



TRUTH

“... thy word is truth” (John 17:17)

June 2010

THANK GOD FOR WHAT JESUS DID FOR US!

What Jesus did for you and me was an incredible demonstration of genuine love. What Jesus did for us, we do not deserve. What He did for us was an act of grace. We could never repay the debt that we owe Him. But, we can (and should) be grateful for Him and His life-giving sacrifice! Not a day should pass without us expressing our thanks to God for what His Son has done on our behalf. “*But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*” (1 Corinthians 15:57). Jesus did some amazing things for us. Let us look at four actions that He took on our behalf. May the Bible’s message about Jesus ever thrill our souls.

First, for you and me Jesus **CAME** – He came from heaven to earth. He Himself 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). In heaven, Jesus shared in the glory of the Father “*before the world was*” (John 17:5), but He left heaven to come to earth. Why? “. . . *Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners*” (1 Timothy 1:15). Let us admit it without shame: if Jesus had not come, we could not be saved from our sins. Consider some of the beautiful words of the song “He Still Came” [*Songs of Faith and Praise*, song number 377]:

Yet the King of kings left heaven to become a lowly man,
He left all heaven’s glory to fulfill His Father’s plan.
He still came just for me, He still came.
Knowing all He would endure, He still came.
Disregarding every cost, from the manger to the cross,
He still came just for me, He still came.

Second, for you and me Jesus **WENT** – He went to the cross. When the mob came to take Him in the Garden of Gethsemane, He could have called “*twelve legions of angels*” to protect Himself (Matthew 26:53), but He did not [Note: one legion = 6000]. Jesus had the power to run away from the interrogations of the Jewish council, Pilate, and Herod, but He chose not to

do so. Instead, He endured mockery, physical and mental torture, and with the help of Simon carried His cross “*to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him*” (Luke 23:33). Why did our loving Lord go to the cross when He could have avoided it? The Bible’s answer is plain: the Christ “. . . *bore our sins in His own body on the tree*” (1 Peter 2:24). If Jesus had not gone to the cross to bear the burden of our sins, we would still be hopelessly lost!

Third, for you and me Jesus **STAYED** – He stayed on the cross. After He was crucified, He hung on the cross for six hours (Mark 15:25,34-37). While He was still hanging there, some mockingly spoke these words of blasphemy: “*Save Yourself, and come down from the cross! . . . He saved others; Himself he cannot save*” (Mark 15:30,31). Did Jesus have the power to come down from the cross? Of course, He did! But, He stayed right there until the end. Why? Number one, because of His great love for us, and number two, because He knew that in God’s plan His death was absolutely necessary.

Fourth, for you and me Jesus **RETURNED** – He returned to heaven, where He sat down at the right hand of the Father (Mark 16:19). He went “*into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us*” (Hebrews 9:24). Upon His return to heaven, He was given “*dominion, and glory, and a kingdom*” (Daniel 7:13,14). There “*He always lives to make intercession*” for His followers (Hebrew 7:25).

Do you not see these four great actions of Jesus that He carried out for our salvation?! For you and me the Christ *came, went, stayed, and returned*. The message about Jesus, His cross, and the empty tomb never grows old, does it? May we always be grateful for our Lord’s gracious sacrifice and work on our behalf. Let us be busy telling others of the salvation that all people can enjoy through the Son of God.

-- Roger D. Campbell

LESSONS FROM A HAPPY FAMILY REUNIION

They were twins. Daddy loved the oldest one, and mama had a special affection for the younger one. By conniving and deceiving, the younger of the twins got his brother's birthright plus his special blessing from their father. As a result of losing that special blessing, big brother vowed to kill his deceiving younger brother.

These are some of the familiar facts that we associate with the biblical account of Esau and Jacob. Their rocky relationship is presented in Genesis chapters twenty-five and twenty-seven. As a result of Esau's threat to kill Jacob (Genesis 27:41), Jacob went away to his uncle Laban's, where he married Leah and Rachel. Jacob lived there for a total of twenty years (Genesis 31:41).

After the passing of those twenty years, God told Jacob to return to the land of his fathers (Genesis 31:3). However, before Jacob made it back to the land of Canaan, he first met Esau along the way. These twin brothers apparently had not seen each other since Jacob left home. When they met, would they finally get to "fight it out," would they simply ignore one another, or would they somehow turn it into a happy family reunion?

Here is the Bible's answer: "*Then he [Jacob, rdc] crossed over before them and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother. But Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept*" (Genesis 33:3,4). The reunion of these two brothers was a blissful moment! Knowing the hatred and resentment that existed between them in the past, who would have thought that they would come back together in such a wonderful manner? Let us look at some of the lessons that we can learn from this account.

First, sometimes things are not nearly as hopeless or bleak as they may appear to be. Sometimes we get ourselves all worked up over what we are afraid will happen, but in the end, it all turns out much better than we ever anticipated. Make no mistake about it, when Jacob knew that he was going to have to cross paths with Esau, ". . . *Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed*" (Genesis 32:7). And we understand why! After all, twenty years earlier "*Esau hated Jacob*" and vowed to kill him (Genesis 27:41).

The message for Christians that is written all over Matthew 6:25-34 is "do not worry." So often we "worry ourselves sick" over things that never come to pass. Worry shows a lack of trust in God, it shows us to be like unbelievers, and it does not accomplish anything positive. We must learn to put our lives in

God's hand and accept the trials that come to put our faith to the test (James 1:2,3; 1 Peter 1:7).

Second, sometimes people really do change for the better. Look at the change in Esau's attitude toward his brother. After he felt like he had been cheated or "ripped off," Esau hated Jacob. He even said that he would kill him. Hatred is a strong emotion, and a vow to murder someone is a serious matter. But, after the passing of much time, Esau's attitude toward his brother was drastically different. Read it again: "*But Esau ran to meet him, and embraced him, and fell on his neck and kissed him, and they wept.*"

People's hearts can change. We see it in family relationships, we see it in the church, and we also see it in those to whom we make an effort to teach the gospel. Before their conversion, some in the first century had been "*hateful and hating one another*" (Titus 3:3). But, they changed. Saul of Tarsus went from being a rejecter of the gospel to a receiver of it. In Bible terminology, he at first was like the wayside soil, then he became good soil (Luke 8:4-15). He obviously had a change of heart. Thinking back to Esau, we know that he made his mistakes. But, to his credit, he removed hatred from his heart.

Third, in the happy family reunion of Jacob and Esau we see the beauty of brotherly reconciliation. Rebekah, the twins' mother, expressed her hope that one day Esau's "*fury*" would subside (Genesis 27:44,45). It did. The picture of the peaceful and loving meeting of Esau and Jacob that we see in Genesis 33 is a thing of beauty – brotherly forgiveness, a willingness to bury the hatchet, a desire to make up and move on.

Personal conflicts between brethren (both biological and spiritual brothers and sisters) can cause such tensions that the individuals involved feel like their whole life is messed up. How true is the saying, "*A brother offended is harder to win than a strong city*" (Proverbs 18:19).

As Christians, we must strive to work out any personal conflicts that exist between us. The Holy Spirit charges us, "*Bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do*" (Colossians 3:13). The time to get together for the purpose of ironing out personal problems that keep us separated is *right now*, while we still have the chance.

Let us all strive to learn and apply the lessons from Esau and Jacob's happy reunion.

-- Roger D. Campbell

DEALING WITH DISAPPOINTMENT (1)

We live in a world in which not everything happens exactly as we wish it would. Anyone that is capable of reading and understanding what I am writing has experienced some form of disappointment. Students are disappointed when they do not score as well as they would like to on an exam. Athletes are disappointed when they do not perform at the level which they desire to compete. Those seeking a particular job are disappointed when they are not hired. On the spiritual side, as Christians, our hearts are shattered when we see children of God turn away from the truth.

Regardless of whom we are, disappointment is a real emotion with which all of us must deal in life. I am not a psychologist, counselor, or heart expert of any kind. I would, however, like to offer some facts, reminders, and soul-searching questions for your consideration.

(1) God never promised that everything in life will go like we want it to go. For instance, Jesus told Simon that there would come a time when he would be carried where he did not wish to go (John 21:18). So goes life.

(2) Part of each person's life on earth is facing trials and troubles (1 Peter 1:6,7). Disappointment can be a troublesome trial to face. Such a reality should serve as a reminder to us that, though disappointments may affect us while we live on this temporary planet, there is a place where there will be no disappointments. It is called "heaven."

(3) We must keep our focus on the ultimate goal. Like Abraham, we are waiting for "*the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God*" (Hebrews 11:10). We must not allow Satan to use life's disappointments to distract us from our number one goal, which is to go be with the Lord forever!

(4) Remember, we are not the first ones to face disappointments. The Bible records troublesome, disappointing episodes in the lives of many of the godly men and women of history. Moses was disappointed with the Israelites. Samuel was disappointed in King Saul. Simon Peter was totally disappointed with himself when he denied his Lord. Yet, they all overcame such disappointments and served the Lord faithfully.

(5) As we struggle with various forms of disappointment, it is possible to learn some helpful lessons from such (even learn some things about our true character) and grow as a person as a result. Yes, the trying of our faith, including dealing with disappointment, works patience in those who maintain a healthy attitude throughout

their season of disappointment (James 1:2,3).

(6) Sometimes closed doors turn us in a different direction and can actually turn out to be a blessing. Paul and those traveling with him were temporarily forbidden by the Godhead to preach in Asia and Bithynia. Instead, they got the call to go preach in Macedonia (Acts 16:6-10). What a blessing that was to the continent of Europe, as churches were established in Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, and Corinth. Such came about after doors were closed elsewhere. A disappointment was turned into joy and productive activity in the Lord's Cause. Some friends of mine originally desired and planned to work in two different foreign nations spreading the gospel. In the end, both of those doors were closed. But, rather than dwell on their disappointment, they instead went to a third country and had a very productive work there. Satan wants to use disappointments to get us down. We may feel badly when things do not go as we had hoped, but we must pick ourselves up, move forward, and keep pressing on!

(7) If your heart is broken because something did not turn out as you had hoped, ask yourself this question: "In the big picture of things, is it really that big of a deal?" We have all seen small children have temper tantrums when they do not get the color of shoes they want, do not get to sit exactly where they want, or do not get to watch the show or video that they want. Sadly, some teenagers and adults, whose level of maturity ought to far exceed that of a toddler, "go wild" when their heart has to face disappointment. Many choose to wallow in self pity, trying to convince themselves and anyone else that will listen that they are the most pitiful people in the history of the human race. When we are tempted to go around feeling sorry for ourselves, it would be a good idea to read Philippians 4:4: "*Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice.*" What makes this teaching even more powerful is that it was written by one (the apostle Paul) who was at that very hour of his life a prisoner in Rome. Imagine that, a confined, chained man encouraging folks "on the outside" to keep their chin up! Shame on us when we allow a minor, trivial, unimportant, insignificant matter to dominate our thoughts and attitude and keep us in a disappointed-and-down-hearted mode.

Disappointment is a real part of life. It is not, though, "the end of the world." [To be continued]

-- Roger D. Campbell

Acts 5:40-42 – NOTABLE ACTIONS OF THE APOSTLES THAT WE CAN IMITATE

The apostles were doing many signs and multitudes were being added to the Lord in the city of Jerusalem (Acts 5:12-16). The Jewish authorities did not like it one bit, so they had the apostles arrested. God sent an angel to release them, but when they returned to preach again in the temple area, they were once again taken into custody (5:17-26). The Jewish Sanhedrin rebuked the apostles for what it considered to be misconduct, but ultimately it released them.

With the above information as a background, let us now read the words of Acts 5:40-42:

And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

We may never suffer through the type of persecution that the apostles endured, and we certainly will not do true miracles as they did, but there surely are some lessons that we can learn from their attitude and action. What do we see in the apostles on this occasion that is worthy of imitation?

(1) The apostles delighted to be able to suffer for Jesus' sake. They rejoiced – not complained, not whined, not blasphemed – they *rejoiced*. They counted it as an honor to be able to suffer for the name of the One Who had willingly suffered for them. The apostle Peter later wrote to saints that were facing severe trials and persecution. His instruction for them included these words: “. . . rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings . . . If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you . . . Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter” (1 Peter 4:13,14,16). You and I need to learn to rejoice in the Lord always, even when things do not go as we desire.

(2) The apostles defied human decrees that conflicted with the revealed will of God. The apostles did not simply spread the gospel; they did so despite a direct command from the Jewish Sanhedrin not to do it. It was not the first time that they had gone against the council's decree, and they knew that doing so had the potential to get them into big trouble once more. But still, there they were, doing again what the council despised: doing their best to fill the whole area with the good news of the Lord's salvation. Before the Jewish leaders beat and released them, the apostles told them to their face: “*We ought to obey God rather than men*” (Acts 5:29). They did not organize a public demonstration. They did not go around shouting as they held signs that revealed their anger. They simply

let it be known that they intended to do what God told them to do, regardless of what any humans might think or say about it. Then, they went out and continued to work to carry out their Lord's charge to preach His will to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem (Luke 24:47). Brothers and sisters, their attitude and action showed courage and commitment. Most of us could do better in these two areas, do you not agree?

(3) The apostles taught and preached daily. That is what the Bible says (5:42). Not once per month, and not one day per week. No, their pattern was to do it every single day. No doubt they were glad to do so. No doubt they felt a sense of joy each time someone obeyed the gospel. Yet, being a daily teacher of God's word involves a huge amount of work. It requires self-discipline and steadfastness, too. Is the church putting forth that kind of effort today? Are we really trying to reach souls on a daily basis?

Daily evangelism was the practice of the early church. One of the clear factors in the numerical growth of the Kingdom in its early years was the evangelistic fervor of Jesus' followers. Collectively, they showed such zeal each day. Consider some other references in the Book of Acts that point to daily teaching [emphasis below is mine, rdc]:

“*So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily*” (16:5). “*Therefore he [Paul] reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and with the Gentile worshippers, and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there*” (17:17). “. . . he [Paul] departed from them and withdrew the disciples, reasoning daily in the school of Tyrannus” (19:9).

We further read in Acts 2:47 that the Lord added saved people to the church on a daily basis. While such a statement does not necessarily prove that the teaching was done each day, it would make us think that teaching was done often, yes, very often. We need to step up our efforts in the 21st century. Just like the apostles, we, too, need to go to work to teach and preach Jesus as the Christ on a daily basis.

(4) The apostles taught both publicly and privately. The Bible says that they taught and preached “*in the temple, and in every house.*” Some people can be reached by hearing the gospel proclaimed in a public manner, while many more learn and receive the gospel through teaching that is done in person-to-person settings. A wise course of action is to employ a combination of both public and private teaching. What works well in one location may not be the best approach in other places. There is so much work to do! Let us learn from and imitate the apostles.

--Roger D. Campbell

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