

# 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)

## LOOKING FOR LOVE

According to Amazon.com, there are at least 32,507 books currently in print with the word *love* in the title (over 145,000 that deal with the subject of love). There are more than 11,000 popular albums/CDs with *love* in the title. A Google search of the Internet reveals that there are at least 121,000,000 websites that use the word *love* as one of their key words.

The Bible is a book about a love story. It is about God's love for humanity, His wooing of our affection through the mediator, His Son. The word *love* (various forms) is found 419 times in the Bible. The book of I John has love for its theme. It tells us that "God is love" (I John 4:8), and then shows that God has demonstrated—made manifest—His love (3:16; 4:9-10). Love is not just something we feel; it is more often something we do.

Love requires action; it is demonstrated through behavior. God's love is more than jus talk; He demonstrated compassion so we would learn to be compassionate. As Paul said, "*Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it*" (I Thessalonians 5:24). John wrote, "*My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth*" (I John 3:18; cf. James 2:15-16).

### **God Demonstrates His Love For Us By Gift-Giving**

One of the "five languages of love" is "gift-giving." We enjoy surprising our mates with a little something we picked up on a trip. We take pleasure in giving presents to our children during the holidays. We celebrate graduations, weddings, and births with gift-giving.

God also uses this "love language" to express His sentiments to man. He "gave gifts unto men" (Ephesians 4:8). He leaves no one out—even His avowed enemies get daily gifts from the Creator they deny. "*The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works*" (Psalm 145:9). He gives us sunshine and rain, fruitful seasons, and beautiful vistas. Paul and Barnabas explained that God had "*left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with good and gladness*" (Acts 14:17; cf. Matthew 5:45).

### **God Demonstrates His Love for Us Through The Life Of His Son**

Jesus helped us to get to know the God of love. *Love* (various forms) is found eighty-six times in the eighty-nine chapters of Jesus' biographies (when *compassion* is added, the total increases to one hundred times). Jesus told Philip, "*He that hath seen me hath seen the Father*" (John 14:9). We saw Jesus' love demonstrated in feeding hungry people (John 6), healing hurting people (Matthew 4:24), directing lost people (Mathew 9:35-36), correcting wrong people (Matthew 23), accepting rejected people (Luke 19:1-10), and dying for lost people (Matthew 20:28).

Someone once wrote about a traveler who fell into a deep pit and couldn't get out. Several persons came along and saw him struggling in the pit.

- The sensitive person said, "I feel for you down there."
- The reflective person said, "It's logical that someone would fall into the pit."
- The aesthetic person said, "I can give you ideas on how to decorate your pit."
- The judgmental person said, "Only bad people fall into pits."
- The curious person said, "Tell me how you fell into the pit."
- The perfectionist said, "I believe you deserve you pit."
- The evaluator asked, "Are you paying taxes on this pit?"
- The self-pitying person said, "You should have seen my pit."
- The counselor said, "Just relax. Don't think about the pit."
- The optimist said, "Cheer up! Things could be worse."
- The pessimist said, "Be prepared! Things will get worse."
- Jesus, seeing him, love him, and lifted him out of the pit.

**ITS ALWAYS TIME**

Text: \_\_\_\_\_

I. When Thou \_\_\_\_\_

Notes:

II. When Thou \_\_\_\_\_

Notes:

III. When Thou \_\_\_\_\_

Notes:

IV. When Thou \_\_\_\_\_

Notes:

**WHY GO TO CHURCH?**

A churchgoer wrote a letter to the editor of a newspaper and complained that it made no sense to go to church every Sunday. "I've gone for 30 years now," he wrote, "and in that time I have heard something like 3,000 sermons. But for the life of me, I can't remember a single one of them. So, I think I'm wasting my time and the preachers are wasting theirs by giving sermons at all."

This started a controversy in the "Letters to the Editor" column, to the delight of the editor. It went on for weeks until someone wrote this clincher:

"I've been married for 30 years now. In that time my wife has cooked some 32,000 meals. But, for the life of me, I cannot recall the entire menu for a single one of those meals. But I do know this. They all nourished me and gave me the strength I needed to do my work. If my wife had not given me these meals, I would be physically dead today. Likewise, if I had not gone to church for nourishment, I would be spiritually dead today!"

A Christian can truthfully sin, "I was sinking deep in sin, far from the peaceful shore" when "love lifted me!"  
**God Demonstrates His Love For Us Through The Death Of His Son**

God has an infallible track record. He can be trusted. He has proven beyond question that He loves us. The Bible says, "*But God commendeth [demonstrated] his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us*" (Romans 5:8).

John Griffith lived in Oklahoma in 1929, and he lost all he had in the stock market crash. He moved to Mississippi, where he took a job tending a bridge for a railroad trestle. One day in 1937, his eight-year-old son, Greg, spent the day with his dad at work. He played in the office that morning and asked a thousand questions. Then a ship came through and John opened the drawbridge. Suddenly, he realize his son wasn't in the office.

Frantically he looked around, and to his horror saw him climbing on the gears of the draw bridge. He hurried outside to rescue his son, but just then he heard what he knew was a fast-approaching passenger train, the *Memphis Express*, filled with four hundred people. He yelled to his son, but the noise of the now clearing ship and the oncoming train made it impossible for the boy to hear him. John Griffith realized his horrible dilemma. If he took the time to rescue his son the train would crash and kill all aboard. If he closed the bridge, he would sacrifice his son.

He made the decision he would relive ten thousand times and pulled the lever to close the bridge. As the train went by he could see some passengers' faces. Some were reading, some waved, and all were oblivious to the sacrifice that had just been made on their behalf.

God once faced a similar dilemma. He could not save sinners and spare Jesus, too. How could He be "just" and "justifier" at the same time? (cf. Romans 3:26). God had to allow the jaws of death to close on His Son. He "*spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all*" (Romans 8:32). Millions go by oblivious and indifferent, even some who know the sacrifice.

Still, there is one tremendous difference between the two fathers. Unlike the *Memphis Express* that caught John Griffith by surprise, sending Jesus was not a panic move. It wasn't a spontaneous decision. It was planned. Paul said, "*But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law*" (Galatians 4:4). Jesus' death was not the result of jealous Jews or hard-hearted Romans. It was the result of a loving God who saw there was no other way to save man. "*Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us*" (I John 3:16).

Since people are looking for love, and "God is love" (I John 4:8), God is what people are looking for!

-Allen Webster

**“ELECTION, SMELECTION”: OVERCOMING POLITICAL INDIFFERENCE**

It has often been said that in polite company, two subjects are to be avoided in conversation: religion and politics. Perhaps it is figured that as long as they are not discussed then no feelings will be hurt and all problems will be resolved. However, even in avoiding the topics, feelings still get hurt and problems still go unresolved, thereby increasing the turmoil and iniquity in which governments and thus societies abide. And then perhaps there is an even stronger conviction that religion and politics should not be discussed together, and to some degree there is good in separating the two. However, the standard of right for one must be the standard of right for the other in order for the two to coexist in harmony, and from that standpoint religion and politics go hand in hand. A problem many democracies face, America in particular, is that many of its citizens want no more to do with politics than they do with religion and therefore the very foundations upon which they are built crumble like rotted wood. If, though, America is ever to revive its Christian roots and restore morality, ethics, and common sense, there must be a political awakening among New Testament Christians.

Many children of God perhaps view elections as nothing more than the smear campaigns that they have seemingly become. Sadly, too many times political races are not decided based on who knows the right answers to the problems being faced, but rather they are decided based on who desecrates the reputation of the other candidate the most. Voters no longer can vote for the best of two candidates, but for the lesser of two evils. And because the political arena has such a poor reputation many Christians want nothing to do with it. However, stop to consider the fact that if Christians do not vote, who easily accomplishes their agenda? The lost and ungodly of the world, leading the country further into spiritual decay. That exactly is where America stands today. We are, for all intents and purposes, at a crossroad. Will there be a general desire among the people to try to maintain what little righteousness remains, or will America “cross the Rubicon” into perpetual evil? Christians must awake from their political indifference and make a statement for right.

There perhaps is no need to look any further into history than ancient Israel to see an example of people who were religiously and politically indifferent and paid severely for lack of interest or conviction. Though since their beginning the nation had periodically rejected God, at the end of Joshua’s life, the people make a marvelous statement about their willingness to serve God. When told to choose whom they would serve, the people answered and said, “*God forbid that we should forsake the Lord, to serve other gods...*” (Joshua 24:16). And serve Him they did for a short while. However, shortly after Joshua’s death and burial as recorded in Judges 2, about these same people it is said that, “*...there arose another generation after them, which knew not the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel*” (Judges 2:10). Their religious indifference impacted the nation politically, and they incurred the wrath of God by being sent into captivity. Eight times in the book of Judges alone the religious and political indifference of the people caused them to be exiled by the Lord. And later on in their history, it would cause them to be punished again. Those people, sadly, never did learn the value of moral and godly political leadership and therefore never demanded it. When will the people of America and of the world learn the lesson the Israelites never did and demand moral and godly leadership once more?

How, though, can Christians overcome their political indifference? First, **remember** the glory America once enjoyed because of her association with Christianity. No, not all citizens accepted the truth of the Bible religiously, but most did accept the truth of the Bible morally. Remember the country that was once was and realize that it could be again.

Second, **educate** yourself in the issues that especially relate to the moral nature of society. Understandably, there are other pressing needs that every American has in the areas of finance, healthcare, and security; but matters of morality should be the first priority all Christians have when they enter the voting booth. Paul stressed to Timothy that physical matters should never be exalted above godly matters (I Timothy 4:8). Educate yourself in these moral matters such as abortion, homosexual marriage, stem cell research, and others; and then vote according as to who will lead this country in, or closest to, righteousness.

Finally, **pray**. There is no greater need this country has than for faithful Christians from coast to coast and around the world to pray for it. As great as America is, it is nothing without God on its side. Therefore pray for its government, for its citizens, for its decisions, and for its future.

I remember as a young boy making the statement to my father on one occasion that when I reached the age at which I could vote that I had no desire to get mixed up in these silly politics. “Election, smelection,” was what I in my youthful ignorance thought. However, in response to my indifference my father told me that nobody who refuses to vote has any right to complain about the direction of the country because they have forfeited their right to make a difference. Are you tired of governmental corruptness and social immorality? If so overcome the strong desire to be politically indifferent and impact the future of this country and her relationship with the everlasting Father with your vote.

-Andy Brewer