



Vestry Voices

The Church Family Newsletter

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Church of Clinton

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Christ and The Church

But also you all, every one, each his wife in the same way must love as himself, and, the wife, so that she should respect the husband. *Ephesians 5:33*



Rev. Gary Kiontke



At the end of my last seminary class in Hebrew our professor, Douglas Stuart (co-author of *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, first published in 1982), gave us some advice for keeping our Biblical language skills ‘hot.’ He suggested after we do our morning Bible readings in our favorite English version to read a few verses in the original language. Since January 2001, I have taken three verses of Hebrew and five verses of Greek every morning.

In 2014, I was reading the Greek for the end of *Ephesians 5* for the second time when I noticed something unusual about the last verse. The form of the verb for the wife was not the same as the form of the clear command given to the husband. This got me to check my Greek grammar books to confirm the plain sense of the verse in Greek. To share what I learned I need to explain one word with a verb mood.

Rather than a direct command, the verb for respect (or fear) is written as: *hina* plus the subjunctive mood. As a person who loves logic, this form gets my attention. The Greek word *hina* means ‘in order that’ or ‘so that.’ In general, the subjunctive mood suggests a possibility. Often it is used as an exhortation, especially when used with ‘we’ or ‘us.’ Here are some ‘let us’ examples from the New Testament: *Romans 13:12-13; 1 Corinthians 5:8; Galatians 6:9-10; Philipians 3:15-16; Hebrews 4:9-16; 10:19-24*. But when used with *hina*, it often expresses the desired result or purpose of the clause which precedes it. This would mean the husband is to sacrificially love his wife, as Christ loves The Church, to the result that she would respect him, or for the purpose that she would respect him. This is consistent with the sense of the teaching in *Ephesians 5*, and makes it a fitting conclusion.

Too many men focus on the command for wives to submit to their husbands while ignoring the command that they must love their wives as Christ loved The Church by giving Himself over for it to sanctify and cleanse it. While we were dating, Debi told me that she would be willing to submit to a man that she trusted enough to know he would lay down his life for her.

This also excited me for what it means for The Church and Christ. But, most translation committees, as well as commentaries, say the subjunctive in this verse should be taken as a command. So I dug deeper into my higher level Greek grammar books and discovered that the most common use of the subjunctive (over half of the time) in the New Testament is to have the force of a command.

So I prayed to understand how this sentence would have been understood by the churches in Asia Minor within 100 miles of Ephesus when it was first read to them in about 60 AD. Given Paul’s great communication skills, and the guidance of The Holy Spirit, the fact that one sentence has two distinct verb forms would indicate there is at least a subtle difference in the meaning of the two verbs. The words ‘must’ and ‘should’ seem to best convey this difference. The husband (Christ) is directly commanded to love his wife (The Church) in a sacrificial manner as himself. ‘Must love’ is a good way to express a clear command to love. However, the wife (The Church) is to respect her husband in a contingent way bordering on a command. Although she will not always respect (fear) her husband (Christ), she ‘should’ respect (fear) him.

When it comes to Christ and His Church, remember Jesus said He was always doing what His Father commanded Him (*John 14:30-31; 15:9-10*). The eternal plan He had worked out with The Father and The Holy Spirit involved Him being obedient to this plan to die on (continued on page 2 ...)

Inside this issue:

<i>Christ and The Church</i>	1
<i>March Preaching Schedule</i>	2
<i>Easter Sunday</i>	2
<i>“Who Do You Have Faith In ... Forever?”</i>	3
<i>Bible Study Survey Results</i>	5
<i>A Celebration of Nancy Moody’s Life — 90 and Counting!</i>	5
<i>March 2021 Calendar of Events</i>	6



Christ and The Church (... continued from page #1)

The Cross (*Philippians 2:8*), even though it involved suffering (*Hebrews 5:7-10*). Jesus was always obedient to God (obedient to Himself). How many times do we fail to do the good we desire to do (*Romans 7:14-24*)? This verse tells us we can be fully assured that Jesus loves His Church, us. He is the Husband of His Bride who gave up His life for us (*Ephesians 5:25-27*). He obediently died so that whoever believes that His Death and Resurrection has provided forgiveness, and turns to Him in humble, dependent, obedient faith is forgiven. At the moment of forgiveness in Jesus, a person's dead spirit comes to life and The Holy Spirit comes to live in that person to teach him or her how to live in Jesus, obeying all He has commanded (*Matthew 28:18-20*). This is both the purpose and intended result. However, both in gen-

eral and with respect to our verse, we know that people do not always obey Jesus. Obedience is contingent on the person. While we should respect Him in reverent fear, we do not always do so. But, if we stay close to God through reading His Word and praying in The Holy Spirit, He will remind us of all Jesus has done for us, and how His love never changes. This should be enough for us to surrender to Him in worship, which is the ultimate purpose of The Cross.

For Christians who might be getting discouraged because they cannot always live up to what they desire to do for Jesus, it is comforting to know that, while we should respect and fear Him, because He is always faithful and obedient, if we ask Him, He will help us to do what we should.

March Preaching Schedule

Sunday	Readings	Theme
March 7 Lent 3	Deuteronomy 28:15-29	Idolatry brings the curse of darkness from God
March 14 Lent 4	Ephesians 5:3-17	All who receive light from God must live in light
March 21 Lent 5	Isaiah 59:1-18	Yahweh stirs Himself up to save His people trapped in darkness
March 28 Palm Sunday	Isaiah 60	Yahweh promises to bring light to His people in deep darkness

Easter Sunday

As we work our way through Lent to prepare for Easter (Resurrection Sunday) on April 4, we have been exploring the theme of darkness. Specifically, we are seeking to learn how God works in darkness to reveal His Light and how He is present to us, even in the darkest times. And we are also being challenged to realize that we can bring darkness on ourselves when we do not keep God first and foremost in our lives.

The Gospels and New Testament have much to say about Jesus' resurrection and what it means to people. The noun (*anastasis*) appears 42 times, 15 times in The Gospels. There are also variations on the phrase 'rise (*anistaymi*) from the dead.'

After reviewing many passages, *Acts 26:19-29* is our Easter text this year. This is Paul's testimony before King Agrippa before he was sent to Rome to be tried by Caesar. The key point Paul makes is that his preaching agrees with

Moses and the prophets: The Messiah would suffer and, by His resurrection from the dead, would be the first to proclaim light to both the people (Jews) and the nations (*verses 22-23*).

The darkness of racial injustice in our nation and the deadly worldwide virus we have been dealing with for a year has made us long for light. The only hope when darkness and death threaten to overwhelm us is The Truth that Jesus Himself IS Light and Life. And, all who are IN Him by turning from self and sin to receive Him in humble obedient faith, will receive His Light and Resurrected Life.

If you are not able to worship with us in person on April 4, please join us virtually.

Instructions on how to worship virtually will be posted on our website: fccclintonma.org when we start live-streaming. Click on 'Blog Postings' on the left hand side, then 'FCC Clinton News.' Our goal is to start virtual worship on or before Easter.



“Who Do You Have Faith In ... Forever?”

By Petros

Imagine that God, at this moment, makes His presence known to you. He calls you by your name. Just as He called Abraham. In the scenarios below, applying what the Bible says about God and Abraham should put everyone's mind at ease unless your understanding prevents having faith in God's love for his creation.

1. Would you be Adam, who replied, “I ran and hid because I was afraid ...” *“the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision, saying, “Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield to you ...”* Genesis 15:1
2. Would you be Abraham, who replies, “Here I am, Lord.” *“By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, ... indeed I will greatly bless you, ...”* Genesis 22:15-17
3. Would you behave the same as the crowd that is holding onto the last presidency? *“Go forth from your country, And from your relatives ... To the land which I will show you; ... And I will make you a great nation, And I will bless you, ... And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”* Genesis 12:1-3

How do you imagine your feelings would be when God comes -- calling you by name? Abraham had a one on one relationship with God the Almighty. *“I ... am your very great reward ... Abram believed the LORD, and it was credited to him as righteousness. (Genesis 15:1-6.)* God made a promise to Abraham that he and all of his descendants would always be considered righteous, before God. God keeps the gift of righteousness upon Abraham despite the many times he fails to do as God says. Kings would fear Abraham because they could see the hand of God on his life. *“Then Abram fell to the ground as God continued speaking to him. “Look, I’ve made a covenant with you ... I’ll make you the father of many nations ... I’m establishing my covenant between me and you, and with your descendants who come after you, generation after generation, as an eternal covenant, to be your God and your descendants’ God after you.”* (Genesis 17:3-7.) God's grace and mercy, as descendants of Abraham, allows us to remain righteous in God's judgment. Just as close as Abraham was to God, Abraham (repeatedly) could and would disobey God. Our belief in God, our faith in the Almighty God that Abraham would answer, “Here, I am,” is why God loves us.

Our belief in God allows us to understand and feel the sacrifice and love He offers us (His Kingdom on earth!). *“In those days Jesus came ... and was baptized by John in the*

Jordan ... and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. Then a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love. I am pleased with you!” Jesus ... said, “The time is now! The kingdom of God is near! Repent, and keep believing the gospel!” (Mark 1:9-14.) Our belief in God allows us a haven where darkness is illuminated. The key to the Kingdom of God which “*is near*” is to look to God (turn from our sin) and obey God's word. The Holy Bible is the written word of God. *“But seek (aim at and strive after) first of all His kingdom and His righteousness (His way of doing and being right), and then all these things taken together will be given you besides.”* (Matthew 6:33, AMP.) I think we are onto something. Karen Lafferty (1972) wrote in her song, “Seek Ye First,” *“Seek ye first the kingdom of God; And His righteousness, And all these things shall be added unto you. Allelu, alleluia.”*

The case is made that faith in God will guarantee God's righteousness. Seeking the Kingdom of God will bring us into all and more. So in our world, today, people of all colors and beliefs are all descendants of Father Abraham. Which makes us all not only family, “*but (makes you) a great nation with God's blessing ... And the one who curses you ...*” will be of darkness and deceit -- not part of the Family of God ... darkness will be cursed because it does not belong in the family of God. And, “*... all the families of the earth will be blessed.*” True faith is: God is the Creator of All, He is the One and Only; the Beginning and the End; God is the Truth.

In closing, I have a weight on my heart seeing what is going on in our country. Lost is the love for our neighbor. Our country's forefathers, who prayed and sought God's blessing, drafted a Constitution with intent that truth and justice shall prevail. Now we have interpretations and amendments on the core principles; ... was there even a motion to seek God's direction? Pretty sure, “Thou shalt not kill” still stands in the Book. Groups of people are adopting views and hearsay as gospel truth. Mob mentality is blinding people. God and country is forgotten and more conspiracy formulating and plans of counter-attack are gaining loyalist. I attempted to gently persuade the reader to seek the path God has for each and avoid the pitfall in following the (sometimes) follies and agendas of man. The value in God-granted righteousness, through the generations that we are part of, is not being broadcast as good news. It is crucial for everyone to go before God to seek His grace and mercy. Better to practice now and often, before standing alone before the Judgment of God, hoping to hear, “My good and faithful servant ...”

(continued on page 4 ...)

“Who Do You Have Faith In ... Forever” (... continued from page #3)

So in our world, as individuals, we need to call upon the Lord, all day and every day, as living in the Kingdom of God. It is by the power of our Lord and Savior that will bring us into eternity. Getting caught up with man's follies is letting the darkness in that blinds us from seeing God's path for us. Individually, we will stand in judgment before God. Faithfulness to a group opposing God's Truth will not justify eternity with God. Now more than ever is the time to go before God. The Truth shall set you free. Adolf Hitler was welcomed to join the German Workers' Party. When Hitler was appointed leader, his personal agenda created the Nazi Party. Hitler's faithful followers were convinced they could establish a New Order by elimination of six million Jews from Germany and started WWII. Certainly, I am not hinting to any likeness from history to today. Just pointing out that following a man is emotional and following God is a discipline. One has a guarantee it will be done only if God allows it, and the other comes with a guarantee for an eternal life.

It has been close to twenty years since a good biker friend told me about his motorcycle ministry. He was the President of “The Seed of Abraham,” Lowell, MA Chapter. He said to me, “... you know the story of Abraham being the Father of All nations?” And as descendants, or “seeds,” we are called to preach the good news to fellow bikers. I felt in my heart there was more to Abraham being the Father of All than I was willing to admit to not knowing. At the time, my friend was having the quality time with God and given the spiritual ears to hear the Word of God. He has gone home, but when our paths cross, most likely on our HD rides, aka Heavenly Divine versions of Harley Davidson motorcycles, we will rejoice and brotherly hug ... and I will share with him that at the time he was pleading his case of being a Seed, I had no idea of God's plan to make me righteous. It took me a couple years, Dick, but I think by the story I just presented, you will agree I have put in the time before God. I have learned to discipline myself, to have quality time and prayer with God. I have been given spiritual ears to hear God and understand His Word, and the truth has set me free. And I'm learning there is so much more of God and His ways to love and save us from eternal separation from eternity with God. Also, there isn't enough time in my life to learn of the Kingdom of God before it evolves beyond a spiritual world of blessed reassurance and peace.

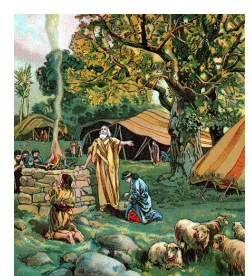
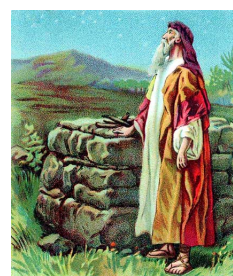


A question: Has your life significantly changed by the last three Presidential terms?

My answer: At my level or pecking order in society, nothing of significance has changed in my life due to whoever was President. When Obama saved the US auto makers, I didn't need to buy a new car. When Trump made me nervous with his personality as one of the world's most powerful people -- no bombs hit near my backyard. And I can't remember being involved with politics before Obama. From the survey I based my question on, most peoples' lives were not impacted by the last three Presidents. So, all the concerns and efforts are for naught. However, I am thankful that Biden has picked an experienced cabinet to advise him and those concerned to make the right decisions. And will pray to that cause with the leading of God.

Another question: Who Do You Have Faith In? Man's Ideals or Man of righteousness.

My answer: My answer is in the article. Contemplate immediately. Both come with a guarantee for life by God. Forever is a long time.



Bible Study Survey Results ***By Sally Camara***

Nine surveys have been returned so far. Here are the results.

Choosing a time:

Three (3) people selected Saturday afternoon as their best time, three (3) Wednesday night, two (2) Saturday morning and one (1) Monday night. Several people indicated as a second option, that any evening would be OK.

Five (5) people wanted to meet every week, three (3) every other week, and one (1) either.

Choosing a place:

Six (6) people chose "in person" and three (3) hybrid (*zoom or in person*).

Choosing a topic:

This was very scattered. Some people numbered their preference, while others checked off the ones they were interested in without indicating preference.

Four (4) people chose The Life of Christ, three (3) The apostle Paul; End Time Prophecy and Angels got the least interest.

There were several suggestions including: Hebrews, Job, The Four Gospels, The Prophets from Ezra to Nehemiah, The Church and the Racial Divide, Psalms and Proverbs, Genesis, The Kingdom of God.

As you can see, the interests are all over the place. Pray that the Lord will lead us, and that people will be flexible. It seems most important that we study together — partly for the fellowship aspect, but mostly to motivate us to dig into God's Word deeper.

Thanks to all who are participating!

A Celebration of Nancy Moody's Life — 90 and Counting!



Led by a fire truck and police from Clinton, a parade of festively decorated cars drove by Nancy Moody's house, in celebration of her 90th birthday, on Saturday February 20th. The parade started from Central Park, at 1:00 PM, with each car stopping on the road, briefly, to wish Nancy a "Happy Birthday!", with proper social distancing, of course! Later in the afternoon, a Zoom birthday celebration was held for her.


This celebration was organized by Nancy's granddaughters, Jen and Becky. And best of all, it was a complete surprise to Nancy — even with the activity of a tent being set up right outside of her house!

Nancy, a long-time member of FCC Clinton, has been a very active participant in various church roles and functions, such as Church Secretary, Clerk, Sunday School Teacher, Women's Fellowship, Shoe Box Ministry, and countless dinners and coffee hours.

Thank you, Nancy, for your dedication and service throughout the years!!



MARCH 2021

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1	2	3	4 (**)	5	6
7 Communion Sunday & Third Sunday of Lent (Note #1)	8	9	10	11 (**)	12	13
14 Fourth Sunday of Lent (Note #2) 	15	16	17	18 (**)	19	20
21 Communion Sunday & Fifth Sunday of Lent (Note #3)	22	23	24	25 (**)	26	27
28 Palm Sunday (Note #4)	29	30	31			

Calendar Notes:

- #1) 3/07 — Communion Sunday and Third Sunday of Lent.
- #2) 3/14 — Fourth Sunday of Lent.
- #3) 3/21 — Communion Sunday and Fifth Sunday of Lent.
- #4) 3/28 — Palm Sunday.
- (**) Thursday afternoon prayer: **3:00 PM** (in FCC Parlor).



Daylight Savings Time begins on Sunday, March 14th -- please don't forget to "Spring Ahead!"

