

Milk & Honey

Vol. XIX November, 2004 No. 11

Spiritual Food and Encouragement for Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ

Are You a Withered Leaf?

J.G. Bellet

An exhortation to the older generation
(A lesson from the life of Isaac - Genesis 26-28)

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly...but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, *whose leaf also shall not wither.* (Psalm 1:1-3)

There is a common saying, "It is better to wear out than to rust out." But this better thing was not Isaac's. He rusts out. And such was the natural close of such a life. Was Isaac, I ask, a vessel marred on the wheel? Was he a vessel laid aside as not fit for the Master's use? or at least not fit for it any longer? His history seems to tell us this. Abraham had not been such an one. All the distinguishing features of "the stranger here," all the proper fruits of that energy that quickened him at the outset, were borne in him and by him to the very end. Abraham's leaf did not wither. He brought forth fruit in old age. So was it with Moses, with David, and with Paul. They die with their harness on, at the plough or in the battle. Mistakes and more than mistakes they made by the way, or in their cause, or at their work; but they are never laid aside. Moses is counselling the camp near the banks of the Jordan; David is ordering the conditions of the kingdom, and putting it into the hand of Solomon; Paul has his armour on, his loins girded. When, as I may say, the time of their departure was at hand (2 Tim. 4:6), the Master found them "so doing" as servants should be found (Lk. 12:43). But thus was it not with Isaac. Isaac is laid aside. For forty long years we know nothing of him; he had been, as it were, decaying away and wasting. The vessel was rusting till it rusted out. There surely is meaning in all this, meaning for our admonition.

And yet—such is the fruitfulness and instruction of the testimonies of God—there are others, in Scripture, of other generations, who have still more solemn lessons and warn-

ings for us. It is humbling to be *laid aside* as no longer fit for use; but it is sad to be left merely to *recover ourselves*, and it is terrible to remain to *defile ourselves*. And illustrations of all this moral variety we get in the testimonies of God. Jacob, in his closing days in Egypt, is not as a vessel laid aside, but he is there recovering himself. I know there are some truly precious things connected with him during those seventeen years that he spent in that land, and we could not spare the lesson which the Spirit reads to us out of the life of Jacob in Egypt. But still, the moral of it is this—a saint, who had been under holy discipline, recovering himself, and yielding fruit meet for recovery. And when we think of it a little, that is but a poor thing. But Solomon is a still worse case. He lives to defile himself; sad and terrible to tell it. This was neither Isaac nor Jacob—it was not a saint simply laid aside, nor a saint left to recover himself. Isaac was, in the great moral sense, blameless to the end, and Jacob's last days were his best days; but of Solomon we read, "It came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods" (1 Ki, 11:4), and this has made the writing over his name, the tablet to his memory, equivocal, and hard to be deciphered to this day.

Such lessons do Isaac and Jacob and Solomon, in these ways, read for us, beloved. They give us to see, in the house of God, vessels fit for use and kept in use even to the end - vessels laid aside, to rust out rather than to wear out—vessels whose best service it is to get themselves clean again—and vessels whose dishonor it is, at the end of their service, to contract some fresh defilement. *

York Bible Study Program

2004 – 2005

November 13	Bob Spender	Judges
December 11	Bob Gessner	Angels
	Dan Weaver	Life of Samson
January 15	Bruce Hulshizer	Hebrews 11
	Steve Hulshizer	Christian's Money
February 12	Tom Irwin	2 Corinthians
March 12	John Gordon	Colossians
April 9 (Conference)	Willie Burnett, Keith Keyser	
May 14	Randy Amos	Christian Walk

Write or call for directions.

(717) 767-2900

Comments On a Critical Passages For Critical Times

Compiled by Bob Gessner

Passage One

Caught in the web of materialism - 1 Timothy 6:6-10

Vs. 6,7,8 *But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.* Godliness is ever accompanied with contentment in a greater or less degree; all truly godly people have learned with Paul, in whatever state they are, to be therewith content (Phil. 4:11). They are content with what God allots for them, well knowing that this is best for them. We brought nothing with us into this world, and yet God provided for us, care was taken of us, we have been fed all our life long unto this day; and therefore, when we are reduced to the greatest straits, we cannot be poorer than when we came into this world, and yet then we were provided for; therefore, let us trust in God for the remaining part of our pilgrimage. We shall carry nothing with us out of this world. Why should we not be content with a little? Because, no matter how much we have, we must leave it behind us (Eccl. 5:15,16). Hence he infers, if God gives us the necessary supports of life, we ought to be content therewith, though we have not the ornaments and delights of it. If nature should be content with a little, grace should be content with less. Though we have not dainty food, though we have not costly raiment, if we have but food and raiment convenient for us we ought to be content. Matthew Henry

Vs. 9 - *But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.* The word BOULOMAI, rendered "desire," implies a deliberate grasping after wealth as a dominating object in life. The danger lies in attempting to acquire for one's own ends more than satisfies one's needs (Prov. 28:20). There is perhaps a suggestion of various stages in the descent to which the desire leads. To begin with, there is certainly in aiming at the increase of riches a temptation to aim at the acquisition of more, and this carried with it the danger of gaining it by doubtful or unrighteous means, a veritable snare. This trap is used of the allurements to evil by which the devil ensnares a person (2 Tim. 2:26). Here it indicates the seductions to evil which result from tendencies within. There is a

further snare of being involved in worldly associations. The series now broadens out to a variety of foolish and hurtful lusts; foolish because the determination to obtain wealth tends to involve a passionate craving for things undesirable; hurtful because of the injury done not only to the soul but to the body. The metaphor of drowning is suggestive of the suddenness with which calamity falls upon the self-willed aspirant. What may appear to outward observers as a sudden disaster is here shown to be the climax of a course of evil. W. E. Vine

Vs. 10 - *For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.* Not all evil in the universe springs from the love of money. But it is certainly one of the great sources of many varieties of evil. For instance, it leads to envy, strife, theft, dishonesty, intemperance, forgetfulness of God, selfishness, embezzlement, etc. It is not money in itself which is spoken of, but the love of money. Money might be used in the service of the Lord in a variety of ways where only good would result. But here it is the inordinate desire for money that leads to sin and shame. One particular evil of the love of money is a wandering from the Christian faith. In their mad striving after gold, men neglect spiritual things, and it becomes difficult to tell whether they were ever really saved at all. Not only did they lose their grip on spiritual values, but they pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

William Macdonald

Passage Two

Falling asleep on the job - Romans 13:11-14

Vs. 11 - *And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed.* It is time to awake out of sleep, such sleep as the world all around us is in (1 Thess 5:6), knowing nothing of what is at hand. But with a certainty which comes by believing the last recorded word of the living Lord in heaven, "Surely I come quickly" (Rev. 22:20), the Christian knows that now his salvation in its fullness, including the redemption of the body, is nearer than when he believed, on that happy day, when by faith in the Great Redeemer, salvation from sin's penalty and power, became a personal possession, and the bright and blessed hope of glory, first lit up his soul. John Ritchie

Vs. 12 - *The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.* The night signifies the whole period of man's alienation from God (1 Thess. 5:5). The day is the day of

