

GOD: OUR SOURCE OF CONTENTMENT

"Two things have I asked of thee; Deny me *them* not before I die: Remove far from me falsehood and lies; Give me neither poverty nor riches; Feed me with the food that is needful for me: Lest I be full, and deny *thee*, and say, Who is Jehovah? Or lest I be poor, and steal, And use profanely the name of my God" (Proverbs 30:7-9). These words, recorded as those of Agur, introduce us to the privilege of asking God anything in prayer. Jesus taught this very thing as has been recorded for us in the book of John. It is **not** the case that Jesus said anything and everything we ask for shall be granted, like a new boat or car or a million dollars. Those are the pseudo-promises of televangelists, not the word of God. But we do learn that we may ask for those needful things and we have God's promise that He hears and will grant according to His good will for our good (1 John 5:14,15).

Notice from our beginning text that Agur spoke of "two things." They are: **1**-purity, and **2**-contentment. These two qualities of the Christian life build upon one another. Purity in mind and deed brings contentment, and being content with such things as we have (Hebrews 13:5) builds purity. Purity is found in the knowledge of doing God's will and the resulting salvation. Contentment is the emotional response to this knowledge. Purity is the fruit of a good life. James wrote "Who is wise and understanding among you? let him show by his good life his works in meekness of wisdom" (James 3:13). A good life is guided by the wisdom from above which is pure (James 3:17). But we have a dilemma: the wise man asks, "Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin" (Proverbs 20:9). Our hearts need purifying. Yet note this blessing: "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8). Is there a contradiction in this? No! Rather, the purity must come from above when we obey what God has said regarding it. Thus, God is truly the source of our purity, and we must maintain that purity by following after the things which make for purity (Philippians 4:8).

We can be content with what we have, if we decide to be so. Paul said, "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content" (Philippians 4:11). This was because of his great faith in the Lord, as he expressed, "I can do all things in him that strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13). Whether rich or poor, let us "remember Jehovah thy God, for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth" (Deuteronomy 8:18). Indeed, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the

Father of lights" (James 1:17). Let us not fall into the snare of trying to get rich (1 Timothy 6:9,10,17), for we may wander away from the faith and suffer.



FIRST CENTURY EVANGELISM: ZEAL FOR THE LOST OR FOR THE LORD?

Many are the articles we have read which speaks of the zeal of the first century church. Such articles usually go something like this: "The reason the church grew by such leaps and bounds in that time is because of the great zeal and love for the lost souls of men and women. If only we could copy that zeal and love for the lost today, we too could grow like that", etc., etc. Though it is true that the saints of that time went everywhere preaching the word (Acts 8:4), I question whether it is the case that such growth was necessarily due to their zeal or love for the lost. That particular verse speaks of great persecution which served as the motive for those brethren.

I am concerned about such kinds of motivations for Christians today. Yes, we ought to teach and preach the blessed gospel to all who will listen. Yes, we ought to use every opportunity and means at our disposal for such worthy work. However, I am also convinced that we may get (and have done so) the "cart before the horse" in evangelism. Having taught personal work courses for some years, I have come to recognize that I was once guilty of that very thing. I used to emphasize the importance of loving lost souls rather than that which ought to be first in all things: our love for the Lord.

Zeal is an important ingredient for evangelism, but certainly not the primary one. Rather, one may end up with a good deal of "zeal without knowledge" (Romans 10:2), which will build big churches alright, but not necessarily convert lots of people. In fact, as we think about these things, I hope to convince the reader that zeal and love for the lost has very little to do with successful evangelism. Those who so teach and write in bulletin articles will without doubt refer to the great growth spurts of the church in the book of Acts. Yet the word "zeal" is conspicuously missing in that entire book. The word "zealous" appears but twice and never with reference to Christians and their

work of evangelism. So, to what may we credit the great growth of the church of the first century?

To begin, let us take note of the fact that zeal alone does not cause an increase. Do not forget what Paul said to the Corinthians, "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase," (I Corinthians 3:6-7). What caused the church to grow? Not necessarily zeal nor love for "the lost", but a zeal and love FOR THE LORD. Let us investigate further. In the first six chapters of Acts, we see a good deal of emphasis upon the word, its being preached and heard and then such statements as, "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls," (Acts 2:41). Again we find such a declaration, "And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith," (Acts 6:7).

Looking further into Acts, we find another such proof of what I affirm just here: "But the word of God grew and multiplied," (Acts 12:24). We recognize this as a figure of speech which allows this statement to actually stand for the growth of the church. In Ephesus, where so many came to the obedience of the faith and turned from their magic arts, we find this tribute, "So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed", (Acts 19:20).

When God's people will dedicate themselves to Him and the Word of His grace (Acts 20:32), the results will be obvious. There will be an increase in disciples. Love for the Lord and His word is what leads to church growth! Regardless of all the "workshops" "seminars" and "conventions" offered, the church will grow "with the increase of God" (Colossians 2:19), when the Lord's elect will "let the WORD OF CHRIST dwell in [them] richly" (Colossians 3:16). Let us be as David, the sweet singer of Israel who said, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Psalm 119:11). And again, "O how I love thy law! it is my meditation all the day" (Psalm 119:97). Finally, let us pray, as Paul asked of the saints at Thessalonica, "Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run and be glorified, even as it is with you", (II Thessalonians 3:1).

RAGER ROAD CHURCH OF CHRIST

5775 Rager Rd, Canal Winchester, Ohio 43110
Phone: 614-830-0110
Website: www.ragerroad.org



SCHEDULE OF SERVICES:

SUNDAY MORNING	BIBLE STUDY	9:30 A.M.
	WORSHIP	10:30 A.M.
SUNDAY EVENING	WORSHIP	6:00 P.M.
WEDNESDAY	BIBLE STUDY	7:30 P.M.
Preachers:	Robin W. Haley	614-751-1082
	James Grayson	614-409-0941

April 11, 2009

Weekly Budget: \$1360.00

Wednesday's Wisdom:

"Follow God's instructions: it is THE recipe for successful living!" James Grayson

Six days...until our *Spring Saturday Study* with all the lessons being presented by our local, young(er) men, with two coming up from Pomeroy. What better way could you spend a Saturday than with your brethren, studying God's word, enjoying fellowship and a great meal together?

It's a girl! Josh, Melanie, and Iain are expecting a girl at their house in August. Not just any ole girl...but Cheryl's 2nd granddaughter!

Men's business meeting will be Sunday, April 19th at 4.30pm.

Sister Lee Hall is traveling again for the next couple weeks. Pray for her safe travel and return.