

For with You is the fountain of life; in Your light we see light.

Psalm 36:9

the LifeWord

with Michael Green



June 5, 2009

Dear Friend:

KUMBAYA KIBITZERS

Brother Paul, in his closing words to the Romans, delivered some remarkable words that probably wouldn't fly in today's church world. In a four verse burst, he slams head on with the problem of those, from their church group, who had proven to be divisive and destructive in nature. In the 16th chapter, verses 17-20, he shells down the corn, *"mark them...avoid them"*.

How unloving, mean and unforgiving can you get? I can just hear the saccharine, drippy response now, *"Oh no, you've got it all wrong. After all, we just love you!"* An overflowing cup of Splenda, Sweet and Low and some Louisiana Domino Sugar mixed in together ain't never been so sweet.

Perhaps this marking and avoiding sounds a bit unloving and closed minded but God's man was speaking under the Anointing and the wisdom of past experience. These Pharisaical parasites had been the rock in his sandal since he got up off of that dusty Damascus Road but this guy, who gave us the bulk of the New Testament, was right on the money.

This horde had specialized in using their influence for control, enrichment and the obliteration anyone that didn't bow to the agenda. Paul had enough scars and *"Get Out Of Jail"* cards in his wallet to prove it.

Notice he is not mean spirited or cruel, just measured and mature.

On many levels, this mark and avoid mindset can mean the difference between success and failure, the realizing your dreams or ending up in life's ditch, or it can be as serious as life and death. We tell our kids to do this regarding the bad kids who would like to introduce them to addictive things. We practice the concept as we watch where we go, where we drive, where we park and the being alert to all kinds of potential danger.

One key concept, parallel in our natural and spiritual world, if we stay in the *"well lit"* areas, our chances to stay safe go way up in a dramatic, provable way. Think about it. Hang with those who have Light on the inside, you're supposed to know it when you see it. There should also be some warmth in there, too. Bottom line, stay where the Light is.

David, in his classic insightful rules of success and blessing, is quite clear but not warm and fuzzy. *"Blessed* (Read happy) *is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly* (No Light here), *nor stands in the path of sinners* (Not blocking the way of, but actually right alongside of), *nor sits in the seat of the scornful.* (Scornful - to reject with extreme derision, haughty, overbearing, judgmental)" Psalm 1.

We must gravitate to the Light and to the people who will live in that Light and love it. The big problem is that many of God's good folk can't even tell the difference.

Recently, thousands of sincere seeking people made the pilgrimage to a Southeastern state to witness the latest *"move"*. From the start, it was dramatic and exciting in nature but draped in a seemingly intentional, in your face, eccentricity. The *"look how big the crowds are, it must be God"* current washed all of us up in the euphoric thrill of revival. Yeah, it was different but we must not be judgmental, God was moving again.

Although it was not cosmetically, structurally and *"demeanor wise"* to my personal taste, I needed to make sure my spirit was right and that my reservations were based in the Word and Holy Spirit discernment and not a personal prejudicial opinion. Folks got blessed and I was seeing some friends that I knew fairly well who had jumped in with both feet. I was feeling the pressure to get in on the wave. I certainly didn't want to *"miss God"*.

After one long TV session, I told Linda (and no one else) my feelings and then decided to keep my mouth shut. What I told her that day was basically what actually happened and what the sad fallout would be.

On this side of the mess, it seems that the evaluation switches of the *"leaders"* had been turned off. All the while, it was walking like a duck, quacking like a duck but was called a dove. The mark and avoid thing was ignored;

families have been destroyed and thousands are dejected and disillusioned.

If we are going to see God's best, we need to get this concept down. Paul continues in verse 19, *"...I want you to be wise in what is good and simple concerning evil"*. At this point, we might have to actually practice it and this is when the going can get real tough. When you make your stand, expect a vindictive sewer of derision and isolation to belch back your way. However, if we do stand strong, this Word assures us that the God of Peace will show Himself in our lives and the Grace of the Lord Jesus will be upon us. That is a good trade.

After having faced an array of allowed Absalom antics, we certainly can say that faithful God will make good on that promise to sustain you, encourage you and then He will bring folks into your path that will bring life and light. Just keep the Word handy, it's not called the guide, the lamp and the comfort for nothing. Read it!

Mark and avoid in order to experience God's peace, grace and blessing on our lives? It sounds like a strange contradiction because it is not the loving Kumbaya moment demanded by the clueless, regardless of the price they have to pay. But, it is the Word of Life for all those who will walk in it.

We should always keep our heart in a forgiveness mode but we are in no way obligated to submit ourselves to the repetitively petty or scornful. Sometimes people stay in those traps because they are afraid of being alone or left out of the group. Some hang around because they know what is said about those who do not surrender and they sure don't want the stinging ridicule.

Time is too short for abusive actions disguised as submission and fellowship; I am not constrained to sit at the tables of such. Furthermore, we are not duty bound to be the vulnerable receptacles for verbal lpeccac spews and fake air kisses from the Peanut Gallery. It is a new day. It is a God Day!

As for you dear friend, while facing the pressures of standing against the passive/aggressive parade or if you're just facing the struggles of everyday life, don't be discouraged, grab on to His hand, He won't leave you alone. He is in full control...rest assured on that.

Michael

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