

The Danger of Not Resting in the Lord (Isaiah 30:15).

Our Lord Jesus was never hurried. He was never in a rush. He was never late. He was never anxious and He was never upset. He knew when to work and He knew when to rest. Even more importantly, He knew how to rest in His work. He accomplished all that the Father had for Him to do and He was able to say, "I do always those things that please Him" (John 8:29).

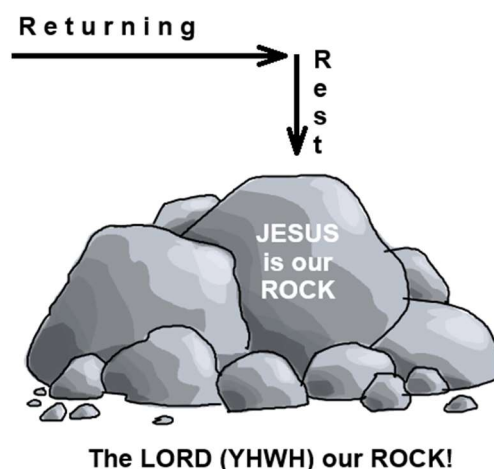
Seminary life can often become hectic. During a normal day we usually have 78 things to accomplish and time to do only 6 of them! Our studies alone demand much time not to mention our jobs, our families and our local church responsibilities. We can't afford to be slothful (Proverbs 6:6). With all diligence we must redeem the time, enduring and suffering hardship as good soldiers. We must remember that in each day there is enough time to accomplish **all** that the Lord wants us to do. We may only get halfway through our planned schedule, but it's the Lord's schedule of activities that really counts. Our main desire must be to honor and obey Him. Our only worry must be that of not pleasing Christ (1 Corinthians 7:32).

It may be necessary to learn to say "NO" lest we should become involved in too many things. It's always best to do a few things well rather than to mess up much. God's priorities must be maintained:

1. Our personal relationship with the Lord--prayer and Bible reading
2. Our family
3. Our local church--being faithful whenever possible, **not** whenever convenient
4. Our place of occupation—being that witness who draws attention to the only Saviour (Isaiah 43:10-11)
5. Our Seminary work.

Who is sufficient for these things? Certainly in the energy of the flesh we can only fail. We must remember that the battle is the Lord's. As we rest in Him we discover that we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us. As we are still before Him we realize that He is the God who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think according to the power that works in us! This truth may be illustrated from Isaiah 30:15:

“For thus saith the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel; In **returning** and **rest** shall ye be saved; in **quietness** and in **confidence** (trust) shall be your strength: and ye would not.” (Isa. 30:15)



May the joy of the Lord be our strength as we **rest** and **relax** in the God who has saved us!

The Danger of Neglecting Personal and Private Devotions (Mark 1:35).

None of us would deny the importance of daily Bible study and prayer. And yet as Seminary students we face a unique situation in that we are daily confronted with God's Word -- in the classroom, in chapel and in our studies. Is it therefore really necessary for us to set apart a special time during the day to meet with our God? If the attitude of our heart is right throughout the day, will not the Word of God that we study for our courses and hear taught by our professors be sufficient for our spiritual health and well-being? Is it really needful to push our seminary work aside to spend some moments alone with our Bible and with our God?

In seeking an answer to these questions, the example of our Lord may be of help. The Word of God was also a vital part of our Lord's daily routine. He knew the Scriptures thoroughly, He meditated on them constantly and He applied them unceasingly. His mind was saturated and immersed in the Word. When under attack by Satan or the religious leaders of His day, He would unerringly use the Sword of the Spirit: "It is written!", "Have ye not read?", "Ye do err, not knowing the Scripture!" For over 3 years our Lord indoctrinated His disciples in Biblical truth. If any man was daily confronted and baptized in God's Word, it was He! And yet, as we observe His life and walk a pattern becomes evident:

"And in the **morning**, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a SOLITARY place, and there prayed." (Mark 1:35)

"And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain APART, to pray; and when the **evening** was come, he was there ALONE." (Matthew 14:23)

"And it came to pass in those days, that he WENT OUT into a mountain to pray, and continued all **night** in prayer to God." (Luke 6:12)

"And he WITHDREW himself into the wilderness, and prayed." (Luke 5:16)

Compare also Matthew 26:36; Mark 6:46; Luke 9:18,28; Luke 11:1; 22:41.

If our Lord in His perfect humanity needed to come apart from His daily routine to spend time with His Heavenly Father, then certainly we ought to follow in His steps.

Daniel had a devotional program which he faithfully practiced **thrice daily** (Daniel 6:10). David had a similar program: "**Evening**, and **morning**, and at **noon**, will I pray, and cry aloud, and he shall hear my voice." (psalm 55:17)

What about you?

The Danger of Not Putting the Lord First (Daniel 1:8-16).

There is a cost involved whenever we put the Lord first. It may mean the loss of friends. It may involve financial loss. We may be forced to lose sleep.

At times our physical health must be sacrificed. And yet, regardless of the cost, whenever we give God His rightful place, He makes up the difference! He sees that our needs are met (Phil. 4:19; Psalm 34:10; Matthew 6:33). It's impossible to lose when we put God first!

This principle is illustrated in Daniel chapter 1. Daniel purposed in his heart that he would put the Lord first regardless of the cost (v.8). He could have put the Lord second and enjoyed the king's food and wine. But instead he chose to put God first and to go without his minimum daily protein requirements. He was content with vegetables and water as long as he was in the place to enjoy God's very best! Was God able to make up the difference? He did more than that: "And, at the end of ten days, their countenances appeared FAIRER and FATTER in flesh than all the youths who did eat the portion of the king's food" (v.15).

How might this apply to us? We know that while attending Seminary time is at a premium. There is little if any free time. Often we don't seem to get enough sleep. What would happen, for example, if we were to determine in our hearts to wake up 30 minutes earlier each day to meet with our God in prayer and meditation upon His Word? Could we afford to lose this sleep? Are we willing to trust God to make up the difference? God is able!

We might consider also our relationship to our local church in light of Hebrews 10:25. Whenever the local church assembles together for the purpose of instruction and edification of the body, God expects and demands that we be there, and so much the more as we see the day approaching! And yet we know that on prayer meeting night and at other times we are usually loaded with work. Often being faithful to prayer meeting may cost us several hours of study time that will have to be made up in the early hours of the morning. We must make a decision: What is more important, my sleep or my obedience to the Lord? Am I willing to trust Christ to make up the difference?

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you" (Mt. 6:33).

God can't break His promise if we fulfill the condition!

The Danger of Taking God's Word Lightly (Psalm 138:2).

Perhaps one of our greatest problems is a lack of reverence and respect for the things of God. We often fail to make the distinction between the holy and the profane, the sacred and the common, the clean and the unclean (Ez. 22:26). We are prone to take prayer lightly and often we come before the presence of our Holy God with a frivolous attitude. Instead of trembling before the Word of God (Ezra 9:4; 10:3), we make jokes about the Scriptures.

Not too long ago a group of Seminary students were sharing Philippians 2:4: "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." As we were seeking to determine how this verse might apply to us personally, one of the students said, "That's a good verse to apply while taking an exam!" Certainly he meant this merely in jest, but that's just the problem! God has not given us His Word as a joke, but rather to obey. Our levity must at times be abhorrent to our Great and Awe-inspiring God (Neh. 4:14). The time has come to realize that God is not playing games. We need to put aside the flippancy which so characterizes all that we do. We need to be sober (Titus 2:2,4,6,12) and to fear God--giving unto Him the respect, honor and reverence that is due unto His name.

David's attitude of heart should be an example to us. In Psalm 138:2 we find these words: "I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy loving-kindness and for thy truth; for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name." We are generally very careful about how we treat and handle and use God's Name, lest we should in any way take it lightly. We are very slow to use God's Name in a joke. How much more should we honor and respect God's Word which He has magnified even above His Name!

Our Lord Jesus never made light of the Scriptures. It may be well for us to observe His attitude and relationship towards the written Word of God and then to imitate Him in this respect.

In Isaiah's day and also in our day, God is looking for a man. He is looking for a man in whom He might dwell and find His rest:

"Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is My Throne, and the earth is My footstool: where is the house that ye build unto Me? and where is the place of My rest? For all those things hath Mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: **but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word.**" (Isaiah 66:1-2)

By God's grace may our Seminary contain such men!

The Danger of the Bible Becoming a Mere Textbook (Psalm 19:7-11).

The Seminary student must ever guard against the danger of allowing academics to rob him of the enjoyment of his relationship and walk with the Lord. We use the Bible so much, in class and out of class, that we tend to forget that it is God's precious and personal love letter to us. Our studying soon becomes mechanical and laborious. We become anxious about meeting a deadline or passing an exam, and the joy of learning and applying truth is lost. The delight that comes from meditating on the things of the Lord is forfeited as we leave God out of our studies. Cursed be the day when we no longer are able to say, "Beyond the sacred page I seek Thee, Lord! My spirit pants for Thee, O living Word!"

Our attitude towards the Word of God is of utmost importance (Hebrews 1:1-2; 2:1-3; 3:12-19; 5:11-6:9; 12:25-29; cf. 1 Th. 5:20). We must ever be teachable before our God, being quick to hear and always having our hearts fertile to receive with meekness the implanted Word (James 1:19-25).

The following questions might serve as reminders of ways we can protect ourselves from developing a coldness towards God's Word:

1. Do I take time to pray and prepare my heart before each class? before chapel? before my personal times of study?
2. Do I pause often to thank the Lord for what He is teaching me? Do I ask Him to help me to apply these things in my life?
3. Am I studying to please Christ or for some lesser motive?
4. Do I daily look for ways I can apply what I have been learning both in and out of class? Do I daily look for opportunities to share these truths with others? Do I take time to share God's Word with my wife? my children? (Deut. 6:6-9)
5. Right now am I able to sincerely say, "Lord, how I love Thy Word! It is sweeter than honey and more precious than gold! It is my meditation day and night!"

When the Bible loses its uniqueness and its preciousness, then perhaps we need to spend some time alone with the Lord. At such a time Psalm 19 and Psalm 119 ought to be of great encouragement. We need to agree with God that our attitude towards His love letter has not been right (1 Jn. 1:9). And then as we **abide in Christ** and as **His words abide in us**, we will once again experience the joy of relaxing in our God and in what He has said!

The Danger of Studying As Unto Grades (Colossians 3:23).

It's possible to accomplish good things for the wrong reasons. It's possible to be commended by men and rejected by God. Our God is concerned not only with **what** we do, but **why** we do it. Not only does He see our actions, He knows our motivations.

One of the great dangers we face as students is that we become grade-conscious rather than God-conscious. We become more concerned about pleasing a professor than pleasing the One who died and rose again on our behalf (2 Cor. 5:15). Whether we eat, drink or study, we are to do all for the glory of God and not for the praise of men (1 Cor. 10:31). Our studying must be as unto the Lord and not as unto grades, for we serve the Lord Christ (Col. 3:23-24). We need to get our eyes off the grades and fix them on Christ. The reason we study for our theology exam and read our collateral is to please Christ, knowing that we shall receive our true grades at the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor. 5:9-10). Then shall every man have praise of God.

It would be a terrible thing to discover that our cherished 4.0 grade average was built primarily upon a faulty foundation of wood, hay and stubble. After the flames subside we might be left with a 1.0. What is worth more to you? Your grade point average or your Lord's "Well done!?" May the terror of the Lord persuade us to make sure that we sit at our desk for the right reason and with the right attitude (2 Cor. 5:11). Our responsibility is to be faithful (1 Cor. 4:2) and well-pleasing to the Lord (2 Cor. 5:9; Eph. 5:10), leaving the results in His hands and thanking Him for whatever He should choose to give us.

This principle applies to other aspects of Seminary life. Consider, for example, our "Christian Service" requirements. Do we render such service as unto Christ or as unto the 16 hours? Our Lord has given ample warning about performing religious functions for the wrong reasons:

And when thou prayest,
thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are:
for they love to pray
standing in the synagogues
and in the corners of the streets,
that they may be seen of men.
Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.
(Matthew 6:5).

We choose to forfeit the reward of our Father who is in heaven (Mt. 6:1). We may earn a "satisfactory" on our Christian Service record, and yet when we stand before Christ we will realize who keeps the real records. We know that all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do (Heb. 4:13). May our only fear be the fear of not pleasing Him!

"Little is much when God is in it!
Labor not for wealth or fame;
There's a crown and you can win it,
If you go in Jesus' name!" (see Col. 3:17)

The Danger of Much Activity But Little Fruit (John 15:5).

"Only one life, 'twill soon be past,
Only what's done while abiding in Christ shall last!"

It's possible for us to labor in the Lord (1 Cor. 15:58). It's also possible for us to labor in the flesh. We can become so wrapped up and entangled in all of our activities that we run to and fro in the energy of the flesh. We seemingly are accomplishing much, but in the eyes of God we are accomplishing nothing.

We can get so wrapped up in "serving the Lord" that we forget the Lord we are serving (Luke 10:38-42). We need to STOP and BE STILL before our God (Ps. 46:10), remembering the sobering words of our Saviour: "without Me ye can do NOTHING" (John 15:5). Out of resting and abiding in the Lord flows service for the Lord.

It is impossible to please the Lord in the flesh (Rom. 8:8), and it is a shame for the believer to walk in the flesh because "ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you" (Rom. 8:9). Except the Lord build the house (Ps. 127:1), all of our labor is vanity. We need to be careful that we count fruit as God does. A fruitful day to us may be quite unfruitful as God sees it. There's coming a day when we will discover how God counts fruit: "every man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire" (1 Cor. 3:13).

Do we include God in all our activities or do we leave Him out? Is He in all our thoughts? Do we include Him in our plans (cf. James 4:13-17)? How great is the sin of independence manifested by the attitude of heart that says, "Who needs God?" (Ps. 2:3)! How great is the man who has learned to be dependent and who fears doing anything if the Lord is not in it!

God has told us what He desires and demands with respect to our relationship with Himself: "for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1 Th. 5:16-18). Let's test ourselves: Is my daily walk characterized by an attitude of constant rejoicing regardless of circumstances (verse 16)? Do I enjoy a God-consciousness and a God-awareness and a God-dependence throughout the day (verse 17)? Do I manifest a thankful spirit regardless of what state I am in (verse 18)?

As we honor and acknowledge Christ in all our ways (pr. 3:5-6; Col. 1:18), we can have the joy and confidence that comes from knowing that our labor is not in vain in the Lord! may we be sitting in His presence (Luke 10:39), standing upon His Word (1 Cor. 16:13), walking in His holiness (1 pet. 1:14-16) and running in His service (1 Cor. 15:58), all for His glory, now and forevermore,
AMEN!

The Danger of a "Christian Environment" (Titus 2:11-13).

Contrary to what is often believed, the spiritual atmosphere at a Bible Seminary is not always conducive to inner growth and health. If we think this we are only deceiving ourselves. A godly atmosphere can only result from godly living (Titus 2:12). Those who name the name of Christ are commanded to depart from iniquity (2 Timothy 2:19). As long as we have our depraved natures we are subject to the spiritual second law of thermodynamics which declares that apart from the grace of God our lives will naturally tend towards rebellion, disobedience and every evil work (Genesis 4:7; James 3:16; Hebrews 3:12; 2 Peter 3:17).

Therefore, while attending a Christian Seminary, we ought to recognize that there will always be a strong susceptibility towards luke-warmness and wishy-washy living. Luke-warmness is very contagious and it doesn't take too long before the majority of students has been infected. We begin to display anxiety, bitterness, murmuring and complaining. We can only ask ourselves, "Are we not carnal, and walk as men?"

In some ways it is easier to live pure and consistent lives at a heathen university than it is at Grace Seminary. We tend to let down our guard (cf. 1 Timothy 4:16). After all, since we are sheltered here at Seminary, why do we need to put on the whole armour of God? We somehow forget that we still face the same enemies: the flesh (Romans 7:17-24), the world system (1 John 2:15-17) and Satan himself (1 Peter 5:8). May we always keep in mind that as long as we are pilgrims in this evil world (1 Peter 2:11; Hebrews 11:13) we are in the midst of the battlefield (even in the corridors of McClain Hall) and we continually need to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might (Ephesians 6:10; 2 Timothy 2:1). We must never sit back comfortably in our chairs thinking that because we are in Seminary our lives will automatically be conformed to the image of Christ. We must be watchful and diligent (1 Peter 5:8; Matthew 26:41; Colossians 4:2), exercising ourselves unto godliness (1 Timothy 4:7-8; 1 Timothy 6:11; 2 Peter 3:11).

Grace Theological Seminary does not produce men of God. Only God can do that. Our responsibility is to stay healthy on the inside (3 John 2-3; Psalm 1:1-3; 1 Timothy 4:12) and to manifest the resurrected life of our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 6:4-11; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15; Galatians 2:20; 5:22-23). Our Saviour has provided everything we need to serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear (Hebrews 12:28). He has given us His Holy Spirit and He has given us His Word. May we be alert to the spiritual dangers that confront us daily. While we are here at Grace Seminary may we war a good warfare and fight the good fight of faith, looking only unto Jesus, the Captain of our salvation!

The Danger of Not Submitting to Every Authority and Ordinance of Man (1 Peter 2:13).

By electing to attend Grace Theological Seminary we have voluntarily placed ourselves under the authority of this school. Our responsibility, therefore, is to subject ourselves to our faculty and administration as unto the Lord (1 Peter 2:13; 5:5; Ephesians,5:21; cf. Romans 13:1). The Greek term, hypotasso (ὑποτάσσω), literally means to rank under. It was used as a military term and indicates that we are to fall into our proper place and rank. Hence we are to submit cheerfully to every regulation, requirement and rule of our Seminary no matter how foolish or unnecessary it may seem. We have no choice but to display supreme submission and obedience to the authorities that are over us. To disobey a school regulation is to disobey God.

As grievances arise there are proper and Christ-honoring channels that we can follow. One way is to meet personally with professors and administrators in order to share problems and how they might be corrected. Another way is to make our requests known to our Student Council representatives so that they might take the proper action. It is possible to have change apart from rebellion. As the world clamors for its rights and privileges, may we realize that as love-slaves of the Lord Jesus (1 Corinthians 6:19-20), the only right and freedom we have is to serve our God acceptably with reverence and godly fear (Hebrews 12:28).

We must also guard our classroom attitudes. Our professors must have our reverence, our honor and our respect at all times whether or not we agree with them or like their personalities or delight in the assignments they give! May we esteem them in love and set a high value upon them because of the work that God has given them to do (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; Hebrews 13:7,17). May we be much in prayer for our school and for our professors and for ourselves. May all carnal disputations and foolish questions be put away from us, knowing that they can only gender strife (1 Timothy 1:4; 6:3-4; 2 Timothy 2:23; Titus 3:9; Philippians 2:14). Before speaking up in class may we search our hearts to determine that we will share only those things that will edify and profit one another (1 Timothy 1:4; 1 Corinthians 14:26b; 8:1; Ephesians 4:29).

As a Seminary student body we can work together as a team to become that school where Biblical truth is not only taught but practiced.

The Danger of Comparing Ourselves With Others (John 21:20-22).

In a Bible Seminary there are believers who have reached varying degrees of spiritual maturity and consistency. As we watch the way others live and conduct themselves, there is a strong tendency to compare ourselves with them: "For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves and comparing themselves among themselves are not wise" (2 Cor. 10:12).

The danger is twofold:

1. When we see those who are not walking in truth we will become proud and we will soon harbor the "I'm better than you" attitude. Next to them our lives look superlative and we begin to think that we have reached our spiritual peak! God has not left us without ample Scriptural warning concerning this danger: Rom. 12:16; 1 Cor. 10:12; Gal. 6:3; Eph. 4:2; Phil. 2:3.
2. When we see those who are living righteous and godly lives we will become envious and jealous. Our competitive old nature begins to go to work: "I'm going to do everything I can to be more godly than him!" Again God's Word speaks to this very problem: 1 Cor. 12:26b; Phil. 2:3; Col. 1:3-4; 2 John 4; 3 John 4.

The believer really only has one measuring stick--**THE BIBLE!** The only absolute and final standard for all matters of faith and practice is the Word of God. As we see ourselves in the mirror of God's Word (James 1:22-25) and as we measure ourselves by the standard of absolute truth, we will have a correct and realistic view of ourselves. We are clothed with humility only as we hold a proper evaluation of ourselves--seeing ourselves as God sees us (Isa. 6:5-8; Rev. 3:17; 1 Pet. 5:5-6). We are to keep our eyes only upon one Person, our Lord Jesus Christ (Heb. 3:1; 12:2), and upon others only as they imitate Him (1 Cor. 11:1; Phil. 3:17; 4:9).

Whenever we see a fault in a fellow believer, let us search our own hearts, realizing that we are probably guilty of the same thing. We know from experience and from the teaching in Romans 2:1 that the reason we can spot sin so easily in others is because we are so used to it in ourselves! Whenever we point a finger at someone else there are always three accusing fingers pointing back at us! Thus, as we see sin in others, may that be a warning to us, because we are subject to the same passions (1 Cor. 10:13a).

Whenever we see a virtue in a Christian's life, let us thank the Lord for it, praying that the person might abound yet more and more. By the grace of God, may we imitate their example of godliness even as they imitate Christ (1 Cor. 11:1).

The Danger of Too Many Warnings (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2-3).

As men preparing for the public proclamation of the Word of God (1 Tim. 4:11-16 and 2 Tim. 4:1-5), we dare not depreciate the importance of a warning ministry. Warning is a manifestation of genuine love. A loving father will warn his son lest he should be harmed. The person who clearly sees a danger and fails to warn is not exhibiting love, but hatred. Therefore, a failure to warn our people is due to one of two things:

1. A lack of love
2. A failure to discern dangers.

There is a desperate need for warning in our pulpits today. In general our churches are breeding the Laodicean attitude: "We are rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." We fail to realize that we are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked and in need of repentance (Rev. 3:15-19). God forbid that we should be timid sentinels. The hands of many pastors are already dripping with blood (Ezek. 33:6; cf. Acts 20:26-27). It is not easy to give warning, but it is necessary. Preventive medicine may not be pleasant but it may save us from the operating table or the grave! Our people need a strong dose of warning NOW so that they might amend their lives in favor of the Word of God.

Warning is an essential element in indoctrination, and thus in the fulfillment of the Great Commission (Mt. 28:20). To merely teach our people "positive" truth without giving warning is to fatten the sheep for the wolves who will not spare the flock (Acts 20:29-30). Faithful Biblical teaching must include warning. Not only did Paul not shun to declare the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27), but he also ceased not to warn the flock by the space of three years night and day with tears (Acts 20:31). A continuous teaching and warning ministry is essential so that we might present every man mature in Christ Jesus (Col. 1:28). It would be profitable for us to read through the pastoral Epistles to notice the numerous warnings given to Timothy and Titus. The example of our Lord Jesus is also instructive (Matthew 7:15-20; 16:6-12; 24:4-5; Luke 12:1,15; compare Paul in Phil. 3:2).

Are Seminary men and women immune to dangers? Are we free from the contamination of subtle errors? Is doctrinal defection an impossibility? Has the god of this age lost all control and influence over our minds? We must pray for much warning in our classes and in our daily chapels. We must pray for much warning in our pulpits. We must warn one another as we discern dangers that daily confront us!

The warning must be factual, specific, relevant and personal. Error must be exposed. Our unbiblical and slanted ways of thinking must be corrected. Sin must be dealt with. As we are living in perilous times with doctrines of demons on every hand, may God raise up many faithful men who will warn night and day with tears!

And yet, there is danger even in all of this! Warning apart from edification and encouragement is a disaster! The sheep will die--not from the wolves but from starvation! Let us consider one another to love and good works--exhorting one another and encouraging one another and edifying one another--and so much the more as we see the day approaching (Heb. 10:24-25; Col. 3:16; Eph. 4:29; 1 Thess. 5:14)