



NightLight

A NEWSLETTER OF McLEAN MINISTRIES

"take heed....as to a light that shines in a dark place." II Peter 1:19

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Dear Friends,



Then said Jesus,

Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.

(Luke 23:34)

As I have too often repeated, I don't do holiday topical messages very well, or therefore, very often. But I do try to send messages that are timely and helpful. So, even though the holiday season has not yet begun, our next several messages will take us through the December issue of **Nightlight**. The topic we will be addressing is forgiveness.

It would be great if we could enter the season with our focus on the specific meanings of the celebrations - thankfulness, incarnation, and the sanctifying of time. Those who follow the biblical and early church calendars are greatly helped in walking out these celebrations. Yet for many, the holidays can become overwhelming. What better time than now to prepare our minds and hearts with the message of forgiveness! On the family and personal level, these holidays present a yearly challenge for us. So much to do! Family to visit, presents to buy, meals to prepare, holiday activities to attend. I know it is often a sad time for many, or worse, an infuriating struggle in some cases. For some, how do you satisfy all the members of a divided family? It is impossible! Add to that the increasing political wars that tempt us towards anger at the whole system. All this can mix together with any unhealed family pain, and can explode unexpectedly around the family dinner table!

When these two levels of unforgiving poison - personal and political - come together, they create a double

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challenge to us to be godly. “I have good reasons to hate Uncle Joe, but now, more than ever, when he starts his political preaching!” You know. That sort of thing. Failure to forgive Uncle Joe specifically for previous offenses then mixes with the new political stuff, and off we go. The kind of scenario (or a million like it) are great opportunities for us to stop, and listen to God. We need to discern what is going on in ourselves before passing judgment on anyone else. What is going on in me? What do I want to communicate? Am I more concerned with being right than being Christ-like? Am I just spewing out my own hurt and pain? What is Jesus saying to me? How can I begin to forgive Uncle Joe? I know it is wrong to hate! How do I speak out without it being contaminated with my feelings?

This morning (Sunday), one of our pastoral team told of a dream he had some time ago. He saw ten huge very weighty stones. Then he became aware of an angel standing near him. The angel said, “These are the laws of God. They are unchangeable, unalterable. Yet God loves more than the weight of these stones, than these laws. Make sure when you preach, your love weighs more than your message.” **Make sure when you speak, your love weighs more than your words.**

These messages will address the struggle of unforgiveness on several levels. This month’s audio is entitled **How Do I See God?**, and is about receiving forgiveness. Do I believe God has forgiven me? I have admitted to you before my own tendency to become a bit bored when the subject of addressing forgiveness is raised. So I don’t blame you if you do also. But that should awaken us all to a dangerously egocentric trap. We think we know. We think we have been there. Done that. And we think a mere surface understanding of the topic is the same as walking out the reality of the subject. And that is a great self-deception. I am more aware of my failures to live and walk out loving and forgiving than I have ever been before.

As we enter this coming year in which all the polemics in our current national climate are at the peak, and which will certainly be stirred even greater, it is more than vital that we who claim to know and obey Jesus, are doing so. A review of the basic foundational principles of forgiving is where it begins, and ultimately where it also ends. **Forgiveness is only understood at the Cross.** It begins there, and is made possible there in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. Those who forgive much, love much. May we all love much!





The Power of Words



I make my living, so to speak, by the use of words. I am painfully aware of the danger that presents. As Pascal once said of a contemporary writer in his day, "He has written a very large book because he didn't take the time to write a small one." Malcolm Muggeridge, who also wrote for a living, titled one of his books *Chronicles of Wasted Time*. In one place, he described his work as words like piles of flies that buzzed around a bit and ended in a dead heap on the floor.

Words have power to awaken or deaden, to empower or paralyze, to blaze with truth or freeze with lies. We all know the death that creeps over the soul while sitting under a droning flow of meaningless drivel. It could be the voice of a politician, or a rote lecture, or worst of all, a spiritually empty sermon. Words overused become the death of their own message.

So it makes me tremble each time I write or speak. I don't want *Nightlight* to become over-used words that say nothing. I don't want to be guilty of the destructive repeating of words that merely fill a page or a recording. Just yesterday a pastor friend of mine said, "I was given a book by a well-meaning person, which I read. And the only reason I can figure it was written was because the writer wanted to say he wrote a book. It left me stone cold, even though it was basically truth. It was true, but it was not the truth." Only the anointing of the Holy Spirit can give life to words. *The words that I speak to you, they are spirit and they are life (John 6:63)*. We pray that the Voice of His Spirit will speak through these oft-repeated words in *Nightlight* and that we will not become guilty of communicating dead letter. Dead letter are words that are true in principle, but empty of His Presence. *For the letter kills, but it is the Spirit that gives Life (2 Cor. 3:6)*.

Is it better to read an entire book, even a book of the Bible, just to say you covered it? Or would it be better to just take a phrase that speaks to your heart, and soak in it? Then that one phrase can become the living word which saturates your heart so that you become that Word in action? It is the anointed words that Jesus speaks to us that remodel our inner worlds. Living words are like manna to our souls. May we be aware of the power of our own words for good or ill. I long for my mouth to only flow with words of Life. And I ain't there yet.

Closing Thoughts...



Just got a news video forwarded to me; there is a move of the Holy Spirit on the campus of Auburn University. Got a wonderful phone call from a pastor in Atlanta telling me of the number of random millennials (under 30) asking him for help to understand what is and is not real, for they are sick of being lied to. Praise God for the awakening that is coming, and that is here! Speak it. Declare it out loud.

All your children will be taught by the Lord and great will be your children's peace. (Isaiah 54:13)

For the glory of God, Clay & Mary



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