

Emmaus Chapter 13 – Mike Baran

Grasping God's Word – Chapter 13

Assignment 13-1

Create a real-world scenario that parallels Philippians 4:13

¹⁰I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. ¹¹Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. ¹²I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. ¹³**I can do all things through him who strengthens me.**" (Phil 4:10-13).

We don't have to invent stories in order to parallel and explain the statement, "I can do all things through him [Christ] who strengthens me." We can reflect on real-life scenarios from the religious and even the secular world that adequately parallel this statement by Paul.

We can reflect on the life and experience of both Richard Wurmbrand (*"Tortured for Christ"*) and Viktor Frankl (*"Man's Search for Meaning"*), both of whom suffered persecutions, for quite different reasons, but who we can understand to have survived their respective traumatic experiences and to have come through with an ongoing positive frame of mind because of or "through him who strengthens me."

The "law of Christ" (Gal 6:2) is not clearly defined in the Scriptures, but we can understand the intent of its meaning from what Jesus taught in his Sermon on the Mount about the way that we should live, as well as his teachings about the kind of love for humanity that we should exemplify, something that was evidenced in the parable about the Good Samaritan and also by what Paul similarly taught, having been himself instructed by Jesus:

¹⁹Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." ²⁰To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." ²¹Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom 12:19-21, and compare Prov 25:21-22).

In other words, the "law of Christ" is the mark of a true Christian and is no different to the Ten Commandments; the law of God, which teaches love for God and love for humanity.

Richard Wurmbrand was a Christian pastor in Communist Rumania who was persecuted for being a Christian. He describes in his memoir *"Tortured for Christ"* how he suffered all kinds of beatings, starvation and various other indignities while jailed, and yet he remained at all times the "light" in the darkness that came from his faith in God and the teachings of the Bible. In living this way he "heaped burning coals" on the heads of his detractors to the extent that some prisoners and guards were moved to change their attitude and behaviour and so came to respect him and to embrace his Christian example.

Viktor Frankl, on the other hand, was a secular Jew and Holocaust survivor who found himself in the Auschwitz concentration camp for the simple reason that he was Jewish. Like Richard Wurmbrand, he experienced the same kind of persecutions and indignities from the Nazis, but he overcame these by practicing kindness and a caring relationship towards himself, other prisoners, and especially towards those prisoners who were of a hateful disposition towards their persecutors as well as towards their own Jewish fellow-prisoners. Being a psychologist in his former and later life, he also wrote a memoir of his time in Auschwitz (*"Man's Search for Meaning"*) that describes what he was able to learn about human nature and the positive effects of

love and care towards others, as well as the positive psychological impact that such a caring approach had on those who practiced kindness and concern for themselves and towards others.

In choosing two such examples of people who overcame hate with love, we can reasonably ask how these examples, especially the one of a non-Christian Viktor Frankl, can reflect the statement that “I can do all things through him [Christ] who strengthens me”?

When we look at the Greek text of Philippians 4:13 we find the following literal statement: “I am strong in all things with the one [Christ] empowering me.”

Here we can ask if it is Christ himself that empowers or gives Paul (and us) the strength to overcome the various problems and difficulties that life throws at us, or whether it is Christ’s teaching and example that allows us, as followers of Jesus, to live a Christian life and to be a “light” in a dark world by following the example and teaching of Jesus and the Bible (Ps 119:105 – we are a light because we walk in the light). I would suggest that it is the latter case; especially as we are told that if we live this way then “God will [sooner or later] reward you” (Prov 25:21-22), if only at the time of the Great White Throne Judgment.

Richard Warmbrand lived this way consciously and Viktor Frankl lived this way perhaps only unconsciously, or perhaps as a result of his psychology training that allowed him to understand the benefit of unfailing self-respect and respect for others. Even so, both were ultimately rewarded with their lives and the knowledge that such a life of love towards neighbour results in a positive outcome that can tolerate pain and suffering in a much better way than does despair or hatred. (Apparently those in Auschwitz who were not of a positive and caring disposition were less likely to psychologically survive their Holocaust experience.)

It was not the intervention of Jesus himself in their lives that helped Richard and Viktor to suffer and overcome their persecution but it was through the teachings of Jesus which they practiced – consciously in one case and seemingly unconsciously in the other.

Assignment 13-2

Contemporize the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:30-35

The parable of the Good Samaritan tells a story about a civilian traveller who was minding his own business but who was attacked by murderous thieves who robbed him, beat him, and left him for dead on the side of the road. In the same way, an unprovoked murderous Russian army attacked Ukraine killing and wounding civilians and abducting (stealing) their children, irrespective of whether they were orphaned or not. An unknown total number of children were stolen by these evil and murderous thieves, although it is estimated that some 19,500 children were abducted, of which only some 1,350 have returned.

Stolen children 'marketplace': Russia creates 'catalogue' of Ukrainian kids for adoption



"Russia is now offering forcefully deported Ukrainian minors for coerced "adoption" through a newly created "catalogue", where Ukrainian children are categorised by age, eyes and hair colour. The database includes 294 Ukrainian children, who are sorted and categorised so that the users can "filter" them by age, gender and physical traits, like eyes and hair colour."

Rather than inventing a story, we have here a ready-made story of abducted children who may have been, in some cases, physically or psychologically broken by the "thieves" who robbed the children of their parents and even of what could have been the children's future. Some of these children (the older ones) are being "re-educated" to hate their former society. Others (the smaller ones) are now either not wanted by the Russian government, which obviously cannot be bothered looking after them and so are being sold for profit – the government profiting from their plight. Who knows where these young children will end up living. Some authorities are concerned that some of them may end up being financially or even sexually exploited by those who decide to foster them or adopt them. The lucky ones will end up in good family homes – but how many?

Here we can see parallels with the parable of the Good Samaritan. There the rulers and teachers of the Law passed by the injured traveller and did not care for his plight (those Russian rulers and politicians who don't care about the plight of the abducted children), while only the Good Samaritan showed love to his injured "brother" (only the decent human beings who will genuinely pity and love these traumatised children and perhaps even eventually return them to their families). Here the parable of the sheep and goats (Matthew 25:31-46) comes to mind and tells us that evil and lovelessness will have nowhere to hide in the day when Jesus judges the world at the time of the Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:11-15).

Assignment 13-3

Take 1 Timothy 6:10a through the interpretive journey

“For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils.”

1. Grasp the text in their town.

Paul was teaching Timothy that “there is great gain in godliness with contentment” (v.6), while Jesus taught that “it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God” (Mt 19:24). This lesson by Jesus was in the context of a Rich Young Man being unwilling to share his wealth with those who were poor because he obviously coveted his wealth and cared nothing about his impoverished brothers. His disappointment at such a suggestion from Jesus is accurately described by Paul, who said to Timothy: “those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ... It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs” (1 Tim 6:9-10).

2. Measure the width of the river.

Human nature being the same at any time in human history, there is absolutely no width to the river separating their time with ours. In fact, here there is no river at all that would separate our two ages. To all intents and purposes, today we live side-by-side with them.

3. List the theological principles communicated by the passage.

The theological principle communicated by this passage is that coveting or lusting after wealth can cause us to lose sight of what is truly important and valuable in our lives and can cause us to be mean-spirited such that we may lose out on the greatest gift that we can ever have – eternal life. Living a covetous life can also cause us to transgress God’s law of love such that we hurt others and, in the process, ultimately hurt ourselves.

4. How does our theological principle fit with the rest of the Bible?

Throughout history, people have murdered for money; stolen or extorted to gain money; have practiced prostitution (themselves or forced others to do so) for money; have allowed themselves to be bribed to gain money; and have coveted wealth generally, sometimes to the extent that they sometimes behaved in unspeakable ways – all to gain earthly treasure rather than working honestly and ethically in order to laying up treasure in heaven (Mt 6:19-21).

The Ten Commandments were given to all of humanity (Eccl 12:13) to teach righteous living that will lead to God’s blessings in this life as well as in the next. However, “the love of money” that represents covetous behaviour and a greedy attitude is certainly the basis (the root) of all kinds of evils that will ultimately result in God’s condemnation and possibly even the second death in Gehenna Fire. It represents the transgression of at least five of the Ten Commandments, if not all ten of them.

The whole of the Bible teaches us about God’s loving-kindness towards humanity and his wish that none should be lost through their unwillingness to live by the commandments of God – to live by the law of love. When we follow the way of “get” rather than the way of “love” then we are living a covetous and self-indulgent life which leads to

nowhere good, but, rather, to a life of hurt and pain for self and others. That is what human history has been all about and that is what the Word of God in both of its Old and New Testaments has been constantly warning us against.

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