

Inside this issue:

<i>The Cart Before the Horse</i>	1
<i>Ezras Still Need Shecaniahs</i>	2
<i>The Problem of Depression</i>	3
<i>Just Telling What I Feel</i>	5
A.M. Sermon Outline: Noah and the Flood	6
Duty Rosters	7
Announcements & For the Record	8



Time of Assembly



Sunday:

Bible Study	9:00 a.m.
Worship	10:00 a.m.
Worship	5:00 p.m.
(every other week)	

Wednesday:

Bible Study	6:30 p. m.
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The Cart Before the Horse

By Leslie Diestelkamp

A good preacher appealed to an able church for support while he worked with a small group of Christians in a vast metropolitan field. His request was declined because the elders felt he was preaching to too few people. "He only preaches to thirty-five or forty people," they complained.

Another able, experienced preacher determined to go to a completely new field to help establish a congregation in a good city there. One elder wrote him advising against it. The elder's plan seemed to be as follows: such new churches should get by with local talent so that the full-time preachers could be available for work with larger congregations.

The two paragraphs above demonstrate the "cart before the horse" attitude. According to such ideas, Paul should have stayed at Antioch. He should have declined the "Macedonian call," explaining to the Lord that he could preach to more brethren in Antioch.

The fact is that some brethren want to hire an "errand boy" for the church, but they have to designate him as "our preacher" to justify the expenditure. Other brethren seem to measure the worthwhileness of a preacher's support by the number of people he preaches to even if 99% of them are already Christians.

A few years ago I heard from an older preacher who said, "If I were a young preacher I'd pick me out a good church and settle down for life." This kind of statement almost makes me vomit! And if that sentiment (or the attitude described in the first two paragraphs of this article) represents a scriptural approach to gospel work and a scriptural discernment of the will of Christ, then I surely don't know enough to come in out of the rain!

But this must not be construed to mean that I believe it is wrong for a preacher to work with a well-established

church or that it is wrong for a preacher to stay a long time in one community. I just believe many brethren have established wrong priorities. The first matter of concern for any gospel preacher should be to preach the pure Word and preach it where it is needed most. Likewise, the first priority for the expenditure of money from the church treasury should be to be sure it is spent for support of faithful men in whatever field may present the greatest need and/or opportunity.”The field is the world,” and Jesus said, “Go teach.”

Ezras Still Need Shecaniahs

By Jason Hardin

“Ezra.” If you’re familiar with the Old Testament of the Bible, you remember the name, “Shecaniah?”

Probably not. But here’s something we all need to understand: the “Ezras” of the world desperately need the “Shecaniahs.”

In Ezra 10, after rebuilding the temple, restoring the Passover, and contending with a wide variety of adversaries, Ezra was worn out and discouraged. The people were distracted and dangerously close to slipping into the old patterns of behavior that had led to the exile of their forefathers. And Ezra had reached the end of his rope.

“While Ezra prayed and made confession, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, a very great assembly of men, women, and children gathered to him out of Israel, for the people wept bitterly. And Shecaniah the son of Jehiel, of the sons of Elam, addressed Ezra: ‘We have broken faith with our God and have married foreign women from the peoples of the land, but even now there is hope for Israel in spite of this. Therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all these wives and their children, according to the counsel of my lord and of those who tremble at the commandment of our God, and let it be done according to the Law. Arise, for it is your task, and we are with you; be strong and do it’” (Ezra 10:1-4).

Ezra has a book of the Bible named after him. Shecaniah doesn’t. Ezra was known by Artaxerxes, king of Persia. Shecaniah wasn’t. Ezra is remembered for standing before a great assembly of people, reading the Book of the Law of Moses for hours, and leading a multitude to repentance and restoration. Shecaniah isn’t. But Ezra 10 documents a dark day. A deep valley. Ezra was bitterly weeping, with a tear-streamed face to the ground. And Shecaniah was there to help.

Shecaniah was honest about the current predicament. He didn’t gloss over the mess. He didn’t downplay the seriousness of the situation. He didn’t point fingers. He didn’t cast the blame as far away from himself as he could. Notice the pronouns. *“We have broken faith with our God.”*

He shared the gift of optimism and perspective with Ezra. *“Even now there is*

hope.”

He challenged Ezra. “*Arise.*”

He reminded Ezra. “*It is your task.*”

He strengthened Ezra with the blessing of fellowship. “*We are with you.*”

He inspired Ezra. “*Be strong and do it.*”

Then Ezra arose and Israel was motivated to take the next right step.

Your name might not be known by the masses. Your reputation may not open the doors of power.

Your biography probably won’t be written. But you can make a real difference today by following in Shecaniah’s footsteps. Just look around. Who is worn out? Spent in the service of others? Maybe a little discouraged? Close to the end of their rope?

How could you serve as a refreshment to their souls?

Optimism. Perspective. Encouragement. A reminder. Strength. Fellowship. Inspiration. Those are the gifts Shecaniah gave on that tough day in Ezra 10.

In a darkened world full of discouragement, self-centeredness, and pessimism, be a Shecaniah this week.

*"Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; or **he who exhorts, in his exhortation**; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness" (Romans 12:6-8).*

The Problem of Depression

By David Weak

Depression’s a problem that plagues most people, and Christians are no different. It’s a natural part of the human mind to take periodic emotional downturns. Here is the problem for Christians: somewhere along the way, someone decided that depression is a sin for a Christian. As my dad would say, “Horsefeathers!” God created emotions. Sadness, anger, and melancholy are all part of a human’s constitution.

Furthermore, the Bible indicates that depression was a normal state of affairs for many Bible characters. David wrote about being clinging to the dust (Psalm 119:25). Job was troubled by loss, disease, a nagging wife, and what he called “*miserable comforters*” as friends who spoke, “*words of wind*” (Job 16:2-3). Is it any surprise that he wished he had never been born (Job 3:3-4), or that he longed for the relief death would bring (Job 3:20-21)? The prophet Jeremiah was so disturbed by the rejection of His people that he despaired of preaching (Jeremiah 20:8-9). Surely, the belief equating depression with sin is misguided and unbiblical.

The trick for a Christian, when depression arises, is to get rid of it as quickly as possible. Paul said that one should not let the sun go down on anger (Ephesians 4:26).

The child of God has plenty of help from God during these times. When depression rears its ugly head, remember some very important facts.

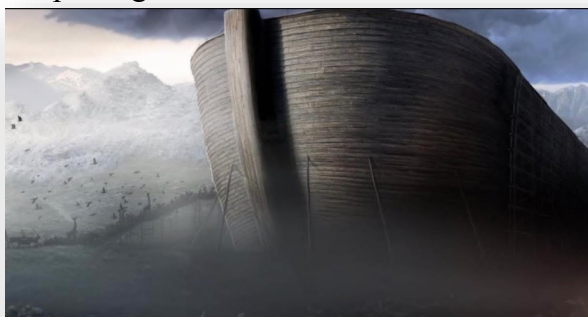
First, give people a break. Many times we find ourselves disappointed in our brethren. Why have we built them up so? People don't always do what I think they should, nor do they see things my way all of the time. They disappoint me. Well, so what!? I shouldn't let disappointment send me into despair. Perhaps the problem is with me, not my "offender." Think the best of your brethren, not the worst (I Corinthians 13:5, 7). Don't idolize mere people, and don't make them live up to your standards. It's enough that they are serving the Lord (Romans 14:5-6, 10).

Second, put your trust in God. The Lord will never forsake you. He will never mislead you. His promises are "*exceedingly great and precious*" (II Peter 1:4). Family, friends, and even Christians can fail you, but God never will. Stand with Him. Walk in the light and be content to be in fellowship with those similarly walking in the light (I John 1:5-7).

Third, you're never alone. Elijah became convinced that he was whipped. He believed Jezebel had won, and he was alone. It was all in his mind because the facts were that although he believed his great victory over the prophets of Baal of Mt. Carmel meant nothing, God told him to pick himself up and get to work. God had seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed to Baal (I Kings 19:1-19).

Fourth, put your mind on things above. The greatest disturbance of a Christian's mind and heart is a broken perspective. Quit listening to every news report about Washington's shenanigans. Instead of obsessing over all the evil in the world, pause daily to focus on things above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God (Colossians 3:1-2). Remember heaven is home, not this world (Philippians 3:20).

Depression is a subject with which I am well acquainted. I have experienced it often, and I know how badly it can sap one of strength, joy, energy, and motivation. Thanks to the teachings of the Bible, I know how to fight back, and I know how to keep from wallowing in darkness.



They said Noah was a crazy conspiracy theorist. Then the rain came and the fact-checkers drowned.

Just Telling What I Feel

By Doy Moyer

That our culture has been trained to act more on feelings than objective truth and reality is evident in so many ways that it hardly needs proving. The outbursts of anger, the murders, the sexual abuses, the lack of civility, the completely irrational denials of reality, and more are ever before us and do not seem to be waning. Feelings have overtaken facts; it is more important that we do not hurt feelings (as defined by ... feelings) than that we deny truth and reality.

Unfortunately, the feelings-over-truth paradigm is also found among believers in God. We define what it means to glorify God by what we like and feel rather than allowing God to define what He wants. This is evident in the worship-for-entertainment industry. Some seem to be more interested in being rock stars for Christ than humbly submitting to God's expressed will.

Humility must control feelings. Feelings can be arrogant, selfish, and demanding of others. What matters is what I feel. Me. Not you. Me. Humility, however, constrains and limits how we allow our feelings to outweigh the need to submit to God and others. "Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves" (Phil 2:3). This is the mind of Christ.

Feelings are not a proper source of truth. We may feel otherwise, but then we have entered the vicious circle of defining truth by our own desires. That lie can be traced back to the garden. When we allow that to happen, then we will inevitably let the flesh take over the Spirit.

Herein is the difference between letting our feelings take precedence over truth and vice versa: "*For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit*" (Romans 8:5 — really, the whole chapter; and while you're at it, the two previous chapters ... and the whole book).

What will define your actions today? The flesh (your feelings) or the Spirit (God's will)? Feelings are very good followers, not leaders, of truth, but we must first give way to that Truth in Christ so that our feelings will do what they were actually meant to do. Therein will we be set free from sin (John 8:31ff).

