

christian

WORKER



"We are workers together with Him..." (2 Cor. 6:1)

Volume 104, Number 11

8900 Manchaca Road, Austin, TX 78748

November 2018

IT WAS THE SAND IN MY SHOES

Ronnie Scherffius

Imagine the obstacles one might face, the barriers and difficulties one would be forced to overcome if he took up the challenge to walk from New York City to San Francisco. Matt Mattingly does not have to imagine it because he did it! In his book, *The Long Walk Home*, Mattingly chronicles his 3,507 miles/117 days odyssey across America from near the Statue of Liberty in New York City to the Golden Gate Bridge of San Francisco. As he travelled the highways and byways he made note of what he observed, from the number of Coca-Cola cans he saw in ditches to the number of sneakers he wore out on the journey. When asked to tell of his greatest hurdle he gave a rather surprising answer. According to the then 59 year old Mattingly, the toughest part of the trip was not traversing the steep slopes of the mountains or crossing hot dry barren stretches of desert. "The thing that came the closest to defeating me," Mattingly explained, "was the sand in my shoes."

Incredible! More than 3,500 miles on foot in extreme climate across extreme geographic structures, and sand, small insignificant rock particles, is what almost brought the journey to an end! How similar it is for many spiritually. We prepare for the mountains; we build storm shelters; we are ever on the lookout for extreme attacks on our faith. We are certain to know book, chapter, and verse to defend the truth of baptism and to confound the error of faith only salvation (Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; Jas. 2:17, 22, 24, 26), the weekly observance of the Lord's Supper (Matt. 26:26-29; Matt. 28:18; Acts 2:42; 20:7), and a cappella in our worship without the accompaniment

of mechanical instruments (Eph. 5:18-19; Col. 3:16-17). We have studied and can accurately use the Word of God to demonstrate the inspiration of the Bible (2 Tim. 3:16-17) through the fulfillment of prophecy (Ezek. 26; Ps. 22; et al) and the demonstration of scientific foreknowledge (Isa. 40:22; Job 28:25; Eccl. 1:7; et al). Without the slightest hesitation we can weave together Old Testament prophecy and New Testament fulfillment showing without fault the truth that the kingdom of heaven is the church and that Jesus is even now reigning as King (Joel 2:28-32; Isa. 2:2-3; Dan. 2:44; Zech. 6:12-13; Mark 9:1; Luke 9:27; 24:44-49;

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Editor

Cody Westbrook



"We are workers together with Him..." (2 Cor. 6:1)

BACK TO BIBLE AUTHORITY

Upon hearing Jesus teaching in Jerusalem, the Jewish leaders asked Him one very important question, "...By what authority are you doing these things?" (Mark 11:28). Obviously, the Jewish leaders of the day had ulterior motives for asking their question, but the fact remains that authority is a very important matter. If we base our actions upon a false standard of authority then they will not be pleasing to God. Unfortunately, many people rely on standards of authority that are really no standard at all. Emotion, popular opinion, and many other things are commonly the determining factor for many. Sometimes this is done in the name of progress—advancing the cause of Christ in a new generation with greater knowledge and understanding. However, the Bible says, "And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (Col. 3:17). We cannot look outside of the pages of scripture for authority in any age. As we go forward, we must go back to bible authority.

The first step in going back to Bible authority is to recognize that all authority ultimately resides in Jehovah (Rom. 13:1). In Isaiah 43:21 Jehovah said, "This people I have formed for myself; they shall declare my praise." As creator and sustainer of all things, God, and God alone, has the sovereign right to rule. He is the ultimate criterion of power, truth, and reality, and, as David said, "we are His people and the sheep of His pasture" (Ps. 100:3). It is God who rules in the kingdoms of men (Dan. 4:25), and it is He who ordains the powers that be (Rom. 13:1). Because He made us He has the right to rule over us, and it is His will with which we must be concerned, not our own (Matt. 26:42).

In Deuteronomy 18:15-19, Moses foretold of the prophet whom God would raise up from among His people. This prophet would speak with the authority

of God, and all men were to heed His words. As Jesus stood upon the mount of transfiguration, the Father said of Him, "...This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him" (Matt. 17:5). Thus signifying that Jesus was He of whom Moses spoke, and that His message carried with it the full weight of Divine authority. Though Jehovah possesses ultimate authority, He has chosen to place all authority in the hands of His Son, Jesus the Christ. John wrote, "The Father loves the Son, and has given all things into His hand" (John 3:35), and Jesus Himself said, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18). God speaks through His Son (Heb. 1:1-2), and we must do all things by His authority (Col. 3:17).

The authority of Christ is found not only in the words, which He spoke (John 12:48), but also in the preaching and teaching of His apostles. Jesus foreshadowed the authority that He would give to His apostles in Matthew 16:19 when He said, "... whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." Jesus promised them that the Holy Spirit would come upon them after His departure, and would inspire them to teach and preach the authoritative doctrine of Christ (John 14:26; 16:13-15; etc. al.). Just before His ascension Jesus commanded them to

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations... teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you... (Matt. 28:20).

When the Holy Spirit came upon the twelve in Acts 2:1-4, they were inspired by the Spirit to teach and preach the word of God. Those words, though proclaimed through the mouths of the apostles,

CHRISTIAN WORKER

(UPS 109-700)

Third-Class Postage Paid at Manchaca, Texas

Published on a Non-Profit basis by the

Southwest church of Christ, 8900 Manchaca Rd., Austin, TX 78748

E-mail: office@swcofc.org

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Editorial Address: 8900 Manchaca Rd., Austin, TX 78748

Single Subscriptions ----- \$6.00 per year

In Clubs of five or more ----- \$5.50 per year

Per family on the Congregation Plan ----- \$5.00 yearly

In a bundle to a congregation or individual ----- \$0.75 each

Foreign (Air Mail postage) ----- \$17.00 per year

FREE online subscription at www.swcofc.org

were and still are the authoritative word of Jesus Christ. Therefore we must respect and obey them.

Just as society has moved away from respecting the authority of men, so we have moved away from respecting the authority of God. Two of the great pleas of the restoration movement were that we “speak where the Bible speaks, and be silent where the Bible is silent,” and that we “call Bible things by Bible names, and do Bible things in Bible ways.” These two well-intentioned mottos stand squarely upon the principles of Holy Scripture. Behind them was an attitude of supreme reverence for the God of Heaven, and for His will. We must develop that same attitude of respect so that we may go forward, back to Bible authority!

CW

JESUS CHRIST OUR PERFECT EXAMPLE

Clay Bond

*For even hereunto were ye called:
because Christ also suffered for
us, leaving us an example, that ye
should follow his steps:(1 Peter 2:21)*

If you are in Christ Jesus, then your goal in life should be to become more and more like Him. The Apostle John said, “He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked” (1 John 2:6). Through transformation we can become more like Jesus every day (Rom. 8:9; 12:1-2; Col. 3:1-4). Jesus suffered and died on the cross so that we would stop living for self and start living for Him (2 Cor. 5:15).

With the help of God’s Word, each one of us can be an imitator of Christ. We have Jesus’ words written down in the Bible to guide our steps (Col. 3:16; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). We also have His example to follow. Listen to what Peter says in 1 Peter 2:21, “For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps.”

Jesus is a perfect example in obedience. His whole purpose in taking upon Himself the form of a servant and being made in the likeness of men, was so that He could do His Father’s will (John 4:34). Jesus said, “For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me”

(John 6:38). The powerful truth that all of God’s commandments are righteousness is found in Psalm 119:172. Understanding that, consider Jesus’ words when John the Baptist tried to prevent Him from being baptized, “thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” John accepted Jesus’ words and fulfilled righteousness by baptizing the Creator of all things. Jesus Christ was emphasizing to John the importance of obedience. Even when it was difficult to do the Father’s will, Jesus “humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:8). It is imperative that we follow Christ’s example in this area. God wants us to be obedient children because, as far as He’s concerned, “to obey is better than sacrifice” (1 Sam. 15:22). The only way Jesus can propitiate for our sins is if we obey Him (Heb. 5:9). There are strong warnings in the Scriptures for those who refuse to submit to God’s will (2 Thess. 1:7-9).

Jesus is also our perfect example in humble service. I believe the greatest example of this is seen in John 13:1-17 where Jesus took a towel and washed His disciples’ feet. At times the apostles were arguing about who would be the greatest in the kingdom. When Jesus got down on His knees and washed their feet, He taught them the valuable lesson that they did not need a title, they needed a towel. Jesus said, “For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you” (John 13:15). If we follow the example of Jesus, we are going to be busy serving others (Phil. 2:1-5). The focus will not be on self. We will say with Jesus, “I am among you as the One who serves” (Luke 22:27). This is one of the marks of true greatness in Christ kingdom, “whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave” (Matt. 20:26-27). If we learn to serve others, people will see Christ living in us.

Finally, Christ is our perfect example in constant prayer. His day often began in prayer,

in the morning, having risen a long
while before daylight, He went out
and departed to a solitary place;
and there He prayed (Mark 1:35).

When He had to make important decisions, like choosing His twelve apostles, He spent all night in prayer (Luke 6:12). Before He faced the excruciating pain and suffering of the cross, He prayed fervently to His Father (Matt. 26:36-46). If we will follow the example of Jesus, we will begin every day in prayer,

approach every decision with prayer and face every challenge with prayer (1 Thess. 5:17). In prayer we cast our cares upon the one who cares for us (1 Pet. 5:7). Instead of worrying about everything, we should be like Jesus and pray about everything (Phil. 4:6). Prayer helped Jesus through this life and it can also help us. There is power in prayer (James 5:16).

If you are already a Christian, challenge yourself to emulate Jesus more fully each day. If you are not a Christian, now is a great time to start imitating the Master.

CW

“THAT’S IMPOSSIBLE”

Trent Kennedy

In a society of “can doers”, no one likes to hear the word “impossible” unless it is preceded by the words “nothing is.” As Christians we realize the truth of Jesus words, “with God all things are possible” (Matt. 19:26, Mark 10:27, Luke 18:27). Here, in context, Jesus said that the rich would not be able to enter heaven; however, if those rich people trusted in God instead of their riches, all things (eternal salvation) would be possible. In the American Standard Version of the Bible, the word “impossible” is found nine times: five times in the Synoptic Gospels (including the three verses mentioned above) and four times in the book of Hebrews. Consider the later four times that the Bible teaches us that some things are impossible.

1. Hebrews 6:4-6

For as touching those who were once enlightened and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come, and then fell away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.

The word “impossible” is found in verse 6 of the ASV and verse 4 of the KJV and NKJV. No matter whether our word for study is at the first, middle, or end, the message is clear: if Christians fall away from the truth (continual aspect of sin remains in their life), then it is impossible to renew them to

repentance. What a powerful message! This passage has been used time and time again to refute the Calvinistic doctrine of “preservation of the saints” or “once saved always saved. But, we need to also see how this verse serves as a warning to us. If we continue in our sin (thereby putting Him to open shame and falling from Christ), we cannot repent. In order for us to go east, we must quit heading west! If we are unwilling, it is impossible for us to be saved.

2. Hebrews 6:18

“...it is impossible for God to lie...”

The unchangeable nature of God is clearly seen in this fact: He cannot lie. It is not that God will not lie, but He cannot (cf. Titus 1:2, Num. 23:19). It is against His very nature. What trust, what comfort, what refuge, what faith Christians can take in this reality. The promises of God are steadfast and will endure. He has been tried and tested, yet His words remain true. Although the comfort in this passage is great for the child of God, the warning is just as clear for those not right in God’s sight. Concerning hell, damnation, weeping and gnashing of teeth, God cannot lie.

3. Hebrews 10:4

“For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins.”

While the sacrificial system of the Levitical law had pacified God, it had only done so because of the coming sacrifice of Jesus. The blood of bulls and goats can never pay the redemption price for the sins of mankind. God instituted a sacrificial system as a type of the ultimate sacrifice paid by the Word of God Himself when the fullness of time was come. The blessings of this verse are clear: we live under the better covenant with a better sacrifice, and we have full revelation concerning this matter. However, the warning is equally clear: do not look to the Old Law for justification (Heb. 1:1-2), or anywhere else for salvation than Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12).

4. Hebrews 11:6

Without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him, for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that seek after him.

When we pull verses and phrases out of their context (wresting the scriptures), they can become scary: “it is impossible to please God.” However, that is the situation only when one does not have faith. Therefore,

with faith it is possible to please God. Faith consists of believing in God and the promises which he has given concerning the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:19), eternal life (Titus 1:2), the second coming (Titus 2:13) and others; but faith is more than mental acknowledgement (Jas. 2:14-26). To understand faith, read Hebrews 11. The words "by faith" will be immediately followed by action verbs (cf. Hebrews 11:4,5,7,8,9,11,17,20,21,22,23,24,27,28,31). The faith that saves is the faith that obeys! The teaching of impossibilities from Hebrews is both a comfort and a warning on all accounts. It is impossible to find salvation outside of the blood of Christ (cf. 10:4). It is impossible to please God without faith (11:6). It is impossible to repent if we do not stop our sinful ways (6:4-6). In all of these things, and in the comforting knowledge that we can seek Christ for salvation through faith being willing to repent and remain in the light once we have been saved, it is impossible for God to lie (6:18).

CW

ANGER BEGETS ANGER

Troy Spradlin

One of my instructors at Southwest School of Bible Studies once said, "A husband and wife should never yell at each other ... unless there is a fire!" That is funny, in one sense, but it is also true. Harsh arguments and angry words are never constructive for a marriage, or any relationship. Never! Kind words and wisely used speech will always build a stronger relationship. Solomon teaches this principle in Proverbs 15:1-2.

A soft answer turns away wrath... Gentleness will disarm those who are angry. When someone confronts us, our natural defense is to shield ourselves. We will often retaliate with angry speech of our own. It is difficult to remain calm and deal with the situation in a loving manner. Hard arguments and disagreements are always handled best with soft words. Gideon's conduct in Judges 8:1-3 is a good example.

But a harsh word stirs up anger ... A word that causes pain will create resentment. Wrath will produce wrath and anger will beget anger. Using harsh or afflictive words in an argument is equivalent to throwing gas on a fire! Arguments become more

escalated when each party continues to use hateful speech. Ephesians 4:26 teaches "Be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your wrath."

The tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly ... Knowing what to say and when to say it requires experience and wisdom. This only comes with time. It's unfortunate when we intend to say something kind but instead, our words end up causing pain because they weren't applied correctly. There are times when even wise counsel can be foolishly given. Choose your words wisely.

But the mouth of fools pours forth foolishness ... One of my favorite quotes is, "Better to be thought of as a fool, than to open one's mouth and remove all doubt." God gave us one tongue and two ears. We should take the hint that maybe we should listen twice as much as we talk. Learning to listen takes a lot of practice for some of us. It is human nature, but we should remember Solomon's proverb and do so wisely.

Once a word leaves our lips in anger, or malice, it is forever out there where it may continue to cause hurt. An older, wiser preacher once told me that if you do allow a harsh word to be spoken to a loved one that you later regret saying, then go to that person and "take back" every single word. Verbalize to them your remorse and retract everything you said. Do not just leave the words with them by offering a simple "I'm sorry." Part of having agape love for others means looking out for their best interest. Your lingering hateful words are certainly not something that is in their best interest. Take them back!

James describes the power of our speech in a very poetic manner,

And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell (Jas. 3:6).

He goes on to say that "no man can tame the tongue," and that "with it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men," (3:8,9). Perhaps, the most difficult part of being a Christian is watching what we say. If we are to love God with all our being and love our neighbor as ourselves (Matt. 22:37-39), then, speaking kindly to others is a clear indication of that love in action.

CW

LET GO OF ENVY

Joshua Ortiz

Envy is a sin (Rom. 1:29) and is related to covetousness, greediness, or jealousy, but it is not the same as those. Envy happens after a person contrasts himself to another person, and thinks the other person is superior to him. It could be in the areas of wealth, talent, popularity, spiritual maturity, and the like. Envy is when you see what someone has, and you know that you were not able to get that yourself, and so you hate that person and yourself. Numerous examples are given in the Bible. One of them is when the Philistines envied Isaac because he was the only one who prospered during a famine (Gen. 26). They could have stolen from Isaac, but greediness was not the issue. They had envy which meant they felt low of themselves because they could not prosper with their own hard work. Isaac obtained something that they could not, and it made them look inferior. So, they stopped up his wells and told him to get out.

Envy is forbidden under the Christian age and leads to punishment (Rom. 1:29-32). When envy finds its way into the church, it is because we let it in. It would be good to remember that envy put Jesus on the cross. The chief priests handed Him over because of envy (Mark 15:10). But even when you have envy towards someone else, that is another sin that put Jesus on the cross. Envy can happen over the simplest things in life and towards anyone you know. What is the solution for envy? Let God instruct you to love. He commands to “. . . *love your neighbor as yourself*” (Jas. 2:8). But in order for you to love correctly, you have to deny yourself (Mark 8:34). When you let go of self, you no longer follow any standard you make. Therefore, you should not make up your own standard of self-worth; e.g., a new Christian may be tempted to think that experienced Christians are worthier to God. But God teaches He loves both just the same and both are worthy to Him. God wants all people to be saved (2 Pet. 3:10). God shows no partiality (Acts 10:34-35). Of course, you still need to grow in knowledge and the work for God. But you can have peace knowing that whatever stage of Christian maturity you are in, the fact that you are growing pleases God. Let go of envy.

CW

CHASING PERFECTION

Kevin W. Rhodes

Life does not promise a steady stream of positive experiences, an ever-improving situation, or a constant sense of comfort and peace. Indeed, to suggest such a thing is laughable. And yet the critique offered by many in their youth arises from just such a utopian vision of this world. As a result, youthful vigor chases that elusive perfection in whatever form current worldly wisdom can project. Sometimes it appears in political circles masquerading under the disguise of hope. Sometimes men present it as a falsified version of Christianity. Sometimes people give up on the idea of perfection and accept with nihilistic defeat the problems of the world as if they are the ideal. But David, who experienced far more ups and downs in life than most could ever imagine, never wavered in his passion for the perfect, because He recognized its existence in the character of God. Therefore, after decades reigning as king over Israel, David could pen the words of Psalm 145 with a heart for God rooted not only in youthful hope, but in mature experience, and thus declare God, his King. This we also should do—after steady reflection and years of contemplation—so we can see God as He truly is, and thereby understand ourselves.

Our God sits on His throne in heaven, but we must regularly bow before Him and consider His majesty to remind ourselves of His authority and power. More than that, such reflections should swell our hearts with enough thanksgiving to last a lifetime and pour over into eternity (Psa. 145:1). Yet, rather than storing up thankfulness, which is all too soon forgotten, we should cry out daily to the LORD to acknowledge what He has given, building up an appreciation that motivates and increases our praise (Psa. 145:2). The LORD's greatness is unsurpassed; no one even approaches it. Therefore, the worship we offer does not exalt Him beyond measure; it only acknowledges to a small degree the extent of His true glory (Psa. 145:3). Passing this sense of awe on to the next generation becomes our responsibility (Psa. 145:4). Therefore, it is essential to take the time to stop and reflect on who God is and what God has done (Psa. 145:5), to then speak what we have learned boldly (Psa. 145:6), and then commit these reflections to memory so that they might stir up our hearts to worship regularly (Psa. 145:7).

When the LORD passed before Moses and gave

the Law the second time, He described Himself (Ex. 34:6). That description still applied, hundreds of years later when David wrote, and it remains true today. The LORD's character has neither changed nor diminished, nor will it. Thus, all that He reveals of Himself provides a glimpse into eternity and beckons His people to follow. The LORD wants to favor us because He cares about us. His patience and longsuffering, made necessary and obvious by our sin, demonstrate the depth of His mercy. He offers good and pleasant things to His creation because all of His creation matters greatly to Him (Psa. 145:8-9). He has proved this time and time again by what He has done (Psa. 145:10), eliciting praise and appreciation for what He has made possible, but most of all for His kingdom (Psa. 145:11-12). That King David spoke in terms of God's kingdom rather than his own bears witness to David's faith in God's promises. For the true glory of the kingdom depends upon the LORD's reign, ultimately fulfilled in every way by the coming of the Messiah (Psa. 145:13; 2 Sam. 7:14).

Appreciating the greatness of God begins with humility built upon the recognition of our need (Psa. 145:14). It grows into expectation and reliance on God's providence for what we have and enjoy in life (Psa. 145:15-16). It matures in recognizing justice in the LORD's will and kindness in all He does (Psa. 145:17). And all of this God does to draw us near to Him, so that we trust Him and place ourselves under His care by submitting to Him and His will (Psa. 145:18; Jas. 4:8; Rom. 10:13; Acts 22:16). Our God wants to save; He listens and watches for the opportunity to do so, to see if people will do His will and follow Him (Psa. 145:19). But judgment will ultimately come, and the distinction between those who have acknowledged the greatness of the LORD, have submitted to Him, and have become His people and those who have neglected their opportunity will become evident in the preservation of the righteous in the presence of God and the destruction of the wicked who acted as if they did not need Him (Psa. 145:20). Our God does not require perfection of us—only faithfulness (Rev. 2:10). But this is possible because He is indeed perfect, and therefore worthy. Let us then also say with David, "My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord, And all flesh shall bless His holy name Forever and ever" (Psa. 145:21).

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Acts 1:8; Acts 2; 1 Tim. 6:15), and Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ of God (Isa. 40:3; John 1:19-29). We have prepared our hearts to be able "to give a defense to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear" (1 Pet. 3:15). But are we overlooking the sand in our shoes—those small day to day temptations that we determine insignificant and perhaps never even give them a second thought?

Might it be the case that one is so bold as to believe that one innocent little click on a link to a "questionable" website will have no effect on their heart and mind? How many men and women, co-workers, daily throw caution to the wind as they innocently pass flirtatious remarks or send texts that are too personal and put in jeopardy their marriage, family, and eternal soul? Perhaps the music to which we choose to listen is filled with lyrics about drinking, carousing, unfaithfulness, and worldliness in general—and we never consider that we are numbing ourselves to such sinful deeds. How many times has a Christian brother or sister been overtaken in a fault that began with just one drink? How often is it the case that a brother or sister becomes overwhelmed with an addiction initiated by the purchase of an innocent five dollar lottery ticket? How many souls will be lost because of that tiny insignificant grain of sand we have indiscriminately labeled a "little white lie?" How wise the warning—Beware the little things, for the small things in life are often what bring spiritual giants to their knees!

How vital are the words of Peter and how desperately we ought to give heed in ALL areas of our lives:

Besober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet. 5:8).

The attacks of our adversary are not always in the form of a ferocious lion! Many temptations appear as a wolf in sheep's clothing, a cat among the pigeons, or as sand in our shoes. Let us heed the words of our beloved brother Paul, "watch thou in *all* things" (2 Tim. 4:5).

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