

The Brown Street Beacon

"...Shine out among them like beacon lights,

holding out to them the Word of Life" (Phil 2:15-16)



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God's Acid Test

On one occasion, after Jesus had silenced the Sadducees concerning the resurrection from the dead, a certain lawyer was moved to tempt Him by asking a question about the law. This particular lawyer said to Jesus, "Master, which is the great commandment in the law?" (Matthew 22:36) Jesus answered, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment" (vers. 37,38).

Loving God with all our hearts is our primary responsibility. That God loves us has been proven beyond doubt by what He has done for us. John wrote, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10). Later in the same chapter, John affirmed, "We love him, because he first loved us" (ver. 19).

How can we not love a God who sacrificed His only begotten Son so that we might live? How can we not love a God Who watches over us like a loving and protective Father, and who provides us with all that we need (Matthew 6:25-7:11; Philippians 4:19)? It should be easy and natural for us to love God with our whole heart.

Loving God, though, involves more than just saying that we do, or even thinking that we do. There are many people who claim that they love God and who sincerely believe that they do, but who simply don't. How then do we know for sure that we truly love God? The acid test for loving God is obedience. Jesus simply said, "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:15).

No matter how much we talk about loving God, the bottom line is we only love Him if we obey Him. Disobedience is a sign of a lack of respect. A lack of respect is a sign of a lack of love. God is truly disappointed when we disobey Him. Can we say that we love God if we care nothing about hurting Him? True love is always demonstrative. This is why John teaches us not to love in word only, but in deed (1 John 3:18). Aren't you glad that God loved us in more than just word? What if Jesus just said that He loved us but backed out of God's plan before laying down His life for us? Where would that leave us today? You know the answer to that, don't you? We would be condemned to eternal death. Thankfully, God did more than talk. He acted. He sent His Son to die in our place. Jesus did more than talk. He acted. He gave up the riches of heaven and took on the form of a servant so that we could be saved (Philippians 2:5-9; 2 Corinthians 8:9). How is it that some can now claim to love God and His Son in word but not in deed? The one who says that he loves Christ but refuses to keep His commandments speaks empty words. Jesus said, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me..." (John 14:21).

Let's all examine our lives to see if we really love God. When God, through inspired men, says that we are not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together (Hebrew 10:25), and we violate that

command regularly and without repentance, do we love God? Evidently there are some among us who love God on Sunday morning, but not on Sunday night. There are those who claim to love God, but at about 7:30 on Wednesday evenings, the truth is really revealed.

Do we think we love God if we refuse to forgive those who sin against us? Forgiving is given to us as a command over and over again in the Word of God. It is not optional to forgive those who sin against us, it is mandatory. How can we ignore such a clear commandment of God and then turn around and say that we love Him?

Preaching the gospel to the lost is a commandment (Matthew 28:19). Controlling our tongues is a commandment (James 3:1-12). Refraining from a lustful heart is a commandment (Matthew 5:27,28). The Bible is full of instructions which teach us how to live before God (Titus 2:12). These instructions are obligatory. They are commandments given to us by God. The question is will we keep them? Maybe the better question is, do we love God?

Don

Building & Battle by Wilson Adams

In Nehemiah chapter 4, God's leader is faced with a serious challenge - discouragement. Nehemiah had been commissioned by the Lord to return to Jerusalem and rebuild the city wall. It was no easy task. This was no "9 to 5 kind of job. This was one of those "no-way-in-the-world" projects. Yet, in the face of multiplied threats and constant criticism, Nehemiah got it done. How? There are several answers, one in particular that saw Nehemiah challenge the people to maintain a balance between building and battle.

"As for the builders, each wore his sword girded at his side as he built..."(4:8). They could not stop the work to fight the enemy. But, they could not work and ignore the fight either. Nehemiah said, "Draw the sword with one hand and fight with the other."

There Are Two Extremes In Building The Lord's Work

1. Some churches never build because they are too busy fighting. There is nothing Satan likes to hear any more than the sounds of silence when God's people lay down their hammer and saws. So often we are too busy fighting (usually with each other) to lay bricks necessary to build the Lord's work. We champion the cause of truth to the neglect of soul-winning. We glory in our stand against denominationalism, institutionalism, Pentecostalism, Catholicism, Crossroadism, Calvinism and all other "isms" while, at the same time, our personal lives are spiritually bankrupt. We consider ourselves "sound" if we oppose this or that, all the while failing to pray, forgive and love all men as we should. We're too busy fighting to build.

2. Some churches never fight because they are too busy building. Sounds odd, doesn't it? More and more churches are putting such an accelerated emphasis on being "positive" that they have lost their grip on the sword. The Bible exhorts us to "contend earnestly for the faith." There are times when we must draw the sword and defend the truth, expose error and rebuke sin. Call it negative and old fashion but the Scriptures say, "buy the truth and sell it not" - and I'm afraid that some are selling the precious Gospel of Jesus upon the altar of positive thinking and unity at any price. We're so busy building that we ignore the fight!

There must be a balance between building and battle. We must never lay down the bricks to pick up the sword. Yet, we cannot afford to ignore the battle either.