

THE PLEASANT VIEW PLUMB LINE

"...then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel..." (Amos 7:8)

WHAT MUST BE THE WORSHIPER'S ATTITUDE?

Great responsibility has always rested upon the worshiper, in the Old Testament as well as in the New. Not only must one have the right object, but he must have certain attitudes.

First, the True Worshiper Feels the Desire to Worship. "Both young men, and virgins; Old men, and children: Let them praise the name of Jehovah; For his name alone is exalted; His glory is above the earth and the heavens" (Psalm 148:12-13). "These things I remember, and pour out my soul within me, how I went with the throng, and led them to the house of God, With the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude keeping holyday" (Psalm 42:4). David exclaimed, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go unto the house of Jehovah" (Psalm 122:1). Man needs to realize his need for his maker and thirst for Him. "As the heart panteth after the water brooks, So panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; When shall I come and appear before God" (Psalm 42:1-2)? Job cried, "Oh that I knew where I might find him! That I might come even to his seat" (Job 23:3).

Second, the True Worshiper Feels Profound Gratitude for the Wonderful Grace of God. He seeks every opportunity to acknowledge his dependence upon God and his awareness that without God's blessings, he could not live. "O praise Jehovah, all ye nations; Laud him, all ye peoples. For his lovingkindness is great toward us" (Psalm 117:1-2). "What shall I render unto Jehovah for all his benefits toward me" (!16:12)? "I will pay my vows before them that fear him" (22:25). "Praise ye Jehovah. O give thanks unto Jehovah; for he is good; For his lovingkindness endureth forever" (106:1).

Third, the True Worshiper Feels Reverence in and Worships God from the Heart. It is genuine: the emotions are involved. "These things I remember [what God has done for me and that my soul pants after God, CAC], and pour out my soul within me" (Psalm 42:2). "Glory ye in his holy name: Let the heart of them rejoice that seek Jehovah" (I Chronicles 16:10). "Him shall ye fear [reverence, CAC], give thanks with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise unto thee" (Psalm 138:1). The worshiper is not passive in his worship, awaiting some entertainment or mystical uplift to result from the "performance" of the song leader, the preacher, and others. We actively lift up praise and adoration to God within His prescribed way out of a heart filled with reverence, gratitude, confession, praise, and supplication.

Fourth, the True Worshiper Realizes that God is Close at Hand. Unlike many who think that God is so remote that He cannot see, know, or be concerned with our needs, thoughts, prayers, and joys, men need to realize that "...they should seek God, if haply they might feel after him, and find him [through His Word, of course, CAC], though he is not far from each one of us" (Acts 17:27). With the Israelites, God's glory filled the tabernacle (Exodus 40:33-38), from whence He spoke to the people when the Word would tabernacle in the flesh (John 1:1-3,14) and when He would dwell in His holy temple, the church (I Corinthians 3:16-17). He is with His people in the worship (Matthew 26:28-29; I Corinthians 10:16-21; 11:23ff). The righteous people of the Old Testament walked with God, building a close relationship with Him (not the type of "buddy-buddy," "daddy" relationship as some shallow, flippant souls would aver today). Study the faith and reverence demonstrated in the worship of Abraham, Moses, David, and others. Enoch walked with God; David was a man after God's own heart; Daniel was greatly beloved.

-Curtis A. Cates

DON'T FORGET!!!

Text: _____

I. Don't Forget Christ's _____

A. _____ of _____

B. _____ of _____

II. Don't Forget Christ's _____

A. _____ of _____

B. _____ of _____

C. _____ of _____

III. Don't Forget Christ's _____

A. _____ through _____

B. _____ through _____

C. _____ unto _____

IV. Don't Forget Christ's _____

A. The _____ of His _____

B. The _____ of His _____

TREATING OUR BIBLES LIKE CELL PHONES

Recently I received an e-mail entitled "Cell Phone vs. the Bible." The article began by asking the question, "What would happen if we treated our Bibles the same way we treat our cell phones?" For example:

- What if we carried the Bible around in our purses or pockets?
- What if we turned back to go get it if we forgot it?
- What if we flipped through it several times a day?
- What if we used it to received messages from the text?
- What if we treated it like we could not live without it?
- What if we gave it to kids as gifts?
- What if we used it as we traveled?
- What if we used it in case of an emergency?

In Psalm 119, the Psalmist tells us as Christians how important it is to study and reflect on the Word of God. The psalmist says, "I will meditate on Your precepts, and contemplate Your ways. I will delight myself in Your statutes: I will not forget Your word. Oh, how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day. Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:15-16,97,105—NKJV).

Let me encourage you to start treating the Bible like you treat your cell phone. Always be connected to God's Word.

-Wade Hunt

THE JOY OF GIVING

When I was a boy I went to Sunday School at a little country church called Mt. Pleasant. I can remember old brother Varner, one of the good elders of his little country church. During the Depression he visited the preacher, who spoke to this congregation once a month, and gave him \$5.00. The preacher said, "No, times are hard and you need the \$5.00." Brother Varner said, "I want you to have it. You will only receive this \$5.00, but I will receive spiritual blessings for it." This old brother truly knew and understood Acts 20:35).

If is cheerful, joyful giving that appeals to the heart of our Lord. "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." There is nothing surprising about that—that is the kind we love. Who wants a gift that comes with a snarl? Thackeray, in his lecture on "Thrift," tells how the great Dean would spend himself in the service of others. But it added these terrible words, "he insulted you while he served you." Then he adds, "I had rather have a potato and a kind word from Goldsmith than to have been beholden to the great Dean for a guinea and a dinner."

Suppose a husband has been away from home for some time and, returning, brings his wife a gift. He enters the house, throws the gift at her, and says, "There is your gift. I did not want to bring it, but I knew there would be a fuss if I did not." She would not appreciate it. I have known some members of the church who gave so reluctantly, so grudgingly, and so snarlingly, that one feels in the language of Thackeray, that they insult God and his cause every time they give.

In II Corinthians 8, we read of some beggars. How, as a rule we detest beggars. We don't like to be around people who want a handout all the time. Paul compliments these beggars. They are not asking to be exempt from suffering. They were not begging for preeminence. Now listen to it—they were begging Paul for an opportunity to give (yes, give) to the support of the saints. No wonder Paul was so enthusiastic. No wonder he could not think of those Macedonians without his heart bubbling over with joy. These people had a wonderful attitude toward their wealth. Giving had ceased to be a duty that they performed reluctantly and with long face. It was a joy, they could and did give with joy in their hearts. "They begged me of their own accord most urgently for the favor of contributing."

-V.P. Black

IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED...

One of the hardest things in the world to face and have to live with is failure. Whether it be failure of a very simple, and ultimately insignificant nature or a failure of a monumental, life changing nature, man hates and lives in fear of failing. Maybe a factor behind this fear is an experience from childhood. As a child maybe one failed academically or athletically and paid the consequences of that failure in some way. Maybe a factor behind this fear comes from experience in young adulthood. Possibly that time finally came when one moved out of their parents house and began an independent life making their own decisions and supporting themselves financially and found that lifestyle to be vastly different from what they imagined and hit some bumps in the road. Or maybe a factor behind this fear is found in experience from adulthood from failing as a spouse or a parent and seeing real people suffer in real life. Whatever the factor behind one's fear ultimately failure is something nobody wants to suffer.

However, maybe failure is mostly feared in matters of the soul. Man fears condemnation of his own soul and the influence he may have on another soul that is condemned. And one would think that this excruciating fear would be enough to bring about change and renewal, but often that is not the case. But thankfully the God of heaven is not One who expects perfection, but knows there will be failures in our lives. Though what He does expect is that if at first you don't succeed, to use the old phrase, you dust yourself off and try again.

God's longsuffering toward man is as old as is mankind. All the way back in Genesis 3, the command was to not eat of the tree in the midst of the garden, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, or else they would surely die. And as sure as they had received the command, Adam and Eve broke it. The consequence then, as prescribed by God, was death (Genesis 2:17). However, following the sin Adam and Eve continued living. Yes they spiritually died, and yes they began to physically die, but the point is that they continued living though they deserved to die immediately. They failed, and yet God in His longsuffering looked forward to the time when one would die on their behalf, to the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8) and had mercy upon Adam and Eve, allowing them the opportunity to dust themselves off and try again.

Then one might turn his attention to the Israelite nation and realize that she lived in constant failure throughout her history. Whether it be during the exodus, the wilderness wanderings, the period of the judges, or in the events that resulted in the major captivities in Assyria and Babylon, Israel constantly failed the expectations of God. It even was thought of by God at one time to extinguish the nation and save Himself the grief of having to deal with them (Numbers 14:11-12). However, God in His mercy and longsuffering merely punished them to try to bring about repentance and renewal so that His promise to Abraham would continue to unfold unharmed. Even in the midst of failure they were given opportunity to dust themselves off and try again.

Finally, in turning to the pages of the New Testament a final example of failure is within the elect and redeemed of God themselves, the Corinthian churches of Christ. There were factions, adultery, brethren taking each other to court over spiritual matters, fornication, misunderstandings over meat offered to idols, doubts about Paul's apostleship, women usurping authority, misuses of the miraculous gifts, and false teachings over the resurrection, just to name a few. Spiritually they had failed and were currently suffering some temporary consequences of that failure, but God in His mercy suffered long, giving them opportunity to change, which they did. They dusted themselves off and tried again for the sake of success.

Today man lives in an age of spiritual failure. Society is more heathenistic, atheistic, skeptic, and hateful than ever before in the history of the world. All of this negativity is having an effect on all facets of humanity and will bring about a new generation after this one that will probably escalate in apostasy if nothing is done to change it. However, amidst all of this failure God has continued to give opportunity to repent. That is because He "*is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance*" (II Peter 3:9). Continually man at first has not and does not succeed, but still there is opportunity to dust himself off and try again. That, in essence, is the theme of this life: trial, error, and repentance. God now commands all men to repent so that we might benefit from His eternal blessings promised, made possible, and confirmed by the blood of His Son. Won't you accept it today?