
Words of Truth

Visiting The Sick And Those In Prison

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Our brief study here is rooted in a series of Scriptures found in a context about the return of Christ and the Judgment Day (Matthew 24:35-25:46). We will only be looking at part of that context. What we are going to study is about who was expected to be visiting whom. We will also be looking at some clear points to show this context is NOT telling anyone to feed, clothe, or otherwise help EVERYONE that has some kind of need.

Here is the text from which our study is drawn: *“When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal”* (Matthew 25:31-46).

“Inasmuch As Ye Have Done It Unto One Of The Least Of These My Brethren”

Who does Jesus refer to as “His brethren”? According to the Scriptures, Jesus considers those that do the will of His Father in Heaven His brethren (Matthew 12:46-50 and Mark 3:31-35). So, those who He expects to be clothed in times of need, fed when hungered,

and visited when sick or in prison are those whom obey His Father. Therefore, we know this contextual expectation is concerning looking after our brethren. This is consistently true throughout the New Testament (Acts 11:27-30, Romans 12:13, Romans 15:25-27, I Corinthians 16:1-4, II Corinthians 8:1-9:13, Hebrews 13:3, James 2:14-17, and I John 3:14-18).

There is also a principle to consider in this context and it is important to understand. Jesus looks at how His disciples are treated as though it is happening to Him directly (Matthew 10:40-42, Mark 9:41, and Luke 10:16). Now, we need to take these points forward into our next point. Consider what it means to visit and minister to our brethren in times of need.

Visiting And Ministering Unto

The word translated “visited” means: “to inspect, i.e. (by implication) to select; by extension, to go to see, relieve: — look out, visit...” (Strong’s # 1980). The terms translated “ministered” means: “wait upon (mentally or as a host, friend or [figuratively] teacher...” (Strong’s # 1247).

So, we should consider what it looks like (so to speak) for a saint to look after a fellow saint in a time of need. For our example, we will look at how a brother in Christ attended to the Apostle Paul while Paul was in prison. Take note of this proper handling of Jesus’ expectation: *“Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants. For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick. For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful. Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation: Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me”* (Philippians 2:25-30).

Conclusion

Why does attending to brethren in need matter so much that it is emphasized in a context about Judgment? *“And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love him, because he first loved us. If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also”* (I John 4:16-21).