



# BIBLICAL PRIORITIES

BY DR. RON J. BIGALKE

Charles Perrault's tale, "The Three Wishes," begins with a woodcutter who is preparing to chop down a tree. However, the tree is home to an elf, who promises three wishes to the woodcutter, if the man will spare the tree. The woodcutter waits until dinnertime with his wife to reveal the good news regarding the elf's three wishes. Without thinking, the woodcutter's wife took a sip of her wine and said, "I wish I had a string of sausages to go with it." Instantly, the sausages appeared; however, the woodcutter was not pleased. With anger, he shouted, "What a stupid waste of a wish! You foolish woman! I wish they would stick up your nose!" Immediately, the sausages leapt to the woman's nose and remained

stuck there. The couple sat sadly upon the floor, and realized there was only one thing to do, which was to restore the woman's nose with the last wish. The woodcutter said, "I wish the sausages would leave my wife's nose." The husband and wife hugged each other tearfully, and remarked, "Maybe we will be poor, but we will be happy again." The sausages were fried for dinner; nevertheless, the couple thought as to how they wasted their wishes.

Perrault's tale reminds us how easy it is to waste our lives with the insignificant; that is, to live our days without any purpose. The "tyranny of the urgent" is always looming (as Charles Hummel wrote in 1967); thus we can be busy, yet not truly making any significant progress. According to Hummel, the

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problem is not shortage of time; rather, it is a lack of priorities. The greatest tragedy in life is allowing the urgent to hinder the important.

The gospel accounts of Jesus reveal that the Lord was never in a hurry, even when his friend Lazarus was dying. Mark 1:35 indicates the priority that the Lord Jesus had for prayer. The reason for this prayerful waiting was to await His Father’s instructions; of course, Christians today receive such instruction solely from God’s Word. Consequently, the foundational precedence for the believer is to prioritize Bible study and prayer.

God is the Lord who created time and who uses it for His purposes, in accordance with His sovereignty. Throughout the Bible, it is evident that God works within time, and works differently at various points in time. The repeated emphasis of Scripture is that God revealed prophecies of the future in the Old Testament, and then accomplished those actions in a latter period in time. Therefore, one manner by which we can understand time is that God created it so that everything does not occur at once, which certainly refers to His work within time to bring redemption to His people; yet also with regard to the ordering of the daily events of our lives (cf. Eccl 3:11).

Do not expect that you will have the time to accomplish everything that you desire to achieve. You may find that it is difficult enough to accomplish what you must do. Therefore, make it your resolve not to allow the urgent to control the important things in life, and then you can experience how it is that God “has made everything appropriate in its time.” Why not read the eighth chapter of Luke this week? Ask God to grant you wisdom to cultivate the good soil, which is hearing and heeding God’s Word for the purpose of glorifying Christ! The importance in doing so is simple: the will of God is the goal of life, and He is our reason and strength for living.



### **Cultivating Good Soil**

In Luke 8:4-15, the Lord Jesus described four different responses to the Word of God. God gave His Word, yet people respond differently. *First*, there are those who hear that Word, yet the devil immediately “takes away the word from their heart, so that they will not believe and be saved.”

*Second*, some “receive the word with joy” until some other joy appears, which then hinders the regeneration and transformation that come from God’s Word. Feelings alone are not enough to cause you to endure in difficult times.

*Third*, some hear the Word of God yet quickly forget what it says and do not allow it to affect their lives (cf. Jas 1:22-25). Some become entangled in the quest for material success and the worries of daily life. Seeking pleasure overcomes eternal pursuits; thus there is no time for God’s Word and they “bring no fruit to maturity.”

Note that Jesus did attend enough parties to be falsely labeled as “a gluttonous man and a drunkard” by the Pharisees (Luke 7:34); and to accomplish His ministry, the Lord did depend upon certain individuals for material resources (8:3). Jesus never issued a call for hermits who seek refuge from life in the world; however, He does call people who have an eternal perspective with regard to this world, and who hear and heed God’s Word far beyond all temporal activities, cares, and interests.

**Regardless of how demanding life can be, we must heed the commands and plans of God. If we do not have such biblical priorities to organize our life, then we will inevitably stumble into ruin and unbelief, as did the generation in the wilderness.**

*Fourth*, some “seed” (i.e. the Word of God) hits the target. The “good soil” welcomes the seed, encourages its germination, keeps the seed for future times, and perseveres through the complexities, temptations, and trials associated with the present life. Jesus’ parable indicates that if we hear God’s Word, and then believe it and “hold it fast,” then we can be “good soil” in which that Word multiplies and bears fruit with abundance. We need to be certain to be “good soil.”

Of course, the notion that one can “drift away” from God’s Word (Luke 8:11-14; Heb 2:1-4; 6:1-8; 10:1-10), provokes questions with regard to such apostasy. In other words, could one “believe” in God, and yet not be a disciple? Are belief and discipleship mutually exclusive? Discipleship is a call to faith/trust in Jesus Christ as Lord God and Savior, and such a call is evident in devotion to the Word of God far beyond all other priorities.

Regardless of how demanding life can be, we must heed the commands and plans of God. If we do not have such biblical priorities to organize our life, then we will inevitably stumble into ruin and unbelief, as did the generation in the wilderness. When something that appears “better” than the determination and purpose of God seizes our priorities and thoughts, we will quickly realize the insignificance of such pursuits when the sovereignty of God is demonstrated. Sometimes sudden surprises in life help us reorganize what is most important. An “act of God,” the loss of an office, sickness, and/or personal difficulty can be blessings to cause us to reassess our priorities and to “become partakers of Christ” (Heb 3:14).

Maturity is not immediate; that is, it does not occur in days or weeks. Mature disciples are devoted to a lifetime of listening to God’s Word, retaining that Word, and continuing to listen to the Bible throughout life so that it progressively becomes more and more the primary component of one’s life. Those who are enthusiastic for a time

and then “drift away” into the world’s occupations and pleasures, demonstrate a lack of discipleship. Moments of enthusiasm and good feelings dominate until something “better” comes. Following that something better reveals their true nature. They were never devoted to God’s Word nor were they disciples. They were merely testing God (cf. Deut 6:16).

Ignoring God’s Word will always result in horrible consequences. Why should we read and study God’s Word? The outcome is eternal for ignoring or neglecting the Word. “And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment” (Heb 9:27). We must listen to God and heed His Word. God has spoken! He has not resigned us to grope in darkness for spiritual direction. God spoke in many different ways through the Old Testament prophets. God spoke gloriously and completely through Jesus Christ. God is not silent! We must diligently study His message as those who seek direction, treasure, and wisdom for now and ever.

The one who believes in Jesus Christ—by grace through faith—is a disciple. Discipleship is not one good feeling or one statement in the past in which you felt positive toward Jesus and desired salvation. The warning of Christ’s words in Luke 8 is not to become too secure in one’s salvation too quickly. Salvation is a life-changing experience that remains for a lifetime. *Therefore*, believers are those who seek maturity in discipleship for life, as opposed to good feelings for a brief time. God’s Word brings change! Do you have ears to hear? Only one type of soil, which is attuned to God as He reveals Himself in the Holy Bible, produces maturity in salvation. We do not “live on bread alone,” but must have “every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God” (Matt 4:4).

(We will conclude the Daniel series in the next issue.)

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