



On The Frontier



“For The Glory of God and the furtherance of the Gospel”

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All Scripture presented is from the Authorized King James Version unless otherwise noted. Comments and notations by this author within Scripture text will appear in brackets.

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Be First

My first encounter with a bully occurred when I was quite young. Being inexperienced and naive I found myself running home with a bloody nose, not once but twice. The second time my Nanny was home and when she saw me she was troubled and asked what had happened.

Upon hearing my story, she simply said “The next time he comes at you, hit him first.”

I did as she suggested and never had another problem with him.

Of course, this advise would be viewed negatively today as “political correctness” seems to have taken “center stage.”

That being said, what my Nanny told me worked. In fact, it worked so well that I utilized it repeatedly

throughout my life even into adulthood.

Now I have no wish to give you the wrong idea. You should absolutely avoid punching others in the nose or seeking violence as a conflict resolution.

However, there is much to be said about being first. Perhaps you are familiar with the adage, “he who hesitates is lost.”

Precise credit for the origin of this phrase is uncertain. But, general consensus attributes it to misquoting or possible adaption of; “The woman that deliberates is lost” from Joseph Addison’s play “Cato” (cira 1712).

One thing is certain, if you cannot make up your mind on coming to a decision the opportunity to act may be lost to you forever.

Every athletic coach will concur and exhort the athlete to “be first.”

This is also true for most all of life’s challenges and events. Most will agree that the best defense is a strong offence.

Consider the following:

John 3:16
For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him

should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Without question, God was and is the first to love. He is the prime mover, especially when it comes to love.

What about us?

I John 4:19
We love him [texts omit *him*], because he first loved us.

Since the textual MSS omit the word *him*, the verse should simply read as follows:

We love, because he first loved us.

This can be seen in the following versions:

I John 4:19
We love, because he first loved us. (1901 American Standard Version)

I John 4:19
We love because God first loved us. (1912 Weymouth New Testament)

You and I have the ability to love even as God loves. And why? Because He first loved us.

I know that some of you reading this may be thinking, “I loved my children, parents, siblings and even friends before becoming a

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Christian. What is he talking about?"

I'm glad you asked. Biblically speaking there are different words used both in Hebrew and Greek to describe various types of love.

We understand that there is what we know as "human love." This is the type of love that a parent has for a child. But that type of love has stipulations, i.e., familial connections. Likewise for friends and even lovers.

Erotic love is no secret, but that too has limitations and clearly subsides upon satisfaction.

The love that we did not have, until God filled us with His spirit, is the love of God. That kind of love is not intrinsic to humanity. That kind of love requires no stipulation, no reciprocity, no commonality. That kind of love never subsides, is never satisfied.

We did not first love Him. No! We were in fact disobedient children of wrath.

Ephesians 2:1-10
And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins;

Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the of power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,

Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

And hath raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus:

That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in *his* kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God:

Not of works, lest any man should boast.

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

God is rich in mercy and through His great love which He had for us, saved us and that while we were dead in sins. Wow!

He did not deal with us after our sins nor reward us according to our iniquities.

No! Instead, He through His great love sent His Son to die for us.

It was God who moved in love and not man. God is, was, and remains the prime mover. He is first, especially when it comes to love. God is first.

Romans 5:6-8
For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die.

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Imagine that! While without strength and ungodly Christ died for us. Ungodly, not godly or deserving and certainly not loving.

God has justified you! You have peace with Him. Right now! Not some time in the distant future or when you become "good enough." Right now!

You have access to Him, and for this and so many other things, we rejoice in the hope of His glory.

Romans 5:1-5

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ:

By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience;

And patience, experience; and experience, hope:

And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

Variant readings of verse 5:

And hope causeth not shame; because the love of God is poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which was given to us. (E.W. Bulinger - Companion Bible (condensed) Page: 1671 (11))

and that this hope never disappoints, because God's love for us floods our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. (WEY)

and hope never disappoints us; for through the Holy Spirit that has been given us, God's love has flooded our hearts. (1936 Williams New Testament)

God moved first. He was and is the first to love. And because of His

great love we may enjoy eternal life.

Now it's our turn to love. Love like God. We can and we should, it's the least we can do and it is very, very rewarding.

It helps immensely to remember where we came from, lest we fall prey to an entitlement mentality.

Titus 3:2-7

To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, *but* gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men.

For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, *and* hating one another.

But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared,

Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;

That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

Ephesians 2:11-13

Wherefore remember, that ye *being* in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is

called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands;

That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:

But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

I don't know about you, but I have no problem loving and forgiving others as I know full well what God forgave me of.

To be first can be good, yes even preferred. If that is, we are first in the things that emulate God's will. After all, God was the first to love and love is Good. Is it not?

I've been accused of many things in my life but not once has love been among them. Never have I heard, "That Rev. Linus, he's just too quick to love. He simply loves too much." Had that ever been laid at my feet I'd have considered it an honor and a great compliment.

So here it is, be first. Be first to love, first to speak a kind word, first to lend a helping hand, first to forgive, first to speak and serve the Word. Be first to give, just like God.

Ephesians 5:1-2

Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children;

And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given

himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.

It's interesting to note that the Greek word from which the English word followers was translated is *mimetes* which means "an imitator." Simply put, we are to imitate God. Verse 2 of the above is clear in how, i.e., walk in love just as Christ did. And how he did that was in the most remarkable way imaginable. He sacrificed his life for us!

John 15:13

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

Look down further in this wonderful chapter:

Verse 17: these things I command you, that ye love one another.

This is a command, not a request.

What impresses me most about this is that Jesus did not ask the disciples to do something he wasn't prepared to do himself. In fact, his act of love far exceeds any other in all of history, past, present, or future, both theirs and ours.

Love is the command, and if we are to imitate God in this regard we must first be just like our Lord.

I John 3:16

Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down *our* lives for the brethren.

To do this we must become living sacrifices.

Romans 12:1-2

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service.

And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

To be a "living sacrifice" requires renewed mind because a "living sacrifice" is one that is constantly living for Him. That means keeping His commandments, doing His will and not your own. The best way to do this is to love. Again, be first.

Don't wait for the "other guy" to act. Why be a "reciprocator" when you can be a prime mover? Be an artist, a mover, a motivator, a builder, even an instigator.

Hebrews 10:23-25

Let us hold fast the profession of *our* faith without wavering; (for he *is* faithful that promised;)

And let us consider one another to provoke 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.

Imitate your Heavenly Father. Be first. Be a provocateur of love!

NOTES

Morning Nourishment

by Peter M. Blake

As the holiday season approaches, many of us are making plans to be with loved ones around the dinner table to enjoy fellowship, food and drink. Perhaps your holiday table resembles the traditional smorgasbord: whole turkey basted in garlic and spices filled with homemade stuffing and gravy on the side, mashed potatoes, sweet potatoes, cranberry sauce, homemade dinner rolls, green beans sauteed in garlic and butter, fresh green salad with spinach, Roma tomatoes, cucumber, black olives and feta cheese, and lots of pie!

When visualizing this delectable meal, consider a passage from Jeremiah:

Jeremiah 15:16

Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of hosts.

After many years of God's Word, the Scriptures, being lost, Jeremiah claimed that he ate or consumed the Word of God when it was found. Jesus Christ made quite the remarkable statement on this subject when being tempted with physical food by the devil after fasting for forty days.

Luke 4:4

And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.

Just as we eat for our physical wellness and strength, we must eat or consume the Words of God for our spiritual enrichment. If we seek to eat healthy physical food that will bring nourishment to our bodies, we ought to seek the healthy Words of God to bring nourishment to our lives.

We know from II Timothy 3:16 that all scripture is God-breathed and all scripture is profitable. God is faithful to His Word and it is His Word that nourishes us and equips us to stand and walk with and for God.

The epistle to the Ephesians has been referred to as the "breakfast of champions," and quite appropriately. It outlines so many

wonderful realities from which any born-again one can gain encouragement, strength, vigor and joy when they read.

Let's take some time to enjoy the nourishment of the God-breathed scripture in Ephesians 1; and as we do so, we may allow our Heavenly Father's Word to encourage and equip us as we walk.

Ephesians 1:1-10

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:

Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;

Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence;

Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:

That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:

This epistle to the saints opens with “grace and peace from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.” According to E.W. Bullinger’s “A Critical Lexicon and Concordance to the English and Greek New Testament,” the word “grace” means “a kind, affectionate, pleasing nature and inclining disposition [p. 341].”

Our Heavenly Father certainly has a kind, affectionate and pleasing nature and as we read His Word we may begin to understand more fully His goodness towards us in Christ Jesus.

We learn from the first portion of this epistle that we have been chosen in Christ to be holy and without blame (blemish) before God. According to Bullinger, the word “before” literally means “in the direct presence of” [Bullinger, p. 89]. We stand in the direct presence of God as holy (sanctified) and without blemish because of the accomplished works of Jesus Christ.

Verse 5 tells us we have been predestinated “unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.” The word adoption means to be placed as a son. There are two ways one can be placed as a son in a family. One way is by adoption and the other by birth. We’ve been born again or born from above with the new spirit nature from God. Our sonship is that of birth and it was made available by the accomplishments of Jesus Christ.

The word “beloved” in verse 6 can better be translated as “beloved one.” From the context we can see the beloved one is referring to Jesus Christ.

Verse 6 beautifully communicates another reality that is ours in Christ, we’ve been made acceptable in the beloved one, Jesus Christ.

We are children of God. We’ve been made acceptable by the work of the beloved one and we have redemption and forgiveness of sins in Christ. All of this has been given to us by God according to His good pleasure and according to the riches of His grace.

Ephesians 1:11-14

In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him

who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:

That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.

In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth,

the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise,

Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

We were chosen in Christ and sealed with the holy spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance to come. We’ve been made children of God according to the good pleasure of His will and to the praise of His glory.

Let’s look at Romans 8 to learn more about our sonship and the inheritance we’ve received in Christ Jesus:

Romans 8:15-17

For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

The spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:

And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.

We saw in Ephesians 1 that we’ve been given sonship by Jesus Christ and that we’ve obtained an inheritance. Romans 8 teaches us that we received the spirit from God and that spirit is what makes us His children. We are heirs of

God and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ.

The epistle of I John also speaks of these sonship realities:

I John 3:1-2

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

We've been made sons of God right now! What a joy it is to know that our Heavenly Father loved us and gave His Son for us that we might have life and that we might be His sons right now.

Jesus Christ spoke a parable to the multitude in the gospel of Matthew which is worth our consideration in light of being God's children, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.

Matthew 13:24-30

Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field:

But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.

But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.

So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?

He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?

But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.

Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.

Verse 36 explains that Jesus' disciples asked him about this particular parable after the multitude was sent away. His answer and explanation is contained within verses 37-43.

Matthew 13:37-43

He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man;

The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one;

The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.

As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire;

so shall it be in the end of this world.

The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;

And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.

As sons of God in this day and time, we are the children of the kingdom. The tares will be gathered and burned at the end of the world but the righteous children of the kingdom will "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

We've been made children of God according to His good pleasure. We are sons of God, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. We may not realize the fullness of our inheritance yet but we've received the down-payment of our inheritance, the gift of holy spirit.

Let's return to Ephesians 1:

Ephesians 1:15-23

Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints,

Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may

give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him:

The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,

And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,

Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,

Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:

And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,

Which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.

The last section of this chapter contains Paul's prayer for the saints. He prayed that the eyes of their understanding would be enlightened and that they would know what is the hope of God's calling and what is the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.

It's astounding to consider that this God-breathed scripture states He has an inheritance in the saints. WE are God's inheritance. God

demonstrated the exceeding greatness of His power in raising Jesus Christ from the dead and seating him at His own right hand in the heavenly realm.

According to the working translation, "A Journey through the Acts and Epistles" [Copyright 2006 by Walter J. Cummins. All rights reserved], Verse 23 may be rendered "Which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all things in all people." Christ has filled all things in all people in the church, which is his body.

The epistle to the Colossians states this reality as well:

Colossians 2:9-10

For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.

And ye are complete [completely filled] in him, which is the head of all principality and power:

Christ accomplished what was necessary for us to receive the gift of holy spirit and become children of God. It was not by our own works or accomplishments in any way, but by his.

When we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, we were saved and completely filled with all that is necessary for us to stand before our Father holy and without blemish. We can serve one another in this body of Christ with the confidence that no born-again one is less needed than another and no born-again one is lacking anything, for Christ filled all things in all people in the church.

In this first chapter of Ephesians we saw that it was God's immense love

that motivated His making us His children. We've received redemption and forgiveness of sins in accordance with God's purpose in Christ Jesus. We've been chosen in Christ to be holy and without blemish before our Heavenly Father. Each member of the body of Christ has been completely filled in him and has nothing lacking. Each member of the body of Christ is a son of God, an heir of God, and joint-heir with Christ. Each member of the body of Christ has been accepted (highly favored) in the beloved one (Jesus Christ).

As born-again ones, we've certainly been blessed by our Father God and His Son Jesus Christ. God decided to accomplish His plan of redemption and salvation and Jesus Christ carried out the work necessary in order to complete it.

We've received many blessings now and can look forward to more as we await the return of our risen Lord and Savior.

(Peter was raised in God's Word in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and began studying the Scriptures as a teenager. He has continued to learn and teach the Scriptures in home fellowship settings for the last eight years with his lovely wife, companion and friend, Stephanie. They now live in Alaska with their daughter.)

Do it now
by Berton Braley

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If with pleasure you are viewing
any work a man is doing,
If you like him or you love him,
tell him now;
Don't withhold your approbation
till the parson makes oration
And he lies with snowy lilies on his brow;
No matter how you shout it
he won't really care about it;
He won't know how many teardrops you have shed;
If you think some praise is due him
now's the time to slip it to him,
For he cannot read his tombstone when he's dead.
More than fame and more than money
is the comment kind and sunny
And the hearty, warm approval of a friend.
For it gives to life a savor,
and it makes you stronger, braver,
And it gives you heart and spirit to the end;

If he earns your praise - bestow it,
if you like him let him know it,
Let the words of true encouragement be said;
Do not wait till life is over
and he's underneath the clover,
For he cannot read his tombstone when he's dead.

One Little Rose

**I would rather have one little rose
From the garden of a friend
Than to have the choicest flowers
When my stay on earth must end.**

**I would rather have one pleasant word
In kindness said to me
Than flattery when my heart is still
And life has ceased to be.**

**I would rather have a loving smile
From friends I know are true
Than tears shed round my casket
When this world I've bid adieu.**

**Bring me all your flowers today
Whether pink, or white, or red
I'd rather have one blossom now
Than a basketful when I'm dead.**

Author Unknown