

*In
search
of*

Truth and Right

Tim Henderson, Editor

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"Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things." Phil. 4:8 (NASB-U)

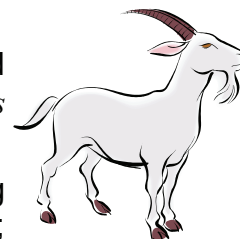
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Christ**

Get Rid of Your Goat

J. S. Smith

King Ahab came up with a catchy nickname for the beleaguered prophet Elijah. When the king saw him coming, "*Ahab said to him, 'Is that you, O troubler of Israel?'*" (1 Kings 18:17)?

In modern parlance, Ahab was trying to get Elijah's goat -- trying to get under his skin and make him blow his top. Enough cliches; you get the point.



It appears that we all have such a goat and that we keep him near us at all times. Other motorists often try to get my goat while driving, but I do my best to make sure he is securely belted in the vehicle. Oh, he bleats a bit and his beard gets a little frothy, I admit. Some folks I know in denominational churches, and even one in a liberal church of Christ, have often tried to get my goat, sometimes successfully. I had brought my goat along to the ball field on a loose rope that day and a few comments about having no music or being anti-cooperation and off he goes like a mad -- well -- goat.

TIMES OF SERVICES	
SUNDAY	
Bible Classes*	10:00 AM
AM Worship	10:45 AM
PM Worship	6:30 PM
WEDNESDAY	
Bible Classes*	7:00 PM
(* Bible Classes for All Ages)	

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Truth be told, I'm not that fond of my goat and rather than let people get my goat, I would just as soon get rid of him altogether. But how?

Speak, please, James. "*So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath, for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God*" (1:19-20).

Wisdom adds, "*A soft answer turns away wrath, But a harsh word stirs up anger*" (Proverbs 15:1). My goat needs more than a loose rope; he needs a muzzle, several sedatives and a permanent vacation.

Since the people trying to get my goat are my neighbors and I am to love my neighbor as myself, it would logically follow that "*Love suffers long and is kind ... does not behave rudely ... is not provoked, thinks no evil ... bears all things*" (1 Corinthians 13:4-7). It can become awfully hard to love actively someone who is vigorously attempting to get your goat, but that's what makes turning the other cheek such a display of patience and meekness.

Goat-getters are sometimes more than neighbors; they become enemies, and the temptation to retaliate or argue can be intense. Some will admire your self-control while others will think you cowardly for not responding in kind to discourteous baiting (1 Peter 4:1-5). Let them think as they will. You can't afford to let anybody get your goat. In the end, he's your goat after all.



Someone has rightly observed that Heaven is a prepared place for prepared people, but what does that make Hell?

Hell is likewise a prepared place for *unprepared* people, one might say. People tend to get cozy with and desensitized to the terror of Hell during the world's autumnal Halloween season. Haunted houses, some even operated unscripturally and unwisely by churches, end up minimizing the biblical depiction of a place of eternal torment.

Jesus acknowledged the reality of Hell by using a smoldering garbage dump outside the city as an illustration. Gehenna, or as it was called, the Valley of Hinnom, had been a location of idolatrous worship. Parents had actually sacrificed their own children to the idol Molech in flames of fire (2 Chronicles 28:3; 33:6). King Josiah ended this practice and the Valley of Hinnom became instead a repulsive, repugnant garbage dump which smoldered continually as refuse was burned. "Here the dead bodies of animals and of criminals, and all kinds of filth, were cast and consumed by fire kept always burning" (*Easton's Dictionary*).

Jesus could point to the Valley of Hinnom and explain that it was but an earnest of Hell. He warned his disciples to go to great lengths to avoid hell's fire (Matthew 5:29-30). "*And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell*" (Matthew 10:28).

The lingering image of Hell should not be one of Satan in command, for Christ taught that he, his own ministers and every unredeemed person would share his fate: "*Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels*" (Matthew 25:41; cf. 2 Peter 2:4). The lingering image of Hell is a combination of fire, torment and eternity.

Some would argue with the sovereignty of God or question his justice by contending that everlasting punishment should really be temporary -- instant spiritual annihilation instead. When Jesus talked about the final judgment, however, he used the same adjectives to describe both reward and punishment, Heaven and Hell. That word -- *aionios* -- means "that which always has been and always will be ... without end, never to cease, everlasting" and it has equal application both to Heaven and to Hell (Thayer).

Unforgiven sin is the ticket to Hell. Any sin, left unrepented, has such a consequence attached (Romans 3:23, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, Gal. 5:19-21). Paul wrote, *"These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power"* (2 Thessalonians 1:9). Don't allow Hollywood or Halloween to desensitize you to Hell's reality.

***"The growth of true
friendship may be a
life long affair"***

How do we consider friendship? The wise man, Solomon tells us something about friendship. To have friends, we must be friendly (Prov. 18:24): *"A man that hath friends must show himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother."*

First a friend is so important that we should see the NEED to have friends for our own good. It would be a lonely place for us if we had no friends. However, IF we only seek friendship for our own benefit, then that is selfish, and will not REALLY be the kind of friendship that God tells us to seek and be! The old saying, "A friend in need is a friend indeed." If I am your friend, and come to your aid only in "fair weather" situations, I'm really not your friend at all!

Secondly, Jesus is our example as what it means to be a friend, and the kind we ought to be as well as seek: *"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you."* (Jn. 15:13-15)

Beloved, it is so important that we make Jesus our BEST FRIEND! But if we are His friends, in fact, we'll be doing what He says, keeping His commandments. I am deceiving myself, IF I call Him my friend but pay little or not attention to what He says; neighbor, the same is true of you.

Yes, as the quote says: Friendship is a matter that we need to be concerned about all of our life. Making friends with people of good character, and being a REAL FRIEND when there is an opportunity to be helpful should be our goal in life. The Lord expects us to be, being a member of the human race demands it, and we'll be much more content and enjoy life to a greater extent when we do.