

Settled Lees

“And it shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees: that say in their heart, The LORD will not do good, neither will he do evil.” Zephaniah 1.12

Today's youngsters really do not understand the dynamics of us older people - especially when it comes to being “green.” Many believe we were wasteful because we never recycled, however, they again do not understand our way of life.

While it is true that we used paper bags to carry our groceries from the store to our homes, we never bought trash bags because we used those same bags to hold our trash until we could get it to the burn pile. What was not consumed was fed to the hogs or the dogs and the rest was burned. I suppose we should have been more careful when we separated everything to be sure we put it in its proper place. However, neither the hog nor the dog seemed to care.

For extra money, we would ride down the road looking for empty drink bottles we could redeem for cash at the local grocery store. Rather than recycle, the grocery would send them off to the soft drink bottlers to be washed and reused. We had never heard of aluminum and so were devoid of the opportunity to recycle the cans - but, drinks did not come in cans, they came in bottles.

We were so wasteful. While working in the field, we never recycled our drinking bottles. After all, it was a rare occasion when we actually had a bottle. Quite often, water was delivered to us from the barn to the field on a tractor. Hanging somewhere from the tractor, our boss supplied us with a dipper. Now that I think of it, the dipper may have been made of aluminum.

The dipper served our entire workforce in the field. After the first person dipped in the bucket and drank, he would throw the rest to the ground. The next person would dip a bit, swirl it around in the dipper, throw it to the ground (thereby sanitizing the dipper), and dip in the bucket to get his drink. After a few trips between the field and the barn, the bucket collected some things that floated - grass, flies, and other assorted buoyant objects. It also collected some things that sank - dirt and other debris. The foreman would encourage us to drink, “A little dirt never hurt anyone.”

To be quite honest, the floaters bothered me more than the sinkers. It was necessary to pick out the floaters or else get a mouth full and spit. At any rate, the sinkers were more settled - not causing any real damage or threat - just laying there on the bottom of the bucket. It is really amazing we survived childhood and left anything to our posterity since we were so mindless about our environment and so careless about germs.

In the above verse, the sinkers are called "lees." The imagery comes from wine making, where the wine, if allowed to remain on the sediment too long, will thicken into syrup. The image suggests that the people described here were complacent in their sinful behavior and interpreted the delay in judgment as divine apathy. This speaks of the dregs that settle to the bottom of a wine bottle, which, over time become hardened and nearly impossible to remove.

Zephaniah, under the direction of God, is chastising complacent men for being satisfied with their present condition. Their lackadaisical attitude would render them destitute. Their opinion of God - that He is not involved and that He does not care - would be their ruin.

The day is coming in which God shall shine His spotlight upon all those who have become thick and slow in His service. He will search through His kingdom to determine who is watching for His return. He will bless those who long to see Him and punish those who believe He does not care. He will show the naysayers how involved He really is. We should be ready for His coming. We should stir up the syrupy discharge - get unsettled. We should get into gear and let everyone know that God is at work in our lives and in the world today.

His coming is near.

"The great day of the LORD is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the LORD: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly." Zephaniah 1.14

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