

Words of Truth

Don't Defraud A Brother

By: Brian A. Yeager

As Christians, we are taught by God to love one another as Christ loved us (John 13:34-35 and John 15:12-13). With that as the foundation of our relationship with one another, we should be all good. If you love someone enough to die for them, you are not going to do anything harmful to them. Right?

Well, maybe that conclusion is not so readily practiced. Christians, who are taught to love one another, do not always treat each other as they should. Notice: *“Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Know ye not that we shall judge angels? how much more things that pertain to this life? If then ye have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the church. I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? But brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? Nay, ye do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren”* (I Corinthians 6:1-8).

When you read of how the so-called “Christians” in Corinth treated one another, you cannot profess that they loved one another. Their actions state otherwise. Their actions also show that they do not abide in the light of Christ (I John 2:9-11).

Christians are supposed to work hard at being unified (Ephesians 4:1-3) and having proper relationships with one another (Philemon 1:1-25). There is a particular passage in the New Testament wherein the Lord instructed Christians not to defraud a brother in any matter. We are going to study this Scripture and consider some points of applications.

Don't Go Beyond And Defraud A Brother In Any Matter

Notice the Scripture we are about to discuss in this study in the context wherein it appears: *“Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God: **That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified.** For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness”* (I Thessalonians 4:1-7).

The Greek word (πλεονεκτέω) that is translated as “defraud” in the quote above means this: “to be covetous, i. e. (by implication) to over- reach:— get an advantage, defraud, make a gain” (Strong’s # 4122). In other Scriptures you can see how the translation of this word shows us it means to make a gain of a person or to take advantage of a person (II Corinthians 2:11 and II Corinthians 12:17-18).

Thus, from all of that, we learn that if a brother takes advantage of a brother in some way the Lord is going to avenge that. Now, we know that false teachers have long been covetous and take advantage of others for gain (II Peter 2:1-3). Yet, seeking to take advantage of others is not just about false teachers (James 5:1-9). Since we are to be faithful to our Lord and love holiness, we better be sure we are not seeking to make gain off of a brother or sister in Christ. Rather, we should look at how we can better serve one another rather than get something from one another.

Serving One Another Rather Than Abusing One Another

Jesus taught the principle of service to each other when He washed the feet of His disciples (John 13:1-16). Then, throughout many Scriptures, we are taught to serve one another and seek to help rather than gain. Notice a few of those Scriptures: *“I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive... We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me... For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake... For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another”* (Acts 20:35, Romans 15:1-3, II Corinthians 4:5, and Galatians 5:13).

The world says: “what have you done for me lately?” As Christians, we don’t care to live off of a system of give and get in return or vice versa (Luke 14:12-14). Jesus Himself, the Lord with all authority in Heaven and Earth (Matthew 28:18), came to be a servant (Matthew 20:20-28). Think on that for a while. The Lord, whom is due to be served, lived in the flesh the life of a servant. Are we greater than He? So what rightful thinking could ever be behind getting something, in the way of advantage, from our brethren?

Conclusion

While I would like to think that articles like this are not necessary, we have discussed Scriptural examples that show otherwise. While I do not think we have this problem here, I would be remiss if I did not teach on it (Acts 20:26-27). If we are always mindful of what we can do to help one another we will never be in a position wherein we will seek unjust gain from one another. Jesus gave up everything so that we can be eternal beneficiaries of His sacrifices (II Corinthians 8:9). There is a lot to learn from that. Sacrificial givers are individuals who are not looking to gain some kind of advantage over others. Sacrificial givers are people who have other people’s interest above their own. Let’s be sacrificial givers!

Milkshakes

The Greater Context

By: Brian A. Yeager

Last week we talked about the danger of taking a Scripture out of context. We examined Jeremiah 29:11 as an example of an often abused passage of Scripture. We showed how the chapter revealed something far different than how most use that verse. Now we need to consider how context is even greater than a chapter or even a book or series of letters in the Bible.

For an example in this study let's discuss circumcision in the flesh. Prior to the Law of Moses being in effect, the Lord established circumcision as a token of the covenant between God and Abraham (Genesis 17:1-16 and Acts 7:1-8). Under the Law of Moses circumcision was continued amongst the Jews (Leviticus 12:1-3 and John 7:22). However, in Christ both the Law and the command of fleshly circumcision ended for God had fulfilled His covenant with Abraham (Galatians 3:8-29). Now, circumcision in the flesh has no spiritual importance (Romans 2:25-29, Romans 3:24-31, Galatians 5:6, Galatians 6:15, and Colossians 3:10-11).

When you consider the truths presented in the previous paragraph above you can see how there are three different large contexts we used in briefly discussing circumcision. We used the book of Genesis, which covers a large space of time from Adam to Joseph. During all of that time, the Law of Moses was not given yet. I then cited the book of Leviticus that was in effect the whole time the Law of Moses was in effect. Then we used some Scriptures that showed circumcision is no longer in effect under the Law of Christ. We used three greater contexts of the Scriptures in that brief study.

This shows that something different can be taught prior to Moses, then a change under Moses, and another change in Christ. In addition to that, we also have to remember a contextual point when it comes to what happened during the days Jesus lived on this earth. While He began teaching His law prior to His death and essentially undoing things of the Old Law (i.e. Matthew 5:31-48), He still practiced things taught under the Law (Matthew 26:17-29). These things make studying Matthew through John a bit difficult.

We have to remember that the Law of Christ did not fully come into effect until after His death (Colossians 2:14 and Hebrews 9:15-17). Thus, some things practiced prior to the second chapter of the book of Acts have to be understood in the greater context of them still being under the Law of Moses. This point has many applications to consider. We should consider one for an example.

Most of us are likely very familiar with the fact that the Apostles were told to go and teach the Gospel to all nations (Matthew 28:18-20 and Mark 16:15-20). Yet, that was not the case prior to Jesus' death on the cross. Prior to Him dying He told them to go only to the Jews (Matthew 10:1-7). What if you just read Matthew 10:1-7 and not the other Scriptures? You could easily conclude that only the Jews could obey Jesus. The Apostles thought that until shown otherwise (Acts 10:1-11:18). The whole picture needs to be taken into account. We must be aware of the greater context!

In our next first principle study I'd like to take a step away from authority and principles of study. We are going to move on to study some basic principles about the Lord's church.