

THE ERROR OF THE WICKED

2 Peter 3:17

There has always been and always shall be those whom Peter calls the wicked both within and without the Lord's body. We have the tremendous task as Christians to "be on our guard" for these characters. Paul's echo is heard in this regard when he warns, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong" (1 Corinthians 16:13). What was it he said to the Ephesian elders (and thus to all elders) in Acts 20:28? "*Take heed unto yourselves*, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). Yes, even elders must watch out--they are not immune to the "wiles of the devil" (Ephesians 6:11)! Perhaps this is who Paul had in mind in Galatians 6:1 when he said, "Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ***ye who are spiritual***, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; looking to thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Galatians 6:1).

Jesus told a parable about the kingdom in Matthew 13 in which He taught that tares or weeds were sown into a man's wheat field. Those weeds were permitted to grow with the wheat until harvest. He gives the explanation of this parable in verse 38-39, "and the field is the world; and the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil one and the enemy that sowed them is the devil: and the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are angels" (Matthew 13:38-39). Please note now verse 41: "The

Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather ***out of his kingdom*** all things that cause stumbling, and them that do iniquity". It is clear that in this verse Jesus referred to His kingdom as the whole world. Thus, He truly does have authority over all things (even as He said, Matthew 28:18). This is why we must be alert to the "weeds" both within and without the church. Take the advice of Paul and "walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time" (Colossians 4:5).

What else do we learn from the verse in our title? 1-These men are in error and practice error. They walk in darkness though they claim to have fellowship with Christ. This makes them liars (I John 1:6)! 2-We need to know this beforehand, that we might not follow them. We, like Timothy, must avoid them and their error and the "knowledge which is falsely so called" (1 Timothy 6:20). 3-If we get carried away, we too will fall from our own steadfastness! God forbid! Let us do the right thing: "Mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned: and turn away from them" (Romans 16:17). To mark them we must know them. To know them we must know their fruits (Matthew 7:20). Let us learn the difference between the "unfruitful works of darkness" (Ephesians 5:11), and the "fruit of the Spirit" (Galatians 5:22).

WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT GRACE

What does the Bible say about grace? If ever there was a subject that deals directly with the heart of God, it is grace. Grace . . . that beautiful word which is lovely just to hear. Grace . . . what an exciting thought! Grace . . . so amazing when one considers all the joy and gratitude we mortals feel toward a loving God and Father who so loved us, as to send His only begotten Son.

What exactly is grace? Volumes have been written on this subject without exhausting it. We do not suppose to give even the essence of grace in this short article, yet we can at least dwell upon the thought for a moment. Defined, grace is God's favor of holiness shown toward sinful men. It is deserving what we do not receive (condemnation), and receiving what we do not deserve: forgiveness and righteousness before God!

"Oh the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past tracing?" These are the words of Paul the Apostle in Romans 11:33, expressing the unfathomable glory of God's grace and calling, which he states in verse 29 "are not repented of." God's grace can never, will never be canceled.

But if grace is God's action toward man, what then is the motive for this grace? What does the Bible say? Perhaps the most quoted verse in all the New Testament is John 3:16, "For God so loved the world . . ." Listen to John again, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God" (1 John 3:1). It is **love** that motivates God to show His grace toward us. The sending of His Son is grace. Paul told Titus "For the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men" (Titus 2:11). Thus, if God loves us, what ought we to do? Love begets love. It is natural then that we should love Him in return. 1 John 4:19 tells us, "We love because He first loved us." Our love must be demonstrated. Jesus said, "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments." Do you REALLY love the lord enough to obey Him? Consider what the New Testament says about the grace of God.

RAGER ROAD CHURCH OF CHRIST

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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

December 6, 2009

Weekly Budget: \$1360.00

Wednesday's Wisdom:

"Don't believe everything you hear! Believe God's word!" Hubert Wiley

Ladies' night out at sister Lee Hall's home, Thursday, December 17.

Haley Holiday Open House at Robin & Cheryl's home, Sunday afternoon, December 20, from 2pm onward.

If you have an announcement...you can always give it to me at the building, or you can call me most anytime with the information. I'd be happy to put it into the bulletin. Robin