

GLAD TIDINGS

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

Vol. XIX

April 11, 2010

No. 15

Compared To What?

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ur judgment of things is often determined by present circumstances. It may be hard for you

to ever consider a rat or cockroach as a possible meal. If so, you probably have not experienced hunger under extreme circumstances, when one of these creatures is the only menu item for your future. If you are hungry and desperate enough, these creatures can become tempting morsels. The circumstance of being hungry causes what is normally considered unclean and disgusting to be not so bad and tempting.

There is a proverb in the Bible setting forth this truth of man's experience. *“The full soul loatheth a honeycomb; But to the hungry soul every bitter thing is sweet”* (Proverbs 27:7). The honeycomb, that source of sweet energy to the tired and hungry wanderer, will always be a cherished oasis and constantly protected. Right? Not if you are full and not in need of sustenance. It might be merely a colony of stinging bees in your way, and deserving of you “trampling upon” their structure, which is the literal meaning of *“loatheth”* in the text. Conversely, bitter things can be considered sweet to the

palate that has not tasted of the sweet. It is this side of man's experience that deserves careful attention.

In a dysfunctional family, where at least one of the parents has abused his or her authority, the child may grow up thinking he or she had a normal upbringing. In reality, sexual and emotional abuse may have occurred. Therapists often hear such children, now grown adults, speaking of *“how richly loved they felt by their mother and father, even though the history indicates that nothing could be further from the truth”* (*The Wounded Heart*, page 106). As Dr. Dan B. Allender remarks, *“How is a child to know what she is missing if she has nothing else to compare it to?”* As bitter can be interpreted as sweet to the hungry, a child may think a bad parent is better than no parent at all.

Abused family members, including children, should open God's Word to find a standard for healthy family relationships. Self-sacrificing love, not self-serving lust characterize the headship in the family receiving God's approval (*Ephesians 5:25-29*). Viewing a child as a soul to nur-

ture to adulthood, instead of an object to control as we wish, is the character of godly parenthood (*Ephesians 6:4*).

Like families, churches can be dysfunctional. If a member only knows the church of which they are a member, one might accept leadership and preaching which is far from acceptable before God. Qualified men should lead the local flock in the way of truth as caring shepherds, not as pompous dictators (*I Timothy 3:1-7, I Peter 5:3*). Soul-loving men should preach the word, balancing reproving rebuke with encouraging exhortation (*2 Timothy 4:2*). Members hungry for some kind of leadership, constantly beaten down by condemning sermons, may be set up to accept a group of dictators as elders, and soft, politically-correct preaching.

Always compare your family and the church of which you are a member with God's standard. Don't accept the “bitter” and unacceptable calling it sweet. You always have God's standard for functional families and churches when you are limited by experience. .