

## ***RIGHT CONCLUSION, WRONG SCRIPTURE***

Joe Slater

We're a people of the Book! That is as it should be. I cringe, however, when I hear someone make a good point while trying to support it with a Scripture that doesn't apply. Let me illustrate what I mean:

Jesus' enemies asked Pilate to secure His tomb to guard against the disciples stealing His body and claiming a resurrection. The governor said, "*Ye have a watch: go your way, and make it as sure as ye can*" (Matthew 27:65, KJV). This text has been quoted to "prove" that we should be as sure as we can that we believe and practice what God's word teaches. Now, being certain that we're following God's word is a worthy goal. But Matthew 27:65 has nothing whatever to do with it! In the first place, do we really want to take a pagan governor as our authority? Besides, Pilate's concern was the security of the tomb, not being "sure" about the rightness or wrongness of a religious point. The NKJV clarifies: "*make it (the tomb) as secure as you know how.*"

Here's another example: "*Where there is no vision, the people perish*" (Proverbs 29:18, KJV). How many times has that passage been quoted to "prove" that church leaders ought to be men of vision, setting lofty goals and making plans to reach them? Again, the conclusion is correct, but the wrong Scripture is used to support it! Solomon was writing about miraculous visions such as the prophets had as God spoke through them. Such a vision was not just a mental picture of some objective. The rest of the verse makes that clear: "*but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.*" A prophet's vision was to be obeyed as God's law.

Reverence for God and His word requires not only that we quote it, but that we apply it correctly!

## ***Attendance Excuses***

Have you been regular in your church attendance lately? If not, why not? Before you begin with the excuses, read on:

The world's first excuse fell from the lips of the world's first man, Adam. When confronted by God with his sin of clear disobedience, he excused himself by doing what many men have done ever since – he blamed his wife! "*The woman,*" he said, "*whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate*" (Genesis 3:12).

Eve quickly followed suit. When God's gaze fell upon the "mother of all living," she diverted attention from herself and blamed the serpent. "*The serpent beguiled me,*" she offered, "*And I ate*" (3:13).

Too many of us are little better than this first couple. Like Adam and Eve, we fool no one, and certainly not the God of heaven, as we make one lame excuse after another. As is often said, the man who is good at making excuses is generally good at nothing else.

And so, with this in mind, would you be willing to answer a few questions? Where will you be this Sunday morning during the Bible Class hour? Where will you be Sunday evening? What about Wednesday night? Don't follow the example of the wayward church member as she excused her poor attendance. She told the preacher she just couldn't come to church because she lived too far away to walk, and yet a little too close to drive!

The Lord, knowing the difference between a justifiable reason and a contrived excuse, has never retracted the teaching found in Hebrews 10:25 – "*Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the day approaching.*"

Don't you think it's time we put the excuses to rest once and for all?

--Dalton Key (Tulsa, OK) via *Old Paths*

## ***Your Place***

*For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's* (Rom. 14:7-8).

The poet John Oxenham wrote: "Is your place a small place? Tend it with care; He set you there. Is your place a large place? Guard it with care. He set you there. What e'er your place, it is not yours alone, but His who set you there."

Even though Paul's statement for the Christian is (or should be) an obvious truth, still it is very profound when we think on its implications.

The Lord put each of us here. As part of being here, God gave us a mind to reason and to make life decisions. Some fill their minds admirably (Col. 3:1), and thus they tend to guard their place well.

Others just never seem sure what they should do and thus cannot do their best. We must realize that God did put us here for a reason. And He will use us right where we are, if we but only let Him.

When Queen Esther wasn't quite sure what she should do, her Uncle Mordecai reminded her, "Who knows whether you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

Look around! Someone might really need you, and they might need you now.

--Hugh Shira (deceased)