

Equipping The Saints

“...For the equipping of the saints for the work of service...” ~ Ephesians 4:12

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What Is Christianity All About?

(By Andrew Dow)

I recently read where someone wrote, “*Christianity is love, not hate.*” These kinds of statements are not unusual. We are constantly reminded by Christians and non-Christians alike that Christianity is all about love. Of course, I believe these statements are meant to promote kindness between individuals and, in that regard, I don’t necessarily object to these kinds of statements. After all, Jesus taught that love summarized the Law and the Prophets (cf. Matt. 22:37-40). He taught that love is to be shown even to our enemies (cf. Matt. 5:43-44). One could easily say the Bible as a book about God’s love (cf. John 3:16).

However, is Christianity really all about love? Love obviously plays a major role in Scripture, but is the primary purpose of Scripture to make us more loving?

Let me be clear: *Christianity is NOT all about love, Christianity is all about Christ!* When Paul taught the gospel he didn’t teach love, he taught Christ (1 Cor. 2:2; 15:1-5). The climax of every sermon in the book of Acts was not love, it was Christ (Acts 2:36; 3:18; 7:52; etc.). Being a Christian is not about being the most loving, kind person you can be; being a Christian is about being like Christ (cf. 1 Pet. 2:21; 1 Cor. 11:1). It’s about loving what He loves and hating what He hates. Don’t put the cart before the horse: “**We love, because He first loved us**” (1 John 4:19).

One Sinner Destroys Much Good

(By Ron Daly)

“Wisdom is better than weapons of war; but one sinner destroys much good” (Ecclesiastes 9:18). The title of this article comes from a statement of the writer of the book of Ecclesiastes in chapter 9, verse 18. It conveys a thought that each of us must consider. It tells us that a sinner wields a lot of influence, but it is the wrong kind and it is destructive! Notice that the text doesn't say that *“many sinners destroy much good,”* but **“one sinner destroys much good.”** Many times one sinner does more harm to the cause of good, than one righteous person does to a stampeding herd of ungodliness.

A preacher may be a very effective pulpiteer and he may have a firm grasp on the truth of scripture, but if he doesn't believe what he preaches enough to live it, he is himself a sinner who destroys any good that he achieves (1 Timothy 4:11-12).

An elder may have tremendous leadership skills coupled with a broad knowledge of God's word, but if he doesn't practice what he requires about honesty, controlling the tongue, moral purity, and all else, he isn't fit for the position of overseer. He will destroy any good that he accomplishes (1 Timothy 5:20; Titus 1:7).

A Bible class teacher may be kind, knowledgeable, and very practical in his application of scripture, but if he is a gossiper, quick tempered, listens to slander, and never asks forgiveness from those against whom he has sinned, any good that he accomplishes will be destroyed by his sins (Romans 2:19-24).

If one hundred people obey the gospel every week and gather for worship and if they see people in the assembly who also claim to be Christians, but frequent drug houses, strip clubs,

bars, prostitution and gambling houses, receive and conceal stolen property, and swindle others out of their belongings, any good that is accomplished by the congregation will be destroyed (Hebrews 10:26-29).

We should promote good instead of destroying it. If our lives are not what God says they should be we are destroying the good that we or other saints seem to be achieving. We must repent of our sins and start anew. Grieving in sin isn't the answer. We've got to get over the "*self-pity complex*." If there is sin in your life, stop it and turn to God. Then and only then the good that we and others are trying to do will not be destroyed.

Are You Noble-Minded?

(By Rick Lanning)

“Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11).

On Paul's second missionary journey, he came for the first time to preach the gospel of Christ in the regions of Macedonia and Achaia (modern Greece). He preached the gospel in the great cities of Philippi and Thessalonica, but when persecution arose he moved on to the city of Berea. At this place, the above remarkable statement is made about the Jews who heard the word of God proclaimed. Luke records that they were more noble-minded than the audience in Thessalonica. Notice the reasons given for this noble attitude:

1. The text says **“they received the word with great eagerness.”** Literally, the word eagerness means, *“a rushing*

forward.” As one would rush forward to greet and hug an old friend, these noble-minded individuals “*rushed forward*” to eagerly receive the word of God. But although they were eager, the next phrase teaches us that they were in no way gullible.

2. Secondly, the text says that they were “**examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so.**” The word examined means “*to sift,*” or “*to make careful and exact research.*” These individuals were searching for the truth. They were sifting through the word of God as an archaeologist sifts through the dirt at an ancient tel. An archaeologist does not use a bulldozer to uncover the remains of civilizations long buried. He carefully and patiently examines every inch of dirt to find the valuable treasures that are waiting to be discovered. The Bereans were sifters, carefully examining the word of God. They had the Old Testament Scriptures when Paul and Silas came preaching Jesus, and they carefully examined the Scriptures to make sure that these things were so.

Are you noble-minded? Do you carefully compare what you are taught by religious teachers with the revealed will of God found in the Bible?

Notes:

AM Lesson:

Two Responses to the Gospel

PM Lesson:

Making a Difference: Ruth

“Go therefore and make disciples...” (Matthew 28:19-20)