

THE BELLEVILLE MESSENGER

December 3

2017

AND WHEN HE CAME TO HIMSELF

This is said of the younger son who had departed from his father's house, wasted his inheritance in riotous living and experienced the shame for a Jewish boy of feeding unclean swine. He had tasted the bitter dregs of hunger and sin. In such a condition, he did what many in similar circumstances need to do today. HE CAME TO HIMSELF! Sin is an infatuation and a craze. When the blinded eyes of the soul are opened, no man is content to abide in sin; that is, in destruction. Having come to himself, he could see clearly his shameful, pitiful state and the way to do something about it. Return to his father's house in remorse and humility, saying, *"..I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants."* (Luke 15:17-19). His condition was a form of spiritual insanity. It was an improper evaluation of his blessings and stewardship. But the beautiful thing in this scenario is that he came to himself and returned before it was too late.

There are those today in the church of the Lord who need to come to themselves. They are not properly evaluating their blessings and stewardship before God! They need to see themselves in the swine fields of failure before God and return to Him in spiritual zeal before it is too late. We think of some who truly need to come to themselves and return to the better life of faithfulness in God that they once knew. WE HAVE IN MIND:

Those who shun responsibility. We are accountable to God for our talents and abilities. These are God given! Our eternal home depends upon how we respond to our responsibilities (Matthew 25:30). Some have become slothful in doing their part. They need to awaken and see just how far they are drifting from God. Yes, the work goes on, but what about our souls? Our actions may be condoned by ourselves in the haze of deception and other members may attempt to justify us, but not so of God. *"For every man shall bear his own burden."* (Galatians 6:5). We need to come to ourselves and cease thinking that God will accept us in our slothfulness and failure to do our part. What about you? Are you truly on the team? Are you doing your part? What if everyone were like you? We need to start thinking soberly. We need to come to ourselves and not continue in shunning our responsibilities.

The lukewarm and indifferent. Surely, you weren't always this way! Can't you see how you have drifted from faithfulness in God? Such evidently have become blinded to the true perspective of the life of faithfulness in Christ. Lukewarmness can sap the strength of any work. Diligence and zeal are commended in the scriptures. Lukewarmness and indifference are condemned. Christ said that the lukewarm would be spewed out of His mouth. *"I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth."* (Revelation 3:15-16). To the Laodiceans, Christ said that in their lukewarmness they were blind to their true spiritual condition. *"Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:"* (Revelation 3:17). Here were members of the Lord's church who definitely needed to come to themselves and see themselves as Christ truly saw them. In their lukewarmness and indifference toward God, they were voting to defeat the greatest work on earth. Consider the following regarding voting: (author unknown)

"Last Lord's Day, I voted. Not intentionally, not maliciously, but carelessly, and thoughtlessly, lazily and indifferently, I voted! Yes,

I voted for the church to cease assembling for worship. I voted to stop the class study. I voted to close the open Bible which has been given to me by many years of struggling and by the blood of martyrs who have died that we might have it to read, obey and be saved. I voted for the preacher to cease preaching the glorious truth of God's word. I voted for the children no longer being taught God's word in the Bible classes. I voted for the church to cease singing hymns of praise, glory and thanksgiving to the Father. I voted to cease the work of the congregation. I voted for the darkness of superstition and the degrading influence of sin, the curse of the selfish greed to once again settle their damning load on the shoulders of an already overburdened world. I voted for souls, even my own, to be damned to a devil's hell for eternity. Carelessly, lazily, indifferently, I voted! For, you see, I could have gone, but I did not. I stayed away from worship. I stayed away from Bible study. Yes, I VOTED!" The prodigal came to himself and returned to his father's house. Some in the church today need to come to themselves and return to faithfulness in the Lord. Think on these things!

✍ Bobby K. Thompson



Speaking The Truth In Love

In his letter to the Ephesians Paul said, *“But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ”* (Ephesians 4:15). Not only must we always speak the truth, but we must do so in love. Just what does this entail?

First, and foremost, it demands a love for the very source of truth. Jesus said, *“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth”* (John 17:17). This statement was a part of His prayer to the Father. When one does not love the truth he does not love God, the very source of all that is true and good.

Loving God will result in our loving the truth. Peter tells us we purify our souls in obeying the truth (1 Peter 1:21). Paul tells us that some will be lost because they did not receive the love of the truth

that they might be saved (2 Thessalonians 2:10).

Speaking the truth in love also requires us to have a love for those who need to hear and obey the truth. When we have a love for the souls of men we will present the truth to them in a loving manner. How sad that some have been turned from the truth, not because of the truth, but by the way it was presented to them. Sometimes barriers are built before one has the opportunity to teach the truth. I remember an incident that took place years ago. I was studying with a young friend and discussing some of the false practices in which the church he attended was involved. An older brother who was overhearing our discussion said, “Boy, don’t you ever read your Bible?” The young man answered in the affirmative and the older brother said, “Are you sure you didn’t get it confused with the Sears catalog?” This brother’s words destroyed any good I had hoped to accomplish with this young man. He was turned away, not by the truth, but by the way this man had spoken to him.

The same sometimes happens today. Efforts are made to encourage someone to obey the Lord and those efforts are offset by words spoken unwisely that drive them away. Speaking the truth in love is a show of spiritual maturity (Ephesians 4:12-16). May we all strive for that maturity.

✍ James Hahn

Belleville church of Christ
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Schedule of Services

Sunday Bible Study	9:30 a.m.
Sunday Morning Worship	10:30 a.m.
Sunday Evening Worship	5:00 p.m.
Wednesday Bible Study	7:00 p.m.

Evangelist

James Hahn (317) 745-1507