

The Harvester



Preparing Souls

To Serve The Lord



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Two Students Completing Their Work

On May 6, 2012, two students will complete their two-year course of study. Both come from different backgrounds, but have one major thing in common: they love the Lord and want to serve Him in the Gospel. The Lord desires properly trained men, such as these, to preach His word throughout each generation (cf. 2 Tim. 2:2; 4:1-5). We are doing our part to fulfill this aspect of God's will. We continually need your help in finding men of quality with a desire to preach the Gospel of Christ. These two men bear witness to the "word of mouth" advertising upon which we rely.

Brother Roger is originally from Haiti and has been living in this country since 2001. He and his wife, Welcie, have been married since 1996. They have four children and another due in mid-June. Before coming to FSOP, Wilken worked as a Haitian police officer and a truck and town car chauffeur. He also



Wilken Roger

completed a degree in economic science from Haiti. He currently serves as a deacon with the Pinecastle church of Christ in Orlando. After graduation, he plans on working to support his family and continuing to make trips to Haiti in order to establish and stabilize local churches of Christ.



Thomas Wise

Brother Wise is originally from Norristown, Pennsylvania. He moved to Florida in 2004. He came to the school from the Venice church of Christ. His interest in Biblical studies and attending the school was cultivated through visiting our annual lectureship while still in high school. For most of his time with us, he has been dating Vitina Bonelli, from the Central church of Christ in Clearwater. Upon graduation, he plans on continuing his education at Freed-Hardeman University, and would like to work with a congregation in that area, where he could continue gaining experience with education.

"What Shall I Render To The Lord?"

By Brian R. Kenyon

In the midst of Psalm 116, the unidentified psalmist, declared, "What shall I render to the LORD For all His benefits toward me?" (Ps. 116:12, NKJ). The word "render" carries the idea of repaying. Thus, the psalmist is asking,

"How can I repay the Lord?" We know there is nothing we can do to literally pay back God for all that He has done, and continues to do, for us. Our most grand efforts at "repaying" the Almighty will not even come close to

the minutest fraction of all the Lord has done for us in just one day of His blessings! However, the attitude captured in the psalmist's question is one that demands our attention and imitation. In considering the question, "What shall I render to the LORD?" let us answer three questions that are involved.

Why Do We Render to the Lord?

Contained in this Psalm are at least three reasons why we owe the Lord. First, the Lord answers prayer.

I love the LORD, because He has heard My voice and my supplications. ²Because He has inclined His ear to me, Therefore I will call upon Him as long as I live.... ⁴Then I called upon the name of the LORD... (Ps. 116:1-2, 4).

The Lord answering prayer is a common theme among the Psalms (cf. Ps. 17:6; 31:2; 55:16; 86:7), and gives great encouragement to the children of God (1 Jn. 3:22; 5:14-15). This alone gives us a sense of indebtedness to the Lord!

Second, the Lord delivers.

The pains of death surrounded me, And the pangs of Sheol laid hold of me; I found trouble and sorrow. ⁴Then I called upon the name of the LORD: "O LORD, I implore You, deliver my soul!"... ⁶I was brought low, and He saved me....⁸For You have delivered my soul from death, My eyes from tears, And my feet from falling. (Ps. 116:3-8)

Note the occurrences of "death" and "Sheol" in these verses. In the mindset contemporary with the psalmist, there was no greater power that could envelope man and from which rescue was impossible. "Death" and "Sheol" (condition and location) were often equated (Ps. 88:3-7), and

they were often viewed as being out of reach (Ps. 88:10-13). However, the Lord can deliver, even from "death" and "Sheol"! Note the words of Paul to the Corinthians concerning how the Lord delivered him from the seemingly impossible.

For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came

to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life. ⁹Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, ¹⁰who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us. (2 Cor. 1:8-10)

More dependence on God was a positive result of Paul's unidentified trouble experienced in Asia. The situation was beyond Paul and his coworkers' power to deliver. Thus, there was no way they could trust in themselves. Paul's identifying God as the "God who raises the dead" is reminiscent of Abraham's test to offer Isaac (Heb. 11:17-19)—Paul knew that the God who could raise the dead could "raise" him from his Asian "death." The Lord can still deliver us today!

Third, the Lord is merciful. "Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; Yes, our God is merciful" (Ps. 116:4). God's mercy and God's deliverance go hand in hand.

Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness! You have relieved me in my distress; Have mercy on me, and hear my prayer. (Ps. 4:1)

I will be glad and rejoice in Your mercy, For You have considered my trouble; You have known my soul in adversities, ⁸And have not shut me up into the hand of the enemy; You have set my feet in a wide place. (Ps. 31:7-8)

What Do We Render to the Lord?

The psalmist states that we must love the Lord. He starts the Psalm, first and foremost, with the declaration, "I love the LORD" (Ps. 116:1 cf. 1 Jn. 4:19). The psalmist shows his love for the Lord throughout this Psalm. Love and appreciation for the Lord causes him to truly "call upon Him as long as I live" (Ps. 116:4). Love recognizes that the Lord offers true rest. "Return to your rest, O my soul, For the LORD has dealt bountifully with you" (Ps. 116:7). Love causes him to always live as if he were in the presence of the Lord, for he declares, "I will walk before the LORD In the land of the living" (Ps. 116:9). Love motivates him to fulfil his vows to the Lord (Ps. 116:13-14, 17-18). Love causes him to serve the Lord.

Second, we must live for the Lord. We live for the Lord by walking before Him, as the psalmist declares, "I will walk before the LORD In the land of the living" (Ps. 116:9). In another Psalm, the writer asks, "Have You not kept my feet from falling, That I may walk before God In the light of the living?" (Ps. 56:13a). We also live for the Lord by trusting in Him. The psalmist has great faith in the Lord, "I believed, therefore I spoke, 'I am greatly afflicted'" (Ps. 116:10 cf. 2 Cor. 4:13). Though men will disappoint (Ps. 116:11 cf. Num. 23:19), God and His word will never

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let us down (Pr. 3:5-6). Finally, we live for the Lord by serving Him. The psalmist declares, "O LORD, truly I am Your servant; I am Your servant, the son of Your maidservant; You have loosed my bonds" (Ps. 116:16). The repetition of "servant" and the reference to his mother's being a servant of the Lord emphasizes the psalmist's deep, long standing commitment to serving God. Is it any wonder, then, that the psalmist would declare, "Precious in the sight of the LORD Is the death of His saints" (Ps. 116:15)? Some take "precious" here to mean valuable, in the sense that the Lord loses valuable servants on earth at their death.

Third, we must praise the Lord, for the psalmist said, "In the courts of the LORD's house, In the midst of you, O Jerusalem. Praise the LORD!" (Ps. 116:19). This Psalm reveals at least three ways the psalmist praises the Lord. He praises the Lord by taking up "the cup of salvation" (Ps. 116:13). Insight into this may be gained by realizing that this Psalm was the fourth of the Hillel psalms read during the Passover meal (cf. Ex. 12:26-27; Mt. 26:26-27). Thus, the "cup of salvation" includes faithfulness and willingness in observing the Passover. He also praises the Lord by paying vows. Twice he declares, "I will pay my vows to the LORD Now in the presence of all His people" (Ps. 116:14, 18). The psalmist realizes that a verbal declaration without backing it up with sacrificial action is meaningless (cf. Rom. 12:1). Finally, he praises the Lord by being thankful, by offering to God "the sacrifice of thanksgiving" (Ps. 116:17). Though we live under a different covenant than the psalmist and the avenues through which we praise God may be different, our praising the Lord must still be characterized by obedience, backing up our declarations by authorized actions, and being thankful for all that the Lord has done and continues to do for us!

When Do We Render to the Lord?

Rendering to the Lord is not something we should have as a future goal, but the time to render is now! First, the psalmist declares, "Because He has inclined His ear to me, Therefore I will call upon Him as long as I live" (Ps. 116:2). Compare this with what Paul said, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). Elsewhere, he said, "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21). Rendering to the Lord is to be done "as long as I live"! Second, rendering to the Lord is to be done "now"! Again, twice the psalmist says, "I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people" (Ps. 116:14, 18). Rendering to the Lord should not be put off until a "more convenient season" (cf. Acts 24:25). Paul reminded his readers the words of Isaiah when he wrote,

For He says: "In an acceptable time I have heard you, And in the day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation. (2 Cor. 6:2 cf. Isa. 49:8)

Rendering to the Lord is something that we should begin right now, if we are not already serving Him in love!

Conclusion

"What shall I render to the LORD For all His benefits toward me?" (Ps. 116:12) is certainly a relevant question. We owe the Lord for all that He has done and continues to do for us, among which are answering our prayers, delivering us from sin, and extending mercy toward us! Though we cannot pay Him back monetarily, we can and must love Him, live for Him, and praise Him! 

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Special Gifts: Atlantic Christian Fund.

*Our final deposit for the month is usually made on the last Wednesday of the month. All contributions received after that time are reported on the next month's financial statement.

WEALTH, FRIENDSHIP & PREACHER TRAINING

By Brian R. Kenyon

A wise man once wrote, “Wealth maketh many friends; but the poor is separated from his neighbour” (Pr. 19:4, KJV). Let us consider two aspects of the first part of this verse. First, consider “wealth.” Money is neither good nor bad of itself, but our attitude toward it will either “make us or break us” (cf. Pr. 23:7). If we have a godly attitude toward wealth, we will use it in a good way (Pr. 4:23). If we have a selfish attitude toward wealth, we will use it in an evil way (cf. 1 Tim. 6:9-10). Our attitude must not allow us to regard money as the main goal in life (cf. Eccl. 5:10-11). Money is a tool to be used, not a commodity to be hoarded. If we can use our money for good, we must do so (Pr. 3:27-28). Using money for good is the only way we can benefit from it (Pr. 11:24-25). We must realize at least three things concerning money: (1) it is unreliable (Pr. 11:28 cf. Lk. 12:16-21; 1 Tim. 6:17; Jas. 4:15); (2) it does not determine contentment (Pr. 30:8-9 cf. Eccl. 4:8; Phil. 4:11-13; 1 Tim. 6:8); and (3) it cannot go with us at death (Eccl. 5:15 cf. 1 Tim. 6:7; Eccl. 2:18-19). Second, consider “friends.” Why do we chose the friends we do? Some friends are “fair weather” (cf. Pr. 19:4 cf 19:6-7; 14:20). That is, they are only around and supportive when there is benefit to them. When Job was wealthy, he had all kinds of friends, but when his wealth (and health) was gone, so were his friends (Job 30:9-10). This, of course, is nothing new, for even Jesus experienced similar “friends” (Jn. 6:26-27). Characteristics of true friends are as follows: (1) they love (Pr. 17:17); (2) they are always loyal (Pr. 18:24); (3) they will rebuke when necessary (Pr. 27:5-6 cf. 28:23); and (4) they cheer up and encourage (Pr. 27:9).

How are we using our wealth? What kind of friends do we have? What kind of friends are we? The school has operated as it has due to the generosity of wise wealth users and true friends of the Truth. We continue to faithfully serve the Lord by training men to preach and preparing souls to better serve the Lord. Only the Lord can truly measure the value of the school. One truth is certain, though: the school continues needing friends who will support it with their wealth. We thank our friends for their continued support. Will you also consider our need and be our friends? 

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