

Do Not Neglect Your Calling

Paul reminds us of our calling and the need to remain true to it. Eph. 4:1 I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beseech you to walk worthily of the calling wherewith ye were called.

Summer time is just around the corner and vacations for many brethren will take up a certain segment of the next 3 months or so. As we attempt to walk worthily of our calling it is imperative that our service to God be the centerpiece of our lives when on vacation, just as it is when we are home.

It is true, no one will know the difference when we fail to assemble for worship in a place we are not known. But, of course, God will (Heb. 4:13). He has called us out of darkness into his marvelous light (1 Pet. 2:9).

If, indeed, we truly believe in the one body, one Spirit, one hope, one faith and one baptism, we will submit to the one Lord and one God and Father of all whenever and wherever we are. Our prayer is for the safety and faithfulness of our brethren this season.

- by Jim Stauffer

An Ancient Description of Christians

The following quotation is from a letter written by a Christian who lived sometime in the second or third centuries:

"For Christians are not distinguished from the rest of mankind either in locality or in speech or in customs. For they dwell not somewhere in cities of their own, neither do they use some different language, nor practice an extraordinary kind of life. Nor again do they possess any invention discovered by any intelligence or study of ingenious men, nor are they masters of any human dogma as some are. But while they dwell in cities of Greeks and barbarians as the lot of each is cast, and follow native customs in dress and food and the other arrangements of life, yet the constitution of their own citizenship, which they set forth, is marvelous, and confessedly contradicts expectation. They dwell in their own countries, but only as sojourners; they bear their share in all things as citizens, and they endure all hardships as strangers. Every foreign country is a fatherland to them, and every fatherland is foreign. They marry like all other men and beget children; but they do not cast away their offspring. They have their meals in common, but not their wives. They find themselves in the flesh, and yet live not after the flesh. Their existence is on earth, but their citizenship is in heaven. They obey the established laws, and they surpass the laws in their own lives. They love all men, and they are persecuted by all. They are ignored, and yet they are condemned. They are put to death, and yet they are endued with life. They are in beggary, and yet they make many rich. They are in want of all things, and yet they abound in all things. They are dishonored, and yet they are glorified in their dishonor. They are evil spoken of, and yet they are vindicated. They are reviled, and they bless; they are insulted, and they respect. Doing good they are punished as evil-doers; being punished they rejoice, as if they were thereby quickened to life. War is waged against them as aliens by the Jews, and persecution is carried on against them by the Greeks, and yet those that hate them cannot tell the reason for their hostility."

This quotation is taken from "The Epistle to Diognetus," paragraph 5. It is accepted as authentic, and its author is classified as a Christian. It is obvious that it was not easy to be a Christian in his day. Count your blessings, and daily ask yourself if you are really being a Christian.

- by Bill Crews

For The Lack of Wood

"For lack of wood the fire goeth out; and where there is no whisperer, contention ceaseth. As coals are to hot embers, and wood to fire, so is a contentious man to inflame strife. . ." (Proverbs 26:20-21).

Slander and gossip are said to be like a fire; they heat up the spirit and cause us to speak inflammatory things. This kind of speech burns up all that is good. It will inflame and embroil families, friends, work associates, and brethren -- as well as enemies. All of our society bears the marks of fires that have raged out of control, destroying what is good and precious. And where does the fire start? It is the whispering gossip or slanderer, according to Solomon, that is often the one who fuels the fires of contention.

In the New Testament, James writes about the evils of the tongue and says: "Behold, how much wood is kindled by how small a fire! And the tongue is a fire; a world of iniquity among our members is the tongue, which defileth the whole body and setteth on fire the wheel of nature, and is set on fire by hell . . ." (James 3:5-6).

Brethren, what we must all do is put an end to the fueling of these fires! We must stop the talking that hurts and destroys others. When the whispering and gossiping stop, the fire will go out. When the rumors, evil reports, and tale-bearings cease, the contention will cease.

- by Bob Dickey

"So Great Salvation"

"How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him." (Hebrews 2:3)

Christians should think long and meditate often about the wonderful salvation that God has made available to us through His Son. Look at this text, and realize that we are the recipients of a:

"Great Salvation": It is great because our past sins have been forgiven; we enjoy a present relationship with God as our loving Father; and we have the hope of a beautiful future in eternity.

"Spoken Salvation": Too many people in the religious world trust their subjective feelings concerning their eternal souls. They wouldn't do that if it involved their material possessions or their financial security, but they do it with their souls. It simply makes no sense. God does not ask us to trust our salvation to such uncertainty. Instead, he has given us His spoken word, whereby we can learn and understand the things essential to salvation (Rom. 1:16; 10:17; Eph. 3:3-5).

"Confirmed Salvation": We can be sure that the salvation offered through Jesus Christ is legitimate. The message of salvation was confirmed by the men who knew Jesus, who saw Him, heard Him, worked with Him. They were eyewitnesses to His life, and their words and accounts assure us that these things are true. In fact, their willingness to die for His cause is one of the surest proofs of all. Furthermore, God also confirmed their testimony by way of the miracles they were empowered to do (see the previous verse, Heb. 2:4).

"Conditional Salvation": A key word in this great text is the word IF. It clearly teaches that our salvation is conditional upon meeting the requirements set forth in God's word. God offers us this wonderful gift. We show our willingness to accept it by doing His will. Salvation is for "all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:8,9).

- by Greg Gwin