

A GOOD YEAR FOR GROWING MEN

Dwayne Laws

The nation was in the midst of the Great Depression and drought in 1930. I was 15. My mother and I lived alone on a small, west Tennessee farm with whatever abilities an ignorant boy, a widowed mother, and one mule and a plow could muster. That fall the rainfall had been so little that the planter tracks could still be seen.

After a tiring, fruitless day, mother sat by the coal oil lamp reading of God's love for man. With all the impatience of a teen-age boy, I halted her reading from the thumb-worn Bible with this question: "Mother, you tell me God loves us. He has a funny way of showing it! We have worked our fingers to the bone for the entire growing season, yet we will harvest little from these parched fields. We have done all man can do. All this soil needs is rain, which only God can send. If God loves us, why doesn't he make it rain?"

With the patience which comes only from faith and years of trials, mother paused, raised her head from the pages of her beloved Word of God and replied, "Son, you are making a serious mistake. You are assuming that God is interested in growing cotton and corn. He isn't! He can do that without you and me. God is interested in growing men. I dare say that, in future years, if God grants such to you, you will look back on 1930 as a terrible year for growing corn and cotton. But, if you learn the message God is teaching, you will recall this depression year as a great one for growing men!"

Mother was right. Want teaches what abundance can never know. Without a drought and a mother who understood it, I might never have known, "*My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness*" (2nd Corinthians 12:9).

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He does not expect Christians to keep sinful, unrepentant disciples at their tables. He taught that offenders need to be confronted, and to apply an escalating scale if a proper response is not forthcoming. Eventually, "*if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector*" (Matthew 18:17). Concerning immoral brethren subject to church withdrawal, Paul commanded "*not even to eat with such a person*" (1st Corinthians 5:11).

Jesus had a very specific purpose to fulfill when He kept company with His own betrayer and, thus, His example in this case is not one to emulate. Indeed, doing so would violate straightforward commands.

THREE RESPONSES TO PAUL'S SERMON

David Cox, adapted

"And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked, while others said, 'We will hear you again on this matter.' So Paul departed from among them. However, some men joined him and believed, among them Dionysius the Areopagite, a woman named Damaris, and others with them" (Acts 17:32-34).

Paul had preached his sermon to the men of Athens at Mars Hill; he concluded by telling them that God commands all men to repent and then reminded them of the coming judgment. There are three responses from those who heard Paul.

Some mocked him (32). Luke says that some who heard Paul "*mocked*" him. They had heard Paul preach the truth of the gospel, but instead of accepting the preaching of Christ they were unwilling to change their lives to do what was acceptable to the will of God. There was a similar response of those on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:13), they belittled or mocked the preaching of the apostles. It is a disposition like this that Paul mentioned when he referred to people thinking the preaching of the cross as foolishness (1st Corinthians 1:18, 21).

Some were wanting to hear more (32). The second response is seen by those who heard and said, "*We will hear you again on this matter.*" They were not out-right refusing to listen to Paul, but they wanted to wait. Perhaps it was a difficult decision for some to hear the truth and obey it. They still desired to learn more, but they needed to respond. It is this disposition that Felix displayed (Acts 24:25). The parable of the ten virgins (Matthew 25) teaches the importance of not waiting because while we delay, our lives may end without being prepared.

Some of them who heard believed (34). There were some among those who heard Paul preach who believed. There were those whose hearts were pricked, and they responded and continued on in the work of the Lord.

The responses to Paul's sermon were three-fold, and the reactions Paul encountered are the same responses people have today to the preaching of God's word. What is our response to the preaching of the gospel? Do we mock the word of God by defying the necessity to obey or mock those who are striving to live right? Are we waiting to hear more? Are we ready to commit to obey and cleave to God's word? Let us remember the lessons of God's word and believe and obey Him now; not mocking or waiting until a convenient time.

**"WHAT MUST I DO
TO BE SAVED?"**

ACTS 16:30

LEARN THE GOSPEL

John 6:45; Romans 10:17

BELIEVE IN CHRIST

Hebrews 11:6; John 3:16

CONFESS CHRIST

Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10

REPENT OF SIN

Acts 3:19; 17:30

BE BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST

Mark 16:16; Romans 6:3-6

REMAIN STEADFAST

1st Corinthians 15:58; Revelation 2:10

**"THE ASSEMBLING OF
OURSELVES TOGETHER"**

HEBREWS 10:24-25

SUNDAY

Worship @ 10:00 a.m.

Studies @ 11:45 a.m.

WEDNESDAY

Studies & Worship @ 7:00 p.m.

THURSDAY

Ladies' Study @ 6:00 p.m.

75 Sherrod Boulevard
Belén, New Mexico

**Seekers Welcome.
Members Expected.**

**"IF A MAN IS OVERTAKEN IN
ANY TRESPASS...
RESTORE SUCH A ONE"**

GALATIANS 6:1

CONFESS TRESPASSES

James 5:16; 1st John 1:9

REPENT OF SIN

Acts 8:22

PRAY FOR FORGIVENESS

Acts 8:22

REMAIN STEADFAST

1st Corinthians 15:58; Revelation 2:10

**"A WORD FITLY SPOKEN IS
LIKE APPLES OF GOLD IN
SETTINGS OF SILVER"**

PROVERBS 25:11

"Being angry at Bible truth
doesn't make you right; it only
makes you an angry sinner."

"WHOLE COUNSEL"

ACTS 20:27

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SITTING WITH JUDAS

Bryan Matthew Dockens

It has been said, "When you learn to sit at the table with your Judas, you will understand the love of Christ," but this lacks veracity.

Following Judas's demise, the surviving apostles said that "*Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place*" (Acts 1:25). Judas had a different destination than the apostles. The Master had already told them, "*in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel*" (Matthew 19:28). The apostles will share the regeneration with Christ in His glory, but Judas went "*to his own place.*" Clearly, Jesus did not accept Judas on a permanent basis, but blatantly rejects him in the hereafter. Thus, receiving him at table during His ministry served another purpose.

It is an assumption that love for Judas was Christ's reason for keeping him in close company. "*Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him*" (John 6:64). Since the Lord had every intention of laying down His life and taking it up again (John 10:17-18), the betrayer's presence was necessary. Of course, love was the fundamental motive for this intentional death (Romans 5:6-8), but that love was directed broadly toward all sinners, not Judas, personally.

While Christ does teach love and prayer for enemies (Luke 6:27-28),
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