



THINK

ON THESE THINGS

Philippians 4:8

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Number 4

CLIMBING OUT OF RECESSION

By AL DIESTELKAMP

The economic recession our nation is experiencing did not come about overnight. There were signs of its approach for some time before it was realized. While the recession has had an impact on our whole nation (and beyond), there are some areas of the country that have fared better than others.

In a similar way, there may be evidence of “spiritual recession” that is affecting the body of Christ. Just as signs of economic decline were generally ignored, many of us ignore the signs of spiritual decline until the damage is done.

Prolonged spiritual immaturity should serve as a warning to us that something is wrong. This malady often results in strife (1 Cor. 3:1-3), and always produces a scarcity of adequate teachers (Heb. 5:12-14), and congregations that can only be described as “lacking” (Tit. 1:5).

Another signal of spiritual recession is apathy toward the local work. The most obvious evidence of this is reflected in sporadic attendance by members, despite the oft-quoted warning found in Hebrews 10:25. Apathy may be the reason that our giving appears to be inconsistent with our prosperity (1 Cor. 16:2).

Diminished involvement in the work and worship is another symptom of spiritual recession. It can be identified by obvious lack of preparation for Bible classes, missing enthusiasm during worship or by misplaced priorities. Planned congregational events (i.e., gospel meetings, singings, etc.) are treated as “optional.”

Sometimes there is a lack of personal involvement with one another. Hospitality and good deeds are left to others, and cluttered lives have caused some to be “too busy” to interact outside of the meeting place.

While our primary obligation is to the lo-

cal church, it seems that there has been a marked decline in brethren showing support for the work of other congregations. I am not referring to financial support for gospel preachers in other locations, but in lending encouragement to neighboring congregations in their evangelistic and edification efforts.

Our national leaders of both political parties decided that the answer to our economic woes would be to implement a “stimulus package.” Whether that effort will eventually work may be up for debate, but regarding spiritual matters there is no doubt that we need to be stimulated to climb out of recession.

With God’s help, we as individual Christians can start the climb out of spiritual recession, but that climb will be even more successful if we will work together in our congregations. In order to have the revival we need, let me suggest some things that might help:

We must remember the past

Like the church in Ephesus, about which Jesus had some good things to say, we need to “remember from where we have fallen” (Rev. 2:1-5). Those who have been involved in the start of a new congregation can probably remember what an exciting time that was. Over time, we may have lost that excitement. We must not allow ourselves to be satisfied with mediocrity. Are we willing to put forth the effort and make the time to remember and “do the first works”?

We must forget the past

This may seem to be a contradiction to my previous point, but bear with me. There are some things we should forget. We cannot rely on past performance or successes. Too often we are inclined to justify relaxing our present efforts because of our past work for the Lord. No matter how successful we

have been in the past, we need to ask ourselves, “What have we done for Christ lately?” Consider the apostle Paul’s attitude (Phil. 1:13). Nor can we allow past losses or failures to hamper our future work. We need to forget such things and move on.

We must strengthen ourselves

Not only that, but we must help in strengthening others (Heb. 12:12-13). We cannot be satisfied with remaining stagnant. We are commissioned to “abound in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58), and to work together to build up the body of Christ (Eph. 4:16).

However, we must avoid a number of failures which could prevent the recovery we so desperately need:

Failure to recognize the problem

If we deny we have a problem, or that the problem is ours, we will not be motivated to do something about it, and will end up just “keeping house for the Lord.”

Failure to pray for recovery

If we want relief from our spiritual recession, we must recognize that we can’t do it by ourselves. God won’t revive us without our effort, but He has promised to provide the wisdom we need (Jas. 1:5).

Failure to expect revival

If we pray to God for help, we must have the faith that He will answer. His word tells us that the effective and fervent prayers of the righteous “avail much” (Jas. 5:16), but He holds out no helping hand to the double-minded (Jas. 1:6-8).

Our political leaders tell us that change is coming to America. Whether these changes will bring an end to our nation’s economic woes, or worsen them, is yet to be seen. No matter what happens in America, it’s imperative that positive change must come in the congregations of God’s people.

Conduct “In the Lord”



By RICK LIGGIN

To the Colossian brethren, Paul writes about the “renewal” or “renovation” that should be taking place in us now that we are Christians (Col. 3:1-17; esp. 3:11); and according to the apostle, this “renovation” should also have an affect on our families.

Paul begins by addressing wives, urging them to “be subject to your husband as is fitting in the Lord” (3:18). Now, I am aware of the fact that submission to a husband is “counter-cultural” conduct. Our culture (or society) says, “You are his equal!” And that certainly is true in terms of value: in God’s eyes, women and men are of equal value;

but God has clearly given women a role different from men. Our culture says to our women, “Assert yourself! He has no authority over you! You take the lead! You take control!”

But the Lord consistently demands that wives be submissive to their husbands (cf. Eph. 5:22-24; Tit. 2:5; 1 Pet. 3:1-6). And this submission, says Paul, is “fitting in the Lord” (Col. 3:18); literally, it “comes up to” His standards. Now please note well that the text does not say, “fitting to the Lord,” but “fitting in the Lord.” This is “in the Lord” conduct.

If we were “in the world,” then worldly conduct would be “fitting” for us. But we’re not “in the world!” We are “in the Lord,” and that means that our conduct (our behavior) must “come up to” His standards—not the world’s.

This brings me to the real subject of this article. Because we “have been raised up with Christ” (Col. 3:1) and are now “in the Lord,” our conduct, even at home, must no longer reflect worldly standards, but rather the standards of our Lord. As Christians, we’ve been called out of the world, and are now “in the Lord”—and our conduct must reflect this change in relationship. Our conduct, even in the home, must “come up to” the standards of the Lord, rather than just the standards of the world. Christ calls on us to live in a “counter-cultural” way. He calls on us to live in a way that is “fitting” to Him.

We see this same point made when Paul says to young folks: “Children, be obedient to your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing in the Lord” (Col. 3:20—check your marginal note for this more correct literal translation). Conduct that is acceptable or “well-pleasing in the Lord” may not be acceptable or well-pleasing “in the world.” Young folks in the world may rebel against their parents, but a young person “in the Lord” whose life is being renovated after the image of Christ obeys his parents and submits to their authority.

The point is that we are “in the Lord!” We are not “in the world”—not anymore! And because this is so, our behavior must “come up to” the Lord’s standards; it must be “fitting” to Him—everywhere—and in every relationship...even at home!

If we really want to build better families, we must start living in a counter-cultural way—even at home. And this must be true, not just of wives and children, but of all of us—husbands included. Our conduct must reflect the fact that we are “in the Lord”—and not in the world! Is your conduct “in the Lord”?

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Finding Some Disciples

By AL DIESTELKAMP

In recording the travels of the apostle Paul, Luke reports about him “finding some disciples” in the city of Ephesus (Ac. 19:1). We aren’t told just how Paul went about locating these twelve men who believed in Jesus, but like Apollos, “knew only the baptism of John” (Ac. 18:25).

How fortunate for these disciples that Paul took the trouble of finding them. Having “not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit” (Ac. 19:2), they needed to be “baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Ac. 19:5).

Still, I wonder just how Paul found these disciples? He didn’t have the Yellow Pages or an Internet to aid his search, and I seriously doubt they had a sign outside their meeting place. I suspect the answer lies in

the fact that first century disciples were aggressive enough in their own evangelistic efforts that finding them was not a big problem.

How hard is it for someone traveling into our communities to locate the Lord’s disciples? Given the confusion produced by counterfeit churches, the task is sometimes difficult. However, given our ease of communication, faithful brethren should not be hard to find.

Unfortunately, even if one is able to locate the meeting place of a congregation in a given area, often the information given is inadequate or inaccurate. Congregations sometimes change locations or times of assemblies. There is nothing wrong with that, but too often they neglect to do what they can to help traveling or relocating brethren find them.

Even many churches which go to the trouble and expense of having a website, are careless about updating the information needed by wayfarers. Churches having answering machines or voice mail for times when no one is available to answer the phone is helpful only if someone consistently checks the messages and returns the call.

I don’t know about you, but I am encouraged when brethren who are traveling on vacation (or for business) take the time and make the effort to find and meet with us. In turn, when I am away from home I am edified when worshiping with disciples whom I may not have previously known.

If you make it more convenient for strangers to find you, I’m confident it will prove to be a blessing to you and to them.



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Why the Meek Are Blessed By God

By **ANDY DIESTELKAMP**

From Washington, D.C., to Beverly Hills, California, it is the rich and famous, the influential and powerful, whose lives are glamorized. From our youth, entertainers and athletes of all kinds are our heroes. As we mature, perhaps we begin to see beyond the thin facade of fame, but let a notable personality suddenly cross our path and we revert to giddy groupies mugging for a photo-op. ("If I may but touch his garment, I shall be..." what?! Made whole? important? powerful? wealthy? humble?) Aren't we just a little bit embarrassed about how we sometimes behave ourselves in the presence of flawed men and women who have become famous for their looks, their money, their power, or their ability to do something with a ball?

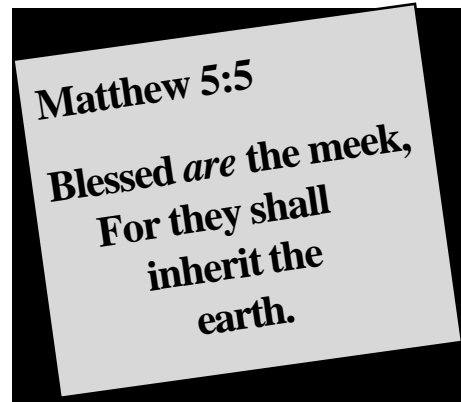
Greatness is often sought through very carnal means and measured by very shallow standards. However, just as beauty is in the eye of the beholder, so is strength, intelligence, and greatness. Paul wrote, "For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called" (1 Cor. 1:26). So, who are the wisest, the strongest, and the most beautiful in the eye of The Beholder? Who are the ones who will achieve greatness, success, and reward? Those the world would least expect.

Have you ever found yourself being envious of what others (who do not fear God as they ought) have? Perhaps you have questioned why the corrupt and godless can live so comfortably while you struggle to make ends meet. Indeed, when I make such comparisons, I reveal a discontentment that does not befit the faith that I profess in Christ. Paul wrote that he had learned to be content regardless of his economic or physical status and boldly announced, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:11-13).

David wrote, "Do not fret because of evil-doers, nor be envious of the workers of iniquity" (Psa. 37:1). In this psalm he proceeds to reveal that the end of the wicked is nothing to be envied. The reward and inheritance offered by God is not going to go to the famous but to the meek (vs. 11). The defining characteristics of the meek are revealed in this psalm. The meek trust in God (vs. 3). They delight in God (vs. 4). They commit themselves to God (vs. 5). They patiently wait on God (vs. 7). They cease from anger and wrath (vs. 8). To be meek is to forego what the flesh has the ability to do, and what perhaps the world would say we have the right to do, and instead submit to the will of God. Thus Jesus quotes from this psalm in beginning His sermon on the

mount and identifies those to whom the kingdom of heaven belongs (Matt. 5:5).

So, why does God favor the meek? One reason is that the meek know their place. Paul tells us that because men in their arrogance have chosen not to know God, He has chosen to reveal the way of salvation in a manner that would be foolishness to many who are wise in their own eyes (1 Cor. 1:21). This He did so that no flesh should glory in His presence (vs. 29). At first one might ignorantly think that God feels threatened by any competition; however, our pride does not threaten God in the least. It threatens us. A warped perspective of our own worthiness based on our own intelligence, wealth, power, or beauty significantly decreases the likelihood that we will see how dire our spiritual condition really is.



When Eve rationalized her choice to ignore God's instructions (Gen. 3:6), she was not being meek. God values the quality of meekness because it honors and submits to what is right, rather than what the flesh selfishly wants. The problem of sin is not merely the technical transgression, but the prideful attitude that rationalizes and justifies serving one's own will over God's will. (And this can even happen with things that are not technically sin.) The end result of such myopic arrogance is a depravity that can only be called ugly (Rom. 1:22-32).

God offers something much better, and the meek recognize this. Indeed, it is the meek who will repent, obey, and conform to the will of God. Recall the incident with Naaman and his leprosy (2 Ki. 5:9-14). For whatever reason, Naaman was too proud to do something as apparently foolish as washing in the Jordan River to be made clean. It just did not make any sense from his perspective. God does not ask us to do "foolish" things for the sake of the act itself but to demonstrate the submissive attitude of meekness. When we resist doing the will of God simply because it does not make any sense to us, it indicates that we are not as meek as we ought to be.

If we are not as meek as we ought to be,

then it is going to be very difficult to have a righteousness that exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees. Yet, unless we do, we will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 5:20). Indeed, as we then continue to read all of Jesus' "but I say unto you" commands following His challenge to have excellent righteousness, we come to realize that meekness is critical to carrying out those commands. Reconciliation (vss. 23-25), self-control (vss. 28-30), not causing someone else to sin (vss. 31,32), being true to your word (vs. 37), and enduring unfair treatment (vss. 39-42) all require this quality of meekness.

Yet ultimately the reason God values meekness so highly is that it is reflective of His image in which we were created. Jesus calls upon us to love our enemies (vss. 43-48), which certainly takes meekness. When we bless those who do not deserve to be blessed, then we are being like God. In our relationships with one another, we are called upon to have the mind of Christ and not look out after our own interests but the interests of others (Phil. 2:3-8). The example of the suffering of Christ is an example of meekness, not only in that He endured the cross, but that He did it for us, and we do not deserve such grace (1 Pet. 2:21-24). When we follow Jesus' example and meekly submit to the governing authorities (1 Pet. 2:13ff), our masters (vss. 18ff), and our spouses (3:1-4), then we are truly disciples of Jesus Christ.

The world has its standards of greatness, and so does God. They are rarely the same. From the evolutionary theory of survival of the fittest, to the fleeting fame of Hollywood, to the endzone antics of athletes, there does not seem to be much meekness. Yet God has told us what is good and what He expects of us: "to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with [our] God" (Mic. 6:8).

The spirit of meekness is not just for women in their relationships with their husbands; it is essential in our relationships with God and one another. It is no wonder then that God in His "foolishness" requires us to repent and be baptized for the remission of sins (Ac. 2:38). True repentance is only possible in a heart that is meek; and a meek heart will not resist but will submit to being baptized (note the passive action) into Jesus Christ.

Nothing we do is done truly on our own, nor should it be done for our own glory, but in humble submission to the will of God. It is only in meekness that we can respond to the meek and lowly invitation of our Lord and God and find rest for our souls (Matt. 11:29).

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BETTY ERDMAN

July 13, 1914 – September 1, 2009

Betty Erdmann died September 1, 2009 at the age of 95 years. Many readers of this paper have had the privilege of getting to know Betty, a long time member of the church in West Bend, Wisconsin. She obeyed the gospel many years ago under the teaching of Albert and Bernice Wanous, and never looked back to her popular life in the world. All who knew her understood her unflinching dedication to her Lord and her constant efforts to teach the gospel to the lost. To say that she was unique is an understatement—she had her own style. Always smiling and joyful, she loved everyone with a warm, holy affection, and like Phoebe of Rom. 16:1,2, she was “a servant of the church...for she herself also hath been a helper of many, and of mine own self.” I know of no one who has more unselfishly given of herself and her resources to assist anyone and everyone (Gal. 6:10) and to share with them at the same time the gospel of Christ. She will not only be missed at West Bend, but throughout this whole region. Mike Cox who knew Betty most of his life and who labors in the gospel in West Bend plainly preached the gospel to a large crowd at her funeral. She would have been pleased.

~Karl Diestelkamp



With this issue we mark the 40th anniversary of the publication of *Think*. In 1969 we never dreamed that we would still be publishing four decades later.

From the beginning our aim was to publish a paper “in the interest of purity of doctrine and practice” and distributed to Christians free of charge. We determined that we would not overtly solicit funds to help defray our costs, but have been blessed by a host of individual Christians who have become our *Voluntary Partners* in this labor of love. Their help, as well as the encouragement we have received from readers, has extended the lifespan of this paper beyond what otherwise would have been possible.

My father, Leslie Diestelkamp, served as editor and primary writer for twenty years. He had the uncanny knack of being able to sit down at his typewriter and quickly pound out numerous articles as needed. None of his sons or grandsons inherited that gift. At the beginning of 1990 he turned the editing responsibilities over to me, a task I have done for the past twenty years.

Over the past forty years we have published 175 issues. At the outset we indicated that we would publish “in quantities and as frequently as ability permits,” printing 55 issues between 1969 and 1979. Since then we have consistently published on a quarterly basis.

Four Decades Together

By AL DIESTELKAMP

When I took over as editor, and especially after the death of my father, I anticipated that the loss of his influence would diminish interest, and especially affect the voluntary donations to the point where we would be forced to cease publication. However, I have been pleasantly surprised by the support and encouragement we continue to receive from readers.

Through the years our mailing list has remained fairly constant, numbering between 1400 and 1500 per issue. This, despite the fact that we aren't always provided forwarding addresses when readers move. We are always happy to add new readers who request to receive the paper.

Since December, 1998, we have also maintained a website containing the articles from *Think*. Visitors to the website are able to read and/or copy articles from current and all past issues since 1998. The website was originally designed by Matt Hennecke (my brother-in-law) and maintained by him until earlier this year when I took over the maintenance. I still rely on Matt as a troubleshooter when needed.

It is our plan, the Lord willing, to continue publishing *Think* as long as ability permits. Somewhere along the way the younger generation will have to decide whether it is feasible to continue the printed format. When the time comes that I cannot do the actual printing on my offset press, to continue may require an investment in more modern and less cumbersome digital equipment.

Voluntary Partners

Cost of past issue:

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Deficit	\$ 504.59

Donations (as of 11/5):

Jerry & Sue Brewer, AL	\$ 50.00
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TOTAL DONATIONS	\$ 825.00
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We are thankful to God for the ability to publish this paper, and for all those who share in the costs. This issue is expected to cost about \$530, which would leave us with a deficit of \$210.



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