

Being “Determined”

*“I determined not
to know any thing
among you, save
Jesus Christ, and
him crucified.”*

—*I Corinthians 2:2*

THE WORDS OF OUR TEXT

should be familiar to each of us as followers of Christ. They speak of the serious mindset we must have if we are to prove faithful to our Heavenly Father. In our consideration of this subject we, as consecrated children of God, must understand the importance of this verse and others similar to it in significance, as they should help us focus all of our attention upon attaining unto “the hope of the gospel.” (Col. 1:23) Having responded to the heavenly call, the gospel message should compel us to be zealous in husbanding time and talent for the ministry of this “good news,” leaving all other subjects, however interesting, behind. If this is not done fully, we may be “turned out of the way,” and fail to make our “calling and election sure.”—Heb. 12:13; II Pet. 1:10

KNOWLEDGE AND WISDOM OF THIS WORLD

In this day, we have constant access to knowledge and information that is available in the world, and

it can be easy for us to become distracted. Literally, within the palm of our hand, we can simply ask a question to a “smart” phone, and in seconds a voice will give us an answer. This and countless other examples provide much evidence that we are indeed living during the time prophesied when “knowledge shall be increased.” (Dan. 12:4) The single focus emphasized in our opening verse in no way means that we are not to take advantage of the amazing tools of technology that we readily have at our disposal to advance the message of truth. Much is being done by the Dawn, and in many other circles of the brotherhood around the globe, to spread the Gospel of the kingdom through the use of today’s technology. We rejoice in the reports of these efforts, and thank the Heavenly Father for these opportunities.

The things we are to resist are those which pertain to the wisdom of this world, and its general spirit of pride. This spirit comes from the Adversary, who desires to distract us from being about our “Father’s business.” (Luke 2:49) We are to divest ourselves of selfishness, which seeks fleshly gratification and advancement, and which envies others. The importance of this is illustrated in these words from James 3:14-17, which reads: “If ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.” How true it is that the trend of worldly wisdom is mostly in this direction. James continues, “The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.”

These words from James complement those of Paul in our theme text, as they provide further insight concerning what we should be “determined” to know and do in our consecrated walk. The wisdom from above, which has the qualities of purity, peaceableness, gentleness, and those others that James cites, was personified in “Jesus Christ, and him crucified.” Thus, to be “determined” only to know him, means that we will seek to obtain this same kind of “wisdom from above.” The Book of Proverbs also speaks of this wisdom, telling us that “Wisdom is the principal thing,” and “The fear [reverence] of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.”—Prov. 4:7; 9:10

FOLLOWING CHRIST’S EXAMPLE

Just as Christ embodies the wisdom described by James, he also exemplifies the wisdom which from eternity has been an attribute of God, the Creator. Part of God’s wisdom, shared by his Son, is the desire to impart the divine revelation of his plan to those earnestly seeking to know and understand it. Those who desire this heavenly wisdom, and who possess the proper humble attitude of heart and mind to receive such instruction from the Lord, are sure to be given a knowledge of whatever truths are needful for their spiritual development. To them, it will be provided as “meat in due season” for their nourishment and strengthening.—Ps. 145:15; Matt. 24:45

The wonderful truths of the Bible fit in exact harmony with those things we should be desirous of in our spiritual life, and also with respect to our message to others. We are commissioned to be “ministers of Christ.” (I Cor. 4:1) This includes the

instructions: “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. . . . Watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist [preacher of the gospel], make full proof of thy ministry.” (II Tim. 4:2,5) As ministers of Christ, we are to preach the Word with patience, gentleness, forbearance and sound doctrine. Thus, our ministry will resound loudly to the glory of God, and his Son Christ Jesus. If faithful, we have the assurance that we will, in the full sense of the word, be made “able ministers of the new testament [covenant]” in Christ’s kingdom.—II Cor. 3:6

OUR FOCUS

In further consideration of the admonition in our text to be fully “determined” to know “Jesus Christ, and him crucified,” we here suggest three specific aspects of endeavor upon which we should particularly focus. To be truly single-minded in our divine service requires that we:

1. Carefully and continually study God’s plan as revealed in his Word, which he has hidden “from the wise, . . . and hast revealed . . . unto babes.”—Luke 10:21

2. Have our hearts and minds illuminated, and have our life led, by the power and influence of God’s Holy “Spirit of truth.”—John 16:13; Eph. 1:18; Col. 1:9

3. Possess an enthusiastic zeal for the accomplishment of God’s will in our life, and a desire to be “zealous of good works.”—Titus 2:14

Fulfillment of these endeavors means that we will concentrate our energies upon those things which

will successfully lead us beyond the veil. The Apostle Paul refers to this, and points out that gaining such a complete victory is not an assured thing, and we must be very careful in all aspects of our Christian life. “If possibly I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already received it, or have been already perfected; but I pursue, if indeed I may lay hold on that for which also I was laid hold on by Christ.” (Phil. 3:11,12, *Emphatic Diaglott*) The Lord has “laid hold” upon us, calling us out of darkness. He desires that we keep our hearts loyal to him, and through character development and sacrifice “lay hold on that for which” we have been called. Paul describes this grand invitation as both a “holy” and a “heavenly calling.” (II Tim. 1:9; Heb. 3:1) If we “attain to the [first] resurrection,” we will be given the great privilege of showing forth God’s great character to the world of mankind, and of blessing them, in the kingdom.

PRESSING ON

Reading further Paul’s words to the brethren at Philippi, he says, “This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark [along the line, *Emphatic Diaglott*] for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded.” (Phil. 3:13-15) This “one thing” that Paul did, which we are also to do, is actually made up of many related requirements. However, it can be summarized as having everything in our life centered on one purpose—that is, to please God in thought, word, and deed. “The thoughts of the righteous are

right.” (Prov. 12:5) If we have “right” thoughts, they will be in accord with the new mind and will—the New Creature—and we will strive to put off the “old man with his deeds.”—Col. 3:9

Later, in this same chapter, we are told, “Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.” (vs. 17) This harmonizes with Jesus’ admonition that “unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required.” (Luke 12:48) There is a great responsibility which comes to us if we are counted as God’s chosen people—his “elect.” As his ambassadors, our actions and words should properly represent our Lord and bring honor to his name at all times. We each are to be an “epistle, . . . known and read of all men.” (II Cor. 3:2) In order to make this a reality, we must strive to meet the requirements of the “race” set before us. It is important to note that these are the same for each one running the race, but they may be attained at different rates among the body members. For all, however, it is a narrow way which leads to glory, honor, and immortality. We may indeed develop individually at different rates, but we all must progress and “press on.”

Paul said concerning himself, “I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air.” (I Cor. 9:26) We must follow his example in this regard, laying aside “every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and . . . run with patience the race that is set before us.” (Heb. 12:1) We have the strength to do this because the Heavenly Father grants it to us. We also have the assistance provided by “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set

before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him . . . , lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.”—Heb. 12:2,3

“NOT TO KNOW ANY THING”

Looking further at the life of Paul as an example to us, we see that following his conversion on the road to Damascus, his days and years were as though he knew nothing else, “save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.” The course that he chose to follow after, being called and chosen of God, was one of self-abandonment and sacrifice. His knowledge on other subjects, which was extensive, or the many things which might have otherwise tended to distract him from fulfilling his consecration vows, he knew must be put behind him.

As previously noted, we too must forget “those things which are behind,” and “press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling.” As it was with Paul, it is critical that we set proper priorities and standards in our life, both concerning our conduct as well as our understanding of God’s Word. With regard to daily conduct, we are told, “Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.” (Col. 3:2) This includes the putting away of pride, selfishness, and those things which may promote and call attention to the flesh and self-interest. In connection with our understanding of God’s Word, we must give no “heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.” (I Tim 4:1) False doctrines and creeds of men add error upon error, and Jesus warned that these would “seduce, if it were possible, even the elect.”—Mark 13:22

The records of the experiences from the life of Paul and other faithful followers of Christ are provided as examples for us in our own experiences and Christian walk. They should serve to help us in fully applying ourselves to do the “one thing” to which we were called. “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”—Phil. 1:21

“AMONG YOU”

Our one goal, as was our Lord’s and his disciples such as Paul, is to prove acceptable to the Father, and to do so with all our might and energy. It is to be done to the extent of giving up our own wills entirely and presenting our “bodies a living sacrifice,” which is deemed a “reasonable service.” (Rom. 12:1) Part of our privilege in this regard is that of helping others run the race, that we all might reach the goal and gain the “victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (I Cor. 15:57) We should be motivated by a sincere desire to be determined to know “among you”—our fellow brethren—nothing other than the one goal that we all are striving for. This is the highest form of love in action, and is exemplified in the words of the Master: “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”—John 15:13

Paul was fully activated by God’s divine teachings, summed up in love. He said, “I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ,” even though it brought him much ridicule and persecution. How was Paul able to make this claim? Continuing, he answers that the “gospel of Christ” demonstrates “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.” (Rom. 1:16) His

further explanation concerning the importance of this method of reasoning is found in the next verse: “Therein”—in the salvation provided by the power of God—“is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”—Rom. 1:17

In considering Paul’s reference in this text to “The just,” we realize that, according to the flesh, “There is none righteous, no, not one.” (chap. 3:10) There are none perfectly sound in mind and body. Being justified by faith in the blood of Christ, however, the truly consecrated are reckoned as upright before God, covered with the “robe of righteousness” provided through Jesus. (vss. 24,25; Isa. 61:10) Through this arrangement, our Adamic imperfections are covered. Additionally, by claiming Jesus Christ as our Advocate, the merit of his sacrifice is ever efficacious to keep us blameless in the sight of justice. Thus is shown “the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe.”—Rom. 3:22

We read in I Peter 3:12, “The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.” This verse indicates it is not enough to be counted as “justified” by the blood of Jesus, but our deeds also must be, so far as possible, upright and good. We are to daily strive to be righteous and pure in our intentions, thoughts, words and deeds. Although perfection cannot be attained, nothing short of our maximum effort will be found to be fully acceptable to the Heavenly Father.

The just, Paul says, shall “live by faith.” What great importance is given here to the quality of

faith. We are told that we “should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” (Jude 3) “The faith” is God’s Word of truth, and we must have absolute belief in his holy utterances. God’s Word provides us the details of his great plan of the ages, and his precious promises assure us of its fulfillment and completion. We are also to “live . . . by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.”—Matt. 4:4

The “Word of God,” or *Logos* in the Greek, also refers to his only begotten Son, Jesus. Since his creation by God, he has been the Heavenly Father’s faithful mouthpiece, both in his prehuman existence and as a perfect human being upon the earth. “The Word [*Logos*] was with God. . . . All things were made by him.” (John 1:1-3) God’s Son was daily his Father’s delight while in his prehuman heavenly existence. As the perfect man Jesus, we are told that, beginning at a very young age, he “increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.” (Luke 2:52) When this “Word of God” was baptized in the River Jordan, “the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”—Matt. 3:16,17

GOD’S WORD IS SURE

Paul knew that the Gospel message—“good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people”—would withstand the darkness and confusion of Greece and Rome, and the attacks of the so-called scholars of that day. Therefore, he was not fearful of bringing it into contrast with all of the philosophies

of men. Rather, he said, “For necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!”—I Cor. 9:16

The attacks against the plan of God, even his very existence, and the truth concerning his only begotten Son, Jesus, are in many ways the same today as they were in Paul’s day, although they may be presented in a more subtle manner now than in former times. With his many deceptions, Satan will appear as an “angel of light.” (II Cor. 11:14) However, he is the ruler of darkness, and “hateth the light.” (Eph. 6:12; John 3:20) This will be so until his reign over mankind is brought to an end, and sin and evil are destroyed forever. In Messiah’s kingdom, Satan and his evil influences will be fully restrained, and the whole world will come to a knowledge of the blessed and glorious character of the Heavenly Father. They will then know that “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.” (I John 1:5) Mankind will also praise and honor his Son, Christ Jesus—“the light of the world.”—John 9:5

As consecrated believers, who at the present time have been blessed with an understanding of the Gospel message, its hope is so grand that we should desire to hear it again and again, with thanksgiving. Each of us, in our own personal meditation, should reflect on the words of the Master, “Blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.” (Matt. 13:16) We are indeed privileged to have had our eyes opened, and our ears unstopped, through the power of the Holy Spirit, in order that we might receive and understand the message of truth.

We are assured by the Scriptures, and by our faith in the promises of God, that his plans and

purposes are being thoroughly worked out. We continue to claim the promise made to Abraham, through the oath-bound covenant given to him by God, that “in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.” (Gen. 22:18) Laying claim to such a grand promise should instill within us a renewed desire to be faithful to our vows of consecration. It should incite us to daily seek to know more of God’s wonderful character, and to partake of his guidance and instructions which he so graciously provides for our spiritual benefit. We should also be energized, as light-bearers, to impart God’s promises to others, telling the poor, groaning creation that a time of great rejoicing will soon come to all mankind. We can share the wonderful truth given by Peter on the Day of Pentecost: “The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus.” (Acts 3:13) God has given him “all power . . . in heaven and in earth.”—Matt. 28:18

“JESUS CHRIST, AND HIM CRUCIFIED”

The primary lesson of these words is that we fully understand and appreciate the importance of Jesus’ death as the ransom price, provided for Adam and his posterity. He “gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.” (I Tim. 2:6) This is the essence of the Gospel message. Paul says, “I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, . . . wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved. . . . 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.” (I Cor. 15:1-4) Jesus death as man’s Redeemer

was necessary only once. There was no need for him to ever be crucified “afresh.” (Heb. 6:6) Later in his epistle to the Hebrews, Paul reminds us of this important fact. “Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.” “We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”—Heb. 9:28; 10:10

The divine promises of present and future blessings are for our special benefit, that we might be “kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.” (I Pet. 1:5) The phrase “unto salvation” signifies the goal before us. We must remember that a work still must be done within us—a work of transformation and sanctification. “This is the will of God,” Paul said, “even your sanctification.” (I Thess. 4:3) “Christ . . . loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”—Eph. 5:25-27

In conclusion, let us keep constantly before our hearts and minds the many promises given to those who are “determined” to fulfill their consecration vows. “Your life is hid with Christ in God.” “It is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.” Have “boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us.” “Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.” “We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye.”—Col. 3:3; Phil. 2:13; Heb. 10:19,20; Ps. 116:15; I Cor. 15:51,52 ■