

CHRISTIAN WORKER

“We are workers together with Him...” (2 Corinthians 6:1)

VOLUME 109, NUMBER 12

BUYING AND SELLING THE SOUL

Rick Brumback

Every sales transaction requires both a buyer and a seller, whether buying a home, an automobile, or any other item. In any such transaction, both the buyer and the seller must agree on the price. What the seller asks reveals how much he estimates its worth to be. What the buyer is willing to pay reveals their appraisal of its worth. It is this idea of buying and selling that Peter has in mind concerning God (1 Pet. 1:18-21). The Lord’s plan was to purchase humanity for Himself, and the price He is willing to pay shows the value of humanity to Him. What can we know about His thoughts on us?

First, He knows us. *“Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it”* (Ecc. 12:7). *“I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth”* (Ps. 139:14-15). He also knows we have sold ourselves to another in the form of sin. Paul described it exactly correctly when he said that people could be servants of sin and unrighteousness (Rom. 6:18-22).

It is in light of God’s knowledge of us and our situation, and His desire to have us for Himself, that Peter speaks of buying us back from sin and death. The idea of a *ransom* is to “buy back.” This gives us the idea of *redemption*, or being *redeemed*. Consequently, 1 Peter 1:18 is the price God will pay – *“ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain manner of life received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ.”* The fact of this purchase price is what leads the apostle Paul to say, *“You are not your own; you have been brought with a price”* (1 Cor. 6:20).

If we stop to reflect upon what has prompted God to make this purchase, this ransom, it should tell us how important each person is and help us appreciate the value of the human soul. This also ought to bolster a flagging sense of self-esteem. I may not be the smartest, the handsomest, or the most eloquent, but God wants me! You may not feel that you stand out in any particular way. Possibly you have wrestled since childhood with the fact that you live in others’ shadows. We appear to be caught in a world which operates looking for the standouts. How vivifying, how refreshing to

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FROM THE EDITOR:

HOW TO DEAL WITH STRESS

Cody Westbrook

“Americans are some of the most stressed out people in the world.” That was the conclusion of the Gallup Global Emotions report and it probably does not surprise you. What might surprise you is that the report was published in 2019. As can imagine, the problem is far worse today than it was a few years ago.

Everyone experiences stress to some degree as part of the natural course of life. When events happen, like a major move, a wedding, or a new baby, our body reacts mentally and physically. This is stress. The trouble lies within the fact that major stressors have become more and more common, and the ability to cope with them has become less and less common. In fact, more than 75% of adults in the US say that stress has caused physical symptoms and affected their behavior and family life. This is a major problem.

Christians are not exempt from stress. Like everyone else we experience loss, health problems, challenges of raising children, financial struggle, moving, major life events, and so many other things that test our faith (cf. Jas. 1:1-2) and stress us out. But we also recognize that we have access to world’s greatest Doctor and most powerful prescription for managing and overcoming the stresses of life. Consider what Paul wrote in Philippians 4:6-9 (ASV).

In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are

lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. The things which ye both learned and received and heard and saw in me, these things do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

This context tells us three things about dealing with stress.

First, we must pray regularly (Phil. 4:6). How easy it is for us to take a moment to cast our cares upon God (1 Pet. 5:7) and yet how often we forget to do so. The Philippian brethren has obviously crossed the line of care and concern and ventured into the realm of anxiety. Paul’s command was simple, stop worrying and start praying! The passage uses three separate terms for prayer. “Prayer” is a general term, “supplication” has to do with approaching God with our needs, and “requests” is an all encompassing word which calls for us to be specific in our prayer and acknowledges our total dependance upon God. Together these terms emphasize the importance of consistent faithful prayer in the Christian’s life, but especially as a solution to stress and anxiety.

Second, we must think clearly (Phil. 4:8). The Bible puts great emphasis on protecting our minds. Solomon said “Keep your heart with all diligence for out of it spring the issues of life” (Pro. 4:23; NKJV). “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh” (Matt. 12:34). “That which proceedeth out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, evil thoughts proceed...” (Mark 7:20-21). As it pertains to stress, we often make things worse for ourselves by dwelling on the negative and imagining all of the terrible things that may happen, most of which never actually do. Philippians 4:8 says to “think” on things that are good and holy. It is an imperative verb

which has to do with fixing our minds in a God-ward direction. One writer put it this way,

The command to think requires his readers “to give careful thought to a matter, consider, ponder, and let one’s mind dwell on something.” Paul is calling for followers of Christ to be attentive, reflective, meditative thinkers. Developing a Christian mind and character requires a lifetime of discerning and disciplined thought about all the things that are excellent and praiseworthy.¹

Finally, we must live faithfully (Phil. 4:9). The word of God will change our lives for the better, but only when we apply it. The Philippians were responsible for applying the things they had been taught, and seen on display in the life of Paul. The Psalmist asked long ago, “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his heart? By taking heed thereto according to thy word” (Ps. 119:9). Colossians 1:9-11 teaches us that having a knowledge of God’s word and applying that knowledge to our lives results in spiritual growth and strengthening of our fellowship with God. Thus, Paul said that doing the will of God results in God being with us. It is not enough for us just to “think” (v. 8) we must also “do” (v. 9)! Stressed can be relieved by remembering the blessings that come along with doing God’s will (Ps. 128).

Americans may be among the most stressed people in the world, but Christians should not be. Yes we will experience stress, everyone does. But our God supplies us with the tools we need to manage it successfully.

¹ G. Walter Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 299.

CW

ARE YOU A “DISSEMBLER”?

Carl B. Garner

Abraham Lincoln often told a story about a young man who murdered both of his parents, then entered a plea for leniency on grounds that he was an orphan. The judge was having none of that, and he used a word that was not familiar to the jury. The word “dissembler” was not the word they would have used, but it was exactly

what they were thinking. A dissembler is “one who conceals under a false appearance; to conceal the truth by pretense; to act hypocritically; to be a hypocrite.” No, the young man did not get what he wanted, but he got free room and board for a long time.

Well-known author Nathaniel Hawthorne wrote the following about a person who was known to be a dissembler: “No man, for any considerable period, can wear one face to himself and another to the multitude without finally getting bewildered as to which may be the true.” In the book of Acts, chapter five, we read of a couple that was guilty of this behavior, and their deeds led to their death. They had done one thing and claimed another, which is merely one of several ways by which a man or woman can be guilty of being a dissembler, a liar. Their fate was not to be a pleasant one (Rev. 21:8).

Unless this is a very unusual group, some of us are guilty of being “dissemblers.” No, I’m not accusing, but it is never a bad idea for Christians to search our hearts for honest answers and make genuine corrections to such issues. Without “beating around the bush” on this subject, here is the clearest synonym for a dissembler: A dissembler is just a hypocrite! It may surprise you, but being a hypocrite is commonly said to be the most prevalent, the most practiced, the most transparent and most visible of sins. A hypocrite is someone who is one kind of person but who acts as if he/she is really another kind of person—much like an actor. In truth, the theater is where the word had its origin.

W. E. Vine gives a history of the Greek word *hypocrites* or hypocrite:

It was a custom for Greek and Roman actors to speak in large masks with mechanical devices for augmenting the force of the voice; hence the word came to be used metaphorically of a dissembler, a hypocrite. (*An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* 242)

An actor on the stage or the screen, in truth being one person, is acting the part of another. The Greeks made good use of the word, and we can see the obvious application of the term.

Who, then, is a hypocrite? The word is found only in the Synoptic accounts of Jesus’ life (Matthew, Mark and Luke). Therein the term is found twenty times, and the only person quoted in those passages is Jesus Himself. He uses it to define the “scribes and the Pharisees,” and it is used in a very special, forceful way on each occasion. In Mark 7:6 Jesus spoke to the Pharisees and scribes boldly and powerfully:

THE PURPOSE OF GOSPEL PREACHING

Clay Bond

“O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD” (Jer. 22:29).

“Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.” Those to whom Jesus spoke were thought to be the best and most righteous of men. That is how they appeared to others, but Jesus said they were truly hypocrites. That thought should be sobering to all of us. It is so easy to pretend godliness, to act as though we are genuine followers of Christ. **But He knows our hearts. He knows who and what we really are.**

When we sing *“O How I Love Jesus,”* or *“Jesus Is All the World To Me,”* Jesus knows if we are just mouthing the words but really thinking of other things. If He called a group of Jewish leaders “hypocrites,” do you not think He would call us “dissemblers” or hypocrites, too? In our giving, in our prayers, and in our everyday interaction with our neighbors, Jesus knows our hearts. We may fool our neighbors—even our family—but we won’t fool Jesus.

I wish I had not written this article; doing so demands that I look more carefully at my own actions and thoughts. How easy it is to think we can fool God. How easy it is for us to merely go through the motions without feeling, without genuine, heartfelt thoughts in our worship, in our daily lives. In Revelation 3:15-16, the Holy Spirit inspired John to write to the church at Laodicea: *“I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot: I could wish you were cold or hot. So then because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of my mouth.”*

Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye. (Matt. 7:5)

CW

These words, spoken so long ago, reflect what God wants more than anything. His desire is for His creation to hear His spoken word which is *“quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart”* (Heb. 4:12). In our age, God has designated Gospel preaching to be the means by which His word is proclaimed to all the earth (Titus 1:3).

There are several implied purposes in Gospel preaching, one of which is clearly seen in Acts chapter eighteen. When Paul came into the debauched city of Corinth, he preached the Gospel which entailed the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:1-4). Paul proclaimed the power of God’s word to those who were living in sin and called upon them to submit to its transforming power (1 Cor. 6:9-11). Many of the Corinthians who heard the Gospel on this occasion *“believed, and were baptized”* (Acts 18:8). They were washed, sanctified and justified in the name of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 6:11). Therefore, we see that one primary purpose of Gospel preaching is to convert sinners (Psa. 19:7).

God, who desires for *“all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth”* (1 Tim. 2:4), has designed Gospel preaching to save souls from eternal damnation through knowledge. By hearing the Gospel preached, the lost can come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ (Rom. 10:14). The truth that can set us free from the bondage of sin is made known through Gospel preaching (John 8:32). Bringing men to the knowledge of truth is, therefore, another purpose of Gospel preaching.

God has no desire for anybody to be lost; His desire is that all would come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9; Acts 17:30). Jesus once warned, *“Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish”* (Luke 13:3). It is through repentance that we come to the *“acknowledging of the truth”* that sets us free from Satan’s captivity (2 Tim. 2:25-26). In Paul’s letters to Timothy, knowledge and repentance are linked with salvation (1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Tim. 2:25). Both of these elements come



through Gospel preaching. Gospel preaching is designed to bring about repentance.

While converting sinners is an important purpose of Gospel preaching, equally important is the edification of the saints. When Paul left Timothy at Ephesus to build up the saints in the most holy faith, he exhorted him to *“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine”* (2 Tim. 4:2). In order to develop Christian character, those who are converted out of darkness need to hear Gospel preaching (2 Pet. 1:5-8). Paul said, *“So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”* (Rom. 10:17). Gospel preaching feeds our faith and helps us to grow in faith (2 Pet. 3:18; Col. 1:9-11)! Even the most mature of Christians needs to be built up and prepared to overcome temptation (Acts 20:32; 1 Cor. 10:13; James 1:13-14). Through Gospel preaching the Christian learns to deny ungodliness and worldly lust and *“live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world”* (Titus 2:12).

In Mark 16:15 we read Jesus’ marching orders to His church, *“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.”* When we preach the preaching that God bids us, we can trust that His Word will not return unto Him void. Gospel preaching will accomplish its intended purposes (Jonah 3:2; Isa. 55:11). It will convert sinners through the knowledge of God, it will bring the erring to repentance and it will edify God’s children.

The word of God has the ability to reach into the innermost depths of our being and transform who and what we are. When the Gospel is preached and when it is properly heeded and applied, it produces abundant life (John 10:10). Truly the Gospel is a treasure that has been given to us (2 Cor. 4:7). Thank God for Gospel preaching and may each and every Christian share in Paul’s sentiment, *“Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!”* (1 Cor. 9:16).

CW

“JUSTIFIED IN THE SPIRIT”

Trent Kennedy

Jesus Christ is exhorted in First Timothy as our hope (1:1), our Lord (1:2), as the epitome of grace, faith, and love (1:14), our Savior (1:15), our mediator (2:5), and

the one who will come again (6:14). This epistle and the New Testament certainly proves that He is worthy of our praise, adoration, and honor. In the short, Spirit-inspired song of praise through the pen of Paul (1 Tim. 3:16), there is a phrase that draws the present-day reader’s attention: Christ was “justified in the Spirit.” Though our inclination might be to skip over the short line, it sustains the careful consideration of the Bible student. If we give no more than a quick thought before passing this phrase on to the next, we might be left without seeing just why Christ is so highly praised.

Jesus was “justified.” The text verifies this fact. Many have taught for years that justification means: “just-as-if-I never sinned.” As a concept, this is in line with many scriptures about the justification of man (Rom. 5:1; Titus 3:7, et. al.). Thus, does this text teach that Jesus was made as if He had never sinned? Of course not! The Bible clearly teaches that Christ did not sin (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:22; 1 John 3:5). However, sometimes we can make the standard Bible class or sermon explanation of a biblical concept akin to the definition of a biblical word. The definition for the Greek word translated “justified” is defined by Thayer as, “to show, exhibit, evince, one to be righteous, such as he is or wishes himself to be considered.” In fact, Jesus was shown or exhibited to be righteous or the righteous one. The Bible also uses the word in this way in Matthew 11:19. The text does not refer to a person, but it says, “...wisdom is justified by her children.” Certainly, wisdom had committed no sin, but she is set forth, shown to be, exhibited for who she says she is by the fruits of wise living.

Moreover, Jesus was “justified in the Spirit.” The King James Version capitalizes “Spirit” in First Timothy 3:16 while the American Standard Version (1901) leaves the word lowercase as “spirit.” It seems that the proper rendering should be that of the King James Version in capitalizing the word “Spirit” to signify how Jesus was demonstrated or shown to be the one whom He claimed to be. Jesus did not perform any miracles until after the Spirit has descended upon Him as a dove (John 1:32, 2:11). It was through the Holy Spirit that Jesus wrought many miracles (Matt. 12:28; Luke 4:14, 18-19; Acts 10:38). It was Jesus’ miraculous works that caused people to believe (John 3:1-2). It was through His mighty works, signs, and wonders that Christ was shown to be the approved one of God (Acts 2:22).

Biblically, there can be no doubt that the miracles done by Jesus through the Spirit proved that He was and is the Messiah. In fact, He still stands justified today through those recorded miracles (John 20:30-31). While the words

of First Timothy 3:16, “justified in the Spirit,” seem to embody all of the miracles done by Jesus on earth, those words likely point to one singular event in all of human history—the resurrection from the dead. This miracle of miracles, this conquering of sin, Satan, and death, this trail blazed to heaven to give us hope of eternal life was Christ’s final justification. Besides, it also was through the Holy Spirit. Here, for all eternity, with a garden tomb bodiless, Jesus of Nazareth was powerfully declared or demonstrated to be the very Son of God according to the Spirit of holiness (Rom. 1:4). Jesus remains “justified in the Spirit.”

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order to do as He did and live as He lived, we see His use of prayer and thanksgiving before meals. With this in mind, Christians should pray to God and give thanks before every meal as Christ has given the example.

Mark records one of these examples in his gospel account: “So He commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. And He took the seven loaves and gave thanks, broke them and gave them to His disciples to set before them; and they set them before the multitude” (Mark 8:6). We can see very clearly in the text that Jesus gave thanks for the food for which He and others were about to receive. This pattern continues on in Mark’s text: “They also had a few small fish; and having blessed them, He said to set them also before them” (Mark 8:7). This time we see that Jesus blessed the food which they were going to eat. After Jesus gave thanks and blessed the food, they sat and ate that which God supplied. John points out to us in John 6:23 that he and the people noticed the order in which Jesus ate. Therefore he records “however, other boats came from Tiberias, near the place where they ate bread after the Lord had given thanks.” By these scriptures alone the example has been set. Before we eat meals, we are to give thanks to God and then eat the nourishment which we have received.

Paul teaches us the same thing, in that we should pray for our food before we partake of the meal. “For every creature of God is good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer” (1 Tim. 4:4-5). In the context of First Timothy 4, Paul is speaking of the great apostasy and how some would be commanding others to abstain from foods which God has created. However, Paul shows us in this very context that no food which God has created is to be refused and is to be received with thanksgiving and prayer. Look at the order which is given. We receive, we give thanks, it is sanctified by God’s Word and prayer. That is the example Jesus gave in Mark 8:6-8, “He took the seven loaves” (He received) “and gave thanks” (He received with thanksgiving), “having blessed them” (He sanctified them)—and how did He do this? He did it in prayer to the Father.

Concerning the institution of the Lord’s Supper, Christ continues with His example of giving thanks before partaking of sustenance. “Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.” And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me”



“AND WHEN HE GAVE THANKS ...”

Justin Gonzalez

Jesus the Christ is the supreme example that all men should follow. Paul said “Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ” (1 Cor 11:1). Paul understood that Christ is the example to be followed in all things. John writes that the Christian should abide in Him and “walk just as He walked” (1 John 2:6). When looking to Jesus for our example, in

(Luke 22:17-19). The reason we pray before each meal is because that is the example Christ left for us. Also, we pray before our meals because we are thankful to God that He has supplied us with food, with which we are to be content (1 Tim. 6:8). The next time someone asks why we pray before meals, we can say with surety that it is because of the example Jesus Christ, our Lord, left for us.

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realize that God wants you! No one can replace you, either to the people who know and love you, or to the Lord who loves you. Maybe we have been the recipients of what we know as “put-downs” – the insults that hurt and belittle us. Such put-downs are terrible and powerful if we do not think rightly and overcome them. I may need to make some changes to bring out the best that is possible, to reach my potential, but it is possible in Christ. We can be everything we need to be in Christ. All is possible. And along the way, God loves me, you, all people.

Just because God is ready to buy us, to own our souls, does not mean we are ready to sell to Him. We will sell our souls and our futures for something, but perhaps we will not get a good deal. Your soul, your destiny is the most valuable commodity you possess. You can replace your car, you can replace your home or job. But you and I each only have one chance at eternity, only one soul. For what would we sell it?

History is replete with examples of people who sold precious items for paltry sums. In 1626, the island of Manhattan was purchased from the Indians who lived there for bright cloth, beads, and other trinkets worth about \$24. In 1803, to finance war in Europe, Napoleon sold the “Louisiana Purchase” territory to the United States for a total of \$27 million. That may sound like a large sum, until you consider that the land was five times as large as France, and the price was only 4 cents per acre. Spiritual history is replete with examples of people who sold their souls and life’s purposes for pittance. Esau was called a vulgar man because of the cheap sale of his birthright (Heb. 12:16). Achan disobeyed God for some pretty clothes and money (Josh. 6, 7). The rich, young ruler walked away (Matt. 19:16-22). Felix and Drusilla heard Paul, but apparently never obeyed the Gospel (Acts 24:24-27). Demas was a faithful Christian and coworker with Paul (Col. 4:14), but he went

back to the world because he loved it (2 Tim. 4:10).

What price will you demand for your soul? Will it be a garage sale? A bargain basement sale? Or will you receive Jesus’ and God’s gracious offer? Some have sold to others: a spouse, a family member, a friend. We know the phrase, *caveat emptor*, “buyer beware,” but we also need to heed the principle, “seller beware.” Those who sell out will have a day of remorse – seller’s remorse. They will be weeping for wrong choices made. But those who belong to God will never be disappointed. Whom will you allow to own and direct you? God is ready to purchase and redeem you. The offer is on the table by means of the blood of Jesus. “*For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel’s, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?*” (Mark 8:35-37).

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“To Know Jesus and...make Him known”

From the Director's desk



Trent Kennedy
Director
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Jesus trained his apostles. Moses trained Joshua. Elijah trained Elisha. The list could go on, but the Bible is clear that the task of training men to lead, to preach, and to minister is an important one (2 Timothy 2:2). The primary training ground for leadership is the home, but the church has a great role to play in furthering this cause. It is our belief that the Southwest School of Bible Studies can help local congregations in this endeavor.

Since the church is God's spiritual institution ordained on this earth (Matthew 16:18-20), the church must be concerned with training spiritual leaders. If we are to have men serving in such capacities such as leading singing, praying, preaching and other authorized roles such as elders or deacons, the church should desire to do its part in training young men for these tasks. In this regard, the church can serve as a great compliment to the Christian home for training young men to lead. Furthermore, for young men who are not raised in Christian homes, the church may have to fill the primary role of training these individuals to be spiritual leaders. Finally, the church can help young men find mentors to support personal and spiritual growth within the individual.

The school motto at SWSBS is “to know Jesus and make Him known.” A vital part of this work is training men to grow into greater areas of service and leadership in the church. Through classroom instruction, practical experience, and personal mentorship, we will train men to lead in public assemblies and to know and desire the qualifications of leadership roles in the church. We all want to make sure that there is not a future generation who will forsake Jehovah (Judges 2:11-14). If you are interested in the development of young men into leaders or know of some young men who may be interested in growing, we would love to talk to you.

www.swcofc.org