

A Quarterly Journal

(A presentation by email)

“LIGHT FOR OUR AGE”

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*“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”
Psalm 119:105*

Feature One: Editorial

The Good King that Failed

2 Kings 12:1-3 In the seventh year of Jehu Jehoash began to reign; and forty years reigned he in Jerusalem. And his

mother's name was Zibiah of Beersheba. 2 And Jehoash did that which was right in the sight of the Lord all his days wherein Jehoiada the priest instructed him. 3 But the high places were not taken away: the people still sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places.

The story of Jehoash is quite interesting. Jehoash was seven years old when he began to reign as king. He was guided and raised by Jehoiada, the priest. His home in his early days was the temple. As the text says, as long as Jehoiada was able to instruct him, he did that which was right in God's eyes. Unfortunately when he came of age, he did what many today do. He forgot or ignored the spiritual and focused on the physical.

In that Jehoash was raised in the temple he saw that it was in need of desperate repair. He saw the temple as home. He wanted it fixed. Yet, the Bible indicates that he did not care about the items of the temple worship. He wanted his physical home repaired but not the spiritual aspect of Jewish worship restored.

We see that Jehoash allowed idolatry to continue during his reign. But before we condemn him too sharply, we need to look closely at our own situation. Jehoash is not to be condemned for repairing the temple. That was good, but he stopped short of doing what he should have done. In the same manner we need to be concerned with the physical aspect of the house in which we worship. Our buildings need to be neat and attractive. The way our building look speaks loudly about how we feel about God. When visitors enter our buildings they will notice if everything is clean, in repair, and in order. They will also notice if that is not true. Without saying a word many will decide whether or not to return based on what they see.

I have also noticed that when building projects or upgrades to our house of worship have been proposed, everyone is ready to jump on board, even though the cost is in the hundreds of thousands of dollars. These things are good and often necessary. But we do not want to be as King Jehoash and only be concerned with the physical. The spiritual is far more important. We are often ready to sacrifice for our own comfort in a newer or better edifice, but we need to remember the words of Samuel when he reprimanded King Saul.

I Samuel 15:22 ...Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams....”

Our Father in heaven was not indicating that it was not necessary to sacrifice, but that our obedience to His will comes first. We cannot ignore our Savior’s commands to teach His word. That must always take precedence. Let us always remember that it is important to watch the appearance of our facilities, but it is far more important to carry out the work with which God has entrusted us.

Feature Two: *an article by R. C. Oliver from Light Magazine*

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THE CALF THAT KICKED

(edited by RTO)

*“Thy calf, O Samaria, hath cast thee off; mine anger is kindled against them: how long will it be ere they attain to innocency?” –
Hosea 8:5*

In the above text the prophet Hosea seems to be poking fun at the people of Samaria, in an earnest attempt to get them to see the folly of their calf-worship. It is as though he had said: “Thy calf, O Samaria, hath kicked thee!” Thus, through such derision, the prophet had hoped to regain this idolatrous people; neither is he the only prophet that has resorted to such derision for the sake of those who heard him.

When you first read the text, just how did the text impress you? Perhaps you thought: why, the people only got what was coming to them; for anyone ought to have better sense than to condescend to idolatry. And while this is true, yet I perceive that many of us might be surprised were we to turn this same critical eye upon ourselves. Should we not see whether we are living in glass houses before we begin to throw stones? Yea, verily!

But perhaps you are saying, of course we would not be so naïve as to worship a calf! And while this may be true, yet it is quite likely that we are doing equally as bad, if not considerably worse. Just think of the calves of idolatry that this old world is worshipping today! Can we truly say that we worship none of them?

The calf of pleasure: Take for instance the calf of pleasure; have you never bowed your knee to it? I am no pessimist, yet I can soberly say that we are living in a pleasure-mad and hell-bent generation. Millions are annually bowing down to the calf of pleasure, which eventually will cast them off forever! God has so ordained that men cannot worship the god of pleasure without receiving the plague of pleasure: strong drink, while offering pleasure brings destruction; promiscuous love, if indeed it can be called love, will perhaps give pleasure for a time—a very short time, but then

comes the deterioration of both body and mind; the law violator in general may find some ephemeral pleasure in his violations, but “be sure your sins will find you out” –the calf of pleasure will kick you; for God hath ordained that “the wages of sin is death.”

The calf of dress: Some people seem to live to out-dress the other person: their god is their clothing. This, therefore, is another calf that, if you are not careful, will kick you. A well-dressed person, in my judgment, is one whose dress is neither offensive nor conspicuous—you very likely will not be able to remember just how he was dressed when he has gone from your presence. Yet despite the fact that our Bible says we should dress in “modest apparel,” there are those today who will either dress so scanty that their very presence is offensive, or else they will dress so glamorously that others of their social circle will feel out of place with them, and hence will avoid them. Thus thwarting their purpose, their calf hath kicked them; for they had originally intended that others should admire them because of their clothing whereas they stand despised.

The calf of education: No one in his right mind will underestimate the value of good education. God does not, and we must not. However, when our education becomes our master, instead of our servant, it has become a calf that will kick. There is the young preacher, for instance, who, after asking two college graduates in his class of adult Christians if they knew the answer to a certain question which he could not answer, said: “Well, if Brother and Sister So and So cannot answer the question, and if I cannot answer it, then there is no need for us to waste more time with the matter; for we are the only college graduates in the class, and if we don’t know the answer, I presume that no one else does.” It was right then that his calf gave

him a good swift kick, and one from which he has never fully recovered! He greatly lowered himself in the minds of his brethren that day! Some friendships were greatly weakened if they were not altogether destroyed. Very much like fire and water, education is a great blessing when under control; but should it gain control of us, like uncontrolled fire and water, it leaves the ghosts of precious memories in its wake! Education is something to be mastered, and not something to be worshipped. Therefore, if you have it, master it, lest it kick you also.

The calf of personal admiration: Despite the fact that the scriptures say we should learn “not to think of men above that which is written”; it remains a fact that personal admiration is still one of the most useful mediums through which Satan leads the innocent and the unsuspecting astray. To prove that men still hold “men’s persons in admiration: and that even “above that which is written”, I lift the following quotation about its author from a book in my library: “The sermon will not be merely a piece of writing to be judged by its intrinsic argument or beauty; but a human document, a letter from a friend whose utterances we hold as true not so much because he *proves* them as because *he* says them.” Such persons as those described here are headed for a fall—their calf will kick them, and when it does, they will have no one to blame but themselves. Jesus said: “If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.”

Seeing therefore that we are surrounded by such dangerous, though perhaps attractive cattle, let us learn to pray: “Lord save us from these calves of idolatry.”

Feature Three: Sandy's Women's Corner

A Spiritual Bucket List

At the beginning of this year, I mentioned to our Ladies' Class that I do not make New Year's resolutions. I think many people make them, but not many people follow through.

I did, however, offer a challenge to the class. I asked them to think about things they would like to add to or improve in their Christian life. Then I asked them to make a list of these things and work on them all year. I told them that we would talk about them at the end of the year.

My plan is to allow the ladies, if they are willing, to talk about what they put on their lists. My guess is that the lists will be fairly similar.

As I began working on my on list, I thought about the things I do now and the things I would like to improve on or add to my life. It wasn't hard for me to come up with some things that really need my attention.

A bucket list is supposed to be a list of things you want to do before you die. These are things that you have a passion for and about which you want to feel a sense of accomplishment.

I want my spiritual bucket list to be things that I believe will help me get to heaven, things that are lacking in my life, things that will help me serve others and the Lord.

Paul gave us some excellent examples of things we might put on a bucket list:

"Let your conversation be as it becomes the gospel of Christ..." Phil. 1:27

“Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others”. Phil. 2:4

“Do all things without murmurings and disputings.” Phil. 2:14

“Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.” Col. 3:2

“Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt.” Col. 4:6

“Pray without ceasing.” I Thess. 5:17

“See that none render evil for evil unto any man...” I Thess. 5:15

“Abstain from all appearance of evil.” I Thess. 5:22

“...That women adorn themselves in modest apparel...” I Tim. 2:9

“To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, showing all meekness unto all men.” Titus 3:2

Jesus gave us a wonderful list of things to put on our spiritual bucket list:

From Matthew 5, Jesus gave us a wonderful list of ways to be blessed.

“Judge not, that ye be not judged.” Matthew 7:1

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” Matthew 28:19

James tells us:

“...Visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.” James 1:27

“If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?” James 2:15-16

“Speak not evil one of another, brethren...” James 4:11

Do you see anything in any of these scriptures that you could work on this year? I can assure you that some of these are on my list for 2013.

Some things have happened already this year that have made me want to add some additional things to my list, and I am sure there will be more as the days and months go by.

I hope you will join our class and commit to making a bucket list.

Determine that you will improve your prayer life, give more to the Lord,

visit more, send more cards, say more kind things and less offensive things, judge less, look for more opportunities to teach the lost.

Wherever you are lacking in your spiritual life, add something to your bucket list and see how much you can do for the Lord before the end of 2013.

Feature Four: Our Communication:

A few weeks ago I saw a young man participate in a worship service. He did an excellent job speaking, but he had gum in his mouth. Let me share with you what I taught my public speaking classes in my 36 years of teaching. If you want to know what you look like with gum in your mouth, watch an old cow chewing its cud. I don't mean to be crude, but that is the best example I have ever been able to find.

When you speak in front of an audience everything you do communicates to your audience. Having gum in your mouth communicates to your audience that you really do not know what you are doing. That is not what you want to project. You want your audience to focus on your message, not on you as a speaker, or a participant. This should always be a rule when you are in front of any audience for any reason. Never have gum, or anything for that matter, in your mouth.

Feature Five: Bible Question

“Would you please comment on 1 Corinthians 1:17.” – thank you.

I realize this passage has puzzled many people. The text reads: *“For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.”* Why would Paul say he was not sent to baptize? Is it therefore not a part of the gospel?

In this passage context is extremely important. What had Paul previously written? The brethren were divided over personalities. According to 1 Corinthians, some were following Paul, some Apollos, some Peter, and some Christ. The apostle then poses the question, “Is Christ divided?” He asks if he was crucified for them, or if they were baptized in his name.

Next he tells them he is glad he didn’t baptize them other than the few people he names. His reason for this is found in verse 15. *“Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name.”* Paul was horrified that someone might claim he had baptized by his own authority. It was for this reason Paul made the statement in verse 17. He was not sent to baptize in his own name. Notice he did baptize. If the intent was that he was not to baptize at all in the statement found in verse 17, then he admits that he violated the command for he did baptize some. We also know that he was sent to follow the teaching of Jesus found in Matthew 28:19-20 *“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”*

We also see that Paul commanded baptism in Acts 16:14-15 *“And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended*

unto the things which were spoken of Paul. 15 And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought us, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there. And she constrained us.” Lydia attended to the words of Paul and was baptized.

In that Paul baptized people, by his own admission; and we note that others were baptized at his instruction, and further that he wrote that we are baptized into one body in I Corinthians 12:13 *“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.”* We also see that we must be baptized into Christ to put on Christ in Galatians 3:27 *“For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.”*

When we examine these passages and couple that with the fact that Jesus commands baptism in Matthew 28, then we know that baptism is a part of the gospel of Christ; and Paul certainly taught its importance in becoming a Christian.

Humor:

A mother was preparing pancakes for her sons, Kevin, 5 and Ryan, 3. The boys began to argue over who would get the first pancake. Their mother saw the opportunity for a moral lesson. “If Jesus were sitting here, He would say, ‘Let my brother have the first pancake, I can wait.’”

Kevin turned to his younger brother and said, “Okay Ryan, you be Jesus.” <http://www.jaredstory.com>

In Closing:

From a personal note, I have had a bout with kidney cancer. On March 6th I had successful surgery to remove it. Recovery has been difficult, but things are getting better. Many have been praying for me, and that has been a wonderful gift.

Bob Oliver