



The Reflector

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Three Responsibilities of Children of Light

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In the first part of Ephesians chapter 5, the Apostle Paul contrasts the “children of light” (v. 8) with the “children of disobedience (v.6).” Light” stands for all that is in harmony with God’s will, with darkness being the very opposite. “Children of light” are the same as children of obedience. “Children of disobedience” the same as children of darkness. In verses 8 through 11, “children of light” are assigned three responsibilities:

1. Children of light must prove what is acceptable unto the Lord (v. 10). There are two basic senses in which something may be proven: 1) “To establish the truth or validity of by presentation of argument or evidence” and 2) “To determine the quality of by testing; try out.” (*Microsoft Bookshelf 98, Dictionary*) In the first instance one proves a proposition by appealing to the objective evidence that sustains it. In spiritual matters, this evidence would be the scriptures. In the second instance, after one has proven the proposition by objective evidence, he may then “prove” its worthiness by putting it to the test in practice. It is this sense that “proving” is used in verse 10. Vincent says the meaning in this verse is that of “proving by your walk.” (*Word Studies of the New Testament, Vol. III, p. 399*).

“Children of light,” having already proven or established their walk to be in the light by the evidence, must now continually prove it in the second sense – experimentally by “proving (it) by (their) walk”. It is much like the old saying, “The proof of the pudding is in the eating.” Romans 12:2 suggests the same idea: “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, *that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*” (Italics mine, eob).

Children of light must actively and constructively prove (walk in) “*what is*” acceptable, not merely oppose what is not acceptable. We cannot just be “aginner” (a-gin-urs) – yes, I know that word is not in the dictionary, but it ought to be.

There are *church* responsibilities to meet, such as public worship (Heb. 10:25; Acts 20:7), doing one’s share of the church’s work (Eph. 4:16) and helping set in order things lacking (Tit. 1:5). There are *personal* responsibilities to meet, such as personal evangelism (Acts 8:4), caring for the needy (Jas. 1:27) and other daily obligations of life that must be met – such as financial obligations (Rom. 13:8; 1 Tim. 5:8; Eph. 4:28; 2 Thess. 3:10), home duties (Eph. 5:22-6:4), civic and civil functions (Rom. 13:1-5). When we faithfully practice these things we are “proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.”

We must prove what is acceptable *unto the Lord* – not ourselves, not our families, not our brethren, not our neighbors, but the Lord.

2. Children of light must have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness (v. 11). Back in verse 7, Paul writes, “Be not ye therefore partakers with them” – “them” being the “children of disobedience” (v. 6). One may have fellowship with a person or thing by joint-participation or partnership according to the basic meaning of the “fellowship.” Or, he may have fellowship by way of endorsement or encouragement as is suggested by the “right hand of fellowship” (Gal. 2:9).

One must have no fellowship (joint-participation or encouragement) with the children of disobedience in either moral (Eph. 5:3-5) or doctrinal darkness (2 John 9-11). As children of

light, we must not fellowship false doctrine (either its teaching or practice), in or out of the church. Nor can we fellowship immorality (fornication, adultery, homosexuality, etc), either in or out of a marriage relationship.

3. Children of light must reprove (expose – NKJV) the works of darkness (v. 11). Christians cannot claim faithfulness simple because they do not jointly participate with children of disobedience in their darkness. Nor simply because they don't overtly endorse or encourage them in their works. We must go a step further and reprove or expose the sins for what they are. Gideon (Judges 6) did not merely refuse to join in the idol worship or his father. Nor did he simply refrain from openly encouraging his father's idols. Nor did he merely build up the Lord's altar and leave his father's idols alone. He got busy and destroyed the false gods and the means of sacrificing to them. Under the Christian dispensation we are not to destroy the physical property of those engaged in false religion and immoral practices – like those who burn church buildings or bomb abortion clinics. The Christian's weapons are not carnal, but are spiritual “casting down *arguments* and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every *thought* into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5 NKJ - Italics mine, eob).

Churches are not sound simply for not being direct partakers with “children of disobedience.” Often elders and other brethren will console themselves, by saying something like this, “We do not go along with that doctrine or practice and we do not endorse it in any way.” Yet, if one gets in the pulpit and really exposes the false doctrines, practices and teachers for what they are, these same brethren act like they are sitting in a bed of fire ants. As long as the opposition is passive and quite they feel comfortable because the cost of their opposition is minimal, but when it becomes active and open the stakes are raised considerably.

So, while they claim to not jointly participate in the matters under consideration, they do not want anything openly said against them. When a church claims to be “straight” on the issues that separate us from the denominations, the institutional issues, the marriage-divorce-remarriage issue, the progressive creation issue (the doctrine that the creation days were long periods of indefinite length or that there were long periods of indefinite length

between the days, that has been floating around lately among brethren), or any other issue that is vital to the faith, it might be good to ask a few questions. If you do not participate or encourage these doctrines and those that teach them, then do you encourage the local preacher to expose them plainly for what they are? Do you allow and/or encourage your Bible classes to be used to expose them? Do you invite preachers for meetings who are known to speak kindly and plainly against these errors, exposing them in such a way that there can do no doubt what these errors are about nor any doubt where that congregation stands.

Individual Christians and churches must be busy doing those things acceptable unto the Lord. At the same, time they must refuse to partake of sinful doctrines and practices in any way. Then, they must go a step further and expose sin and error for what it is. This would not be necessary if sin always appeared to be what it really is on the surface. It must be exposed by shining the light of the gospel on it – by taking hold of the sheep's clothing and ripping it off to reveal or expose the wolf underneath. ■

“Handling Aright the Word of Truth”

R. J. Evans

The Apostle Paul told Timothy to be “a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15) The American Standard Version of the Bible says “handling aright the word of truth.” In this short article, let us notice how not to handle the truth, and then, how to handle it aright or properly.

How Not to Handle the Word of Truth

1. *Don't be ashamed of it.* Paul suffered continually for the gospel's sake because he wasn't ashamed of it (Rom. 1:16). Many people try to be “closet Christians,” ashamed for others to know that they are Christians. We must be willing to suffer hardship for the gospel (2 Tim. 1:8).

2. *Don't pervert it.* Paul denounced those in Galatia who perverted (changed to a wrong purpose) the gospel (Gal. 1:7). Some wrest or twist the scripture to their own destruction (2 Pet. 2:16). Those who tamper with the truth mishandle it and commit spiritual suicide!

3. *Don't misapply it.* Understand and make the proper applications of scripture. For example,

make the proper distinction or division between the law of Moses and the gospel of Christ, between the Old Testament and the Old Testament and the New Testament. It would be wrong to apply the Law of Moses, such as the laws of circumcision, animal sacrifices, the burning of incense, etc. to New Testament Christians today. Paul told those in Galatia who were attempting to be justified by the Law of Moses -- “you have fallen from grace” (Gal. 5:4).

How to Handle the Word of Truth Aright

1. *Obey it.* The gospel is not for us to read and forget, but to hear and obey (Jas. 1:22-25). The Lord will condemn the disobedient at His coming (2 Thes. 1:8).

2. *Defend it.* Paul strongly defended it (Phil. 1:7, 16). Some are now saying it needs no defending, only proclaiming. However, proclaiming involves defending it. We must contend earnestly for the truth (Jude 3).

3. *Hold fast to it.* Once we have embraced the gospel, we must cling to it (1 Cor. 15:1-2). If we drift away in neglect (Heb. 2:1-3), or make shipwreck of the faith (1 Tim. 1:19), we are doomed! How awful to stand at the judgment with but a memory of faithfulness, long ago abandoned.

4. *Live it.* “Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ” (Phil. 1:27). It isn’t enough to be good professors; we must be good practitioners of the gospel. Do our neighbors, relatives, friends, work associates think highly of the gospel and the church or poorly because of our conduct? Give no one cause to call you a “hypocrite.” Let your habits of life adorn sound doctrine (Titus 2:10).

5. *Preach it.* Jesus commanded that we preach the gospel everywhere because no one can be saved without it (Mk. 16:15-16; Rom. 1:16). Like Paul, we need to be “ready to preach the gospel” (Rom. 1:15; 1 Cor. 9:16). Paul told Timothy to “Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season” (2 Tim. 4:2). The gospel wasn’t given to be hoarded, but to be shared!

6. *Love it.* The Psalmist stated: “Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day” (Psa. 119:97). The importance of loving the truth is emphasized so much when we consider the consequences of not loving it. Notice carefully as Paul described “those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie,

that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 Thes. 2:10-12).

There is nothing in all of the world comparable to the truth of the gospel. It is that unique message from heaven that reveals God’s plan to redeem man from sin through His own Son. With what infinite and loving care God has given it to us and preserved it for us to this very hour! The Apostle Peter said “the word of the Lord endures forever” (1 Pet. 1:25). With what incomparable cost—the very blood of Jesus—was it certified and energized (Gal. 1:11; Heb. 4:13; Jas 1:21). It is so important and precious to God that our attitude toward it gauges our attitude toward Christ Himself—“He who rejects Me and does not receive my words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day” (John 12:48). ■

Most Preachers Have Come From Poor Circumstances

Donald Townsley

Brother J. W. McGarvey, in his “CHAPEL TALKS” (which were delivered to the students of the College of the Bible in the school year 1910 - 11), shows that the title which I have chosen for this article was true in his day. Under the subject, “**Poor Preachers**”, he said: “*Some twenty-five or thirty years ago when we had about two hundred preachers in the state of Kentucky, I took pains to find out in regard to those whom I did not know personally how many of them were the sons of wealthy men, not millionaires, but such men as pass in rural sections as rich men. Out of all the number there were only two that were rich men's sons -- one in a hundred. That tells the story in regard to Kentucky. On another occasion when chapel was more largely attended than it is today I called upon all students whose expenses at college were being paid by their parents to stand, and out of nearly a hundred only nine stood up. That showed that not only was the preaching done by the poor, but it was the sons of the poor that were preparing to be the next generation of preachers. This has been the case all the way back to the beginning. So we can say of this as the Episcopalians so often say in their prayer book of*

another subject, "as it was from the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end." I think brother McGarvey's statement is as true today as it was then. Poor boys are still making the preachers and carrying the gospel to the lost of the world. But, someone may say, "Don't you think that one of the reasons we have a preacher shortage today is the way preachers are being paid?" With that attitude before us, let me remind all of us, preachers included, that preachers are not made by wages! I say to the extent that this (wages) keeps men from preaching is a blessing to the Lord's church! Brother McGarvey said it this way: "Any young man who declines preparing himself for the ministry for this reason (money, etc) is not fit to enter upon it. And to the extent that the anticipation of poverty keeps men out of the ministry it keeps out those who would be an encumbrance, a dead weight, and a disadvantage. They are not fit to go into the pulpit who are controlled by this consideration."

The Lord and His church does not need men who are motivated to make preachers for the purpose of earthly gain or selfish ambition. The Lord needs men who are "faithful men" (2 Tim. 2:2). I shall never forget what brother Roy E. Cogdill told me when I was a young preacher. He said: "When a preacher becomes ambitious for himself, that is the end of his usefulness to the Lord and His cause." I have tried to live by that advice till this day. Where the cause of the Lord needs men most is not necessarily where the most money is: in fact, most of the time, where a preacher is needed most is where the least money is! A preacher's success in the Lord's cause is not measured by the size of his weekly salary, the kind of car he drives, the type of meeting house he preaches in, or the kind of clothing he can afford to wear. If these things are marks of a preacher's success, then John the baptist was a complete failure (his raiment was "camel's hair" which was very similar to "sackcloth" -- only the poorest people wore garments of this kind of material, (Matt. 3:4)! This preacher (John) did not eat too "high on the lamb" either: his diet consisted of "locusts and wild honey" -- what the poorer class of that day ate.

Preacher, if you count your success in terms of what you can attain in a high salary, a large congregation to want your services, a popular

name on the tongue of the masses, and the privilege to travel in the circles of the socially elite, then I say that you have misunderstood what it means to be successful as a preacher. Please don't misunderstand -- I am not against a preacher being paid a good salary or a large congregation wanting his services; I am not against his being popular (if his preaching the gospel will make him so), and neither do I object to his traveling in the circles of the socially elite (if he doesn't get to thinking that this is the crowd he belongs with all the time). What I am saying is that when a man thinks of these things as his attainments of success and anything less than this marks him as a failure or is beneath him, then he has the wrong attitude toward the work of the Lord and what success in His cause is.

Faithful preachers must learn to endure some "hardness and affliction" (2 Tim. 2:3; 4:5) -- things won't always be rosy, but that is no sign that he is a failure in the Lord's work. Men need to preach who have enough faith to trust the Lord to supply their needs (Matt. 6: 24 - 33) as He supplied the needs of the twelve (Matt. 10: 9, 10); men who believe what David said in Psalms 37: 35: "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread".

I have not written this to justify those who might abuse preachers from the financial standpoint by not paying them adequately, but to show that "men of God" will not go hungry or without the necessities of life if they will faithfully preach the gospel to the lost.

From "The Hebron Herald", June 1991 ■

"For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven, with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." (1 Thessalonians 4:14-17 ASV)