

# *A Light in the Valley*

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*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)*

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## ***A Different Kind of People***

*by: Kris Brewer*

There is a recurring theme throughout the psalms, in which the various authors identify a difference between the way people of the world view the people of God, and how God Himself views His people. While this contrast may be used for various purposes in the context of the different psalms, there are some consistent points that can be seen.

One particular point that quickly becomes evident is that those who are faithful to the Lord are viewed as being different than the people who are around them. This striking difference would lead to a contemptuous attitude on the part of the worldly. David expressed the contempt that was hurled at him in Psalm 41:

*My enemies speak evil of me: "When will he die, and his name perish?" And if he comes to see me, he speaks lies; His heart gathers iniquity to itself; When he goes out, he tells it. All who hate me whisper together against me; Against me they devise my hurt. (Psalm 41:5-7)*

David had many enemies, and addressed his conflicts with them multiple times throughout

the psalms. They were determined to do him harm, and were constantly pursuing him, or devising evil plans against him. It is clear from passages, such as the one above, that they thought ill of him.

However, David also expressed the view that God had of him. That view was quite different from the view of his enemies.

*By this I know that You are well pleased with me, Because my enemy does not triumph over me. As for me, You uphold me in my integrity, And set me before Your face forever. Blessed be the LORD God of Israel From everlasting to everlasting! Amen and Amen. (Psalm 41:11-13)*

This distinction shows us what was most important to David. He was more concerned how God viewed him, than what the people of the world thought of Him! This caused him to be different than the worldly people around him. That difference was significant enough to draw the attention of those worldly people, and even cause them to hate him. The choice that David made to serve and please God, rather than conforming to

the desires of men, caused him problems and discomfort in the short term. But, David had a long term perspective that allowed for him to endure that turmoil.

The Hebrew writer indicates that it was this same type of long term perspective that allowed Jesus Himself to overcome His persecution. That inspired writer also used the example of Christ to encourage his readers to have the same type of long term perspective:

*Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:1-2)*

Jesus was looking to the “joy that was set before Him” as encouragement to overcome the trials and persecution that were brought upon Him by worldly people. There was something better (and more lasting) on the other side of the tribulations. Throughout the book of Revelation, an encouragement is given to the faithful that God would, in the end, be victorious. They needed to remain faithful, no matter how bad their persecution got, because in the end they would receive the eternal reward that was promised by God:

*Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. (Revelation 2:10)*

This long term view shows us that there is value to being the people of God, and rejecting the way of the world, even though it will cause us temporary discomfort. When we serve the Lord, persecutions will come upon us (Mark 10:30, 2 Timothy 3:12). This understanding will cause us to be different from the worldly people around us, even if it means that will make enemies of those who despise the Lord.

As Paul wrote to the Corinthian brethren about the idea of being different from the people around them, he reminded them of God’s own instruction to His people:

*Therefore “Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you.” (2 Corinthians 6:17)*

### **Application...**

Sometimes, we as Christians are afraid to actually be different than the rest of the people of the world. There are probably many excuses for this, but unfortunately, it is often because we are afraid of the persecution that might come when we are unwilling to involve ourselves with the practices that differentiate us from the ungodly. So, instead of being different, we

try to get just as close to the world as we can get. We dress almost exactly like the world (“My shorts are a full inch longer than those immodest shorts!”) We talk like the world (“I’d never use profanity...I always substitute a euphemism!”) We act like the world (“But, being just a little dishonest is necessary for success in my business!”)

We need to make sure we have the long term perspective exhibited by David, Jesus and many other biblical examples. If we are going to live in such a way as to protect ourselves from any persecution, then we will miss the eternal goal that we should all have. We must be willing to be different, to serve the Lord, so that we can have confidence in the reward that He has promised to us (2 Timothy 4:7).

*For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it. (Mark 8:35)*

*He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. (John 12:25)*

May we be dedicated to being God’s own special people (1 Peter 2:9), and not seek to be conformed to the world (Romans 12:1-2)!

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*Continued from page 7*

*Her children rise up and call her blessed; Her husband also, and he praises her: “Many daughters have done well, but you excel them all.” (Proverbs 31:27-29)*

The virtuous wife is resourceful, honorable, wise, strong, hard-working, hospitable, and kind. We are not specifically told how she dressed (other than verse 22), how she fixed her hair, or if she wore makeup. Considering all of the things she did with her hands throughout the day it doesn’t seem likely that she spent very much time worrying about superficial beauty. Instead of focusing on worldly standards of beauty and attraction, the virtuous wife focused on the needs of her family, honoring her husband, and being pleasing to God. These are the things that are ultimately important, for –

*Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her the fruit of her hands, and let her own works praise her in the gates. (Proverbs 31:30-31)*

Superficial beauty will tarnish and fade; signs of aging will ultimately come, no matter how much we might try to prevent them—we cannot stop time. We can, however, achieve an incorruptible inner beauty by cultivating our lives and our hearts in a way that is pleasing to God. Like the slogan goes, we are most definitely “worth it.” We deserve to have this incorruptible beauty that goes deep into our hearts and guides us towards the service of not ourselves but of others.

# ***More For Less***

*by: Justin Brewer*

In today's society, everyone wants more for less; we want more house for less money, more car for less buck, free healthcare, and free education. This is not a new concept, nor is it isolated to our own modern society. If you follow the current political debates, you'll notice that some platforms include "free" products and services, and they are gaining a lot of ground from the younger generations who too often lack a valuable work ethic.

It is no surprise, then, that this attitude/perspective bleeds over into religion. The predominant "religious" view is that IF God exists, then He will not or does not require us to "work" for our salvation. If He required us to "work" for our salvation, then that somehow means that we have "earned" our salvation, and since we cannot "earn" our salvation, then God must not require us to "work". It is, as you can plainly see, a very self-serving argument; through such arguments, we can have our salvation and yet be free of any action contrary to what we want to do.

Are these arguments new? Are we the first generation to come up with such? Can God ever get salvation correct? Will we ever be satisfied with God's plan?

History distinguishes clearly between those who truly loved God (those who obeyed) and those who were selfish and thought only of themselves (those who disobeyed). The Israelites, from the time that they departed from Egypt, wanted God to work on their own terms and constantly complained against both God and His servants. Consider it this way for a moment: God frequently provided for the Israelites and required very little effort on their part. For instance, only two months out of Egypt, the Israelites began to complain against God and said, "Oh, that we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat and when we ate bread to the full! For you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger" (Exodus 16:3). It is clear that this generation of Israelites had very poor short-term memories; they were enslaved in Egypt and Pharaoh had increased their workload to unbearable levels to keep

## **Study Opportunities**

Sunday Bible Study: 10:00 AM

Sunday Worship Assembly: 11:00 AM

## **Meeting At**

Homewood Suites of Bozeman  
1023 E Baxter Ln,  
Bozeman, MT 59715

***Everyone Welcome!***

them docile (Exodus 5). How much easier did the Israelites want their lives to be? God had promised them great things, including a glorious land that they would simply walk into and take over by the hand of God. After their complaint in Exodus 16, God provided “bread from heaven” (16:4) for them and required very little from them in return.

What did God require of the Israelites? Did God require too much of them? The account in Exodus informs us that the Israelites were to gather a certain quota every day for five days, then an extra quota on the sixth day, gather nothing on the seventh day (Sabbath Day), and, except for the night of the sixth day, they were to leave none of the bread overnight (Exodus 16:15-31). However, the Israelites violated these very simple commands; they left Manna over until the morning (16:19-20) and some attempted to gather on the Sabbath Day (16:27-30). Couldn't God get it right? Perhaps, if God truly existed, He should have made the bread appear inside their tents for their convenience? How could God be so inconsiderate as to implement rules governing the Israelites concerning the bread for which they did not have to cultivate soil, plant, water, weed, harvest, process, and bake? And yet, what attitude did the Israelites have? One of disobedience, selfishness, and ungratefulness, for they said “our soul loathes this worthless bread” (Numbers 21:5).

When we complain about what God requires us to do today or claim that there are no stipulations placed upon salvation, we are telling God that “our soul loathes this worthless bread”. Why are we so arrogant and self-righteous as to insist that the almighty God bend to our wishes? Why do we pretend that God ought to be grateful of us for whatever service we decide to “bless” Him with?

In our society, entertainment reigns supreme, which naturally leads to the attitude mentioned earlier that many people want more for less (or for nothing, in most cases). Our society desires freebies; we want to have fun all the time and not be bothered with work. This concept is clearly defined for us in 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15; Paul's command for those who were refusing to work and were busybodies was that they should not eat. However, we want to take that a step further; while it is clear that Paul's immediate context concerned physical needs, is there a spiritual application we can make? If we refuse to do the commands of God (work), should we be able to have salvation (eat)?

Salvation does not come on our own terms. Our fulfilling the commands of God does not negate the grace of God, although some attempt to make these concepts mutually exclusive. Did the Israelites somehow “earn” their Manna (miraculously given) because they picked it up off of the ground? Could they have had their Manna if they had not picked it up off of the ground? In reality, it is a ridiculous argument to claim that we earn salvation because we adhere to the commands of God; both parts of the equation are necessary or salvation will not be obtained (reference also 2 Kings 5). As Jesus stated in John 14:15, “If you love Me, keep My commandments.”

# ***Incorruptible Beauty***

# ***Ladies***

*by: Laura Brewer*

***Corner***

As women in today's world it is very easy to get caught up in maintaining and perfecting our outward appearances. We have every imaginable type of "beauty" products readily available to help us cover our flaws, conceal our gray hair, and make us more physically attractive. In fact the most common definition of the word beauty is "physically attractive" (Merriam-Webster). We are even told by major cosmetic companies that we are "worth it" and deserve to feel beautiful, i.e. physically attractive. Don't like your natural hair color? Dye it. Don't like your eye color? Wear tinted contacts or eye makeup to your liking. However, is this superficial beauty the type of beauty that we as Christians should be working and perfecting ourselves toward? Let's consider a few passages from the scriptures and determine where our focus should ultimately be.

## ***This World is Not My Home***

We are constantly reminded in the New Testament to set ourselves apart from the unbelieving world. Those of the world set their mind on "earthly things" and serve only themselves, to their shame and destruction (Philippians 3:19), but we as Christians will have citizenship in heaven if we "stand fast in the Lord" (v.20-21). Again in 1 John 2:15 we are instructed to not love the world or the things in it, and verse 16 describes those worldly things as the "lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." The people of the world care about looking good. They care about external appearances and how others perceive them. They are driven by satisfying their own physical desires and are proud of themselves. We are further admonished by the apostle Paul in his letter to the Colossians to "set our minds on things above, not on things on the earth" (Colossians 3:2).

We know that the things of the world are temporary and will pass away, but "he who does the will of God abides forever" (1 John 2:17). As the hymn goes, "This World Is Not My Home." My children are known to randomly start singing this song throughout the day, and for me it is a constant reminder that our citizenship is in heaven. After we "put to death" our former selves, we are instructed to "put on" tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, and longsuffering (Colossians 3:13). As citizens of heaven we shouldn't care about the same things that the world cares about. Instead of serving only ourselves, we should be constantly looking for ways to serve others.

## ***A Gentle and Quiet Spirit***

If this world is not our home, then how can we as Christian women separate ourselves from it and conduct ourselves in a way that is pleasing to God?

*In like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with*

*propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works. (1 Timothy 2:9-10)*

The instruction here is to dress ourselves in “modest” clothing. Typically we think of modest clothing as dealing with the amount of skin covered, but one of the more appropriate definitions of the word modest actually is “placing a moderate estimate on one’s abilities or worth; neither bold nor self-assertive” (Merriam-Webster). Modest clothing is about more than just a hemline or a neckline. We can wear things that cover our bodies and still be immodest by taking too much pride in our appearance or by dressing simply to attract attention. Furthermore we are to dress with “moderation” and “propriety”. Both of these terms lend to the idea of dressing properly, but not excessively – i.e. fancy clothes or jewelry—so that we are noticed not for our outward appearance but for our faith and good works.

Additionally, as instructed in 1 Peter 3:1-2 and again in Titus 2:5, we are to have “chaste” conduct. The word “chaste” is commonly limited to describing sexual purity (Merriam-Webster) but can also refer to a “simplicity, plainness, or moral purity.” Someone who is chaste does not try to draw extra attention or physical attraction by wearing provocative clothing, jewelry, makeup, or other superficial things but rather seeks to “adorn” their hearts:

*Do not let your adornment be merely outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel—rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. (1 Peter 3:3-4)*

Here we are instructed to not worry “merely” about our outward appearances, but to “adorn” our hearts by having a gentle and quiet demeanor, thus pleasing God. In the following verses an example is given of holy women from former times that trusted in God and adorned themselves with this “incorruptible beauty.” Sarah, in particular, is commended for obeying and honoring Abraham. We are told in Genesis 12:11 that Sarah was a woman of “beautiful countenance.” Her beauty was such that we are given two separate accounts in which Abraham worried that a foreign monarch would have him killed in order to take Sarah for himself (Genesis 12, 20). Sarah was so beautiful that she was coveted by kings, and yet in the New Testament she is mentioned not for her physical beauty but for her submissive and obedient nature.

### ***Putting it All Together: The Virtuous Wife***

One of my favorite passages to go to when I feel like I need encouragement as a woman, as a wife, and as a mother, is Proverbs 31:10-31. It is one of the best examples we as women are given in scripture from which to pattern our own lives and become pleasing to God. And while it is noted that her clothing is “fine linen and purple” (Proverbs 31:22), the majority of the passage describes not her physical appearance but her diligent and tireless work in caring for her family:

*She watches over the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness.*

*Continued on page 3*

# Daily Bible Reading

## May 2016

May 2	Psalms 75-77	May 17	Psalms 107
May 3	Psalms 78	May 18	Psalms 108-110
May 4	Psalms 79-82	May 19	Psalms 111-115
May 5	Psalms 83-85	May 20	Psalms 116-118
May 6	Psalms 86-88	May 23	Psalms 119:1-48
May 9	Psalms 89-90	May 24	Psalms 119:49-112
May 10	Psalms 91-95	May 25	Psalms 119:113-176
May 11	Psalms 96-100	May 26	Psalms 120-128
May 12	Psalms 101-103	May 27	Psalms 129-133
May 13	Psalms 104-105	May 30	Psalms 134-137
May 16	Psalms 106	May 31	Psalms 138-141

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