

NEWSLETTER No. 310

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Let your Yea be Yea and your Nay, Nay

"Let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into temptation,"

James 5:12

Hearing someone say, "Cross my heart and hope to die, stick a thousand red hot needles in my eye;" followed by "Now, do you believe me?" doesn't move us anymore.

It's not so much that we have to prove what we say today; nobody believes us anyway. And not many seem concerned about it, either. We just hear, "That's the truth;" then they walk away. We watch with wonder, asking ourselves how he's able to walk in those baggy pants.

Yet, the old adage: 'if a man's lips are moving, he's lying,' seems to demand that we say things like: "I swear on a stack of Bibles." Now, that ought to prove what we say, right?

What everyone needs to do is get back to the "ole days." Back when a man's word was as good as gold. Lavon & I were privileged to have my 80 year old Aunt Alta from Alabama visit us recently. She knows about integrity. Her experience was that people would rather die than go against what they said.

Aunt Alta was talking about the "**ole days**," when things were clear and upfront. She grew up in a family that had no misunderstandings of what was expected of the kids. When Daddy spoke, he said it only once. Kids believed their parents back then, before the Clinton years.

In fact, when we read James 5:12, we're going back beyond the "old days." That was when the Bible was read and believed. And the Bible makes it clear about the word of the Christian - it is sacred!

The Bible teaches us that once our word is uttered, we have placed ourselves behind what we said. It's our integrity, and we will carry it out, no matter who is involved; or what is required.

How strict are some Biblical accounts? Well, some are hard for us to receive. A few cause our hearts sink within us; one such as the words of **Jephthah** in the Book of Judges. His words move us because he stood behind what he promised God.

Jephthah's heart was in his words and he would carry his vow out; even though it meant harm to the apple of his eye. "If Thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands, Then it shall be that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the lord's and I will offer it up for a burnt offering," Judges 11:30-31.

"Alas, my daughter," Jephthah would later say of his only child. But, he knew he must back up his words. "For I have opened my mouth unto the LORD, and I cannot go back," (V 35). Back then, it was a serious matter of what a man's heart spoke. The daughter of Jephthah understood this. "My father, if thou hast opened thy mouth unto the LORD, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth," she said (v36). Her only request was for time to mourn (v 36).

Thus, three thousand years before the writing of James, it was clear that men understood the meaning of, "Let your nay be nay and your yay be yay." And, close to Jephthah's time, we read of a similar vow.

In 1st Samuel, King Saul nearly killed off one of his offspring; his son Jonathan (14:24-30). And would have were it not for many testifying that Jonathan was unaware of his father's earlier words; or, it was lights out Jonathan. That was back in the "old days," when a man spoke, he meant it.

If we go way back to Genesis 27, we learn the same lesson - a man means what he says. Here, in *Genesis*, however, we are given another Biblical truth to observe: "**REJECTION OF THE FIRST BORN.**" As we tie a man's integrity to the "**rejection**" principle, we learn a Biblical truth of how God sees mankind; a view that will not change.

Thus far, we have learned that a man's word is true; even, as '**pure as gold.**' Now, we listen as Isaac as he carries out that basic truth; this time it deals with the first born inheritance. What Isaac said he would not, could not, change. And, therefore, we understand the "**Rejection of the First Born Son**" is permanent; something that church members ought to learn.

In the blessing of Isaac's two sons - even though Isaac thought he was blessing his first son, Esau - he could not take his words back. God wouldn't allow it. While, we might see trickery in the plot of Rebekah, let us also think of Esau's

attitude toward the blessing. Earlier, he sold it to Jacob, his brother, remember? The teaching is one that all Christians need to know; for the rejection of the 1st born son is an eternal principle.

The "rejection" principle is also extended throughout God's word. It's not a one-time act against Esau. Adam was of the first creation, and that creation is rejected by God. The "rejection" principle reveals that all mankind of the natural - those born of woman, are rejected.

Natural man is rejected because he sins. Notice what the Book of Romans declares: "...as one man's disobedience many were made sinners" (5:19). Not only are the natural born rejected by God, the principle is clear in other areas. The 1st born king, Saul, was rejected, but David, the second king, was accepted.

Fortunately, for all of us, sinners don't have to stay in a rejected state. Although death came to us through Adam, **life** comes to us through the Second Adam, Jesus. "That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord," Romans 5:21.

The Genesis account that reveals the truth of "Rejection of the first born," is not just a physical principle, either. Coming to the New Testament, Jesus teaches glorious clarification. "Except a man be born of water (natural birth) and of the Spirit (his spirit reborn of God), he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). Here, we see that man's rejection can be overturned; that is, in the Person of Jesus, the Son of God.

Clearly, the Bible wants us to imitate God in speech. What we say, is what we are to do; just like the "**old days**." Those days of Biblical times warned us against jesting (sporting). "As a mad man casting firebrands, arrows and death, So is the man that deceiveth his neighbor, and saith, 'Am I not in **SPORT?**'" (Pro 26:18-19). And, in Ecclesiastes 5:4, "**When thou voweth a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he that no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed.**" Don't say it, if you don't mean it!

In the New Testament, jesting and sporting are not automatically covered by the blood, as so many think. Words are important; especially, words from God. Jesus places His words even above the Universe, "**Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words will never pass away**" (Mt 24:35). He means it!

Therefore, vows, commitments and promises are extremely serious to the LORD. In Matthew 12:36, Jesus said we are justified and condemned by our words. Be careful! "Don't swear by heaven-it's God's throne. Nor by earth-it's God's footstool. Neither by Jerusalem-it's God's city. Don't even swear by your head-you can't make a hair white or black, Matthew 5:34-36.

Back in the "old days," every man began his day using the prayer of David. "Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer," Psalms 19:14. Well, may be not everyone; but we can. Let's pray that prayer, today, my good friends.