



The Tri-Cities Edifier

Volume 9

April 16, 2023

No. 16

“You Must Rule Over It”

By Jamey Hinds

After Adam and Eve sinned, they were then kicked out of the Garden (Gen 3:24). The passage here reads, “He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.”

God spoke to Cain, urging him to obey. We don’t read that God forced him into obedience, or that he informed him it was impossible for him to obey, but gave Cain the choice: “If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is contrary to you, but you must rule over it” (Gen 4:7). That last phrase is very interesting because it shows us that Cain had a choice. “You must rule over it.” This is what we might call self-control.

There are nine characteristics of the fruit of the spirit in Galatians 5:22–23. The first is love (no surprise there), and the last is self-control. Some people believe that we can’t do anything right, but then we have God urging Cain to choose; we read about Joshua urging the Israelites before they enter the Promised Land, “Choose this day whom you will serve . . . But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Josh 24:15) Why the admonition to choose if we can’t?

Self-control is what Paul preached to Felix (Acts 24:25). It’s we as Christians need to be thinking about a lot as we serve the Lord (see 2 Pet 1:5–11). “For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Pet 1:8). The world is all about no self-control, no discipline. We are not of the world, but of God (1 John 2:15–17).

Entertainment or Worship?

by Steven F. Deaton

The Bible declares that men are to worship God. God is seeking for such. "But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:23, 24). The primary aim and object of worship is to praise God. To honor Him for Who He is and to praise Him for His great grace. Further, the Bible teaches that when we assemble we receive blessings as well. "And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching" (Hebrews 10:24-25). We benefit by encouraging each other in the work of the Lord--we are to build each other up (cf. Ephesians 4:11-16).

In contrast to the Bible's teaching, many men today "worship" with self being the focus, not God. They ask, "What's in it for ME?" They say, "I am looking for a church that is suited to ME." Or, "I am searching for a church that meets MY needs." What this amounts to is finding a place, not where truth and righteousness are the foremost concern, but where the most prominent people attend, the most entertaining "show" is put on, or a "smooth" sermon is preached (cf. Rom. 16:17-18).

We agree that man has needs that need to be met. He needs to hear the gospel of God's grace (Romans 10:17). He needs to know his sinfulness (Ephesians 2:1-3). He needs to know God's plan for saving man (Romans 1:16). He needs to know how to live right before God and his fellow man (2 Peter 1:3). This is the point and purpose of the church--spiritual

matters. "If I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15).

Unfortunately, there are many "churches" more than willing to cater to the carnal appetite of man. They strive to put on the biggest and best plays. They labor to assemble the best band. They offer classes on finances and weight loss. Their motto is, "If it will boost the numbers, DO IT!" What matters to you, entertainment or worship?

People will object, saying, "But, we need something to bring the people in. With these attractions we can 'reach' people who would not normally hear the gospel." Well, that is the way the devil thinks. He believed man needed worldly, carnal enticements to be lured into serving God. Remember Job? The devil thought he served God because of all his material, earthly blessings (Job 1:9-11). He was wrong! Job still honored God even though his blessings were taken away. Why? Because Job had the right heart, he was determined to serve God regardless. Today, do men need some type of carnal enticement to serve the Lord Jesus Christ? Is there something better or more profound than the pure gospel of the Son of God (Romans 1:16)? Is there something more motivating than the sacrifice of the Lamb of God (John 1:29, 34)? No, a thousand times NO!

Charles Spurgeon once wrote, "The fact is, that many would like to unite church and stage, cards and prayer, dancing and sacraments. If we are powerless to stem this torrent, we can at least warn men of its existence, and entreat them to keep out of it. When the old faith is gone, and enthusiasm for the gospel is extinct, it is no wonder that people seek something else in the way of delight. Lacking bread, they feed on ashes; rejecting the way of the Lord, they run greedily in the path of folly." Think about it. What matters to you, entertainment or worship?

To Be, Or Not Be Seen!

Robert F. Turner

Did Jesus contradict himself in the sermon on the mount? He said, Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven (Matt. 5:14,16). But later he said, Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven (6:1-f.).

To be seen of men indicates a self-glorifying motive; doing things with no genuine desire to serve God or other men. This is labeled exactly what it is; i.e., hypocrisy. By such we deceive ourselves most often; perhaps a few others; but never fool God. Hypocrisy is not true light in the first place. It has no heavenly reward; only praise of deceived men.

Regarding the first verses, true light will shine — that is its nature. If we will concentrate on being true lights rather than on being seen, the light will make known its presence. It will not be hidden unless we follow a policy of obscurity. But why would any one want to hide his light? A few years back it may have been fear of being called a square. Now it may be a desire to be thought free or uninhibited. But light-hiding usually means we are ashamed of the gospel of Christ, and fear the unpleasant consequences that may come to those who defend and live its principles.

Cowards can find plausible excuses for using the bushel. They show a brotherly deference to prejudice-- a condescending attitude, less than honest. They wish to gradually accustom men to their new idea. They are lovers of peace (where there is no peace). I remember one fellow saying that John lost his head because he lost his head — he failed to use tact and diplomacy. But John's light shone, and continues to shine on us.

Let your light shine means we must live for Christ in open, unashamed fashion. We must reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. We must be primarily interested in pleasing the Lord, not in what men see or think of us.