

Warn . . . Comfort . . . Support . . . Be Patient

Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men (I Thess. 5:14).

A Gallup Poll conducted some time ago indicated that adult church attendance in the U.S. has decreased from 49% in 1958 to 42% in 1969. At the same time the number of Protestant missionaries sent from North America has declined for the first time since the depression years of the 1930's. These missionary statistics were published in August in the ninth edition of North American protestant Ministries Overseas Directory. At the same time the March 16, 1970 U.S. News and World Report indicates that violent crime is up 131% from 1960 to 1969 while our population increased only 13% during the same period of time.

It is not pleasant or popular to face up to such realities, but sometime we must remove our heads from the sand and admit what has happened to the world. There are several courses of action which confront the Christian. We can continue as we are; we can run like rabbits to burrow into some bomb shelter or isolated retreat; or we can penetrate and conquer the world like Christ commanded us to do.

The church has ceased to be an invading army concerned with the conquest of society. We have shriveled up into little clubs that hire professionals to do our fighting for us. "Ministry" is not something that we do for God but something which we feel God, or God's servants ought to do for us. As we stand upon the threshold of 1971 it is time we overhauled our thinking and got busy. The above scripture provides inspired direction and guidance as we seek to do something about a lost world and a decadent church.

First of all let it be observed that these instructions are given to the “brethren.” These words are not just for church officers and leaders but they are for every person who claims Christ as King.

The Christians who need help are divided by God into three different categories, viz.: the unruly, the feeble-minded, and the weak. Each group is to be dealt with in a different way. The unruly are to be warned, the feeble-minded are to be comforted, and the weak are to be supported. We are to have patience toward everyone.

Warn the unruly – The word translated “warn” means to “put in mind” and is translated as “admonish” in verse 12. It is not just bawling someone out but is a warning based upon instruction. The word translated “unruly” is a military term and refers to soldiers who are out of rank. An army with its soldiers out of rank will be of little value. The confusion created by men who are out of place and out of order has seriously impaired the work of Christ’s church upon earth and all such men are to be “warned” by the brethren. It needs to be emphasized again that this responsibility is incumbent upon all Christians and not just upon elders or church leaders.

Comfort the feeble-minded – The word translated “feeble-minded” literally means “small-souled” and is translated as “fainthearted” in the revision. It refers to those who are dispirited, downhearted, and downcast. Such individuals are not to be “warned” but are to be “comforted”. The word “comfort” literally means “calling to ones side.” How beautiful and appropriate are the instructions of God.

Support the weak – The word for “weak” literally means “strengthless” and is sometimes translated as “feeble” or “sick.” The word “support” means “to hold oneself opposite” and by implication “to adhere to.”

Patient toward all – the word for “patience” means to be long spirited and for-bearing. It is the same word used in I Corinthians 13:4 – Love is “patient.” Vine calls it “that quality

WARN . . . COMFORT . . . SUPPORT . . . BE PATIENT

of self-restraint in the face of provocation that does not hastily retaliate or promptly punish.”

Here then is some timely and appropriate advice for the New Year. “Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men.”

Two Kinds of Wisdom

When all the activities of earth are reduced to their lowest common denominator we find that only two forces have been at work. One force for good . . . and the other for evil. Sometimes evil appears to be good, for a time, and vice versa, but in the final analysis the simple dichotomy God and Satan is a valid explanation for life as we know it.

The book of James was directed to the twelve tribes of the Dispersion. It is a matter of record that Jewish converts were involved in a serious and long standing dispute which threatened to destroy the primitive church. The controversy manifested itself in Antioch (Acts 15:1ff) Jerusalem (Acts 21:20ff) Crete (Titus 1:10) Rome (Rom. 14:1ff) and in virtually every other part of the Mediterranean world. It formed the basis for Paul's letter to the Galatians. It is the background for understanding the opposition to Paul at Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, Thessalonica, Berea and Corinth. To properly grasp this issue is to take a giant stride toward a proper understanding of a large segment of New Testament Scripture.

The Jewish teachers who traveled the earth attempting to destroy the work of Paul, undoubtedly felt that they were doing God a service. The "debates, envyings, strifes, back-bitings, whisperings, swellings, and tumults" which usually accompanied their efforts, however, indicates a different type of wisdom than God employs.

This truth is brought graphically to our attention in James 3:13ff. After emphasizing the power of a teacher's influence and therefore the strict judgement which all teachers must face, these words are utilized to delineate and describe two types of wisdom:

EARTHLY WISDOM

Bitter Envyng – The word translated "envying" is "zelos"

TWO KINDS OF WISDOM

which means "an envious and contentious rivalry."

Earthly – "epigelos" terrestrial

Sensual – "psuchike" animal, as in Jude 19

Devilish – "diamoniodes" proceeding from or resembling demons

Confusion – "akatastasia" disorder, tumults, anarchy

Evil – "phaulon" worthless

WISDOM FROM ABOVE

Peaceable – "eirenike" a state of tranquility like Eden.

Gentle – "epieikes" the fruit of the Spirit which makes us like Jesus.

Easy to be entreated – "eupetthes" easily obeying, complaint

Mercy – "eleous" a readiness to help those in trouble

Good fruits – beneficial and constructive results

Without Partiality – "adiakritos" wrangling, uncertainty, indecision

Without Hypocrisy – "anupokritos" sincere, unfeigned, undisguised

Wars, fightings, killings and covetousness do not originate with God. For God is not the author of confusion . . . but of peace. When God completed Eden it was a model of "peace." There was no need for bloodshed, for even the animals ate vegetation. The author of confusion, however, was more subtle and deceptive than any beast of the field. His cunning devices lured man to tamper with that wisdom from above and thus turned our earth into a snarling jungle.

There are two types of wisdom in the world. One is from the earth and brings misery, heartache, and despair. The other is from above and brings joy unspeakable and full of glory. Choose you this day which you will serve . . . as for me and my house . . . we will serve the Lord.

The Word of God is Alive

For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb. 4:12).

The word of God is alive. It strikes through the veneer that is seen by human eyes and exposes the very thoughts and motives of a man's heart. Like a seed which is planted it takes root in the innermost recesses of the soul and transforms by the renewing of the mind. In the words of the Psalmist - "The doctrine of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul" (Psa. 19:7).

The Gideons International recently contained the following illustrations regarding the power of the word.

Over two million English-Japanese Testaments were given to university students in Japan. Mike Kumai, orphaned by the bombing of Hiroshima, received one at the University of Yokohama. He hated everything that was Western but during periods of discouragement he found himself drawn to the pages of God's word. The power of the word transformed his life. Today he is a preacher of the gospel broadcasting the Good News from station HCJB of Ouito, Ecuador to the 600,000 Japanese in Brazil and Paraguay. Hundreds of letters are received each month from interested listeners. Mike's wife also has a program and instructs 234 students by means of a Bible correspondence course. The word of God did not return void.

Many years ago a man read the Bible in his hotel room. He became a Christian and then led his family to Christ. From this family have come 17 preachers of the gospel, among whom is Willard Cantelon, artist and missionary evangelist. The power of the gospel initiated a chain reaction that will bring many more conversions in years to come.

Sometimes even an unopened Bible can produce conviction.

A couple checked into a Reno, Nevada, hotel. Minutes later, the woman asked the manager to pick up her luggage. "Is something wrong?" he asked. "No. Well yes," she replied. "This man is not my husband. I was brought up in Sunday School and when I saw that Bible, I could not continue with what I had planned. Can you recommend a minister who can pray with me?"

Perhaps the most thrilling story in this particular issue was regarding a family of atheists who lived in Norfolk, Virginia. The father was the president of the American Association for the Advancement of Atheism. When their son, Ben, was killed in Korea, his body was shipped home for burial. The father threw himself across the casket and cursed the God he claimed he did not believe in. Later, Ben's belongings arrived home. When his mother opened his possessions, she found a Gideon Testament _ on the back was a signed statement that Ben had become a Christian. Through this single testament the entire family was won to Christ. The daughter is a missionary and the son is Pastor Sutterfield who told the Gideons this story.

After considerable reflection it seems evident that there is some connection between a weak and powerless church and Biblical illiteracy. Many church members can attend both Sunday School and church services and yet scarcely hear the word of God even referred to. Frequently sermons are long on illustrations, jokes, and current events, but pitifully short on exposition of the Bible. We will never have the kind of church we need until the people of God become so conversant with the word of God that divine thoughts captivate and control our lives.

Ponder these words of apostolic benediction: "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" (Acts 20:32).

Whom Having Not Seen Ye Love

“Proskuneo” is a Greek word which means to “worship.” It comes from “pros” – towards and “kuneo” – to kiss. James Strong in his Exhaustive Concordance defines it as “to kiss, like a dog licking his master’s hand. . . .”

almost everyone can frame a mental image of the faithful dog crouching obediently and licking his master’s hand. This is the kind of reverence and obedience which mankind is to give to God.

The loyal dog, however, has no capacity to worship an abstraction. He can frequently be trained to obey many commands from a master whom he can see, but he is totally incapable of worshipping a master whom he cannot see.

Thus, man emerges as something unique in the world which God has created. Every other creature is limited to the experiences which time and space place within the reach of five senses. Man is endowed with a sixth sense. He has been created in the image of God himself. He has the capacity to transcend the realities of time and space and to experience “reality” in a new dimension.

The antenna which permits us to experience this phenomenon is faith. Faith is the “substance” of things hoped for and the “evidence” of things not seen (Heb. 11:1). The word for “substance” comes from “hupo” (under) and “stasis” (standing) and refers to that which stands under like a foundation. Faith is the foundation which enables us to experience the reality of God. It is the indisputable “evidence” of things which the physical eye cannot see.

Therefore, Peter could write about the trial of faith and the resultant glory which we will experience at the appearing of Jesus Christ “whom having not seen, ye love, in whom, though

now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls" (I Pet. 1:8-9).

Thomas the "twin" said he would not believe until he could put his finger in the nail prints and thrust his hand into the Master's side. When confronted by the risen Christ, he cried out, "My Lord and my God." Jesus responded, "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (John 20:29).

It is our privilege to have this kind of faith. No living person has experienced Christ with the five senses. The risen Lord is at the right hand of God waiting for the grand conclusion of human history. The only way to experience Him is by "faith." Therefore, we hear the testimony of Scripture and consider the evidence of the preached word and arrive at a crossroad which calls upon us to make a decision.

By faith we transcend the physical world in which we live and "receive" Jesus Christ into our hearts. We have never seen Him with human eyes or touched Him with human hands yet He becomes a "reality" in our lives. We "believe" and therefore we "receive."

Though we commit our love to One whom we have not seen the validity of our faith is made manifest by an abundance of physical evidence. The presence of the Holy Spirit produces fruit. The unseen impulses which we accept by faith begin a marvelous process of transformation. Our hatred is replaced by love, our sadness by joy, and our turmoil by peace. The change within is verified by behavior modification.

It is joy unspeakable and full of glory and brings about not only an abundance of happiness in the world which now is, but eternal life in the world which is to come.

Whom . . . or What?

In a recent conversation with Stuart York I was given this quotation from Joe Dampier. "Our faith is not propositional, it is personal. Paul did not say I know WHAT I have believed, but WHOM."

This states succinctly something which I have been thinking for many months. The faith "once for all delivered to the saints" involved the identity of Jesus Christ. The doctrine of the apostles was that God had pitched His tent on earth and any who denied this doctrine of the incarnation represented the spirit of the antichrist (I John 4:3). The false teachers of the First Century were those who would deny the Lord that brought them (II Pet. 2:1).

Our faith is not propositional, it is personal.

The original converts at Pentecost had no alternative. There was no "official position" on anything but Jesus. The first book of N.T. Scriptures would not be written for many years. The N.T. canon would not be complete until near the close of the First century, and the N.T. canon would not be officially accepted until the fourth century.

Our faith, however, is not propositional, it is personal.

The Christians at Rome did not agree about many things. They did not agree about foods and fasts, and days of worship (see Rom. 14). They did, however, agree about Jesus and it was upon this foundation that they experienced a oneness with one another in spite of their differences.

The church at Corinth had similar problems. Since they didn't have Bibles to study on their own they were indebted to various preachers for whatever perspectives or emphasis they came to accept. Thus, we see the emergence of schism in the church. The solution to the problem was not to have the brethren concur with any preacher . . . not even with Paul.

The faith of the Corinthians was to be in the person of Jesus

WHOM . . . OR WHAT?

Christ. I Corinthians 3:11 states it like this: "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

The context involves unity. They were experiencing envy, strife, and jealousy (v. 3). they were identifying with human leaders (v. 4). There were many "things" that they did not have in common, but there was "someone" that they did have in common. It was on this foundation they were to unite and build.

We have a great many advantages over our brethren in the First Century. Most of us who are English speaking people usually have several Bibles at our disposal and sometimes these are in a variety of versions. We, also, have concordances and commentaries and a great many other study helps to aid us in understanding and interpreting the Scriptures. Our wide access to differing perspectives also leaves us with a great many points of disagreement.

When we talk about "what" we believe we are sometimes estranged by our differences. When we talk about "whom" we believe we are standing upon a foundation stone which binds us together in love.

The Manifold Wisdom of God

It doesn't take an intellectual giant to recognize that man has created a colossal mess upon this planet. In the name of progress we have stock-piled enough nuclear bombs and poison gasses to destroy the world's population many times over. Great minds are at least coming to realize that the real problems we face are moral and ethical and not scientific.

Hear the testimony of the late Albert Einstein, "The real problem is in the hearts and minds of men. It is not a problem of physics, but of ethics. It is easier to denature plutonium . . . than denature the evil spirit of man. What frightens us is not the explosive bomb, but the equally explosive power of personalities." Einstein continued, "Man's skills have outstripped his morals. His engineering has leaped ahead of his wisdom. We cannot cancel or call back his scientific advance, but we can and must, if the world is to survive, help man to catch up. In God's name," said Einstein, "if you still believe in God, take Him seriously, and somehow get control of what science has given to the world, or else - we shall all like wise perish.

After twenty centuries of experimenting with externals we are at last approaching the crux of man's problem. In the final analysis we have come to fear the perversity of human nature. We tremble at the prospect of dictators expressing their paranoia by the berserk detonation of hydrogen weapons and the suicidal release of nerve gas. Every new discovery compounds the enigma instead of solving it. We now realize that to change men's nature is the most critical problem facing the Twentieth Century.

This brings us, a little belatedly to the "manifold wisdom of God." Jesus did not come to earth to add a new dimension to education or to build a better mousetrap. He came to redeem humanity. His plan did not involve externals, it dealt with renewing the heart. The transformed individual had buried his

THE MANIFOLD WISDOM OF GOD

bias in the grave of baptism. Gone was the bitterness and animosity that characterized the old man of sin, and in its place was a new nature that radiated love.

Before the foundation of the world the Omniscient One decided to use the assembly of Christians to express His many sided wisdom to the principalities and powers in heavenly places (Eph. 3:10-11). This unique organism has survived the storms of the centuries and penetrated every continent on earth. It now stands as the one and only hope for a doomed world. The transforming of the human heart will never come from the conferences of great governments or the wisdom of political heads of state. The longer we seek to solve our problems by human might and wisdom the more tangled and difficult is the crisis we face. Now is the time for each to individually turn to God.

“If my people which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land (II Chron. 7:14).

Patterns

As a young preacher I was taught that we were to build the church "according to the pattern" (Heb. 8:5). I assumed that just as Moses was given specific instructions regarding the dimensions and materials for the tabernacle, the Christian was given specific instructions regarding the government or structure of the local congregation. This I construed to be the "pattern" and sincerely felt that anyone neglecting the "pattern" would be stricken by God as in the case of Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1-7). I now conclude that I was wrong in my understanding of the biblical useage of the word "pattern."

For your information here are the words translated as "pattern" in the N.T. Scriptures:

1. *Tupos* - this comes from the word which means "to strike." It means "An impression or mark of a blow," "a seal, stamp or die," "form, mold, pattern." It is used 16 times and is variously translated as: "ensample 5, example 2, fashion 1, figure 1, form 1, manner 1, pattern 2, print 2."
2. *Hupodeigma* - this is from the Greek word "hupo" under and the word "deiknumi" to show. It is used six times and is translated as ensample 1, example 4 and pattern 1.
3. *Hupotuposis* - this means to "outline, sketch." Thayer associates it with a pattern to be held up and copied. It is used two times and is translated as form once and pattern once.

**Hupogrammos* is used only once (I Pet. 2:21) but is so similar to the words for "pattern" that I feel constrained to include it here. It literally means "under writing" and refers to letters which were traced or copied. *Deigma* is also similar and is used one time in Jude 7.

PATTERNS

Here is the way these words are used in the Scriptures:

1. Adam was a "figure" or "pattern" of Jesus (Rom. 5:14).
2. The tabernacle, etc. were "patterns" of spiritual realities in the heavens (Acts 7:44, Heb. 8:5, 9:23).
3. O.T. prophets were "patterns" or "examples" for those suffering or in need of patience.
4. Jesus gave a "pattern" or "example" by washing the disciples' feet (John 13:15). When he was persecuted he also gave us an *example that we should follow in his steps (I Pet. 2:21).
5. Paul became a "pattern" or "example" by means of his conversion (I Tim. 1:16), his personal conduct (Phil. 3:17), and his willingness to work (II Thess. 3:9).
6. Timothy was to be a "pattern" in good works, uncorrupt teaching, gravity and sincerity (Titus 2:7).
8. Elders are not to be lords over God's people but "patterns" or "examples" to the flock (I Pet. 5:3).
9. Timothy was to hold fast a "form" or "pattern" of sound words (II Tim. 1:13). The word "sound" means "healthy" and refers not to the governmental structure of a local assembly but to the moral conduct of one's personal life. (See I Tim. 1:9-10; II Tim. 4:3; Titus 1:9, 13; Titus 2:1.)

Negative Patterns:

1. Israel is a "pattern" or "example" to us that we should not "lust after evil things" (I Cor. 10:6), "murmur" and "be destroyed" (I Cor. 10:11), or fall after their "pattern" or "example" of unbelief (Heb. 4:11).
2. Sodom and Gomorrha are "patterns or examples for those who want to live ungodly lives (II Pet. 2:6; *Jude 7).

You Are the Salt of the Earth

Salt is not something which you try to become in Christ. It is what you are in Christ. Here are a few attributes of salt which can provide insight into the nature of our Lord's disciples.

1. Salt was precious in the days of Jesus. It was so valuable that Roman soldiers received a salt allowance along with their pay. Our word "salary" literally means "payment in salt." To this day we say of one who does not measure up that "he is not worth his salt." The fact that Jesus referred to His disciples as salt is a strong indication of how precious and valuable they were to Him.

2. Salt was the best preservative known in the time of Jesus. Sometimes when a corpse was to be transported a long distance it was packed in salt. When a covenant or compact between two parties was to be ratified they ate salt together. The covenant which God made with Israel required that salt accompany every cereal offering.

You shall season all your cereal offerings with salt; you shall not let the salt of the covenant with your God be lacking from your cereal offering; with all your offerings you shall offer salt (Lev. 2:13).

Our ancestors knew the preserving character of salt and found it indispensable in the preserving of food without refrigeration.

Salt does not make a lot of noise or whip up excitement, but it works quietly, gently, and effectively to preserve our culture from further decay and disintegration.

3. Salt was a purifying agent in the days of Jesus. It was believed to possess antiseptic qualities and when a soldier received a spear wound the hole in the flesh was often tamped full of salt to prevent infection. It was used by Elisha to purify a spring of water (II Kings 2:22) and is illustrative of what Chris-

YOU ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH

tians are to be in a society that is infected by sin.

4. Salt increases the palatability of food. All of us have eaten attractively prepared food in which the cook had forgotten to put salt. It tastes flat and insipid. We feel a sense of compassion for one who has to be on a salt-free diet. Life without the Christian influence is also flat.

It bothers a great many people that Christians seem to have so little influence upon the world in general. There is no simple answer, but it must not be forgotten that salt will do no good while huddling in the shaker. And a great many in our day are trapped inside of religious structures. Here they hold services instead of rendering them. They carry on religious exercises while the world is dying at the doorstep. Lewis Mumford calls these institutional forms of religion "a mere husk of habit."

In his book, *New Light on the Gospels*, Clifford A. Wilson says it was a Jewish tradition that when salt became unfit for use on sacrifices it was sprinkled upon the temple steps in rainy weather to keep the priests from slipping. Barclay makes reference to unfit salt which was thrown on the roadways. Let us never allow our salt to lose its savor and thus be consigned to an all but meaningless existence.

Jesus does not say, "If the salt has lost its strength, I shall have to try something else." There is nothing else. It is you or nothing! If you fail, the question is, "With what shall the earth be salted"? The answer is that it will not be. You are the last divine thrust into the world. Jesus was the Son of God made flesh. You are flesh made a son of God.

Condensed from *Adventure In Faith*
by W. Carl Ketcherside

Bible Facts About Shoes

Shoes in Bible times were quite simple, and very inexpensive. They usually consisted of a simple piece of leather, wood, or perhaps the bark from a palm tree, which was bound to the foot by a leather thong, or "shoe-latchet." The simple design of this ancient footwear is reflected by both the Hebrew and Greek words for "shoe." The Hebrew word for "shoe" is "na'al" which literally signified "that which is fastened." The Greek word for "shoe" is "hupodema" which means "to bind under." Because these "shoes" offered no protection from the dust of the roadway, facilities for the washing of feet were found in the doorway of almost every dwelling.

These ancient shoes were so simple and easy to construct that their low cost was proverbial. For example, when Abraham returned from the slaughter of the Eastern kings, he demonstrated his integrity by declining to keep even a "thread" or a "shoelatchet" that belonged to anyone else (Gen. 14:23). When the prophet Amos condemned ancient Israel for their utter disregard for the poor he accused them of "selling the poor for a pair of shoes" (Amos 2:6, 8:6).

Since sandals were not worn indoors, anyone who put them on indicated a readiness for activity. Thus ancient Israel ate the Passover with their loins girded and their shoes on (Exod. 12:11). This indicated that they were ready to flee from Egypt. When Peter escaped from prison the angel said, "bind on thy sandals" (Acts 12:8). Christians are to have their feet "shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace" (Eph. 6:15). It is interesting, and perhaps significant to note that individuals approaching God were given divine instructions to remove their shoes (Exod. 3:5, Josh. 5:15).

The Bible makes reference to some very interesting customs relating to the shoe. It was a law among the Hebrew people that a childless widow was to marry her husband's brother. Any

man who refused this responsibility was to be publically disgraced. The widow would bring the man before the elders, take off his shoe . . . and spit in his face. "And his name shall be called in Israel, the house of him that hath his shoe loosed" (Deut. 25:5-10). Another custom is mentioned in Ruth 4:7. Though the circumstances are very similar with those mentioned in Deuteronomy 25:5-10, the expression, "a man plucked off his shoe" "to confirm all things" seems to indicate that at some period in Hebrew history a shoe was given to signify the transfer of possession. As a man possessed land by walking upon it, a shoe was given to consummate a bargain. Perhaps this explains the scripture, "Over Edom will I cast out my shoe," in other words, "claim it as my own."

Shoes with blood on them was a figurative expression denoting war (I Kings 2:5).

Men of rank frequently assigned slaves the lowly task of caring for their shoes. John the Baptist made reference to this practice when he said that he was not worthy to unloose the latchet of Christ's shoes (Luke 3:16), or to bear them (Matt. 3:11).

These ancient shoes apparently did not wear very well. Joshua 9:5 indicates that a pair of shoes could be worn out in a single journey. Yet God provided for Israel in such a miraculous way that their shoes did not wear out in 40 years of wilderness wandering (Deut. 29:5). Isaiah 5:27 indicates that God is able to provide divine strength which will eliminate the necessity of weariness and slumber. These words are enforced by the promise " . . . nor shall the latchet of their shoes be broken."

Ladies of distinction wore shoes of badger skin (Ezek. 16:10). Women's shoes were frequently very attractive (Song of Sol. 7:1) and sometimes were adorned with tinkling ornaments (Isa. 3:18).

The most beautiful feet of all, however, belong to those who preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things (Rom. 10:15).

THE SHOEMAKER'S PRAYER

Here is a pair of shoes, dear God. As I hold them in my hand a wave of emotion sweeps across my soul. Perhaps these shoes will someday be scattered in the midst of blood and broken glass beside some highway. Perhaps these shoes will creep quietly through some darkened doorway to rob, to plunder, and to destroy. Perhaps these shoes will rot away in some forgotten prison cell . . . and so dear God . . . I pray for these shoes. You have promised that not even a sparrow can fall from the heavens without your knowledge . . . surely it is not wrong for me to pray for these shoes. I pray that these shoes may ever walk in paths of righteousness. I pray that they will never feel the inside of a prison cell . . . the rugged abuse of violence . . . or the staining touch of human blood. I pray that these shoes will be acquainted with quiet times of prayer and meditation. I ask that they will be found in church or Christian service . . . perhaps by the bedside of a sick friend . . . close by to the bereaved . . . and often by an open Bible. May these shoes be characterized by laughter and radiant joy as they bring warmth, comfort, and protection to the feet of your precious children . . . may they help us to walk these paths of earth in such a way that when they are removed a final time our feet will walk on streets of pure gold.

Be Still . . .

Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth . . . (Psa. 46:10).

Please consider the context.

. . . trouble, v. 1.

. . . earth removed and mountains carried into the sea, v. 2.

. . . waters roaring and mountains shaking, v. 3.

. . . heathen raged, kingdoms moving, earth melting, v. 6.

. . . wars ceasing, bows breaking, spears cut in sunder, chariots burning, v. 9.

. . . BE STILL, v. 10.

Lord, what are you talking about? This is not time to be still. The earth is moving, the mountains are shaking, the water is roaring, the heathen are raging.

The Lord said, "Be still."

But, Lord, there is so much to be done. With trouble like this I'm going to have to work harder than ever before in my life.

The Lord said, "Be still."

But, Lord, you don't understand! The Egyptians have us trapped. The chariots of Pharaoh have us surrounded. On the one side is a wide, impassable sea and on the other is death from a pagan spear.

The Lord said, "Stand still . . ." (Exod. 14:13).

But now we have a theological problem. Certain men have been defiled by a dead body and cannot keep the passover. We're confused, Lord, what do we do?

Moses said, "Stand still . . ." (Num. 9:8).

Saul was destined to be the King of Israel. He had been busy in the futile search for his father's lost animals. He needed to cease from the frustration of his activity and hear the Word of the Lord.

Samuel besought him, "Stand thou still . . ." (I Sam. 9:27).

WORDS ARE WINDOWS

Jehosaphat was worried. The Ammonites, the Moabites and the inhabitants of Mount Seir had conspired to defeat Judah, and the people of the Lord had no power to stand before them. Then the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jehaziel and he prophesied.

“Stand ye still . . . ” (Job 37:14).

If God would speak in the mighty winds that rend the mountains, we could hear His words above the bustle of activity around us. But sometimes the voice of God is not in the wind. If God would speak through the rumble of the earthquake, we could hear His voice above the clash of confusion resounding in our troubled world. But sometimes the voice of God is not in the earthquake.

If God would speak from the crackling tumult of a raging fire, we could focus on His message in spite of the raucous distractions which clamor for our attention. But sometimes the voice of God is not in the fire.

Sometimes the message of God is wrapped in the fabric of a “still small voice.” In times like these we must draw aside from Martha and the clatter of the kitchen and sit like Mary at the feet of Jesus. In times like these we need to take leave of the grinding gears of traditional treadmills on the plains of conformity and climb with Jesus to some lofty mountain peak of transformation where God can be heard with clarity and new horizons can be viewed with a fresh perspective.

When the waters roar and the mountains quake . . . be still and know that He is God!