

Friend or Foe?

Rick Kelley (2004)

(From Prestonsburg Church of Christ Bulletin, 11/13/11)

God loves everyone. That doesn't mean God approves of everyone. There are "those that are His," ones who "depart from iniquity" (2 Tim. 2:19); and there are those who "refuse" and "reject" Him. Hebrews 12:25 states, "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven."

Those who submit to God's will are called His "friends" (Jam. 2:23; cf. John 15:14). Those who seek friendship with the world are called His enemies (1 John 2:15-17). James 4:4 reveals, "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God."

Being friends with God is not difficult (1 John 5:3; Prov. 10:29) – especially when compared to the difficulty of being His enemy (Prov. 13:15b). Being friends with God pays richly (Rom. 8:17; Titus 3:7), while being an enemy of God is costly. "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matt. 16:26).

So, does God really love everyone? Indeed. He sent his Son to die for us all (John 3:16; Heb. 2:9). Is God friends with everyone? No. God's enemies outnumber His friends. "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." (Matt. 7:13-14).

Friend, or enemy? Which are you? Ω



Rick Kelley

Alumni News

The Prestonsburg, KY congregation began its 47th year of work by opening a new worship and classroom facility on the congregation's anniversary date of Jan. 1, 2012. The new auditorium will seat about 250, with seating for an additional 150 in the balcony. The Lord blessed us with a baptism (Dec. 31) recently, as well as three restored this year, and appointed three more deacons Jan. 22. Our annual lectureship program is expected to resume this fall, and we have plans for gospel meetings with brothers Keith Kasarjian and Charles Pugh III.



Publishing Peace

A monthly journal published by West Virginia School of Preaching under the oversight of the elders of Hillview Terrace Church of Christ, Moundsville, WV 26041 (888) 418-4573

Vol. 8 No. 3 March 2012

"Behold on the mountains the feet of him who brings good tidings, who proclaims peace!..." (Nahum 1:15)



From the Director's Pen

We See Jesus

Denver E. Cooper

Most of us preachers have been confronted with folks who have said, "I saw Jesus the other night as He stood by my bed and I know I am saved." Those who know the Scriptures know that Jesus does not appear personally to anyone in our day and age. Like Thomas, many fail to believe unless they are able to reach their finger into the print of the nails in Christ's hand or put their hand into the side of the Lord where the spear had pierced His side. Only when Thomas saw Jesus, and could have done as he desired, did Thomas declare, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28). On another occasion Jesus told Thomas, "If you ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also" (John 14:7).

While it is true that none of us have ever seen Jesus in the flesh, the Hebrews writer says, "We see Jesus" (Heb. 2:9). Just how do we see Jesus? The writer indicates that we see Him "made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste of death for every man."

We also see Jesus as a great teacher. He "taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Mark 1:22). The superiority of Jesus was expressed in His teaching over that of Moses. He repeatedly stated, "But I say unto you". While He kept the Law of Moses perfectly, He did not hesitate to indicate His superiority.

But we see Jesus as a man of sorrows. "He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised; and we esteemed him not." Jesus was sorrowful for others. When Lazarus died He visited Mary and Martha; seeing their sorrow, "Jesus wept" (John 11:35). He did not weep for himself, but showed compassion for others. Looking on Jerusalem and seeing them scattered about as those having no shepherd, he was moved with compassion. How sorrowful He was when His own rejected Him. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often I would have gathered thy children together, even as a chicken gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not" (Matt. 13:37).

But we see Jesus as a humble servant. "Let this mind be in you, which was also was in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Phil. 2:5-9). In John chapter 13 we have the record of Jesus taking a towel and basin of water and washing the feet of His disciples. Simon reluctantly submitted to Him. Jesus thus taught him a lesson of humility and service. He always claimed to have come to do the work of His Father. He said, "I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day: the night cometh when no man can work" (John 9:4).

Best of all, we see him as a risen Redeemer. Because flesh and blood, that which is corruptible and mortal, shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven, Paul said, "Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (1 Cor.15: 51-52). How thankful we ought to be that we are able to see Christ in all of the attributes of the Father and especially in the few mentioned above. If you are interested in attending the West Virginia School of Preaching please check us out at WVSOP.com , e-mail us at dirwvsop@aol.com, or call 304-845-8001. Ω

Hillview Terrace Church of Christ
West Virginia
School of Preaching
PO Box 785
Moundsville, WV 26041



Love Means Hate?

Andy Robison

The Gospel of Christ is all about love. It was love that prompted the plan of salvation (Rom. 5:8-10). It was love, not force, that kept Jesus on the cross (John 10:17-18). It is love that motivates service toward the gracious Lord (1 John 4:19). It is love that marks the believer as a true disciple (John 13:34-35). Love is a tender blessing between brethren, as Paul noted in Philip. 1:3-5. Love is, further, demanded between lovers of God (1 John 3:14-18; 4:20-21).

With all of this instruction about love, one might be tempted to boldly proclaim, "Hate has no place in the Christian religion." While such a statement would be understood appropriately in such a context, a broad view of Scripture will reveal that hatred has its place. With this shocking affirmation, Bible students will readily agree after consultation of a few passages.

Paradoxically, Paul sadly noted that a love of the truth will sometimes engender hate from those who reject such truth, even among one's brethren. Galatian brothers of Paul had, at the first, loved him so much that they would have been willing to pluck out their eyes for him (Gal. 4:15). They received him as if he were an angel (Gal. 4:14). After, though, some false teaching had leavened its way through them, they weren't so fond of their brother, the apostle. Some of his harshest words are reserved for them (cf. Gal. 1:6-8). And, he quite pointedly asks, "Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?" (Gal. 4:16). The word *hate* is not used, but their animosity is clearly implied. They were angry at Paul for telling them the truth. And these were his brethren. His brethren had become enemies, simply because they preferred their ways over God's, and Paul would not relent from telling them God's ways. Brethren became enemies because of the teaching of truth. Does this still happen in the church today?

As warmth implies the possibility of cold, and pleasure necessitates the existence of its converse, pain, so love also implies a necessary hate. The Psalmist, extolling his love of the truth of God's word, writes,

Through Your precepts, I get understanding;
Therefore I hate every false way (Psalm 119:104). And,

Therefore all Your precepts concerning all things
I consider to be right;
I hate every false way (Psalm 119:128).

These principles blend painfully in the teaching of preachers. The men studying at WVSOP exhibit a great

love for the truth, and for souls. It is quite sad, but unavoidable, that they will at some point, tragically, even from their own brethren, experience hostility due directly to their love. Loving truth means hating falsehood. Hating falsehood means agreement with those who cling to such falsehoods will not be possible. Loving people means being deeply hurt when such rejection surfaces. Ω

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The Mystery of Christ

Ben Jones

The word "mystery" occurs twenty-two times in the New Testament, most often in the writings of Paul. The apostle used the word ten times in Ephesians and Colossians alone. Our English word is translated from the Greek *mustērion*, which has an interesting history. According to Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words, the term means "primarily that which is known to the *mustēs*, 'the initiated'" (424). Ancient religious cults often held ceremonies which were open only to those who had been initiated into the secret teachings of the group. These enlightened ones then gained special status and privileges not available to outsiders. Words, however, are ultimately defined by their use, and the New Testament context suggests a different sense of meaning.

In the NT it denotes, not the mysterious, but that which, being outside the range of unassisted natural apprehension, can be made known only by divine revelation, and is made known in a manner and at a time appointed by God, and to those only who are illumined by His Spirit. In the ordinary sense a 'mystery' implies knowledge withheld; its Scriptural significance is truth revealed (424).

Notice this pattern in the letter to the Ephesians. Paul explained his knowledge in the mystery of Christ, which consisted of the following: "that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel" (Ephesians 3:6). This mystery was unknown to men in other ages (3:5), but was part of God's eternal purpose (3:11). When the time was right (1:10) God brought His plan to fruition in Christ, and then revealed the message of the Gospel to man through the Holy Spirit (3:5). Once revealed, the Gospel was no longer a mystery as such, but was intended to be shared with all men (3:4,9).

Consider the implications of Paul's inspired message. First, spiritual truth is unattainable without God. The mystery does not disclose itself to man, and no amount of searching can uncover God's hidden purposes (1 Peter 1:10-12). Second, God wants man to know His will. Paul wrote that the revelation of the mystery was according to God's good pleasure (Ephesians 1:9). God wants a relationship with His people, and that comes through knowledge (cf. John 15:15). Finally, God has revealed His greatest work to man through Christ. This is not a claim that man knows all that God knows, but rather a recognition that what God chose to reveal is very valuable. The scheme of redemption was centuries in the making, from the call of Abraham to the contributions of multiple world empires. When all the preparations were complete, God

revealed His masterpiece (Ephesians 1:10). In Christ the church is to display God's manifold wisdom to the world (Ephesians 3:10).

Post-modern culture has sparked a renewed interest in the mysterious aspects of religion. Christianity, however, is not based on decoding secrets or searching for subjective truth within self, but rather a life changing response to the objective truth of Jesus Christ. The greatest mysteries of the Christian faith have been revealed in the New Testament. Thank God for such a powerful gift. Ω

Works Cited

"Mystery." *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*. Ed. Merrill F. Unger, W.E. Vine, and William White, Jr. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1984. Print.

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