

On The Frontier

“For the glory of God and the furtherance of the Gospel”

A Year Closer

by Linus A. Mathis III

It's 1999 and though some may feel one year older the greater reality is we are all one year closer. To what? The Return of Jesus Christ. I may not know when he'll return but I do know that each day is one day closer. What then ought we to do?

Hebrews 10:22-25

Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

Let us hold fast the profession [confession, see Romans 10:9,10] of *our* faith [hope, ours resides in Christ] without wavering; (for he *is* faithful that promised;)

And let us consider [fix your eyes or mind upon] one another to provoke [incite] unto love and to good works:

Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

What day do you suppose He's talking about? The day of our Lord's Return! Well, hallelujah!!! Praise God!!! Is that a reason for shouting, or what? You ought to be jumping out of your seat right now (that is if you're sitting down). Why I'm so excited I can hardly type. But I'll contain myself as I must finish this article.

If today is one day closer to Christ's Return (and it is) then we ought to be:

- 1.) Holding fast to the Hope of Christ's Return!
- 2.) Considering one another to provoke (motivation and purpose directly opposite to worldly provocation) unto love and good works.
- 3.) Spending more and more time with the Family of God. He also indicates that some spend less and less time as "the day" draws near.

This latter truth is corroborated in other sections of His Word.

II Timothy 3:1-5

This know also, that in the last days [starting from the day of Pentecost] perilous times shall come.

For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,

Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;

Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

This reads like it was written yesterday! There's no doubt but that the world in which we live is progressively getting worse and worse. And those who embrace its ways degenerate in like fashion.

We can expect a little persecution if we live godly lives. Each passing day should see us living more zealously for God.

Verses 12-14:

Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.

But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned *them*;

Persecution! Not to worry. Skip back a few verses for a testimony of Paul's deliverance.

Verses 10,11:

But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience,

Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of *them* all the Lord delivered me.

If we get serious about moving and living God's Word we can expect to be persecuted. But, if we continue to

put our trust and expectations in our Heavenly Father, we will be delivered.

Romans 16:19,20

For your obedience is come abroad unto all *men*. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil.

And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ *be* with you. Amen.

J.B. Phillips has an exciting translation of these verses:

Verse 19:

Your loyalty to the gospel is known everywhere, and that gives me great joy. I want to see you experts in good, and not even beginners in evil.

Verse 20:

It will not be long before the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet. May the grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.

The next verse has a greeting from Timothy, imagine that!

God is blessed when we walk on His Word and He will take care of persecutions when they come. He will continue to deliver us if we but stand. Our daily goal should be to increase our walk of truth. I want to do a better job for Him tomorrow than I did today because I love Him. And He is joyful when we walk on His Word. Therefore, I want to walk on it.

III John 4

I have no greater joy than to hear

that my children walk in truth.

So, while the world is getting worse, we are getting better. Our love for Him and His Word should grow daily. There should be an ever-increasing drive to reach the lost with the Gospel of deliverance. And we should be more involved than ever before with THE family. We are able to do this because He has enabled us.

II Peter 1:2-4

Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,

According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that *pertain* unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:

Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption [getting worse and worse, like a decomposing corpse] that is in the world through lust.

Don't be surprised if the world is becoming more decadent and the people in it more depraved. The Bible tells us this will happen. It has, in fact, been happening since the day Noah got off the ark. (Remember God had to "clean house" because Adam's fall led every imagination of man's heart to only evil continually?) Regarding the world, not much has changed (in the way of godly improvement). Don't be sad or scared. Rather, rejoice, it's one day closer.

Having said that, allow me to divert.

There are those who have become preoccupied with the "signs of the times." As to the Return of our Lord, His Word is clear, NO man knows the day or hour. So, when they start to speak of signs and times I tend to become skeptical. I know the world is in an ever increasing state of turmoil but I'm also aware of the following truths:

I Thessalonians 5:1-3

But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you.

For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.

For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.

Frankly, I haven't heard them saying "peace and safety" yet. Have you?

There is much speculation and prediction as to what will occur at the turn of this century. Millennium fever! By this time you've probably heard about the Y2K problem (the millennium bug) and the potential disasters related to it. God doesn't want you bugged by the millennium. Don't forget that He is much bigger. As for the year 2000, the fact is, our Julian calendar is in error. This may affect computers but not God's Word. The calendar errors are especially amplified since the Lord was born in 3 BC but I'll let you figure that out. Nevertheless, we should be prudent and not foolish as to our observations of the events which surround us.

Proverbs 22:3

A prudent *man* foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished.

I love the way James Moffatt has rendered this:

Proverbs 22:3 [Moffatt]

A cautious man *sees* danger and takes cover: A simpleton strolls on and pays for it.

Most people when appraising the Y2K situation either sluff it off or panic. Neither of these is the appropriate reaction. Having both a Scriptural and experiential understanding of man's worsening state should be sufficient to guide us in a judicious path. For example, I carry a spare tire in my vehicle. A jack too. I don't panic when I get out on the road and I don't expend unnecessary energies on "believing to not get a flat." I find it easier to have a contingency plan. All the while I consider God as my sufficiency. I know He can not only get me the funds to purchase a spare but also see to it that I don't have needless flats.

Where I live earthquakes are a common occurrence. We here have been aware of 25 to 30 of them in the last 3 ½ years. The facts are that we live in a seismic region. Consequently, each member of my family has an emergency back pack. In each pack there are items to provide for my family should they not be able to get into our home. Among the survival goods we each have 72 hours worth of food. We could easily live for more than three days without food but it wouldn't be much of a blessing. "Natural disasters" do happen and it's comforting in such a case to have

something to eat. Do I think we'll be forced to use these packs. No, not really. But I also don't expect to get a flat. In fact I don't give a thought to flats or earthquakes. Why? Because I've taken steps to be prepared in either eventuality. I don't live in fear of the next seismic event anymore than I do getting a flat at midnight on a deserted stretch of highway.

Do I think that Y2K could present a problem? Possibly. Your bank might have some problems. You might not be able to get cash from an ATM. For how long? I don't know. So, it's a good idea then to not trust that ATM for an early January 2000 cash withdrawal. Is that a problem? No. Simply have cash on hand so you don't have to depend on the banking system. Like wise with the grocery store. Too many folks depend on and trust the grocery store to always have provisions. This is especially true for city dwellers. If you've ever lived in a rural area you'd realize that some food storage is prudent. Your grocers shelves could be bare for any number of reasons. Not the least of which is rumor. A number of years ago, when we lived in New York, there were reports of a coming toilet paper shortage. As a result there was a run on the stores and you couldn't find a single roll of toilet paper. I don't know about you, but I would sure miss squeezing the Charmin. Before the tissue panic, you could buy all the T.P. your little heart desired. During this onslaught, you were SIMPLY OUTTA LUCK. (Or toilet paper, whatever the case may be.)

The biggest problem in the world today is idolatry. The pagans of old had many gods. The Romans and Greeks both were guilty of this. Each

of them had their favorites too. There were those that they revered more than others. The Greeks considered Zeus to be top dog. For the Romans it was Jupiter. Today among the pantheon of our modern world there is a most revered god also. That god is technology. Modern man thinks that advancements in technology will provide all his answers. Technology has been elevated in the hearts of far too many. They have revered it above the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Most find it easy to believe that the True God will fail and that man will prevail. They presume that some whiz-kid will come up with the answer to their problems. They should consider that the same phenomenons which brought us this technology have brought along with it humongous dilemmas. Won't they be surprised when the god of Silicon Valley is devoured of itself! Whatever will the high priests of the PC do? How will they who serve in its temple survive? What shall they sacrifice at the beige plastic altar where so many come to worship? What can they do to alleviate the consequence of this predicament? Since it came via egotistical blindness, I'd suggest humility before God. He and He alone has the answers. He has made, formed and created man for His glory. Man should bring glory to God, not to himself. Man NEEDS God. Man needs His Word.

In rural America it has always been considered normal to have some food stores on hand. This is still somewhat true, though it is becoming less of a practice due to the increase in availability of most items. But, in most urban areas the concept of storage has been abandoned years ago. Cosmopolitans have been

tricked into trusting the local super market, they have long since forgotten the prudence of dry storage.

Proverbs 10:5

He that gathereth in summer *is* a wise son: *but* he that sleepeth in harvest *is* a son that causeth shame.

It's a simple matter to put up some dry beans, or whatever, when they are readily available. And it's also wise. Currently it's no problem to go into any supermarket and buy whatever you need. In fact you could write a check or use your check debit card. This could change for a time if technology fails. Notice, I said technology not God. I know He can take care of us just as He did Elijah the Tishbite. Yes sir, He fed him via Raven Air and sent him to the place where he would find water. When that dried up He sent him to the widow woman. I'm well aware of that record. However, the same God who brought that to pass is the Author of Proverbs. I'm sure He has the ability to fix my flat or see to it that I never get one. However, He also expects me to exercise prudence and wisdom in my life. I should put a spare in my vehicle and even insure it. As a matter of fact I have insurance on my house. I'm even insured against fire. Not because I fear fire but because it's the smart thing to do. I need to see to the ways of my family and take care of them. This is my responsibility to God and them. I'm supposed to make prudent decisions regarding their welfare and mine.

Remember the virtuous woman mentioned in Proverbs?

Proverbs 31:21

She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household *are* clothed with scarlet.

She sees to it that her family has the proper clothing. Thus, she has no concerns about them getting cold.

Verse 27:

She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness.

She makes absolutely certain her family is cared for in every way.

And most importantly of all:

Verse 30b:

. . . a woman *that* feareth the LORD, she shall be praised.

She has a reverence for God. This is of course the MOST important thing. We must never forget that God is our chief care giver. He is the one who looks after us and supplies our every need. Does this mean that we should sit idly by and wait for Him to do everything for us? No! It does mean that whatever we do must never take the place of our faith in Him. If He doesn't deliver, we don't receive. If He isn't behind our actions and preparations, then all that we do will be little more than an exercise in futility.

Psalms 127:1

Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh *but* in vain.

Is the Lord Returning soon? Oh yes! We are one year closer! Imagine, face-to-face!

When we all get to heaven, what a day of rejoicing that will be!

The Counselor's Corner

With Rev. Linus A. Mathis III

Signs Of Aging

It was in the hall of our home that I first realized it. I was standing in the old familiar spot. The place which had warmly greeted me time and again. But something was wrong! Things were somehow different. My once festive area had taken on a solemn tone. Oh no! It was happening already. How could this be. I knew it, this was inevitable. I must have been in denial. No, no, it's much too soon. Not yet! Sadly there's nothing to be done. The years are taking their toll. After all who can hold them back? Time, man's eternal nemesis, had come to mock me. That which I feared had found me. My little girl is growing up. The signs are indisputable. Right there on her door, glowing defiantly at me, "KEEP OUT." Where once this door was open, now it's closed. And I have to knock and ask permission to enter (which at times is denied).

Oh well, it's part of growing up. All children go through a time where they are preparing to individuate. This is in preparation for the time when they will have to separate from you. Remember all those times you prayed for them to grow up and move out? Well adolescence is the beginning of this ultimate move. We often agree that this is a hard time for our kids, don't we? Frankly, I think it's a harder time for us parents. How about it?

What is often seen as rebellion is

many times nothing more than "growing pains." Some professionals equate the child's need to rebel in proportion to the parent's need to control. I think there's merit to that. We need to allow our teens the privilege of authority. It's frustrating to be given a responsibility but denied the authority needed to carry out the task. In some cases parents do become control freaks. The trick, however, is discerning whether or not the "rebellion" is normal. (Presupposing, of course, that you are not overbearing with your child.) Commonly accepted signs of serious problems include, depression, running away, consistent behavior dilemmas at school, drug or alcohol use, bulimia, anorexia and suicide threats. If any of these are plaguing your child please consider professional help. However, rebellion in a teen is not in and of itself abnormal. You as the parent need to be honest in your observation of your son or daughter. The same honesty needs to be applied in evaluating yourself. Is the example you are setting for your child a good one? If you drink, can you honestly expect your child not to? To ask your kids not to do something that you do is hypocrisy and will be viewed as such by them. Do as I say and not as I do does not carry any weight. If you have corrected any unsavory ways and are now a good example to your child, do as I do and not as I did would be admissible.

That being said, we can assume that it's normal for teens to experience some difficulties. Frustrations and angers are often acted out when they can't be talked out. They might even choose their peers over their parents as a means of individuating. Peers ask fewer questions and level less judgements. (Friends don't grill you

or put you on trial.) We need to make our homes a safe place for our kids to fail.

Proverbs 24:16.

For a just *man* falleth seven times, and riseth up again: but the wicked shall fall into mischief.

It's okay to fall as long as you get up again. God doesn't expect perfection but He does recognize faithfulness.

Psalms 31:23

O love the LORD, all ye his saints: *for* the LORD preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer.

So, don't take the preoccupation with friends personally. Rather, make peer pressure work in your favor. To do this you must help your child find friends with similar moral values. Then, peer pressure can be a positive thing. Like the toddler who eats his apple because he sees an older child eat one. Invite the positive peers into your home.

Since the teen years represent a power struggle don't take anything as a personal affront. All teens think their parents are embarrassingly weird and thus are humiliated to be seen in public with them. They also think that we're hopelessly out of it. Didn't you harbor some of these feelings towards your folks when you were a teen? Do you remember how stupid you thought it was for an adult to act like a teen? Good! Always act like an adult. Just be mom or dad. They'll get past thinking that you're outdated. The young get old too and it doesn't take all that long. Adolescence is most challenging. I know! There are now five signs on that door.

What's the answer?

II Timothy 3:15

And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Psalm 119:9

Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed *thereto* according to thy word.

I John 2:14

I have written unto you, fathers, because ye have known him *that is* from the beginning. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.

I Timothy 4:12

Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

-*"The Counselor's Corner" also appears in Alaska Parenting Magazine in an edited version as "The Christian Corner"*-
