

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

Bidding God Speed

By Joe R. Price

We greet people every day. Some we know, others are strangers. “How are you doing?” “How are things going?” “How’s your day?” Common greetings, yet too often spoken without a great deal of forethought or real intent behind them. We get into the habit of greeting people without taking time to really show an interest in them. All of us can do better at showing genuine, godly concern for others (Matt. 5:43-48).

The customary greeting of Bible times helped prevent complacent salutations. For example, one might wonder why Jesus told the disciples He sent out to preach to **“greet no one along the road”** (Lk. 10:4). Was Jesus forbidding friendliness? No, He was impressing upon them the urgency of their task. A salutation on the road “was made not merely by a slight gesture and a few words, but generally by embracing and kissing, a journey was retarded frequently by saluting” (*Online Bible Greek Lexicon*). Thus, Jesus was warning them to not delay, to quickly be about the work He was sending them to do (cf. 2 Kgs. 4:29).

The Bible speaks of bidding God speed to others. That is, to express one’s desire that God grant prosperity and success to another person. To bid Godspeed means to speak, affirm or extend expressions of well-being and joy to others. It is a greeting of gladness and blessing that all may go well for the recipient. It speaks of the joyful acceptance of another.

For example, Zacchaeus **“made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully”** (Lk. 19:6). Here, **“joyfully”** is translated from the same word as **“God speed”** in 2 John 11. Or again, **“And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshiped him”** (Matt. 28:9). **“Hail”** is the same word used in 2 John 11.

Sometimes brethren wonder whether or not they are bidding God speed to error. The New Testament shows us what it means to bid God speed so that we will know how and to whom we should do the same. Conversely, we will learn who is unworthy of being bid God speed.

Bid God Speed

It is right and good to bid God speed to faithful brethren in the Lord. It is good and encouraging to express one’s heartfelt desire that God prosper him in his faithful endeavors. The Bible teaches us to give such joyful, encouraging salutations to those who are faithfully serving the Lord Jesus Christ.

We should gladly bid God speed to faithful workers in the cause of Christ. It is right to assist them in their good work. 3 John 8 says that “workers for the truth” are worthy of our reception, encouragement and endorsement as they go on their way preaching and teaching the word of God. **“Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers, who have borne witness of your love before the church. If you send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God, you will do well, because they went forth for His name’s sake, taking nothing from the Gentiles. We therefore ought to receive such, that we may become fellow workers for the truth”** (3 Jn. 5-8).

By receiving and encouraging faithful brethren who teach, preach and live the gospel of Christ we thus have fellowship with them and their work. As verse 8 says, we become **“fellow-workers”** with them. Such expressions of support and encouragement show our love for the saints, for the Lord and for His truth as we **“send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God”** (vs. 6).

Jesus taught that **“He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. He**

who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward. And he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward" (Matt.10:40-42).

The Lord acknowledges and will reward the person who assists others who are doing the Lord's work. By so doing this person is showing his agreement with the gospel of Christ and those who teach and live it. Let us determine to rejoice in and express gladness for all those who live in Christ and faithfully teach His truth. Encourage a brother as he teaches a Bible class to a lost soul. Rejoice with the young Christian who is teaching the gospel to a friend at school. Hold up the hands of a gospel preacher as he proclaims the word of the cross without fear or favor. These and many more are opportunities for us to bid God speed to those doing a faithful work in the Lord (Gal. 6:10).

Do Not Bid God Speed

There is another kind of person from whom we are taught to withhold such joyful expressions of support and prosperity. Not because we are taught to be unfriendly or rude. There is no justification for such treatment of others. We are commanded to not lend our encouragement, aid and well wishes to those who do not teach the true doctrine of Christ: ***"If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him Godspeed is partaker of his evil deeds"*** (2 Jn. 10-11).

To bid God speed to one who teaches, promotes and/or lives in error is to ***"receive"*** him and his error just as surely as bidding God speed to one who teaches, promotes and lives in truth means we ***"receive"*** him and the truth he advocates (cf. Matt. 10:40-42).

We are taught to ***"have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them"*** (Eph. 5:11). Surely we agree that false teaching (which is a departure from the faith) is a work of darkness (cf. 1 Tim.4:1-3). To give our approval and support to the proclamation and proliferation of error makes us a ***"partaker"*** (fellowship, communion) in the evil deed (2 Jn. 11).

Application

Should we give our encouragement, help, support and well wishes that God will prosper a person while he teaches the sinner is saved before and without water baptism (cf. Mk. 16:15-16)? No. To do so is to have fellowship with error. Instead, we try to teach the gospel plan of salvation and are careful to not give our name, influence and support to the promotion of error.

Should we bid God speed to those who have altered the divine pattern of worship by adding mechanical instruments of music to singing (Eph. 5:19)? No. Therefore, we cannot practice this sin or encourage those who do so. We must oppose it and seek opportunities to teach the truth.

Should we give our time, energy, influence and well wishes to those who advocate unity in moral and doctrinal diversity? That is, when brethren teach we can agree to disagree on matters of the revealed faith (the gospel), may we continue to bid God speed to them? Are we not rather to ***"contend earnestly for the faith," "correcting those who are in opposition if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth"*** (Jude 3; 2 Tim. 2:25)? Yes, just as surely as we are with the faith-only teacher and the instrumental music advocate!

A choice is placed before every disciple of Christ. To whom will we give encouragement and endorsement by way of offering our aid, assistance or well wishes: the ***"workers for the truth"*** or those ***"who do not bring this doctrine"*** of Christ (3 Jn. 8; 2 Jn. 10-11)? Our choice determines whether we share in the good works of the gospel or in evil deeds of error. May our Lord strengthen each one of us to always make the right choice.— ***Fifth Street East church of Christ Bulletin***, February 17, 2002. ■

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

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