



The Reflector

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A Medley of Matters

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(Editor's note: The following is a collection of comments on various subjects that we have posted on Facebook.)



A debt or free gift?

You find yourself broke and very much in need of money. You receive a call from a concerned friend telling you that he has decided to make you a gift of a few thousand dollars. You ask if it really is a gift and you won't have to do anything to earn it. He assures you that such is the case. You ask when can you get it, because you really need to pay some bills. He says as soon as you come over to his place and pick up the check. You ask if he means that you must come all the way across town to get it. He assures you that this is right. You say that you thought he said it was a gift that you did not have to do anything to earn, yet he is now telling you that you have to come across town to get it. You tell him that if such is the case, then it would no longer be a gift but a debt for your having to come get it.

Do you think your friend would be favorably impressed with your response to his offer?

Why then do men quibble over God's offer to save them from sin by forgiving them, as a gift from him, by asserting if there are **any** conditions that require effort or work on our part to receive it makes it no longer a gift but a matter of debt.

If salvation is an offer to all men without conditions, then salvation would have to be universal or God is a respecter of persons. No way

is faith, repentance, confession and baptism payment for our salvation, but conditions for receiving the free gift of forgiveness from God.



A slavery from which I do not wish to be emancipated...

Yes, I am a slave. This is to serve notice to those well-meaning people who would free me from this slavery – I do not wish to be emancipated. You see, I am a slave of obedience.

“What then? Shall we sin because we are not under (the-kjv) law but under grace? May it never be! Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?” (Romans 6:15-16 NASB)

Slavery to sin results in death. Slavery to obedience results in righteousness. These are the only two choices I am given. To those who wish to use grace to free me from a life of servitude to obedience, don't bother. I am a slave of obedience by choice. I would not have it any other way.



About gospel preaching ...

According to 2 Timothy 4:2 (nkjv), gospel preaching consists of convincing (convicting), rebuking, and exhorting (encouraging) those who hear it. We do not need to forget the tool for all three of these things is “the word (of God),” not our word or the word of the latest self-help guru. All are to be done with long-suffering and doctrine

(teaching). All this means we are to take “the word” and teach it – using it as the basic for our efforts to convict, rebuke and encourage our hearers.

I hear well delivered sermons where the purpose of the speaker is evidently is to convict the hearer, or to rebuke sin, or to encourage brethren or all three. Yet, as I listen, I hear little if any Bible other than an occasional passing reference.

It seems to me that the concept of preaching outlined by Paul in 2 Timothy 4:2-4 is that of taking “**the word**” (the scripture text) and show how it convicts. How it rebukes the sin we are targeting. How it encourages those who need encouraging.

So, a really good preacher is more than just a good speaker. He is one that can take the text, teaching and using **it** to “convince, rebuke, and exhort.”



Calvinism and reason...

You can't really believe Calvinism until you throw reason under the bus. Calvinism does not allow for gathering data from the Scriptures and discerning from the data what one must do to be saved and then reasoning to decide whether or not to do it. Calvinism has to have saving faith miraculously implanted into the heart of a sinner causing him to be saved even against his will – because God's grace is irresistible. After being saved in such fashion, the Calvinist cannot know how to live as a Christian by simply reading the Scriptures and through reason applying what he learns. Instead he has his life predetermined by God and is guided day by day by the “inner voice” of the Holy Spirit directly guiding and speaking to him. There is simply no room left for reasoning from the Scriptures (Acts 17:2, 24:25) and thus discerning between good and evil (Heb. 5:14) based on what the Bible says. Even when one reads the Scriptures, he cannot understand nor apply them without the direct help of the Holy Spirit. So, there is no rhyme nor reason in Calvinism. While some of the fellows who are championing the idea that you can't use your reasoning power to discern Bible authority may not be full-blown Calvinists, they are deeply influenced by it by reading mostly Calvinistic materials and studying online from

places like Liberty University.



Choosing your bait ...

While living near Grenada Lake in Mississippi, I used to fish often. I could go out early in the morning fish for about an hour and be back home to begin my day's work. I learned that one's choice of bait depended on what kind of fish he wanted to catch.

Young folks, it is kind of like that when you go fishing for someone to date and possibly marry. If you don't want someone whose interest is only in sharing your body, then don't dress and act in a way designed to attract the opposite sex in that way. If you want to attract love for the “real you” then dress and act in a way that takes the focus off your body and on to your inward beauty.

Does that mean one must not dress attractively? No. Just don't dress lustfully. Now quit kidding yourself – you know the difference.

Nor does it mean that one should have NO interest in your body? That interest was created by God in men and women for a reason. That is going to be there no matter what. But it should be a controlled burn and not one on which you throw gasoline by provocative dress (or lack of clothes) and gestures. If you want to catch someone to share the “real you” (heart, mind and soul), concentrate on making that attractive and using it for bait.



Chronological age and spiritual maturity

do not always run along parallel lines. A lot of chronologically young Christians are very spiritually mature. Also many chronologically old who have been Christians for many years are still spiritual babes. Also there are physically mature ones who are very immature in their judgment. So, one's value as a teacher of the gospel depends on his level of spiritual maturity more than on his chronological age.

In view of all of this, it make me wonder why churches, looking for someone to work with them as an evangelist speak of looking for someone who “will relate to” their young people, will seek out someone whose spiritual and judgmental maturity level is as near as they can get to the ones they are

trying to help grow into spiritual maturity. Seems to me that this is close to the blind leading the blind. Oh well, go figure.



Controversy ...

We know it is hard for many who have followed our writings, preaching, and social media posts over the years will find this hard to believe, we do not like controversy! We had much rather live at peace with all men. We could very easily adopt the “see no evil, hear no evil, speak no evil,” approach as some seem to do.

As much as we love peace, we love truth more. As much as we despise controversy, we hate religious error more. The kingdom of God has never prospered by its citizens allowing error to go unchallenged. The need for Christians to deal with controversial subjects has been from the earliest days of the church. This need is not likely to decrease, but rather increase according to the Apostle Paul: “But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.” (2 Timothy 3:13 NKJV)

As with all humans, we sometimes make mistakes in dealing with those with whom we disagree and challenge. But, we do try hard to be fair, honorable, honest, gentle and charitable toward those whose teaching we are trying to expose – even when we feel they are not returning the favors. We also try to be plain and to the point in order to minimize being misunderstood.

It would be much easier to deal with the preaching/teaching without dealing with the preacher/teacher. But, unfortunately the preaching/teaching does not float around abstractly in the air – it is spread by the preachers/teachers because of the influence that they hold over their audiences. Do we try to destroy or at least minimize the effect the erroneous teaching/preaching being done. Absolutely. Do we try to lessen the influence the person teaching/preaching error has over his following. Absolutely.

One day the great tension and warfare between spiritual truth and error will be over. Then there will be no need to engage anyone in controversy. All

will be absolute peace and harmony. But that day is not here, nor will it come in this world. Then and only then can the faithful soldier of the cross lay down his armor and enjoy eternal peace basking in heaven’s glory. Until then we will continue to pray for those with whom we differ. But, we do not believe prayer alone will do the job any more than prayer alone for “daily bread” will feed us. We must also work to bring about the desired result. So, we will continue to do the best we can to “fight the good fight,” both defensively and offensively, taking the lumps thrown our way from any of our brethren who feel we should not be engaging in open controversy.



“Do you understand everything ...”

A tactic used in the 60's and 70's by those using grace as the basis for extending fellowship to those teaching and practicing religious error was to ask their critics, “Do you understand everything about the Bible?” If you answered, “No,” then they would ask “How can you be so sure that others are wrong?” The idea being that since you admit you don’t understand everything then you have no right to say with certainty that another is wrong in his understanding.

It took me a little while to catch on, but when I began to see what they were doing, I quit answering their question with a mere, “No.” Rather I would tell them let’s pick a topic, let’s look at it and then you tell me whether I understand it or not. That would take away their “gotcha.”

Because one cannot say with certainty that he knows all about any discipline does not mean that he can not say with certainty that he knows much of it. In my early preaching days, I also taught high school math for one semester. If a student had challenged me for giving him and others a failing grade by asking me, “Do you understand everything about mathematics, then how can you be so sure that my answers were wrong” I would have likely taught him a thing or two that had little to do with math.

Don’t let those fellows who are presently talking about grace like they are the first ones in the church to have discovered that “by grace are ye

saved” to lure you into believing that since we are all weak in our understanding in certain areas that we have no right to draw any lines against those professed Christians who may “understand differently” than we do. The fact is, we cannot understand truth differently, we either understand it or we misunderstand it.

As it was in the 60’s and 70’s, I fear that it will be with the present one’s who are overemphasizing grace and using it as an excuse for broader fellowship, most of them will wind up out right espousing the false doctrines of the ones they are now seeking a way to fellowship – in fact, some of them may already be there.

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Does God love and hate sinners?

In all our efforts to distinguish between the sinner and his sin, why should we be afraid to use Bible language? Biblical writers clearly say in some cases that God hates certain sinners. They did not seem to feel the need to add voluminous explanations of the nuances between loving the sinner and hating the sin. They seemed to have assumed that their readers would know the difference. Some examples of the Bible’s saying that God hates certain sinners:

(In these verses, notice the persons that we have put in all **boldface**.)

“The LORD tests the righteous, But the **wicked** and the **one who** loves violence His soul hates.” (Psalms 11:5).

“These six things the LORD hates, Yes, seven are an abomination to Him: A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood, A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil, **a false witness** who speaks lies, And **one who** sows discord among brethren.” (Proverbs 6:16-19)

Notice that God is said to hate the sinner not merely the sin:

“The wicked” not merely “wickedness.”

“One who loves violence” not merely “loving violence.”

“A false witness” not merely “false witnessing.” or “lying”

“One who sows discord” not merely “sowing discord.”

What is my point in all of this? It is simply this, let’s not get all out of joint when someone may say, “God hates (fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, homosexuals, sodomites, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, extortioners)” rather than saying, “God hates (fornication, idolatry, adultery, homosexuality, sodomy, thieving, covetousness, drunkenness, reviling, extortion).” They have good precedent for so speaking.

They may well understand that God loves everyone – even His enemies and wants all men to be saved. They may also understand that we are to be like God in this (cf. Matt. 5:43-48). They may also understand **there is a sense** in which God hates the sinner or God would have not used such language pointed out above. So, let’s give a break to those who may say that God hates certain sinners.

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Concerning the right to boast ...

Only when we are capable of effecting salvation and making it available, do we have a right to boast. Only then can it truly of ourselves.

Only by leaving it to us to “work out (our) own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil. 2:12) by obedience can God protect our freedom to choose our destiny. Otherwise it would be salvation by force.

Even if we obeyed all commanded us we would still have no right to boast (Luke 10:17). We would still be **His** “workmanship,” (Eph. 2:10) because we are obeying **His** will and not ours.

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“Honey, start packing ...”

A preacher received a call from a church in another city offering him the opportunity to work with them at about twice the wages he was presently receiving. He told them that he would not make such a momentous decision unless he had prayed about it and “slept on it.” So, he would let them know the next morning. Hanging up the phone, he turned to his wife and said, “Honey, start packing, I have some praying to do.”

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