

*"Sir, we wish to see Jesus" — John 12:21*

## Intentions Won't Get It

by Dee Bowman

Some of the proverbial expressions not found in the Bible are nonetheless true. Truth will always plumb with all other truth; it cannot contradict itself. Take the expression "the road to hell is paved with good intentions." That 's not in the scriptures, but I fear it's true nonetheless. Nobody that I've ever heard of really wants to go to hell; and everybody I know intends to do something about not making that trip. But when? That's the question.

"I intend to be more diligent." Diligence is necessary to progress in spiritual living. You can't just sit around and become spiritual. Furthermore, it doesn't come by some process of osmosis—or just because you are in close proximity to a Bible, or to others who believe it and are involved in it. Diligence is a personal, willful action: you decide to do it. In the NKJV, 2 Tim. 2:15 says, "Give diligence to present yourself approved to God." The word translated diligence is from a Latin word which means to give earnest persistence to a matter. The Greek word means both an earnest zeal and a burning haste to get it done. You can't just sit around and be still be diligent.

Peter tells us something about diligence when he uses that same term to describe what have been styled "The Christian Graces" in 2 Peter 1. "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." You don't add those things up in your mind and you're through—it's a life-long pursuit. And it all begins with the decision to get on with the project. That means you develop a serious conviction and a pressing urgency to the need to add all those things to your life. Intentions won't get it; it takes work.

"I intend to get involved." When? And what's wrong with today? Intentions won't get it, folks. You can only get involved when you participate with someone in something, become a part—a working part. The "someone" is other brethren and the "something" is the work you've decided to do together. Paul speaks of joint participation in Romans 12: "For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another." We're individuals who are melded together in the fight against sin and ungodliness. And we're together in our common worship of the Father, in our desire to bring others to Him. We're together, and being together takes work, patience, understanding; and it takes time. But it doesn't just happen. It's a planned action. Intentions don't work, folks.

"I intend to tell somebody." I seriously doubt that anybody is going to heaven alone. You will go with someone and you will take someone. Just as somebody loved us enough to tell us about the Lord and His salvation, it's up to us to pass it on. Not just intend to, mind you, but to do it. Everybody intends to talk to their family, to their neighbor, but that won't get it. You have to run the risk. And if you lose a friend over it, it's no more than what the Lord did.

"As many as were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word" we are told in Acts 8:4. Not just the preachers, not just the elders, but "as many as were scattered." Everybody has the responsibility to pass on the message of the risen Savior and His salvation. It may be that the great deficiency of the church in this age is the failure of its members to get involved in teaching others. Oh, they intend to. But intentions won't get it, folks.

And you don't have to be a Bible scholar to teach the word. All you need is a note pad

### **Wear Masks**

**Today's**

### **Schedule**

### **The Lord's Day**

**8:30 - Assembly**  
Building

**9:30 - Assembly**  
Building

**10:30 - Assembly**  
Building

and a knowledge of the scriptures broad enough to tell someone what you did to be saved. Following the great commission in Matthew 28:18, Jesus said, "...teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you." What did He just command? "Go therefore and teach all nations," that's what. Maybe you intend to do it but you don't have the ability? Then help someone else do it. Be a part. One thing is certain: it needs to be told. And intentions won't get it done; you have to get on with it.

When it's all said and done and you stand before the bar of judgment, can you say to the Lord, with a clear conscience, "Lord, I intended to?"

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## Looking Good

by Dee Bowman

Everyone admits to the need for truth. No matter the endeavor, truth figures into the result. Truth is what is verifiable, what can be shown to be right; it's what has authenticity, what is real. It suppresses ignorance; it encourages progress; it precipitates growth, promotes usefulness; truth is the basis for all improvement.

But you have to apply truth. Just because you know the truth by no means argues its effectiveness. You have to do something with it, make it work, not just admire it. And it takes courage to apply truth to a given set of circumstances—especially when it's unpleasant to do so. It certainly is true what the proverb says, "truth sometimes hurts," but in the long run, truth is necessary to any occupation or project. Sometimes you have to hurt to get better.

Notice some things about truth and your personal relationship toward it from James 1:22-25.

It takes honest evaluation. Truth is necessary for good introspection—for looking inside yourself. It's hard to be objective when you are looking at your own motives and desires, hard to not be prejudiced in favor of yourself. First, you have to admit to the need of truth before you will apply it. A kind of intellectual humility is necessary to bring yourself under the scrutiny of the word of God. You have to divest yourself of your pride and admit to the need. If you're not careful you will rationalize and excuse yourself. Looking into the mirror of the soul sometimes is not a pleasant experience, but it's always a necessary one. And it takes considerable personal integrity to do it.

It's easy to be deceived. If we are not very careful we will think ourselves justified just because we know what is right.

For instance, we can have a kind of corporate view of religion, thinking that we are just fine spiritually because we attend a sound congregation, listen to sound preaching, and have good concepts of what the New Testament church is. Don't be deceived. Until we get active in all those areas we are not sound. James says, "be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." We have to look past our preconceptions and truly see ourselves, not as we want to be, but how we really are.

It's easy to procrastinate. James predicts that "whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the word, this man shall be blessed in his deed." This necessarily implies that we can know what is right and forget it—that is, we can ignore what we have seen when we look into the mirror. It doesn't mean we didn't see, just that we don't want to do anything about it right now. God never gave man a command on which he could not start right now. All truth is that way. It will not tolerate delay and postponement. It makes no sense to put off doing the truth, anyway. First, it's foolish to know what is right and not attend to it immediately. Further, it is inviting trouble to do so because it becomes easier and easier to put it off until it finally becomes ineffective to your calloused heart. To put it off is to ignore truth—for the present anyhow.

There are numerous blessings to obedience. When we do what truth says, we derive great benefits. James says, "this man shall be blessed in his deed." Each deed we do, each accomplishment we make, each good act we perform results in blessings for us. Those blessings can come right now or they can come in eternity, but they are nevertheless great in either case. It's never out of order to do right—never. It may seem difficult, but it's always right to do right. It may seem hard, but truth is still truth, no matter the consequences. And it may well be that doing right in the smallest matters is the greatest illustration of truth.

How do you look today? Did you take a look in the mirror before you came? Do you remember how you looked when you left the house? When you looked, did you find anything wrong? And if you did, did you repair it? When? Right then or sometime later? And when you looked did you look at just certain areas or did you look at all you could possibly see? When you went to the rest room before services, did you glance into the mirror?

Now, think about your spiritual being. Have you taken the time to look lately? Today might be a good time to take a few minutes and see yourself for what you really are—see the real you, the one that will live forever—somewhere.



Read your Bible daily