

VIGIL



“Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.”

~ I Peter 5:8

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REPRESENTATIVES

MANNER OF LIFE

Tom Larkin

Everyone calls him Fisherman – obviously not his given name, but a nickname derived from his job as a commercial fisherman. By most accounts, he is a decent man. He will tell you that he tries to be a good person. He does not drink or run around on his wife and usually he does not use bad language, but he never goes to church. He told the lady at the convenience store that he would be running his trotlines “tomorrow morning while you’re at church.”

“Why not come to church with us in the morning – the trotlines will still be there when church is over,” she said. He declined and in the conversation that followed explained his bad experience with “church.”

“We grew up very poor. Mamma made sure we went to church every Sunday, even if she had to whip us to get us there. We walked down a dirt road to get to the church building – hot or cold, rain or shine. Often church members would drive by, splatter us with mud, laugh at us and drive right on by. They never helped us even though they knew we were poor.”

I don’t know where these events took place or in what religious group

Fisherman grew up. Such calloused actions do not excuse Fisherman from his duty to God, but it made such a lasting impression on him that he may never again trust anyone connected with “church.”

Most likely you are familiar with the poem that contains the words, “I’d rather see a sermon than hear one any day.” It is not likely that the author was voicing any opposition to sermons. Rather, his poem emphasizes the importance of our influence. Because our lives will potentially affect far more people in a given week than will the sermons preached in our assemblies, it is imperative that our manner of life accurately represent Christ.

Many will never make an effort to learn about Jesus by reading the Bible, but they have that opportunity as they observe the lives of his followers. What young Fisherman saw in the lives of church members on the way to the assembly did not preach the truth concerning Jesus. If they had been mindful that they were supposed to represent Jesus, would they not have treated this poor family differently? Paul understood that he was responsible to faithfully represent

Christ. “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

Unlike the sad outcome of Fisherman’s story, the persistent example of a godly life can have a beneficial effect on others. Peter emphasized this to Christian women whose husbands have not obeyed the gospel. “Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear” (1 Peter 3:1-2). Also, Peter explains that such a manner of life can cause those who speak evil of you to have a change of heart. “Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation” (1 Peter 2:12).

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EDITORIAL

Ronnie Hayes Representatives of Christ

Paul speaking to the Christians in Rome said, "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren" (Romans 8:29). Some have taken the term "predestinate" to refer to the individual, but to do so would be to miss the meaning and beauty of the passage. *Vines Expository Dictionary* says of "PROORIZO"

"pro, beforehand, and No. 2, denotes to mark out beforehand, to determine before, foreordain; in Acts 4:28, A.V., 'determined before,' R.V., 'foreordained;' so the R.V. in 1 Cor. 2:7, A.V., 'ordained;' in Rom. 8:29, 30 and Eph. 1:5,11, A.V., 'predestinate,' R.V., 'foreordain.'" (305).

Burton Coffman in his commentary on *Romans* wrote, "'Destined' has special reference to the plan of God, his intention, the objective he had in view when man was created" (317). Has God provided for man a foreordained plan of salvation? Absolutely! Paul said, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Ephesians 3:8-11).

It is through this foreordained plan that man can transform his image to that of Christ's! Paul urged these Romans, "I beseech you therefore,

brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:1,2). It is through this transformation that we become the image of Christ. Coffman states that this passage has reference to "...the Christian's being transformed into the image or likeness of Christ, in mind, character, obedience, and all other qualities and virtues of the soul..." (320). To be a Christian is to be "Christ like". Therefore, we are and should be representatives of Christ.

When someone looks at my life, do they see Christ? When the religious rulers and elders of the Jews looked at Peter and John, they saw Christ. "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, **that they had been with Jesus**" (Acts 4:13). How we represent Christ is certainly recognizable. About Sardis, John wrote, "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy" (Revelation 3:4). In life, do others see Christ in us when it comes to morals? Our attire, attitude, and actions should be different from that of the world. There is no debate that our attire is to be modest (cf. 1 Timothy 2:9), but are we more concerned with fashions than modesty? Our attitude is one that is motivated by love. Paul reminds us to be "...kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another..." (Ephesians 4:32). Does that describe us? There are many who we could model their attitude. Actions are where the true representative of Christ will be seen. Not that they are seeking acknowledgement, but actions do

speak louder than words. Christ said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). When I think of my life and whether or not I am the kind of representative I should be for Christ, it makes me think of the old song, "Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus". Then I have to ask myself, "Am I"? Are we living for Christ?

Does what I love represent Christ? John warned, "Love not the world..." (1 John 2:15). What wonderful, sound advice, but so often ignored. The things of this world shouldn't be what captures my heart. Paul warned Timothy, "...the love of money is the root of all evil..." (1 Timothy 5:10). That which every Christian should desire is the salvation of all. Paul said, "Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved" (Romans 10:1). What does our heart crave? To convert someone is difficult. To convert someone without love is impossible. Our prayer should be, "God, give me a heart that melts at the sight of the lost!"

Will someone look at the way I handle the law of Christ and see a follower or rejecter? Paul told the Christians at Corinth that they were not "...handling the word of God deceitfully..." (2 Corinthians 4:2). He had earlier said, "For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God..." (2 Corinthians 2:17). Peter warned of those who twist or wrest the scriptures (cf. 2 Peter 3:16). How should I as a representative of Christ handle the law? It is my responsibility to study the words of Christ (cf. 2 Timothy 2:15; 1 Peter 3:15). I should also be ready to obey the commands of Christ (cf. Hebrews 5:8,9). It is not mine to question, but to obey. Then, it is my responsibility "...to teach others also..." (2 Timothy 2:2).

Who does the world see in us? It should be Christ!

CALL TO MEDIATE

Brian Gentle

When we look at the word “mediate” we cannot help but think of Jesus Christ because He is our mediator (1 Timothy 2:5, “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus;”). Without His mediation there would be no hope whatsoever. As representatives of Christ, one can look to all of his disciples as being “mediators”. Mediator means intervention or arbitration. There are some things Jesus left for us to do which will not be done by anyone else unless done by his disciples today.

We are to be mediators in declaring the Gospel. Jesus left this command for his disciples to carry out (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15, 16; Luke 24:46-48). But even He understood the problem, “*The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest.*” (Mark 9:37b-38) Who will spread the gospel if Christ’s disciples do not? Some denominational body of people who teach the “commandments of men?” (Matthew 15:9) God forbid. We must be those who preach, warn, teach, and present according to Paul in Colossians 1:28. Those in the Bible had, as Jeremiah puts it, *fire in their bones and they could not contain!* (Jeremiah 20:9) Where are the declarers today?

We are to be mediators in demonstrating service. Jesus taught that the one who is the “greatest” is to be the servant. (Matthew 23:11) We all are to be “foot washers” (i.e. servants). Jesus made this clear when He himself washed the apostle’s feet in John 13:14. Jesus said in John 15:8, “*Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.*” A Christian’s life is tested by his character and not by his profession. He must demonstrate his good works. The Christians at Antioch found ways to help

“...according to their ability” (Acts 11:29). Every Christian has at least one ability or talent to use in glorifying God. So where are the demonstrators?

We are to be mediators in defacing sin. That means a person should never laugh, make fun of, or make light of sin. Rather, one should always rebuke any form of sin. A stand against sin must be made regardless of our associates. James does this when he says, “*But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.*” (James 1:14, 15) James meant business when it came to letting people know about the reality of sin and its consequences. Look at what he says a little later, “*Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.*” (James 4:8) People knew where he stood on the subject of sin and we see many others in the scriptures that did the very same thing. (Galatians 5:19-20; Matthew 15:19-20; Romans 6:2). Where are the defacers?

We are to be mediators in defeating apostasy. No one will deny the obvious that we are to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). However, those who go about teaching false doctrine (who “were once enlightened”) must be defeated. The Hebrew writer talks of the consequences of those who once knew the truth but leaves it... “*If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.*” (Hebrews 6:6) The writer is not one to go about and spend every waking hour to call down certain people as some seem to do, yet, Paul gives us instruction on the matter when he says, “*Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them*

which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. (Romans 16:17) That sounds pretty simple doesn’t it? One could look at it this way; there will be those who “cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine.” Paul said he was hearing of those that were causing divisions and believed some of it. (1 Corinthians 11:18) He also said in the first of that letter, “*that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.*” (1 Corinthians. 1:10) It must have been hard on Paul to write about all of this but it had to be done so that the truth could be spread further. Where are the defeaters today?

We are to be mediators in defending the church. Who will defend her today if we as New Testament Christians do not? Remember, the church was purchased with Christ’s blood. (Acts 20:28) He is also the HEAD of the church (Colossians 1:18) which establishes his authority over it. When anyone tries to tear down this beautiful institution then one must be ready to stand up for her. Peter does this in Acts 4:8-13. When questioned “*by what power or by what name had he done these things*” Peter tells the rulers and elders what they did to the chief cornerstone of the church. He stood up and spoke in defense of the church in a somewhat hostile crowd. Paul, Peter, and others continually defended the church. (Acts 17:2, 18:4, 19:9, 24:25). Where are our defenders today?

Where are all the mediators? All Christians should mediate God’s word, His will, and His way to the whole world.

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MOTIVATION

Bobby Liddell

In obedience to the Lord, Paul went with the gospel, the message from Christ, and the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16), to foreign lands, even to the rulers in whose prisons he was bound (Ephesians 6:20). As in Paul's day, taking the gospel to the lost is the greatest and most needed work in the world (Mark 16:15-16)! Doing so requires motivation—but how does one stay motivated? With the task of evangelism, instructing others in the way of the Lord, comes weighty responsibility (James 3:1), and the demand for our most fervent labors (Romans 1:15). Ever looming is the possibility of discouragement (which some have characterized as Satan's most effective device), the archenemy of motivation. How can we overcome discouragement, and maintain the motivation to keep on keeping on in this most important work? We need to understand and apply the internal, external, and eternal aspects of motivation, if we would live the Christian life and teach others the truth, in order that we and they might be saved (1 Timothy 4:16).

The internal aspect of motivation comes from the Christian's heart-felt concern for the salvation of souls (cf. Romans 10:1). The saved should realize they are debtors (Romans 1:14), and be motivated by the real obligation to help others be saved. God's children understand that the world is in sin, yet God has provided for salvation for all men through Christ (John 3:14-17), and that salvation is conditional upon the sinner's being taught the truth and obeying it (Matthew 28:18-20). The problem of sin requires a plan for salvation—God's plan (2 Timothy

2:2). Thus, hearts filled with compassion motivate those in Christ, who are forgiven, washed by His blood (Ephesians 1:7; Revelation 1:5), to do all they can, to teach all the truth they can, to all the people they can (cf. Mark 6:34). While God's commands, and man's faithful response to His commands (1 John 5:3), promote internal motivation, workers in the vineyard of the Lord also need encouragement from their brothers and sisters in Christ.

All need encouragement—especially those fighting the good fight of faith (1 Timothy 6:12)! In the local church, elders can help motivate by leading the flock in the paths of righteousness (Acts 20:28). Insuring that gospel preaching sounds forth from pulpit and classrooms is another way elders can help members get moving, and stay moving. The gospel will motivate (cf. Galatians 1:23-24). Likewise, when well planned, properly managed programs, with specific, challenging, yet attainable goals, are in place, members will be encouraged in their labors for the Savior. Clearly defined work which makes good use of the abilities (and time) of individuals provides a major impetus in motivation. Along with these, support for those who stand fast in the faith, joined with appreciation expressed for a job well done, will provide the external incentive which propels faithful workers.

The eternal aspect comes from the knowledge that instructing people in the Bible opens the door for them to enjoy the greatest life in this world, and in Heaven after a while (John 10:10). Teaching one about Christ will make the greatest difference (from lost to saved), for the greatest

“time” (eternity). Therefore, teaching the gospel to others fills the greatest need in the world. Knowing this makes our efforts a blessing, not a burden. The salvation of one soul makes all the time, energy, and resources expended, as well as all the problems faced, and difficulties encountered, worthwhile.

As we live the Christian life and teach others the truth, we are instructing minds with the doctrine of Christ, helping mold lives into what they should be, building up knowledge, giving purpose, instilling hope, and putting into place the principles to save souls that will live eternally (Ecclesiastes 12:7; Matthew 25:46). There is no more important job than changing lives for the better, giving them direction for both present and future living, strengthening the church, helping brethren to be better equipped for God's service, and preparing the present and future church for its task. Knowing this should help us stay on course, motivated to faithful service.

May God bless faithful brothers and sisters who are willing to give, to serve, and to be used in the Lord's service. Humble servants of God are not motivated by love for worldly acclaim, by just a compelling sense of duty, or by the desire to be seen, or to be in charge. They are motivated by love for souls and willingness to work for the Lord. They have grasped what many have missed—a correct view of eternity and the urgency of the present. Let us all work together to be properly motivated in the greatest work in the world!

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MINISTERS

James E. Rogers

Christians are ministers for the Christ. The Corinthians were Paul's "epistle" and "an epistle of Christ" (2 Corinthians 3:2,3). Christians imitate Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1). Jesus stated, "whosoever would become great among you shall be your minister (diakonos); and whosoever would be first among you shall be your servant (doulos)" (Matthew 20:26-27). "Doulos" is "an adjective, signifying 'in bondage' . . . [and] is used as a noun, and as the most common and general word for "servant," frequently indicating subjection without the idea of bondage . . ." (Vine, 3:347). "Diakonos" "primarily denotes a servant, whether as doing servile work, or as an attendant rendering free service, without particular reference to its character . . . *Diakonos* is, generally speaking, to be distinguished from *doulos*, a bondservant, slave; *diakonos* views a servant in relationship to his work; *doulos* views him in relationship to his master" (Vine Expository Dictionary, 1:272-273).

David Anguish in his article "Restoring Ministry" contained in The Reflector --observed:

Among the Greeks, *diakonia*, voluntarily giving oneself in the service of others, was considered degrading and dishonorable. 'In Greek eyes, service is not very dignified. . . . The formula of the sophis: 'How can a man be happy when he has to serve someone?' expresses the basic Greek attitude. . . (Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, 2:82-83) . . . 'Though Judaism in the time of Jesus knew and practiced its social responsibilities, e.g., to the poor, this was done mainly by alms, not by service (cf. Luke 10:30-35). Lowly service, e.g., waiting at the table, was beneath the dignity of a free man (cf. Luke 7:44ff)' (*The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, 3:545).

Against these attitudes — and their modern counterparts — Jesus calls

upon his followers to imitate his example (he came to serve, not be served - Mark 10:45). In using the *diakonia* word group, he employed a term which refers to 'menial and mundane activities . . . activities without apparent dignity' (J. Gary Inrig, "Called to Serve: Toward a Philosophy of Ministry," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, October-December 1983, 336). The fact that he used this word, that its major focus is on service, not an office, and that the New Testament writers use it to refer to all God's people has far reaching implications for challenging us to ministry more like Christ's than the world's.

Kenneth McClain in an article "Do You Serve the Lord" in *Light for Living*, listed the following ten characteristics of a servant of the Lord:

1. One who will put the Lord's business above any other business.
2. One who attends the services of the church on a regular basis.
3. One who is willing to be a good example for others to follow.
4. One who thinks more of attending Bible class than staying home to sleep.
5. One who gives to the church according to what he makes rather than the amount he has left over.
6. One who wants to help rather than one who wants help.
7. One who attends services because he loves to, not merely because it is his duty.
8. One who has a willing mind to do the Lord's work.
9. One who can see his own faults and not just the other fellow's.
10. One who is more concerned with winning souls than with the honors men may give.

These things practiced with willing minds would make a tremendous difference in local congregations. One issued the following warning which needs to be heeded:

The churches and preachers feel that they should be served instead of serving. They delight in the chief seats and exalted places. Jesus considered none of these

things. These have always had a tendency to separate the pulpit from the pew. The preachers become an exclusive class, and must be ministered to by the people. This is in no sense the spirit of the Master. Not only so, but elders and deacons have come to take the same view of things. They are in the light of the Bible the servants of the church, but they have in many instances developed into a group of autocratic lords to rule with an iron hand over the heritage of the Lord. They have exclusive meetings and decide by majority vote the affairs of the whole church, while the congregation must obey. Such positions tickle the vanity of human beings to the extent that they render themselves unfit to carry on the Lord's work (The Life And Works Of Charles M. Pullias, pp. 153-155).

Paul gave examples of ways we are to represent the Christ as ministers in Second Timothy. Christians are to be vessels "unto honor, sanctified, meet for the master's use, prepared unto every good work" (2 Timothy 2:21). Lois and Eunice (1:5; 3:15) were vessels unto honor in exhibiting "unfeigned faith" and teaching, Onesiphorus (1:16-18) in the area of benevolence, "Faithful men" (2:2) in teaching the Gospel, Timothy in faithful living (3:10-11), Luke, Mark, Tychicus, Prisca and Aquila, Erastus, Trophimus, Eubulus, Pudens, Linus and Claudia (4:11-21) in service to Paul and God. These vessels of honor are referred to in 2 Timothy as prisoners (1:8), workmen (2:15), servants (2:24), sufferers (3:12) and evangelists (4:5).

Let us all work as ministers of the Christ as we represent Him in this world. Let our representation of Him be utmost in our decisions.

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MESSENGER

Sam Willcut

The common term for “messenger” in the Hebrew language is *mal’ak*, which James Strong defines as, “from an unused root meaning to dispatch as a deputy; a messenger; specifically, of God, i.e. an angel (also a prophet, priest or teacher):--ambassador, angel, king, messenger” (New Strong’s Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Hebrew Bible, 1995, p. 78). While the KJV translates this Hebrew term ninety-one times as “messenger,” it translates this very same term 107 times as “angel.” The KJV of the New Testament only translates this word “messenger” nine times—seven times as *aggelos* and twice as *apostolos*. Nevertheless, we see this word more frequently translated as “angel” (174 times) and “apostle” (77 times), respectively. Dr. Strong defines the term *aggelos* as, “from *aggello* (to bring tidings); a messenger; especially an ‘angel’ ” (New Strong’s Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Greek Testament, 1995, p. 1). He defines *apostolos* as “a delegate; specially, an ambassador of the gospel; officially a commissioner of Christ (‘apostle’) (with miraculous powers):--apostle, messenger, he that is sent” (New Strong’s Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Greek Testament, 1995, p. 12). Now, boiling this all down from both the Old and New Testaments, a messenger was a credible individual (either physical or spiritual) sent from God (at least, for the purpose of this study) to provide an important message.

There were many manifestations of this taking place. First, we see that God sent angels from heaven on various missions to deliver messages, such as to Lot and his family in Genesis 19, to the shepherds of Bethlehem in Luke 2 and to Cornelius in Acts 10. Thus, heavenly angels brought messages according to the will of Almighty God.

Second, John the Baptizer was a messenger. Both Matthew 11:10,

Mark 1:2 and Luke 7:27 quote Malachi 3:1, which shows the purpose of John as being a messenger to prepare the ministry of Jesus Christ: “Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.” Therefore, John was a messenger to the people about the coming Lamb of God (cf. John 1:29-35).

Third, Jesus himself was a messenger. He was a messenger in his pre-Incarnate form (cf. Exodus 3). He was a messenger when he was in the flesh. He, being the Son of God, came to declare the Father (cf. John 1:18). The Father sent Jesus as a messenger of redemption (cf. John 5:36; 8:28; 13:20; 17:4-8).

Fourth, the apostles were messengers. Jesus told his apostles, “Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you” (John 20:21). He delivered unto them the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-20). Among these apostles (messengers) was Paul. Nevertheless, Paul had to prove that was a true ambassador for God. Thus, he wrote on one occasion, “If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 14:37). Earlier in this epistle, he spoke of being an inspired ambassador/messenger by writing, “For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:16).

From these examples as messengers for us today, we may learn and apply the following three things. First, a messenger was not the originator of the message, but was simply the one who delivered it. From the heavenly angels of God to the apostles of Jesus Christ, each recognized his place to relay the message that they were to deliver. Even Jesus, while he was on earth,

continually recognized a subservient role to the Father in heaven by simply relaying the message he was to bring. Today, we as messengers are to recognize the authority that Christ has “in heaven and in earth” (Matthew 28:18). We do not alter the message that the apostles and inspired men have delivered unto us (cf. Revelation 22:18-19), because this message of hope and redemption does not originate with us. We are simply evangelists—we proclaim the good news! By the way, the Greek term *euaggelizo*, which the Bible translates over fifty times as “to preach the gospel” or “to bring glad tidings,” conveys this same thought through this entire article of being a faithful messenger with a great message.

Second, the aforementioned examples all prove that they were credible messengers. Heavenly angels proved that their message was divine (i.e., Judges 7). Apostles were ones who had miraculous abilities to prove their credibility (Mark 16:17-20; Hebrews 2:3-4). Today, we as messengers do not need miracles to confirm credibility, because the message we proclaim—the word of God—is a credible proclamation (1 Corinthians 13:8-13).

Third, being a messenger will keep us from neglecting our purpose, becoming selfish or always bogging ourselves down in church problems. While there are times to deal with internal issues of the church, we must realize our task of delivering a soul-saving message to those who need it the most. If we truly are involved in the work of evangelism, we will often be too busy to worry about things that will matter so little in the kingdom of God.

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MERCY

Jerry Martin

Of all the characteristics of God that Christians are expected to imitate and implement into their lives, there is hardly a more vital one than that of mercy. Mercy is showing compassion toward or pity on the undeserving and the guilty. We desperately depend on God's benevolent mercy for our salvation. If we are to represent God to the world, we must be grateful recipients of His mercy and willing extenders of such mercy to others.

Mercy is a characteristic of God. Though sin is an intensely offensive thing to a pure and holy God, and the fury of His wrath is directed against it, at the same moment He is a God full of love yearning to extend His mercy to save practitioners of sin if they are willing to repent (1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9; Ezekiel 33:11). Peter describes the liberality of God's mercy in these words: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3). Paul describes the genuineness and depth of His mercy. "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) (Ephesians 2:4-5). Paul also used the merciful characteristics of the heavenly Father to motivate the Christians at Rome to grateful and sacrificial service. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1). Paul relied on the same divine mercy to motivate the Corinthian Christians. "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who

comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God" (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

Mercy is a charge to the godly. "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God" (Micah 6:8). In the text we refer to as the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus emphasizes that mercy is required of those who claim to be His disciples. "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy (Matthew 5:7). Paul says mercy is something to be worn by those who represent a merciful God. "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering" (Colossians 3:12).

Mercy is a cause for gladness. "He that despiseth his neighbour sinneth: but he that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he" (Proverbs 14:21). In describing the joy of Christian service Paul explains, "Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness" (Romans 12:5-8). As the chosen people of God, we have received mercy and therefore ought to spread the gladness. "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are

now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy" (1 Peter 2:9-10).

Mercy is a conditional gift. In the parable we often refer to as the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant, we see clearly the conditions placed on the recipient of mercy. In the parable there was one servant who freely and compassionately forgave a huge indebtedness. That debt-free servant went out and found a poor, fellow servant who owed him a small amount and demanded immediate and full repayment. When his fellow servant pled for mercy, the debt-free, unmerciful servant refused mercy and had the poor servant cast into prison. The following is the Lord's analogy of and response to the unmerciful servant: "Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses" (Matthew 18:32-35). The sobering and inescapable conclusion drawn by James is, "For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment" (James 2:13).

Dear friend, if we want the mercy of a compassionate God extended to us, we must be prepared to extend mercy to others as badge of discipleship.

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Manner of Life-by Tom Larkin-----Continued from page 1

Often those who claim to follow Christ are held to a higher standard than those who make no such claim. Instead of resenting this scrutiny, we should welcome it and recognize that God requires more of us as well. It is no coincidence that elders are required to “have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.” Likewise, many New Testament worthies are said to be “of good report,” such as Cornelius (Acts 10), Ananias (Acts 22) and Demetrius (3 John 12). When those who are without closely examine the lives of faithful Christians, they cannot help seeing the influence of Christ. Only by protecting our

influence by right living can we hope to influence them for good.

If our manner of life accurately represents Christ, not only can we influence the lost, but we will also encourage fellow Christians. Paul instructed Timothy – “Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Timothy 4:12). Paul also held up his attempt to pattern his life after Christ as an example to follow. “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1). Our human frailties combined with Satan’s temptations make faithful Christian living difficult, but the burden is

lightened by the example of those who faithfully follow Christ.

Our manner of life is the acid test of our claims to faithfulness. We can claim to follow Christ – we can wear his name – we can assemble on the first day of every week – but the way we live reveals to the world what is in our heart. On a muddy, dirt road years ago, nominal Christians had a detrimental effect on a young life – how is your life impacting the world around you?

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