

cried, "Certainly!" Still, they could not face the withering fire of Paul as he "reasoned with them out of the scriptures," "proving and explaining" that "this Jesus whom I preach unto you is Christ" (Acts 17:2, 3). So, what do they do? Simple. They "take hold of his words," "contradicting and blaspheming," as "they spake evil of that way before the multitude" (Acts 13:46; 18:6; 19:8, 9). By slandering Paul and maliciously twisting words, they caused truth to be rejected and repudiated.

That Jesus was "reviled" is tragic, indeed. That Paul was demeaned is sad, but it misses the point (2 Cor. 6:3f.). The real tragedy was that "the ministry of reconciliation," "the word of...salvation" was "blamed" and blasphemed (Acts 13:26, 46; 2 Cor. 5:18-6:3). Paul did not worry about the slurs he had to endure (1 Cor. 4:3, 9-13). The only thing that matters is the truth. When it, by whatever means, is tarnished and diminished, souls will be lost. Trashing the man is not good, but the evil effect against the cause of truth and righteousness is the central concern (2 Cor. 4:1-12).

Let us, therefore, maintain a proper focus. As Jesus did not spend his valuable time seeking to justify himself, personally, but, rather, continued to preach the word, so must we. As Paul did not allow his enemies to distract him from preaching the cross-crowned Christ, neither must we. Let the Pharisees rail and revile; let them plot and plan to discredit and destroy. Stay the course. Let not their disdain distract from the work of evangelism. "Let them alone" (Matt. 15:14). If they can cause one to stop and squabble, they will have achieved their purpose. This must not be allowed to happen. "Thou therefore endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Tim. 2:3). "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:21). "Preach the word" (2 Tim. 4:2).

News & Notes

- Please pray for the Wallace family. They continue to miss our services (Heb. 10:24-25).
- "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." (Jas. 5:16)
- Please keep sister Wilma Cardwell in your prayers. She's an encouragement to all!
- Pray for all our members who do not attend regularly. Try to encourage them!
- Pray for the African appeal for funds to buy Bibles, songbooks and support faithful preachers' travel expense. Donate if you're able! 1 Jn. 3:17
- Please pray for Marcia Wilson, Wilma's daughter. She recently had gall bladder surgery. Also, please pray for Lana May. She is struggling with kidney stones.
- Pray that Westside might be an influence for good in this community.
- Pray for the all of our students: elementary, secondary and college. Our young people face many trials and temptations at school.
- There are many needy saints, including preachers! Can you help?!

Words of Life is published by the **Westside Church of Christ** meeting at 1301 N. Enterprise, Bloomington, IN 47404

Times of Service: Bible Study, Sunday 9:30 AM and Wednesday 7:00 PM; Worship, Sunday 10:30 AM and 5:00 PM

Editor: Craig Thomas (812-320-9569); craigthomas82000@gmail.com

Please direct questions and comments to the editor.

Words of Life

Westside
church of Christ

"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

John 6:68



Sep. 20,
2020

Vol. 12,
No. 28

Thoughts on Psalm 114

Craig Thomas

This short psalm poetically describes Israel's miraculous deliverance from Egyptian bondage. The very first verse caught my attention:

*"When Israel went out of Egypt,
The house of Jacob from a people of strange language,"*

When Jacob's family was providentially spared from the great famine in the days of Joseph, they fled to Egypt for food and refuge (Gen. 45-47). The Egyptians despised them because they were shepherds (Gen. 46:33-34). Therefore, Joseph persuaded Pharaoh to allow his family to dwell in the land of Goshen. That land was suitable for their livestock and gave the Israelites a measure of isolation from the pagan Egyptians. It was profitable in the sense that their relative isolation would help minimize the influence of the Egyptian culture on God's people, the Israelites.

Christians, as God's people today, live "in the world" (Jn. 17:11) but we are "not of the world" (Jn. 17:14, 16). We, if you will, "rub shoulders" with the Egyptians. John goes on to tell us (1 Jn. 2:15-17):

"¹⁵ Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that is in the world — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life — is not of the Father but is of the world. ¹⁷ And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever."

Even though we live in a lost and dying world, a world dominated by sin and Satan; we follow God's Word as our only guide (Rom. 8:14; Psa. 119:105). The Israelites lived among a people who spoke a "strange language." When it comes to sin and the ways of the world, we as Christians also live among a people who do not speak our language—the language of obedience and righteousness (Rom. 6:17-18). To please God, we must live separate from the ways, views, attitudes, and opinions of the world. Why?

"¹⁶ For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said:

*'I will dwell in them
And walk among them.
I will be their God,
And they shall be My people.'*

¹⁷ Therefore

*'Come out from among them
And be separate, says the Lord.
Do not touch what is unclean,
And I will receive you.'*

¹⁸ *'I will be a Father to you,
And you shall be My sons and daughters,
Says the LORD Almighty.'*

^{7:1} *Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all
filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."*

How's your pursuit of "perfecting holiness" going? Do you still speak the "strange language" of the world or do you speak as God speaks? (cf. 1 Pet. 4:11)

A SUCCESSFUL LIFE

SWORD TIPS #2050 (SEPTEMBER 8, 2020)

Joe R. Price

He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8, NKJV)

How do you define a successful life? Fortune? Leisure? Fame? Power? I watched a couple of TV shows today about former NFL players who set many records and won many championships. Their walls are lined with trophies and awards that recognize their athletic accomplishments. Yet, when they talked about what being successful was to them, it was not about statistics, championships, and awards. It was about being a good husband, a good father, a good friend, and a good citizen in the community. That is impressive. All these things are good, and yet, something was missing. They did not measure their success in spiritual terms. Jesus said, *"What profit it is to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul"* (Matt. 16:26)? When you wake up and consider how you intend to succeed that day (and in life), assess your success the way God does. God's measure of success requires us to choose to practice justice and love mercy (to love our neighbor as ourselves, Matt. 22:39), and to choose to walk humbly with our God (to love God with all our being, Matt. 22:37). Define success as a life of justice, mercy, and faithful service to God. These things are good. God says these things make life successful.

Entangle Him in His Talk

Larry Hafley

"Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk" (Matt. 22:15). "And thy sent unto him certain of the Pharisees and of the Herodians, to catch him in his words" (Mk. 12:13). "And they watched him, and sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him to the power and authority of the governor" (Lk. 20:20).

The course and character of envious and enraged men in every age and at every stage of controversy is typified by the Pharisees (Matt. 27:18; Lk. 6:11). Ironically, those who shout, "Pharisee," the loudest are often those who employ their tactics. While referring to another as a Pharisee, they "compass sea and land" to find "how they might entangle" their foe "in his words." They listen,

not for instruction in righteousness, but for how they may "catch him in his words." In order to discredit an opponent whose arguments they cannot overthrow, they listen "that they might take hold of his words," and find something with which to poison the well of truth and reason.

Though the Pharisees would insist that they stood for the Scriptures of Moses and the prophets, their effect was to obscure them. Rather than engage the Lord in objective, reasoned argument, they sought to "take hold" of an unguarded word that they might dishonor him before the people. This practice has its practitioners in every controversy. Elijah faced it (1 Kgs. 18:17). Jeremiah faced it (Jer. 26). Paul faced it (Acts 22:22; 2 Cor.; 2 Thess. 2:1-3). Nineteenth century disciples who stood against the instrument and societies faced it. Wallace faced it during the premillennial fight. Cogdill and a host of others faced it during the institutional conflict. Of course, as we have seen, Jesus faced it, therefore, remember, *"the servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you"* (Jn. 15:20).

Whenever a gospel teacher has said, *"baptism doth also now save us,"* the spirit of the Pharisees has taken "hold" of "his words" and said, "See, he trusts in water as his savior, while we trust in the blood of Christ." Whenever an instructor in righteousness has said, "The Spirit convicts men through the agency of the word of God," the Pharisees have taken *"counsel how they might entangle him in his talk,"* and have responded, "He does not believe in the work of the Holy Ghost." Then, they say, "If this man's doctrine is true, the Holy Spirit is nothing but a 'retired' author, and your dear, old grandmother is in hell tonight because she was not baptized." If the audience accepts that twist, they will not hear.

Whatever the issue, this is the way of the Pharisee. He opposes the truth, but he does not want to be seen in that light. Craftily, therefore, he alters words and constructs verbal straw men and reviles the man of God. If the Pharisee's audience is convinced that the man of God is a troublemaker or a sabbath breaker, the Pharisee does not have to defend his cause (1 Kgs. 18:17; Jn. 5:18). He does not have to expose his case to objective study (Acts 17:11). The original Pharisees were masters at this game (Matt. 12). Once the Pharisee has successfully distorted his opponent's words, hearers will turn a deaf ear to truth. Folks, that is how error works and wins.

Those who seek to clasp a clause and frame a phrase against the teacher of truth will say, as the Pharisees did, *"we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth"* (Matt. 22:16). *"Feign(ing) themselves (to be) just men,"* they claim allegiance to truth and its teachers. That way, their position, their soundness, is not questioned. Then, they are free to defame the defender of truth by wresting "his words." Whether unwitting or inadvertent, or coldly calculated as the Pharisees were, the consequent result is that truth suffers the most.

For example, Paul's enemies often took hold of his words and used them against him (Acts 16:21; 17:7; 19:26). Jealous of the number of subscribers Paul had, *"they were filled with envy and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming"* (Acts 13:44-46). Using this means, Paul's opponents did not have to answer a single argument. All they had to do was to disparage and discredit Paul by perverting "his words" and using them against him.

However, if one had asked those Jews, "Do you believe in the Messiah of the prophets?" they would have been insulted. "Of course, we do!" If they had been asked, "Do you believe in the kingship of the son of David?" they would have