

THE DRAWING POWER OF THE GOSPEL

Men, because of their sins, are separated from God (Isa. 59:1-2). They are without Christ, hope or God. (Eph. 2:1, 11-12). At one time they were in a state of innocence. Then they were friends of God; but sin entered into their lives by their transgression of God's law, and they died; that is, they were separated from God. They became God's enemy. But now they stand in need of reconciliation. The word "reconcile" means "to make friends again." But how is one drawn to God? What is the pulling force, if you please, that brings one back to a right relationship with God? And once one is drawn back to God, what is the staying force that keeps one in fellowship with the Father? These questions we will consider in this short article.

Jesus said, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me" (John 6:44-45). This passage teaches us that the Father draws a man to him. How does he do this? Some teach that by God's irresistible grace men are compelled to obey. If one were of the elect, according to this view, one could not resist the Spirit's power if he wanted to do so. Is this the meaning of the passage?

The word "draw" literally means to drag. This word is used in reference to Paul's having been physically dragged out of the temple in Jerusalem (Acts 21:30). God does not use physical force to get people to become Christians or to live the Christian life. The word "draw" in the verse under consideration refers to its metaphorical use. Thayer says, the Greek word metaphorically means "to draw by inward power, lead, impel." That is the use here. But what is that power that draws men to God?

The drawing power is the gospel, which means "good news" or "glad tidings." Man is burdened with sin; he stands in need of salvation; he needs the good news of Jesus. What is that good news? Listen to Paul's inspired words: "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:..." (1 Cor. 15:1-4). Of course, the death of anyone is not good news; but if that one who died had been wealthy and left you as his heir, that would be good news. Jesus

died and left an inheritance for any one who will meet the conditions of his will.

The drawing power is not recreation. Some brethren want to pull people in by providing recreation for them. Some build what they call family life centers or gymnasiums to draw outsiders. There are several things wrong with that kind of thinking and practice. First, it is a lack of trust in the power of the gospel. If the gospel cannot attract people, friends, we have nothing else to offer. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 1:18). Second, when the church builds a gym for its members or to bring others into the fold, it is attempting to do the work that belongs to the home (Eph. 6:4). It is the home's responsibility to provide physical recreation for its members. Why do churches of Christ want to ape the denominations? We cannot keep up with their unscriptural, unauthorized practices. And by the way, one cannot place a family life center in the category of expediency. It certainly is not a parallel to a drinking fountain or restroom in the church building. In order for something to be expedient, i.e., advantageous, it must first be lawful (1 Cor. 6:12).

One elder brother a few years ago tried to defend the church's having built a gym where he labors. He said it was not a gym. I inquired: "Is the floor marked for a basketball court? Are there basketball goals in the room, or that can be brought into the large room?" He had to say, "Yes," to these questions. I said then: Just excuse me if I call it a gym, because that's what it sounds like to me.

The third point to consider is the money spent for the family life center that could have been used to spread the gospel or help the needy. Eldershops who use the Lord's money to build family life centers or hire a glorified baby sitter, called a "youth minister," will have to give an account for their use of his funds.

What is it that draws men to God? The golden text of the Bible reads, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). Paul wrote, "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead" (II Cor. 5:14). The word "constraineth" means to impel, urge. The love that Christ demonstrated toward us urges us onward, motivates us upward. In the long, long ago Jeremiah wrote, "The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee" (Jer. 31:3). God loves us with an everlasting love. Notice what drew Israel of old: "therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." God's love in sending his only begotten Son to die for us is the drawing power.

Consider how man is drawn to God. John 6:45 says, "It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." This statement tells us how one is drawn.

We are drawn first by what is written in the prophets. Of course, the Old Testament prophets pointed to Christ. Jesus, on the day of his resurrection, said to two men on the road to Emmaus, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory" (Luke 24:25-26)? Later Jesus said, "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me" (Luke 24:44). If what is written of Christ does not draw us, we have nothing else to offer.

What is written must be taught. One does not become a Christian by generation, osmosis or by just being under the sound of the gospel. There are people who sit under the sound of preaching, but do not hear. They do not learn.

One must hear the message. Paul wrote, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). N. B. Hardeman used to suggest that his students try to believe something that they had never heard. After a moment of silence, he would ask, "How are you doing?" One must hear before he can believe. Read the examples of conversions in the book of Acts and notice that the subjects had to hear the message.

It is not enough to hear the message, one must learn it. Hearing precedes learning. Over thirty years ago my brother-in-law was an instructor in the Marine Corp at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. I remember sitting in one of his classes as he was trying to prepare those young men for Vietnam. Some of them heard his voice, but were not learning. Their failure to learn could have cost them their lives. I see the same thing in audiences that I address. Some are hearing, but not learning; yet, their failure to learn, could result in their being lost eternally.

Some are ever learning but never coming to a knowledge of the truth. Learning should cause one to action; i.e., to go to Jesus. Let us be drawn by the gospel, by hearing it, learning it and living it.

Ben F. Vick, Jr. from *The Informer*

BIRTHDAY

Natalie Parish, 11-22.

ILL

Sunday: Joy Parish and Leah Thrasher.

Allen Scott was treated at Olathe Medical Center last week and was released on Friday afternoon. He is recovering at home.

Those battling cancer: Jamal Abyad, David Cole, Ledgia Campbell and Betty James. Please remember these in your prayers, as well as: Millie Robertson, Allen Scott, and Ralph and Helen Franklin.

HOME BOUND

Bob Adams resides at Room D-4 of the Johnson County Nursing Center in Olathe. Marion Stone is at home. Please remember these in your prayers and visitation.

OUT OF TOWN

Debra Gragg was in Wichita, Kansas on a business trip. Melissa Cole was in Osage, Kansas last Sunday. Trent Thrasher was in Fulton, Missouri last weekend.

GOSPEL MEETING

Chuck Northrop will conduct a Gospel Meeting at the Chipman Road congregation in Lee's Summit, MO on December 2-5. See the flyer in the foyer for details.

SATURDAY SEMINARS

"Getting To Know Our God" is the theme of the Saturday Seminars at 39th Street in Independence, MO. December 15 is the next scheduled date.

ATTENDANCE

Sunday AM, 46; Sunday PM, 35; Wednesday PM, 32.

"And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful."
Colossians 3:15

Those To Serve

November 18, 2007

BUILDING AND COMMUNION.....Thomas

MORNING WORSHIP

ANNOUNCEMENTS..... Joel Nelson
SONG LEADER..... Trent Thrasher
OPENING PRAYER John Cody Carter
PRESIDE.....Steve Brown
ASSIST..... John Dodson
ASSIST.....John James
CLOSING PRAYER..... Chris Edwards

EVENING WORSHIP

OPENING PRAYER George Thomas
CLOSING PRAYER.....Jared Nelson
LORD'S SUPPER.....Steve Brown

WEDNESDAY 21st

SONG LEADER.....Steve Brown
INVITATION Trent Thrasher

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Sunday

Bible Study 9:30 AM
Morning Worship 10:30 AM
Evening Worship 6:00 PM

Wednesday

Ladies Bible Study 10:00 AM
Bible Study 7:00 PM

Preacher: Ted J. Thrasher

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