



*"And having been
perfected,
He became
the author
of salvation
to all who
obey Him"*

Hebrews 5:9

THINK ON THESE THINGS

Philippians 4:8

April-May-June, 2023 • Volume 54, No. 2

Those Who Are Welcome to God

By **RICK LIGGIN**

IN AN AGE WHEN ACCEPTANCE is so important to people, we might ask the question, "What kind of person will God accept? Who will be welcome to God?" In preaching to the house of Cornelius, the apostle Peter pretty much answers this question when he said, "I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him" (Ac. 10:34-35). This text points us to what does and doesn't matter to God when it comes to whom He will accept.

What Doesn't Matter to God

Peter starts his message to Cornelius by affirming that God does not show partiality to any person! He doesn't discriminate! No bias or prejudice affects His treatment of people. It's quite obvious why Peter makes this point with Cornelius, a Gentile who would have been socially discriminated against by all the Jews. But the larger context (Ac. 8:4 – 11:19) illustrates this point repeatedly: the Samaritans were a racially mixed people (8:5-13); the eunuch was a physically impaired person (8:26-39); and Saul was a persecutor and murderer (9:1-19)! Yet all these people were accepted by God! Listen: it doesn't matter to God that you are racially or culturally different, or that you are physically impaired, or even that you are a social or moral outcast! God doesn't discriminate or show partiality.

Now, if God is not prejudiced—if He does not discriminate against race, culture, class, or social group—then we ought not to be either! There is no room in the kingdom of God for racism, cultural bias, or social discrimination among us as disciples of Christ! It is critical to our efforts in spreading the gospel that we make sure all prejudices are purged from our hearts!

But the fact that race, culture, or social standing doesn't matter to God doesn't mean that *nothing* matters to God! God's

offer of salvation *is* to all men; the gospel *is* for all! But the offer of salvation is *conditional*! Some things *do* matter to God! God doesn't discriminate: all men are welcome but *on His terms*! Who you are doesn't matter, but how you respond to Him does matter! Acceptance by God requires two basic *essentials*: you must *fear* or respect God; and you must (actually) *do* what is right!

What Does Matter to God

God wants us to fear Him! And whether or not we do *matters* to God! If we want God to accept us, we must learn to fear Him! Now, this doesn't mean that God wants us to be scared or afraid of Him. Sure, we ought to be afraid if we're disobeying Him. But the word for "fear" here implies more than just being scared of God; being "afraid" isn't the emphasis of this word in many places where it is used.

The kind of fear God primarily wants from us (the fear that matters to Him) is fear in the sense of "reverential awe" or respect. Why? Because this is the kind of fear that will motivate the second thing that really matters to God: that we do what's right! God knows human nature. He knows that scary threats will not *sustain* obedience! Being scared motivates obedience only while the threat is present. If the threat is removed or is not imminent, obedience often stops. God doesn't want us to do what is right only because we are afraid of Him! He wants us to do what is right because we respect (reverence) Him! The only people God welcomes are those who respect Him, since these are the only ones who will also do the second thing that matters to God!

God wants us to do what's right! And again, whether we do or not *matters* to God! If we want God's acceptance, we must do what is right. And what is right isn't what we say is right. Our standards are not God's. Only what He says is right *is* right (Mt. 7:21-23)! God wants us to do what is right (obey Him) even when it's hard...

even when no one is looking (Gen. 39:8-9). The real test of obedience is when I don't want to do what's right (as God wills), but I do it anyway because I respect God (Mt. 26:36-39; Heb. 5:7-9). Your race, culture, or social rank doesn't matter to God; but it does matter to God whether or not you *do* what is *right*! The only men that God will welcome are those who respect Him enough to do what is right...even when it's hard!

rliggin@gmail.com

Robert E. Speer

1935 - 2023



ROBERT E. SPEER, gospel preacher and beloved member of the extended Diestelkamp family, died Sunday, March 26, 2023.

Robert was the husband of the late Lavon Diestelkamp Speer and played a significant role in the publication of THINK in the early years of the paper.

Our love goes out to our many nieces, nephews, and cousins. A more complete and personal obituary will soon appear on our website:

<http://www.thinkonthesethings.com>

SAY IT ANYWAY . . . GO ANYWAY

By DAVID DIESTELKAMP

GOD TOLD MOSES, "...I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go..." (Ex 3:19); but God sent Moses anyway. God was certain that "Pharaoh will not heed you" (Ex 7:4), but Moses said it anyway.

God told Jeremiah, "They will fight against you..." (Je 1:19) and threaten to kill you (Je 11:21), but God sent him anyway.

God's prophets were, "...rising up early and speaking, but you have not listened" (Je 7:13, 25; 11:17; 25:3) and they would not listen to Jeremiah either (Je 7:27), but he said it anyway.

God told Isaiah that the people are "stubborn-hearted" (Is 46:12); they had "shut their eyes, so that they cannot see, and their hearts, so they cannot understand" (Is 44:18); and desired only "smooth things and deceits" (Is 30:10), but God sent Isaiah anyway. They "will not hear the law of the Lord" (Is 30:9), God warned; but Isaiah said it anyway.

God told Ezekiel that Israel had an "adulterous heart" (Ez 6:9), "the desire for their detestable things" (Ez 11:21), and "eyes to see but does not see, and ears to hear but does not hear" (Ez 12:2); but God sent him anyway. God knew, "...the house of Israel will not listen to you, because they will not listen to Me" (Ez 3:7), but Ezekiel said it anyway.

God told Hosea, "There is no truth or mercy or knowledge of God in the land" (Ho 4:1), and that Israel would not return

*"Rejoice and be exceedingly glad,
for great is your reward in
heaven, for so they persecuted
the prophets who were
before you."*

Matthew 5:12

even when God begged her to return, but God sent Hosea anyway. God sent Amos to people who were violent, covenant breakers, despisers of the law of the Lord, unjust, and idolaters. In Zechariah's day, God said the people "did not hear nor heed Me" (Zech 1:4) and historically "would not listen" (7:13), but Zechariah said it anyway.

When you read the prophets, sinful people who are inclined to reject God's

message are usually the norm. But God still sent messengers to speak His Word. It's no wonder that James wrote: "My brethren, take the prophets, who spoke in the name of the Lord, as an example of suffering and patience" (Ja 5:10). But James is calling us to follow the example of the prophets' patience among our own sinful people who are inclined to reject God's message. We must go to them anyway and say it to them anyway.

Admittedly, it's discouraging and there is a temptation to give up—to not go, to not say it—or at the very least look for whiter harvests. But Jesus expects that we go and that we say it, everywhere! Jesus came, knowing He would be rejected by His own (Jn 1:11; Mk 6). He preached to an "evil and adulterous generation" (Mt 12:39) who He knew wouldn't listen (Mt 13:15). We follow Him even though we know Jesus said, "A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you." (Jn 15:20). Go anyway. Say it anyway.

davdiestel@yahoo.com

Unthinking Christians

By MATT HENNECKE

IRECENTLY SAW AN EMAIL appeal for prayers from a sister about her hospitalized brother. She wrote, he "...is a Christian but after having been really hurt by some unthinking Christians, has not been back to church in about 40 years."

All I can do is shake my head. How often have we heard something similar? Uncaring, unthinking, or unloving Christians drive away the very souls Christ has died to save. All his efforts, all his work, all his blood, undone. Imagine an artist creating beautiful works of art but being followed by a scoundrel who destroys the art before the paint even dries. Jesus is the Artist and He's still working on us. The paint hasn't yet dried. Are we protecting His works in progress or destroying them? We can spend hours talking about God's grace and then make one harsh, hurtful comment and all the good can be undone. Am I surprised? No. Am I disheartened? Yes.

I'm not surprised because we are all flawed. We all need help—including those who stand in judgment of others and intentionally or unintentionally drive

them away. But I am disheartened because driving away those whom Christ has saved only leads to death. Life is found in Christ, only in Christ.

C.S. Lewis once wrote that when we accept Christ, the road ahead immediately branches: One way leads to love, humility, and compassion for others who, like us, are beset with sin. The other way leads to spiritual pride, self-righteousness, and persecuting zeal. Which road are you on? Do you draw others to or drive them away from Christ?

Jesus told a parable about those who were self-righteous and treated others with contempt. He said, "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other.

For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted." (Luke 18:9-14)

Of course, the source of the problem is twofold. There are some "Pharisees" in local congregations. They feel themselves superior to their brothers and sisters. They make the mistake of comparing themselves to others rather than to Christ. They look down their noses at the flaws of their brethren, ignoring their own. Want a healthy dose of humility? Compare yourself to Christ. Ouch! This should humble even the most self-righteous amongst us.

The other source of the problem is putting our faith in men rather than in Jesus. Get ready. Your brethren will disappoint you. Your brethren will hurt you. They will say and do things that are completely unlike the Son whom they claim to follow. But Jesus won't. He will never disappoint. He will never betray. He will always do what's in your best interest. Put your faith in Him and not in men. Don't leave Him and His bride, the church, because of the harshness of the broken people He is still working to save.

mjhennecke@gmail.com

REPRODUCTIVE INEQUALITY

By ANDY DIESTELKAMP

MANY WHO FAVOR the right of a woman to abort her unborn offspring assert that such freedom is *essential* if there is ever to be a just equality between men and women. This contorted thinking causes some to view the freedom to abort one's offspring as a matter of justice.

However, reproductive *inequality* is a biological reality. It is a matter of fact. It always has been. It always will be.

Females have been specially designed with eggs. Males have been specially designed with the ability to fertilize eggs. Females have been specially equipped to carry and give birth to and nurse their offspring. Males have not. While this is not *universally* true in the animal kingdom, it is predominantly so.

If it is reasoned that humans are merely animals, then we are left with only the practical (and often brutal) consequences which naturally accrue to the sex which is most significantly burdened in the process of reproduction. It is *only* by acknowledging the obvious uniqueness of humans as beings created in God's image (Gen. 1:26,27) that we can hope to overcome the brutality of nature in this cursed world and actually glory in and fulfill the unique roles our Creator has given to men and women (e.g. 3:16-19).

When humans think of themselves and behave as mere animals, the results are naturally catastrophic for females. It is *only* when humans behave as God designed and intended them to behave that women are ultimately honored and protected by men as joint heirs of the grace of life (1 Pt. 3:7).

Human laws which ignore natural realities and divine expectations in order to attempt to achieve a semblance of reproductive equality and "freedom" for women are short-sighted, counter-productive, and harmful not only to babies but to society at large. The thinking that women *need* the freedom to kill their offspring in order to have equality with men ultimately relegates women to being equal to men only in the basest of ways, in their *abuse* of beings *equally* created in God's image.

The stereotype is that it is *men* who—from their position of power and privilege—abuse women. Women who think having the right to kill their babies gives them power and privilege equal to men have a very warped view of justice. When sexually mature females use their position of power and privilege to abort their helpless offspring who need their protection, they engage in the very same kind of think-

ing and behavior of males who, instead of protecting their mates, abuse them.

Extending and exercising this freedom to abort human lives accomplishes *nothing* toward meaningful equality and justice. It is a deadly, demonic, and immoral ruse wherein the biological realities of reproductive inequality remain unchanged while the spiritual realities of beings created in the image of God are debased. This kind of thinking makes us little more than brute

beasts destined for darkness and destruction (cf. Rom. 1:24-32; 2 Pt. 2:12; Jude 10).

So, beware of false proclaimers of fairness! Do not be deceived by their worldly reasoning which employs divine ideals and biblical verbiage such as freedom and justice. You will know them by their fruits! Advocating for the killing of human offspring to make life "freer" and "fairer" for females is foolishness.

andydiestelkamp@gmail.com

The Way of All the World

By ANDY DIESTELKAMP

WE HAVE REACHED the end of something in our little corner of the world. For decades, I have been afforded the opportunity to take a turn in writing an article several times a year for the "religion page" in *The Daily Leader* (the local newspaper for Pontiac, Illinois). While the newspaper has not yet ceased publication, I suspect that its days are numbered. The cancellation of the column for which I occasionally wrote has simply become the latest symptom in what will be the eventual demise of the paper. In the grand scheme of things, the cessation of this column is a relatively minor end; but it may also be reflective of a cultural shift away from an interest in things pertaining to Jesus Christ.

The cycles of life touch us all as things come and go in this transient and vaporous existence. In his old age and farewell address, Joshua—the great leader of Israel—observed, "I am about to go the way of all the earth" (Josh. 23:14). Over four hundred years later, King David said the same thing in his old age preceding his final advice to his son Solomon (1 K. 2:2).

"The way of all the earth" is to live and die. Indeed, the observation of the philosopher of Ecclesiastes was, "there is ... a time to be born and a time to die" (3:1,2). This is the apparent reality of life "under the sun" (1:3, etc.). The cynical conclusion of those who look at life from this limited perspective is that "all is vanity" (1:2, etc.). In other words, it is impossible to make sense of the billions upon billions of lives which have cycled throughout human history; and, thus, many conclude that life is meaningless and without purpose.

However, this is not the conclusion to be drawn about life or death. Rather, what we *should* conclude from all of the cyclical uncertainty of life is not to eat, drink, and be merry "for tomorrow we die" (Is. 22:13; 1 Cor. 15:32) but to fear God and keep His commandments (Ec.12:13).

Everything that pertains to this life has a life-cycle, a beginning and an end. This includes individuals, families, local churches, nations, and empires. Obviously, newspapers and their columns and columnists are no exceptions. We will all, in time, go the way of all the earth. Yet, our Creator has greater plans for us than the apparent vanity of life cycles.

Do not let the end of things that have been blessings in your sojourn discourage you. It certainly appeared that Jesus went the way of all the earth when He was crucified, but what happened on the third day declared otherwise. Jesus' resurrection revealed that not even the gates of Hades could prevail against the divine plan (cf. Mt 16:18) to rescue us from the vain cycle of sin and death. This is good news! Those who faithfully follow Jesus have the realistic hope of likewise overcoming death. This truth and reality make the various cycles of life and death meaningful exercises—not in futility—but toward a greater goal and a fuller existence which God has prepared for those who love Him.

So, when the time for you to go the way of all the earth comes and your departure is at hand, keep your eyes fixed on Jesus. These things I have written to you, that in Christ you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, Jesus has overcome the world (cf. Jn. 16:32)!

andydiestelkamp@gmail.com



Voluntary Partners

Cost of past issue:

Printing	\$ 340.00
Postage & mailing supplies	404.72
TOTAL COSTS	\$ 744.72
Funds available for past issue	1,189.97
Surplus	\$ 445.25

Donations: (as of 3/24/23)

Dorothy McDonald, VA in memory of M. Bruce McDonald	\$ 350.00
Delores Davis, WV in memory of Bill Davis	400.00
Larry W. Stephens, TN	30.00
Gordon & Jean Hochmeister, IN	25.00
Paul & Teresa Urbans, WI	125.00
TOTAL DONATIONS	\$ 930.00
Surplus from past issue	445.25
Funds available for this issue	\$ 1,375.25

We deeply appreciate the help of our voluntary partners in covering printing and postage costs for this paper. The postage rate was increased in January, so this issue will cost approximately \$840. This will leave a balance of about \$535 toward a future issue. Please see the article below regarding the rising costs of this paper.

**For back issues of THINK
visit our website:
thinkonthesethings.com**

THINK ON THESE THINGS

Philippians 4:8

AL DIESTELKAMP, *Editor*
260 N. Aspen Drive,
Cortland, IL 60112 • (815) 785-0401
e-mail: aldiestel@gmail.com
Web Page: www.thinkonthesethings.com

*Published quarterly by the Diestelkamp family in the interest of purity of doctrine and practice.
Distributed free as ability permits.*

260 N. Aspen Drive
Cortland, IL 60112

Return Service Requested



PSRST STD
U.S. Postage
PAID
Provident Direct

Inflation and THINK

The economic inflation in our nation is being felt in every aspect of our lives, and the costs of publishing this paper is no exception. Of course, when I no longer was able to do the actual printing of the paper, the printing costs skyrocketed. I thought it would soon force us to cease publishing, but fellow Christians came through to cover that increase.

After mailing the past issue, we received over 50 papers returned by the Post Office with messages such as NOT DELIVERABLE AS ADDRESSED, OR ADDRESS UNKNOWN. I knew most of them were correct addresses; and when these were resent, most were not returned a second time.

Beginning with this issue, we will be using a system that will confirm the addresses as current and accurate. This will cost an additional \$95 per issue but will slightly reduce the per-piece postage rate and will eliminate the need to renew the annual mailing permit (currently \$290, but it increases every year). Therefore, if my math is correct, the additional cost per issue will be about \$20.

An additional benefit is that the printer will do the mailing, and I will not have to lug the trays to the post office.

~Al Diestelkamp

The Small Things We Can Do

By AL DIESTELKAMP

A GOSPEL SONG that recently has become a favorite of mine is *Room in God's Kingdom*, the lyrics of which acknowledge the value of "the small things that you can do." While we need citizens in God's kingdom who are able to tackle the "big" things, there's a place for those who will do the lesser things.

The parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30) confirms the truth that God recognizes the potential as well as the limitations of individuals. The Master doesn't expect a one-talent servant to live up to the abilities of the five-talent or two-talent servants, but He does expect something from him. The apostle Paul quoted from Psalm 68:18 to make the point that Christ "gave gifts to men" with abilities in various measures "for the equipping of the saints, for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:7-16).

Of course, this cannot rightly be used as an excuse to be satisfied with doing the least you can get away with or not seeking to do the most you can do; but just as in physical life, a child is not expected to do everything an adult can do, the same is true of new Christians. Just as we don't expect

the aged to be able to do all they once did, this is sometimes true of "old soldiers" in the Kingdom.

As I write this, I am just a few days away from another one of those pesky annual reminders of the reason I am no longer able to do as much as I used to do. I am disappointed that I have lost some of my abilities, but I am not ashamed to admit it. For this reason, I'm pleased to report that the church in Sycamore, Illinois, where I have worked for 35 years, has asked Jackson Sneed to take on the full-time work here beginning May 21. Jackson was born and raised in northern Alabama and has since been living in Florida. We commend him for being willing to step out of his comfort zone to work in the North. He is married to Cassie (formerly Miller) who was raised in central Illinois.

Of course I will continue to do what I can, supporting the truth from my front-row seat. I am reminded of brother Craig Roberts' lyrics of another song we sing:

*"Our elders, long in battle years,
Alas, begin to fade;*

*But from the ranks, young men appear,
And lead their first crusade."*

aldiestel@gmail.com