

Northeast Church of Christ

FROM THE PEN OF PAUL: LET US NOT GROW WEARY (2)

Consider the time element. That which is promised to those who “faint not” is to be theirs “in due season.” This is an exhortation to patience. Paul had exhorted the Corinthian brethren, near the end of his first letter, by urging them to “Be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (I Corinthians 15:58). The idea of being patient and being stedfast are almost synonymous. Jesus also spoke of the importance of patience when He said, “In your patience possess ye your souls” (Luke 21:19). Patience comes when we are tried or tested. James wrote, “Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience” (James 1:3). Last week we mentioned some of the things that cause us to “faint” or relax or quit in our service. Trials and tribulations, instead of being the cause of our fainting, should be used to promote the patience it takes to see the journey through to the end.

We also need to remember that God works on His time schedule, not ours. In Galatians 4:4, Paul wrote of God sending forth “His Son, made of a woman, made under the law” (Galatians 4:4). But he tells us that this great event was “when the fullness of time was come.” God was operating from eternity on His time schedule. He knows what is best; He knows what we need; and if we will just continue to work and wait on God’s schedule, there is a promise awaiting us.

“We shall reap,” writes Paul. Doesn’t that statement ring with great certainty and truth? Paul wrote in Romans 8:37, “In all things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.” And Paul spoke of this great victory to the Corinthians when he said, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (I Corinthians 15:55-57). It was immediately following this announcement of victory that Paul reminded the Corinthians that “labor is not in vain in the Lord” (v. 58). Remember John’s statement in I John 5:4: “...this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.” This promise is also expressed beautifully by Paul in II Corinthians 4:16 and in II Timothy 4:6-8: “For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.” “For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge shall give me at that day...” Paul could just as easily have said in each of these beautiful passages, “I faint not; I did not quit even when the road got difficult, because I knew the certainty of the promise given by my Lord.” Read I Corinthians 4:1 where Paul said, “we faint not.”

Continued on p.3

FROM THE PREACHER'S VIEWPOINT

WIELDING THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT

“The sword of the Spirit” is defined by the Spirit himself, through Paul. It is the word of God. “Why is it called the sword *of the Spirit*? Because the Spirit *gave it* and not because he *uses* or *wields it*. The Spirit gave it to men that they might use or wield it. There is not a more unsupported theory in this apostate age than the one that teaches that the Spirit wields the sword. He did not do this even in the age of miracles. Jesus said to his Father “The words that thou gavest me I have given them.” Given to whom? To the apostles. What did he tell them to do with these words, or which is the same, the gospel? He commanded them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.” Preaching the gospel is preaching the word, or wielding the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God. After Jesus died and rose and ascended into heaven, he sent the Spirit to guide the apostles into all truth; to bring all things to their remembrance. On Pentecost the Spirit came, and they spake as the Spirit gave them utterance. The history says, “When they heard this” – the word spoken – “they were pierced in their heart.” The Spirit brought the word to their remembrance, and the apostles preached it – spake as the Spirit gave them utterance. In Solomon’s porch, Peter preached, or wielded the sword – the word of God. Philip wielded the sword in Samaria. Peter wielded the sword at the house of Cornelius. Paul commanded Timothy to “Preach the word.” This was wielding the sword of the Spirit, the word of God.

This whole theory about the word being a dead letter, whether so intended or not, is the

very thing to neutralize the gospel, and cause honest people who believe the gospel, to wait for some immediate power to do something more for them before they come to God. This very theory, in the place of being Scriptural, is directly opposed to the very spirit and intention of the Scriptures, and is, we doubt not, chargeable with hindering more souls from turning to the Lord and receiving the salvation of God than all the out-and-out infidelity in the country. They hear the word of God - the gospel of their salvation - the power of God to salvation to every one that believe it, and honestly believe it. They hear the preaching of the cross of Christ, the wisdom of God and the power of God, and believe it with their whole hearts; but the preacher says you must wait till the Spirit makes it effectual, and till the Spirit quickens you and prepares you to receive it, about which there is not one word in the book of God.

—Benjamin Franklin

ELDERS AND DISFELLOWSHIP

God’s plan for each congregation is to have qualified elders to oversee the flock (Acts 14:23; Tit. 1:5; Heb. 13:17). Elders are responsible for the congregation over which the Holy Spirit made them overseers (Acts 20:28). They have no responsibility over other congregations of the Lord’s people.

We hear folks from time to time talking about the elders withdrawing fellowship from individuals in other congregations. Does God hold accountable all elders in the church to discipline the unruly and rebellious throughout the whole world? In other words does God command and give authority for elders in a congregation to withdraw fellowship from members of another congregation? If so, an eldership local is responsible for the whole world.

—Malcolm L. Hill

Continued from p. 1 – “Pen of Paul”

“If we faint not.” This is the conditional part of the promise. As Christians, disciples of Christ, soldiers in the Lord’s army, runner’s in the Christian race, we cannot afford to quit like spoiled children. Jesus said that we must be “faithful unto death” in order to receive “the crown of life” (Revelation 2:10). And He promised that “he that endureth to the end” would be saved (Matthew 10:22). He even spoke of one who “having put his hand to the plow, and looking back” is not “fit for the kingdom of heaven” (Luke 9:62).

Sad indeed to see disciples let victory slip away due to becoming weary and fainting for whatever the reason. What about you? Are you weary in

doing right? do you feel like the world has let you down or teamed up on you? Are you thinking of giving up and quitting? If so, please, please, reconsider the admonition in the passage that has served as the text for these two articles. I would urge you, like the Hebrews writer urged his readers, “For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, *lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds*. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin” (Heb. 12:3-4).

Remember the goal: Heaven will surely be worth it all! (See II Corinthians 4:16-18).

—*Paul M. Wilmoth*