

Water of Life

“...the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.” - John 4:14

Volume: II

March 2009

Number: 3

“BE SOBER”

DAVID ELDRIDGE

Time and again, the Bible commands that Christians are to be sober. The word sober means, “Of sound mind...hence self-controlled, sober-minded” (*Vine’s Expository Dictionary*). Truly, we need soberness in our lives. Each of us must be sober...

IN LOOKING AT SELF. Paul states, “*For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith*” (Rom. 12:3). We fail to think soberly when we fail to be humble. A sound mind is one that realizes its need before God. Jesus said it this way: “*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*” (Matt. 5:3). It is necessary for us to remember that without God we would have nothing (cf. Rev. 3:17). Furthermore, we must remember that even when we have done all we can, we are accounted only as unprofitable servants (Lk. 17:10). When we see our sinful state before God (Rom. 3:23), the punishment that we

deserve (Rom. 6:23), and the price that was paid that we might escape (Rom. 5:8), we cannot help but be humbled. If, thinking soundly, we will humble ourselves before God, He will bless us. It is recorded in James 4:10: “*Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.*” As we look at ourselves, let us think soberly, not thinking more highly of ourselves than we should.

IN OUR BEHAVIOR. Sobriety of life is required of all Christians. It is required of those who desire the office of an elder (1 Tim. 3:2), of their wives (1 Tim. 3:11), of women old and young (1 Tim. 2:9,15; Tit. 2:4), and of aged and young men (Tit. 2:2,6). Note Paul’s words in Titus 2:12: “*Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age.*” Does this mean one is to be so grave that they never smile and enjoy life? Of course not! However, we must be very serious while deciding the way that we

(Continued on next page)

“BE SOBER” (CONTINUED)

conduct ourselves. We are sober in our lives for we know the consequences of looking at life in frivolity – an eternity in Hell. We understand that the way we live today has eternal consequences, affecting our eternal destiny. Sometimes it is easy to fall into the same trap as the rich man of Luke 12:16-21. In this parable, the rich man was lulled into a feeling of self-sufficiency and carelessness by his gain. This is evident when he says to his soul, *“Take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry”* (vs. 19). However, his life of carelessness was about to end in ruin, for he was told that very night would be his last (vs. 20). We must be careful, serious, and sober in this life. Understand that how you live your life today determines where you will be for all eternity.

IN OUR TEACHING. Paul, after having an accusation of madness leveled at him by Festus, declares, *“I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness”* (Ac. 26:25). Paul, as he taught the gospel of Christ, was doing so in a serious and reasonable way. We must develop the same in our teaching. We do so by realizing the important task at hand. Paul told Timothy, *“Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee”* (1 Tim. 4:16). The seriousness of the message we teach is seen in the fact that our soul, and the souls of others, depends on it. Also, in order to reason with people from

the scriptures, we need diligent, daily Bible study (2 Tim. 2:15; Ac. 17:11). Equipped with the knowledge of God’s word by our study we can *“Always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear”* (1 Pet. 3:15). Realizing the great task we have of teaching the gospel, let us prepare to teach and present the truth in soberness, being serious-minded and reasonable.

IN WATCHING FOR OUR ENEMY. Peter warns in 1 Peter 5:8: *“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.”* In watching out for our enemy, we must be serious-minded. He is a lion on the prowl, looking to devour us, and bring our eternal souls to destruction. To watch for our enemy, since he lures us with evil, we must be able to discern right from wrong (Heb. 5:14). Furthermore, we must learn the ways that he operates. John explained this in 1 John 2:16: *“For all that is in the world — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life — is not of the Father but is of the world.”* Knowing he operates through these three avenues, we must always be on guard, because *“we are not ignorant of his devices”* (2 Cor. 2:11). If you heard a lion was loose in your neighborhood, you would be on alert for your life? This lion (Satan) is on the prowl – be on alert in soberness for your soul. Be sober, in view of eternity, that you might be afforded rest in Heaven.

“I’M OFFENDED!”

DAVID ELDRIDGE

“I’m offended!” It is hard to count how many times I have heard someone say these words in a religious context. There are those who will say that they are offended at any number of things. Though motives behind making this statement may vary, it is a Biblical subject and worthy of our attention. Let us consider what it means to be offended.

THE WORD OFFENSE DEFINED. A secular definition of offense is, in part, “the act of displeasing or affronting” (*Merriam Webster Dictionary*). Many accept this definition in religious matters. If something just doesn’t set right with them or slightly displeases them, they say they are “offended.” However, the Biblical definition is much different. It is a “Stumbling block...(and) causes one to fall by the way...something which leads others into error and sin” (*Vine’s Expository Dictionary*). A true offense is that which will either cause or lead others to sin – it is not merely something you don’t like!

WHEN “I’M OFFENDED” IS IMPROPERLY USED. It is a misuse of the term offended to speak of something which might simply displease you. Many use the statement “I’m offended” to get their way or to control the actions of others. They say they are “offended” by lawful expediencies and matters of opinion about which no one could be truly offended. I even heard of a man say he was “offended”

by the color of paint a congregation was going to use in their new building. We must consider the feelings of others in all that we do, but not to the point at which we fail to do good things altogether, against which there is no reasonable argument. However, many brethren will abruptly halt even good, necessary action at the mere mention of the words, “I’m offended.” One should never try, or be allowed, to impede or control others and their actions by saying, “I’m offended,” when such could not truly be the case.

WHEN “I’M OFFENDED” IS PROPERLY USED. To be truly offended by something that thing must be either against your conscience (in that by participating you will be sinning), scripturally wrong, or an occasion for sinning. If something truly will make our brother stumble, we need to have Paul’s attitude found in 1 Corinthians 8:13. He said, *“Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.”* We must be concerned with our actions, both congregationally and individually, and how they affect others.

To say something offends you should not be said lightly. If you are truly offended by something, in a strict Biblical way, you should say so. However, one should not use this statement in a casual way so as to simply get their way or stop something which is not wrong but just merely displeases them.