

Prayer List

Sheila
Ophelia
Josh
Daniel
Olene

Services:

Sunday

Bible Class 9:00 a.m.
Assembly 9:50 a.m.
Assembly 6:00 p.m.

Wednesday

Bible Class 7:00 p.m.

Pinole Tidings

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This Week's Question:

What judge tore down the tower of Penuel and slaughtered the people of the city?

Answer To Last Week's Question:

David - 1 Chronicles 29:1, 19

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Forbid Him Not

These verses are in the context of a discussion that Jesus was having with the twelve apostles. They had been arguing among themselves about who among them "should be the greatest" (Mark 9:34). Human ambition was even a problem among those closest to our Lord. Jesus explained to them that those who would be "first" would have to give up all effort and desire to be elevated above others and, instead, become the servant of all. To illustrate the point, Jesus set a child in the midst of them, took the child in His arms, and said,

Whosoever shall receive one of such children in my name ,
receiveth me: and whosoever shall receive me, receiveth not me,
but him that sent me (Mark 9:37).

This scene ought to have a great impact upon our own minds. Those who would seek to become "big men in the brotherhood" should either change their goal or leave the brotherhood of God's children. The world has corporate ladders to climb, fancy titles to offer, lofty positions for which to compete, and abundant opportunities to become distinguished above your fellow, -- but the ground is level at the foot of the cross. All available positions are positions of humble service. Those who stoop to help others are those who stand tallest in the sight of our Father. Selfish ambition must be surrendered at the door of the kingdom for selfless service.

Something that Jesus had said apparently caught John's attention. It almost seems that John had not picked up on the main point that Jesus was making. It may be that John was becoming uncomfortable with the implications of the main point and that he was steering the discussion toward a lesser point.

Jesus had just made reference to doing a good thing in His name. John apparently thought of something that he had been wanting to say to Jesus.

And John answered him, saying, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name, and he followeth not us: and we forbad him, because he followeth not us (Mark 9:38).

John's comment seems to betray another aspect of the same problem. The apostles had just been disputing "among themselves" (9:34) concerning who should be greatest among them. Jesus had, in effect, said that none of them should even want to be greatest or try to become "first apostle". Now John reveals that he and the other apostles had seen a man who was not an apostle casting out devils in the name of Christ. They told the man to stop doing this because he was not one of the apostles.

Notice that the man was apparently successfully casting out devils in the name of Christ. To do a thing in the name of Christ is to do it by His authority and to His glory. Men may claim to do any number of things in the name of Christ, but they are mistaken if they think that they can do what Christ has not taught them to do and, at the same time, act in the name of Christ. If a man knocks on my door and demands that I open it in the name of the law he had better be ready to show me a badge giving him the authority to make such a demand. Anytime a person claims to be doing a thing in the name of Christ we ought to be prepared to ask for the scripture that authorizes him or her to act.

Apparently Christ had authorized a non-apostle to cast out devils. According to Luke 10:17, Jesus had given such authority to seventy disciples. It seems that the apostles had come upon one who truly had authority to cast out devils and that they had taken it upon themselves to forbid him.

But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is on our part. For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward (Mark 9:39-41).

The apostles had made the mistake of assuming too much concerning this man. He was doing his work (apparently rightly) in the name of Christ. When God looks at a man there is no ambiguity concerning his spiritual state. There are no "fence-sitters". There is no neutral ground (Matthew 12:30; Luke 11:23; 16:13). Those who passively ignore the will of God are just as much "against" Christ as those who aggressively pursue evil (2 Thessalonians 2:10-17; 1 John 2:21-26).

Some have used these words of Christ to argue that God approves of various denominations and a wider range of religious teachings than we might imagine. They are mistaken. Today, we can discover whether or not any religious teaching or practice has the authority of Christ by consulting His last will and testament. The apostles should have consulted Jesus directly before they judged this man to be an impostor. If we have learned the lesson that they should have learned from this incident we will not judge anyone out of jealous motives but we will always judge on the basis of God's revealed word.

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:21-23).

Tim Nichols