

Oak Mountain Informer

Volume 13, Issue 17

April 25, 2004

The Power of One

People sometimes get the feeling of being overwhelmed by all the responsibilities and pressures of life. We may think that there is more to do than we can possibly accomplish, and that it is hopeless to try. The evil in the world is too great, there are too many people that need encouragement, there are too many that need to be taught the gospel. If what John says is true, that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one (1 John 5:19), how can one person make a difference?

David was a youth when he fought Goliath (1 Samuel 17). The giant had intimidated the army of Israel and its king into inaction. When David understood the challenge issued by Goliath and what a shame it would bring to God's people, he took up the fight. He selected five stones from the brook, put one into his sling, flung it at the giant, and killed him. Saul's army did not go out with him nor did his brothers. He was one man alone. Yet he killed the giant, put the Philistines to flight, and won the victory for God's people.

Elijah stood alone against 450 prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:20f). He challenged them to a battle of the gods. If their gods could send fire from heaven and consumed their offering, then Isarel would serve Baal. If their gods could not consume the sacrifice, but Jehovah could, then Israel would worship Him. The false gods failed, but Jehovah did not. At the end of the contest, when the Lord had sent fire from heaven and burnt the offering, the wood, the stones, and the dust, the people cried out, "The Lord, He is God; the Lord, He is God." Elijah was just one man. His opponents were numerous and strong. Yet the one routed the many.

We could easily relate other stories in the Scriptures which inspire us to action for good though we may act

alone. But the reverse is true as well. One can be a tremendous influence for wrong. Paul observes, "So then as through one transgression there resulted in condemnation of all men..." and, "For through one man's disobedience the many were made sinners" (Romans 5:18-19). He is speaking here of the influence of Adam in the world. Adam was one man; he committed one transgression. But his influence for evil is still being felt in the world today.

On the other hand, consider the effect of Christ's work. Just as through the sin of one man condemnation came into the world, through the work of one Man (Jesus) righteousness is made available to all. We only quoted the first part of Romans 5:18 above. The rest says, "...even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men." Though at times Jesus had disciples around Him, at the critical points in His life He was all alone. He was only one man, but He was one man who had the courage to act when He was called upon.

What should we say about these things? First, though we think we are all alone, we are not. There are many others who are fighting the same battles we are fighting. They, too, stand opposed to false teachers and immorality in the world. They, too, are fighting personal battles to overcome the "sin that so easily besets" them. When Elijah expressed his feelings of aloneness, God assured him that there were yet 7000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal (1 Kings 19:18). We are not alone. God still has His faithful remnant in the earth.

Even if we were alone, we could still do right.

"Standing and acting alone may do more good than we realize ... Who knows what growth the Lord will provide?"

God does not challenge us to take the right stand only if there are others who will take it with us. He tells us to “put on the whole armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil” (Ephesians 6:11). Whether those schemes involve personal temptation to sin, the threat of false teachers, or confronting sin in others, we are challenged to stand firm. What can one person do? He/she can stand for right.

Standing and acting alone may do more good than we realize. Joseph stood alone and saved the nation of Egypt. The woman at the well acted alone and saved the men of the city. Andrew acted alone to bring Peter to Christ who in turn preached to thousands in his lifetime. Today there are people who, acting on their own initiative, are planting and watering the seed. Who knows what growth the Lord will provide? Not only will we save ourselves, we may save many others as well. Contrariwise, if we remain silent, or if we exert an influence for evil, who knows what kind of eternal damage we can do? We will not only lose our own souls, but perhaps the souls of others.

No Christian is ever truly alone. God has promised to always be with us. He has said, “I will never desert you, not will I ever fail you” (Hebrews 13:5). John also reassures us, “Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world” (1 John 4:4). Do you remember the story of Elisha and his servant? When the king of Syria wanted to capture the prophet and Elisha’s servant became afraid, God showed the servant the advantage the two of them had over the army of Syria. “And the Lord opened the servant’s eyes and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha” (2 Kings 6:17). Elisha demonstrated to the Syrians the power of God so convincingly that they no longer came into the land of Israel.

Perhaps at times God will ask us to act alone. Though this be the case, we can certainly do it successfully. Many of God’s people have done so before us. Others will do so after we are gone. Know that, though we be forsaken by all others, God is with us, and that He will give the increase. May we simply put on the whole armor of God, be prepared, and do His work.

A Point Of Grammar

A participle is a verbal adjective. They are common in both New Testament Greek and English. In English they often end in “ing” and tell us something about the noun they modify. For example, in the phrase, “the running man” the word running is a participle. It conveys action like a verb, but it also describes the noun “man” like an adjective.

Quite frequently in the New Testament participles are used like adverbs. Adverbs tell us when, why, how, or under what circumstances the action in a sentence takes place. In the sentence, “While running to the store, Tommy fell and scraped his knee,” the words “while running” are used as adverbs. They tell us when the main action (falling and scraping) took place.

When they are used in this way, participles may suggest any of several different ideas about the action in the sentence. Among them are purpose, result, time, attending circumstances, means, manner, condition, and cause. Knowing this may help us understand what is being said more clearly.

Consider, for example, what Paul says about Christ, “...who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of not reputation, taking the form of a bondservant...” (Philippians 2:6-7)

The first participle is “being” it grants a concession - “although He is in the form of God...” The second participle is “taking.” It denotes the means by which the made Himself of no reputation, and could be translated “by taking.” This helps to clear the mistaken notion that Christ somehow emptied himself of His deity when He became a man. He emptied Himself, not by giving up something in His nature, but by taking on a new nature, namely human

April 18, 2004

Attendance
AM Worship: 224
PM Worship: 197

Wednesday Evening:

***Our Goal:
Every member
at every
service!***