

EQUIPPING THE SAINTS

“...FOR THE EQUIPPING OF THE SAINTS FOR THE WORK OF SERVICE...” ~ EPHESIANS 4:12

VOLUME 2

JUNE 4, 2017

ISSUE 49



UNFAITHFULNESS IS INWARD

By Frank Jamerson

The little book of Hosea teaches a great lesson on the nature of sin. Hosea was told to marry Gomer; who became unfaithful to him and finally left him to live with her “lovers.” Later, Hosea was told to buy her back and accept her as his wife, which he did.

Gomer’s leaving her husband was a result of inward unfaithfulness. She ceased to love and have confidence in her husband before she left him for others. Her leaving was simply an expression of the inner infidelity that existed. In this experience, God taught Hosea a valuable lesson about Israel’s unfaithfulness to Him. Just as Hosea wanted more than a housekeeper, God wanted more than external forms of service. Just as Gomer ceased to love Hosea before she became an adulteress, Israel had ceased to love God before they turned to idolatry.

There is a valuable lesson in this for us. God desires our love and devotion. If He gets this, He will get our external service. If He does not get this, then our outward forms will be vain. Just as Hosea did not want a “housekeeper,” God does not want a half-hearted ritualistic service. If we are faithful in our hearts, our lives will reveal it. The external unfaithfulness manifested by many who claim to be children of God is simply the expression of an inner infidelity.

“My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways” (Proverbs 23:26). **“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life”** (Proverbs 4:23). When people give their hearts to God, faithfulness is the natural result. Paul said that the Macedonians **“first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God”** (2 Corinthians 8:5). When they “first” gave themselves, the service that followed was rendered cheerfully.

It is a sad thing to see a marriage companion forsake his commitment and commit adultery, but no one ever did that who was not first unfaithful in the heart. It is likewise sad to see those who are married to Christ (Romans 7:4) become unfaithful in their service to God, but the unfaithfulness that we can see was preceded by an inner infidelity that only God could see.

[Originally published in the Guardian of Truth, 1/19/1994]

HE LOVES EVEN ME

By Robert F. Turner

How may one, who is pure, relate to sin, and the sinner? Light has no fellowship with darkness—Come ye out from among them... saith the Lord (2 Corinthians 6:14-18). Yet, Jesus Christ, the purest of pure, lived no monastic life. The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners! But wisdom is justified of all her children (Luke 7:34-35).

Space will not permit discussion of the many examples of Jesus association with sinners, but we urge you to read:

Luke 7:36-50; 15:2-32; 19:1-10 and John 8:3-11; then think with us.

First, we should realize that much of Jesus' criticism came from people who judged themselves righteous on a basis of externals: I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess (Luke 18:10-14). The fault is compounded when we judge ourselves sound because we oppose something. Such prejudicial and superficial judgment makes it easy to classify all tax collectors (etc.) as sinners, rather than fairly deal with each one.

But the universal lesson in all of Jesus dealing with sinners—and the ever-present contrast of his attitude with that of the Pharisees—was his genuine concern for them. Like a parent whose child has contracted some loathsome disease, he could shrink from the foul contamination even as he reached lovingly for the victim.

Jesus rejected the idea of defilement via touch (Mark 7:14-23); insisting we keep a pure heart as protection against corruption. He shrank not from the woman of bad reputation, when she evinced repentance and came to him for understanding. He could not allow a sulky elder brother to dampen the joy in heaven over a sinner that repents. He went to Zaccheus' house for the same reason a fisherman goes to water. He sought the lost—where they were. He told the adulterous woman, Go, and sin no more.

We may dismiss our Lords compassion as a divine attribute, unreal. Failing to appreciate his motives, we may even excuse (?) our vile life by his pure examples. But we will not be Christ like until we learn this love.

[Originally published in Plain Talk, 11.11.1]

1 CORINTHIANS IN A NUTSHELL

By Andrew Dow

If you need something to make you feel better about yourself, look no further than Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. This church, with their large number of problems, seems about as dysfunctional as they come.

The book divides itself into two sections. In the first section Paul addresses two reports he had heard concerning the Corinthians (1 Cor. 1-6). The second section contains answers to the Corinthians' own questions (1 Cor. 7-16). Their issues include both physical problems (immorality, food sacrificed to idols, etc.), and spiritual misunderstandings (spiritual gifts, resurrection, etc.).

Corinth had serious problems. But, then again, it would be foolish to pretend we are a perfect church. Fortunately, the Corinthians' shortcomings are preserved for our learning. Let me encourage you to spend some time learning from the church at Corinth this week!

NOTES: _____

AM LESSON:

Be Fruitful & Multiply
(Genesis 1:28)

PM LESSON:

Freedom in Christ
(Galatians 4:21-5:6)

“GO THEREFORE AND MAKE DISCIPLES...”
(MATTHEW 28:19-20)