

RELIGION

Surviving life in today's 'real world'

1 John 2:7-17

The degenerate human mind can devise new doctrines to replace the things that have served as points of reference for mankind throughout the centuries. These new enlightenments are, simply, old spiritual baggage dressed in new language. Spiritual darkness is never converted to light by clothing it in modern verbiage.

After the establishment of the church — on that momentous day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4) — the thoughts of new revelation had begun to raise their ugly heads before that first century drew to a close. The Apostle John wrote his letters to those people who were being bombarded with these new doctrines that were attempting to undermine the simplicity of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. The offspring of these philosophers continue to be with us.

Most of the new philosophies — that are, simply, the old ideas in new cloaks — have come to bring us

“new light.” Darkness is darkness, no matter what dress is used to cover the death that lies beneath. The new enlightenments were addressed by the apostle.

John declared to his readers, “Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning.” 1 John 2:7a. He reminded his readers, “The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning.” 1 John 2:7b.

If these readers insisted on something new, the apostle would give them that which they desired. “Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth.” 1 John 2:8.

The attitude that was demonstrated by those who brought new light was that of “spiritual light.” Others were not seen in a positive light. John wrote, “He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness, even until now.” 1

Sunday School Lesson



Rev. James Temples

John 2:9.

The contrast is clear. “He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.” 1 John 2:10. The apostle painted a dismal picture of these who saw themselves as enlightened. “He that hateth his brother abideth in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because darkness hath blinded his eyes.” 1 John 2:11.

The Apostle John has been called the “Apostle of Love,” since this theme is woven into all of his letters. He addressed different groups, as a father would speak specifically to members of the family. I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name’s

sake. “I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the father.” 1 John 2:12, 13.

This declaration could be made by the apostle because he was aware of the godly influence that the fathers would have over their households. The father of the family is expected to be the “spiritual head” of the household. Ephesians 5:25; 6:4; Colossians 3:19.

Too often, fathers have abandoned their divinely-assigned role, and have allowed the children to “raise themselves,” with little or no positive input into their spiritual development. Is it any wonder that some of the children have turned out the way that we see them in our society?

John continued his encouragement to the men of the families. “I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him

that is from the beginning. I have written unto young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.” 1 John 2:14.

With difficulties surrounding our lives — and teachings that might cast doubts on the things that we believe — it could be easy to begin to wonder, “What if ‘they’ are right?” Temptations do not always present good or bad choices, but forces one to make a choice between the good and the best. It might be easy to rationalize our choices, based on some compromise of the basic principles that we know to be based on the word of God.

John — under inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21) — gave a directive that became a rallying point for the believers of that day — and reaches into our lives, today. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. 1 John 2:15a.

He warned the believers of that day, and that warning is valid, today. “If any

man love the world, the love of the father is not in him.” 1 John 2:15b.

We live in a real world with real problems, real tests, and real temptations. It is comforting to know that our Lord Jesus Christ lived in a real world, with real problems, and faced real temptations.

The writer to the Hebrews assured us that Jesus knew the things that confront us, and he overcame them. Hebrews 4:15c. Thus, we have divine help with our difficulties of life. Hebrews 4:16.

John wrote, “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the father, but is of the world.” 1 John 2:16. Yes, our Lord overcame all of these on the mount of temptation. Matthew 4:1-11; Luke 4:1-13. This present life is temporary at best. We can claim that which is eternal. 1 John 2:17.

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Share the goodness of Christ's love

This is a biographical message. I want to try to tell you what it is like to be a preacher, or a messenger of God. Few people really understand the hard work of study, the dilemma of dealing with people's problems day after day, and the pressure of having eyes and ears fixed on you with the expectation they are about to receive a word from the Lord.

The name “Malachi” literally means “my messenger.” You might say this is a message from the messenger to the messenger. So let's listen to the message of Malachi 1:1-5.

What is it like to be a messenger of God?

It is a great burden.

The word “oracle” (NASB, NIV) is better translated “burden” (KJV). It literally means to be given a heavy load to carry and deliver.

I used to work for a trucking company. At one time I had the distinction of loading the heaviest trailer we had ever shipped. It was an export trailer, so regular DOT reg-

ulations did not apply. They told me when the crane loaded it on the ship, the bottom almost fell out. I was so proud. Of course, if the contents had spilled, I would have been so unemployed! So you can imagine the pressure I was under until that load was safely delivered.

May I use another personal illustration? I'll never forget the first time I ever threw a pass for the Lowndes High School Vikings. It was a perfect strike, right between the numbers of my receiver. It was an easy play, really, with the end only about ten yards from the quarterback. Unfortunately, I was so nervous and threw the ball so hard, that it bounced off his chest and was intercepted by the other team. That football was a burden I tell you. Once I had it, I realized there were other people out to get me. I needed to get rid of it, but in such a way that it helped my team reach the goal. Sometimes I succeeded, sometimes I

The Gospel Truth



Dr. Charles F. DeVane Jr. First Baptist Church

failed, but it was always an exciting and excruciating burden.

Now, that's some sense of what it is like to be a messenger for God. We have been given the word of God. It is not our message, it is his message. We are supposed to know how to handle it. And we are supposed to herald it, accurately and safely, to help God's people reach the goal. I am sure Malachi found it an exciting and excruciating burden.

I think you will, too. So stay tuned.

It is a great blessing.

It is hard to find a book in the Bible that begins better than Malachi. After the brief introduction, we read these words from God: “I have loved you.” There is no greater blessing than being loved by God!

The only problem with this blessing is that when messengers get the message that God loves them, they often doubt it. And if you are a messenger who is doubting the message that God loves you, I doubt you

are going to get that message of love out to other people.

Malachi and the messengers of his day doubted the love of God. This is clear from the context. The Israelites of this period in history were about one generation removed from the Babylonian exodus. They were back in the promised land but the promises of God didn't taste sweet. Don Henley wrote about this stage in life: “Now those flowers in your garden, they don't smell so sweet. Maybe you've forgotten, the heaven lying at your feet.” Heaven on earth is living in the light of the love of God. But Malachi's generation had forgotten that, I suppose.

Or perhaps they thought that God was loving them with only half his heart. In reality, they were the half-hearted people. In order to pump them up, God's messenger gave them a strong message about God's love. It is a message that needs to be heard today as well.

God's love is a sovereign love. God chose to love Jacob and hate Esau. You say, “That's not fair.” You're right, God had no reason to love Jacob, but he graciously and mercifully chose him anyway. What a thrill it is to be loved by someone infinitely greater

than you.

God's love is an unconditional love. Jacob did not have to do anything for God to love him. But God's love transformed him into another man, Israel. What a thrill it is to be loved by someone who accepts you in spite of your great sin.

God's love is a saving love. Like Old Testament sacrifices foreshadowed the saving work of Christ, Old Testament wars and wrath offer a glimpse of the utter separation and destruction that await those who reject the lordship of Christ. God's sovereign, unconditional, saving love rescues from the wrath to come. What a thrill it is to be loved by someone who has saved your life.

God's love is a permanent love. In the statement, “I have loved you,” love is stated in the perfect tense. This speaks of past action with ongoing, permanent consequences. If you are a messenger whom God loves, the message for you is that he will never, never take his love away (Romans 8:35-39). What a thrill it is to be loved by someone forever.

At the end of the day, there is no greater thrill and no greater blessing than the love of God. And with great blessing, well,

comes great responsibility.

It is a great responsibility.

When the burden of love came to Malachi, it was meant to be broadcast. And the program was not to be limited to local stations, but aired around the whole world. The great responsibility is the great commission to get the great message of God's love, God's provision in Christ, and God's call to repent and believe the gospel to the whole world, beginning right where you live.

Messengers are required to send the message. That's why this is a message to the messengers. So just who is the Malachi of our day?

Remember I did not say this is an autobiographical sermon. It is not about me, at least not exclusively. It is about you. It is about every Christian. It is a message to the messengers. God loves you. Believe it. Live like it. And go tell others about his love!

“O grant, that having been rescued from the darkness of death, we may ever walk as the children of light, as never to wander from the course of our holy calling, but to advance in it continually, until we shall at length reach the goal.” (John Calvin)

THANKS

Words cannot express the heartfelt gratitude of the Foster family for the love and support of the community that we have experienced on our loss of Bill. Your words of comfort and hope, your calls, cards, hugs, handshakes, food, flowers and visits have helped by giving us strength to face difficult days. Thank you also for sharing your thoughts about Bill which reminded us of his wisdom and laughter and many precious memories he left behind. We honor those and thank you for your support and love. May God bless each of you.

The family of Bill Foster

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The Freedom Council would like to take this

opportunity to thank everyone who attended the banquet as well as all of those who helped in the planning and execution of this wonderful evening. Special thanks to Shirley Freeman, the City of Blakely, the Early County News, and Congressman Bishop and his staff.

The Freedom Council

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I would like to thank Lamar Willis, Clay Willis, Brian Creswell, Larry Worsley, and Eric Harris for all the hard work they put into helping me with my first and last hog show. It has been a fun experience and wish I would have competed in the hog show many years earlier.

Hannah Scarbrough

CHURCH NEWS

Fort Gaines U.M.C.

Fort Gaines United Methodist Church will host revival services March 11 and 12. There will be a covered dish supper at 6 p.m. Sunday and Monday with the service following the meal at 7 p.m.

On Monday at 11 a.m., there will be a service with lunch immediately following. The speaker will be the Rev. Mike Ricker of Wynnton Road UMC in Columbus, and the musi-

cian is Angie Carr of Cordele.

Oakey Grove

Oakey Grove Community Church will have their 48th annual men and women's day April 1 at 2:30 p.m. The guest speaker is Rev. Robert Register. The all-day celebration will begin at 9:45 a.m. with Sunday school, regular services at 11 a.m. and dinner at 1:30 p.m. The afternoon program begins at 2:30 p.m. Everyone is invited to attend.

Gospel Revival

Fort Gaines Church of Christ

On the corner of Hancock and Habersham Roads

Saturday, March 17

Sunday, March 18

and

Monday, March 19

Leading the services is Minister Adam Bush, formerly of Colquitt.

He is the son of Milton and Dianne Johnson and the late Ted Bush.



Adam Bush

Times

Saturday: 6:30 Hamburger Supper
7:30 Worship Services

Sunday: 9:30 Sunday School Services
10:30 Worship Services

Afterwards: Covered dish lunch, congregational singing and evening services

Monday: 6:30 Sandwich Supper
7:30 Worship Service

Make it a Family Affair

Attend a Church of Your Choice This Sunday

