the things of this world. What do we treasure or highly esteem (Luke 16:15)? If we love the things of this world,

the love of the Father is not in us (1 John 2:15).

"They that buy [are to be] as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away" (1 Corinthians 7:30-31). We need to remind ourselves that all these earthly things will perish. Therefore, if we would have eternal wealth, we must set our affection on the eternal riches, not the fading, temporal things of time.

We will "give an account of [our] stewardship" (Luke 16:2). That we must someday give this account before the Judge of all the earth is a solemn truth. Those who have a greater knowledge of truth and a greater understanding of the will of God have a greater accountability. "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required" (Luke 12:48). We are accountable for the proper use of our time and of the material goods that God has entrusted to us. We will also answer for the gifts of the Spirit (talents and abilities), which are given to edify the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:7-11). To use these gifts selfishly is to misuse them.

Are you focused on spiritual priorities? Are you anticipating the marriage? Those who have accepted the Gospel invitation will keep first things first. They anxiously await their Lord's return. "Who then is that faithful and wise steward . . . ? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing" (Luke 12:42-43).

—*Brother James*



THE SALVATION OF OLD TESTAMENT SAINTS

Is salvation primarily a New Testament theme? Not necessarily. The term salvation is used about one hundred twenty times in the Old Testament. These usages are translated from four different Hebrew words. The definitions of these Hebrew words include the following concepts: deliverance, victory, prosperity, liberty, and rescue. At various times in the Old Testament, salvation refers primarily to deliverance from physical danger or natural enemies. For example, at the Red Sea, Moses said, "Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD" (Exodus 14:13). At other times, salvation refers to spiritual prosperity or to deliverance or rescue from spiritual danger. Our consideration for this article is the spiritual salvation of saints in the Old Testament. Salvation in the Old Testament era, as in the New

Testament era, is being rescued or delivered by the grace of God from the clutches of sin and its eternal consequences. Those who are saved have God's favor and are ready to meet Him at any time. Therefore, upon departing this life, the saved enjoy eternal bliss with God and escape eternal death, the just recompense of the wicked.

What was the prospect for salvation in the Old Testament times? According to the Old Testament Scriptures, salvation has been the experience and aspiration of the righteous of all time. "The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Psalm 27:1). "But I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation" (Psalm 13:5). "I have waited for thy salvation, O LORD" (Genesis 49:18). "He also shall be my salvation" (Job 13:16). "Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation" (Habakkuk 3:18). "Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit" (Psalm 51:12).

Was the salvation of Old Testament saints inferior to that of the saints of the New Dispensation? Certainly not! The Pentateuch, the Psalms, and the Old Testament prophets portray their salvation as being joyful and satisfying. Actually, we in the New Testament era receive much encouragement from the salvation texts in the Old Testament and the relationship Old Testament saints had with God.

What conditions did man need to meet in the Old Testament to be God's child, be accepted of Him, and enjoy His salvation? J.C. Wenger answers this question as follows:

"The Old Testament is entirely clear, therefore, that always and ever there has been but one way to become God's child, to be acceptable to Him, and to enter into a covenant relationship with Him. That way is the way of faith and holiness. Believers from Abel to Moses were accepted on the basis of their faith. Abraham is frequently used in the New Testament as a symbol of the fact that God has always saved men by faith, regardless of whether they lived before the Mosaic Covenant, during the Mosaic Covenant, or in the New Covenant made by Christ." ¹

The relationship between faith and the life of holiness that accompanies faith is explained by Chester K. Lehman:

"Abraham believed the stupendous promises of God. The narrator of Genesis added, "And he [the Lord], counted it [his belief] to him for righteousness" (Genesis 15:6). Since Paul used this same statement as a foundation for the great doctrine of justification, we are safe in considering Abraham's life as an example of the operation of faith in obtaining right standing with

God ... Abraham having manifested his faith, the Lord initiated a solemn covenant and sealed it by passing between the pieces of the sacrifice (Genesis 15:17). . . . Abraham soon realized that faith in the Lord who solemnized a promise by a covenant imposed upon him a life of holiness. His God said to him, "I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect" (Genesis 17:1).²

God's command to Abraham—"Walk before me, and be thou perfect"—demonstrates the inseparability of one's faith and manner of life.

The requirements for the Israelites to be in favor with God, or to be saved, were similar to the requirements given to Abraham. "Thou shalt be perfect with the Lord thy God" (Deuteronomy 18:13). "And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of the Lord, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?" (Deuteronomy 10:12-13).

"Various Scriptures indicate clearly the great and underlying continuity of the various preparatory covenants made with the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; the Mosaic Covenant, (the sign of which was the Jewish Sabbath); and the New Covenant in Christ Jesus. Paul summarizes Galatians 3 as follows: "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:27-29). This Scripture indicates clearly the continuity of the covenant which dates back to Abraham, two thousand years before Christ, and the New Covenant which is in Christ; the continuity consists in the principle of salvation by faith and the resulting holy obedience unto the Lord."³

Part of God's plan for Old Testament saints was to offer acceptable sacrifices through faith. Abel obtained acceptability with God as he offered his sacrifice by faith. God made a covenant with Noah as He smelled the sweet savor of his offering. After Job's friends offered burnt offerings and Job prayed for them, the Lord's wrath subsided toward Job's friends, and He turned the captivity of Job. The Mosaic Law included a comprehensive sacrificial system.

While the sacrifices of the Old Testament were God's perfect plan for that time, the Old Testament saints needed the sacrifice of Christ to complete their salvation. "And for this cause he is the mediator of the new tes-

tament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance" (Hebrews 9:15). "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

The Old Testament saints saw the work of Christ through faith. Simeon was a classic example of an Old Testament saint who had a clear view of the completion of his salvation through Christ as he said, "Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel" (Luke 2:29-32). Anna also testified of the many who had faith in the completion of their salvation when she "spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem" (Luke 2:38).

Thanks be to God for His wonderful provision of salvation for saints of all time.

Brother Daniel

Footnotes:

1 J. C. Wenger, *Separated Unto God* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Mennonite Publishing House, 1951), p. 6.

2 Chester K. Lehman, *The Holy Spirit and the Holy Life* (Scottsdale, Pa.; Herald Press, 1959), pp. 12, 13.

3 Wenger, *Separated*, p. 7.

Note: Scriptural quotations within quotations from the above sources were changed to the King James Version.



" My People Shall Never Be Ashamed" (Part 1)

This article examines an unconditional statement of God—a statement so emphatically true that the Lord repeats it in consecutive verses: "And my people shall never be ashamed" (Joel 2:26-27).

"My people shall never be ashamed" rests in the absolute sovereignty and immutability of God. Only God can say "never" with absolute certainty. The old saying, "Never say never," while often good advice for us, is never true for Him. When our God says "never," it will be never. "Never" spans both time and eternity.

God's people never have a reason to be ashamed of their God, of His way, of His Word, or of His people. Let us examine some of the reasons.

We will never be ashamed of our God. Our God is perfect in all His ways. We are definitely not ashamed of perfection: the scholar's perfect grade, the trim carpenter's perfect miter, or mother's perfect bread. Perfection cannot be improved upon. Our God is perfect in all His ways.

He is perfect in His leading. "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye" (Psalm 32:8). We marvel, at times, how the puzzle pieces of life come together, and we are reminded of the perfection of His leading.

Although numerous circumstances in life are not what we would have chosen, our God is able to use even those difficult experiences to accomplish His purposes. Joseph is a good example of one for whom, by all appearances, things were going very wrongly. But God was obviously superintending those circumstances to accomplish His good purposes. "His purposes will ripen fast, unfolding every hour." "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3:6). We will never be ashamed when we follow Him.

God is perfect in His provisions. "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19). And we have needs: the need for forgiveness, the need for grace, the need for love, the need for wisdom, the need for daily bread, the need for. .. and our list goes on. In all our need He "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." God is able to do for us what we cannot do. We will never be ashamed when we trust Him.

He is perfect in His judgment. We may remember times when we have made embarrassing decisions based on faulty information. But with our God retrials will never occur, new evidence will never be uncovered. There will be no mistakes. We will never be ashamed of His judgment.

He is perfect in His commands. Behind every command of God is the wisdom of God. He never guesses about what is best for us. "The laws of the Medes and Persians could not be changed, but the laws of our God need not be changed" (Brother Donald Nolt). We will never be ashamed when we obey Him.

He is perfect in His timing. "When the fullness of time was come" describes the timeliness of His work. If we were to read the entire historical record from Creation until now, we would find that our God is never late, never caught off-guard, and never surprised. His word to Isaiah rings true for us today: "They shall not be ashamed that wait for me" (Isaiah 49:23).

Our God never fails. We will never be ashamed of Him. "This God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death" (Psalm 48:14). "The LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory" (Isaiah 60:19).

We will never be ashamed of His way. "As for God, his way is perfect" (Psalm 18:30). "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man," but God's way is right. And He has so graciously revealed His way through the Scriptures, through His Holy Spirit, and through His people. His way is always open to any honest seeker. "I being in the way, the LORD led me" (Genesis 24:27).

His way is not radical in the sense of being sensational, absurd, or extreme; but His way is characterized by directives that require simple, common, everyday obedience. Obedience is the greatest characteristic of those who are not ashamed of His way.

God's people are convinced His way is perfect; they want no other way. Others may ask, "What would Jesus do?" and then keep on sinning because they have a faulty view of Jesus. God's people take the revealed next step and ask, "What wilt Thou have me to do?"

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego understood God's answer to this question and stood. "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us.... But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods" (Daniel 3:17-18).

Joseph understood God's answer to this question and ran. "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9).

God's own Son understood the Father's answer to this question and died. "Not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42).

Only this level of commitment, this depth of conviction will keep us in His way. Half-hearted allegiance, partial surrender, and unwilling obedience will never culminate in an enduring church. Some of our greatest tests come in what we may call the "small" things: obeying the speed limit, obeying the lights-out policy at Bible school, or submitting to the details of church standards. Commitment to His way is all-encompassing. "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much" (Luke 16:10).

His way is the only way. We will never be ashamed to be found walking in the way which "leadeth unto life."

Brother Kevin



"The steps of a good man are ordered by
the LORD: and he [the good man] delighteth
in his [the LORD'S] way"

Psalm 37:23

'And whosoever believeth on him [as Savior and
Lord] shall not be ashamed"

Romans 9:33



"The Root of All Evil"

Compared to other eras and to many individuals in the world today, we are wealthy. We dwell in furnished houses, eat a wide variety of food several times a day, and have closets well filled with clothing. With this abundance, we should heed the Scriptural warning: "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil" (1 Timothy 6:9-10).

Does this warning condemn the use of money and the ownership of goods? Money is not evil in itself. The Scriptures assume that we will earn money. We are called to provide for our own families' physical needs (1 Timothy 5:8). We are commanded to be diligent and to do manual labor (1 Thessalonians 4:11). And we are taught to share materially with those in need (Ephesians 4:28).

In this land of freedom and abundance, those who follow the Scriptural principles of diligence and wise stewardship are often blessed with more than they need. This reward carries with it a snare, for success tempts us to pride. To the carnal appetite, the taste of wealth is intoxicating. It craves more and never feels satisfied. Herein lies the root of evil.

Indications of this Root

Stealing. We know that taking what belongs to another is sin. But do we ever "steal" from our business clients in a legalized way? Consider situations such as highly profitable niche markets or high-profile customers who seem willing to pay exorbitant prices for ordinary goods. If we seize these opportunities, are we not taking advantage of our fellow men? Even though we have a ready buyer, if we are selling products at unreasonable

prices, might it reveal a heart snared by the love of money?

Dishonesty. "It is naught, it is naught, sayeth the buyer: but when he is gone his way, then he boasteth" (Proverbs 20:14). Do we discredit and pick fault with an item that we intend to buy until the seller lowers his price and then smugly go our way with our "good deal"? Or if we are the seller, do we misrepresent our merchandise or hide flaws in our product? If we do, we value riches more highly than honesty.

Misplaced loyalties. We cannot afford to allow our work to infringe on our time with our Lord. Is the hay crop more important to us than the prayer meeting service? Do we allow our customers to intrude on family worship with phone calls? Do we permit beef prices or produce patch earnings to linger in our minds while having personal devotions?

Our natural drive for wealth will also intrude on our family time if we let it. Wives and families need more from fathers than paychecks. If fathers are gone all day, they ought to lay aside bread winning for the evening to be with the family. The more time that fathers spend away from home to earn a living, the more effort they must put into meeting the emotional needs of the family.

Parents do well to find projects that not only provide income but also promote family togetherness. This may mean that fathers must sometimes choose less efficient methods so that they may involve their sons in working together. The whole family should labor together on family projects such as gardening and yard work.

The Scriptures outline the duty of mothers as "keepers at home." If mothers neglect home responsibilities in order to supplement the family's earnings, might it be that the love of money is taking root?

Luxurious living. We live in a society that takes pride in making an open show of wealth. This attitude has a tendency to rub off on us. We can almost unknowingly begin to envy our neighbor's immaculate landscape or new pickup truck. We feel pressured to meet the status quo of society. What factors decide when it is time to replace the siding on the house or to buy a new living room suite? Do we do it because it is necessary or because we like the new styles? Whether or not we can afford an item must not be the only criterion that decides a purchase. A luxurious lifestyle displays a love of money.

Helps for Avoiding this Root

Cultivate contentment. View earning power as a way to provide "food and raiment" for the family, not as a means of gaining whatever the heart desires. Like Jacob of old, learn to say, "I have enough." Bring into subjec-

tion that hankering after the newer, bigger, or better. When the neighbor buys a new tractor or the church brother drives a nice minivan, crucify the envy in your own heart. "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content" (Philippians 4:11).

Maintain a "stranger and pilgrim" mentality. Biblical principle, as well as historical precedent, requires a simple lifestyle. This concept calls for avoiding the purchase of luxurious vehicles or of those models with sports or extravagant features. It guides the purchase and use of technology. It steers away from the professional image that is promoted in today's world of business. It contributes to humility, even for the well-to-do.

Give. The Scriptures contain many admonitions to share with the needy. Needs abound. Christians, of all people, ought to be liberal in their giving. Give in the church offering. Give a private donation to your needy brother. Give a meal to the widower in your congregation. Learn to abound in the grace of giving. If you sincerely give as the Lord has prospered you, the temptation to love money will fade.

As you search your life, do you find the root of all evil lurking there? See it as sin, and repent before the Lord. Your money, and all you own, is the Lord's. Use your possessions in humble service for Him.

Brother Daniel

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth,
where moth and rust doth corrupt,
and where thieves breakthrough and steal:
but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven,
where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt,
and where thieves do not break through nor steal
for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Matthew 6:19-21



"Come Out of Her, My People" (Part 3)

Electronic Addiction

"Jonathan, do you have homework this evening?" Mother questioned.

"Yes, I must write a friendly letter for English class," Jonathan replied.

"Brother Chester reminded us that he will not accept various types of shorthand which seem to be the new fad."

"What did he have in mind?" Father lifted his eyes from the article he was

reading.

"He has been noticing that some are using text-messaging shorthand. He feels that this devalues good spelling habits."

"I know just what he is thinking," Mother injected. "Fairlane's Roadside Market has a winter message on their sign. It says, 'C U in the Spring!'"

Father's brow furrowed. "I am glad for Brother Chester's foresight. Our society is addicted to their electronic gadgets. Addictions usually lead persons into a ditch. We cannot afford to follow their example even if it appears innocent."

Using electronic equipment is not wrong in itself. We benefit from this technology in many ways, possibly without even realizing it. But electronics have become quite fascinating. Liquid crystal displays, digital readouts, blinking lights, charming ring tones, and soft-touch controls all proclaim, "Simple to operate, easy to learn, and fun to use."

Can electronic fascination become an addiction? Addiction is marked by several symptoms. First, the addiction creates an unrestrainable craving. Second, if the craving is not fed, the addict succumbs to emotional distress. Third, those who feed an addiction damage their physical and mental health. They often make poor or unsafe decisions. Frequently, addicts waste much time and money and neglect the more important things in life. Electronic technology has become a most sought-after attraction by both young and old around us. Time and money is thoughtlessly spent as people purchase one electronic device after another. But God warns us: "Be not deceived: "evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Corinthians 15:33).

In times like these, we must be assured that "godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Timothy 6:6). Godly living must be our highest priority. Nurturing contentment will restrain our impulses and restrict our desires for the newest and the most capable electronic devices. We must shun wantonness and selfish gratification.

Conservative Christians will also honor the Scriptural directive, "See then that ye walk circumspectly" (Ephesians 5:15). A circumspect mentality bears an alert wariness toward the new, the flashy, the modern contrivances. Are these things as useful as they appear? Are they worth the money? More importantly, are they worth the potential spiritual cost? What hidden features lie here which could lead a soul to hell? Give it some time. Do not be the first to have one!

Electronic improvements tend to simplify things that were once costly and complicated. This can bring subtle changes that may displace our bet-

ter judgment. Our use of photography is one of these areas. Historically, the Plain People were skeptical of photography, believing that it militated against simplicity and humility. Are we today fascinated with photography, or do we share our forefather's concern?

Another subtle change has come with the ability to generate all types of computer-designed materials. This becomes evident at times in schoolroom displays, scrapbook pages, wedding stationery, and business advertisements. How quickly we can surround ourselves with elite design, the latest fads in color coordination, and a decor unbecoming for those with a meek and quiet spirit! Are we wise to allow these changes?

Possibly the greatest electronic danger is the access to enormous stores of information. Worldly society is thoroughly drunk with this mind-boggling web of data. Godly people must not allow this infectious craving for information to overtake them. With utmost caution we must "come out" and prove "what is acceptable unto the Lord" (Ephesians 5:10).

— *Brother Christopher*



PRAYER POINT

*"The effectual fervent prayer
of a righteous man availeth much"*

Thank the Lord for freedom of religion and worship.

Today many Christians are being persecuted

And martyred for their faith.

We should use our freedoms for the glory of God

And pray for those who are suffering under ruthless regimes.

