

# *A Matter of Character*

*Because  
Character  
Matters*



**Adult Workbook - Wednesday Evening – Summer Quarter 2019**  
**Forum Terrace Church of Christ, Grand Prairie, Texas**

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# Thomas: Going Beyond All Doubt

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***John 11:7-16; 14:1-6; 20:19-29***

Eight passages in the New Testament in which Thomas is mentioned. Four are in the lists of the apostles where they mention nothing of Thomas except his name (Mt. 10:3; Mk. 3:18; Lk. 6:15; Ac. 1:13). However John defines him more clearly in three occasions (Jn. 11:16; 14:1-6; 20:24; 21:2). Of these the thing which stands out the most about Thomas is doubt concerning the resurrection of Christ. He has been dubbed a "doubting Thomas." Was Thomas a mere doubter or a true investigator seeking truth?

## **A Willing Thomas, John 11:7-16**

Word came that Jesus' friend Lazarus was very sick. Jesus did not jump up and run to Bethany. Instead He waited until He knew Lazarus was dead. Then Jesus said, *"let us go into Judea again"* (John 11:7). This sort of behavior probably puzzled the disciples. After all, it was reckless and even to the point of suicidal to go back now. Twice before the Jews at Jerusalem had tried to kill Jesus (Jn. 8:59; 10:31). It is at this point that Thomas proclaimed his willingness to go and die with the Lord, *"Let us also go, that we may die with Him"* (John 11:16). Perhaps, there is a touch of fatalism here. However, his statement stands in contrast to the boast of Peter when he said to Jesus, *"Lord, I am ready to go with thee to prison and to death."* As you will recall when put to the test Peter denied the Lord three times. Thomas' sacrificial attitude is commendable.

All true disciples of Christ must have a willingness to being loyal to the Master to the point of death. After all, the Lord has promised that if we are faithful unto death, He will give us a crown of life (Rev. 2:10). Whether or not he was really ready to die with the Lord we cannot say with certainty. Later, according to tradition we learn, Thomas was run through the body with a lance at Coromandel in the East Indies.

## **A Following Thomas, John 14:1-6**

On the last night the Lord would be with His disciples before His crucifixion, He told them that He was going away. Inquisitive Thomas asked, *"Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?"* (14:5). Christ answered, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me"* (14:6). Thomas could know where and know the way by following Christ. This may have made no sense to them at the time. Yet, in the ensuing years they would be brought to the remembrance of this simple statement. The light would click on. They would know that without the Way they would not be going anywhere. They would understand the without seeking the Truth they would know nothing. Without the Life there could be no living. This apostle was not just a willing disciple, but as a true disciple was willing to follow his Master wherever He went.

## **A Missing Thomas, John 20:19-23**

On a Sunday after the Lord's death a special meeting of the disciples was called behind closed doors for fear of the Jews. All of them were there, except Judas of course. But Thomas was also missing. It was during this gathering that the Lord walked into the room and revealed himself alive to them. We do not really know why Thomas missed the Lord's day meeting of the disciples with their risen Lord on the evening of the resurrection day. No doubt he had convinced himself that his absence was excusable, Whatever the reason, it resulted in him missing an opportunity to meet with the Lord. To witness the evidence of the resurrection and believe.

What did Thomas miss by not being with the other ten disciples on the Sunday evening?

- Thomas missed the joy of seeing and being with the Lord.
- Thomas missed the Lord's greeting and the blessing of peace.

- Thomas missed a Great Commission Charge give by the Lord to His apostles.
- Thomas missed the promise of the Holy Spirit.
- Thomas missed the comfort and support of other disciples.
- Thomas missed the evidence needed to remove doubt.
- Thomas missed opportunities to share his faith.
- Thomas missed having a good reputation and example among the disciples.

Just think what you miss by not being present to assemble with the saints. Like Thomas you miss being with the Lord who is promised to be there (Mt. 18:20) even if the doors are locked. Had he been present his faith would be at the same level as the rest of the disciples who were present. Many of us have stunted our faith by failure to attend on Sunday night. I know where the Lord will be on the first day of the week. Where will you be? One day the Lord will return. Not to meet with us, but for us to meet Him in the air (1 Th. 4:17). Where will you be when He returns? Will He find you ready?

### **A Doubting Thomas, *John 20:24-26***

Thomas wanted to see. He needed proof. He doubted because he lacked the evidence which the others had. However, we believe in the resurrection based upon the testimony of the apostles and the promise of Christ and even the prophecies of old. However, Thomas wanted to see the Risen Lord Himself. All he demanded was the same evidence they had received. Thomas was not going to be gullible nor was he a hardened skeptic. Seeing and touching he did believe.

Lovingly Christ rebuked Thomas for his weakness of faith. His faith was weak because he refused the testimony of his fellow disciples.

Doubt is not always a bad thing. Thomas is an example of a doubter who found the truth. Honest doubt and sincere inquiry help build strong faith.

Today, we have those would be disciples who have been given the eyewitness testimony recorded in the scriptures of Christ's resurrection. However, they doubt and look for more proof. Unlike, Thomas they will die in doubt for we have been given all the evidence we need to believe.

### **A Believing Thomas, *John 20:27-29***

Jesus said to Thomas, *"Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing."* (20:27). He is saying to his disciples, "Okay here is the evidence, now give Me the proper verdict". Thomas answered and said to Him, *"My Lord and my God!"* (John 20:28). Thomas accepted the truth and went from doubt to determination.

Jesus showed Himself alive unto the apostles by many infallible proofs (Acts 1:3). Infallible means beyond doubt and without mistake. The New Testament is the proof for our faith today (Rom. 10:17). Hearing the evidence from the eyewitness accounts of history demands our verdict. Our faith is the "evidence of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). We walk by faith, not sight (2 Cor 5:7).

When we think of Thomas perhaps it would be fair to consider more than just his doubting. What about the good example of his willing attitude, following as a disciple and believing the evidence? Also, remember the that his doubting was preceded by his missing.

### **Questions:**

1. What is Thomas most noted for in the Gospels?
2. Compare and/or contrast Peter and Thomas in relation to Jesus' mission?

3. What finally happened to Thomas according to tradition?
4. Where has Jesus promised to take His disciples in John 14:1-6?
5. How could Thomas know where Jesus was going and how to get there?
6. Does the Gospel of John tell us why Thomas missed the first meeting of the resurrected Lord with his disciples? Why?
7. What did Thomas miss by not being present with the disciples the first Sunday evening after Jesus' resurrection?
8. What did Thomas require in order to remove his doubts about the resurrection of Christ?
9. What evidence do we have to base our belief in the resurrection of Christ?
10. What is the difference between our faith in the resurrection and Thomas' faith?
11. What is so significant about Thomas' confession of faith?
12. Explain how our faith in the resurrected Son of God is not a mere blind, groundless, wishful thinking type of belief.

**Application & Discussion:**

1. What should a Christian do if he has doubts?
2. List the reasons why Christians should attend on Sunday night services.

# **Peter: The Most Reprimanded Man in the Bible**

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Just who was the most rebuked man in the Bible? Was it David, Moses or Peter? In my opinion, Peter was the most rebuked man in the Word of God. Just how did this lovable, influential, vocal and wise apostle of our Lord become the most rebuked? It is because he made a lot of mistakes and someone loved him enough to correct him.

It has been said, "Experience is the best teacher, but only the worst students need the best teacher." When Peter would stumble and fall, he would always get back up and learn from his blunder and go on. It would seem that no matter how hard Peter tried, he could not get things right. No matter how hard he failed, he would make things right.

## **Right Action, Wrong Focus**

Everyone knows the story of Peter walking upon the water (Matt. 14:22-33). Peter started to walk out to Jesus upon the waves. He looked down at the raging sea and began to doubt. As he lost faith, he started to sink. Do we admire the other disciples besides Peter? Do you admire those boat potatoes? At least Peter had enough faith to get out of the boat. He was reprimanded for his lack of faith. Jesus did not condemn him for trying, but for giving up. His action was right. His focus was wrong as a result of looking at the waves instead of Jesus.

## **Right Emotion, Wrong Advice**

*"From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, 'Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!' But He turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men'" (Matt. 16:21-23).*

Peter received one the harshest rebukes ever given to anyone in the Bible. Jesus called him "Satan." Peter's emotion was right. He only had love for Jesus and only rebuked Him because he did not understand God's plan for His Son. We can learn from Peter's wholesome emotion and his unsound advice. Christians must learn to accept God's plans and commands regardless of whether we think they will work or not.

## **Right Attitude, Wrong Action**

Peter, James and John had the distinct privilege of witnessing the transfiguration of Jesus, Moses and Elijah (Matt. 17:1-5). Peter was so moved by what he saw, he said, *"Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah."* This time Peter received a rebuke straight from God in Heaven! God said, *"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!"*

Like Peter, we too become so avid about the Lord's cause that we fail to seek God's Will. We have the right attitude, but we engage in the wrong action. You cannot alter God's Work in order to do God's Will.

## **Wrong Humility, Right Extreme**

To teach His disciples a lesson on humble service to one another, Jesus took a towel, and some water and began to wash their feet. *"Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God, rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples'*



*feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. Then He came to Simon Peter. And Peter said to Him, 'Lord, are You washing my feet?' Jesus answered and said to him, 'What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this.' Peter said to Him, 'You shall never wash my feet!' Jesus answered him, 'If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me.' Simon Peter said to Him, 'Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!'" (John 13:6-9). When He came to Peter, he said, "You shall never wash my feet!" The Lord replied, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me." Peter said, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!" However, Jesus knew that spiritually Peter was clean. Although Peter had the wrong idea about humility and service, he had the right idea about being completely clean.*

### **Right Action, Wrong Endurance**

On another occasion, Peter asked Jesus, *"Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?"* Jesus said to him, *"I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven"* (Matt. 18:21,22). The rabbinical schools were divided over the number of times a person ought to be forgiven. Some argued you should forgive someone only three times. Others were more compassionate. They argued that one should forgive up to four times. Peter added the two answers together and arrived at seven times. In effect, Peter was saying, "Give me just the minimum." Jesus said, "No way am I going to tell you seven times. Instead, you ought to forgive him 490 times!" Jesus was not suggesting to His disciples to keep a little black book on each brother's trespasses. As soon as someone sinned against us the 491th time, we could say: "Brother, I don't have to forgive you any more." Jesus used the hyperbole of 490 times to command limitless forgiveness of our penitent brothers and sisters. Peter had the right action in mind, but the wrong endurance.

### **Right Comment, Wrong Conviction**

*"And the Lord said, 'Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.' But he said to Him, 'Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death.' Then He said, 'I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me'" (Luke 22:31-34).*

Like so many well meaning Christians of our day, Peter made the right remark, but he did not have the real conviction to support what he was saying. How often do we hear someone proclaim to us, "I'll be there Sunday. You can count on me"? When Sunday comes, the person is not in attendance. Instead, he or she sound asleep in attendance at St. Mattress.

### **Right Place, Wrong Activity**

Speaking of sleeping on the job, Peter was rebuked more than once in a single night for dozing off at his post. On the night of His betrayal, Jesus took Peter, James and John with Him to the Garden of Gethsemane. Leaving them, He moved into the garden a short distance and began to pray. Every time He came back to check on His disciples, He found them asleep (Matt. 26:39-46).

You don't have to go far to see the application for the modern-day Christian. Worship service is the right place for a faithful Christian to be. However, coming to doze off on hard pews, expecting to be entertained or just day dreaming is not the right kind of activity for the occasion.

### **Right Battle, Wrong Weapon**

Later in the garden, Peter cut off the ear of Malchus when Jesus was arrested. Although Jesus miraculously replaced the ear, He still rebuked Peter: *"Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword"* (Matt. 26:52). Peter had some kind of courage. He took on a whole band of trained soldiers by himself. He is such an awful swordsman that he misses the guy's entire chest and cut off the man's ear.

Like so many modern religious militants, Peter was using the wrong weapon for the right battle. We do not fight a carnal war but a spiritual war. Instead of carnal weapons we need spiritual weapons (Eph. 6:10f).

### **Right Answer, Wrong Concern**

After Jesus' resurrection, He asked Peter who had been out fishing, "*Do you love me?*" Peter gave the right answer, each time: "Yes, I love you." In response to each answer Jesus commanded Peter to feed His sheep. Peter then focused on John. "What is going to happen to John?" Peter asked Jesus. Jesus said, "Peter, you need to worry about Peter, John is my business not yours."

He had the right answer but the wrong concern. Again, his focus should have been on his duty to the Lord, not John's. No matter what others are doing we must first examine ourselves to make sure we are loving and obeying the Lord.

Space in this article is limited. We have not spoken of Peter's wrong response but right conclusion in Acts 10. Peter had both the wrong spirit and the wrong interest when Paul had to rebuke him at Antioch (Gal. 2:11-14). Peter had the right question, but wrong understanding in Matthew 15:13-20. He had both the wrong answer and the wrong reasoning when he was asked if Jesus paid the temple tax (Matt. 17:24-27). When Jesus was on trial, Peter used the wrong words in response to those who inquired if he knew Jesus. Later, Peter expressed the right sorrow when he wept because of his denial of the Lord (Matt. 26:69-75).

Yes, Peter made a lot of mistakes, but he learned from them. Peter never denied that he made a mistake and never tried to rationalize away his mistakes. Instead, he repented of them. He was the most reprimanded man in the Bible, but he learned to take it like one of the greatest men in the Bible.

How about you? How do you handle all your mistakes? How do you respond to rebuke?

### **Questions:**

1. Where was Peter's focus when he was walking upon the water to Jesus?
2. Why did Jesus call Peter "Satan"?
3. What was wrong with Peter wanting to build a three tabernacles?
4. Why must Jesus wash Peter's feet?
5. How many times did the Lord require Peter to forgive another? Who many more times was this than the number Peter has suggested?
6. Was Peter insincere when he told the Lord he was willing to die for Him?

7. Why was it so important to Jesus the Peter, James and John stay awake in the Garden?
8. What happened between Peter, Malchus and Jesus?
9. What are the weapons Christians are to use to fight for the Lord?
10. Why was Peter concern about John 21:20-22 none of his concern?
11. What was Peter's wrong response but right conclusion in Acts 10?
12. Why did Paul rebuke Peter in Gal. 2:11-14?
13. Explain Peter's wrong words but right sorrow in Matt. 26:29-75.

**Discussion:**

1. If Peter refused to admit or accept his mistakes would he have been of much use to the Lord and His Kingdom? Why is it so hard Christians to accept rebuke and admit their mistakes?
2. List character traits and attitudes which Peter could have used to avoid making mistakes and being rebuked in the first place.

# Enoch, God Took Him

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**Genesis 5:21-24; Hebrews 11:5-6; Jude 1:14-15**

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Not much is known about the life of Enoch. Although few books have been written about him, he was very famous with God. All that is said of him in the Bible is found in three passages: Gen 5:21-24; Heb 11:5-6; and Jude 1:14-15. Our first introduction to Enoch comes in what might be called the “*and he died*” chapter (Genesis 5). All the generations from Adam to Lamech were born, begot children, lived and died - except Enoch. At the tender age of 365 years God called Enoch home to heaven. He was the youngest man to end his life on earth in the whole chapter. The good are taken so young. “*And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him*” (Gen. 5:24). What an epitaph for a man to put on his tombstone! But he never had a tombstone.

*What makes Enoch so Special?*

## **Believing In God**

His God was not the mean policeman god whose job was to catch him doing wrong as he traveled down the highway of life. His God was not the apathetic god who just created the world and then retired from all public life. His God was not an impersonal cosmic force. Instead, Enoch’s God was one he could walk with.

Enoch did not just believe in the existence of God. He believed he had a relationship with his creator. Einstein once said, “Certainly there is a God. Any man who doesn’t believe in a cosmic force is a fool, but we could never know Him.” However, Enoch would not agree. He would say, “I know there is a God. I took a walk with Him this morning.”

## **Pleasing to God**

Concerning Enoch the Hebrew writer tells us: “*By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, ‘and was not found, because God had taken him’; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him*” (Hebrews 11:5,6). True faith pleases God - without it pleasing God is an impossibility. The word “*impossible*” is a term which leaves no room for probability. The likelihood of a man being struck by lightening is about three million to one. However, the possibility of a man pleasing God without faith is zero. The world does not please God because the world is enmity against God. Enoch could not have walked in the ways of the world and pleased God.

## **Seeking in God**

Enoch trusted in God. He believed God was a rewarder. Enoch diligently sought God – He pursued God in his life. The reward that God gives for faith is salvation. “*For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened*” (Luke 11:10). God said, “*And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart*” (Jer. 29:13). Enoch did find God. God did reward Enoch. He did not see death. When God plays hide and seek He wants you to win by finding Him. He has given you all the clues in the Bible and sent His Son, Jesus Christ to show you the way.

## **Preaching For God**

“*Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, ‘Behold, the Lord*

*comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him*" (Jude 1:14,15). Jude tells us that Enoch functioned as a prophet, declaring God's just judgment upon the unrighteousness of his time. Like many other prophets of old, Enoch preached about the coming judgment and of the need for repentance. Enoch proclaimed judgment against false teachers. These had spoken recklessly against the Lord and were without God.

As the Jews count generations Enoch was *"the seventh from Adam."* Although he *"prophesied about these men also"* this information, like the story above about the body of Moses, is not found in the Bible. Again, Jude may have known this information from the Book of Enoch (1 Enoch 1:9) or from oral tradition. At any rate, being moved by the Holy Spirit this prophecy is included in the New Testament. Perhaps, Enoch who was taken alive to be with God before the flood, originally spoke this in reference to those of his generation. God has Jude use this alluding to the false teachers of these last days. Although God has sent angels to punish the wicked in the past, in the end *"the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints."* *"Saints"* can be translated "holy ones" and most like refers to angels (Mt. 25:31; 2 Th. 1:7). No one can escape this *"judgment on all."* If the Israelites who were redeemed from Egypt, the angels to abandoned their place, and those of Sodom and Gomorrah could not escape judgment, no one can. It will be a just judgment *"to convict all who are ungodly among them."* Four times Jude uses the term *"ungodly"* in verse fifteen. These are those who are the false teachers and perhaps those who follow them. The term *"convict"* means "to convince someone of their misdeeds." Judgment will seem just even to the ungodly. The Judgment will include *"all their ungodly deeds."* All the actions of man will be recorded in the mind of the Almighty Judge. Solomon concluded his book of wisdom: *"for God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil"* (Eccl 12:14). The ungodly are judged for deeds *"they have committed in an ungodly way."* The ungodly deeds are part of the manner in which they live their life. The ungodly will not only be judged by they way they walk, but how they talk. The *"harsh"* words against the Lord could refer to just about anything. The Pharisees called him a glutton and a winebibber. They implied the he was in league with the Devil. Today, many attack His deity accepting Him as merely a prophet of God or just a good teacher.

Enoch named his son, "Methuselah" which means "when he is gone, it will come." Some have concluded that Methuselah died the very year the flood of Genesis came. Perhaps Enoch was made to understand that the death of his son would signal the destruction of the world. If this is true Enoch was prophesying through his son's name! God did destroy the wicked world. Yet Enoch's great-grandson, Noah, did listen and was also a preacher of righteousness. Only he and his family were saved from the flood.

## **Walking with God**

The simple phrase, *"Enoch walked with God,"* is repeated twice in Genesis. Walking is synonymous with a man's manner of living. How he walks is how he chooses to live his life. Enoch lived his life in a way that was pleasing to God. Walking with God requires a man to surrender his will and walk in accordance with God's Will. *"Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?"* (Amos 3:3). No; only those who have a spirit of cooperation can walk together. Walking with God also requires continued holiness on the part of the man. John wrote, *"If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin"* (1 John 1:6,7). God is holy. He walked with sinless Adam in the Garden until man and woman sinned. It takes moral fitness to walk with God. Enoch and God walked together for a least three hundred years. If a modern saint's walk with God consists of an hour on Sunday... or even three hours on Sunday and one on Wednesday, they are not walking with God!

Although the walk of Enoch with God is not to be taken literally, it is a beautiful picture to envision a man walking side by side with his Father and creator. Someone wrote, "If God had a refrigerator, your picture would be on it. If He had a wallet, your photo would be in it. He sends you flowers every spring and a sunrise every morning. Whenever you want to talk, he'll listen. He can live anywhere in the universe, and he chose your heart...Face it, friend. He's crazy about you." God wants this step by step fellowship with

all His children, not just Enoch.

### **Ascending to God**

In September of 2008 David Southwell published a very curious book – *1001 Ridiculous Ways To Die*. This book gives examples of some of the odd and astonishing ways people have lost their life. Whether Enoch's incredible disappearing act made it in the book will require further research. All that is said in the Bible of the end of Enoch's life is "*And Enoch walked with God; and he was not, for God took him*" (Gen. 5:24). Perhaps this suggests that his friends sought for him and he was not to be found. Like a children's knock, knock riddle.

"Knock, Knock!"

"Whose there?"

"Enoch"

"Enoch who?"

"He knock and he knock and no one is home to answer the door."

What ever happened to Enoch? He was never found. Despite all the posters plastering the telephone polls on the street corner, all the door to door searching, and even putting his face on the back of milk cartons could never locate him. God took him. God also took Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind (2 Kings 2:11-12).

How Enoch was taken is not nearly as important as why he was taken by God. Perhaps it was to spare him further ridicule and persecution, which he was bound to have experienced. "*The righteous perishes, And no man takes it to heart; Merciful men are taken away, While no one considers That the righteous is taken away from evil. He shall enter into peace; They shall rest in their beds, Each one walking in his uprightness*" (Is. 57:1,2). After all, the wickedness of the earth was increasing to the point that "*the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually*" (Gen. 6:5).

### **Summary**

Enoch's name means "dedicated." He was dedicated to God, not this world. He was not conformed to the world (Rom. 12:2). If you are walking with God, there will be a very sharp contrast between you and the world. Additionally, Enoch was not condemned with the world. He was taken up approximately 680 years before the Flood came. Enoch's ascension can be viewed as a foreshadowing of the rapture of the saints when the Lord comes again. "*For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord*" (1 Thess. 4:15-17). So when God's judgment of fire rains down on the earth (2 Th. 1:7-9) in the end His saints will not be there, for He will have also taken them. One day all the faithful who walk with God will meet Enoch when the Lord returns with all the saints.

### **Questions:**

1. What separates Enoch from all those mentioned in Genesis 5?
2. How many years did Enoch spend on earth?
3. Based on what we know from the Bible how did Enoch demonstrate his life of faith?

4. What is the possibility of pleasing God without faith?
5. What is the meaning of "Methuselah"? Why might have Enoch so named him?
6. T F Because of Jude's use of stories not found in the Bible but in psuedipigraphal writings is it not likely that his epistle is inspired by the Holy Spirit.
7. The ungodly speak great swelling words to
  - a. murmur
  - b. to speak the truth
  - c. to flatter people and gain advantage
  - d. all the above
8. How many times does Jude use "**ungodly**" in verse 15? Who is he talking about?
9. What does it mean to "*walk with God*"? How can Christians walk with God today? How would this be manifested in the life of the believer?
10. How did God reward Enoch's faith? Can the Christian of today anticipate a similar reward? Explain.
11. Who else was taken by God so as to never see death? What common traits do they have with Enoch?

**Discussion:**

1. How can we walk with God today?
2. How can we know we are pleasing to God?

## Barnabas: The Son of...

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**Acts 4:36,37; 9:26-29; 11:22-26; 15:36-39**

Everyone needs encouragement for his efforts, but few people make the need known quite as clearly as the little boy who said to his father: "Let's play darts. I'll throw and you say 'Wonderful!'" (Bits & Pieces, December 9, 1993, Page 24). This father's son knew of the necessity for encouragement.

In the New Testament the apostles nicknamed an early convert from Cyprus with the name "Barnabas." They picked the name to fit the man. It means "*son of encouragement*" (Acts 4:36). The phrase "Son of" is a means of expressing one's outstanding attributes. For example, if a man was exceedingly wicked, he may be referred to as "son of perdition". This Levite from Cyprus named Joseph obviously impressed the early Christians with his powerful ability to exhort people. In addition to encouragement, Barnabas was the "son of" many excellent virtues.

### **Son of Generosity**

After Pentecost many of those from other parts of the New Testament world decided to stay in Jerusalem. This would have placed an extra hard economic strain on these early Christian families. The generosity of other Christians made it possible for them to meet their financial needs. Barnabas was one of the most generous for the inspired writer Luke singles him out as an example for ages to come. *"And Joses, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet"* (Acts 4:36,37).

Are you a son of generosity? Does the way you give encourage others? Are you a good example of practicing stewardship rather than mere ownership? Only selfless men can give like Barnabas. Only those who treasure people more than possessions can be so giving. The materialistic are so attached to their goods they cannot do good for others in need.

### **Son of Support and Trust**

After the stoning of Stephen, Saul emerged as the primary persecutor of the church. Yet, the Lord appeared to him on the road to Damascus and told him to enter the city and wait for a preacher. Ananias was sent to Saul and he baptized him. After leaving Damascus Saul spent three years in Arabia. Back in Damascus he found it necessary to flee to Jerusalem.

*"And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple"* (Acts 9:26). Can you imagine how Saul must have felt? In true remorse and genuine repentance he had turned from his past. He lost all his old colleagues who now wanted to kill Saul. He forfeited his great position of honor among the Jews. Now his fellow Christians are weary of him because of his past.

Barnabas comes to Saul's rescue (Acts 9:27-29). He put his own reputation on the line by coming to his defense. First, "he told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord" Next, he told them how "the Lord had spoken to him". Finally, Barnabas reported "how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus." The pay-off: not only did the brethren receive Saul, but as the apostle Paul he would go on to do great work for the glory of God's Kingdom as much of the New Testament is written about him and by him.

What about you? Are you a son of support and trust? Will you put your neck on the line for an under dog? Too often brethren want to place a new convert on a lengthy period of probation before they risk investing too much of themselves into a novice. Henry Drummond once wrote, "How many prodigals are kept out of the kingdom of God by the unlovely characters of those who profess to be inside!"



### **Son of Exhortation and Joy**

Marion Gilbert sent in the following story to Reader's Digest:

One morning I opened the door to get the newspaper and was surprised to see a strange little dog with our paper in his mouth. Delighted with this unexpected "delivery service," I fed him some treats. The following morning I was horrified to see the same dog sitting in front of our door, wagging his tail, surrounded by eight newspapers. I spent the rest of that morning returning the papers to their owners. (Marion Gilbert in *Reminisce*, Reader's Digest, February, 1994, Page 12).

Imagine Barnabas' surprise at how his example not only encouraged Saul but many of his own country men of Cyprus to spread the Gospel in Antioch (Acts 11:19-21). Perhaps Barnabas' faith was of such that it was no surprise at all. One thing that should not be surprising to us is that when the apostles heard of the great number of believers in Antioch they sent none other than Barnabas (v. 22). After all, he has already proven to be empathetic toward outsiders and underdogs.

During his work with the brethren at Antioch the church grew as "*a great many people were added to the Lord*" (v. 23). This growth was in part due to his character. Being a good man and full of the Holy Spirit (v. 24). Furthermore, he was able to rejoice at the spiritual growth of others (v. 23). He had a strong faith in God and trust in his fellow brethren.

Barnabas went to Tarsus to fetch Saul to share in his joy and work at Antioch (v. 25,26). This not only proved to be a great move to help Barnabas and encourage the brethren there, but Saul would have been motivated by this as well.

How much of an encouragement are you to new Christians? Are you able to rejoice in the spiritual success of others? Can you share your success with others and help them succeed?

### **Son of Humility**

As the church at Antioch sent Barnabas and Saul out on the first missionary journey it was Barnabas who was the primary leader (Acts 13:1-3). However, after Saul dealt with Elymas the magician Luke says, "*Now Paul and his company set sail from Paphos*" (v. 13). Barnabas is not even mentioned. In verse 16 it is Paul not Barnabas who delivers the sermon in Antioch of Pisidia. From now on it is no longer Barnabas and Saul, but Paul and Barnabas.

In all of this, Barnabas seems to be completely free of jealousy. He was willing to take second place behind Paul so long as God received first place. It was Barnabas who initially built the bridges for Saul, but it is now Paul who will blaze the trail.

Are you a son of humility? Someone has said that the most difficult chair to fill in an orchestra is "second fiddle". How well can you play "second fiddle"?

When Rickey Henderson was about to break Lou Brock's career stolen base record the loudest cheers among the forty thousand fans in the Oakland stadium were those of Lou. In preparation for attending the game, Brock said, "I'll be there. Do you think I'm going to miss it now? Rickey did in 12 years what took me 19. He's amazing."

How much easier will it be to make it to Heaven if we know we have the encouragement of our fellow brethren? Brothers and sisters who do not care now your success might make them appear.

### **Son of Patience and Hope**

John Mark had left Paul and Barnabas during the first journey at Pergema for some frivolous reason. When about to embark on their second missionary journey Paul and Barnabas were in disagreement over taking John Mark with them (Ac. 15:36-39). A sharp contention arose to the point that it was decided that Paul and Barnabas go their separate ways. Barnabas was willing to see Mark encouraged, so they separated going to Cyprus while Paul took Silas and went through Syria and Cilicia.

Years later Mark authored the first Gospel. Still later Paul wrote Timothy to "Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry" (2 Tim. 4:11). This is not to say that Paul was wrong in not taking Mark. However, it may represent the success of Barnabas' patience and hope which he invested

in Mark.

Are you patient and hopeful of others? The church is filled with cynics who cry out "It'll never work" or "We've tried that before." We all need someone to believe in us even though we have failed. As Christ is the Savior of the second chance, so we too must be longsuffering with the initial failures of others. Who knows, maybe that weak and stumbling Christian may one day by your help walk strong in the Kingdom and be a source of usefulness in the kingdom.

William Arthur Ward wrote: "Flatter me, and I may not believe you. Criticize me, and I may not like you. Ignore me, and I may not forgive you. Encourage me, and I will not forget you." Obviously, Paul never forgot his mentor Barnabas for he makes frequent mention of him in his epistles (I Cor. 9:6; Gal. 2:1,9,13; Col. 4:10). How will you be remembered?

### **Questions:**

1. Who gave Barnabas his name? What does it mean?
2. Why was there such a great need for benevolence among the early church?
3. Why are some not as generous as Barnabas?
4. Why did the Christians and apostles at the church in Jerusalem initially reject Saul?
5. What did Barnabas say to the apostles in order for them to change their minds and accept Saul?
6. How does Marion Gilbert's story about the little dog apply to Barnabas?
7. Why was Barnabas the best choice to send to the church at Antioch?
8. What made Barnabas such a success at Antioch?

9. What change took place in the relationship with Barnabas and Saul during the first missionary journey?
10. Who was right or wrong in the dispute between Paul and Barnabas over John Mark?
11. Why do you think that John Mark became a valuable writer and useful to Paul in later life?
12. Did Paul and Barnabas ever get over their differences? Explain.

**Discussion:**

1. Make a list of people to whom you can become a Barnabas.
2. Make a list of things you can do to be an encourager to others.

# Zacchaeus: The Penitent Publican

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## Luke 19:1-10

A man was walking down the street when his solitude was abruptly interrupted by the screams of a frantic woman. Rushing to the front door of the home he asked if he could be of any assistance. The frantic mother explained that her young son had swallowed a quarter. Holding the child up by the heels he gave him a pat on the back and the quarter popped out. Amazed, the mother asked, "You sure new how to get the money out of him. Are you a doctor?" The man casually explained, "No, mam, I work for the I.R.S."

Tax collectors have been the object of many of jokes for years. Mark Twain said, *"What is the difference between a taxidermist and a tax collector? The taxidermist takes only your skin."*

During the time of Christ, a tax collector was hated as a trader because of their cooperation with the Roman authorities. Jesus, however, would dine with them. One day in Jericho, after He just healed blind Bartimeaus on the other side of town, he came to a sycamore tree by the side of the road. Looking up he found a tax collector by the name of Zacchaeus. Because he was so short, he had claimed the tree to catch a glimpse of Jesus as he past by. That day Zacchaues was to dine with the Messiah.

### A Publican for the Romans

Zacchaeus was a publican. That is not to be confused with the opposite party to the Democrats. Throughout the provinces of the Roman empire certain local business men would buy the right to collect taxes for Rome. This was not closely regulated. The publican did not receive a salary, but collect extra taxes for his income. This opened the door for corruption and extortion. Since the Jews, rejected Rome's right to rule over God's People, they considered a publican a Benedict Arnold and the worst type of sinner. The Jewish authorities denounced and excommunicated them. Their money was not accepted in the Temple. They could not take an oath. Zacchaeus would have had fortune, but no fame.

### Prosperous in Business

Jericho was a chief taxation center since it lay at a busy and important crossing over the Jordan River. It was believed that a large number of wealthy publicans resided in Jericho at this time. Considering the location and the fact that Zacchaeus is called a "chief" publican, it is safe to believe that he was wealthy.

Since he obtained his fortune by means of a disreputable profession many Jews would have considered him dishonest.

It is true that *"It is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven"* (Mt. 19:23). Also, not many rich are called, however, a few do answer the call of God. Jesus called the rich young ruler, but because of his love for wealth rejected the call to discipleship. Zacchaeus on other hand, proved to be a refreshing exception.

### Persistent in Seeing Jesus

His "trying to see" Him implies a continual effort. He "kept seeking" to see Jesus. Jesus poor public relations move in accepting publicans and even selecting Matthew may have sparked Zacchaeus' interest. After all, the Jews did not like Jesus' dining with Zacchaeus. *"But when they saw it, they all complained, saying, 'He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner'"* (Luke 19:7).

However, Zacchaesus' efforts to see Jesus were foiled by both the crowd and his stature. He may have been short, but he was resourceful. Climbing a tree would not have been a very dignifying act in first century Palestine. Yet, unlike so many who will allow any one and any thing to come between them and Christ, Zacchaeus was not going to allow the crowd or his height keep him from even a glimpse of the great

miracle worker.

### **Proud Host of Christ**

Jesus knew Zacchaeus. He called him by name. Either they had met before or Christ knew him via super human knowledge. Perhaps that later, since Jesus seems to be attracted to Zaccheus's heart.

Notice how Jesus invited himself into Zacchaeus' home. Although this would be a rude gesture to us, Jesus seized the opportunity to reach a soul. Today, Jesus calls out to all, *"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock"* (Rev. 3:20). Sadly, only a few like Zacchaeus are willing to open the door and invite Him into their hearts and home.

### **Penitent Philanthropist**

*"Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, 'Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold'"* (Luke 19:8). He demonstrates true repentance. Repentance is more than just a change in emotion. It involves a change of heart and direction (Luke 3:8). Restitution must be a willing part of repentance. In the Old Law, restitution for crimes against others was spelled out in detail. Zacchaeus' penitent heart exceeded God's requirement. Only a destructive and violent robbery required a fourfold restitution (Ex. 22:1). Robbery involving goods that for the most part could not be restored demanded a twofold penalty (Ex. 22:4-7). All true disciples of Christ should have this willingness to make restitution. Sometimes making restitution is impossible. A murderer does not have it in his power to restore his victim to life. Repentance also involves a change in relationship. He called Jesus, "Lord" showing a willingness to now submit his will to that of Christ's Will (Luke 13:3; Jn. 14:13; 15:14). He found the Messiah and now money does not matter.

### **"Pure" Son of Abraham**

Zacchaeus' name means "righteous" or "pure". The Jews would of laughed at the irony of a publican being so called. He had been an outcast, but now Jesus proclaims him to be a true son of Abraham. Abraham "believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness" (Gal. 3:6). Zacchaeus believed like his forefather making him a true son of Abraham.

### **Prospect of Christ's Mission**

Most of the Jews misunderstood Christ's mission. They expected Him to exercise His power to defeat the Romans at any time and set up His kingdom. Therefore, they also did not understand for whom He came. Jesus came to seek men like Zacchaeus. By seeking Jesus, Zacchaeus was found. The self-righteous crowd did not realize Christ came to save wicked publicans. To his fellow Jews, he was a traitor. to the Romans, he was simply a useful bureaucrat. But to Jesus, Zacchaeus was a lost sheep of the house of Israel, a man separated from God and under His condemnation. Zaccheus may have been a "Wee, little man" up in a sycamore tree, but he was still a sinner in need of a Savior.

Oh, to have Jesus come home with us. It can happen. Seek Him and He will find you. He knocks. You must let Him in.

### **Questions:**

1. What was a publican?
2. Why were publicans so despised by their fellow Jews? How did they treat them?

3. Do you think Zacchaeus was wealthy? Explain.
4. What obstacles stood between Zacchaeus and Jesus?
5. Why do you think Jesus singled him out of the crowd?
6. How did the Jews react to Jesus dining with him?
7. What did the Old Law require when it came to restitution for stealing?
8. Did Zacchaeus go beyond what was required in the Law? Explain.
9. Why did Jesus call him a true son of Abraham?
10. What did the average Jew view as the mission of the coming messiah?
11. How does this story demonstrate Jesus' true mission?
12. Could Zacchaeus continue to serve as a publican after his salvation? Explain.

**Discussion:**

1. How can penitent men and women make restitution in regard to various sins like: failing to attend; failing to give, stealing, etc? Can someone always make restitution for their sins? Explain.
2. Jesus was often a guest in the homes of pharisees, publicans, etc. Imagine Him coming to your house for dinner? What changes would you make?

# King Agrippa 2: Almost Persuaded

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## Acts 26:24-32

Did you ever hear the expression "Almost does not count except in horseshoes and hand grenades."

According to Paul Harvey News, in a county jail in south Florida, jail officials found a plastic trash bag hanging onto the bars of a cell. Inside they found Jimmy Jones, a prisoner who hoped he would get taken out with the trash. This might have worked. Except during roll call his reflexes too over. And when the name Jimmy Jones was called from inside the bag came a muffled response: "here". This criminal almost escaped, but almost was not good enough to give him the desired freedom.

In the book of Acts there is a story of a King who was almost converted and freed from his sins.

### Almighty God Predicted

Jesus had told Ananias in Damascus that Paul would *"bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings"* (Ac. 9:15). The danger of thinking the great are inaccessible and therefore not within reach of the Gospel is to miss out on teaching the Gospel to all the world. A second danger is to think the "nobodies" of the world are insignificant and therefore it is not important to share the Gospel with them. Paul was an ambassador of the King of kings sent out to speak to kings.

### Agrippa's Past Probed

Known as Herod Agrippa II, he served as president of the temple and its treasures. He appointed the high priest to his office. This Herod maintained an incestuous relationship with his sister, Bernice. Juvenal, the Roman writer, referred to her as "Agrippa's incestuous sister." Until she became the wife of King Ptolemy of Sicily she returned to Agrippa and later became mistress to Vespasian and Titus, builder of the Colosseum in Rome.

Festus, the Roman governor of Palestine, calls upon Agrippa for help with Paul's case. In sickness we go to the doctor; with legal problems we consult a lawyer; with car trouble we seek a mechanic; with a Jewish religious question Festus went to Agrippa. The case of Paul seemed to be a purely Jewish matter. How could he send a prisoner to Rome without some evidence of a crime against Roman law? Festus decided that perhaps Agrippa, being familiar with Jewish law and customs, could help him decide what the charge should be.

### Apostle's Sanity Protested

Festus spoke first, explaining that he wanted Paul to appear before Agrippa so that he might be examined and the governor would have something substantial to write to Caesar when he sent Paul to him (Ac. 25:13-17). Agrippa then invited Paul to speak for himself. Festus interrupted, as Paul recounted this event, accusing Paul of being crazy. The remark that *"this has not been done in a corner"* was intended for Festus, to let him know that his ignorance of the matter was no proof of its obscurity. It was a message of "truth and soberness" (25). It must have been a great shock to him that his royal guests were getting the message.

### All the Prophets Proclaimed

Paul was making the most of his day in court. Most of us do not like to have to go to court, even for minor traffic violations either under or beyond our control. Christians should be the best citizens of the community, state and nation. However, situations may arise which require them to come before civil authorities and they can prepare themselves to have the right kind of attitude. He made use of the occasion to tell the king, his sister Bernice, the Roman governor, and all others in the courtroom, the story

of the cross and the detailed account of his conversion.

In effect, Paul said, "my life is an open book." The "you" here in verse 8 is plural. It challenged the whole audience, Jews in the King's entourage and Gentiles in Festus's company concerning the resurrection. He knew that the name of Jesus and His apostles had been household words in the family of Agrippa for generations since Herod the Great tried to kill baby Jesus. Paul preached the gospel of promise and prophecy (22). Beginning with Gen. 3:15 and moving through the Old Testament references could be found to the Messiah which had been fulfilled in Jesus, including His suffering, death, brutal and resurrection. He appealed to Agrippa on the basis of the reasonableness of the faith. Paul said he knew Agrippa believed the prophecies. The Jews treasured such passages as Isaiah 9:6,7 and Daniel 2:44; and they treasured the hope of the promised kingdom. Paul's life and prophecy pointed to the reasonableness of his faith and not being crazy with much learning.

### **Almost Persuaded**

All the scholars admit that the text "*You almost persuade me to become a Christian*" is difficult to translate. Some students take his words seriously, thinking he really was close to becoming a Christian at that moment. Philips translates it: "Much more of this and you will make me a Christian." This New American Bible reads: "A little more, Paul, and you will make a Christian out of me!" On the other hand, he may have spoken sarcastically as if to say, "A little more of this and you will make me out to be a Christian" F. F. Bruce interprets it as: "You are trying to make me play the Christian". The Living Bible reads: "With trivial proofs like these, you expect me to become Christian?" Finally the New International Version: "Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?"

Paul's evidence was convincing. Agrippa was almost converted. Paul's reply shows that he believed Agrippa's response was that of one half-converted. If the king had not been deeply moved and "almost persuaded" by Paul, would he not have risen when Festus tried to break up the assembly with that loud cry? Therefore, Paul was enabled to continue somewhat even after Festus' interruption.

The word "almost" is literally "in little" or "with little". However, to be almost saved is to be entirely lost. A certain young man almost finished high school, but he couldn't be hired because he had no diploma. Teenagers raced down a narrow road until they came to a sharp curve. They almost make it. The time will come when it will be too late to be born again.

### **Altogether Persuaded**

Paul even challenged Agrippa to become a Christian. We must remember to ask for a decision. The Gospel is not to be lectured in order to satisfy academic curiosity. It is to be preached to save souls. It appeals for a verdict. Finally, we must allow our hearers to make their own decision.

Consider Paul's past condition. He had persecuted the church and made havoc of it (2 Cor. 5:17) like Agrippa's forefathers, now a chief proclaimer. He was free from the bondage of sin. He was free from ritualism and ceremonialism (Gal. 4:9-12). He was free from the love of the world. Now, he is a prisoner headed for Rome. Are our lives so fully in Christ that with Paul we may be able to say, "Become such as I am?"

### **Accused's Innocence Pronounced**

Agrippa told Festus that Paul could have been set at liberty, if he had not appealed to Caesar (Acts 26:30-32). Thus, in succession, through five defenses, the verdict has been in favor of Paul's innocence, without exception. Though he is still not a free man because of politics. Paul was put aboard a ship bound for Rome.

Agrippa's favorable vindication of Paul was a condemnation of his family's persecution of the Way of Christ. He was a great grandson of the Herod of Matthew 2 who tried to slay the baby, Jesus. He was the great nephew of the Herod who had John the Baptist executed. His Father was the Herod who slew the apostle James with the sword and who imprisoned Simon Peter (Acts 12) his very family was steeped in the blood of Christians. This was a great gain for the Gospel; for it showed that by the patient endurance of persecution, and the continuous pressing of the Gospel's claims upon men, the later generations of its bloodiest foes had been made willing to give it a respectful hearing.



## **Agitators Punished**

Felix, the previous governor, was recalled within two years; and he and his family perished in the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 A.D. Ananias "the whited wall" was out of the high priest's office in two years, and murdered by his own people within a decade. Bernice fell into public disgrace in Rome. Festus died within two years of denying Paul justice. The Sanhedrin was destroyed forever by the Jewish war ending with the sack of Jerusalem and destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70, only about a decade after the events related in these chapters. *"And shall not God avenge his elect?"* (Lk. 18:7). Dummelow aptly observed: "The words of Jesus' prophecy (Lk. 18:7) were literally fulfilled in the calamities which overtook the Jews and the chief heathen persecutors of the Christians."

Herod Agrippa II alone continued till the second century. Agrippa was confirmed in his kingdom after the Jewish war and lived on until the year 100 AD. As far as we know he was never persuaded to become a Christian.

Many have stood "almost persuaded" through many invitation songs. There is a popular invitation song based on this story:

Almost persuaded, harvest is past.  
Almost persuaded, doom comes at last!  
Almost cannot avail:  
Almost is but to fail;  
Sad, sad, that bitter wail "almost but lost!"

Remember, *"The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved"* (Jeremiah 8:20).

## **Questions:**

1. According to the Lord's commissioning of Paul, Paul was to be His ambassador to what two groups?
2. What personal information do we know about Agrippa?
3. Why did the Roman governor Festus consult with Agrippa about Paul's case?
4. How did Festus respond to Paul's account to Agrippa?
5. How did Paul counter Festus' accusations?
6. Who all made up Paul's audience?

7. What prophecies may Paul have been alluding to as proof of the Gospel?
8. Did Agrippa speak sarcastically or sincerely when he said he was almost persuaded? Explain.
9. Contrast Paul's past with his present situation as he stands before Agrippa?
10. What had Agrippa II family done in opposition to the Christ and His Kingdom?
11. What was Agrippa's conclusion about Paul?
12. What became of the characters in this story?

**Discussion:**

1. How can a Christian make proper use of the story of his own conversion to share the Gospel with others?
2. What can be done with those who admit they are almost persuaded to be a Christian?

## Timothy: Paul's Faithful Sidekick

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According to Merriam-Webster a sidekick is defined as “a person closely associated with another as a subordinate or partner.” When you hear the word “sidekick” you may think of Doctor Watson’s role with Sherlock Holmes or Tonto with the Lone Ranger or even Robin as Batman’s faithful sidekick. They may not be in the limelight as much, however sidekicks do play a vital role second to the superhero. A famous conductor purportedly was asked what was the most difficult instrument in the orchestra to play. With a twinkle in his eye he is said to have replied, “Second fiddle!”

In the Bible several super prophets and leaders had their sidekicks. Elijah had Elisha. Later, Elisha had Gehazi. First, Barnabas had Paul, then Paul had Silas and also Timothy. It is Timothy’s role in relationship to Paul that is our focus in this article.

Timothy’s Greek name means “honored of God.” He is mentioned many times in Paul’s letters and may have had a role in both writing and distributing these inspired epistles. Paul addresses two letters directly to him.

- **Child of Paul**

Timothy may have been converted on Paul’s first missionary journey (Acts 14:6-23). Paul’s reference to Timothy as his “son” in 1 Cor. 4:17 implies that he was a convert of Paul or at least a student of Paul’s. He was Paul’s child in the faith (1 Cor. 4:17; 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2). In a sense he was spiritually fathered by Paul. Timothy’s biological father most likely never became a Christian or provided any spiritual guidance for him when he was a boy. Until Paul came along on his first missionary journey to Lystra His mother and grandmother seem to be his sole source of spiritual nourishment. Timothy as a young man would have seen the apostle perform miracles and later drug out of the city by an angry mob. Stoned and left for dead, Paul got up and returned to the city.

Beginning with his second missionary journey, Paul took Timothy under his wing (Acts 16:1f). The apostle was intimately aware of the young Christian’s past and his development. From a child Timothy had known the holy scriptures (2 Tim. 3:15). Paul wrote *“when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also ”* (2 Tim. 1:5). Timothy was not left to figure out his own spiritual path or religious beliefs. Neither did his mother and grandmother leave the duty to the church. Today, far too many parents act as if the spiritual development of their children is the sole duty of the local congregation’s leaders. Like the apostle John, Paul had no greater joy than to hear of his spiritual children walking in the truth.

- **Circumcised by Paul**

Why did Paul have Timothy circumcised? At the conference held at Jerusalem Paul stood firm on the truth with James, the brother of Jesus and Peter in that the Gentiles did not have keep the Law Moses and be circumcised (Acts 15). In fact, he had decided not to circumcise Titus (Gal. 2:1-5). Remember, while Titus was a Gentile, Timothy was Jewish on his mother’s side and Greek on his father’s. To many Jews he would have been considered a Gentile but to many Gentiles he would be a Jew. Paul had him circumcised, so he could go with him into the synagogues to preach. His upbringing in the Law would be of a great advantage to Paul’s work. The decision was not a doctrinal requirement but merely a pragmatic expedient. To have circumcised Titus would have had no practical value for him or Paul’s missionary work or for others.

- **Companion of Paul**

If Paul had a favorite companion it was surely Timothy. Timothy is named by the apostle in sixteen

passages. He was with Paul on the second and third journey (Acts 17:14; 18:5; 19:22). Timothy seems to replace John Mark, just as Silas replaced Barnabas. Timothy traveled with Paul and Silas through Asia Minor to Troas where Luke joined them. They sailed to Macedonia in Greece and went to Philippi and Thessalonica. Paul was forced to leave Thessalonica in a hurry and Timothy and Silas had to be separated from him until they got to Athens. Paul then sent him on a responsible mission of his own back to Thessalonica to encourage the church. When Timothy reported encouraging news of the church in Thessalonica back to Paul that prompted Paul to write to the church. He stayed with Paul through most of his time in Corinth and Ephesus. Dr. Hort said, "It is possible to sum up the twenty years in Timothy's New Testament story as simply a series of journeys and missions, with nothing very striking about any of them." However, Paul's view of Timothy's help distinguishes this young man as indispensable to the apostle's mission.

- **Coequal of Paul**

Paul told the brethren in Philippi that he was sending Timothy because they were like-minded. *"But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly that I also may be encouraged when I know your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus"* (Phil. 2:19,20). The word *like-minded* can be translated literally as "equal soul." If Paul could not go to the Philippian brethren the next best thing was to send Timothy, because sending Timothy was like going himself. It is certainly true that some people who labor together in the Gospel are as close or closer than blood relatives. This may be why Timothy was often sent to precede Paul or perhaps left behind to preach while Paul moved to another city.

- **Courage from Paul**

It is possible that Timothy may have been "naturally" shy and reserved. He is thought by some to have been timid. This may be well supported by a couple of passages. *"And if Timothy comes, see that he may be with you without fear; for he does the work of the Lord, as I also do."* (1 Cor. 16:10). *"Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind"* (2 Tim. 1:6,7). It would be strange for the apostle to bring up this concern about Timothy in a personal letter and a public letter to a congregation, if he did not have serious concerns about "timid" Timothy. In 1 Timothy 4:14 Paul still encourages Timothy *"Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the eldership."* In the first passage, Paul referred to Timothy using the spiritual gift given him by the apostle. Now he is referring to the "setting apart" of Timothy to do the work of an evangelist. He is commanding the young preacher, "The work must continue! Stir up the fire which burns within you, and preach the word." Perhaps, part of the concern was not only Timothy's natural traits that made up his personality, but his youthfulness. Paul gave him this sound advice, *"let no one despise your youth, but be an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, in purity"* (1 Tim. 4:12). After all, youths do have certain temptations associated with them (2 Tim. 2:22) and Timothy would be called upon to teach and sometimes admonish certain older members.

- **Charged by Paul**

Several times in his letters to Timothy, Paul gives his commands that he must do as a preacher. *"I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ and the elect angels that you observe these things without prejudice, doing nothing with partiality"* (1 Tim. 5:21). *"I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word!..."* (2 Tim. 4:1,2). He in turn was to "charge" others with certain responsibilities. *"Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy"* (1 Tim. 6:17).

- **Co-Sufferer With Paul**

Just as the missionary journeys placed upon Paul many hardships. His faithful sidekicks like Timothy would also have to suffer with him. Timothy was willing to leave his mother and grandmother and a good home, to share the apostle's mission. Timothy overcame a disadvantaged family background.

He grew up in a racially and culturally divided home. His home most likely was religiously divided. This presented him with difficult social conditions. To the Jews he was the uncircumcised son of a Gentile. According to 1 Timothy 5:23 Timothy labored for the Lord despite recurring health problems. In 2 Timothy 3:12 Paul told him, “yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.” He was co-sufferer with Paul in the afflictions of the Gospel (2 Tim. 1:8). Paul knew he was about to die in prison (2 Tim. 4:6-8). He wanted Timothy to come to him. We do not know whether or not he made it. However, there is a piece of his life that is a puzzle. The Hebrew writer informed the brethren, “Know that our brother Timothy has been set free, with whom I shall see you if he comes shortly” (Heb. 13:23). While Paul is believed to have been executed by Nero in about 67 or 68 AD, tradition holds that years later in Ephesus, Timothy was also martyred.

Timothy is mentioned some twenty-four times in the New Testament. He is by no means a mean character in the history of the early Church. Today, every Paul ought to have a Timothy and every Timothy should have a Paul.

### Questions:

1. Who were some faithful "sidekicks" in the Bible?
2. Why did Paul refer to Timothy as his "son"?
3. When did Timothy join Paul?
4. Who taught Timothy to have genuine faith?
5. Why did Paul have Timothy circumcised?
6. What does it mean that Paul and Timothy were "like-minded"?
7. Why do some Bible students believe that Timothy was "timid"?
8. What is implied when Paul uses the term "charge" in regard to the duties of Timothy?

9. How was Timothy a co-sufferer with Paul?
10. What are the last things we hear about Timothy from the New Testament?

**Discussion:**

1. What can mothers and grandmothers do to raise Timothy's today?
2. What can young Christians do to keep others from despising their youth?

# Gaius: Encouragement For & From

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## 3 John 1:1-8

John's third letter is the shortest book in the New Testament. It is composed of about only two hundred fourteen words in the Greek manuscripts. Brief as it may be this epistle has much to say about the apostle John's character judgments about three men: Gaius, Diotrephes, and Demetrius. The purpose of the letter was to encourage Gaius to continue to show hospitality to the preaching brethren who were passing through despite Diotrephes' rejection of John and others sent by him. Demetrius was instead a brother worthy of acceptance and emulation.

### Encouragement for Gaius

*3 John 1:1-4 The Elder, To the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth: 2 Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers. 3 For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth that is in you, just as you walk in the truth. 4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.*

#### Love For Gaius

As in his previous letter John labels himself as *"the Elder"* (1:1a). He is old and the last of the apostles. This title alone is needed to identify himself to his friend Gaius.

The letter is a personal correspondence to a saint named *"Gaius."* Several other men are named Gaius in the New Testament (Acts 19:29; 20:40; Rom. 16:23; 1 Cor. 1:14). This Gaius is not to be identified with any of them. After all, the name was very common in the Roman Empire at this time.

In contrast to Diotrephes who loved to be first, John loves Gaius. By calling him *"beloved"* four times in this short letter, John is clearly demonstrating a much closer relation to Gaius than merely greeting him with a *"dear Gaius"* which would not come close to capturing the love John is expressing. The phrase *"whom I love in truth"* was used in John's second letter to the *"chosen lady."* It does not merely express a sincerity of love for Gaius, instead it focuses on the common relationship both men have by believing and practicing the Truth. John loves him because they both love the Truth.

#### Prayer For Gaius

The next part of John's greeting to Gaius is expressed in a common wish found in letters of the first century. John prays that Gaius is blessed by God with three blessings. First, that he *"may prosper in all things"* (1:2a). This is not a desire for his financial or material prosperity, it is a general desire to see him possess advantageous conditions in day to day life. Second, John desires Gaius to *"be in health"* (1:2b).

This does not imply that he had been in poor health since this was a very common part of the greetings of the letters in the first century. John's final desire for his beloved brother was the continued prosperity of his soul (1:2c). Spiritual health is more important to faithful saints than physical soundness. The soul is made sound by exercising it unto godliness (1 Tim. 4:6,7); by hungering and thirsting after righteousness (Matt. 5:6); being able to grow and eat meat and not just the milk of the Word (Heb. 5:12f); by keeping oneself clean from the defilements of this wicked world (Js. 1:27); and by finding rest for our souls in Jesus (Matt. 11:28-30).

#### Rejoicing Over Gaius

As in the previous letter John here says, *"I rejoiced greatly"* (1:3a). He had received good news

about Gaius when visited from other brethren who had come to John *“and testified of the truth that”* (1:3b) was in him. This was the greatest of joy the apostle could receive. Notice, Gaius was walking in the truth. He believed, practiced, and supported the truth in his everyday life.

Some have taken Gaius to be a convert of John, because he refers to him in verse four as one of his children. However, it is more likely that this is a fatherly feeling toward a younger brother whom he had had an influence. John was apt to use *“children”* to refer to the saints to whom he was writing. John speaks as an elder brother and apostle who had been a spiritual father to many.

## **Encouragement from Gaius**

*3 John 1:5-8 Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers, 6 who have borne witness of your love before the church. If you send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God, you will do well, 7 because they went forth for His name's sake, taking nothing from the Gentiles. 8 We therefore ought to receive such, that we may become fellow workers for the truth.*

### **Hospitality is to Be Maintained**

In verses nine and ten it is learned that Diotrephes was turning brethren away. He may have also been pressuring Gaius to fall in line and do the same. John encourages Gaius to continue faithfully receiving and doing whatever he could to assist the brethren sent to him. *“Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers”* (1:5). Some of these brethren Gaius knew. Some of them were strangers to him in that he had not known these brethren. Hospitality is from the Greek word *philoxenos* meaning literally, “love of strangers.”

### **Hospitality is a Demonstration of Love**

John says these same brethren whom Gaius loved enough to welcome and assist *“have borne witness of your love before the church”* (1:6a). When they came to the congregation where John was they gave a report of their activities. They were able to testify that at least one brother in the congregation where Diotrephes was rejecting brethren was a man named Gaius who received them. Throughout the centuries Gaius' act of love has been preserved as a monument to his hospitality. There is no telling how many other men and women have been encouraged to demonstrate their love by receiving and helping preachers of the Gospel.

### **Hospitality is To Be Done In a God-Like Fashion**

John continues to describe the encouraging efforts of Gaius: *“If you send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God, you will do well”* (1:6). Places where brethren could find shelter and rest in the ancient world was lacking. A MacDonald's or Starbucks could not be found on every other street corner. They were dependent upon such men as Gaius who would give them a place to rest, feed them, and even send them out with the necessary supplies to complete the journey to their next location. Gaius was *“distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality”* (Rom. 12:13). He did as Titus was so instructed: *“send Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their journey with haste, that they may lack nothing”* (Tit. 3:13). The phrase *“a manner worthy of God”* in verse six “means ‘worthy of God, as befits God.’ We are never more ‘godlike’ than when we are sacrificing to serve others” (Weirsbe 543). His kindness toward others was akin to the kind of kindness God Himself would bestow.

### **Hospitality Is Given For Good Reasons**

John gives several good reasons why Gaius should continue to show hospitality to these brethren. The first reason he needs to assist them is *“because they went forth for His name's sake”* (1:7a). They were not mere tourist passing by on vacation or on a business trip. These brethren are on a mission to teach the Gospel in the name of Christ. They are on the road and in need of a warm welcome from him, because they are carrying out the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark. 16:15). The second reason Gaius would receive these workers for the Lord is that the Gentiles will not be called upon to assist them.



It was the habit of Paul to be supported by himself or brethren or churches and not charge and beg support from the lost souls he was trying to reach with the Gospel (Acts 20:34; 1 Thess. 2:6-9). The Gentiles were very familiar with the itinerant philosophers who would travel from town to town taking whatever they could from those to whom they were peddling their new doctrines. Even some false teachers among the brethren were *“teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain”* (Tit. 1:11b). Likewise, these itinerant preachers were *“taking nothing from the Gentiles”* (1:7b). Since the Gentiles or lost souls are not going to be called upon for hospitality it is fitting that the saints *“ought to receive such”* brethren (1:7c). Hospitality is a commandment to all the saints. Paul commanded Timothy to appoint qualified men to serve as elders and these men must be *“given to hospitality”* (1 Tim. 3:2). He also told him that a widow indeed was one who practiced hospitality (1 Tim. 5:10). *“Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels”* (Heb.13:2). *“Be hospitable to one another without grumbling”* (1 Pet. 4:9). The final reason Gaius and other Christians are commanded to show hospitality is *“that we may become fellow workers for the truth”* (1:8). This is the opposite point made by John in his second letter. No one was to assist a false teacher lest they fellowship in spreading the false teacher’s lies against the Truth (2 Jn. 1:10,11). Gaius is fellowshiping in the spreading of the Truth because he helped those to be faithful teachers of the Word. Because Gaius loved the brethren enough to bless them with his hospitality, he was blessed by God in return. Helpers of those who do the work in the Kingdom of God will receive the same reward as those doing the teaching and preaching. Jesus said to His disciples, *“he who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet’s reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man’s reward”* (Mt. 12:41).

## Farewell to Gaius

*3 John 1:13-14 I had many things to write, but I do not wish to write to you with pen and ink; 14 but I hope to see you shortly, and we shall speak face to face. Peace to you. Our friends greet you. Greet the friends by name.*

### John’s Desire to Teach More

John *“had many things to write, but I do not wish to write to you with pen and ink”* (1:13). The letter was long enough to fit on a standard sheet of paper. This is very similar to what he said in his second letter.

### John’s Desire to See Gaius

Next, John gives the reason why he did not want to write a more extensive letter: *“I hope to see you shortly, and we shall speak face to face”* (1:14b). Communication is often more effective face to face or as the literal Greek reads “mouth to mouth.”

### John’s Desire for Gaius to Have Peace

John ends with a quick benediction *“peace to you”* (1:14b) “wishing wholeness and completeness of life to believers (Hebrew, shalom)” (Walls 251).

### John’s Desire to Greet

Paul would often end his letters with a long list of greetings to and from the saints. John does not have the space on the page so he says, *“our friends greet you. Greet the friends by name”* (1:14c). He makes sure that Gaius does not just give the brethren or the assembly a mere “hello from John.” He wants him to greet them personally and intimately by name. All of God’s children should be friends one of another. Jesus was a friend to Lazarus (Jn. 11:11) and he called the disciples His friends (Jn. 15:14,15).

### Questions:

1. Who are the three men discussed in this letter? Why?

2. What was John's prayer for Gaius?
3. Why did John rejoice over Gaius?
4. Why was hospitality so important in the first century?
5. For whom in the New Testament is it required that they show hospitality? Why?
6. How did Gaius demonstrate his love before the church?
7. How is showing hospitality God-like?
8. List the several good reasons Gaius was to show hospitality to faithful teachers?
9. How was Gaius to greet John's friends? Why?
10. Why do you think John's letter to Gaius was so short?

**Discussion:**

1. How can we today support the Truth by aiding the preachers and teachers of the Gospel?

# Caleb: Willing to Take on The Giants

## ***Numbers 13,14; Joshua 14:6-15***

How many have heard of Shammua? Shaphat? Igal? Palti? Gaddiel? Gaddi? Ammiel? Sethur? Nahbi? Geuel? Perhaps, not. These ten men are not nearly as well known as two of their colleagues or fellow spies: Joshua and Caleb. Some characters in the Old Testament are a rich source of excellent lessons (Romans 15:4). Many lessons can be gleaned from the life of Joshua as he played a major role in the conquering of the promised land. Caleb on the other hand only appears on the Biblical scene to make a few cameo appearances.

Caleb's most prominent role in history was when he was sent out with the twelve spies to check out the land of Canaan. From Kadesh Barnea, Moses sent twelve men to spy out the land. Of all the men of the tribe of the Judah, the people had enough respect for him that he was selected to represent them (Num. 13:1,2,6). When the spies returned they gave conflicting reports. Ten of the spies said the land could not be taken because the Israelites would be no match for the pagan warriors in Canaan. Furthermore, this land of promise was one *"that eats up the inhabitants thereof."* Their final protest was that men of great stature lived in Canaan.

Acting on faith, Caleb and Joshua objected, *"Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome"* (Num. 13:30). The congregation wanted to stone them until God appeared to the people (Num. 13:10). The other ten spies died by a plague sent by the Lord (Num. 14:36-37). Caleb and Joshua were rewarded by being the only ones to enter the Promised Land.

### ***Caleb's Award Winning Cameos***

#### **Full of Faith**

Caleb was rewarded because he did not sacrifice his own convictions in order to make the majority report unanimous. He did not minimize the problems the Israelites faced in taking the land, instead he venerated God. The ten spies had faith in men and their power or in this case impotence. Their faith was based on what seemed logic instead on the faithfulness of God's promises. What gave Caleb the confidence to take Canaan? Caleb believed God would be with them.

#### **Complete Compliance**

Louis Albert Banks tells of an incident that illustrates what it means to be a good soldier of Jesus Christ. On one occasion while Sir Henry Brackenbury was a military attache in Paris, he was conversing with the distinguished statesman Gambetta, who said to him, "In these days there are only two things a soldier needs to know. He must know how to march and he must know how to shoot." The Englishman quickly responded, "I beg your pardon, but you have forgotten the most important thing of all!" "What is that?" asked the Frenchman. Brackenbury replied, "He must know how to obey!!!"

Caleb's faith produced godly living. Five times we are told that Caleb "wholly followed" the Lord (Num. 32:11,12; Dt. 1:36; Josh. 14:9-14). Literally, means he "rendered a full obedience." Too often Christians serve God half heartedly. His faith produced active obedience to every command of God.

As Christians we are to be obedient to God wholeheartedly. *"And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ"* (Col. 3:23,24).

President Eisenhower told this tale, "An old farmer had a cow that we wanted to buy. We went over to visit him and asked about the cow's pedigree. The old farmer didn't know what pedigree meant, so we asked him about the cow's butterfat production. He told us that he didn't have any idea. Finally, we asked him if he knew how many pounds of milk the cow produced each year. The farmer shook his head and

said, I don't know, but she's an honest old cow, and she'll give you all the milk she has!"

Not every Christians can be a Paul or a David or a Joshua? But everyone of us can give everything they have got? Are you a Caleb? Does God have your whole heart without reservation?

### **Patient for Promises**

As Joshua was dividing up the land by lots (Joshua 14:6-15). Caleb came to Joshua and reminded him of two promises that had been made many years ago. First, God would prolong his life. Caleb has now 85. Second, he would be rewarded the territory in which he had ventured as a spy. Caleb's faith was based on the promises of God. Five times it said, Caleb said, "the Lord said..."

Even if it takes 45 years, God will keep his promises. Caleb was patient. He was not resentful, he simply went back into the wilderness and waited to receive his reward. That would be like receive a promise today and waiting for it to be satisfied in 2057.

Today, we await the fulfillment of the promise of God that if we are faithful we will receive a crown of life. A life time of waiting patiently for an eternal reward is not too much to ask.

### **Optimistic Octogenarian**

Here are some of the signs that you are getting old...

- You're asleep, but others worry that you're dead.
- Your back goes out more often than you do.
- You're proud of your lawn mower.
- You can't remember the last time you laid on the floor to watch television.
- Your ears are hairier than your head.
- You're sitting in a rocker and you can't get it started.

When the children of Israel were numbered the second time forty years later, all those from twenty years old and upward had died, except Caleb and Joshua (Num. 26:63- 65). Caleb was not 85. Yet, he had the optimistic outlook that he could take the territory promised him even if it was a well fortified mountain top inhabited by giants.

A photographer had just taken the picture of a 98 year old man. He thanked the old gentlemen, saying "I hope I'll be around to take your picture when you're 100!" The old man replied, "Why not? You look healthy to me!" That's optimism.

Having an optimistic outlook is a great blessing. Optimism is considering the positive side of life. Optimism is taking a camera when you go fishing. Optimism is reaching for the song book when the preacher says, "And now in conclusion..." The church, is full of negative thinkers who loudly cry: "It can't be done", "It won't work", "We've tried that", "We're too small"

The key to the longevity of his optimism was Caleb's ability to keep the dream alive as long as he lived. A study was made of 200 people that we would call "very successful." It was discovered that all 200 had one common denominator: each had dared to dream big dreams, set goals, and reach out to achieve those goals. George Foreman, at age 42, he came out of retirement to box once against Evander Holyfield, the heavyweight champion, who was 28 years old. Foreman said afterwards when he was being interviewed. He said, "I lost the fight, but...as long as you're alive you can dream."

Caleb was a fighting senior citizen. When most 85 year olds can only dream of playing dominos in a retirement home, telling stories of past adventures, keeping up with their meds, etc. Caleb still has his health and energy and most importantly his desire. He is not preoccupied with dying but with living a new adventure, twenty years past retirement age.

### **Get Rid of Giants**

Caleb realizes that even though this land has been promised him by God, the only way for him to get the land is by going to battle. God was not just going to drop it into his lap. The Father is giving and kind but He is not a Santa Claus who is going to leave it under the Christmas tree. In fact Caleb requested the very location that had put the most fear into the hearts of the other ten spies. Caleb had seniority and

could have requested any city, at the end of those 40 years only Moses, Joshua, & Caleb were left of the older generation of men. The three sons of Anak would have to be expelled (Judg. 1:20). The book of Numbers tells us that the descendants of Anak came from a people called the Nephilim. To receive his reward Caleb had to defeat several giants.

To claim the prize of great promise we too must defeat the giants the stand in our way. The giant of futility and failure. The giant of advancing age. It is easy to argue that the big task should be left to the younger generation since we have fought hard for years. Then there is the giant of focus. Instead of seeing obstacles we like Caleb need to see the opportunities. We need to trust God to specialize in killing giants just ask Caleb and David.

The physical battles of the Old Testament are foreshadowings of our own spiritual battles. Far too many Christians act as if the war is over and no more battles are to be fought. Others think that we are losing the war. However, Christians who have faith like Caleb will know that we are more than conquerors with God on our side (Rom. 8:31,37).

### **Questions:**

1. What is Caleb's connection with Joshua?
2. What was Caleb's assessment after spying out the land of Promise?
3. What became of the other ten spies?
4. Describe the greatness of Caleb's faith?
5. What does it mean that Caleb "wholly followed" the Lord?
6. What two promises did Caleb lay claim on from the Lord at age 85?
7. How long did he have to wait to see these promises come to fruition?
8. What did he have to do himself to receive these promises?

9. How did Caleb demonstrate optimism and patience?

10. Who were the sons of Anak?

**Discussion:**

1. How can the elderly at church still set an example before the younger generation?

2. What promise of God should be lay hold of as we grow older?

3. Make of the list of the giants that you face in your life? What are you going to do about them?

# King Asa: Seeking and Forsaking

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**1 Kings 15:11f; 1 Chron. 14-16**

Burglars in suburban Marcy were carrying the TV set from the house down the driveway when the next-door neighbor called out: "Hey, are you going to fix her television set?" And the burglars called back, "yes." And the neighbor asked, "Mine needs fixing, could you take it, too?" And the burglars said, "be glad to." And they did.

Often we seek assistance from the wrong source. King Asa is both a contrast and comparison to this. The first three kings of the nation of Judah were Rehobaom, Abijam and Asa. Asa was the godly son of a godless father, Abijah. At first he sought God's help, later in life he forsook the help that God had to offer.

## Seeking the Lord

**He did what was right in the sight of the Lord (11).** This means he followed the ways of the Lord, not his own ways. He is compared to David a great honor among the kings of Judah.

Today, some are presumptuous enough to settle what is good and right in their own eyes. Some like instrumental music, hand clapping, candle lights, etc. Some partake of the Lord's Supper only once a year. Asa illustrates what it is to do right in the sight of the Lord: We must oppose and expose all evil and sinful practices.

**He attacked the enemies of God.** First, he attacked religious homosexuals, (12). The term "sodomites" refers to those perverted persons, who were often associated with Pagan idolatry. These were temple prostitutes. Yes, old Asa was a homophobic king. In contrast there are many denominations today that not only tolerate Gay Christians, but support them in their sins. Some churches are marrying them. The state of California is trying to pass a law not to recognize gay marriages. This is in response to San Francisco which passed laws to permit marriages.

Next, he attacked false religions (12). Asa did all he could. His heart was right but his efforts did not meet with complete success (14). Later there was a second attack on idolatry (2 Chr. 15:8). Today, many wish to leave other religions alone. God is not pleased with those who have the "live and let live" mentality. Those who truly sought God in the Old and New Testaments not only were intolerant of false gods and religious but actively attacked them in public forums.

Then this noble King attacked sin among his own family (13). His grandmother was Queen Mother and in a powerful position. She established a pagan "grove" which was devoted to the grossest licentiousness. He was impartial. Asa's religion was not just a religion of convenience inherited from his forefathers. His religion was one of conviction. He did not allow his family relationships, even with own grandmother, to become more important than God. Some even today who will allow their family, mother or father, to keep them from doing right. Many attend denominations simply because their grandparents or parents did. Such are not worthy of Jesus (Mt. 10:37).

Finally, he restored proper worship. Azariah said they were without the true God, there were no teaching prophets and without law. Today, we must restore the New Testament Church. This involves: 1) Removing false doctrines and traditions of men. 2) Going by the Law: Book, chapter and verse. 3) Bible preaching and teaching.

**He gave back to God (15).** His father failed to give to God from the spoils of war with the Ethiopians. This example of making up failure to give in the past may seem to be beyond what was required of Asa. However, it shows the depth of his genuine seeking. Making restitution for past failures and injustices is often a part of true repentance. Just think of all the money that would be given if all the past failures to give were to be collected this Sunday. Most Christians would do well to remember God

when He blesses us today. When one's ship comes in do you remember the one to created the sea? When you get a raise do you remember to give God a raise?

**Sought God 's help against his enemies ( 2 Chr. 14:9f)** The first ten years of his reign were occupied with abolishing idolatry and establishing religious reforms. Zerah the Ethiopian came against Judah with a million man march and 300 chariots. He prayed before battle with the Ethiopians, "*Lord, it is nothing with thee to help*". Most kings would have tried to seek alliances with foreign powers. When confronted with threats to we seek the aid of carnal mind friends or the all-powerful God.

**He listened to the prophet of God (2 Chr. 15:1-7).** Azariah a prophet came to encourage him to do even more than before. We must listen to the forth-tellers of God, failure to do so is to fail to listen to God.

**He lead the people in a covenant with God (2 Chr. 14:4; 12-15).** Asa first lead by example, but then by command. True spiritual leaders bring people closer to God, not just close to themselves.

### **Forsaking the Lord**

**He did what was right in his eyes (17f).** Baasha, King of Israel, conducts a "cold war" against Asa's Kingdom. Israel captured Ramath which was five miles from Jerusalem. By its command of the high road, used to prevent his subjects from falling away to the kingdom of Judah, or even from going up to Jerusalem to worship; in fact, to isolate Judah and to blockade it capital. Asa's decision was to seek foreign aid. Although the object was of his effort right, The means were wrong. His alliance was successful, but do the ends justify the means? His was zeal without trust in God. Foreign allegiance often became the bane of kings.

**He robbed God (18).** He took the temple treasures he had given previously and hired Ben-hadad to fight against Israel. Many, like Asa, give and take as is convenient. This is the sin of Ananias and Siphira, (Ac. 5:1-11). Give as you have prospered, not hold back as you have problems.

**He sought help of men against his enemies (19; 2 Chr. 16:7-9).** Sought an alliance with Benhadad king of Syria. We must not use carnal weapons to fight for the faith (2 Cor. 10:3-5).

**He lead the people in an alliance with their enemies (2 Chr. 16:6).** Thus, leading them away from trusting in God promised to fight for them.

**He refused to listen to God's prophet, (2 Chr. 16:10).** Although, he had listened to a previous prophet sent by God, he rejects Hanani, whom God sent to rebuke him. He did not like the message of God, so he persecuted the messenger. Just as Stephen was stoned because of his message (Ac. 7:51-60). Or as the Jews Crucified God's Son. Today, men love to fire the rebukers and keep those who will scratch their itching ears (2 Tim. 4:2-4).

**He attacked God's people (2 Chr. 16:10)** Hanani was imprisoned and the people persecuted.

**He did not seek the Lord (2 Chr. 16:12)** Again, Asa sought the aid of mere men (physicians) rather than God. Ironically, Asa means *physician*. This is not a slight against seeking medical treatment, one must remember the ancient art of medicine was more superstition and idolatry, than science. He died with a terrible illness in the feet because he did not seek the Lord. Remember, God will punish all who do not seek Him (2 Th. 1:7-9).

Asa's life is one of contrast: seeking then forsaking. Everything he sought, he later forsook. Are you seeking the Lord? Do not forsake Him. Are you forsaking the Lord? Start seeking Him? "*But you, be strong and do not let your hands be weak, for your work shall be rewarded!*" (2 Chr. 15:7).

### **Questions:**

1. Who was Asa?
2. Asa obedience is compared to whom?



3. List the enemies of God whom King Asa attacked?
4. What did he restore?
5. What did he give back to God?
6. How did he respond to the million man army of the Ethiopians?
7. Who was Azariah?
8. How did Asa react to Baasha attack?
9. What did he do with the temple treasures?
10. How did Asa respond to Hanani?
11. How did Asa die?

**Discussion:**

1. List various problems people normally face day by day. Beside them list who they normally go to in order to resolve these problems. Explain why the Lord is the best and primary source of help in all these situations.
2. Starting strong in serving the Lord seems easy, being faithful till death is hard. What does a Christian need to do to keep seeking the Lord faithfully throughout all his life?

## Gehazi: Greed Gone To Seed

### 2 Kings 5:20-27

Donald Trump said “you can’t be too greedy.” There are many men and women in the Bible that could take issue with that claim. Adam and Eve coveted the forbidden fruit. Their greed cost them the Garden of Eden which was a nicer piece of real estate than anything Trump has ever owned or sold. Achan’s greed for the forbidden spoils of Jericho cost him and his family their lives. David coveted Bathsheba, Uriah’s wife, and as a result brought the sword into his household. Judas was motivated by a covetous heart and betrayed the very Son of God. His greed will go down in history along with his infamous thirty pieces of silver. Then there was the side kick of the prophet Elisha, Gehazi. His greed made him the Achan or Judas of the Old Testament.

The story of Gehazi’s greed is a continuation of the tale of Naaman, the officer whose leprosy was cleansed. The proud general of the Syrian army thought he needed money to purchase his healing. Elisha refused the reward or bribe, sending him on his way to dip himself seven times in the Jordan River. When Naaman *“returned to the man of God, he and all his aides, and came and stood before him; and he said, ‘Indeed, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, except in Israel; now therefore, please take a gift from your servant’”* (2 Ki. 5:15). He wanted to give the prophet a gift - not a bribe, like before, but a gift of thanksgiving. Again, Elisha refused saying, *“As the Lord lives, before whom I stand, I will receive nothing.” And he urged him to take it, but he refused*” (2 Ki. 5:16). The prophet of God certainly knew he was turning down a large reward of 750 pounds of silver and 150 pounds of gold which comes to about 1.1 million dollars. Imagine the ministry potential of a sum like that in the hands of an honest prophet of God.

*“But Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said, ‘Look, my master has spared Naaman this Syrian, while not receiving from his hands what he brought; but as the Lord lives, I will run after him and take something from him’”* (2 Ki. 5:20).

The beginning of greed is **DESIRE**. True, it is not wrong to want money or things. We need these to live and function on earth. However, Gehazi’s desire was selfishly and foolishly motivated. He rationalized that “as the Lord lives” he will get something. God will help him. God understands his desires. Yet, Elisha used that very phrase when he denied the gift. The Hebrew word for “spared” is better translated “denied” or “restrained.” Gehazi further has rationalized that his master had rejected Naaman’s sincere gratitude and now he must correct the situation. However, these are not the motives for his actions. He is motivated by his greed. After all, he deliberately chose to conceal his plan from his superior.

Gehazi’s greed led him to make a **DECISION**. *“So Gehazi pursued Naaman”* (2 Ki. 21a). Gehazi pursued the goods without discussing it with Elisha or a single word of prayer. Greed is not just part of someone’s personality. Greed is the result of choice or making bad decisions.

Greed in Gehazi’s heart led him to utilize **DECEPTION**. *“So Gehazi pursued Naaman. When Naaman saw him running after him, he got down from the chariot to meet him, and said, ‘Is all well?’ And he said, ‘All is well. My master has sent me, saying, “indeed, just now two young men of the sons of the prophets have come to me from the mountains of Ephraim. Please give them a talent of silver and two changes of garments”...When he came to the citadel, he took them from their hand, and stored them away in the house; then he let the men go, and they departed. Now he went in and stood before his master. And Elisha said to him, ‘Where did you go, Gehazi?’ And he said, “Your servant did not go anywhere”’* (2 Ki. 5:21b-22). See how he jumps through hoops and uses moral gymnastics to find a loophole to rationalize his behavior. Greed will do that to a man. Gehazi lied on several accounts: 1) Elisha had not sent him; 2) he took the things for himself which is stealing; 3) he concealed them in his house; and 4) he lied to Elisha about his whereabouts. Furthermore, it could be argued that if anyone had a right to these things to have or use for others it was Elisha to whom Naaman had desired to give them in the first place.

Sooner or later greed, like Gehazi's, will be **DISCOVERED**. Elisha the prophet told his deceptive servant, *"Did not my heart go with you when the man turned back from his chariot to meet you? Is it time to receive money and to receive clothing, olive groves and vineyards, sheep and oxen, male and female servants?"* (2 Ki. 5:26). Gehazi tried to conceal his actions from Elisha. He lied without hesitation. Imagine how foolish; Elisha was a powerful seer, that is, he could see what was going on with Gehazi and Naaman. How ashamed Gehazi should have felt when discovered. He could not even hide from Elisha what his future intentions were for his stolen goods. He wanted to buy olive groves and vineyards and livestock. These would have been a wise investment in their economy, but a waste of time according to Elisha.

The greediness of Gehazi did not bring him what he wanted, instead it led to his **DISFIGUREMENT**. Naaman condemned him, *"Therefore the leprosy of Naaman shall cling to you and your descendants forever."* And he went out from his presence leprous, as white as snow" (2 Ki. 5:27). His leprosy may have been the best thing that ever happened to him. It may have taken an incurable disease to cure him of his greed.

Elisha also warned Gehazi that the consequences of his greed would be upon his *"descendants forever."* Gehazi's greed brought a blight upon his family. Instead of leaving a great inheritance for his posterity, greed had the power to **DISINHERIT**.

The tragic story of Gehazi continues to repeat itself in the lives of greedy men and women today. When we are carried away by our inordinate **DESIRES** we will often make bad **DECISIONS** to **DECEIVE** others and ourselves in order to gain more and more. Yet, sooner or later our greed will be **DISCOVERED**. It will leave our lives **DISFIGURED** and your future, family and friends **DISINHERITED**.

As Christians we have duty to learn from Gehazi's mistakes. First, we should protect our ministry from the dangers of greed. Christians are to serve others, while greed comes from a desire to serve self. Greed's love of things causes us to use people; while love motivates us to serve people. Greed and serving others is not compatible. Second, to defeat greed we must guard our imagination. Rationalization makes all sin less objectionable, especially greed. Next, find a Christian friend to discuss our desires. If Gehazi had made himself accountable to Elisha perhaps all the dangers of greed could have been avoided. Also, check your plans to gain with our priorities of living righteously in the Kingdom of God (Mt. 6:33). Finally, examine your motives to see if they are motivated by greediness or goodness. Perhaps, your motive is the good life here and now instead of focusing on the here after. *"For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"* (Matt. 16:26).

### Questions:

1. Make a list of Bible men and women who were greedy, what they were greedy for, and what their greed cost them.
2. Who was Naaman and what had Elisha told him to do?
3. What did he want to give Elisha?
4. What was Elisha's response?

5. At what point did Gehazi's greed begin to take effect?
6. Before pursuing Naaman what should Gehazi have done?
7. List the lies of Gehazi.
8. What did Gehazi want to do with his ill-gotten gain from Naaman?
9. What punishment befell Gehazi?
10. What did his family suffer for his greed?
11. What can we do to fight against greed?

**Discussion:**

1. Make a list of Bible passages that will help one deal with greed.
2. What are some of the consequences of greed afflicting modern man?

## Phinehas: Zealous for God

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***Numbers 25:1-18; 31:6-16; Judges 20:27-28; Joshua 22:9-12***

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The Bible is filled with little known and oft forgotten heroes. Perhaps, Phinehas the son of Aaron is one of these great men of faith. As Job is known for his patience and Jabez for his prayer, may we never forget to emulate the zeal of Phinehas.

The account of Phinehas in Numbers is not the only place in the Bible which tells of his heroism. Ezra traced his ancestry back to that of Phinehas. According to Psalm 106:28-31 the righteousness of Phinehas' faithful act placed him on a pedestal next to Abraham. Even extra Biblical writings among the Jews named him as a great hero worth emulating as a generation of Jews opposed their foreign conqueror many centuries after his death. He is not an unsung hero among the Jews (Eccles. 45:23,24; 1 Macc. 2:26.) In fact, he is even commemorated as a saint in the Eastern Orthodox Church on September 2.

A little bit of background to the story of Phinehas will help demonstrate why he was such a much needed hero of his day. On the road to the Promise Land Israel was fraught with detours and wrong turns. They suffered from discontent (11:1-6); damaged relationships within a leading family (12:1); jealousy (12:23); fear (14:31); rebellion (14:4,10); disobedience (14:40-45); rivalry (16:1-3); disloyalty (16:41-17:5); quarreling (20:3-5); irreverence (21:4-5); etc. In spite of all this God was with them and they were able to score some impressive victories over their enemies and God's. They were victorious over the kings: Sihon and Og (21:25,35). Success in a few battles does not equal final victory and even overcoming the spiritual foe. Despite America's victories over Germany starting with D-Day, General George Patton warned in December 1944, "we can still lose this war." Israel had lost some key leaders. Both Aaron and Miriam were now dead. The king of Moab just got through trying to curse Israel using Balaam in the "God Wars." King Balak's hiring of the prophet Balaam to curse the Israelites backfired. Balaam is commanded by God to bless the Israelites instead of curse them. Balaam returned home in defeat (24:25) but not for long.

The Israelites are camped at Shittim as the story of Phinehas begins. According to Numbers 33:49 it was the last stopping place of the people before they crossed into Canaan. It is a site about three miles east of the Jordan and five miles north of the Dead Sea.

### **Executioner-Priest, *Numbers 25:1-18***

The prophet Balaam has a plan to get the money purse offered by Balak. His plan is to teach Balak how to cast a stumbling block before Israel. Balaam counseled the Midianites and Moabites to use their women to incite Israelites to rebellion against the Lord (31:16) and to do this through the worship of Baal. The plan was to be nice to God's people. To invite them to their parties. To seduce them with their woman, and then to have them worship their gods. It is sort of a Trojan Horse approach.

Balaam is a prophet for profit and a paradigm of later false teachers who are immoral and greedy. Jude refers to the "*error of Balaam*" (Jude 1:11). John mentions the teachings of Balaam among the church at Thyatira in Revelation 2:14: "*But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality.*"

Notice the snowball effect upon the Israelites as one sin led to another. They ate. They bowed. They joined. The same three sins are found in Exodus 32 when the Israelites ate and drank, bowed down to a golden calf and rose up to "play," that is, commit sexual immorality. The term "*joined*" is the same idea as a fornicator is "*joined to an harlot*" in 1 Corinthians 6:16. The Hebrews word *zana* is translated "commit sexual immorality" or "play the harlot" and used to describe common prostitution. The feasts honoring Baal led to bowing down in worship, and then joining with the foreign women in fornication as a form of worship to Baal. A close connection is seen between joining a man and woman in adultery and the spiritual adultery

of joining Baal in worship instead of being faithful to God. This is the first occurrence of the god Baal in the Hebrew Bible. James warns the saints in James 4:2-5 of the dangers of spiritual adultery.

As a result of their sins, *"the anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel"* (25:3). Israelites were taught that trifling with sin has lethal consequences. *"Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Take all the leaders of the people and hang the offenders before the Lord, out in the sun, that the fierce anger of the Lord may turn away from Israel.'* So Moses said to the judges of Israel, 'Every one of you kill his men who were joined to Baal of Peor'" (25:4,5). For one's body to be left out and unburied as an added insult and used extensively throughout ancient times to further disgrace the dead and warn others (Gen. 40:19,22; Josh. 8:29; 10:26; 2 Sam. 4:12; Est. 2:23; 7:10; 1 Sam. 31:10,12; 2 Sam. 21:12). It was also a divine pointed curse upon the wicked (Deut. 21:22-23; see Gal. 3:13).

Moses passed on God's instructions to hang the offenders. Paul mentions this day to warn the brethren at Corinth *"nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell"* (1 Cor. 10:8). Although God is not killing mankind off by the thousands today, He still deserves, expects, and demands Christians to be faithful.

The reaction of the righteous in Israel can be seen by those who gathered around the entrance of the Tent of Meeting and bitterly wept over the situation. Suddenly, an Israelite brings a Midianite woman before the sight of Moses and the godly men and women and took her into his family tent. This was not just any Israelite but a leader. His open rebellion and licentiousness would further provoke God's anger and caused righteous indignation in another leader of God's people.

Being the son of Aaron, Phinehas is a priest of God and nephew of Moses. Seeing his neighbor take a Midianite in his tent to commit fornication, he runs into the tent with a spear and runs them through. To be able to kill both at the same time with a spear makes it crystal clear what the two were up to. Phinehas was not a vigilante or murderer in the killing of these two. He was being obedient to God's Word. The penalty for such idolatrous and immoral practice was death. Today, Phinehas would be considered an intolerant and meddlesome fanatic. This is not to say Christians must take matters of capital punishment into their own hands. God has ordained the secular governments of the world to punish evil doers (Rom. 13:1-4).

The zeal of Phinehas saved the day. God's wrath was turned back and other saved from the plague. God Himself attributed this to Phinehas: *"because he was zealous with My zeal among them"* (25:11). God is very zealous for His own honor and glory. Zeal is an extremely intense combination of passion and jealousy.

When the disciples of Jesus saw Him cleansing the Temple they *"remembered that it is written: 'Zeal for your house will consume me'"* (John 2:17). In his zeal for God Jesus was cleanse the Temple again at the end of Him ministry.

Because of His zeal God blesses Phinehas with several blessings. First, God said he would *"I give to him My covenant of peace"* (25:12). This would be passed down even to *"his descendants after him a covenant of an everlasting priesthood"* (25:13). God's priests in Christ are blessed with everlasting blessing if they to serve him with zeal.

The dead offenders were Zimri, a prince in Israel, and Cozbi, was the daughter of a prince, so perhaps they thought their social status gave them the right. Zimri and Phinehas are in contrast as one is "the son of a leading Simeonite family, the other the grandson of Aaron. One illustrates blatant insubordination, the other unconditional obedience" (Motyer 231).

Not only does God plan to reward Phinehas, He plans retribution upon the Midianites (25:16-18). Whereas Moab was related to Israel through Abraham's nephew Lot and the Midianites were the allies of Moab (22:4,7). Midian was the son of Abraham and Keturah. Moses' wife Zipporah was from a branch of the Midianites. God's longsuffering with these wicked nations were coming to an end (Gen. 15:16). Phinehas would be employed by God in the future to zealously carry out this retribution.

When the Midianite women came to seduce the men of Israel to commit fornication and worship an idol, he ran an Israelite ruler's, son and the daughter of a Midianite chieftain through with a spear. His act pleased God and stopped a divinely sent plague upon Israel. Paul used this event to warn the Corinthian saints, *"nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; ...Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our*

admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come" (1 Cor. 10:8,11).

In Numbers 25 Phinehas is seen as God's zealous executioner-priest. Next he will be seen as a warrior-priest and a diplomat-priest.

- **Warrior-Priest**

God sent the Israelites on a campaign against the Midianites to exact His divine revenge against them for their temptation of Israel in the incident at Baal Peor. Phinehas went with Israelite soldiers to fight the Midianites. *"Then Moses sent them to the war, one thousand from each tribe; he sent them to the war with Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, with the holy articles and the signal trumpets in his hand"* (Numbers 31:6). The Israelites were also after Balaam who gave counsel to King Balak of Moab. The Moabites *"caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to commit trespass against the LORD in the matter of Peor"* (Numbers 31:16). Balaam would have topped the Lord's "Most Wanted" list. He had used weapons of mass destruction, such as, sex, idols, and food as lethal weapons to kill Israelites. He was like an ancient Osama bin Ladin and his Al-Qaeda gang the Moabites and Midianites. Tragic as September 11th was the Baal of Peor disaster resulted in eight times as many deaths. Not only did they kill Balaam, Israel burned their cities, took their animals, and brought back women and children as captives to their main camp along the border of Moab. The Israelites did not lose a man in the expedition.

When the tribe of Benjamin would not judge the murderous homosexuals in their midst, *"the children of Israel inquired of the Lord (the ark of the covenant of God was there in those days, and Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron, stood before it in those days), saying, 'Shall I yet again go out to battle against the children of my brother Benjamin, or shall I cease?' And the Lord said, 'Go up, for tomorrow I will deliver them into your hand'"* (Judges 20:27-28). In this second campaign for God, Phinehas demonstrated his zeal for the Lord was seen as he carried the Word of the Lord to the people concerning the avenging of the sin of the Benjamites. Twice, now, Phinehas served as God's warrior-priest.

- **Diplomat-Priest**

After the land of Promise had been settled for the most part by the Israelites (Josh. 22:9) an altar is built (22:10). When the tribe of Reuben and the half tribe of Manasseh came to the region by the Jordan, it is said they "built there an altar by the Jordan, an altar of imposing size." But for what reason? Their reasoning is explained later. To some Israelites this was a clear violation of the commandments of God. *"And when the children of Israel heard of it, the whole congregation of the children of Israel gathered together at Shiloh to go to war against them"* (22:12). Phinehas was not so quick to go to war a third time. Plus, God had not ordered a campaign against these tribes. He took a delegation to investigate what was going on with this altar. The purpose of the altar was to serve as a testimony to all that they were a part of Israel, though on the other side of Jordan (vv. 13-30). It was to serve as a reminder, they were all still part of Israel and worshiped the same Lord. Learning the real motivation behind the altar Phinehas returns to the tribes of the west side of the Jordan. Phinehas and the others returned to the other Israelites praising God (30-34). Phinehas recognized that the altar was not an act of rebellion or treachery, and the rest were pleased to hear it.

Phinehas, though full of zeal, did not act rashly and destroy his brethren without checking the facts first. Zeal does not mean "out of control"! At Gilead, he did not simply "shoot first and ask questions later" as many are prone to do even today. Phinehas posed questions, voiced his concerns, pay attention to the testimony, and employed wise judgment.

- **Eternal-Priest**

Not only did God say he was going to make an eternal covenant with Phinehas and this children throughout the generations because of his God-like zeal, He is to be remembered for this deed throughout all time. Phinehas' zeal is commemorated in Psalm 106:28-31: *"They joined themselves also to Baal of Peor, And ate sacrifices made to the dead. Thus they provoked Him to anger with their deeds, And the plague broke out among them. Then Phinehas stood up and intervened, And the plague was stopped. And that was accounted to him for righteousness To all generations forevermore."*

As God's royal priests (1 Pet. 2:5,9; Rev. 1:6) Christians must fight the good fight of faith as warrior-priests for God. And as diplomat-priest was must show proper care and respect for one another. Finally as eternal-priest we must prepare ourselves to serve God zealously forever.

**Questions:**

1. What character trait is Phinehas known for in the Bible?
2. What problems did the Israelites have in the wilderness while heading to the Promise Land?
3. What plan did Balaam come up with to cause Israel to stumble.?
4. What does the term "joined" from the text imply?
5. True False Numbers 25 has the first occurrence of Baal worship by Israel in the Bible.
6. How many Israelites died that day?
7. To whom was Phinehas related?
8. What did Phinehas do to the Israelite leader who was fornicating with the Midianite woman?
9. Was Phinehas a murderer or a vigilante?
10. What blessings did God give Phinehas?
11. What was the result of Phinehas' military expedition against Midian?
12. What was Phinehas' second military campaign for God?
13. How did Phinehas stop an impending civil war in Israel?



14. How is Phinehas memorialized in Psalm 106?

**Application & Discussion:**

1. How is Phinehas' actions with a spear a warning to all generations of Christians?
  
2. Search the New Testament. Find passages which enjoin Christians to be zealous.

# David's Mighty Men: Heroes for a Hero

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## 2 Samuel 23:8-39

The first sergeant was holding a class on combat for his company. He said, "Carson, what would you do if you saw 700 enemy soldiers coming at you?" Carson said, "I would shoot them all with my rifle." The sergeant asked, "On the right you see 800 enemy soldiers charging you. What would you do?" Carson said, "I would shoot them with my rifle." The sergeant upset with his answers gruffly asked, "Okay! On your left, Carson, you notice 1,000 enemy soldiers heading straight at you. What would you do?" Carson answered again, "I would shoot them all with my rifle." The sergeant yelled, "Just a minute, Carson. Where are you getting all those bullets?" The soldier smiled and said, "the same place you're getting all those enemy soldiers."

The questions facing us in our text is not where did the 800 or 300 enemies come from that were killed by heroes of ancient Israel, but where did David find such mighty men of valor?

David was a mighty man himself. Who could forget his triumph over Goliath (1 Sam. 17). "Birds of the feather flock together." David was surrounded by mighty men of valor. They are referred to as the lion faced - that is, faces like the faces of lions (1 Chr. 12:8). David was blessed with thirty-seven such men.

Of these thirty-seven, a few have been singled out for their special heroics. First, there was Adino the Eznite. He had killed 800 men at one time (v. 8). Then there was Abishai the brother of Joab. This warrior killed 300 enemies with a spear. Next, came Benaiah a lion-faced hero who killed two lion-like heroes of Moab, and a lion in a pit on a snowy day, and a giant Egyptian with his own spear (vv. 20-23). Finally, there was the mighty man of valor Uriah the Hittite. This is most likely the same hero David had killed in 2 Samuel 11:3,6.

Where have all the heroes gone? David's heroes fought physical battles. Today, God's children engage in a spiritual warfare. *"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds"* (2 Corinthians 10:4). No there is no bloody swords or piles of dead bodies, but our battles are just as real and important. Moreover, the spiritual men of valor are just as much a hero to God as these thirty-seven were to David.

Just as David's men exemplified several distinct heroic traits, so must the mighty men of God have these same characteristics if they are to fight the good fight of faith.

### ***Just what are the characteristics of the a true spiritual mighty man?***

#### **Steadfast When Surrounded**

Eleazar, the son of Dodo stood with David against the Philistines when most of Israel retreated. It must have been hard to be a serious hero when you had to be introduced as one of the Dodo boys. He remained steadfast when surrounded (v. 9). Courage, like cowardice, is contagious. Eleazar motivated others to rejoin the battle. His courage reminds us of many who stood fast when outnumbered, such men as, Stephen, Christ, and Paul when no one stood with him at his first defense.

After Dunkirk in World War II, England stood alone in Europe. Invasion seemed imminent. The British had lost many of its soldiers, army equipment in France, forty-seven warships had been sunk, half its destroyers were in the shipyards for repair, and the Royal Air Force was depleted. It was then that Churchill declared, "We shall defend our island whatever the cost may be; we shall fight on the beaches; we shall fight in the fields; we shall fight in the streets; and we shall fight in the hills. We shall never surrender ..."

## **Stuck to the Sword**

Another unique aspect of Eleazar, the son of Dodo is that after fighting the battle his hand stuck to his sword. This is not the only instance of such recorded in history. Ancient warriors were known to use warm water after an intense battle to loosen the grip of their cramped hands off their swords.

Soldiers of Christ are to carry their sword the Word of God into battle (Eph. 6:17). Never should they let go. Even the Captain of our Salvation when facing the Devil alone in temptation stuck to the sword. Three times He was tempt and all three times he appealed to the Word of God. (Mt. 4:1-11). How firmly do you grip the Sword of the Spirit when everyone acts like you are wrong, when a loved one desires a divorce without a scriptural reason, when someone introduces an unscriptural innovation into the work of the church or when the world mocks our little "army" in battle. Why would a soldier forget his Bible when going to do battle?

## **Strong in Solitude**

Did you hear about the mighty man of David named Shammah. It is said that when the powerful Philistines showed up for battle the army of Israel scattered. However, this one man stood "in the middle of the field" and defeated them single-handedly. He is not the only man who learned the loneliness of standing alone in the face of powerful enemies. Elijah cried out to the Lord, *"I am the only man in the whole earth who is standing for you."* Jeremiah, too, was required to stand alone. Many times in the wilderness Moses fell on his face interceding for Israel before the Lord. Even the Son of God, Himself cried out on the cross, *"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"* (Matthew 27:46). While on the cross all His disciples fled except John. Paul lamented to Timothy that *"At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge. Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion"* (2 Timothy 4:16-17). David's good friend, Jonathan was a mighty man. When Saul and his men were faint of heart, frightened by the large number of Philistines who opposed them, Jonathan went in pursuit of the enemy with these words, *"Then Jonathan said to the young man who was carrying his armor, Come and let us cross over to the garrison of these uncircumcised; perhaps the LORD will work for us, for the LORD is not restrained to save by many or by few"* (1 Samuel 14:6).

David's mighty men were not as impressed with statistics as they were with standing firm, trusting in God for the victory. You too must *"...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."* (Phil. 2:12b) while trusting God for the victory. If you stop and consider the odds, odds are you might just break an run. However, as Christians we know that if God is for us it just doesn't matter how many are against us.

## **Sincere in Submission**

A very interesting story of heroics takes place in verse 13-17. David longed for a drink of water from his home town well at Bethlehem. Three of his might men heard this wish and desired to grant it. The only problem, the city was held by the Philistines. Nonetheless, they fought their way through to the well drew the water and brought it back to David. David poured it on the ground, not because of his ingratitude, but he felt only God deserved the kind of sincere submission these three demonstrated. David's mighty men did not accomplish these mighty exploits because they were seeking a reward. They served their king because they loved him.

Our genuine devotion to God will cause Christians to go beyond the normal limits. They do not fight the good fight because they have to, but because they want to. They are not the type who can be heard to complain: "Do I have to attend all the services?" After all, Jesus told us that when we've done all it is our duty to do then we are to confess that we are but unprofitable servants (Luke 17:10). This is the same devotion soldiers of Christ must show to one another. This type of devotion is clearly demonstrated in an 1865 letter from William Tecumseh Sherman to U.S. Grant: "I knew wherever I was that you thought of me, and if I got in a tight place you would come--if alive." (U.S. News & World Report, July 29, 1991, p. 5).

## **Swift in the Struggle**

*“Some Gadites joined David at the stronghold in the wilderness, mighty men of valor, men trained for battle, who could handle shield and spear, whose faces were like the faces of lions, and were as swift as gazelles on the mountains” (1 Chron. 12:8).*

Speed in battle is most important. There is an old Greek story of the soldier under Antigonus who had a disease that was extremely painful and likely at any time to destroy his life. In every campaign he was in the forefront of the hottest battle. His pain prompted him to fight to forget it, and his expectation of death at any time made him court death on the field. His general so admired the bravery of the man that he had him cured by a renowned physician. From that moment the valiant soldier was no longer seen at the front. He avoided danger instead of seeking it. And sought to protect his life instead of risking it on the field. His tribulation made him fight well, his health and comfort destroyed his usefulness as a soldier.

In the book of Acts we find Paul and his companions moving the Gospel forward at a swift pace. Luke uses words like “immediately” to describe the actions of these missionary journey’s. He also uses it to inform us how quickly others obeyed the Gospel.

Too many Christians are slow when it comes to Christian warfare. They are quick to seize a business opportunity, save money, jump on a deal, be first in line at an amusement park. Yet, they are slow to get to services, to share the Gospel, learn the truth, and do volunteer for work. We need to have the swift obedience of the British outpost in the remotest parts of Africa at the beginning of World War II. The War Ministry in London sent out the following message. The message read: “War declared. Arrest all enemy aliens in your district.” The War Ministry received his prompt reply: “Have arrested 10 Germans, 6 Belgians, 4 Frenchman, 2 Italians, 3 Austrians, and an American. Please advise immediately who we’re at war with.”

Will you become one of God’s mighty men or women?

#### **Questions:**

1. Demonstrate from the scriptures that David was himself a great hero?
2. List a few of David's heroic warriors and their mighty deeds.
3. For what heroic action is Eleazar noted.
4. What happened to Eleazar and his sword? Why did this happen?
5. What mighty deed did Shammah do? Who else in the Word of God is like him in this respect?
6. List some circumstances in which Christians must be able and willing to stand alone.

7. Why did David pour on the ground the water given to him by his three mighty men?
8. Are Christian who only do what is required and no more fit soldiers in God's Kingdom? Explain.
9. To what animal are the Gadites compared? Why?
10. Why is speed and swiftness important in our spiritual warfare?

**Discussion:**

1. Make a list of your heroes both Biblical and modern. Tell why they are your heroes.
2. How can we use the Sword (the Word of God) in performing mighty deeds in God's Kingdom?