

Spiritual Considerations...

Selected articles designed to assist in our Bible study and Christian walk.



Dave Phillips, editor

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Are We Up to the Challenge of Teaching?

Dave Phillips, Germantown

One of the greatest challenges, if not the greatest challenge, to Christian teachers (not just preachers) is the implicit responsibility. Teachers are responsible for what they teach. James tells us that the teacher will incur a stricter judgment (Jm. 3:1). But what does he mean? Is the judgment from man or God? Will there be one category for Christians and another for Christian teachers at the judgment? Wouldn't it be better for me to stay away from teaching if I will face a more careful critique at judgment? Couldn't this discourage some Christians from teaching?

Several men have commented on this very thought:

R.V.G. Tasker states, "James warns them that all who have professed to point out to others the way in which they should live, will receive greater condemnation than the rest of men if they have failed to walk in that way themselves." Instead of pointing out to *others* how *they* should live, it seems appropriate for Christians to point out to *everyone* how *we all* should live. Ezra, the scribe, certainly felt compelled to learn the law himself before he taught others (Ezra 7:10), but I seriously doubt that he ever felt that he had achieved perfection and ceased the learning process.

John Calvin said, "The common and almost universal interpretation of this passage is, that the apostle discourages the desire for the office of teaching, and for this reason, because it is dangerous, and exposes one to a heavier judgment in case he transgresses; and they think that he said, 'Be not many masters,' because there ought to have been some. But I take masters not to be those who performed a public duty in the church, but such as took some upon them the right of passing judgment upon others, for such reprovers sought to be accounted as masters of morals." Surely the warning for teachers is not limited to the "public teacher," but also applies to the individual who is speaking privately to another individual. If it is limited to a public teacher, where do you make a distinction? How many does it take in your group before you become the leader? We all must be careful.

Guy N. Woods stated, "...If the responsibility is greater, and the judgment heavier for those who misuse or do not properly use the occasion, the reward is greater for those who do properly teach and edify others. Paul described the Philippians as his "**brethren beloved and longed for,**" his "**joy and crown**" (Phil 4:1). And John said, '**Greater joy have I not than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth.**' (3 Jn. 4)." Now, I begin to see that there is a special privilege of helping one see that God has a plan for his/her life and that the church is sincerely interested in helping them find fulfillment of that plan. There may be great responsibility in the task, but the task is imperative if the lost person is to find Christ. Paul pictures this beautifully in Romans 10:13-15.

Peter H. Davids reminds us that "the author reveals his own position at this point...for he includes himself among the teachers; whatever else one knows of the (author) of this work, he considered himself a teacher and had a proper humility about his position. He would also be judged for his teaching (a similar concept is expressed by Paul in 1 Cor. 9:27, where he refers to the possibility of teaching others, but then being declared an 'outcast' himself).

Philip P. Martin says, "persons were putting themselves forward as teachers without having paused to reckon with the high standard of behavior required or having faced the temptation of ulterior motives (such as love of prestige or reward)."

In one sense, there are those who have set themselves about the task of teaching and preaching the Word of God. The task is enormous. The responsibility is great. The rewards are incalculable. Man looks to them for direction. God looks to them for faithfulness.

In another sense, all of us are teachers. We have been charged with the responsibility of living each day in a way that will glorify Christ. When others see us, they see "our model" of Christ. Because of our imperfections and incompleteness, how careful and prayerful we must be.

Is Your Hut Burning?

(Via Acorns from the Royal Oak Church of Christ)

The only survivor of a shipwreck was washed up on a small uninhabited island. He prayed feverishly for God to rescue him, and every day he scanned the horizon for help, but none seemed forthcoming. Exhausted, he eventually managed to build a little hut out of driftwood to protect him from the elements, and to store his few possessions. But then one day, after scavenging for food, he arrived home to find his little hut in flames, the smoke rolling up to the sky. The worst had happened; everything was lost. He was stunned with grief and anger. "God, how could you do this to me!" he cried.

Early the next day, however, he was awakened by the sound of a ship that was approaching the island. It had come to rescue him. "How did you know I was here?" asked the weary man of his rescuers. "We saw your smoke signal," they replied.

It is easy to get discouraged when things are going bad, but we shouldn't lose heart, because God is at work in our lives, even in the midst of pain and suffering. Remember, next time your little hut is burning to the ground --- it just may be a smoke signal that summons the grace of God.

Ready for Your Reward?

Johnny May, illustration from a sermon on Matt. 5:13-16

Compliments do have a way of over-inflating the ego, you know? But every time I start feeling smug or over-confident, I remember this story. I dreamed that several members of this congregation and I arrived at the pearly gates at the same time. Saint Peter told us we would have to wait at the gate until our transportation arrived. He said that each of us would be getting around in heaven in a style related to the way we lived on earth.

After a few minutes, a Lear Jet landed there in front of us. It was one of those fancy corporate models. The door opened and we could see that the plane was equipped with every kind of gadget you could imagine. And there was a full staff of attendants just waiting to serve the lucky occupant. I started to get on board the plane, but St. Peter said to one of our nursery workers beside me, "Here's your ride!"

Well, needless to say I was disappointed. But just then a big, Greyhound touring bus pulled up - you know, the kind all the country and western stars travel around in. The door opened, and we could see that the bus was just as well equipped as the plane had been. And there were attendants on the bus also, just waiting to serve the riders. I had just about decided that I liked the bus just as well as the plane, when St. Peter called out to a little old man, "Ok, here's your transportation!"

I was trying to be understanding when a golden stretch limousine pulled up. It was the most beautiful automobile you ever saw! And the driver got out and walked around and opened the door, and we could see the luxurious interior. "This will be all right," I thought to myself. But then St. Peter said to one of our former deacons, "Climb in, Bert."

I noticed that the modes of transportation were getting smaller all the time, and I was the only one left. I thought, "Well, I never have been much on motorcycles, but if a big, shiny new Harley-Davidson with enough chrome to dazzle the eyes of the angels pulls up, that'll be okay."

Just then St. Peter walked over to me and handed me a pair of roller skates. Then he looked down at his list, shook his head absent-mindedly, and took one of the skates back!

Education

John Ruskin (1819-1900), English art critic and writer

Education does not mean teaching people what they do not know. It means teaching them to behave as they do not behave. It is not teaching the youth the shapes of letters and the tricks of numbers, and then leaving them to turn their arithmetic to roguery, and their literature to lust. It means, on the contrary, training them into the perfect exercise and kingly continuance of their bodies and souls. It is a painful, continual and difficult work to be done by kindness, by watching, by warning, by precept, and by praise, but above all, by example.

"Everything changes; but the need for a change."