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**Viewpoints for Successful Evangelism, pt. 2**

It is important to maintain certain viewpoints while engaging in evangelism. Many people start out with great enthusiasm, but often get discouraged, frustrated and in some cases become apathetic. This happens even to those who are highly skilled in teaching others. When we are armed with the wrong viewpoints (or way of looking at things), many personal workers eventually lose heart. Before long, evangelistic efforts dwindle and in some cases, stop altogether. Last month I shared with you two viewpoints that had to deal with the providence of God in dealing with man, both as one who searches for Him and as one who teaches the gospel to others.

Since the providence of God is at work like this, then it should be easy to see why prayer would play an important role in evangelism. When Cornelius was converted, it was his prayers that prompted God to take notice and move on his behalf, Acts 10:1-4. On the next day, it was Peter who was in prayer that the Lord chose to use in order to reach him, Acts 10:9. I sometimes feel that the preparation that is made for evangelism is not much different from one preparing to make a sales pitch. Sometimes we think that if you follow the same procedure with anyone, the desired (conversion) result must necessarily follow. Brethren, that cannot be our intention. Yet in the books that I have read on evangelism, prayer is often not stressed. Compare Paul’s teaching to the church at Colossae where we find him saying, “pray that God will open up to us a door for the word” Colossians 4:3.

I like to think of prayer in the work of evangelism as the igniter. It starts the process of God’s providence in bringing together the searching person with the prepared servant of the Lord. When we have worked to prepare ourselves to be useful in the Kingdom of the Lord and then diligently pray that the Lord lead us to some soul, I am convinced that we will begin to find souls who themselves have been praying and who will be receptive to the gospel! Prayer is such an important viewpoint when it comes to evangelism, yet seldom is heard or believed when petition is made for God to “lead us to some soul today.”

Next month, I want to continue my viewpoints on evangelism, taken from the parable of the sower in Luke 8. I want to thank all for the kind comments concerning these past few articles on evangelism. I truly believe if a church is not growing numerically or spiritually it’s because evangelism has stopped. Let’s keep it going and praying!!

~Danny Aragon, church of Christ, Kim CO

The three-fold purpose of *The Unveiled Gospel* is as follows.....

1. To help our subscribers grow in their Bible knowledge through articles from various writers.
2. To offer our subscribers Biblical weekend seminars to encourage the faithful.
3. To assist our subscribers in evangelizing their own communities.

*For more information, please call Danny @ 719-980-0587 or Tom @ 719-964-8493. You can also send an email to [info@theunveiledgospel.org](mailto:info@theunveiledgospel.org).*

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Thanks to all.

The Staff at *The Unveiled Gospel* is happy to offer:

1. Gospel Meetings – designed to encourage the brethren
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### *SUPPORTERS OF The Unveiled Gospel:*

Kim church of Christ, 530 Hwy 160, P.O. Box 121, Kim CO 81049 (719-980-0587)

La Junta church of Christ, 921 Cimarron, La Junta CO 81050 (719-980-0587)

Limon church of Christ, 330 N Ave, P.O. Box 391, Limon CO 80828 (719-964-8493)

Sioux City church of Christ, 2111 W. 6<sup>th</sup> St., Sioux City IA 51103 (712-255-1313)

Walsh church of Christ, 646 Missouri, Walsh CO 81090 (719-688-1148)

### *INDIVIDUAL SUPPORTERS OF The Unveiled Gospel:*

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Ray & Rita Martinez, La Junta CO

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Orvis & Connie Trobaugh, Sioux City IA

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### *A PLEA TO ALL OUR READERS FROM “The Unveiled Gospel” STAFF*

From the time of our inception almost a year ago, our goal was and remains not only to talk the talk of evangelism, but also to walk the walk of evangelism. As the result of this goal, two awesome godly events are taking place. First, the circulation of our publication is continuing to grow. Second, the number of congregations from among the churches of Christ seeking our help to teach them on how to evangelize and/or help them evangelize their locales is growing. Consequently, we are in need of increased financial support to maintain the growth of our circulation and bring on more experienced staff evangelists to help us help the churches. We are praying to God to use all of you to open these doors to us to continue our evangelizing a lost and dying United States (Col. 4.2-4). Thank you!

### *EVANGELISM - MINISTRY ACTIVITIES OF The Unveiled Gospel:*

January:

*The Unveiled Gospel* continues to work with the church in Sioux City, IA. Please be praying for the churches at Glass St. and 6<sup>th</sup> St. as they begin talking about uniting as one congregation. There is much work that can be done when (if) these two congregations get together.

*The Unveiled Gospel* went to Henderson, TN to conduct a class on evangelism, Tom will be going back to conclude the class. If you have questions, contact Tom Wright (719-964-8493) for more information on class schedule.

February:

*The Unveiled Gospel* will continue working with the Lord's church in Sioux City, IA.

*The Unveiled Gospel* will have a table set up at the Freed-Hardeman Lectures on the 5<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup>.

## Help Needed!!

The church of Christ in Walsh, CO is looking for an evangelist to come and help them grow spiritually and numerically. This is a mission field in southeastern CO and the congregation can provide some support, but more is needed to fully support an evangelist and his family. Walsh is a community that hasn't been evangelized in a long time, so the field is white. We are a lovely community that has many souls in need to help. If you are interested in learning more about the work please contact Kenton Dykes @ 719-688-1148.

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### *The Battle Belongs to the Lord*

Life can get rough these days and we may find ourselves in positions where we think there may be no way out. It may cause us to become discouraged and want to give up. The problems may be so large that we seem utterly powerless to overcome it. Jehoshaphat found himself dealing with a problem that to him, there was no way to overcome it or escape it.

Jehoshaphat had received news that the sons of Ammon, Moab, and Mount Seir were coming against them. These three groups combined were a very large force combined, and Jehoshaphat became very afraid knowing that his army would not be able to overcome them. Upon hearing the news, he does not hesitate to turn to the Lord in prayer, and asks the Lord to judge them. King Jehoshaphat knows the nation Israel is powerless against such a large and formidable force (II Chron. 20:1-4).

Jahaziel the prophet receives the Spirit of the Lord and tells them listen, all Judah, all Jerusalem, and the King. Do not fear or be dismayed because of this great multitude. The battle is not yours but Gods. Tomorrow go down against them, and when they come up, do not fight, but station yourselves and watch the salvation of the Lord on your behalf. Go out to face them, but remember, the Lord is with you. Hearing this the king bowed his head, and the nation fell to the ground and worshiped God (II Chron. 1:14-18).

The next morning the nation does as directed, and puts their trust in the Lord. What they see next is the enemy attacking themselves. The sons of Ammon and Moab attack the sons of Mount Seir. When they have finished off the opposition, they proceed to cut down one another, till none is left. When the Israelite's look out onto the battlefield there is no one left (II Chron. 20-25).

Jahaziel was very afraid, he did not know what to do, but he did not forget his Lord. Before anything else he turned to the Lord in prayer and asked for help. Today, at times, we may find ourselves in a place we feel we cannot overcome, we might even forget about our Lord. But we cannot forget Him, He is there for us, but only when we take the initiative and come to Him. God cannot do His work until we put our trust in Him, then we can watch Him do His work. Sometimes, the battle belongs to the Lord.

~ Mario Saldana, church of Christ, Limon CO

## *THIRTY SUGGESTIONS FOR BIBLE STUDY – SUGGESTION ELEVEN*

Suggestion eleven for Bible study is that Bible study requires absolute concentration, and distractions must not be allowed that inhibit one's ability to teach or learn from the study (Luke 10.38-42). In context of the reference verses, the word "distract" (Greek *perispao*) infers one being pulled or dragged away (from hearing Jesus' word) by being excessively involved or busied (by choice) with something else (of lesser value or importance). For instance, Martha (as hostess) became distracted from hearing Jesus' word when she chose to prepare a meal (of less importance) for her guests. Still, Jesus' word provides spiritual and eternal life for all who hear and obey it as Martha's meal only provided physical and temporal life for all eating it. Yet, hearing Christ's word is like eating a meal (Matt. 4.4).

However, one teaching or hearing Christ's word is also like one driving a car that must be aware of the three types of distractions to avoid when doing so. First, there is cognitive (mental) distraction wherein a driver's mind is focused on something other than his or her driving. Second, there is visual (viewing) distraction wherein a driver's eyesight might be focused on anything and everything except the road (including what is in front and behind and either side of him or her). Third, there is what is called manual (hands free) distraction wherein a driver's hands are elsewhere but not on the car's steering wheel. Therefore, whenever a driver is distracted in any of these three ways (like that of texting), concentration is broken and driving ability is inhibited putting lives in imminent danger.

Accordingly, the same three types of distractions can doom Bible studies to failure unless those involved prepare themselves in the following three manners. One, where cognitive distractions are involved, it is important for everyone to train their minds to focus only on the Bible study (Col. 3.2). Two, where visual distractions are involved, it is important for everyone to train both their eyes to focus only on the Bible study (Eccl. 12.9-14). Three, where manual distractions are involved, it is important for everyone to train their hands to grab hold of only the Bible study (Prov. 4.13; 1 Tim. 6.12; Heb. 6.17-18). Consequently, as opposed to Martha above, her sister Mary chose the good part (Jesus' word) to feed on instead of Martha's meal with all its distractions and inhibitions. Everyone should do as Mary.

Tom Wright, church of Christ, Holly CO

## BLESSINGS FROM ABOVE

Welcome back to a few thoughts regarding the Sermon on the Mount. As mentioned in the January issue of the Unveiled Gospel, Jesus begins in Matthew 5:3 with a series of blessings. When you think of blessings, perhaps financial, physical, family, or mental blessings enter your mind. We all have some level of blessings in these categories, and should be grateful for whatever it is we have. They all come from God, just as everything does. Typically, people go through life striving to obtain more of these, but are rarely satisfied. It is not an exaggeration to say that most people in the world seek happiness through things such as possessions or pleasure.

The wealthy and powerful may be considered fortunate, but only in a material, not in a spiritual sense. People in the time of Christ were no different in this regard. They had different customs and opportunities, but still they pursued temporary blessings. Jesus' opponents during His ministry were attempting to hold onto their positions of power, rather than placing themselves in the hands of God. This is not the kind of blessings Jesus makes available to all of us. Worldly success is not what Jesus offers, and it is not what we as evangelists have to offer. We offer something far greater to offer those seeking blessings from God above.

Jesus speaks of blessings beyond the temporary realm. Jesus uses the term "*blessed*" nine times during the opening of the Sermon on the Mount. As He pronounces these blessings, He refers to *the poor in spirit; those that mourn; the gentle; those who hunger and thirst for righteousness; the merciful, the pure in heart; the peacemakers; those who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness; and those who are insulted and persecuted because of Him*. The word, *blessed* in the Greek language, can mean happy, favored, fortunate, or privileged.

The idea of being favored by these characteristics does not exactly match the ideas of the world. In fact, they are direct opposites. The blessedness Jesus identifies in the beatitudes all comes from above. They are divinely favored by God, a supernatural source of happiness. Happiness from God may appear strange to worldly thinking, but it is genuine. Jesus makes them possible for us. Recipients of God's favor must realize that without Jesus we are lost. We must put Christ first in our lives, rather than arrogantly looking down on others. So begins the life of the faithful follower of Jesus, receiving all the promises in the beatitudes.

There is a divine reward for living by these Christ-like characteristics and facing what the prophets faced. In none of the beatitudes do people receive personal praise or glory. They enjoy something greater from God, and each beatitude describe why they are divinely blessed. Jesus ushered in the kingdom of heaven, and we can be a part of God's kingdom when we live the life Jesus describes in the beatitudes, and on through the Sermon on the Mount. When we live for Christ, the ultimate reward for which we can *rejoice and be glad* is found not in an earthly sense, but a heavenly one. Share the blessings with others, and pray that we all continue to mature in the divine favor from God above.

~ Terry Smalling, church of Christ, La Junta CO

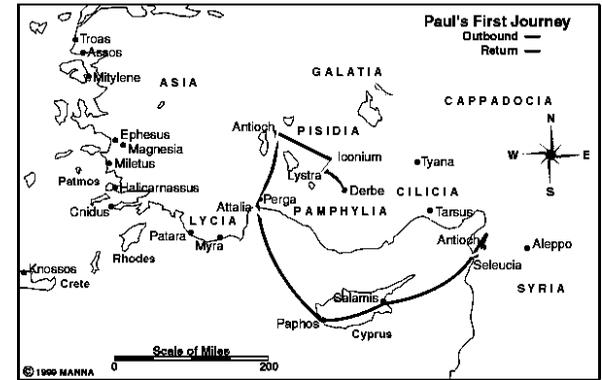
## Elders in a Local Congregation (Part 1)

Most of us are familiar with the passages in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 that outline the qualifications of elders in a local church. Sadly, few men have met these qualifications. As a result, having elders in a congregation seems to be the exception, rather than the norm.

In the next two articles, I want us to address two questions. First, I want us to ask ourselves why this seems to be the case and second I want us to ask ourselves what affect (if any) the lack of elders is having on the body of Christ (specifically, the local assemblies).

Can your congregation have elders? What is the soonest they could develop and become qualified to assume the role? The answer might surprise you.

Let's briefly study the early church. On Paul's first missionary journey he set sail from the seaport of Selucia. From there he sailed to the isle of Cyprus, spreading the gospel and working to establish congregations in the cities of Salamis and Paphos. From there he sails to Pamphylia again, preaching in Perga. He moves onward, having great success in Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derby, continuing to establish congregations throughout the region of Pisidia. But here an astounding change takes place in their ministry. Acts 14:21 records how "they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting *them* to continue in the faith". So, Paul did a 180 degree about face and now, instead of creating new disciples he now returns to strengthen them.



But the amazing thing occurs in Acts 14:23 that tells us that they "appointed elders in every church". Understand that Paul's missionary journey, from beginning to end, took place from 47-48 A.D., or roughly a year. That means, on average (allowing for time to travel) Paul could have only been in each city about one month at most.

But how, one must ask, could these men be qualified to be elders if they've been Christians only a few months? There is one possible answer: commitment. These men had to be deeply devoted to transforming themselves (Rom. 12:2) into men that put on Christ (Gal. 3:27) and walked as He walked (1 Jn. 2:6).

What can this teach us today? Could it teach us that we, in many cases, could have men qualified to be elders in every church, if they would simply develop a deep conviction and commitment to transforming themselves into Christ-like individuals?

In our next article, we'll consider how the lack of elders impacts a local congregation and those lost souls surrounding them.

~ Mike Mahler, church of Christ, Sioux City IA

## *THE PRODIGAL'S BROTHER*

Luke 15:1-32 Jesus teaches, answering the criticism, *“this man receives sinners and eats with them.”*

This criticism of Jesus by the scribes and Pharisees is carefully, meticulously, and patiently answered in the form of three parables. The first is about a man with 100 sheep that lost one. He left the 99 to go find the one lost. When the lamb is found, there is great rejoicing by him, his friends and neighbors. Jesus concludes with, “likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repents more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.” Jesus is answering the criticism, “this man receives sinners and eats with them”! It is the answer; Jesus made connections with sinners to save their souls.

The second parable is about a woman with ten coins of silver but loses one. She gets a light and a broom and searches the house till she finds it. Obviously, the silver coin was very valuable and the woman is ecstatic when she finds it. She calls her neighbors and friends to come celebrate and have a party, “for I have found the piece which I had lost.” Jesus, answering the criticism, “the man receives sinners and eats with them,” and says, “likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents.”

These two parables underscore the seriousness of the need to save lost people. It also underscores the need for a party or rejoicing of some kind over salvation of one person. Since joy breaks out in heaven, it ought to break out here if we think like God! It also underscores why we need to make friends with people who don't think like we do. We can't save sinners unless we connect with them! When a sinner repents, it ought to bring overwhelming joy to Christians. When there is, a sinner immersed into Christ it ought to bring out many Christians filled with joy, excitement, and thrilled to be part of the rejoicing. Jesus, in two parables answers the criticism by telling them that rejoicing happens in heaven when one of them repents. Why did Jesus eat and spend time with sinners? To save them! The third parable goes even farther!

The third parable is “a certain man had two sons.” Not one but two! It is not just about the beautiful story of a sinful man coming home in true and genuine repentance, but about two sons. We have told and retold the story of the prodigal, but often forget this story is about two sons, not one! It is about the reaction of the older brother, who is more responsible, more diligent, and more reliable than the younger. He was the “good son.” Yet there is something very wrong with his thinking.

The first son (the prodigal) was very foolish, reckless, selfish, careless, and broke his father's heart. He took his inheritance from the family and made a lot of bad choices. He took on the world of parties, drunkenness, and sexual improprieties. He connected with loose women and sinful living. We often assume sinners like how they are living. The Bible says, “the way of the transgressor is hard!” We forget that this man, after living with the consequences of sin had remorse for what he had done. Many sinners do not like their

lifestyle, but Christians often like the Scribes and Pharisees fail to connect, believing the devil's lie, they won't be interested!

When the prodigal realized his error, he had a right heart of repentance. He does not blame anyone but himself. He felt the need to verbalize his sorrow and sin. He recognized that his life choices were sinning against heaven and his family. He prepared an awesome speech saying, I “am no more worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your servants.” He made no demands, took responsibility for his poor choices, and came home sorry and saddened by what he had done. That is the attitude one should have when coming back to God!

V. 20 indicates that his Dad (God) was watching for his return. He came home broken, but the father received him with compassion, hugs, and kisses. Dad ordered a party with the best animal cooked, a robe for his son, shoes for his feet, and a ring on his hand. When we come broken, coming back home to God, He receives us with forgiveness, compassion, and rejoicing! Wow! Jesus was teaching why he made friends with sinners, to save them.

The story of the second son is often that of the average Christian and certainly like the Scribes and Pharisees. When he came home from working in the fields he hears music and festivity. When he learns that his father throws a party for his selfish, thoughtless and despicable brother he is angry! He won't go into the party! His thoughts were about his own faithfulness and he did not get a party. His achievements, hard work and faithfulness were not being rewarded. Yet, his younger brother who made some of the worst choices a man could make, was being celebrated with an expensive and elaborate party of sizable proportions. His anger pour out to Dad!

Dad answers the objections of the faithful son. He said, “Son, you are ever with me, and all that I have is yours.” “It was fitting that we should make merry, and be glad; for this your brother was dead, and is alive again; and was lost, and is found.” He made it clear he was not celebrating his bad choices. He responds with, don't you get it? Your brother was **dead!** Many a sinful, rebellious son has left home only to come home in a casket. Dad understood this! **When people are lost, our Heavenly Father wants them to come home!** He reminded the faithful son, his brother, was really as good as dead. Certainly, his son was dead spiritually and could have been killed by robbers who would kill for money. Dad cares for his children even when they make bad choices. Unfortunately, brothers can think wrong! **Eating with sinners is about trying to bring them back home!** “For God so loved the world, he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Dad teaches his good son that we need to rejoice when someone who made bad choices comes home, it is a time for rejoicing! Obviously, Dad taught the blessings of faithfulness as well. He said, “All that I have is yours!” Clearly a lifetime of faithfulness is an awesome blessing, keeping one from the consequences of sin. Jesus was teaching that connecting with sinners was necessary in order to save them from certain death. God changes people!

## *WE LIVE WHAT WE BELIEVE (Part 1)*

Every parent looks back and cringes at some of the things we did and the way we did them. We must never forget that we were the best parent we could have been at that time. Learning from what we may now see as mistakes, is growth. So, what should we do with this box of mistakes we have become aware of? Should we put the lid on the box and shove it under the guest-room bed so no one else will see them? Hardly! We would never let our children get away with that. How many times did we point out that they should always learn something from a mistake? Now it's our turn.

What are we to do with knowledge and wisdom gained from experience? When Paul wrote to Titus, he was not vague. Older women are to teach the younger not to make the same mistakes that we made, both as wives and mothers (Titus 2:3-5). The notion that Paul considered experience in this light, is supported by his first letter to the church at Corinth. Here, he reminds us of events recorded in the Old Testament, pointing out that "... these things happened as examples to us, that we might not be drawn to evil as they were..." (10:6-13). This should make those of us who have already raised our children, realize that now we have a responsibility to share what we have learned with those now ready to embark upon the task.

Okay, I get it; nobody likes to be reminded that someone else knows more than they do. This brings us to another point. The Titus 2 reading imparts a bit of 'left-handed' information: because a positive statement is made, we must consider that the adverse is also true. For older women to teach the younger, these younger women must graciously accept the teaching of the older women. I know this is easier said than done, but in a nutshell, it simply means that older women must endow younger women with the knowledge and wisdom gained from raising our own children, and younger women must be grateful to partake of that which is offered to them.

My opinion must be set at this point. This is as difficult command as any given to men, for this amounts to crossing all the social red lines that the rules of the world tell us we will be ostracized for crossing. Rules like "Mind your own business" and "Don't but in" come to mind. But these rules come from the world to make us abstain from helping each other with the most important job ever to ignore the time clock.

Daughters, sisters, wives, mothers, and grandmothers: we are commanded to help each other. Let's not allow the ways of the world to put those road blocks between our children and the path marked by our Savior. It is unlikely that He would have commanded it, if we were not up to the task.

~ Faith Smalling, church of Christ, La Junta CO

## *A HARSH REALITY*

"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. For God sent his son into the world not to condemn it but that the whole world through him might be saved" John 3:16-17.

This passage of John's gospel is really encouraging and tells us of the great love of our God, to send his only begotten son to be a sacrifice for our sins. But, there were times when the Son of God himself had to be truthful even though it might hurt. Nevertheless, he had to tell the truth no matter what he felt. We are given a great example of this in the 23rd chapter of the Gospel of Matthew beginning with verse 13:

**13** "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in *yourselves*, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in. **14** Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation. **15** "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves. **16** "Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged *to perform it.*' **17** Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold? **18** And, 'Whoever swears by the altar, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gift that is on it, he is obliged *to perform it.*' **19** Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that sanctifies the gift? **20** Therefore he who swears by the altar, swears by it and by all things on it. **21** He who swears by the temple, swears by it and by Him who dwells in it. **22** And he who swears by heaven, swears by the throne of God and by Him who sits on it. **23** "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier *matters* of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. **24** Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel! **25** "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. **26** Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also. **27** "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead *men's* bones and all uncleanness. **28** Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. **29** "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, **30** and say, 'If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.' **31** "Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. **32** Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' *guilt.* **33** Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell? **34** Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: *some* of them you will kill and crucify, and *some* of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city, **35** that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. **36** Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation.

In like manner, in Mark 16:16 Jesus says he who believes and is baptized will be saved but he who believeth not shall be condemned. Harsh statements by our Lord and savior indeed but nevertheless they are true. Sometimes the truth hurts, but it also heals.

~ Ben Estes, church of Christ, Henderson TN