

THE VALUE OF GODLY PEOPLE

It came as a shock to me many years ago when I realized that not all of the commandments of God are equally important. There were Ten Commandments written by God in tablets of stone, and over 600 other commandments in the Law of Moses. Jesus, however, established a pecking order of priorities (Matt. 22:37-40.) He said that the most important commandment was to love God with all of your heart, soul, and mind. The second, as you know, was to love your neighbour as yourself. All truths are equally true, but not all truths are equally important.

Once understood, the priorities established by Jesus can be easily seen in every dispensation. This was the message of God "from the beginning" (1 John 3:11-12.) Faith is essential to salvation (Heb. 11:6,) but love is more important than faith (1 Cor. 13:13.)

Lately, it has been dawning upon me that not all people are equally important. This too is a revolutionary concept. The thought first came to my mind some years ago while reading Acts 12:. Peter was delivered from prison by an angel. His release, however, resulted in the torture and death of sixteen soldiers (Acts 12:19.) God apparently placed more value on Peter than He did on the sixteen soldiers.

Earlier today while listening to Acts 27 on tape, one familiar verse seemed to leap out of the text. There were two hundred seventy six people on that storm tossed ship, but Paul seems to have been more important than them all in the eyes of God. He sent an angel to comfort Paul, and assure him that he would stand trial before Caesar. As a bonus, God decided to give Paul the lives of all those who were sailing with him (Acts 27:24.)

Once articulated, this truth is now so obvious that I am embarrassed to have been so long in seeing it. We are in the midst of a cosmic conflict. The forces of good are in a struggle with the forces of evil. God values those who are helpful to Him in the accomplishment of His eternal purpose, and He destroys the rest.

Peter makes reference to this in 2 Peter 2:

- God spared some angels and destroyed others.
- God saved Noah, and his family, but destroyed others.
- God saved Lot but destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.
- God knows how to deliver the godly and destroy the wicked.
- The godly are valued like wheat, and the ungodly are burned like chaff.

These analogies can be easily expanded. God would have spared Sodom and Gomorrah if only ten righteous people could have been found within them (Gen. 18:32.) God apparently valued ten righteous people more than the whole cities filled with unrighteousness.

The Hebrews were valuable to God in His eternal purpose. He valued them more than the Egyptians. This is why the Hebrews were delivered and the Egyptians were destroyed.

Even some of the Hebrews, however, proved to be worthless and perished in the wilderness.

Daniel was saved, but those who accused him were killed by the lions (Dan. 5)

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were saved but the soldiers who threw them in the fire perished (Dan. 3.)

The branches that bear fruit will be helped to so they can produce more fruit, the branches that do not bear fruit will be cast into the fire (John 15:1-6.)

Mal. 3:17 teaches that God values His people like a treasure of jewels or an obedient son that serves Him.

What about you? If you should die today, what important task would have to be taken over by another? What gap would have to be filled? What positive lessons could be learned by reflecting on your memory?

It is shocking to state it so bluntly, but nevertheless it is true. If you are an obedient child, God values you like a precious jewel. If you are not an obedient child, you are of no value to God and will be destroyed.