

What Should Christians Learn from the Sabbath?

Written on: May 31, 2022

Article by: Ed Broadus

A previous article considered tithing, which was a prominent part of Israelite religion but also antedated the Law of Moses, and a second article was promised about the Sabbath, which also was and is an identifying mark of Judaism but which also antedated the Law of Moses. The word *Sabbath* in both English and Greek is a transliteration of the Hebrew word, *sabbat*, from a root meaning “to cease,” or “to desist.” According to the Fourth Commandment in the Decalogue (Exodus 20:8-11), on the seventh day of the week the Israelites were to keep the Sabbath holy by desisting from their work.

But this was not the first reference to observing the seventh day of the week in this way. Shortly before the Ten Commandments were given on Sinai, when the Lord gave the Israelites manna to eat during their time in the wilderness, they were told to gather each day enough manna for that day, but on the sixth day to gather twice as much, for there would be none available on the seventh day. As Moses explained to them, that day was “a Sabbath to the Lord,” so they would not find on that day any manna in the field. “Six days you shall gather it, but on the seventh day, which is a Sabbath, there will be none” (Exodus 16:25-26). This

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entire incident reads as though desisting from work on the seventh day was not a strange concept to the people and that there may have been other times when they rested on that day. Whatever the case, this example with the manna antedated the giving of the law on Sinai.

When rest from labour was ordained in the Ten Commandments it was stated clearly that after God had completed his work of creation in six days he rested on the seventh and for this reason he blessed it and made it holy. This is why his people were to remember it and to keep it holy (Exodus 20:8-11). What God was teaching them about Sabbath observance is further spelled out in Exodus 31:12-17, where God told them that keeping the Sabbath was a sign between God and Israel “that you may know that I, the Lord sanctify you” (make you holy). It was also a sign reminding them that “in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested and was refreshed.” For the day to be made holy meant that it was observed as a special day, different from other days. The only requirements specified for keeping it holy was to remember what the day was all about and to refrain from all work. It is important to note that, as originally given, there was no requirement to worship because it was the Sabbath. It was much later that synagogue service became part of observance.

How Christians have looked at the Sabbath has varied through the centuries. Because the Sabbath commandment is in the Decalogue, this has seemed to many to give it special importance. Some, like Seventh Day Adventists, have set it apart as the Christian day of worship. Much more common has been the practice of many churches to make Sunday the Christian Sabbath. Apparently in New Testament times some made observance of the Sabbath and other Jewish practices a requirement of Christians, for Paul told the Colossian Christians not to let anyone judge them “in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath” (Colossians 2:16-17). He said that these Jewish ordinances were “a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.”

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However, the apostle did not have a problem with those who observed special days as a matter between them and the Lord. In a warning against quarrelling over opinions, he recognized that “one person esteems one day as better than another, while another esteems all days alike. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. The one who observes the day, observes it in honour of the Lord” (Romans 14:5-6). It is not difficult to imagine that at that time some converts from Judaism personally observed the Sabbath. The principles Paul sets forth here are equally applicable to differing views about whether to observe religious holidays like Christmas or Easter and, if so, how.

It would be going too far, then, to make Sabbath observance a requirement for Christians. There is no indication that the New Testament ever does this. But there is a recognition that the Jewish Sabbath foreshadowed something far greater than refraining from work on the seventh day. The writer of Hebrews, in an exposition of the 95th Psalm, speaks of a place of rest provided by God which some could not enter because of disobedience. But, as he says, the psalmist affirmed that this rest is still available and thus “there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God” and Christians should “strive to enter that rest” (Hebrews 4:1-11). Clearly, that rest is eternal salvation, aptly referred to in Revelation 14:13 as the time and place where those who “die in the Lord” are blessed by being able to “rest from their labours, for their deeds follow them.”

Thus, for Christians, scriptural teaching about the Sabbath takes on richer meaning. To Israel, the special day looked back to God resting after fully completing his creative activity, and so, as a sign that they were his people, they rested one day a week from labour that was often hard and futile because of the curse of sin. To the Christian, the Sabbath that remains for us not only looks back to the cessation of God’s original creative activity; it also looks forward to God’s new creation, where his people enjoy not merely a temporary rest but one that is complete and eternal.

But this does not exhaust what we can learn about Sabbath teaching. As Jesus said, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27). The Pharisees of Jesus’ time had it backwards and made the Sabbath an onerous burden for God’s people, with all kinds of rules about what people could do and could not do on that day. Originally, the Sabbath was designed to free people from work one day a week. We all need a time of rest, for the curse of sin (Genesis 3:17-19) has not only made much of our work toilsome (“by the sweat of your face”) but often futile (“thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to you”). Thus, for all of us, rest is important. Jesus himself recognized that people cannot work all the time. After his apostles returned from a preaching mission and when so many were coming and going that they could not even find time for a leisurely meal, Jesus said to them, “Come away by yourselves to a desolate place and rest a while” (Mark 6:30-31).

But not only did the original Sabbath law remind people that rest is needed for refreshment and renewal; it also was a reminder that there is more to life than constantly toiling whether out of necessity or from an incessant desire to have more. In our culture there are few days when stores and factories are closed, but when they are

it is a welcome reminder that it is good to have a time when we are not consumed with making money or spending it.

The Sabbath law was also a reminder that time, like all else we think we have, belongs ultimately to God. Just as the tithe, because it was holy, was the Lord's (Leviticus 27:30), so the seventh day, because it was holy, was also his. For Christians, who have no one holy day, every day is holy and should be used in a way that honours God. Paul, said, "Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:15-16).

Finally, both the Jewish Sabbath and the Sabbath that awaits us in eternity are patterned after God's example. He not only rested after he completed his creative work; he also had the satisfaction of knowing that all that he did in creation was good. While we will often have to rest in the midst of our labours, the most satisfying rest comes after we have fully completed our work, especially if what we do has been done well. We enjoy a foretaste of this satisfaction when we complete some difficult and vital task in this life, but it will be far grander when we are prepared to hear from our Lord, "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:21).

Thus, even though we are not subject to the same kind of Sabbath law as were the Jews, there is much to learn from this day of rest as we live for God and as we look forward to eternity, to the full realization of the rest God has in store for us.

(All Bible quotations are from the English Standard Version)

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About the Author:

Tim Alexander is a life-long Christian with a love for languages. He reads his Bible with an eye for getting away from human-made traditions and discovering the pure will of God. He works for a non-profit Christian organization and has had the opportunity to travel and speak in churches around the world.

Tim and his wife live in Beamsville, Ontario, Canada.

Charles Gordon McPhee, Canadian Preacher

Written on: May 31, 2022



Article by: Geoffrey Ellis

During the summers of 1950-52, it was my privilege to serve as “sports director” at Omagh Bible School under the direction of C. G. McPhee. I and the campers viewed Brother McPhee as “principal” in those days. Thus, began my lifetime association with Charles Gordon McPhee.

The vision and work of “Omagh Bible School” had been passed on to C. G. McPhee by his predecessor, Raymond Crumbliss, evangelist with the Strathmore Church of Christ in Toronto—who had returned to Alabama in August, 1942. Crumbliss had worked in the early years when “Omagh” was transitioning from a summer country experience for city kids, to a camp, then to a summer Bible “school.” McPhee inherited this vision, which he pursued whenever he served Omagh as “principal” during the next decade and a half.

As post-war teenagers opted increasingly for summer employment, the age of young people at Omagh became younger, “Omagh Bible School” reverted to being “Camp Omagh.” Nevertheless, the vision of a Bible College in eastern Canada remained and grew.

“Gordon and Grace McPhee at Omagh Bible School”

Oliver Tallman and George Johnson led the charge in the late ‘40s. (Oliver Tallman had been born on the campus of Maritime Bible and Literary College, West Gore, Nova Scotia. George Johnson had studied at Carman Bible School, Carman, Manitoba in the twenties.) Letters Patent were drawn in 1950 for Great Lakes Christian College, Beamsville, Ontario. Charles Gordon McPhee was appointed president in 1951. The school opened in 1952, offering high school and Bible College classes, with McPhee, president, Bruce Merritt, principal, Eugene Perry, teacher, and Roy Merritt and Keith Thompson, Bible teachers. McPhee had a major task confronting him.

In the early days of the college, C. G. McPhee traveled often in the U.S. to raise funds for G.L.C.C. He met and became friends with Tom Beam of Oklahoma City, OK. Beam's business was manufacturing seat belts for trucks, and also had interests in the oil industry. His early attraction to GLCC was simply the college's location in *Beamsville*—the only school located in a town having his namesake, "Beam"! For several years support came regularly to the college from Tom Beam, stopped, and then quietly after a time, began again. Near the end of Mr. Beam's career, by now in the 1980s, his continuing gifts made possible the purchase of nineteen acres of land in Beamsville, property that joined the college campus, and extended to the corner of John St. and Bartlett Rd. This property was secured for the anticipated future needs of the college level program. As the hoped-for development faded, that asset saved the high school from closing during a difficult period in the nineties. Gordon McPhee's influence lives on at Great Lakes even today!



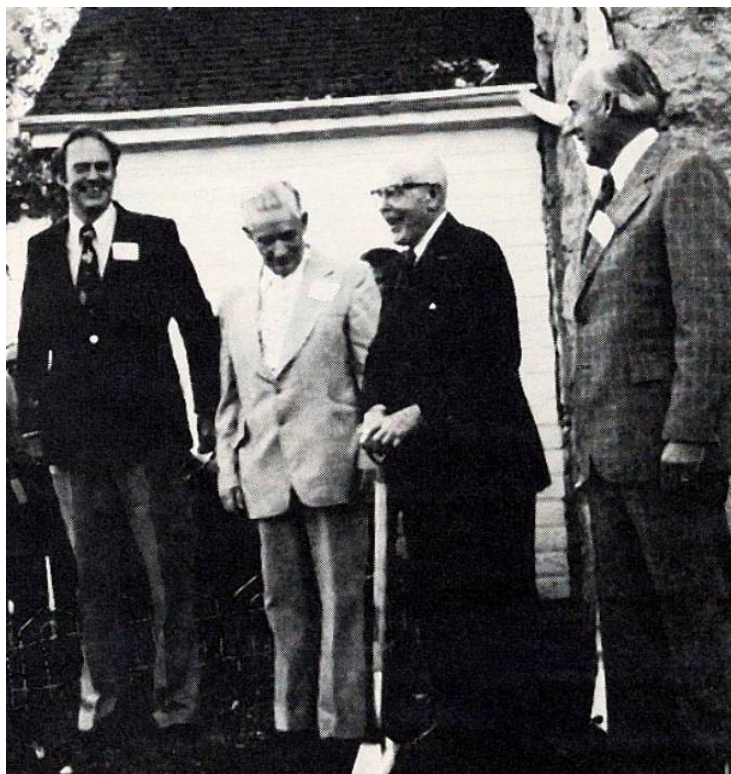
Back to those earlier years! According to a diary kept by C. G., he and his wife, Grace, in early 1952 went to Oklahoma and Texas, fundraising for GLCC. While in Abilene, he visited the campus of Abilene Christian College. He wrote: "Enjoyed visiting with many students. Jeff Ellis was especially happy." Then that fall of 1952, Doreen Begley (of Toronto) having also become a student at Abilene Christian, there we made plans for our wedding: we invited C. G. McPhee to perform our wedding service, which took place at the Strathmore church, in Toronto, on December 27.

In February, 1954, C. G. McPhee was again traveling for GLCC, also with his wife, Grace. They included a visit to Abilene Christian College to attend some of the Bible lectures of that year. As it was my last year of college at Abilene, C. G. took time to visit me and to "recruit" me as a prospect for GLCC. The McPhees were also able to visit my wife Doreen and our new-born daughter, Elizabeth, at the St. Ann hospital, in Abilene. Beth had arrived on the 25th of that month, the last night of the Bible lectures. Then, later, in the Spring, I received a letter from Brother McPhee, again urging my joining the GLCC teaching staff upon graduating. (The previous day I had received a

letter that put an end to my hoped-for plans to preach and study in Connecticut!) He wrote, "Your MA degree in Bible will be important as we will soon develop our college Bible program." With this encouragement, I with my wife and family arrived in Beamsville in late August, 1954, prepared to teach Bible and History, high school and college.

A month passed, and then the unthinkable happened: the GLCC board announced that C. G. McPhee would retire from his position as president! Sometime later, he stated: "It was deemed advisable to terminate my connection with the school as president and return to church work completely. This I have done for 40 years. I believe the best years of my life as a Gospel preacher lie ahead of me."

The years passed. Bruce Merritt became president, serving until 1961. His brother, Roy, in 1969, became Dean of the Great Lake's new Faculty of Bible and Missions. In 1970, the carriage hall of the former Gibson estate, that had been converted to the dining hall/kitchen, dormitory, and staff apartment for school use, was restructured as the Bible building for the Bible college. Offices and a free-standing classroom were added. The complex was designated "McPhee Hall" in honour of Charles Gordon McPhee!



"Dedication of McPhee Hall: (L to R) Geoff Ellis, Oliver Tallman, C. G. McPhee, and Roy Merritt."

The latest development of interest in this recital: the archives of the Canadian Churches of Christ Historical Society were moved in August, 2018, from Meaford to Beamsville, and relocated on the campus of the Great Lakes Christian High School, to the refurbished (\$30,000) former staff apartment, of McPhee Hall!

C. G. McPhee retired in 1966, at age 74, in St Catharines, where our association continued, especially on the golf course at St Anns!

Charles Gordon McPhee passed away to his award in heaven on November 27, 1979, 87 years of age.

It was my privilege to present the eulogy at Gordon's funeral. Included was this recollection: "...this quality of sadness was no stranger to Gordon McPhee, for he ministered to many, many families in just such circumstances. While he did not carry his emotions on his sleeve and was not what you would call a sentimentalist, he did

care deeply about other's grief. An indelible memory takes me back to my first staff meeting at GLCC in '54, held under his chairmanship. Word of the death of a friend in Meaford came while the meeting was in progress. Tears filled his eyes. The meeting was temporarily adjourned. After a time for composure to be regained and arrangements to be made, we went back to work. Here was a man of compassion, sympathetic to the burdens people bear.

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Jesus Heads to Jerusalem

Written on: May 31, 2022

Article by: Art Ford



“The Way of a follower of Jesus” is one of the themes that Luke delivers in this section. See Luke 9:57–62 (TNIV)

⁵⁷As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, “I will follow you wherever you go.”

⁵⁸Jesus replied, “Foxes have holes and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.”

⁵⁹He said to another man, “Follow me.”

But he replied, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.”

⁶⁰Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.”

⁶¹Still another said, “I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-bye to my family.”

⁶²Jesus replied, “No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.”

What is a 21st Century Christian to take from these words of Jesus? We have the security of a home to live in. Even so, our expectations of a “normal life” are to take second place to the commitment to the Son of Man. Life is to be more than real estate transactions, investments, our jobs, and seeing that our children are in all of the enrichment activities that we can provide for them. These cultural values can encompass us to the point that it seems that they are all that matters, and if not all, at least the most important things.

Michael Wilcock says in his commentary, *The Message of Luke*, “Now we are not to misunderstand this. Ordinary security, accepted customs, home ties, are still the norm. Jesus approves of them, since they are part and parcel of the social life of mankind as his Father created it, and that is normally the way his followers are led to live. But the crucial question, and the one he is asking here, concerns what happens at the *parting* of the ways. ‘Suppose I were to lead you towards work in which your income would be lower, your prospects (humanly speaking) more uncertain, and your accustomed standard of living non-existent? Or suppose I were to ask you to do something for me which according to most people of your class and background is

simply ‘not done’? Or suppose I were to summon you to my service with such a peremptory call that your nearest and dearest would have to be left without an explanation? Would you even then come my way?”

Jesus challenges us to make it our first priority to follow him. It’s not just something that we fit in among all of the other things in our lives. He wants us to make him first, last, and all. Then we fit the other things around our commitment to and our faith in him. The call that Jesus gave to the apostles is the one he has for us. “Follow me.”

Another important theme is, **The way of his heralds**. See Luke 10:1–16 (TNIV)

After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. ²He told them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. ³Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. ⁴Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road.

⁵“When you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’ ⁶If the head of the house loves peace, your peace will rest on that house; if not, it will return to you. ⁷Stay there, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for workers deserve their wages. Do not move around from house to house.


⁸“When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you. ⁹Heal the sick who are there and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’ ¹⁰But when you enter a town and are not welcomed, go into its streets and say, ¹¹‘Even the dust of your town we wipe from our feet as a warning to you. Yet be sure of this: The kingdom of God has come near.’ ¹²I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town.



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¹³“Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. ¹⁴But it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you. ¹⁵And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to the depths.

¹⁶“Whoever listens to you listens to me; whoever rejects you rejects me; but whoever rejects me rejects him who sent me.”

Here we see Jesus sending the seventy-two (or seventy – depending on your translation) ahead of him to introduce him to others. He will follow later with them. We may well see this as a parable of the role the church plays. When you decide to follow Jesus there is the opportunity to introduce him to others. In this case, those who follow Jesus and to learn from him are then sent out ahead of him, to introduce him to others. The seventy were to go ‘into every town and place where he himself was about to come’.

Jesus doesn’t send us to places he would not go. Indeed these days, when we go, we learn that Jesus is already there preparing hearts for the harvest. It’s not just a harvest,

but a great harvest. In the Parable of the Sower Jesus speaks of seed producing hundred, sixty, or thirty times what was sown in good soil. Is that a good rate of return? Most of us are quite removed from our agrarian roots so we have no idea what to expect. According to the website, “Askinglot.com” if you plant 1.5 bushel of wheat per acre, you can expect up to a 60 bushel per acre yield. That’s 40 times what was planted. It has taken modern farming methods to get the yield that high. My point isn’t that we bone up on our farming skills, but that the harvest Jesus is speaking of is so great that it’s beyond comprehension for his listeners! That’s how God works.

Because the harvest is great, we are to pray for

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God to send workers into his fields. Note that God sends, and that the fields, and by extension the harvest is his. We pray because there is a need for harvesters, and because of the dangers that they will face are great. Jesus says they will be like lambs among wolves so they need his protection. Jesus also knows that there are many distractions and those who go as harvesters need single mindedness, doing away with distractions so the good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed (5-12).

Our task is sharing the good news whenever we can, to whomever we can. To accomplish this, we don't have to be great evangelists. I often feel like Moses at the burning bush when it comes to sharing the good news. Like Moses I need to learn that the task isn't to be done by my talents and skills, but God will do the work on the heart and send someone else (my Aaron) when the time is right.

It is then from two points of view, that *the way* is described. Jesus calls men to come after him, to be his followers, his disciples and learners; and as they learn, he sends them out ahead of him, to be his heralds, his messengers, and his servants. In both respects *the way* calls for utter devotion to his cause.

When the disciples returned from their mission, they were full of joy because of what they had accomplished. But Jesus taught them to rejoice because their names were registered in heaven. He focused their attention upon their relationship with God as his followers.

When Jesus was teaching in the home of Mary and Martha, Mary was listening at the feet of Jesus while Martha was busy with preparations. Martha asked Jesus to tell Mary to get up and help her, but Jesus responded that Mary had made the better choice.

There is nothing more important than spending time with Jesus, learning from him and engaging fully in the work that he has sent us to do. In the same way that Jesus turned his face toward Jerusalem and the cross, may we also be willing to do whatever God calls us to do in his service. For there we will find life.

Kingston ON

Is Personal Self Defence Morally Right? (Part 2)

Written on: May 31, 2022

Article by: Kevin Cleary

This article continues our discussion from last month.

Having established that killing and or violence is sometimes morally acceptable in both the new and Old Testament, let us turn to personal self defence. The first point we can make, is that scripture does not require a Christian to passively accept violence directed toward them.

On at least two occasions the Jews attempted to stone Jesus. In Luke 4:30 as well as John 10:39 Jesus resisted their efforts by escaping. When his enemies tried to take his life, the apostle Paul thwarted their efforts by sneaking out of Damascus in Acts 9:23-25. When attacked by a mob in the temple courtyard Paul took full advantage of his Roman Citizenship to seek the protections afforded him by the law Acts 22:22-29. Paul had to be forcefully rescued by Roman soldiers from the Jewish Sanhedrin and not long after that, he left Jerusalem under armed guard to guarantee his safe passage to Caesarea Acts 23:12-22.

While neither Jesus nor Paul used personal violence, they took full advantage of the protection of government agents who did and whose actions deterred those with violent intent. A Christian does not have to passively accept violent or harmful behaviour directed toward them.

Another important passage that must be considered before returning to the pacifist argument is found in Luke 22:35-38. Jesus was preparing the disciples for their further evangelistic travels. Unlike the first time they were sent out (Luke 9:1-6) with *no provision or protection*, this time they are told to ensure they have both.

This is what he said: “And He said to them, “When I sent you out without money belt and bag and sandals, you did not lack anything, did you?” They said, “No, nothing.” And He said to them, “But now, whoever has a money belt is to take it along, likewise also a bag, and whoever has no sword is to sell his coat and buy one”

Jesus told them, that anyone who had no sword should sell his cloak and buy one. The purpose of the sword was for self defence. It was not for use against authority figures such as those who came to arrest Jesus. When Peter did so, Jesus told Peter to put the sword back in its proper place. So it appears that Jesus extended to his disciples the same rights enjoyed by the general population, to defend themselves from unlawful violence. Some have attempted to make the sword figurative. But the sword appears in the list of practical things that they were to take...like a moneybag and knapsack to aid their travel. In response to Jesus instructions, two actual swords are produced. The

disciples took Jesus literally and he did not correct them. The apostles were not preparing for battle, nor were they members of the military. The only reasonable explanation is that Jesus wanted the disciples to have the ability to defend themselves.

Returning to the pacifist argument let's examine some of the scriptures most often cited. A close reading and careful exegesis of these passages is critically important. A proper understanding of the key references will demonstrate that they do not directly apply to personal self defence. After all how can Luke 22:35-38 be explained in light of what we have already seen in Matthew 5 and Romans 12?

Rather than starting with the Sermon on the mount, let us start with a principal established earlier, that God is the giver of human life (Gen 1:27; 2:7; Eccl 12:7) which is to be valued and respected. If we are to protect and uphold the sanctity of life, it makes sense that some protective measures should be in place. In his wisdom, God did exactly that in Genesis 9:5-6 when He stated: "Surely I will require your lifeblood; from every beast I will require it. And from every man, from every man's brother I will require the life of man. Whoever sheds man's blood, By man his blood shall be shed, For in the image of God He made man."

God establishing capital punishment in order to ensure that life is valued and respected. Someone contemplating murder, was to understand that their own life would be forfeit. And that should they murder another, they have taken their own life as well. Capital punishment fit the crime and obligated those who governed to carry out God's will. Murderers who were not deterred by the threat of punishment were deterred from future crime by execution. This was the intend of the law and a critical tool for maintaining law and order.

Responding to those who object based on the 'golden rule', Foy E Wallace says "That puts the golden rule to work in reverse. It commits the Golden Rule to protect the wrong-doer and deserts the victim" (World Video Bible School, 2015).

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What God said about capital punishment was intended for the health and safety of society. History shows that when society allows human life to be taken without losing one's own, such social orders are horrible to live in. When human life is cheap, human value is also degraded and love for one another suffers. God's command in Genesis 9 was given out of love and intended to be a blessing.

From the general principal, that life must be valued and respected, let's consider some specific passages.

Jesus pronounced a blessing upon those who make peace (Mat 5:9). There is no question that Christians are called to pursue peace with others and more importantly between God and man. But wanting peace and working toward it does not preclude Christians from encountering conflict. Nor does it exempt the Christian from threats of theft, violence or oppression. Paul devoted his life to the pursuit of peace yet faced a conspiracy to take his life in Acts 23. As mentioned earlier, Paul did not resist that effort and used civil law along with military protection to carry on his ministry of peace.

Perhaps this is what Paul had in mind when he said "If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all" (Rom 12:18) Here we have a clear admonition to pursue peace but also the recognition that it's not always up to you. This would indicate that a person could be a peace maker embodying the teaching of the beatitude but still find themselves under attack. Therefore Jesus teaching does not forbid any effort to protect oneself from violence.

Jesus' next statement, which we mentioned above, pertains to his teaching on the sixth commandment. "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire."

Both sides will agree that this as an expansion or deepening of the commandment, enlarging the application to include matters and motives of the heart. But let us also notice two things. The prohibition began with murder and not simply any and all killing. And closely related to that, Jesus was addressing a settled or growing inner agitation and hatred toward another. This has little in common with a self defence situation or even war for that matter. Conflict between strangers and acts of self defence arising out of them rarely involve harsh feelings or personally targeted hatred. In many cases, the victim and the assailant have never met. Defending oneself without wishing harm to another are not mutually exclusive. It is possible to desire what is best for another while not allowing them to harm you or your loved ones. This is evidenced by the sheer number of accounts where someone shoots an attacker, and then proceeds to call 911 to secure medical attention and even performs first aid and CPR to help their attacker as much as possible.

Matthew 5:38-42 may be more difficult, as it sounds more like a self defence situation than other passages. Matthew records Jesus saying:

"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek,

turn to him the other also. And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.

The kind of restraint that Jesus advocated is the same sort taught by his apostles. In each and every circumstance where you are able, do not ever take the law into your own hands. When insulted or struck, do not retaliate. When taken to court, settle matters by going beyond what is required. Christians ought never engage in 'vigilante justice'. Antifa demands the right to 'punch a Nazi'. And it is that attitude that Jesus addressed.

The apostle Paul said much the same when he wrote: "Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." (Rom 12:18). The admonition to "not resist an evil person" is given in the context of personal revenge. It is not commanding us to let someone engage in wicked practices and to perpetrate violence if we can stop it. This would itself be wicked. The wise man said "Like a muddied spring or a polluted fountain is a righteous man who gives way before the wicked" (Prov 25:26). If this verse were taken out of context, it would require us to free all prisoners, disband all military and police forces, and never stop domestic abuse. The implications would not only result in anarchy but they would violate the teaching of scripture elsewhere such as Romans 13:1-4 or Matthew 22:39. A careful reading along with proper exegesis reveals that Jesus was not commanding Christians to submit to physical violence nor was he restricting them from protecting themselves. Nor does this passage restrict Christians from police or military service.

Well then, what of the command to "Love your neighbour as yourself" (Mat 22:39)? The pacifist argues that love and violence are mutually exclusive. Thus any act of physical violence would disobey this principal.

But as we have pointed out, God put capital punishment in place because he loved us. God's love and those who act as his agents express that love by protecting the innocent and punishing evil Heb 12:6. Studies show that children who are not disciplined feel that they are not loved. A society built on love, will have rules in place to ensure that bullies and criminals are dealt with. The meaning of what Jesus said turns on what it means to 'love oneself'. The responsible care and keeping of oneself ought to extend equally to others. Wishing to live at peace includes the right to secure such peace if attacked by others. We are not surprised when we discover that Jesus and his disciples avoided harm as much as they could. They ran when possible and reasoned with those who wished them harm. Yet Jesus instructed his disciples to make provision for self defence if all else failed.

Before moving to the next passage, there is another principal that we have only touched on but not fully discussed.

We have looked at two passages in which we are told not to retaliate or respond in kind (Mat 538-42, Rom 12:20-21). Jesus and Paul both teach us that we should respond to evil people with kindness and love. We should pray for them and return good for evil. This is part of what makes us different from unbelievers (Mat 5:46-48). These principals

protect us from taking revenge when our pride is hurt or our loved ones are harmed. Vengeance is not the same thing as defending ourselves and our loved ones from harm. Careful thought must be given in advance to just where 'self-defence' ends and retaliation begins. We will discuss more about controlling emotion as a safety precaution, as well as to avoid a sinful response later.

Our last passage is perhaps one that is most commonly quoted when discussing our subject.

It was uttered by Jesus when he was being arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane (see Matthew 26:51; Mark 14:47 and Luke 22:50) Peter tried to defend Jesus with his sword and very nearly killed a man. Jesus turned to Peter telling him to put the sword away for "all who take the sword will perish by the sword". Jesus then explained why 'the sword' was out of place. If the disciples of Jesus rescued him from arrest, then the scriptures would not be fulfilled nor would the world be saved. The angels of heaven were at the Lord's disposal but were not called. Jesus didn't defend himself because his time had come (John 12:23).

Jesus could have avoided arrest, knowing where Judas would bring the guards. He had come to Jerusalem for this very purpose. But Jesus knew that what was happening needed to happen (John 19:30). His words to Peter were not about never defending yourself from violence, but rather, were about how Jesus would achieve the plan of redemption and his ultimate glory. Hebrews 2:9 tells us that Jesus was "crowned with glory and honour because of the suffering of death." Jesus' victory was achieved through sacrifice and obedience, which is still how God's kingdom grows and succeeds¹.

To sum up: we have looked at some passages that at first seemed to favour pacifism but which do not exclude the use of force in self defence. We have shown that when properly examined and understood the scriptures that are claimed to condemn any and all use of violence don't really do that. In our next article, we want to suggest a path forward including some guidance for how a Christian is to conduct him or herself if a dangerous situation should one ever arise.

1 Quite apart from questions about personal self defence is that larger question of a Christian's participation in the military or law-enforcement agencies. Those who oppose this often cite Ephesians 6:12 and II Corinthians 10:3-5 which both teach that Christians are engaged in a spiritual war and not a physical one. This of course is true, but it does not address the question that we have raised. While engaged in matters pertaining to the kingdom of heaven "we don't wage war according to the flesh" nor "wrestle against flesh and blood". But Paul is not answering the question of whether a Christian may serve in the military or the police force as an agent of the state. Romans 13:1-4 would indicate that these institutions are ministers of God to ensure the safety and orderliness of society. Yet we would point out that this discussion and the one from Matthew 26 make it clear that God's Kingdom is never to be spread using physical strength or military force (Jn 18:36).

Meaford ON

Spiritual Leadership in the Church

Written on: May 31, 2022

Article by: Dave Knutson

In Ephesians 4:11-12, the apostle Paul reminds us that godly leaders are actually a gift given by Jesus to the church and given for a very special purpose.

“And He (Jesus) gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ”.

Now not all of these functions or roles continue to today, and to this short list we could also add the role of ‘servant’ or deacon. The first pair of roles that Paul identifies, is apostles and prophets and the second pair is evangelists and pastor-teachers

The apostles in the sense of the 12 along with the apostle Paul had a unique role. When they died, no one replaced them, because no one could. These men were personally chosen by Jesus for among other things they were witnesses of all that He did and said during his ministry. They also saw him crucified and then risen from the dead

Jesus gave them a place of authority in the church which was given to no one else. He established his church through them and led them through the Holy Spirit into a knowledge of all that he wanted the church to know.

Only the Apostles had the power to lay their hands on other believers as the means by which Holy Spirit conveyed spiritual gifts. But when they died, one by one, no one replaced them. The apostles had a foundational yet temporary role. Once the church was established and Jesus had finished his revelation to them, their job was done.

Prophets also appear on this list and we understand that their role was to bring a message directly from God to his people. God spoke to them by revelation. He opened their minds to understand what He said and they unfolded that message to the church. In some cases they wrote those things down. What they received by revelation, they also preserved in writing, doing so under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, a process that we call inspiration.

The New Testament books of James, Jude and Acts along with the gospels of Mark and Luke were written by prophets who were not apostles. The rest are all ascribed to apostolic authorship. In due time, by the end of the first Christian century, direct revelation came to an end and with it, inspired writing. So in this specialized use of the word, we no longer have prophets at work among us.

Yet sometimes, when a person spoke ‘for God’, that person may be said to be prophesying. In this more general sense, we do have prophets today. But those who now proclaim the word of God do so based on their study of inspired writings. None can claim direct revelation from God.

That leaves two other spiritual roles in the list in Ephesians 4, and these are evangelists and pastor-teachers.

Before going on with these, it's useful to remember why God appointed men to fulfill these functions. His reasons really have to do with the church. He gave these men as gifts to the church to equip it to function as a spiritual body that is able to minister to itself.

The body of Christ – the church has at least three main objectives: the first of which is to truly be the people of God. To function as the body of Christ...we need to do the following things:

- We need to unite around a single body of truth
- We must be indwelt and led by the one and only Spirit of God
- We must be united with our Lord Jesus Christ and share a common faith in him as our saviour
- We must be called heavenward by a common hope anchored in Christ's victory over death and his promise of life in the presence of God.
- And we need to serve, honour, worship and glorify our God and Father

To that end, the church is to grow up and to mature to be like Jesus.

- Each person ought to become ever more humble & self-controlled,
- More pure and holy in thought and speech

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- More grounded and blessed by a full knowledge of the whole counsel of God.
- More faithful in life and more active in service. For when the church knows the word of God and is doing it, it is not blown off course by the winds of change or blown away by false doctrine

And then of course, our job is to proclaim the good news to the whole world.

- To preach and live the gospel so others might also be saved.

There is no better example of leadership in the New Testament than Jesus. On the night that he was betrayed, Jesus dressed himself as a slave and washed the feet of his disciples. He even washed the feet of the man who was betraying him.

John writes: (in John 13:2-5,12-17)

¹ When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. 'Do you understand what I have done for you?' he asked them. You call me "Teacher" and "Lord," and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. ¹⁷ Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.'

You will notice that I skipped verses 6-11. That's where Peter didn't want Jesus to wash his feet.

Jim McGuiggan writes in his book *The God of the Towel*:

"Peter was embarrassed by the Messiah's conduct. Leaders don't act that way! Get on your feet, man, that's no way for a Messiah to behave. It's an understandable approach; but unacceptable to God. Then the Master said something very serious to Peter. You see, Peter was refusing to accept a foot-washing messiah. And Jesus said to him...If I don't wash your feet, you have no part in me" You can't reject the spirit of service and have any part with me' Now that is not a threat; it is a fact. There is only one Lord...and he is a serving Lord. If we rejected that Lord...there is no other. We cannot reject the spirit of the Master and claim to follow Him. You see...service is not just God's way for God. It is God's way for all those who belong to God"

Jesus turned our usual notion of leaders on its head. In the church, leaders do not 'lord it over' the flock. Those who lead, do so as servants. They do it in humility, and they do for the good of others. So when we raise the question of church leadership we are really talking about who it is that gets to serve. Or perhaps more accurately, who it is that God has called to serve. It is helpful to think of the church as an extension of the family. By God's design, a husband is the head of his wife and their family. When families assemble, it's family leaders who lead in the Lord's family. God does not cancel out male spiritual leadership, because of a change of venue.

The Evangelist:

An evangelist is a preacher and must be a teacher to do that. He proclaims and he explains. His job is to teach and preach the whole counsel of God. Part of his work is evangelistic and part is directed toward the church and in the New Testament we find

men like Stephen, Philip, Timothy & Titus serving in this capacity. In 2nd Tim 4:5, Paul urged Timothy to ‘do the work of an evangelist’.

Timothy was tasked with the ‘ministry of the word’ and is described as:

- A minister of the gospel (I tim 4:6)
- The Lord’s servant (I tim 2:24)
- A man of God (I Tim 6:11)

To be effective, he needed the qualifications set out by Paul in – II Tim 2:23-25

“The Lord’s bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth”

An evangelist has to have the disposition of a peacemaker. He must be able to teach and remain patient, especially when he knows that he is in the right and when someone has done him wrong. Sometimes his job is unpleasant. He has to correct and rebuke. Some people will oppose the truth while others will oppose their leaders. But this kind of behaviour cannot be allowed to stand. Invariably some correction must be done yet should be done lovingly and gently. The goal is not to win an argument, but to save a soul. An evangelist must conduct himself with concern for the salvation of others.

In I Tim 6:3-10, the Paul calls out some things that an evangelist should avoid and then in verse 11, Paul adds some things for him to embrace: ” – Flee these you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance *and* gentleness.”

In short, an evangelist must ‘pay close attention to himself and to his teaching’ I Timothy 4:16

Similarly II Tim 4:2-5 is all about – the job, the man and those he serves.

“...preach the word; be ready in season *and* out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but *wanting* to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths. But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry”

An evangelist has to be a student of God’s word and a practitioner of it. Jesus hated hypocrisy for it is the undoing of every godly message. So an evangelist must above all else set an example for the believers. God calls these men to a higher standard.

Paul writes to Timothy:

Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but *rather* in speech, conduct, love, faith *and* purity, show yourself an example of those who believe. (I Tim 4:12). I suppose we might ask; who then is really adequate to do this work?

Now when an evangelist succeeds and he plants a new church, part of his job is to organize that congregation according to God’s pattern by appointing elders (Titus 1:5). In new congregations, the first building block in its organization is appointing elders.

This role is designated by four Greek words, with each one adding a dimension to our understanding

1. Presbuteros comes into English as elder and naturally refers to an older Christian
2. We translate – Episkopos – as overseer
3. Poimen becomes ‘shepherd’ in English
4. And Oikonomos is ‘a steward

It’s worth noting that in the New Testament, elders in the church are always referred to in the plural. Congregations always had more than one. God intended for more than one man to serve by setting a godly example. And the decisions that they take have the advantage of collective wisdom.

The word Bishop was often used for managers, foremen, supervisors and inspectors. Where the word *elder* emphasized age and experience, the word *bishop* pointed to the active side of this role. It has to do with oversight and management. And in a spiritual context, oversight includes protection.

Of course, a shepherd takes care of sheep. This word had a long history of metaphorical use both in the Old Testament and in the New. The leaders of Israel were it’s shepherds (Isa 56:11, Jer 23:4, 50:6). Jesus calls himself as the ‘good shepherd’ (John 10)

Spiritual shepherds, lead, feed and protect. They set an example in word and deed. They teach God’s word to mature the flock and they protect it from spiritual harm.

Yet as elders – shepherd and manage, they do so as stewards. A steward manages the household belonging to another. He takes care of the affairs of the owner. He does the will of the owner in a prudent and faithful way. And he does this, knowing that he will have to give an account.

The flock; in this case the church, does not belong to the shepherds. It belongs to the chief shepherd...who is Jesus

There are two main lists of qualifications for these men. One is found in I Tim 3:1-7 and the other in Titus 1:5-9. The lists are similar and say in effect, “this is the kind of man that God wants to lead’.

When choosing leaders, it seems to me that churches need to be careful to avoid two extremes. One is to set the bar so high that pretty much no one qualifies. And the other is to lower or ignore the standards and just choose the best that we have, even when that person is clearly not qualified. Permitting degrees of progress within qualification categories that permit it, may bring balance to this process.

Alexander Strauch, in his *Biblical Elders: An Urgent Call to Restore Biblical Church Leadership* (1995), (pp. 72-83) groups the elder’s requirements into three categories:

- (1) Moral and Spiritual Character
- (2) Personal Abilities

(3) Spirit-given Motivation for the Task:

Starting with the last point first, a man must want to be an elder. Any man who does not aspire to serve, should not serve. He should not ever be pushed or shoved into doing it, but should do so willingly and for the good of God's people. Motives are important since they go to character. Godly leadership is never self-serving. Since only Jesus is lord, all human leadership takes the form of service and servant-hood.

So each elder is to be:

(1) Above reproach.

An overseer must have a good reputation that is deserved.

His conduct at home and in public is beyond reproach.

He is a man of integrity, who is self-controlled and wise

He is not a lover of money

He treats people gently and is respected for it.

He does not... quote: "sit long at wine".

He never lets his judgment become impaired by alcohol.

He is a married man with children who are believers. He demonstrates his management skills first in his own home.

(2) He must be skilled in relationships –

He is of sound-mind, and uncontentious.

He never goes looking for a fight. He's not the sort of man who gets 'in your face'. But is a peacemaker.

He is not dictatorial or quick-tempered

He is not self-willed, but accepts counsel from others.

He demonstrates his leadership abilities by the way that he manages his own family. And in this way he serves as a model for others to follow;

And perhaps of paramount importance, he is able to teach and defend the faith. This is absolutely non-negotiable. No man can serve as a protector of the flock if he cannot protect against false doctrine.

(3) Each elder is to serve with a positive attitude:

Each one who accepts this position should do so because they desire to serve for the sake of the Lord and his work

Those who say 'yes' should do so with the sense that the Holy Spirit has a hand in their appointment. And once appointed, they follow the Master's example of servant-hood. They manage and protect the flock – which they know belongs to God. And they shepherd as good stewards, ready to give an account for each and every sheep.

Biblical leadership has a service to render, a standard to maintain and the Gospel of Jesus Christ to proclaim.

In return...the congregation has a duty to the men whom they place before the Holy Spirit to serve as their shepherd and overseers

- A duty to pray for them (2 Cor. 1:10b-11a)
- A duty to respect them (Rom. 13:7)
- A duty to treat them with kindness and empathy (1 Thess. 5:15)
- A duty to render due consideration (Phil. 2:3) & honour (1 Tim. 5:17)
- A duty to submit to their leadership & obey them (Heb. 13:17)
- A duty to heed their teaching and imitate their example (Heb. 13:7)

In all of this, members ought to be very careful to allow elders to lead by actually following them (1 Thess. 5:12). And while following, being very reluctant to bring charges against them (1 Tim 5:12). In short, you and I should do what we can to make the work of our leaders a joy and not a burden, for they watch over our souls.

When we follow God's instructions for leadership, those choices not only bless those within the church but also promote the greater progress of the Gospel

Adapted from a presentation made to the Sault Ste. Marie Ontario congregation – Dave Knutson

Barrie ON

April a Month of Holidays

Written on: May 31, 2022

Article by: Thayer Salisbury



This work is nothing like factory work. It is not even like an office job. I keep trying to develop a routine because routine helps with efficiency. But it is hard to develop a routine. I remind myself often of the words made famous by Henri Nouwen, “I used to complain about the interruptions to my work. Then I learned that the interruptions were my work.”

April is a month of holidays in Eswatini. Banks, <https://s3.us-east-1.wasabisys.com/gospel-herald/2022/05/Thayer-and-Cheryl-Salisbury.png> government offices and a lot of businesses close from Good Friday through Easter Monday. This year they also added the Tuesday as well, making it a five-

day weekend. It was the King’s birthday. This week we had flag day, so once again many offices and all the banks were closed.

A couple of the churches planned a lectureship for Good Friday through Sunday. Some of the lessons were good, some not so good, but we tried to take in as many as we could. It was good to see a couple of our former students giving lessons (those lessons were among the good ones, of course ☺). When we heard lessons that were not so good, that indicated areas we need to address in developing textbooks. So, it was always good to be there.



Bob and Annette Whittaker

On Monday, Dr. Bob Whittaker, long-time medical missionary to Nigeria and Eswatini, turned 75. He still treats patients 4 to 5 days per week – praying with every one of them. His wife bought the materials, and I built a hall tree with shoe storage as his birthday gift.

Tuesday morning, we drove to Mbabane to get Chery’s driver’s license. In December, she had been told that it would be ready in March. Now it turns out that December licenses will not be ready until June. Tuesday afternoon I prepared messages for use later in the week. Tuesday evening, I taught a class at the Fairview church. The class went well. It was, however, interrupted by some women

who came bringing their mother for prayer. She was not terribly ill, but the family is learning to seek prayer more readily. Nearly everyone in the family has been ill, and one has died.

Today, Wednesday, I will work on the textbook project all morning. In the afternoon we will attempt our weekly grocery shopping.

Thursday and Friday I should have all day for writing.

Most Saturdays I travel to Timbutini to teach an outdoor Bible class. But this week I will give the sermon at a wedding in Mankayane. I am not legally allowed to join couples in marriage here. But they often have one person to do that task and another to preach a sermon about the meaning of marriage. I think that I have a real humdinger ready for them.

This coming Sunday is our once per month visit to the Fairview church.

COVID restrictions are gradually being lifted, but we are still hampered by them. At Timbutini we are struggling to get Sunday Bible classes going again. Our building has no classrooms, no

doors, no windows. Donald Baraball donated a portable generator. Chery and I donated a projector. So, we project songs and scriptures onto a bare block wall. It is modern technology in an unfinished concrete building. Unless it is raining, the children go outside and have a lesson under a tree while I teach the adults.

We still plan to complete volume two of *God's Mission Begins* by the end of this year. We are running ahead of schedule at this point. We have debated what book should come next. The current consensus is that it will be *The Climax of the Mission* (a study of the Synoptic Gospels).

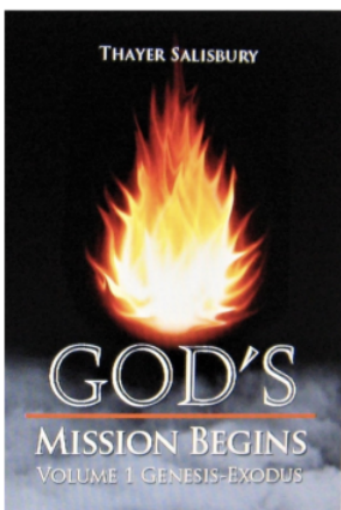
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