

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

“Except”

Almost every day, we are faced with certain and various exceptions. Exceptions are exclusions that must be met in order to qualify for a given thing. A basketball player must shoot the ball through the hoop in order to add points to the team’s score. The condition to scoring points is, “*except*” the ball goes through the hoop, no points are scored. We can understand this! Another illustration: “*Except*” you buy a ticket for the basketball game you cannot enter the arena to watch the game. All would agree that this means that only those who buy a ticket may enter the arena to watch the game. We can understand this too! Can we not?

In the Bible, there are numerous exceptions that are easily understood just like the examples above. Consider these passages:

Amos 3:3 - “*Can two walk together, except they be agreed?*” Two cannot walk or work together if they do not agree. There must be cooperation and agreement by both parties involved in order for there to be true unity.

Matthew 5:20 - “*For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.*” The scribes and Pharisees were “models of righteousness in their own sight and in that of the people.” Hence, Jesus sets a higher standard with the stated exception.

Matthew 18:3 - “*And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*” In a sense, the Lord’s disciples were acting like children (c.f. 1 Cor. 13:11). Jesus taught them that in order to be His disciples, they must turn from their sin of selfish pride and humble themselves as a child is humble in spirit and dependent upon their parents.

Luke 13:3 - “*I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.*” The meaning of this statement of Jesus is clear! Those who do not repent will perish spiritually (c.f. Acts 17:30).

John 3:2 - “*The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.*” Nicodemus correctly concluded that the miracles Jesus performed confirmed that God was with His son.

John 3:3 - “*...Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*” In order to enter the kingdom of heaven, one must be born again in the spiritual sense.

John 3:5 - “*Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.*” The new birth involves two elements—being born of the water and the spirit. Thus, those not born of the two elements mentioned by Jesus, cannot enter the kingdom of God!

Without a doubt, most brethren understand and agree on the force of the word “*except*” in these passages. The word “*except*” in these passages carries with it the idea off, “if and only if.” But, one other passage must be considered:

Matthew 19:9 - “*And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.*” Does not the word “*except*” in this passage have the same meaning and force as in the other passages

we have considered so far? If not, why not?

Countless dodges and excuses have been made by many of my own brethren in an attempt to avoid the force of the word **“except”** in this passage. Justification for divorce for any and every cause is made by some. Some say “we can’t know for sure” what the truth is on divorce and remarriage. One preacher I know was asked the following questions: Do you believe God’s law on marriage is universal in application to believers and unbelievers? Do you believe one put away for the cause of fornication may scripturally remarry? Do you believe repentance demands separation for those unscripturally married? Do you believe 1 Corinthians 7:15 constitutes authority for one who is deserted by an unbeliever to remarry? He responded by saying, “I don’t know whether to envy or pity those who are so sure of themselves on this subject...I don’t want to appear rude, but I won’t be specifically answering your questions.”

I am made to wonder, then, how this brother can be “so sure” on the subject of water baptism? How would he answer the question: **“What must I do to be saved?”** John 3:1-5 deals with the new birth, but the word baptism is not found in this text. Can this brother be “so sure” that being **“born of the water and the spirit”** involves water baptism? Is he “so sure” and confident that he will affirm to those of denominational persuasion that water baptism **is “for the remission of sins”** and use this passage as a proof text? Shall we “envy or pity those who are so sure of themselves” on the meaning of the word **“except”** in Amos 3:3; Matthew 5:20 and 18:3; Luke 13:3; John 3:2, 3 and 5? Yet, many seemingly can’t seem to figure it out (or maybe they don’t want to) when faced with the obvious truth of Matthew 19:9—that the only scriptural cause for the innocent mate to put away the guilty mate is for the cause of fornication! It seems strange to me that they can understand, and we can agree, on the meaning and force of the word **“except”** in all other passages, **“except”** when we come to **“except”** in Matthew 19:9! – *tgmc* ■

You Think You Have It Hard?

By Greg Gwin

As we struggle with our daily walk, it is easy to start feeling sorry for ourselves. After all, we are trying to live pure lives in the midst of a very wicked world. There are temptations and trials on every hand. And, on top of that, if we take firm stands on moral or doctrinal principles some of our own brethren will likely brand us as ‘fanatical’ or ‘extreme.’ It’s often hard to do what is right under such circumstances.

But, wait! As we read our Bibles, we see that God’s faithful people have always suffered for their convictions. The enemies of truth have consistently persecuted anyone who tried to do right. And, quite often, the strongest persecutions have come from people who claimed they were doing the will of God. Take a moment to recall how the prophets of the Old Testament were mistreated. Think about how the early Christians suffered for their faith. Recall the ultimate example—that of Jesus and how the Jewish leaders cried out to have Him brutally murdered.

Furthermore, we should take note of the fact that there are many places in the world today where people are severely persecuted for trying to serve God. In China, “the communist government has called for the eradication of the independent Christian movement...believers are arrested for holding prayer meetings, preaching and distributing Bibles.” In Sudan, those who profess Christianity are being “crucified, kidnapped and often sold into slavery...Evidence suggests that entire male populations of villages have been crucified, including boys as young as nine years old.” In Saudi Arabia, people endure “severe beatings and imprisonment for professing their faith.” (all quotes via [Washington Watch](#), a publication of Family Research Council).

Yes, it’s hard sometimes, but **“ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin”** (Heb. 12:4). **“Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the Lord thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.”** (Deut. 31:6). – *Collegue church of Christ Bulletin Articles*, December 13, 2020. ■

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

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