

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

To Alexander from Asthenes

(A Satire)

By Steven Deaton

Dear Alexander,

May the grace of our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ be with you always.

I write to you with great love and respect. Your work in the Lord is well known by me and many others, and we appreciate all you have done. I thank you for being there when my sister-in-law needed encouragement. She often mentions you and the love you manifest toward her. Our family will always be grateful.

I want to apologize for Paul's actions. I know he is a good man, but sometimes does things that bring shame upon others and himself. I recently read his letters to Timothy and noticed you were twice mentioned — in an unfavorable light. He accused you of making shipwreck of the faith and doing him harm. I find this hard to believe, knowing your past work. I have written him to let him know my disappointment in him. He seems to have a habit of alienating brethren and lost souls. He also likes to call names. I am sorry that you are one of his casualties. Maybe he will change in time.

I do not want to belabor the point, but it really bothers me about all the negative actions of the apostles and others, not just Paul. I wonder if they realize what they are doing. I'm sure you have seen their writings, as well as heard them speak on many occasions, but I hope you will bear with me as I get this off my chest.

I was shocked when I read John's first letter and he called some former brethren *“liars.”* Yes, they may be what he calls the *“antichrist,”* but it seems to me *“liar”* is a strong word. How could the *“apostle of love”* say such? I'm not sure that is an appropriate description of him anymore. Doesn't *“liar”* carry the idea of purposely deceiving others? How can John know this? He impugns the motives of many good men.

I also do not know what Peter has been thinking lately. Maybe his age is getting to him, or his old, unstable self is coming back. He described some men as *“natural brute beasts”* and returning to their own vomit. This is too blunt. He also said there were some who *“twist”* the scriptures to *“their own destruction.”* He seems awfully judgmental considering his past failings. And, how in the world can he speak favorably of Paul after what he did to him at Antioch? Anyway, do you see what I mean?

Jude is just like Peter. Peter must be telling him what to say or sending him outlines. I have often wondered if Jude is actually Peter's disciple and not the Lord's. What do you think? Anyway, I do not understand how he could be so pushy and tell brethren to *“contend”* for the faith. Paul says we are not to be contentious. Jude is also very judgmental. He calls men *“ungodly”* and *“spots in your love feasts.”* Then he said they were grumblers, complainers — talk about grumbling and complaining! I can't stand it when *“men of God”* are so hypocritical. The worst of it is that he said they *“cause divisions.”* If anything is dividing the saints it is the poor attitudes and harsh words of men like Jude, Peter, John and Paul.

Again, I am sorry for the way you have been treated — not even given an opportunity to answer Paul's charges. Hope this letter encourages you some. By the way, if you are ever through this way, bring some of your copper wares — I want to surprise my wife with a gift.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you.

Asthenes

(Asthenes is Greek for weak) – *Watchman Magazine*, August 1, 2003. ■

Do You Feel Saved?

By Wayne Greeson

Are you saved? How do you know you are saved? “I know I am saved because I feel it in my heart,” many often say. But are the feelings of your heart the proper standard to determine your salvation? We do not use this standard in other matters. No one says of his bank statement, “I know it is right because I feel it in my heart,” while they ignore to properly add and subtract from their balance. No carpenter says, “I know the board is 10 feet long because I feel it in my heart”— he checks the board with the proper standard, the measuring tape! But, when it comes to a matter far more important than bank balances and board lengths — salvation — many are willing to trust their eternal welfare to their feelings.

Can you trust the feelings of your heart to tell you whether or not you are saved? The Bible says “No!” ***“He who trusts in his own heart is a fool”*** (Prov. 28:26), for ***“the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man who walks to direct his own steps”*** (Jer. 10:23). ***“There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death”*** (Prov. 14:12). Feelings are subjective, they change from person to person and even within the same person. Truth is objective, it remains fixed and does not change, regardless of the person or the year.

The way you feel about salvation does not change God’s truth concerning it, just as the way you feel about math, does not change the truth of it. Whether or not you are saved is an objective fact, not subject to the whims of how you feel from moment to moment. So how can they know they are saved? The Scripture says, ***“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding”*** (Prov. 3:5).

You do not have to rely upon your own faulty and deceptive feelings concerning your salvation. The Lord has given ***“the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation”*** (2 Tim. 2:15). The knowledge and confidence of salvation can only come from the objective standard of God’s Word. God will judge you by His Word, not by how you feel. Jesus proclaimed, ***“the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day”*** (John 12:48). What is your salvation based upon? Many people feel in their heart they are saved because they have “simply believed” in Jesus. While salvation certainly requires faith in Jesus, faith alone does not and cannot save according to God’s Word. James wrote, ***“You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only”*** (Jas. 2:24). Other people have prayed and “asked Jesus to come into their heart” and now they feel they are saved. But nowhere does the Bible teach one must simply pray to Jesus in order to be saved. God’s Word teaches to be saved you must: hear the gospel (Rom. 10:17); believe Jesus is the Son of God (Mk. 16:16); repent of your sins (Acts 2:38); confess Jesus (Rom. 10:9; Acts 8:36-38) and be baptized for the remission of your sins (Acts 2:38; Mk. 16:16). Those who obey God’s Word do not have to guess whether or not they are saved based upon the feelings of their heart. They know they are saved because their salvation is based on the unchanging Truth of God’s Word. – *Collegvue church of Christ Bulletin*, September 30, 2018. ■

“Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock” (Matthew 7:24).

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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