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near our inquisitor whose name I learned is Chuck.

Offering little in the way of Scripture, he kept asserting that I believe he is going to hell. Still smiling because *“a soft answer turns away wrath”* (Proverbs 15:1), my replies quoted Christ and the apostles who taught the necessity of baptism for salvation (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1st Peter 3:21) and entrance into the church (1st Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 1:22-23), the only church (Ephesians 4:4-6). Chuck gestured toward his rather aged friend, telling me he was a “Baptist pastor,” and asking if I thought he was going to hell, too, “unless he’s baptized in your church.” My answer remained constant – Scripture teaches that baptism is necessary for salvation. When the other man returned to the table, I was introduced as follows: “Milford, this guy’s a preacher. He says you’re going to hell unless you’re baptized in his church.” Milford’s face indicated he would’ve punched me in the nose if he wasn’t fourscore and ten already. Nevertheless, I offered my hand, which he shook with noticeable reluctance, and I introduced myself politely. Chuck and Milford had already eaten and were ready to settle their bill, so I bid them a good day and returned to our table, but not before reminding Chuck he has my card and is welcome to text or email any time he wants to discuss Scripture. When I got back to our group, I was assured my new friends looked just as angry to everyone else as I thought they did to me.

Our desire is to communicate the truth of God’s word with eager souls who hunger and thirst for righteousness, engaging in polite and pleasant conversation about the gospel, *“speaking the truth in love”* (Ephesians 4:15). Realistically, the love might be one-sided, though, as sinners often prefer their delusions and hate any attempt to change their minds. Regardless of how it is received, our approach must remain kind, leaving the other person to grapple with their conscience as they contemplate their own attitude toward God and man. We must prepare for these challenges, resolving, before the opportunities ever arise, to maintain our composure despite how we are treated.

Even more necessary to our readiness is an easy familiarity with Scripture. Those who love the Lord treasure His word in the heart (Psalm 119:11) and not just the uplifting words of comfort, but also words of rebuke (Titus 1:15), being set for the defense of the gospel (Philippians 1:16-17). A proper defense requires not only knowledge of truth, but awareness of error, too, not being ignorant of Satan’s devices (2nd Corinthians 2:11), so we may combat falsehood.

THE COUNTENANCE

Bryan Matthew Dockens

The Hebrew word translated *“countenance”* means “face” and appears over two thousand times in the Old Testament, seldom translated as *“countenance,”* but when it does occur as such, emphasis is usually placed upon the expression of the face.

Cain had a *“fallen”* countenance, showing anger (Genesis 4:5-6). Laban displayed a countenance *“unfavorable”* toward Jacob (Genesis 31:2, 5). Jonathan’s countenance *“brightened”* when he was able to eat after a while without food (1st Samuel 14:27, 29). There is a *“proud countenance”* (Psalm 10:4), a *“cheerful countenance”* (Proverbs 15:13), a *“sad countenance”* (Ecclesiastes 7:3), and a *“troubled”* countenance (Ezekiel 27:35).

Facial expression is a real form of communication, and some consequential things can be accomplished *“without a word”* (1st Peter 3:1). Therefore, it is important to exercise a similar degree of caution over facial expressions as over verbal expressions. Jesus taught, *“Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned”* (Matthew 12:34-37). Truly, mastery of the tongue is mastery of the heart. With the heart under control, so is the countenance. So, *“Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life”* (Proverbs 4:23).

BECAUSE IT IS GIGANTIC

G.K. Chesterton

I can understand how [mothering] might exhaust the mind, but I cannot imagine how it could narrow it. How can it be a large career to tell other people’s children about arithmetic, and a small career to tell one’s own children about the universe? How can it be broad to be the same thing to everyone, and narrow to be everything to someone? No; a woman’s function is laborious because it is gigantic, not because it is minute. I will pity Mrs. Jones for the hugeness of her task; I will never pity her for its smallness.

***"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.

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

"Don't seek validation from a world who crucified a perfect Man."

"WHOLE COUNSEL"

ACTS 20:27

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DISPUTING

Bryan Matthew Dockens

There is genuine value in debating for the gospel's sake, as we read of Paul that *"he spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Hellenists"* (Acts 9:29). These debates might be planned events, publicized, with formally drawn-up propositions for each party to affirm and deny, and might later be published, but, realistically, most of our disputes with error will be much more spontaneous.

Such was the case last Sunday when eighteen of us dined out together following the assembly. An older man seated nearby took notice of our large group, diverse in age and ethnicity, dressed for something important, and he asked, "Church group?" Having affirmed his guess, we were then asked the follow-up, "Which church?" I wasn't sitting within reach, so I passed my card along to him. A few moments later, we noticed he was staring at me, so I returned his gaze and smiled. Gruffly, he said, "You're church of Christ. When Fred Thompson was running for President I looked him up and learned about church of Christ. You think I'm going to hell if I'm not baptized in your church." That is not the beginning to a soft-hearted and sincere inquiry; it's pugnacious. I needed to not only *"give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you"* (1st Peter 3:15), but, more pointedly, I was going to have to *"contend earnestly for the faith"* (Jude 3). Rather than raising my voice, I walked around the long table to sit – Continued on page 2 –

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