

## COMING TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH (THROUGH EVALUATION II)

We have been studying the idea of coming to the knowledge of the truth (2 Tim. 3:7) by working our way through evaluation - the fourth step of the learning process (education, meditation, participation, and evaluation). In the last article, we ended with the thought that there is a difference in an observation and an evaluation. I dropped a hint that we would be stronger Christians if we'd only observe others, and save our evaluations for ourselves. How have you been doing with this? Have you conscientiously been less critical and more understanding of others, yet more critical and corrective of yourself? If so, you're closer to God and to what Jesus died for you to be. If not, then you may be like the forgetful hearer (Jms. 1:25), and all of the efforts to get this message into your hands (and we're talking about all the way back before time) have been in vain. Sort of staggering to meditate upon, isn't it?

Let's continue to dig into the idea of evaluation. Without a sense of value, there can be no act of evaluation. We studied much in the last article on the designated standards we each choose. Without a sense of value, even the designated standards are of little use. How is the value of anything set? A fixed object like a house may have its value set by what it would cost to rebuild it. There may be some sentimental value to a particular house, depending on the emotional history of the house with its owner. However, houses are usually traded based on the cost to construct on that location.

How would you set a value on something more animated like a horse? Now the emotional bond becomes very important. The replacement cost of the horse is not that great. They most all come with only four legs, one tail, two ears, two eyes, and so forth. Horses reproduce in the wild every day whether people are planning them or not. The value of a horse is mainly based on how the horse makes the owner feel. The value is also affected by how the horse makes someone else feel and what they would be willing to pay for it. For example, if Joe has a horse and Sam offers Joe \$100,000 for it, Joe may or may not take the money. Regardless, the horse will from then on be known as a \$100,000 horse simply because that was what one person was willing to pay.

Why is this so important? Brothers and Sisters, you and I are bought with a price, too (1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23). The precious body and blood of God's own Son was spent to buy us from Satan. Can you comprehend what you and I must be worth, what our value is? When you evaluate yourself and how valuable you are to God, remember this saying: "God don't make no junk!" Who knows what precious things Christians are capable of doing if they would all fully evaluate themselves and realize their spiritual value!

Now remember that the value of something is set largely by what someone is willing to pay. Let's look at ourselves as the buyer of our soul (I know this is not spiritually possible, but bear with me and consider this point). Paul says we are to present ourselves as a living sacrifice (Rom 12:1). In Old Testament times a sacrifice was usually completely consumed - 100%. Its value was 100% of what it was or could have been. The young bullock could have grown into a Grand Champion breeding bull, but it was given 100% at an early age in a sacrifice. We are to offer our value to God as a living sacrifice. The scary part is that we set the value! This is done by giving just as much of ourselves as we choose to give. How much you value your soul can be seen in how much you are willing to give of yourself as a living sacrifice.

Are you really giving 100% of your value to God? Of the 168 hours in the seven days before you read this, how many hours did you give to God? Two hours a day? That's a lot for some folks, but that's only 8%. Now count all the time spent just thinking about God. Maybe four hours a day? You're up to 16%. What does this say about the value of your living sacrifice? More importantly, what does it say about the value you put on the price Jesus already paid for you? Do you realize it is a discount to the value of the price Jesus paid for you if you don't evaluate your living sacrifice and put enough value into it?

Paul gives another exhortation to evaluation in 2 Corinthians 13:5, He tells us to examine and prove ourselves, whether we be in the faith. He doesn't stop at just exhorting us to examine ourselves; he also tells us exactly what we are to evaluate - whether Jesus Christ is in us! Might I also add how much Jesus Christ is in us? He will be in us in direct proportion to how much we value His sacrifice to us, and how much we value our living sacrifice to Him. Have we given ourselves wholly, or holey, to Him?

Now let's turn to another thought on the worth of a good evaluation of ourselves. Evaluation is very important for our past, present, and future. In short, we need to evaluate our past performance against our present actions to make sure we perform better in the future! Paul evaluated his past when he wrote of his "*conversation (not just speech, but conduct, way of life, deportment) in time past in the Jews' religion*" (Gal 1:13). He wrote of the damage he did to the church, it was not something he wanted to do again. This principle is painfully obvious to me. Though never trying to do damage to the church, I can evaluate my own history and see times when I should have done better. My own evaluation pricks my own heart (Acts 2:37). And while that's a good thing, it is worth nothing if it stops there and doesn't lead to a corrected life.

Evaluation works in the present when we evaluate how we're doing now in this moment. Do we now have faith that "is spoken of" (Rom 1:8)? Now is the time to pull off the blinders, the rose-colored glasses, the shields of self-deceit and evaluate ourselves as we really are. Evaluate our physical appearance, our chosen surroundings, our thought and intents and actions right now and see if we are a living sacrifice of any value. Hopefully we are. Hopefully, we're honest enough to see a place or two that we could improve.

Let us now look to the future. To me, this is where evaluation really shines. I consider myself as a forward thinking person. I'm going somewhere, whether I make a choice to go or not. I'm going somewhere, whether I like it or not. I'm going somewhere, and I'm going to influence someone to go with me whether I know it or not. Therefore, I'm going to make a choice to go to heaven, a place where I will love to be, and influence as many as I can to go there too! Peter describes this as looking forward for "*new heavens and a new earth*" (2 Ptr 3:13,14). Peter doesn't stop there. He continues with the idea that because we can look forward, it should make us "*be diligent that you may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless.*" Our forward view is really meant to help us live better right now. Again to me, this is one of the best benefits of the step of evaluation in focusing us on where we are going with each step we take now.

Brothers, Sisters, and Friends, let's use this step in coming to the knowledge of the truth in evaluating the value we put on Jesus' sacrifice and then evaluate the value of our own living sacrifice compared to what it could be. Let's evaluate our past and present so we can be a more valuable living sacrifice in the future. This soul-baring experience can be painful. It doesn't

help to realize that God already knows all this. The healing and the sheer joy comes from knowing that Jesus has already paid a great price for us therefore, we must be of great value to Him. Too great a value to let fail! Please evaluate and value yourself in light of this, and let's look forward together!

Bill Prince Jr.  
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## APOLOGIA

QUESTION: Do you believe we must forgive people even if they don't ask us to?

ANSWER: Jesus certainly set an ideal precedent in Luke 23:34 when He said at His crucifixion, "*Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.*" His shining example was repeated by Stephen when at his death by stoning he said, "*Lord, lay not this sin to their charge*" (Acts 7:60). In both instances we note a commendable spirit of concern for those who had been the cause of their suffering, but this concern did not erase the necessity of repentance on the part of the sinner.

Jesus had earlier warned, "*Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish!*" (Luke 13:3). Ezekiel wrote, "*The soul that sinneth, it shall die*" (18:4). Solomon had observed, "*He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law [which was the situation of those who had opposed both Jesus and Stephen], even his prayer shall be abomination*" (Proverbs 28:9). Jesus had plainly taught, "*If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your sins*" (John 8:24) and neither group had acknowledged Jesus as the Son of God.

We must understand these beautiful last words, then, are not that of requesting forgiveness for the sinners while yet in their sin, but rather expressing the desire that they might repent and thus through a change of life be forgiven. We note this desired effect in that three thousand repented and were baptized some fifty days after Jesus' crucifixion. It is recorded two chapters later in Acts where Saul, who had consented to the death of Stephen, became converted to Christianity (Acts 9 and 22:20).

Jesus taught, "*If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses*" (Matthew 6:15). He then extended that forgiveness to "*seventy times seven*" (18:22)). As children of the heavenly Father we cannot harbor

hatred or a grudge or an unforgiving attitude against someone who has wronged us. Instead we should desire a change on their part so that they may find forgiveness before God. Solomon observed, "*The bloodthirsty hate the upright: but the just seek his soul*" (Proverbs 29:10). Jesus said, "*Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you*" (Matthew 5:44).

Ultimate forgiveness is on the part of God Who knows all truth and has the ability of looking deeply into the heart of man. We harm ourselves far worse than the other person when we hold in our hearts the harsh and unyielding spirit of not forgiving.

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## GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>DATES</u>	<u>LOCATION</u>	<u>SPEAKER</u>
March 28 - 30	Verona Congregation Verona, KY	J.D. McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
March 31 - April 4	Liberty Congregation Liberty, KY	J.D. McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
April 4 - 6	Valley Congregation Valley, AL	Bill Prince, Jr. (Oxford, AL)
April 9 - 12	Gilstrap Congregation Morgantown, KY	J.D. McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
April 7 - 11	Oak Grove Congregation Eubank, KY	Joe Hill (Hager Hill, KY)
April 14 - 18	Chestnut Grove Congregation Parksville, KY	Joe Hill (Hager Hill, KY) & J.D. McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
April 20 - 25	West Broad Street Congregation Wedowee, AL	Sam Dick (Cave City, KY)

April  
21 - 25

Mt. Zion Congregation  
Crab Orchard, KY

J.D. McDonald  
(Woodbury, TN)

April 27 -  
May 4

Junction City Congregation  
Junction City, KY

Rodney Sneed  
(Eubank, KY) &  
Hunter Bulger  
(Fort Deposit, AL)

## SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. How old was Noah when the flood ended?
2. Who came to David and rebuked him for his sin with Bathsheba?
3. In Proverbs Solomon says that wisdom should be sought after like what?
4. Paul said it was always his goal to preach the gospel where?
5. According to Paul's letter to Titus, who should be rejected after two warnings?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember last month's questions?

1. What happened to the men who gave false reports concerning the land of Canaan ? THEY DIED FROM A PLAGUE (Num. 14:37)
2. Who told Haman that a seventy-five foot gallows should be built, on which to hang Mordecai? HAMAN'S WIFE AND FRIENDS (Esther 5:14)
3. Who does Hosea say "took his brother by the heel in the womb?" JACOB (Hos. 12:2-3)
4. Jesus told his disciples they were worth more than what? MANY SPARROWS (Matt. 10:31)
5. According to Paul what should wives give their husbands in return for husbands loving their wives? REVERENCE (Eph. 5:33)