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EDITORIAL



The Chastening of the Lord

The Hebrew writer said, "And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." (Hebrews 12:5-11).

From the foregoing reading we will make a number of pointed observations :

1. As the Lord's people we have a relationship with God whereby he is our Father and we are his children. Likewise in the physical world, we have fathers and we are their children. In such relationships, whether physical or spiritual, the father has responsibilities to his children and the children have responsibilities to the father. Because of the father's love for his children, he gives to them their needs, keeps from them those things that would harm them, corrects and even punishes them when they are disobedient. The disciplining, chastening, and correcting part is not easy but when a father loves his children he does it for their good. Neither is it pleasant for the children but it is necessary for their welfare and survival.

2. The chastening or correcting is done in a number of ways. God the Father does not directly and miraculously speak to, or lash out at, his children. Still, he disciplines effectively. This is done through the preaching and teaching of his word. (2 Timothy 4:1,2). It is likewise done through the reading of the word of God. (John 5:39). That is, as one hears God's word preached, or as he reads it, the message there is designed to reprove and rebuke, to condemn sin and to encourage righteousness, to exhort the erring child to return to his Father. The disciplining, chastening, and correcting may be done through contact with other Christians and their reminders of the need for being faithful or their refusal to fellowship a brother or sister in some questionable activity. (Hebrews 10:25; 2 John 9-11). A child of God may also be chastened through the consequences of sin and the Father's refusal to bless those who walk contrary to his will. (Galatians 6:7, 8; Acts 5:1-11). Finally, the Father's most serious chastisement bestowed on one of his is when he asks his faithful children to withdraw their fellowship from an erring brother or sister after every effort to restore them has failed. (Matthew 18:15-17).

3. The Father chastens his children for a number of reasons. We have already mentioned that it is done out of love for them and for their own welfare. It is also done as a form of teaching, to keep the Lord's people holy, and to set a good example before God's people as a whole and the people of the world. (Acts 5:11). That is, when an erring child is chastised, it not only serves to help

that soul, but it also serves as a lesson for the other children in God's family. They are reminded that if they walk disorderly that they will also be chastened. (2 Thessalonians 3:6,7). Then it serves to let the world know that if one is going to be a Christian, and have the approval of God, and the fellowship of the Lord's people as a whole, then he is going to have to measure up to God's expectations. (1 Peter 2:1; James 3:13-18). It is to serve notice to the world that if one is going to become a Christian then he must be a Christian, a faithful child of God, and that the Lord will not tolerate wilful sin, worldliness, and ungodliness in his people. (1 John 2:15-17). This within itself, then, will demand respect by all as they deal with God and his people.

4. The wise child will not rebel against his Father when he is chastened, but will recognize his need for it, and therefore respond by humbling himself and making whatever corrections that are necessary in his life. (Matthew 18:4; Mathew 23:12; James 4:6). The one who resents, resists, rebels, and fights back when he is scripturally corrected, is the one who will bring even more chastisement upon himself and if this does not turn him around then he will end up in destroying himself. The Lord does not force any child of his to be faithful. He encourages it, and attempts to correct one, but if that person is determined to be lost then there is nothing that can be done that can save that soul.

5. The Father loves and blesses those children of his who are obedient and faithful to him. They are the kind that he likes to show off to the world. Do you remember how God pointed to his faithful servant Job as being one that he could count on? (Job 2:1-6). God also wants his children today to be faithful to him so he can say to the world concerning them that this is what Christianity is all about. And of course in the end, the father will save eternally all of his children that have been loyal and faithful to him. (James 1:12).

In conclusion, let us understand therefore that all God does is in our interest. He doesn't want to harm us, hurt us, or destroy us. It is true, sometimes he has to correct us and even punish us, but even then it is done by a loving Father. We as his children,

therefore, need to return that love. We may make mistakes, and may even err, but when the Father points this out to us, we would be wise children to respond in reverence to the Father, by making whatever corrections necessary; that we might please him, have his approval, have his blessings, and to have the inheritance that he will bestow one day on every faithful child. At that time there will be no remembrance of chastisement or any punishment that we had to suffer, but only the reality that we belong to the Lord, and that whatever he had, now belongs to us. Truly this is the reward that awaits every child of God.



**associate
editorial**

What Is The Church?

For most people church means a place of worship, a building in which people assemble. Often we hear people say, I'm going to church, or, this is our church, and by this they mean they are going to a building or the building is the church. Because of such thinking and attitude toward the church many people today fail to see the great importance of the church and the purpose for which it was originally established. Another way in which people understand the church today is party-ism or group-ism, that is, they believe the church is a denomination. Since there exist hundreds of denominational churches, they believe the church of Christ or the church of the Bible is also a just another denomination. There are some who criticize and oppose us because we preach about the church. They have gotten so much accustomed to think about the church in denominational way that to them preaching about the church means preaching about a denomination. But what is the church, in fact ?

The word church has been derived from mid. english chirche, from Anglo Saxon circe and from Greek kyriakon, which means the Lord's house. The word is generally rendered in the septuagint (the Old Greek version of the Hebrew scripture) by ekkelesia. The word church is a translation of ekkelesia which simply means the assembly. See Acts 19:32, 41.

When Jesus, almost two thousand years ago, promised so build his church this is what he exactly meant, that is, he would build his assembly, a body of people. (Matthew 16:18). When the church was established, as we read in Acts 2 chapter, the record says, "...And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." (Acts 2:47). When the church of Christ, (it is the church of Christ because Christ promised to build his church and he built or established the church), was established, the first ones who became its members by being added by the Lord, were told to repent from sins and to be baptized (immersed in water) for the remission of sins. Thus they were saved and Christ added them to the number of the Apostles. (Acts 2:41, 47). This assembly, the church, was the body of the saved people. And in this body of the saved did the Lord add daily such as were saved every day by repenting of sins and by being baptized. As the good news of salvation, after the establishment of the church, spread, and more and more people began believing in Christ and obeying his commands to be saved, the Lord consequently added them to the church, All these Christians or their assemblies in various different places began to be known as churches of Christ. (Romans 16:16).

Today Churches of Christ exist all over the world just as in the first century, A.D. It is very simple to understand. When people do today what they did in the first century to become members of the church, Christ adds them to the church. They exist as churches of Christ just as churches of Christ existed in the beginning by following Christ through his New Testament. Since the saved are added to the church therefore no man is saved outside of the church. It is simple to understand. It also helps us to understand how important the church of Christ is. It is the body of the saved people, who not only follow Christ to remain saved

in him but also help others to know how they can be saved in Christ.

Be assured, however, the Lord has but only one church. He knows who are saved and he adds them to his church only. If you are not in the church then you are not saved, and if you are not in the church of Christ then you are in a wrong church. The Lord would not add people to different churches established by men after he built his church in A.D. 33, in the city of Jerusalem.

The church is not a material building. A building is a place where the church assembles or a meeting place for the church. (Acts 14:27). Check in your New Testament. Acts 5:11 says, a great fear came upon all the church. At Acts 11:22 we read, then tidings of these things came into the ears of the church. The Apostle Paul persecuted the church (1 Corinthians 15:9). Christ is the head of the church (Ephesians 5:23), and he gave himself for the church (Ephesians 5:27). In Revelation 3:22 the Holy Spirit spoke to the churches. All of this shows that the church is not a material building but a living body of people which is able to hear, fear and act. The church is important and valuable because Christ gave himself for it and he is the head of the church. No denomination can claim to be the church which was built by Christ in 33 A.D. in the city of Jerusalem. A material building is not the church, and neither any denomination, catholic or protestant, is the church of Christ.

Lifelessness in the Church

Gene A. Ellmore

When the criticisms regarding lifelessness in the church are heard, the following questions arise: "Who created the situation, God or man?" "What, or who, is the life and dynamic of today's church?" The questions are asked with the hope that if we know

what we are about to lose we may be able to act in time to save it.

To the devout Christian, the answers to the above questions are obvious and unquestioned. Lifelessness in the church is attributable wholly to man. God is the source of life in the church, it's great dynamic.

At each period of time when the laments arise, perhaps what is needed is a review of the answers in order to strengthen the deteriorating condition. What procedure do we use in reviewing the condition? The answer is, "The same procedure by which one first received spiritual life—the word of God." It is living and active (Heb. 4:12); it is the means by which God hath granted us all things that pertain to life and godliness (1 Pet. 1:3); it is spirit and life (Jn. 6:63).

The Bible does not replace God (Acts 17:25), Christ (Jn. 14:6), or the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:2) in providing the church its vitality. But that the Bible shows us the way to God (Psa. 119:105), prompts saving faith (Jn. 20:30, 31), and stimulates obedient faith by which we are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise (Eph. 1:13, 14).

Man's relationship with the source of life for today's church is dependent upon his understanding of the word of God (2 Tim. 2:15). It is contingent upon his obedience to God's word in becoming a Christian (Rom. 10:17; Jn. 3:16; Acts 3:19; Rom. 10:9, 10; 1 Pet. 3:21) and becoming what God wants him to be as a Christian (2 Pet. 1:5-7; Gal. 5:22, 23).

The life of the church is not and cannot be produced by strong men, but by God in the obedient life of each Christian (Heb. 5:8, 9). The word of God is only the agency by which man comes to know God, Christ and the Holy Spirit, but it is the agency. Lifelessness occurs commensurate to the degree that man becomes estranged from God through disobedience to his word, either ignorantly or knowingly. (Acts 17:30; Jas. 4:17).

And if man's obedience is to be motivated by love (Matt. 22:37), then any degree of disobedience reflects upon his reservoir of love.

Proclaiming Christ and Him Crucified

Ernest S. Underwood

Often we hear of people who negatively state that they don't like what they term "negative preaching." They usually want their virtues extolled and their faults to be given the silent treatment. As a basis for their philosophy they will go to Paul's first epistle to the church at Corinth and read verse two of chapter two. This passage reads, "*For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.*" This is a wonderful and marvelous statement. Truly, it should be the aim and purpose of every gospel preacher to emulate the example of this peerless apostle. In fact, he commanded such, as can be sustained in passages such as 1 Timothy 4:16; and 2 Timothy 4:1-2. But, is it consistent with the Scriptures to maintain that preaching Christ and Him crucified eliminates the negative aspect of preaching? When this same apostle declared unto the bishops of Ephesus, "*For I shrank not from declaring unto you the whole counsel of God*" (Acts 20:27), did he mean that only positive things had been preached?

Let us examine the First Epistle to Corinth to see and understand Paul's definition of preaching Christ and Him crucified.

In chapter one he rebukes them for their sectarian spirit. In chapter two he assures them that his message is from the Lord. He deals with their carnality caused by their jealousy and strife in his third chapter. Chapter four finds him exhorting them to be faithful stewards of God. In chapter five he presents a very negative

attitude toward the man living in adultery. He even rebukes the rest of them for continuing to hold this man in fellowship, and commands them to have no company with him. In chapter six we again find him rebuking them for going to law one with the other. In this chapter we also find him speaking about those who shall NOT (negative) inherit the kingdom of God. In this he condemns fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, abusers of themselves with men, thieves, covetous, drunkards, revilers, and extortioners. QUESTION: In doing this is he preaching Christ and Him crucified? Take note that he said he was.

In chapter seven he deals with the husband/wife relationship. Chapter eight concerns itself with conscience, and the fact that the stronger should *not* purposely offend the weaker. In chapter nine he even tells them of the necessity of buffeting his own body to bring it into subjection. Chapter ten condemns murmuring and idolatry, something some of them apparently were practicing. Chapter eleven is dedicated to the chain of authority; *i.e.* God, Christ, man, woman. He also condemns the wearing of long hair by men. The later part of this chapter deals with their mis-use of the Lord's Supper. Spiritual gifts and the arrogant attitude of those who possessed them is dealt with in chapter twelve. Love, biblical love, is the grand theme of chapter thirteen. Women who are out of their God-given places, and the mis-use of the spiritual gifts occupies the thought of chapter fourteen. The resurrection of Christ and subsequent resurrection and ultimate victory of the righteous, along with an admonition to be steadfast and immovable is his message in chapter fifteen. In chapter sixteen he deals with the subject of giving, then closes with a command to "*Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong.*"

With this brief summary of the epistle and Paul's desire to preach to them Jesus Christ and Him crucified examined, let us ask a question to any who would use Paul's statement in chapter two verse two, as their clarion call to arms. Is this the kind of preaching which you desire? Will you throw your total influence behind it when this kind of preaching is done? Or, do you really just want to hear things which please you, and which condemn nothing?

"He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear."

Preaching and Generalizing

James A. Allen

Generalizing is not enough. Jesus and the apostles did not stop with generalizing. They personally pointed out and warned against false teachers and exposed false doctrine specifically and in detail, "And when the chief priests and Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he spoke them. And when they sought to lay hold on him, they feared the multitudes, because they took him for a prophet" (Matt. 21:45, 46). The teaching of Jesus was personal and direct, and condemned them personally. It brought persecution to Jesus, as such a course will today bring persecution to preachers who walk in the footsteps of Jesus. "And the scribes and the chief priests sought to lay hands on him in that very hour; and they feared the people: for they perceived that he spoke this parable against them. And they watched him, and send forth spies, who feigned themselves to be righteous, that they might take hold of his speech, so as to deliver him up to the rule and to the authority of the governor" (Matt. 20:19, 20). Will brethren who "do not believe in controversy" please note that Jesus "spoke this parable against them"? There are false teachers all around us teaching false doctrines, one after another, and how many Christians are "speaking against them"? To preach the truth in a vague and generalizing way is not enough. The truth must not only be preached, but must be applied personally, in such a way as to leave no one in doubt as to who is meant and what is meant. This is the only course that a true gospel preacher can take. To suppress personal, direct discussion and controversy is to give false doctrine and false teachers an advantage over truth.

The Church : A Glorious Institution

John A. Mays

We are living in a time when millions of people do not know

what the church is, how many the Lord built, the value of the church, or if or why they should be members of it. There are many today who cast slurs and disparaging remarks against the sacred institution which was purchased by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

We need to ask, "How many churches did Jesus build?" If people would accept the Bible answer to that question, then they could understand God's Will much easier and quicker. Jesus said, "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). Paul said, "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. 1:22-23). Then in Eph. 4:4-6 Paul said, "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

Jesus said He would build His church—singular. Paul said the church is the body and there is one body. That just could not be put plainer. There are as many bodies as there are Lords. There is only one of each. All who love God and His Word will accept that. You can search the Bible until your eyes fail you and never find but one church which belongs to Christ. Paul said, "Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you" (Rom. 1:16).

Someone may say, "I believe that Jesus has only one church, but I believe that all the different denominations make up that one church." But friends, all the evidence they have is, "I believe." That idea is not in the Bible. In fact, just the opposite is found in God's word.

All denominations were established by men upon the doctrines and commandments of men. Oh, yes, they have some teachings of the Bible mixed in their doctrines, but the doctrines of men make their entire religion void. Jesus said, "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt.

15:9). Someone says, "I just don't see any commandments or doctrines of men in the denominations." It is the doctrines of men which make the differences in the different denominations. Notice a few things which some have which are contrary to the Bible—instrumental music in worship to God, failing to partake of the Lord's Supper on every first day of the week, not having elders and deacons as the Bible instruct, believing in miraculous operations of the Holy Spirit today, believing that one is saved before baptism, pouring and sprinkling for baptism, etc. None of these mentioned have Biblical authority; therefore, all are the doctrines and commandments of men and make the religion of the users vain. Others have built their whole religion on the teachings of men such as the Mormons, Jehova's Witnesses, Christian Scientists, others.

Jesus prayed that all who believe on Him would be one. "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, are in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17:20-21). If all would follow the words of the apostles of Christ, then all would be one. The reason there are many religions today is because people are not willing to follow Christ and have devised their own doctrines. Many times I have tried to point out the differences between the New Testament church and the denominations of men and have given scriptures to show these differences and then people would say, "Well, I just don't believe doctrine makes any difference." What they are really saying is, "I don't believe Jesus or His Bible." In II John 9 we read, "Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son." Can a person go to heaven without God? He can, if doctrine is not important.

Often times members of the church have a "loaded" statement shot at them. Some bitter denominationalist or sectarian will say, "You and your little bunch think you're the only ones going to heaven." Brethren, that is a "loaded" statement to try to put one in an embarrassing dilemma. Are we to be ashamed of what

is right in religion? Are we to turn our backs upon the Lord and His word in order to try to appease some one whose heart is usually hardened to the point that he will not listen to a Scriptural answer? In the first place, we do not have a little bunch or big bunch. The church belongs to the Lord. He has purchased each member with His blood and added them to His church (Acts 20:28; 2:47). Personally, I do not consider the statement worthy of an answer or any consideration.

The church of Christ is a glorious institution because it has been established by the Lord and every member purchased by the blood of Christ and added to the church by Christ. Paul said, "Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen" (Eph. 3:21). Brethren, be not ashamed of the church of Christ.

Is It Right For Men And Women To Live Together Unmarried

Clifford Dixon

Nationwide attention has recently been made to the millions of American men and women who are living together who have not taken the vows of marriage. Our President says that they are living in sin. What does the Bible say about this and also about marriage?

1. The Bible teaches that marriage is honourable. "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge" (Heb. 13:4). So God honours the marriage relationship. He also in the same verse condemns people living together without marriage as adulterers and fornicators. Such will be judged by God. People living together without being married face condemnation at the final day. In Revelation 21:8 we read, "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and the murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolators, and

all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone : which is the second death." While such couples say that they care for one another they are still condemned before God as "whoremongers" and face the lake of fire and brimstone unless they repent.

2. The Bible teaches that God joins people together in marriage thus putting His stamp of approval upon it. When Jesus was asked if a man could lawfully put away his wife for every cause, He replied, "have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said. For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put sunder" (Matt. 19:4-6). The first marriage ceremony was said by God who wanted a man and a woman to be joined together for a lifetime in the marriage relationship. He also joined them together and decreed that man was not to put them asunder. So marriage is a very sacred contact with God and should not be lightly broken.

3. God witnesses marriage and also expects man to keep His covenant of marriage. We read, "The Lord hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously : yet is she thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant" (Malachi 2:14). In verse 13 of this chapter we read of the altar being covered with tears which no doubt were the tears of the wives whose husbands had treacherously put them away. God here reminded the men of the fact that he witnessed those legitimate marriages and expected men to keep their covenants with their wives. Concerning the woman who would do this a warning is given in Proverbs 2:16-18 : "To deliver thee from the strange woman, even from the stranger which flattereth with her words; which forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God. For her house inclineth unto death, and her paths unto the dead." Notice this is the woman who forsook her husband and forgot her covenant of marriage and went after other men. The result was death. God is not pleased with sex relations out of marriage or with extramarital relations. He says

that such end in death. From reading Revelation 21:8 we see that the end result is the lake of fire.

4. God expects man to enter into marriage and to be satisfied with the bonds and love of the marriage. "Let thy fountain be blessed, and rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as a loving hind and pleasant roe; let her breast satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love. And why wilt thou, my son, be ravished with a strange woman, and embrace the bosom of a stranger? For the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings" (Pro. 5:18-21). God sees when either a man or a woman deal treacherously with one another and says, "His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins" (Prov. 5:22).

5. Any living together out of marriage is the sin of adultery or fornication which is a work of the flesh (Gal. 5:19). In Galatians 5:21 it is stated that such do not enter into the kingdom of God. To be put in simple terms one cannot be a Christian and live in such a way. Also to show the final result, it is the kingdom that will be caught up to God at the last day. All living in the sin of fornication will be left out of heaven. Paul said of the Corinthians, "Such were some of you : but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God?" (I Cor. 6:11). Regardless of whether it be this sin or any other when one believes in Christ, repents of that sin or sins, confesses faith in Christ, and is buried in baptism his sins are washed away and he enters the kingdom. However, repentance requires that all sinful relationships be dissolved in order for one to be right with God.

Bible Things in Bible Ways

Owen Solomon

The Restoration Movement was advanced on the conviction

Christians should do Bible things in Bible ways, speak where the Bible speaks, and be silent where the Bible is silent. In the day of widespread departure from the truth as it is in Christ Jesus, and so many innovations by man within the body of Christ, it is time we again take a long look at the authority and silence of the Scriptures!

Years ago, I was taught the use of command, example, necessary inference, and the law of exclusion and inclusion to properly understand the Bible. For example, when a command of God is specific it is also exclusive; when it is generic (or general), it is inclusive. This principle is applied to abstaining from the use of the instruments in worship. The Bible says sing, and that excludes everything else concerning music in worship such as humming, instrumental music, whistling, and clapping of hands!

The Bible also teaches, "Train up a child in the way he should go..." (Prov. 22:6). For years I have attempted to teach my children proper respect for worship services and the building designated for that purpose. Yet many times our small children are taught in the "little folks class" and Vacation Bible School: "If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands, stamp your feet, and say 'amen.'" By what Bible authority do we teach this? James said, "Is any merry? Let him sing psalms." This excludes anything except singing and also any singing except psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (Eph. 5:19). If we want our children to learn to worship God in spirit and truth (Jno. 4:24) and with reverence and godly fear (Heb. 12:28), we need to teach them this early in life.

A second innovation in the brotherhood in recent times is participating in two acts of worship at the same time. Two examples are reading the Bible while the congregation is singing and singing while the Lord's Supper is being served.

These practices are without New Testament authority. It is difficult, if not impossible to meditate on God's talking to you (Bible reading) and your talking to God in song at one and the same time. Each act of worship that God has commanded needs our full, undivided concentration. Such practices as are mentioned

above violate Paul's admonition in I Cor. 14:40 to "Let all things be done decently and in order."

True, we need to be careful not to condemn a practice simply because it is new or different to what we are accustomed. Still, before we automatically participate in and teach a practice in the body of Christ, we need to search the Scriptures and sincerely ask, "By what authority doest thou these things? And who gave thee this authority?" (Matt. 21:23).

Are we careful to do Bible things in Bible ways?

Grace and Peace is the Mark of God's People.

Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ: Romans 1:17

Paul, the apostle, in his every divinely inspired epistle called for grace and peace. His Master's gospel was a gospel of peace and grace. His Lord was the Prince of Peace. Paul himself knew "the peace of God which passeth all understanding" through His Lord Jesus Christ. Much of Paul's writings were of a deep doctrinal nature. Some of them were hard to understand, even so said Peter. They also included exhortations to faithfulness, even strong rebuke—but always, he in every epistle, called his brethren to peace.

The church today stands in great need. It needs the distinctive message of salvation preached. It needs to declare the oneness of the one body, the church. It needs to stand against every false way and every false teacher. It needs a loving, compassionate, yet vigilant and fearless eldership to feed and protect it. It needs to bring forth and refine the rich talents of the many faithful

men and women who share its glory and beauty. But for all this, it seems one of its greatest needs is that of grace and peace. In the atmosphere of peace and grace within it is able to face a world of friction, social chaos and frustration and come in the triumph of faith. Without the aura of peace within its body the church finds its effectiveness greatly diminished as it faces its task before the world.

Our Lord prayed for peace. His apostles marked their prayers with pleas for peace. We should too. The constant prayer of the church, in every worship service, and from every private closet, should be for peace, tranquility and brotherly love to a genuine and evident reality among us, those of His body. To this end should be our most wholesome endeavor to the success and glory of His cause. We are to seek peace and ensue it.

There are no victories to be had for the children of God in "hatred, variance...wrath, strife, envying...and such like" (Gal. 5:20, 21). All these things are the works of the flesh and the devil. These all come under the wrath and condemnation of God. Those whose hearts are thus defiled have lost the image of spirituality for they are "carnal, and walk as men" and not as Christ. All such emotions and actions bring shame on the holy name, and defies the sacredness of His holy church. The world is torn by strife and hatred—such is the nature of the world. The Christian seeks escape from that world in the kingdom of peace! How sad when the evil element of the world invades the kingdom of "righteousness, and peace, and joy," setting brother against brother. Woe to him who sows the seed of strife in the vineyard of the Lord!

In our time when we "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" we must never forget that our labour is to also bring peace. The object of victory in the warfare of the Christian soldier is peace, and eternal peace with God. Where we find that peace, let us hold it dearly, let us give it to others. Let us as the children of God be cast into the likeness and image of Christ, the prince of Peace, and work for those things that make for peace among all men.

The Marks Of Obedience

Grady M. Miller

Allow us to offer just a few brief passages of Scripture which vividly demonstrate the necessity of obeying the commandments of God. We trust that these verses will enable you to realize that no one will be saved who does not render obedience to the Lord in this life.

Notice that Jesus taught that **obedience is the mark of love for God**. Our Saviour declared in John 14:15, "If ye love me, keep my commandments." in verses 23, 24 He, expanded this thought by saying, "If a man love me, he will keep my words : and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings : and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me." These verses are too plain to be misunderstood ; if we really love Jesus we will obey Him. Our love is manifested not so much as by what we say as by what we do. True love for the Lord will result in obedience.

Then again, **obedience is the mark of saving faith**. The Bible records those who were weak in faith as well as those who were strong in faith. What was the difference? Those strong in faith did what God told them to do; those weak in faith did not. It's just that simple. Our faith is demonstrated, as is our love, by what we do, not by what we say. Jesus rebuked the people of His day, saying, "Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). Our Lord affirmed in Matthew 7:21, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven." James testified in James 2:21-23 that Abraham had a "perfect" faith because he both believed in God and did what God told him to do. True faith—saving faith—leads to obedience. The faith that saves is the faith that obeys.

In short, obedience is the mark of salvation. This simply

cannot be denied: "He that doeth the will of God abideth forever" (1 John 2:17); Jesus is the author of "eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him" (Heb. 5:9); Peter addressed his first epistle to those who had "purified (their) souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit" (1 Peter 1:22). An important passage on this subject is found in Romans 6:17, 18, where Paul wrote, "But God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." Here is proof positive that we are set free from sin, not at the moment we believe, but when our faith grows strong enough to lead us to obedience. In fact, we may be assured of salvation through obedience. "...we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments." (1 Jn. 2:3). Assurance of salvation does not result from a good feeling or a warm glow; we can know that we are saved if we do what God has commanded. Obedience is the mark of salvation.

In view of these Scriptures how can anyone still hold on to the false doctrine of salvation by faith only? My friend, the way to be saved—and to know it—is to believe on Jesus and to obey Him. Only those whose faith leads to obedience have the promise and assurance of salvation.

Something Wrong In Tulsa!

Mike Greene

The March 12th edition of the **Jackson Sun** newspaper carried an article that tells of Oral Roberts' intentions to build a one hundred million dollar medical centre in Tulsa, Oklahoma. "So, what's wrong with that?" some may ask. It seems to this observer that something is just a little out of line here.

Oral Roberts got his fame (and millions) by preaching the direct operation of the Holy Spirit; claiming for many years to have the power to heal people of divers diseases. He still

encourages his followers to "expect a miracle." Now it sure seems strange to me that a man who claims to have the power to heal from God would need or want a hospital. Rather, he should have closed all the hospitals in Tulsa by his great power!

Two things become immediately apparent. If Oral Roberts had any faith at all in what he has asked others to believe all these years, he would not want a hospital. If he actually had such power to heal he wouldn't need a hospital. It is sad that many people will be misled and duped into contributing to this campaign and others by such false doctrine as is perpetrated by Oral Roberts.

The Bible does indeed teach that miracles occurred when Jesus and His apostles were alive. But the apostle Paul, by real inspiration of the real Holy Spirit tells us that there would be a time when tongues, prophecies, miraculous knowledge, and other such gifts as made up the partial revelation would be done away. When was that time to be? The Bible tells us that the time would be when "that which is perfect is come;" that is, that perfect, complete thing that allows us to be mature, complete Christians in the sight of God (1 Cor. 13:9-13).

That perfect thing is the completed word of God Paul also wrote by inspiration of the Holy Spirit "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16, 17). Now it is the word of God that supplies our needs and helps us in being perfect (complete or mature) before God. The miracles of old fulfilled their function of confirming the word and are no longer needed.

Further, if one would compare the many "miracles" done by the so-called "miracle workers" today with the miracles of the Bible, he would find some startling differences. First of all, the miracles of the Bible were immediate. It did not take prayer, then a period of time under a doctor's care for the miracles to transpire. There was never a waiting period when Jesus or Paul or Peter told a man he was healed.

Second, the healings of the New Testament were of real diseases. A withered hand, a man blind from birth, a man lame from birth, and a man with palsy were such sicknesses as were healed. There were no healings that could not be verified. All were physically sick and were healed and none doubted it. But the healings of today are always of some physical disease that no one can see; and are no doubt mainly psychosomatic in origin.

Something is surely wrong when a man losses faith in what he has preached all these years. May we all search the Scriptures and place our faith in the promises made to us and live as God would have us to live in this present evil age. Be not misled by those who abuse God's revelation.

The Nature Of Christ's Kingdom

Jerry R. Self

"And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, and one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him. But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss? When they which were about him saw what would follow, they said unto him, Lord, shall we smite with the sword? And one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear. And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And he touched his ear, and healed him. Then Jesus said unto the chief priests, and captains of the temple, and the elders, which were come to him, Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves? When I was daily with you in the temple, Ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness" (Lk. 22:47-53). See also Matt. 26:47-56; Mk. 14:43-50; Jno. 18:1-13.

It is quite obvious that the apostles did not understand the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom. Jesus declared His kingdom

not to be of this world. He said if it were, then would His servants fight (Jno. 18 : 36).

Jesus had spoken of His coming sacrificial death for His people. "Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28).

Proclaiming Himself to be the Good Shepherd, He spoke of His upcoming sacrificial death, "I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again" (Jno. 10:11-18).

The prophets had foretold His suffering and death. Isaiah 53 stands out among Old Testament passages with its intricate details of the Messiah's sufferings and atonement for man's sins.

Why then did not the opostles understand the spiritual nature of His coming kingdom? Why did they fail to understand the necessity of His death?

About 400 years elapsed between the closing of the writings of the Old Testament and the beginning of the New Testament with the birth of Jesus. During this period of 400 years there were no inspired writers.

However, during this period numerous apocryphal writings appear on the scene. These writings are not inspired, are not of any authority, of unknown authorship usually. During this inter-testamental period (between the testaments) the expectations of a coming Messiah were strong. The Jews looked for the coming of a political deliverer for Israel. In all of this literature the Messiah is nowhere represented as suffering for men or as redeeming them by His personal sacrifice.

The disciples of Christ, including the apostles, had been bombarded by these counterfeit scriptures (apocryphal writings) and although these writings were not accepted as scripture, they

clouded the first century expectations concerning the Messiah promised by the Old Testament prophets.

"The Almost Christian"

John Stacy

In Acts 26:27-28 we read, "King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know thou believest. And Agrippa said unto Paul, almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." The life of King Agrippa shows that there is such a thing as being almost a Christian! This rejection of the gospel of Christ was the saddest mistake he ever made. Let us take a look at what is implied in being almost, but not all together a Christian.

First of all who is the almost Christian? Some believe that because they are born in a so-called Christian land they are by natural birth Christians. How utterly foreign to the Bible! Jesus said in John 3:3, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born anew he cannot see the kingdom of God." This new birth is of course a spiritual rebirth. Others believe they are Christians because they have decided in their minds that Christianity is the true religion as it stands in contrast with the pagan religions of Buddhism, Islam, Shinotism, Confusianism, and the multitudes of other world religions.

Just because I decide that I believe that democracy is superior to Communism does not make me an American citizen. I must put my beliefs into Practice and I must try to defend democracy from the evils of Communism. Just because men decide that Christianity is true is no sign that they are Christians! Others think they are Christians because they practice the moral standards of Christianity. My friend, you can be moral and lose your soul! Do you think you can by your morality save your soul? Paul said in Titus 2:11, "For the grace of God hath appeared bringing salvation to all men." We are not able to earn our salvation. We are saved by the grace of God.

Cornelius, a Gentile soldier in Acts 10:1-4 was a religious and a moral man, yet God sent Peter to, "...speak unto thee words; whereby thou shalt be saved..." (Acts 11:14). Others partially obey the Lord's commands and think that they are Christians. Jesus said in Matthew 7:21, "Not everyone that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven." Jesus in Luke 6:46 said, "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?" Many people do some things but leave undone other things that will complete their obedience to the gospel. Finally, the almost Christian is the one who intends to obey the gospel some day. Paul in II Corinthians 6:2 said, "...behold now is the day of salvation." The road to hell will be paved with the intentions of men to become Christians. Are you an almost Christian?

Why do people remain "almost Christians?" First of all some people are unaware of the fact that they are lost! This includes many religious people who practice man-made doctrines and who partially obey the Bible. Paul in Romans 3:23 said, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Secondly, others remain almost Christians because they are afraid of ridicule. Many are afraid of what family and friends will say. Jesus said in Luke 9:23, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." The Christian life is a life of denial. This means that we can and should be willing to bear the reproach of others. Other people, in the third place, love the things of this world too much to become Christians. In I John 2:15 John said, "love not the world, neither the things which are in the world." Fourthly, some people are almost Christians because they rely on sincerity. It does not make any difference what you believe as long as you are sincere. Yet, Peter in I Peter 1:22 said, "seeing that ye have purified your soul in obedience to the truth....." Truth alone will free our souls from sin (John 8:32). In the fifth place many do not want to change churches. Yet the Bible in Ephesians 4:4 said, "There is one body....." In Ephesians 1:22-23 we find out what that body is. Paul said, "And hath given him to be the head over all things to the church which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." In Ephesians 4:5 Paul said, "there is one faith..."

Friends denominational Christianity which divides professed followers of Christ is not Scriptural !

When a man learns that there is only one church he will want to make sure he is in it. How do you know what church that is—you may say ? Friends the Bible gives a complete description of the church of Christ. Does the church of which you are a member fit the Bible description ? If not you are not in the church of Christ ! You must be in Christ's church if you are to be saved for Paul in Ephesians 5:25 said, "Husbands love your wives even as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for it." Christ died to save the church ! In Ephesians 5:23 Paul says that Christ is, "Saviour of the body." The body of Christ is the church of Christ.

Does Believing Make It So ?

Earl B. Claud

In our world today people have many different beliefs and the majority of these people sincerely believe they are worshipping God acceptably. Such beliefs pave the way for unscriptural practices. If believing a thing to be right makes it right, then Christianity is not based on facts but upon opinions.

In Gen. 27:23 we have an example of one believing something that was not true. In this account we see Isaac being deceived and led to believe that Jacob was Esau. As a result of this deception Isaac blessed the wrong son. Isaac believed he was blessing the right son but this did not make it so.

Gen. 37:33 records another example of a person believing a thing to be right when it was wrong. In this story we see Jacob believing his son Joseph had been killed just because his other sons brought Joseph's coat of many colours dipped in blood. It seemed to Jacob that this was good evidence of Joseph's death. We know

that Jacob was led to believe a lie, because God's word reveals that Joseph was alive and that he later saved his family from starvation when the famine was in the land.

In II Sam. 6:6-7 we read of the mistake of Uzzah. As the Ark of God was being moved from Gibeah, Uzzah put forth his hand to save the ark because the oxen shook it. He believed this was the right thing to do, but we see God was displeased with his actions. Therefore he was smitten by God and died there beside the ark.

Let us note one more Bible example of a man who thought he was pleasing God. In Acts 26:9 Paul says, "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth." As we remember, Paul, in his life, persecuted the church and had many Christians beaten and killed before he became a Christian. He thought he was doing the right thing.

After considering these examples, we should realize that just believing a thing is right does not make it so. We find many people today believing things to be right when they are wrong. We are taught in I Thessalonians 5:21, "Prove all things, hold fast to that which is good." Let us not accept anything that is not revealed to us in the word of God. When we are led to believe things to be right when they are not, we bring much disappointment and trouble upon ourselves.

There are many popular beliefs today that are being followed as the right thing to do, when are totally in error. Let us notice some of these and see why they are wrong.

Many people believe that one "church" is as good as another. Our Lord said in Matt. 16:18, "I will build my church." If one church is as good as another, why did Christ say he would build only one. We see this is the teaching of man but that Christ did build only one church. We all have the opportunity to enter the church which Christ built if we will only obey the commands of the New Testament. Let us take God's word and not man's word,

People are being taught to pray through Mary. We are taught by Paul in II Tim. 2:5, "There is one God and one mediator between God and man, the man, Christ Jesus." If the word of God is true then Mary is not the mediator between God and man but Christ only.

There are those who are being led astray by believing they can come to the mourner's bench, or the altar, and pray and be saved. We are told in John 9:31, "Now we know that God heareth not sinners." God gives us commands to obey and be saved. Heb. 5:9 says, "He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." We are saved by obeying Christ's will and not through prayer at the mourner's bench. Saul prayed in Acts 9:11, but he was not saved until he obeyed the Lord and was baptized (Acts 22:16).

Some people believe and teach that sprinkling is baptism. Romans 6:4, "We are buried with him by baptism into death," Can sprinkling be a burial? We do not sprinkle or pour a little dirt over a dead animal and consider it buried? A burial in water is a command of God. When we follow man's teachings, we dishonour God and as a result our soul will be lost. Let us take the words of Paul in II Tim. 2:15, "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth." The truth of God is the only perfect way.

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