



FAMILY LIFE BAPTIST CHURCH

“From a “C” to an “A” Christian, Part 1”

January 8th, 2011

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Informed. Insightful. Intelligent.



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From a “C” to an “A” Christian, Part 1

Numbers 20:10–11:

10 And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock; and he said to them, “Hear now, you rebels! Must we bring water for you out of this rock?”

11 Then Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank.

Thank you for listening and thinking with me as we study God’s Word to obtain the mind of Christ, meaning, to have the Bible illuminated in our minds so we can clearly understand the principles that Jesus taught and base our daily personal decisions on those principles.

We come to Church because we want to be obedient to the Bible, which is the doctrine of Jesus Christ, in an informed, insightful and intelligent manner.

Our takeaway point in this series on Improving our Christian Walk comes from **Philippians 2:14**, which tells us to:

14 Do all things without complaining and disputing,

15 that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.

The topic for our new series comes from my wife, who asked me if we could investigate how those of us that consider ourselves “good Christians”, can improve our Christianity. We “good Christians” have saving faith in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, come to church on a regular basis, do our best to avoid public sin, read our Bibles and consider that which the Lord tells us to do before we make decisions that which we perceive to be “spiritual” in nature.

What more can we do to participate in the Kingdom of God?

In this first sermon on this topic, I decided to spotlight the failure of a Biblical character that falls into the “good” category, a man who was in leadership in the Lord’s earthly organization, but whose negative reaction to provocation caused him to lose his earthly position in the Lord’s government.

It seems to me that, while our primary level of growth in Christianity is reflected by our ability to avoid sinfulness,^[1] our Christianity maturity is reflected in our reaction to provocation by our fellow man. Paul, the intellectual leader of the first century Christian church tells us, in **1Corinthians 4:12–13**:

12 Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure;

13 being defamed, we entreat.



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As Christians, we are all aware of the life of Jesus Christ, who walked the streets of Palestine for three and a half years doing nothing but good for every man with whom He came into contact. Jesus' benevolence notwithstanding, Jesus Christ found Himself the target of the wrath of the Jewish religious leadership of the day.

While Jesus had the demonstrated power to decimate His opponents, Jesus chose to not use His power to react to their provocation, because Jesus Christ had a greater purpose in mind than to get even with those that were tormenting Him. In **Matthew 26:52–54**:

52 But Jesus said to [Peter], “Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword.

53 Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?

54 How then could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen thus?”

My conclusion from the Scripture is that the key to being a more mature Christian than one that simply follows the “negative” commandments, meaning the “Thou shalt nots”, is to recognize, as did Jesus Christ, that we have a greater purpose on earth than to simply obtain personal emotional satisfaction.

^[2] We develop Christian maturity by deciding to take to heart the fact that our job here is to represent the Lord, especially to those that provoke us, and decide to exercise the restraint required to do so. Jesus specified that our focus ought be the will of God rather than our own, in the model prayer, in **Matthew 6:10**:

10 Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

So, while keeping the “negative” commandments is an admirable goal, participating in the Kingdom of God requires more than avoiding those things that we ought not do. Participating in the Kingdom of God mean that we should actively do those things that Jesus did, especially in His sacrifice for us.

Now, the protagonist of our text for today was a man that was brought into this world specifically for the purpose of leading the children of Israel out of Egypt into the Promised Land. Moses was an anomaly when he was born, a male Hebrew child that survived infancy during the persecution of Hebrew boy babies by the Pharaoh in Egypt. **Exodus 1:8, 15–18, 22** tells us:

8 Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph.

15 Then the king of Egypt spoke to the Hebrew midwives, of whom the name of one was Shiphrah and the name of the other Puah;

16 and he said, “When you do the duties of a midwife for the Hebrew women, and see them on the birthstools, if it is a son, then you shall kill him; but if it is a daughter, then she shall live.”

17 But the midwives feared God, and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the male children alive.



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18 So the king of Egypt called for the midwives and said to them, “Why have you done this thing, and saved the male children alive?”

22 So Pharaoh commanded all his people, saying, “Every son who is born you shall cast into the river, and every daughter you shall save alive.”

Neither abortion nor infanticide are 20th century concepts. Killing helpless unborn or newborn babies is a sin that has been around for a long time. But Moses' mother was shrewd enough to save Moses' life while complying with the letter of the Pharaoh's command. She cast Moses into the river inside of a little boat that she built for the purpose, and floated him down to the Pharaoh's daughter, who took pity on the crying Moses and decided to raise him as her own.

At his birth, God predestined this child to be the leader of the Hebrews 80 years later. Moses was not just saved from death, but was also given the best education possible in the house of the Pharaoh. Although having been trained as an Egyptian prince, Moses maintained his allegiance to the Hebrews, because when the Pharaoh's daughter found Moses on the water, she hired Moses' Hebrew birth mother to be his wet nurse.

Moses was raised by his birth mother to be a Hebrew until she turned Moses over to the Pharaoh's daughter. As an adult, even after receiving his Egyptian education, Moses never lost his connection to his slave roots. **Exodus 2:11–12** tells us:

11 Now it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out to his brethren and looked at their burdens. And he saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren.

12 So he looked this way and that way, and when he saw no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.

Moses considered the Hebrew being beaten his brother and decided to avenge him. Moses didn't kill the Egyptian in a fit of passion, but in a cold, calculated way designed to avoid the attention and wrath of the Pharaoh. The Scripture goes on to say, in **Exodus 2:13–15**

13 And when he went out the second day, behold, two Hebrew men were fighting, and he said to the one who did the wrong, “Why are you striking your companion?”

14 Then he said, “Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you intend to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?” So Moses feared and said, “Surely this thing is known!”

15 When Pharaoh heard of this matter, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh and dwelt in the land of Midian; and he sat down by a well.

After 40 years of superb training as an Egyptian prince, Moses fled Egypt. The Bible tells us that Moses met and married the daughter of the priest of Midian. Moses then worked as a shepherd in Midian for 40 years, during which



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time he developed the personality trait of meekness that the Lord requires in his leaders. Eighty years after God oversaw Moses' birth, childhood and adult development, Moses was prepared to bring God's ultimate plan for the liberation of Israel into fruition.

The Bible records that Moses successfully completed the Lord's liberation plan and led the children of Israel out of Egypt, and then began the task for which he prepared all those years. Moses' experiences with the Lord in Egypt and Midian gave Moses wisdom, discernment and meekness, which the Lord requires of any man that he chooses to use. Moses' job was defined in **Exodus 18:13–16**:

13 And so it was, on the next day, that Moses sat to judge the people; and the people stood before Moses from morning until evening.

14 So when Moses' father-in-law saw all that he did for the people, he said, "What is this thing that you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit, and all the people stand before you from morning until evening?"

15 And Moses said to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me to inquire of God.

16 When they have a difficulty, they come to me, and I judge between one and another; and I make known the statutes of God and His laws."

Moses was the lawgiver, not just because he brought down the tablets containing the Ten Commandments from the mountain, but Moses was also the one Israelite who had not been a slave, who was raised in the King's house, and who learned the principles of government. While the other Israelites were building pyramids, Moses was studying the law.

Moses was the earthly leader of the nation of Israel, because he had the experience and the training. Even so, every man who is in authority is also under authority, which is why meekness is important for leadership. ^[3] Without meekness, we tend to forget that even as we lead, we have to be in submission to the higher authorities. All authority is simply delegated authority, and if we choose to misuse our authority, we will lose it.

Meekness is the one emotion is most likely to help us remember our subordinate status and use our authority well.

There is an emotion that is the opposite of meekness, and as meek as he was, Moses forgot his position and exercised that emotion. Let us examine the episode that our text relates to reveal that emotion.

Moses led the Israelites as they traveled through a wilderness on their way to the Promised Land. There was no food or water available in the wilderness, as that part of the wilderness was a desert. There were approximately three million Israelites in the multitude, and a group that size required quite a food and water supply.



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The Lord supplied the food every morning. The Israelites awoke to find manna, a breadlike substance, on the ground like dew when they arose. Water, however, was a different problem. **Numbers 20:2–5** records:

2 Now there was no water for the congregation; so they gathered together against Moses and Aaron.

3 And the people contended with Moses and spoke, saying: “If only we had died when our brethren died before the LORD!

4 Why have you brought up the assembly of the LORD into this wilderness, that we and our animals should die here?

5 And why have you made us come up out of Egypt, to bring us to this evil place? It is not a place of grain or figs or vines or pomegranates; nor is there any water to drink.”

Neither Moses nor his brother Aaron had a water supply sufficient for three million people. The only logical thing for Moses and Aaron to do was to go to see the one in charge of food and water, which was the Lord. **Numbers 20:6–8** records:

6 So Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly to the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and they fell on their faces. And the glory of the LORD appeared to them.

7 Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

8 “Take the rod; you and your brother Aaron gather the congregation together. Speak to the rock before their eyes, and it will yield its water; thus you shall bring water for them out of the rock, and give drink to the congregation and their animals.”

The Lord instructed Moses to take the rod in order to remind the Israelites that God Himself was leading Moses and Aaron. **Exodus 4:1–5** gives the history of the rod:

1 Then Moses answered and said [to the Lord], “But suppose they will not believe me or listen to my voice; suppose they say, ‘The LORD has not appeared to you.’ ”

2 So the LORD said to him, “What is that in your hand?” He said, “A rod.”

3 And He said, “Cast it on the ground.” So he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from it.

4 Then the LORD said to Moses, “Reach out your hand and take it by the tail” (and he reached out his hand and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand),

5 “that they may believe that the LORD God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you.”

From the time of Moses’ call to service, the rod had been a sign to the Israelites that Moses was actually being led by the Lord. The Lord sent Moses to demonstrate to the complaining Israelites that the Lord was still providing for them even as they wandered in the Wilderness. Unfortunately, Moses was so



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exasperated by the Israelites that he did not meekly speak to the rock as the Lord commanded, but took a different tack. **Numbers 20:9–11** records:

9 So Moses took the rod from before the LORD as He commanded him.

10 And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock; and he said to them, “Hear now, you rebels! Must we bring water for you out of this rock?”

11 Then Moses lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came out abundantly, and the congregation and their animals drank.

I’m sure that you can see the problem. The Lord did not tell Moses to speak to the Israelites, but rather, to speak to the rock. ^[4] Moses disobeyed the Lord, calling the Israelites “rebels” and striking the rock. In his anger, Moses rebelled against the Lord, committing the sin of which he accused the Israelites.

^[5] Anger is the emotion that takes away our meekness.

If we want to improve our decision making and increase our participation in the Kingdom of God, we have to control our propensity for anger, even, or especially, in situations in which we are provoked. Anyone can remain calm when they are not being tempted to show anger, but the real test of maturity is the ability to be calm and obedient to the word of God in the face of being provoked. **Proverbs 14:29** tells us:

29 He who is slow to wrath has great understanding, but he who is impulsive exalts folly.

Proverbs 19:11 says:

11 The discretion of a man makes him slow to anger, and his glory is to overlook a transgression.

Ecclesiastes 7:9 records:

9 Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry, for anger rests in the bosom of fools.

As we have just read, the Bible makes it clear that anger is a source of an awful lot of foolishness and trouble. Even with all of Moses’ education, preparation and experience, his anger at the immaturity of the Israelites caused him to lose his job. **Numbers 20:12** records:

12 Then the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, “Because you did not believe Me, to hallow Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them.”

Moses could make the argument that he had a reason to be angry, but his argument would not be convincing to God. God tells us to not indulge our anger even if we consider our anger to be justified, because **Romans 3:23** tells us:

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Regardless of that which others have done to provoke us to an angry sin, we know that we have provoked God. Ultimately, God’s reaction toward us is not anger or sin, but, as **John 3:16–17** tells us:



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16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

Jesus Christ is the paradigm for the treatment of those that sin. ^[7] Rather than anger, Jesus responded with love, giving Himself for the salvation of sinners.

And we must each always recognize that, although ^[8] we may think that we are good Christians, we are actually saved sinners that need to vigilantly guard against our propensity to allow our anger to become sin. If we do not, we will find ourselves falling into the false feeling of confidence that that tricked Moses. Paul warns us, in **Romans 12:3**:

3 For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.

Paul continues, in **Romans 12:14–21**:

14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.

15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.

16 Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.

17 Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men.

18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

19 Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord.

20 Therefore “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.”

21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Developing the conclusion that we are “good Christians”, causes us to tend to develop either disdain or anger for those whom we consider to not be “good Christians”, even as Moses showed his disdain for his fellow Israelites by calling them “rebels”. We have to be vigilant to be neither disdainful of nor angry with one another in order to overcome evil with good.

Our model is Jesus Christ, the sinless son of God, who was unjustly accused of blasphemy by the Jewish leadership, and then was turned over to cowardly Roman leadership that could not find any fault in Him, but still sentenced Him to execution, knowing that He was innocent, simply to satisfy His enemies.

The Roman executioners took eight in Roman roofing nails with square sides, and drove those nailed through a little hollow space in Jesus’ wrist called the place of Destot, through which all the nerves going to the hands pass. The pain of this torture was excruciating, and Jesus felt compelled to say a prayer.



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Now, I'm not going to tell that for which I would have prayed, but listen to that for which Jesus prayed. In **Luke 23:34**:

34 Then Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."

That is the paradigm. ^[9] Jesus prayed for forgiveness for those that were killing Him.

If Jesus can forgive even those that unjustly sentenced Him to death and then carried out the sentence, how can we call ourselves good Christians when we hold a grudge against someone that does something to us that does not kill us, and does not even make us sick?

Jesus Christ died. He gave His life on the Cross so that our sins can be forgiven. Christianity is not just being obedient to the negative commandments given in the Old Testament, but obeying the positive commandment given to us by the example of Jesus, who told us, in **John 13:34–35**:

34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

And Jesus Christ loved us so much that He did not count our faults, but sacrificed Himself so that we do not have to worry about our many faults. Jesus Christ has made the way to forgive our sins so that we do not have to concentrate on the minutia of the law, but rather can concentrate on loving one another, as Jesus has loved us.

The first thing that we can do to improve our Christianity is to eschew anger. Paul tells us, in

Colossians 3:8, 12-13:

8 But now you yourselves are to put off all these: ^[10] anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth.

12 Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;

13 bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.

So, let us improve our Christian walk by bearing with and forgiving one another, even as Christ has forgiven us.

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Questions

1. What does our reaction to provocation by our fellow man reflect?
2. What is the primary job that the Lord has given us here on earth to in grow our Christian maturity?
3. What do we tend to forget when we lack meekness?
4. What did Moses do to disobey God?
5. What is the emotion that takes away meekness?
6. What is the real test of Christian maturity?
7. Why is anger the wrong response regardless of that which others have done to provoke us?
8. What makes us show disdain and anger towards one another?
9. For what did Jesus pray on the Cross?
10. To improve our Christianity, what does Paul tell us to “put off?”



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Answers:

1. Our level of Christian Maturity.
2. We must represent the Lord, especially to those that provoke us, by exercising restraint.
3. Even as we lead, we must be in submission to the higher authorities.
4. Rather than following God's instruction to speak to the Rock to receive water, Moses called the Israelites "rebels" and struck the Rock.
5. Anger.
6. The ability to be calm and obedient to the Word of God in the face of being provoked.
7. God's response to our sinfulness was to lovingly give His Son to save us. And we should emulate God's example.
8. Thinking that we are "good" Christians and forgetting that we are sinners.
9. That God would forgive those that were killing Him.
10. Anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language.

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