**Is True Righteousness in the Middle Lane?**

*by Jerry Fite*

The inspired writer of Ecclesiastes writes, *“Be not overmuch righteous; neither make thyself overwise: why shouldest thou destroy thyself? Be not overmuch wicked, neither be foolish: why shouldest thou die before thy time?” (Eccl. 7:16-17).*

The writer had seen in his life the times when righteous men would perish while living a righteous life, and the times when the wicked would prolong their life while living a wicked life (*Eccl.7:15*). While it was a reality, it seemed incongruous to God’s general rule of prospering in righteousness and forfeiting long days by engaging in wickedness (cf. *Psm. 34:12-16, Psm. 55:23, Prov. 10:27*). The writer urges one not to focus on these exceptions to the general rule and consequently think wrongly regarding righteousness and wickedness.

One is not to develop the wrong type of righteousness – “righteous overmuch.” This could have reference to a “self- righteousness” which pleases self, but is not in accordance to God’s standard of righteousness. For example, the Jews in Isaiah’s day were fasting, but doing so in connection with their “own pleasure,” not living according to God’s standard of righteousness. They then complain that God has not noticed their “righteousness” (*Isa. 58:1-9*). Such a disillusioned people are appalled and dismayed when they suffer destruction.

One is not to multiply his wickedness – *“be not overmuch wicked,”* thinking the wicked seem to escape punishment in their lawlessness. When punishment is not forthcoming, one might be enticed to follow in their steps. In the absence of God immediately intervening in judgment, the Jews in Malachi’s day were going so far to say that God delighted in the evil, and it was vain to serve God (*Malachi 2:17, 3:13-15*). We know that judgment will come on all wickedness, so why multiply wickedness and place oneself in danger of suffering the result generally inflicted upon the wicked of *“dying before thy time”?*

Some have construed this passage to teach that we should practice “moderation.” If so, are we then to guard from being “too righteous”? And then, are we to be a little wicked, but not “over- much wicked”?

God’s standard for righteousness today is the gospel of Jesus Christ (*Rom. 1:16-17*). There is no middle of the road in this standard. We are to be holy as God is holy and measure our holy lives by the stature of Christ (*I Peter 1:15, Eph. 4:13*). Walking in Jesus’ steps is the standard for us to follow (*I Peter 2:21-23*). One cannot get more holy than Jesus, but we must always strive to be like him. The “extreme” of holiness, Jesus Christ, is our standard for righteousness. Are we to find some middle ground regarding holy living? God forbid.

Being righteous before God will demand that we back off of our liberties as we strive to lead and encourage others to be saved in Christ (cf. *I Cor. 10:23-11:1, I Cor. 9,* etc.). In times of anxiety, due to persecution and conflict, we must turn to God in prayer and manifest gentleness to others (*Phil. 4:5-6*). But never can we take a middle ground regarding what God demands of us. Refusing to give “God-speed” to those who do not bring the teaching of Christ is not “extremism.” It is not being “righteous over-much.” It is the standard we must follow (*2 Jn. 9-11*). *“He that feareth God shall come forth from them all” (Eccl. 7:18).*

**The Blood of Christ**

*by Donnie V. Rader*

What does the blood of Christ mean to you? It is possible to count the blood as something unholy or common (Heb. 10:29). That is what most of the world has done. But, even some "Christians" have tried to rob the gospel of the redemption through the blood of Christ.

**Jesus Shed His Blood For Us**

1. *A sacrifice had to be offered.* Sin is an violation of the law (1 Jno. 3:4; Rom. 4:15). Law demands that a price (penalty) be paid. Else, the law is meaningless. Man could not begin to pay the price. The blood of animals was not sufficient (Heb. 10:4). The blood of the sinless Son of God was the perfect sacrifice.

2. *Jesus shed his blood for the sins of man.* Jesus said,

For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins (Matt. 26:28).

Paul said, "without the shedding of blood, there is no remission" (Heb. 9:22).

3. *Jesus shed his blood for all men.* Paul wrote,

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone (Heb. 2:9).

The same writer said that he died for all (2 Cor. 4:14-15).

The remission of sins that is offered through the blood is offered to one and all alike.

**The Blood Was Offered In Heaven**

Just as the High Priest had to enter the Most Holy Place to offer the sacrifice of animals (Heb. 9:1-7), Christ also had to rise from the dead so he could enter into heaven to offer his own blood as a sacrifice for the sin of man (Heb. 9:24-26).

This is the meaning of his being "raised for our justification" (Rom. 4:25). Had Jesus died and not rose to offer that blood, we could not be saved.

**There Is Power In The Blood**

1. *The blood of Christ can cleanse us from* ***all*** *sin.* John wrote,

But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7).

2. *When the blood cleanses us from our sins, God never remembers those sins again.*

For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more (Heb. 8:12).