

THE BATTLE CREEK BULLETIN

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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.

“If the Foundations are Destroyed, What Can the Righteous Do?” (Psalm 11:3)

By Jonathan Perz

When I played baseball growing up, and we had a bad game, it was inevitable that our coach would tell us at the beginning of the very next practice that we had to go back to the basics ... the foundations of baseball - throwing, catching, hitting. The same holds true spiritually. The Hebrew writer had some meatier topics to address with them, but was not able. They needed milk. They needed to go back to the basics. They needed foundational doctrines. Read Hebrews 5:12-6:2 and see for yourself.

I believe we are in a very comparable situation today. The foundations are being destroyed. Many have lost sight of the basics - grace, faith, obedience. We need "to lay again the foundation: repentance from dead works and faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of the resurrection of the dead and of eternal judgment" (Heb. 6:1-2). That is not only what the righteous CAN do, it is what the righteous MUST do!

Unfortunately, it would appear that some have strayed so far in their thinking that the foundations are indeed destroyed to them and they have built "new" foundations. When we can't even interpret Scripture by the same standard, we will never reach agreement, let alone walk together (Amos 3:3) - even on the foundational doctrines. The righteous can do nothing in such cases. When we, as God's people, reject the foundational precepts and teachings of the apostle's doctrine ... the knowledge the Holy Spirit has revealed to us ... we will invariably be destroyed for a lack of knowledge (Hos. 4:6)!

Thus, with such doctrinal chaos prevailing, let us be careful to test EVERY doctrine in the light of God's word and

hold fast to only those things we know to be true (1 Thess. 5:21). Let us ALL examine our faith and be sure we are indeed grounded in the basics (2 Cor. 13:5). Let us be sure our faith is "built on the foundations of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief Cornerstone..." (Eph. 2:20) and avoid being "tossed to and fro and carried about with every winds of doctrine" (Eph. 4:14).

Brethren, not to sound alarmist, but the alarm must be sounded. There are some gale force "winds of doctrine" blowing. It is time to batten down the hatches and sure up our spiritual houses! As Paul wrote, "Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all" (1 Thess. 5:14).

Evangelism is Fundamental

By Ken Weliever

In the comic strip "Peanuts," Lucy tells her brother, Linus, that she has "converted" a school classmate to her way of thinking religiously. Linus is surprised, especially knowing how Lucy operates!

"How did you do it?" Linus asked.

"I told him everything I believe and asked him if he believed it, too," Lucy explained. "Then, when we came to something he didn't see my way, I just hit him over the head with my lunch box until he believed it!"

I suppose we've all witnessed that kind of evangelism. No, not literally hitting someone over the head with a lunch box or anything else. But aggressive, belligerent, and even insulting evangelism.

In a world that says we ought to keep our faith private, God wants us to take the saving Gospel of Christ into all the world (Mark 16:15-16). We should not be ashamed of the gospel or Jesus Christ. When first-century Christians were persecuted, they did not recoil or recant but went everywhere preaching the Word (Acts 8:4).

Evangelism ought to be a fundamental facet of our Christian walk. However, there is a right way and a wrong way to seek converts! The apostle Paul gives this inspired advice that would improve our evangelistic efforts.

"Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person" (Colossians 4:5-6, NASB95)

In these two verses, there are four things we can do to be more effective when sharing our faith with others.

1. Exercise wisdom

Knowledge is obviously important in teaching others about Christ, but effective outreach also requires wisdom, sound judgment, prudential action, and understanding.

Wisdom seeks to understand others, their points of view, background, religious experiences, spiritual problems, and biblical understanding.

2. Be Aware of Opportunities

There are many seekers in this world today — hurting souls, depressed souls, lost souls. They feel empty on the inside. They are searching for something but are not sure what it is.

Christians have the opportunity to share the Good News of Jesus and lead people into a spiritual relationship that will change their lives and bless them eternally.

We need to seek opportunities to share our faith. See the opportunities when they present themselves. And then seize the opportunities that we see.

3. Employ gracious speech

Hypercritical, unkind language does not win people to Christ. While we are commanded to “*speak the truth*” to those who need to hear it, the Bible says to do it in the spirit of love (Ephesians 4:16).

I can contend for the faith without being contentious. I can disagree without displaying a disagreeable spirit. I can affirm the truth without being obnoxious. I can differ without being difficult. And I can persuade without being pushy,

4. Respond instead of reacting to others

When I react to someone with whom I disagree, it is almost always negative. Without forethought, it is too easy to spout off and hurt another’s feelings, antagonize them, or erect a barrier that can never be eradicated.

Finally, Joseph Aldrich, in his book *Lifestyle Evangelism*, reminds us of this important ingredient in evangelism. “Before you can share the Good News, you must be the Good News.

He Restrained Them Not

By James Sanders

The life of the Old Testament figure, Eli, is indeed a remarkable one. Eli was a descendant of Ithamar, the fourth son of Aaron and therefore was of the tribe of Levi. Combined in this man of God were the offices of both High Priest and Judge. It was the first time in Israel that one man had held both offices at the same time. But such was indicative of the goodness and righteousness of Eli; it seems everyone respected him. For some forty years Eli judged the nation of Israel (Cf. 1 Samuel 4:18). His character was one of godliness and devotion but was not without blemish. Phineas and Hophni, the sons of Eli, were as wicked as their father was righteous. And to make matters worse, Phineas and Hophni were put into the office of a priest even though they lacked Eli’s virtue and zeal (Cf. 1 Samuel 1:3). The result was nothing short of extraordinary! The conduct of Eli’s children literally shocked the people of Israel. Because of Phineas and Hophni, men came to abhor the offering of the Lord (Cf. 1 Samuel 2:17). Things were very bad; the sad state of affairs was almost beyond description.

But when the aged High Priest learned of the scandals being committed by his sons, he only administered a gentle rebuke. Apparently, Eli had always so corrected his

children. Instead of reproving his boys while they were small, Eli perhaps reasoned with them and viewed their mischievous conduct with but a look of disfavor. But now Phineas and Hophni were no longer children and with them had grown their mischievous habits. The Scriptures assert that Eli was largely to blame. "He restrained them not" (I Samuel 3:13). Eli had failed to restrain his sons while they were young and now it was too late! As the twig had been bent, so had it grown. Now the sternest rebuke would prove ineffectual. Alas! What a lifetime of waste! All those years of effort and sacrifice in vain. Eli had failed and failed miserably; he had let his sons down when they needed him the most!

The Scriptures urge: "Chasten thy son while there is hope and let not thy soul spare for his crying" (Proverbs 19:18). Doubtless, Eli's philosophy was, "Boys will be boys." But someone has well said, "Boys will be boys, but those same boys one day will be men." A child needs discipline and guidance when he is young. Then there is hope. Parents, open your eyes before it is too late! Now is the time to "restrain" your children. Now is the time to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. This opportunity of youth, once present, never returns. Father or mother, have you really "restrained" (guided) that wee creature who is so fresh from God? Be honest with yourself. Think of Eli - think of yourself - think of the little ones entrusted to your care. Will you fail them when they need you the most?

Live Joyfully!

By Paul Earnhart

The Preacher concluded the eighth chapter with another of his oft-repeated observations that God's ways are inscrutable to men, however wise (Ecclesiastes 8:17). Job, in his misery, twice asks plaintively: "*But where can wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding?*" (Job 28:12, 20). He then answers his own question: "*God understands its way, and He knows its place*" (Job 28:23). What then are we to do? He answers again: "*Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding*" (Job 28:28). Only to the degree God has revealed His plan to us can we understand. The rest is shrouded, and for that, we must trust Him. This, too, is Solomon's unchanging answer to his repeated failures to fully grasp the nature of life under the sun.

One of the challenges in studying Ecclesiastes is the little emphasis put on God's benevolent providence for the righteous in all the pain and disappointments to which they are heirs. There is a greater boldness in the New Testament on this subject (Romans 5:1-4; 8:28-39; Hebrews 12:5-11). In Ecclesiastes, this truth is more implicit than stated, but in chapter nine, it briefly surfaces. "*For I considered all this [life's mysteries] in my heart,*" Solomon writes, "*so that I could declare it all: that the righteous and the wise and all their works are in the hand of God*" (Ecclesiastes 9:1). Heretofore the Preacher

has simply stressed that divine justice will at last be done (Ecclesiastes 3:17; 8:12,13). Now, he stresses that through all the storms and stresses that beset the righteous, they are being carried in the gracious arms of an almighty God. As Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. ably summed it up: "Our quest for identity, meaning, and an explanation of the presence of evil, injustice, and inequities in life must end where Solomon's did -- in the fact that God sits at the helm, ruling and overruling for good" [*Ecclesiastes - Total Life*, p. 94].

Nevertheless, no matter how true that is, the Preacher reemphasizes that such will not always be evident in what we experience here: "*People know neither love nor hatred by anything they see that is before them*" (Ecclesiastes 9:1). He illustrates his point by proving that "all things come alike to all." The same thing happens to both the righteous and the wicked, the good and the sinner, the religious and the non-religious, the committed and uncommitted. They all go to the dead (Ecclesiastes 9:2-3). As a result, some heedless men fill themselves up with evil until they are crazy with it (Ecclesiastes 9:3; I Peter 4:3-5). And sin and madness surely do go together. We must be truly out of our minds if we think we can push the God who created us out of our lives and practice all the things that dishonor Him and injure others. So mindless people waste the one life they are given and plunge headlong into the death they know is coming and which will offer them no opportunity to change their destiny. Whatever they were, it is done (Ecclesiastes 9:4-6). Solomon is not speaking here of annihilation (how could there be a judgment?) but of the fact that they will "*nevermore have a share in anything done under the sun.*" The preciousness of life he has earlier stressed with a proverb: "*But for him who is joined to the living there is hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion*" (Ecclesiastes 9:4).

So, if the righteous are not to be distinguished from the wicked in their circumstances and their end, what should the righteous do? Should they allow their griefs and troubles to consume them, to brood and mope in pessimistic gloom? Solomon rejects this reaction as he has many times before (Ecclesiastes 2:24; 3:12-13, 22; 5:18-19; 8:15), and here his exhortation to joy comes to a rather powerful conclusion (Ecclesiastes 9:7-10). Don't just hope to live, he urges, live! Receive God's gifts gratefully, and though you may not always have them, enjoy them when you do. Eat your food and savor it with gladness (Acts 2:46; the wine mentioned here is not a drug as in Proverbs 20:1; 23:29-35, but wholesome food as in Lamentations 2:11-12). Wear with gratitude the clothes you have been given and the soothing oil for your head, remembering that God has accepted your need for such things (Ecclesiastes 9:7-8). And even more importantly, live joyfully with the mate God has blessed you with and give yourself heartily to your work (Ecclesiastes 9:9-10).

And, however can we do that? Because, though the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, and death is certain (Ecclesiastes 9:11-12), we are in the hands of a gracious and all-powerful God who loves us.