

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)

THE CRYING NEED FOR COURTESY

The dictionary definition of courtesy is: "Excellence of manners, or social conduct; polite behavior."

The Urgent Need for Courtesy Among Brethren

An awareness that our citizenship is in heaven will produce many great characteristics, including courtesy (Colossians 3:1-4). Through inspiration the apostle Paul lays his condemnatory hand upon two perverse and perverting things. Paul wrote, "Not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others" (Philippians 2:4). One can be passionately devoted to a party who cares little or nothing for truth. Sectarianism often eclipses Christianity. It is possible that the applause and favor of men become more welcome than the approval of God. Paul wrote by inspiration and said, "For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ" (Galatians 1:10). "But in lowliness of mind each counting other better than himself" (Philippians 2:3). Behind the word "lowliness" is our word "tapestry." It is as if Paul were saying that we should lay our lives down like a soft tapestry carpet—in kindly thoughts, and gracious sympathies and helpful attitudes and services in order that the weary, bruised feet of other people, and especially those of the household of faith (Galatians 6:10) may find ease and comfort on the road. Some of the ways of life are very rough and flinty, and the sharp jagged edges of circumstances cut the feet most sorely and "going" is for some a matter of ceaseless pain.

It is the blessed privilege of Christians to lay a soft surface on the roads of life, by spreading over them the graciousness of tender compassion, so stooping that other Christians can "walk over us" and to some degree forget the hardships of the way. That is surely the secret of "lowliness of mind." It is the very opposite to the spirit of haughtiness and pride, a spirit that multiplies the difficulties of others, and terribly aggravates the agonies of the road.

True courtesy comes from the heart. Mechanical courtesy is awkward, and often unwelcome. It more frequently irritates than conciliates those to whom it is addressed. One sometimes sees a table fountain sending up its frail and delicate sprays, but one can hear the click, click of the machinery, by which it was propelled. How different from the natural spring, leaping with bright and noiseless spontaneity from unseen depths!

Courtesy Does Not Forbid Us from Defending the Faith

We must be both kind and firm for the truth, "In meekness correcting them that oppose themselves; if peradventure God may give them repentance unto the knowledge of the truth, and they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him unto his will" (2 Timothy 2:25-26). Anything that is an enemy of the cross is an enemy of sound doctrine; and that which is an enemy of sound doctrine is an enemy of the cross." "Sound doctrine" literally means "healthful teaching." God's message, the Bible, must be kept pure and delivered as it is without modification, alteration, or apology. Solomon wrote, "Every word of God is pure: He is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, Lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar" (Proverbs 30:5-6).

Paul instructed Timothy to charge certain men not to teach a different doctrine (1 Timothy 1:3). Some contend that "we must not engage in any negative preaching." However, they who thus contend violate their own rule by telling others not to do any "negative preaching." Jesus did some negative preaching. He said, "Judge not." That is negative. He also said, "Judge not according to appearance" (John 7:24). This is negative preaching. Peter began his great sermon on Pentecost negatively. "These

A NEW YEAR—FRESH OPPORTUNITIES

Text: _____

I. We Should Seek to Reach _____

Notes:

II. We Should Seek to Reach _____

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III. We Should Seek to Reach _____

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TRUE MEN OF GOD

Text: _____

I. True Men of God _____

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II. True Men of God _____

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III. True Men of God _____

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men are not drunken as ye suppose” (Acts 2:25). Paul commanded Timothy to, “Reprove, rebuke, exhort” (2 Timothy 4:2). This is more negative than positive. It has been my great privilege to hear great preachers who have gone to their eternal reward. Brethren N.B. Hardeman, Marshall Keeble, G.C. Brewer, Guy N. Woods, B.C. Goodpasture, Thomas B. Warren, Rex A. Turner, Sr. and numerous others who all opposed error both publicly and privately, and sometimes called names of false teachers and false religions. However, they did it with becoming courtesy, kindness, and dignity. They were all truly Christian gentleman. They were courteous in life, preaching, and in debating.

Bad Motives in Good Work

“Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife: and some also of good will” (Philippians 1:15). How fearful the combination; the truth may be upon the lips, and a most unlovely motive in the heart. The envious hand may deal out the water of life. Thankfully Paul, in the remainder of the verse, informs us, “and some also of good will” (Philippians 1:15). The Lord’s messenger always lives in accordance with the message of truth that he proclaims (Philippians 4:9). There is no hidden poison in his heart, but only good will. All of his motives are Christianized and refined, and every piece of shining armor, every consecrated power is eagerly placed at the disposal of his King!

The Great Need for Kindness Which Produces Courtesy

Paul wrote, “And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you” (Ephesians 4:32). We can think of the world as God’s garden, and we are here but for a short time, and we should be very thankful to have the privilege to visit. We need to be generous with courtesy; generous with compliments; generous with our encouragement, our influence, and our money. We need to sow seeds of honesty, integrity, and courtesy. These are some of the things that build characters: remember a smile is understood in every language. It has been said, “If you smile the world smiles with you.” Some of the things that motivate us to greater service are, too: think deeply, speak gently, laugh often, love much, work hard, pray often, pay promptly, and remember one cannot become rich by making others poor. There is a certain procedure that will assure that all of us practice courtesy as we should, and that is: let us practice the “Golden Rule” *i.e.* “do unto others *as ye would* that they do unto you.” Jesus worded it this way: “Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets” (Matthew 7:12).

-Garland Elkins

SEEKING AFTER THE PATTERN

There is a great comfort in following after methods of living that are tried and true. In practically all areas of life decisions are made based upon practical precedent. It is common to, when professional, political, or legal decisions are being made, refer back to established examples of how situations have been handled in the past and their success or failure. This information allows us to better determine how decisions will affect our lives as we seek the greatest good for ourselves, our families, and our friends. Strangely, though, when established precedent is promoted as the proper means of directing our steps religiously and spiritually, such decisions are rejected by much of the world and labeled as nothing more than “pattern theology” as though such a concept is inherently contemptible. But one of the most confusing arguments against New Testament Christianity is its stated reliance upon seeking a Biblical pattern for all possible matters of life. Apparently those who lead the charge against Biblical patterns find such a concept too restricting as applied to interpretation, organization, work, and worship. I believe, though, inherent in such rejections of established precedent is the desire for license to do whatever they so desire while providing “authority” for it based on nothing more than an outright perversion of the scriptures. Can a pattern be provided for all areas of life in which decisions must be made? No. Judgment calls occasionally must be made, but even those decisions must be made according to Divine will. But as it applies to the identity, organization, work, and worship of the church, there is a pattern. God’s scheme of redemption is a pattern. The Heavenly intentions for the home is represented in scripture through the means of a pattern. And in each of these cases, assurance is enjoyed among those willing to live according to that pattern.

Ancient Israel was given the distinct opportunity to construct a vessel in which God would dwell in their very presence in the form of a tabernacle. But those responsible for its construction were not allowed free reign in its design. God, rather, provided them a strict architectural plan for the structure itself as well as its furnishings and gave them this command: “And look that thou make them after their **pattern**, which was shewed thee in the mount” (Exodus 25:40, emp. mine, AJB). What do you suppose would have happened if Israel had pushed aside that pattern, desiring, rather, free reign to design and build the tabernacle according to the means they might prefer? God would have removed His presence from among them (implied from His promise in Exodus 25:8). Such illustrates the importance of the pattern concept in scripture. To accept and abide by God’s divine pattern is to enjoy the blessings promised. To reject and renege that pattern is to deny ourselves of those same blessings. What are some examples of how Divine pattern should continue to impact and direct our lives?

The church’s identity must meet with Divine pattern. If I am going to belong to a church, would I not want to belong to one that implicitly resembles the church of which we read in the New Testament. Should that church not call itself by the same name, accept as its standard the same truth, submit to the same Jesus, and believe in the same God? Should it not seek to instill the same godly principles in its membership as well as those in the world in seeking to lead them to Christ? The logical answer to all of these questions would seem to be yes. Why? Because everything we read about the identity of the church in the New Testament was Divinely approved. And if we are seeking the same result, should be not abide by the same standard? The church’s identity must meet with Divine pattern.

The church’s organization must meet with Divine pattern. God’s eternal wisdom saw fit to design the organization of the church according to a particular standard. By both example and command, the New Testament bears out His intention for elders to be appointed in every congregation to lead, govern, and shepherd; deacons to serve in a special capacity under those elders; preachers to reprove, rebuke, and exhort; and members to work in various capacities for the overall growth of the kingdom. Why should such a pattern still be followed? Because it has been proven to work for centuries. No alternative method is going to be as effective as that proposed and promoted by God, thus the church’s organization must meet the Divine pattern.

The church’s requirements for entrance must meet the Divine pattern. In the name of more impressive looking membership roles, virtually any and all are being welcomed by some into various religious circles today. But God has stipulated those who He has accepted into His family giving us the information needed to know those who are truly our brethren. In Acts 2, those who repented and were baptized were saved and added to the church, and those same individuals went about to daily live in accordance to Heavenly expectations (Acts 2:37-47). If the church is going to truly go about its duty of seeking and saving the lost, the same stipulations will be expected of all who will enter today. The church truly remains the possession of God and not the possession of man as its requirements for entrance meet the Divine pattern.

Is there a pattern to which we are accountable today? Without a doubt. Many despise and reject such a notion, but the rejection of the masses does not render it obsolete. May we ever seek after the pattern lovingly provided by our merciful God.

-Andy Brewer

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