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YPS

(Young Precious Seed)

is a supplement of *Precious Seed* designed for those young in faith. Its purpose is to restate timeless truths from the word of God for a new generation of Christians and to kindle a biblical approach to current issues in the world in which we live.

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ANIMAL RIGHTS - a biblical approach

by John Parkinson, N. Ireland.

Do animals have rights? In recent times this issue has been the cause of much passionate debate and political activism. The press and media frequently report on threats and violence against those who allegedly deny animals their rights. The anti-fur, anti-hunt, and vegetarian lobbies have become very powerful political forces in society. We are told that animals have equal rights with humans when it comes to sharing the resources of our planet. What should the attitude of the Christian be on this issue?

Does the Bible have anything to say on the subject? Quite a lot! In fact, the believer is duty bound by scripture to practise good animal welfare. We read in Proverbs 12. 10, 'A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast; but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel'. In other words, it is right for a man to have due regard for the life and welfare of his animal. Moses actually legislated so that it became a legal requirement to afford animals certain rights.

Animal rights under the Law of Moses

- The working animal had a right to one day of rest per week, 'Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it', Exod. 20. 8-11. God programmed His creation so that one day in seven would be a day of rest. The working animal could easily have been excluded from this privilege. But God stipulated in the fourth commandment that the cattle too were entitled to this rest-day.
- If a man saw his neighbour's animal going astray he was to return it to its owner, Deut. 22. 1-3. Further, if a man discovered his neighbour's ass or ox fallen down by the way, he was duty bound to help the animal up again, Deut. 22. 4. Thus, a man was not only to care for the welfare of his own animals, but also for the welfare of his neighbour's animals.
- It was forbidden to plough with an ox and an ass together, Deut. 22.

Animal rights – a biblical approach

10. Such an arrangement would have been grossly unfair to both animals. The smaller and weaker animal would have been at a great disadvantage, not being able to pull with the same strength as the other. The stronger animal would have had a disproportionate share of the burden. It would have been a complete mismatch. Paul applies this principle in 2 Corinthians 6. 14, warning his readers that believers should not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. Such an unequal yoke results in a far more serious and disastrous mismatch.

- It was forbidden to muzzle the mouth of the ox when it was treading out the corn, Deut. 25. 4. The animal had a right to enjoy some of the good of its own labour. Yet, it was not really animal welfare that was on Paul's mind when he stated that this was analogous to gospel preachers having the right to live off the gospel, 1 Cor. 9. 9-10.
- So far we have been thinking about the rights and welfare of working animals, but what about the beasts of the field? Did wild animals have rights under Moses? There was a gracious provision for wild animals that is often overlooked. Each seventh year the land was to have its rest, when there would be no sowing or gathering. The poor people of the land were to be allowed to eat freely, whether it was of the field, vineyard or olive orchard. But what the poor people did not eat, 'the beasts of the field shall eat', Exod. 23. 11. It is interesting to observe that when the Israelites were obeying the law of Moses, the very beasts of the field got a blessing! Equally, when Christians are living close to God, who can tell the blessings that may filter through to others?

We can see that there were important animal rights under the law of Moses. But how do such rights compare with the ideas of the modern animal rights movement?

Are animals and humans equally important?

The modern animal rights movement has a very definite anti-Christian agenda. Their philosophy is rooted in ideas borrowed from New Age, Buddhism, vegetarianism, reincarnation and evolution. The leading premise of the animal rights movement is that 'non-human animals' have an equal right with 'human animals' to share the earth. This is clearly unbiblical. The Lord Jesus made a qualitative difference between humans and animals. Having established that not a single sparrow is forgotten by God, the Lord goes on to say that people are of more value than many sparrows, Luke 12. 6-7. In terms of intrinsic worth, there is no comparison between a man and a sparrow.

We can conclude that animals and men are not equally important, but that men are of far greater value than birds or animals. Men are to have regard for the welfare of animals, but that is a very different thing to saying animals have the same rights as humans. In the creation account of Genesis, we are told that God gave man dominion over the animal world. Christians who have contact with animals ought to treat them with sensitivity and kindness. We need not fear such subjects as bio-ethics or animal welfare. The Christian should be a highly responsible steward of God's creation. We should treat all living things with the respect due to God's creatures. And of course, we should remember the Lord's own evaluation and exhortation, 'Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows', Luke 12. 7.

The modern animal rights movement has a definite anti-Christian agenda

Going to the meeting?

Michael Penfold, Bicester, England

It's meeting time. *'Let's see... keys, mobile phone, Bible. Let's go'.* If that's all the 'getting ready' you do before the opening hymn, this article is for you!

Though most believers know that assembly fellowship involves more than merely 'turning up' on time and filling a seat for an hour, truly 'getting ready' for the meeting is fast becoming a lost art. Yet the Bible outlines three obligatory pre-meeting activities.

Three words will help the memory:

1. **Preparation**
2. **Examination**
3. **Reconciliation**

For **preparation**, consider the Lord's words in Exodus 23. 15, *None shall appear before me empty.* Worshipers at the annual 'callings together' of Israel had to come with an offering. None could simply arrive and feel they had done their duty.

Are there long gaps in the breaking of bread meeting where you gather? Do the brothers who take part repeat more or less the same words each week? Do a number of them never have anything to say at all? Surely, much of this poverty is due to a lack of exercise in preparation. Were we to regularly read and meditate on God's word through the week, our hearts would automatically be full of material to present to the Father when we gather. The wise men did not pick up their gifts in the souvenir shops in Jerusalem. They brought them from the land they'd been living in. What will you be bringing this Lord's Day?

For **examination** check 1 Corinthians 11. 28, *Let a man examine himself and so*

let him eat. There's a solemnity about handling emblems that represent the body and blood of Christ. To spend the week soaking up the world's entertainment, language and company, and then to sit down and break bread without judging ourselves is to treat the Lord with contempt. How solemn, before going to the meeting, to kneel at the throne and ask the Lord to show us anything in our lives that grieves Him, and to confess it and clear it. Are you willing to respond to Paul's earnest call for regular self-examination before taking the bread and the cup?

Regarding **reconciliation** we have the Lord's words in Matt. 5. 23-24. *Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.* This man had prepared something, but he still had a way to go. Perhaps as he examined himself he remembered an angry outburst against a brother; or a hasty cruel word he'd written; or a debt he hadn't paid. He was aware that while he was outwardly professing all was well between him and his Lord, all was not well between him and his brethren.

Is there a bad feeling between you and another? Was your last conversation with someone a time when you walked away in anger or slammed down the phone in a rage? Would you be willing to apologise and make it right, even if you feel you are not entirely to blame? It's a hard price to pay for an unhindered life of worship and a clear conscience – but it's worth it. It's worth it a thousand times over.

Are you ready for the meeting?



Heroes of the Faith – Martin Luther

With hammer blows that echoed around the vast Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany, a young monk named Martin Luther nailed to the church door a document on which he had written ninety five 'theses' which he wished to debate in public. These were matters of church doctrine and practice which Luther thought were unscriptural and to which he wanted to draw attention. History shows that not only did those hammer blows disturb the peace of the church building that day, they were to disturb the peace of the whole of Christendom as it then was and to indicate that truth was at last hammering on the door of error. The year was 1517.

What was it that had forced the young monk out with hammer and nails on that fateful day? Shortly before this incident, another monk had appeared not far from Wittenberg selling something special. Tetzel, for that was his name, had made a career and fortune selling indulgences. These were pieces of paper which people could buy and which guaranteed the purchaser a reduced sentence in purgatory. Church teaching of the time

stated that the souls of believers did not go straight to heaven after death but went to a place called purgatory. How long one spent there, where unacknowledged and unrepented-of sin was purged, was different for each person. However, all suffered severely in purgatory. The sale of such indulgences was wide-spread in Luther's day. Tetzel, however, had added a flavour of his own, a magnificently money-parting inducement to those who

did not anticipate dying for a long time. His indulgences, he claimed, were special. For not only could you reduce your own future sentence in purgatory by buying one of these indulgences, you could also reduce the present sentences of those who were already dead and in torment. 'As soon as the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs', he cried. Who could pass by the opportunity to let their dead mother, father, grandparents, friends, etc; out of torment? Tetzel was on to a winner, and the money poured in.

Luther was appalled. When he first became a monk he had troubled his soul, and tortured his body, with useless attempts to atone for his sins, until one day, when studying the Bible for himself, he came across the words in Galatians 'the just shall live by faith'. Suddenly it dawned on Martin Luther that all the feeble attempts we make to justify ourselves, and to atone for our sins, are useless and pointless. A man, woman or child is saved from the penalty of their sins discovered, not by what they do (or pay) but by what they believe. Faith in the atoning work of Christ alone is sufficient for salvation. Luther came to understand that the words 'the righteousness of God' in Romans 1, which he had been taught to think meant the righteousness by which God justly punishes the sinner, did not mean anything of the kind. Instead Luther wrote, it meant 'the righteousness by which, through grace and sheer mercy, God justifies us through faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors into paradise'. Luther exulted in God's free grace. How dare this Tetzel, then, claim in the name of the church to set souls free from judgement by the mere payment of money! What false hopes this Tetzel stirred in the minds of the average man



or woman! Surely the church should know of this deceit and forbid him to raise money in this false way.

It is doubtful whether Martin Luther ever intended the nailing of these 95 objections to the church door to lead where it did: they were originally written in Latin, but others translated them into German so that ordinary people could read them. The resultant furore led eventually to Martin Luther being summoned to stand before the Diet of Wormsa in 1521. The intention was to get him to withdraw his teachings. The Diet was presided over by Charles V, the Holy Roman Emperor, and attended by some of the greatest church dignitaries of the day. Luther was on trial for his life. When Luther entered the room he found his writings laid on a table before him and he was asked to confirm they were his. When he said they were, he was told to 'recant' – to admit they were wrong. Luther asked for a night to deliberate, knowing full well that if he refused to say he had been wrong, he would in all probability be sentenced to death, and be burned alive, tied to a stake as a heretic. The following day, in a candle-lit, packed-out room, Martin Luther stood, alone, facing all the might and power of an unchallenged world-wide Roman Catholic church and the armies of the Empire. He answered the question loudly and clearly. 'Unless I am convicted by scripture and plain reason – I do not accept the authority of popes and councils for they have contradicted each other – my conscience is captive to the word of God. I cannot and I will not retract anything, for to go against conscience is neither right nor safe. Here I stand. I can do no other. So help me God.'

If the hammer blows on that church door have echoed over the centuries of time, so have those brave words of a

courageous man. Luther was rescued by friends before he was arrested for heresy. He was hidden in a castle, protected by powerful political forces. Whilst there he translated the Bible from the Latin read by church leaders only into German. This was the first time the Bible had been made available in a vernacular language and his courage led, eventually, to the translation of the Bible into English. His writings and teachings about justification by faith alone spread around the world.

There is no doubt that Luther had his faults. None of us is perfect. To many he did not go far enough in his repudiation of Roman Catholic doctrine. Other reformers followed in his footsteps and discovered even more truth from the Bible. A good start in reading more about him is the classic biography *HERE I STAND* by Roland Bainton. Luther was a man of his times, with a temperament not suited to all. Yet God used him to recover the doctrine of justification by faith alone, without which no man can be saved. He was, and is, a hero to many. We all stand in his massive shadow, and debt, today.

Suddenly it dawned on Martin Luther that all the feeble attempts we make to justify ourselves, and to atone for our sins, are useless and pointless



Obedience to Parents by Roy Hill, Bristol, England

When Paul is writing to the Colossians and to the Ephesians he is anxious to set out the responsibility of believers in their relationships inside and outside their families. Husbands and wives, masters and servants and children and parents are all offered advice and instruction. The obedience of each shows 'they are receptive to the Spirit's work of transforming them into the likeness of ... Christ', O'BRIEN. When the last of these relationships is dealt with the instruction is very clear in Ephesians chapter 6.

The word 'children' is not restricted by age though it most probably refers to those children still living at home with their parents and being 'brought up by them', see verse 4. However, the principles hold good for children of all ages, even adults with children of their own who, in showing respect to their parents, will be an example to their own offspring.

The word 'obey' is a word of total commitment and is neither hedged about nor restricted in any way. It may be translated as 'to listen attentively' and means to act on what you hear. It is

the responsibility of the children to obey in all things though one would be careful not to obey if it obviously means committing sin. Even then, discussion, negotiation resulting in resolution is better than rebellion. On occasions young people may wish for example, to be baptized but their parents object. In this case it would be prudent for the young person to

wait at least until they are perhaps 18 years of age and then, in maturity, take this biblical and necessary step. The Lord will honour such sacrifice and the young person will maintain his or her relationship with the parents, while the Lord can, should He so desire, change the parents' view of baptism and allay their fears. Most parents wish only what they perceive to be best for their children and this desire should be respected, at least during childhood.

Disobedience to parents is a characteristic of the world in which we live, see 2 Tim. 2. 3. When outright disobedience is witnessed it is somewhat embarrassing to the onlooker. Both Old and New Testaments speak against such disobedience and emphasize the pain that it brings to all involved. Salvation brings responsibilities and obedience to parents is one of them. The parents are described as 'in the Lord'. This may suggest that only obedience to believing parents is required and that a saved young person may ignore the wishes or instructions of his unsaved parents. I doubt whether that is what Paul had in mind when he wrote. Perhaps he was suggesting that yielding to parents should be done with the Lord and His work in view. Reasonable, and even unreasonable (though not sinful), instructions from unsaved parents need to be accepted in good grace and obeyed. It is good to remember that the Lord Jesus Himself, though always God and always involved in the maintaining of the universe while here on earth, was 'subject' to His parents even though Joseph was actually not His father. This may suggest that where believing children have a step-parent he or she, too, should be obeyed.

In his letters Paul gives some reasons why obedience to parents is



incumbent on all who believe: 1) it is right, Eph. 4. 1; 2) it is scriptural, v. 2; 3) it promotes happiness; 4) it offers long life; 5) it encourages discipline, v. 4; and finally 6) it pleases the Lord, Col. 3. 20. We take a brief look at these.

1) It is right

The thought here is that obedience to parents is appropriate and that headship in families should be acknowledged. The husband is not only head of the wife but also head of the family and that is divine order. It is therefore right and seemly that children obey the head and such children will be a joy to their parents and an example to others.

2) It is scriptural

Obedience to parents is spoken of in the law of the Lord. The fifth commandment is clear in its requirement that children obey parents, 'honour thy father and thy mother' involving not only obedience but respect. To obey reluctantly and in a sullen fashion is not much obedience at all. Yet this is described as the 'first commandment with promise', so one might wonder how the fifth becomes the first? Probably because it is the first commandment to which there is a promise attached and possibly because it is the first of the so-called 'horizontal' commands, i.e. those that govern behaviour towards men rather than the first four, which are towards God and said to be 'vertical'. The practice of obedience is based on God's plan and God's word to which it is our pleasure to submit.

3) It promotes happiness

The commandment goes on to say, 'that it may be well with thee'. Among the results of obedience is well-being.

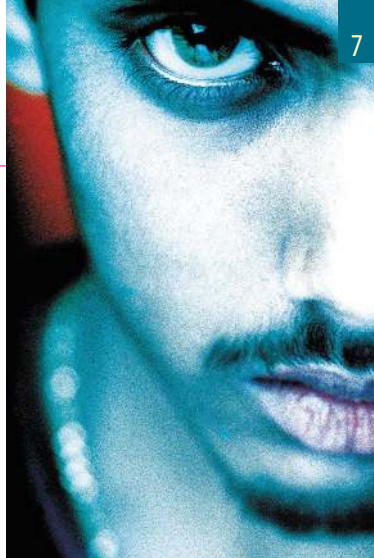
This is defined as being a state of real comfort and happiness. When we obey we experience a feeling of happiness and that encourages a healthiness of mind. This in turn, of course, puts us in a mental position where we can accomplish other tasks readily and where we can resist the overtures of Satan to disobedience, which is one of his prime methods of attack.

4) It offers long life

The second promise attached to the commandment is that 'thou mayest live long on the earth'. Obedience is in usual circumstances rewarded by God by the gift of longevity. This of course may not always be true because many good people in the Bible and in our day were taken away relatively early in life. The principle holds true, however, that long life either in time or in quality is promised to those who seek to obey this commandment.

5) It encourages discipline

An obedient child will make life easier for parents as they seek to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. This involves preparing them for life and suggests the thought of maturity. Each step of obedience is progress in the experience of making right decisions in life and encourages a self-disciplined approach for the children to all the challenges they face rather than the inconsistency of behaviour and the chaos we sometimes see in family life. 'Nurture and admonition may suggest behaviour and speech', LLOYD-JONES, so parental good



behaviour and sound speech will serve as powerful examples to children and should be the norm in families 'in the Lord'.

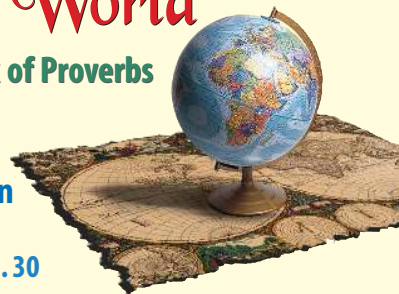
6) It pleases the Lord

Colossians 3 verse 20 says, 'Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord'. Every believer, young or old, surely seeks to please the Lord. Here is yet another way to bring pleasure to the One who has done so much for us – by being obedient to parents!



Ancient Wisdom for a Modern World

Wise words from the book of Proverbs



Favour is deceitful and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised, Proverbs 31.30

The NIV translates the first part of this proverb as, 'Charm is deceptive and beauty is fleeting'. 'Beauty is only skin-deep' may be the wisdom of the world, but it confirms what God says and is true, none-the-less. After all, there's many a man who has married for a beautiful face but found an awful woman. No matter how stunning a woman may look, 'it is better to dwell in a corner of the housetop, than with a brawling woman in a wide house', Prov. 21. 9.

God confirms one of our weaknesses as human beings when He says, 'Man looketh on the outward'. We are often and easily blinded by either the presence or the absence of physical beauty; God, however, looks on the heart.

The wisdom of this proverb should be considered by both male and female alike. God's advice to men looking for a wife is to be careful of the fleeting, outward beauty of face and figure unless that beauty is matched with an inward spiritual attractiveness that will last the test of time and may even deepen over the years. There are many deeply spiritual women around that men do not even see because they may not be physically as attractive as men want. One would think that a spiritual man would be interested in spiritual values. Sadly, that is not always the case, and Christian women can be forgiven for thinking that made-up faces, ostentatious jewellery and high fashion are important. No, no. It is the woman who fears the Lord who should be highly prized amongst God's people.

God's advice to women, too, is straightforward; cultivate a beautiful relationship with God. Spiritual beauties are more important than physical ones. Who is it who gains God's approbation? It is women who 'adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; but ... with good works', 1 Tim. 2. 9-10. The attraction God, and godly men, should look for is 'not that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold', but instead 'the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price', 1 Pet. 3. 3-4. The model wife, according to Proverbs chapter 31, is not the one who could step out of the pages of *Vogue*, but is rather the one who is faithful to her husband, cares for her children, is a wonderful home-maker, hospitable, compassionate, hard-working, an example to others, admired by all and honoured by God. Her beauty is inward, not necessarily outward. She fears God and seeks His approval more than that of men. She is the one whom you ought to aim to be, or to marry. Her value is far above that of precious stones.