

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)

BEING GOOD IS NOT ENOUGH

The conception of many in the world concerning heaven and the way to heaven is bound up in the false perception that as long as a person is morally ethical, I.e., they are honest, faithful to their mates, pay all of their taxes, etc., God will not condemn them to hell. Yet, the Bible is clear and to the point that there is a necessity on the part of man of obedience to the commands of God for the salvation of his soul. Consider these words of Jesus from the sermon on the mount: *"Not every that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity"* (Matthew 7:21-23). Here are individuals who did many good things, they were morally ethical people. However, because they did not *"do the will of the Father"* they were commanded to depart from the Lord.

The simple fact of the matter is that God has given commandments to men which must be obeyed in order for one to be saved on the day of judgment, apart from their moral character. One of the greatest examples of this can be found in the book of Acts from the life of Cornelius. Surely there is not a man living on the earth today who may be classified as a better man morally than this man. Notice the type of life exhibited by Cornelius: *"There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always"* (Acts 10:1-2).

Observe first of all that Cornelius was devout, a term that simply means he reverence God. Second, he was a man who feared God. Cornelius did not fear God in the sense that he was cowardly afraid of Him but in the sense that he respected God. Next, Cornelius gave much money to those in need. In fact, he gave so much that even though he was a Roman (a people despised by the Jews), he was *"of good report among all the nation of the Jews"* (Acts 10:22). Finally consider the fact that Cornelius was a man of prayer. Surely a man of this caliber, one who revered and respected God in his life, a man who helped those in need and one who prayed to God continually, had need of nothing in his life. Surely the soul of this man was in a saved condition! The world would look at Cornelius and say, *"If anyone is going to heaven it will be Cornelius, just look at the type of person he was."* Nevertheless, God does not see it that way, for Cornelius was told to call Peter *"who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved"* (Acts 11:14).

The conclusion is clear. Even though Cornelius was a good man, even thou he was just and feared God (Acts 10:22), he was lost. The only thing that could save Cornelius was his obedience to the commandments of God that were delivered to him by the inspired apostle Peter. Today, God speaks to us through His word and it is by obedience to the gospel that we will be saved (Romans 1:16), not by our own good moral character alone.

-Ronnie Scherffius

BORN AGAIN

An irate subscriber stormed into a newspaper office waving the current edition, asking to see "whoever wrote the obituary column." When referred to a young reporter, he stormed, "You can see I'm very much alive, and you've put me in the obituary column! I demand a retraction!" Replied the reporter, "I never retract a story. But I tell you what I'll do. I'll put you in the birth column and give you a fresh start.

SEEKING GODLY HOMES

Text: _____

- I. _____ by the _____
 - A. What is _____ ?
 - B. What is _____ ?
- II. _____ with the _____
 - A. _____ first
 - B. _____ second
 - C. _____ last
- III. _____ the _____
 - A. Plan to _____
 - B. Plan to _____
 - C. Plan to _____

BOUNDLESS BEAUTY

Text: _____

- I. Ruth's _____
 - A. _____ of her _____
 - B. _____ of his _____
- II. Ruth's _____
 - A. Her _____ for _____
 - B. Her _____ for _____
 - C. Her _____ for _____
- III. Ruth's _____
 - A. _____ through _____
 - B. _____ through _____

Little Carl was having dinner at Steven's house. Trying to help their guest, Steven's mother asked, "Are you sure you can cut the meat by yourself?" Carl answered, "Sure. At home, the meat is this tough too!"

A FORMER MEMBER OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

Recently a friend of mine read me some of the saddest and most terrifying words I have ever heard. The words were from an obituary for a funeral he was about to preach. The obituary told of a woman who lived an active, good life. She had a loving family and a good job, but it was the closing statement that cast a shadow over the summary of her life. "*She was a former member of the church of Christ.*" If a person understands that salvation is in the church, the body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23; 5:23), there are no more tragic words. I was immediately reminded of the word of Jesus when he said, "*For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*" (Matthew 16:26).

I do not profess to know the reason she was a "former" member of the church of Christ. It may be that she joined a man-made church, a denomination. It may be that she abandoned her faith and left the church. Regardless of the reason, the word "former" says it all.

Perhaps the greatest tragedy is that this is not an isolated incident. This woman is just one of many throughout the centuries who have fallen away. I have no doubt that we can all recall those in our own congregation who have left their first love. The Lord and His inspired preaches warned of the danger of leaving Him and rebuked those who had.

"Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins...Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the spirit of grace?" (Hebrews 10:25-26,29). "*For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world*" (II Timothy 4:10).

If all of the former members of the church of Christ were to return this Sunday our buildings could not hold them.

Please do not let your obituary say you, "were a former member of the church of Christ" but a "faithful member."

THE BOOK OF LOYALTY

She was committed, even in the most trying time of her life. Her husband and his brother both had just died. And she, along with her sister-in-law Orpah, was left with nothing but each other and their beloved mother-in-law Naomi. Still young and with her life ahead of her Orpah, with the blessing of Naomi was given permission to go, marry another, and live the rest of her life in happiness. The other, too, was given the same opportunity, but even in the midst of her youth she cared more about others than herself, thus her decision was to remain with Naomi to care for and keep company with her. In fact her loyalty was of such an extent that her exact response to Naomi was, *“Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me”* (Ruth 1:16-17). Her name was Ruth.

The book of Ruth is an oddity as compared to the rest of the books of the Bible because it is the only book that is completely devoted to one woman’s life, and only one of two books that bears the name of a woman (the other being Esther). However, the story of Ruth is of great beauty and amazement as it relates to the unfolding of God’s scheme of redemption. Ruth is just another strand in the scarlet thread of redemption wound throughout the Bible. She herself was in fact a Moabitess, one outside of God’s covenant because of her Gentile status, but her presence in God’s plan is remarkable.

Upon remaining with Naomi, Ruth’s life begins to unfold in a wonderfully providential way:

They received a warm welcome in Bethlehem, and Ruth gleaned in the fields of Boaz, a wealthy kinsman of Elimelech. Ruth found favor with Boaz, who treated her kindly, and exercising the kinsman’s right of redemption, bought the parcel of land belonging to Elimelech. This, according to Jewish law, bound Boaz to marry Ruth, *“To raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance”* (4:10; Deuteronomy 25:5-10). Ruth’s devotion to Naomi and to her God was thus rewarded with rest in the house of Boaz (3:1) and the honor of becoming an ancestor of Jesus (Dunn).

Recognizing her goodness, God in His providence used this loyal, yet Gentile woman to bring about His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. Recorded in Matthew 1:5, *“And Salmon begat Boaz of Rachab; and Boaz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse...”* It was likewise through this seed-line that king David and his royal descendants came forth, showing how that God sometimes uses those who are not His own to accomplish His purposes. And He could not have done it through a couple that showed more purity and love in the sacred bond of marriage than did Boaz and Ruth. May the love of all wedded couples be as strong as was the case with these two.

The events of Ruth’s life actually took place during the midst of all that was occurring during the period of the Judges (Ruth 1:1), therefore happening within that 350 year period, of which this account spans only about ten years. More than likely these things took place around 1200 B.C., but was not recorded by Samuel the prophet until shortly following the birth of David.

In the book of Ruth the principle of Boaz being the “kinsman redeemer.” The kinsman redeemer under Jewish law had certain qualifications that were to be met before performing their duties. He had to:

1. Be related by blood to those he redeems (Deuteronomy 25:5,7-10).
2. Be able to pay the price of redemption (Ruth 2:1).
3. Be willing to redeem (Ruth 3:1).
4. Be free himself.

Whereas Boaz was Ruth’s kinsman redeemer, Christ is also seen by these qualifications as being the kinsman redeemer for man today. Christ is related by blood as he became flesh, therefore being not only Son of God but Son of man. He is able to pay the price of redemption (I Peter :18-19). He is willing to redeem man (John 10:18). And Christ is free Himself being free from the curse of sin (Hebrews 4:15).

The book of Ruth is of great value to all children of God and its lessons should be studied by all. May its great wealth of wisdom be always studied and cherished by all.

-Andy Brewer