

Rom. 14:19  
So then let  
us follow  
after things  
which make  
for peace,  
and things  
whereby we  
may edify  
one  
another.

John 8:32 And  
ye shall know  
the truth and  
the truth shall  
make you free.

# THE LENEXA EDIFIER

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## ERRORS RESULTING FROM POOR BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

Jim Stauffer

One of the often repeated errors is the confusion between what the church, the collective saints in any location, should do and things for which the individual is responsible.

Mother had an old expression for the confusion of group action versus individual action. She would say, *We killed a bear, but Daddy shot it.* So often the lines become blurred between the responsibilities of the church as Jesus designed it and those of His disciples in their daily walk.

Let us look at some things that often are confused in religious circles today. The first and foremost principle to remember is the very nature of the kingdom/church. It is a spiritual organization. It is designed to heal our spiritual ills by way of redemption from sin and therefore a reconciliation with God from the separation caused by our sin.

To illustrate the difference in individual action let's turn to some passages that will demonstrate our point. **Matt. 18:15** *"If your brother sins, go and show him his fault in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother."* **16** *"But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that BY THE MOUTH OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES EVERY FACT MAY BE CONFIRMED."* **17** *"If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector."* Notice the first action is by the one person who is aware of the sin of his brother. If this action is successful nothing further is warranted. However when it fails he is to take others with him (plural but not collective/church action) to attempt to reconcile the brother. When that fails, the church as a group takes the action of discipline in the hope of bringing the erring brother back to the Lord.

Notice how Paul differentiates between individual responsibilities in his instruction to Timothy. First and foremost it is the role of children and grandchildren to care for widows in need (**1 Tim. 5:4**). When that is not possible, the church is instructed to help those who

qualify for such assistance (**1 Tim. 5:9,10**). He further states the reason for individuals to care for them is the moral obligation they have for their upbringing and to allow the church to function where there is no other solution (**1 Tim. 5:4;8;16**).

The Scriptures make it clear an individual earns his own money and with it he bears certain responsibilities and rights as to how it is spent. He is to care for his own (**1 Tim. 5:8**). It is his money to be spent as he chooses (**Acts 5:4**), but he is responsible for the needs of others (**Lk. 10:25-37; Eph. 4:28; Jas. 1:27**).

One of the responsibilities the individual has is to contribute upon the first day of the week to support the work of the church (**1 Cor. 16:1,2**). The work of the church as taught by direct command and example is to preach the gospel (**Phil. 4:15,16**), and care for needy saints in churches or areas where they cannot provide for their needs (**Acts 11:28-30; 1 Cor. 16:1,2; Acts 6:1-6**). The church is also given the direct responsibility for the *edification of the saints* (**Eph. 4:11-16**).

While situations do occur, even today, where God's people are unable to care for their own needs. Such instances as massive storms that damage an area often require churches to help needy saints. However, the primary function of the church is to regularly preach the gospel and teach and edify its members. Benevolent needs are an emergency not a goal. The church of our Lord is NOT a social organization, therefore its responsibilities toward benevolence begins and ends with saints, members of the Lord's body. Today we hear the gospel preached as a message for solving poverty, caring for the aged, dealing with emotional distress caused by such things as physical or mental abuse.

The truth is, almost all of these physical issues are solved by submission to the Lord in obedience to this spiritual message, the gospel. If we seek first the kingdom, God promises we will be successful in providing our necessities (**Mat. 6:33**).

On the other hand, perverting the gospel will bring condemnation (**Gal. 1:6-9**).

## THE BEATITUDES

*"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:3).* With these words Jesus begins the Sermon on the Mount. The Savior promises a blessing to kingdom citizens, those whose motivations and actions, language, thoughts, and priorities, yea their entire lives reflect the control of the King. Why are such people *blessed or happy*? If you are blessed by God, then certainly you would be happy. Today, though, *happy* is used in reference to almost everything (a new car, new clothing, a job, a piece of chocolate cake). *Blessed* is the better choice, rather than the devalued *happy*. The true nature of the blessing is revealed in the second part of each beatitude; the poor in spirit are blessed because the kingdom belongs to them, etc. It is not necessarily what we think; it is how God feels about us.

Still, a modern audience (as well as a 1<sup>st</sup> c. audience?) assumes that those who are poor in spirit, those who mourn, those who are meek, those who are peacemakers, etc., could hardly find any blessing in such behavior. Attitudes such as spiritual bankruptcy, unworthiness, and dependence on someone else hardly help at all. But isn't this the way Jesus wants us to live? Isn't there something in each of us that can find correspondence to these kingdom values? And when we make that connection to Jesus, don't we then truly find a blessing? And even when persecution comes, not even these severe trials can take away our happiness.

Confidence in God, not in the Roman government (or any other government), is wise. Mourners are happy because the stress and strain of sin has been removed. Meek people find courage and strength in God. Kingdom citizens are always hungry—they always thirst for the true values of kingdom living. Merciful people show mercy to others because they have experienced God's mercy. Pure unadulterated hearts keep their focus on Jesus. Peacemakers yield to what is best for others. Even persecuted people can be happy. Serving Christ doesn't mean we lose anything; we gain everything.

Kingdom citizens are desperate people and they know it. Make no mistake, though; to live as kingdom citizens is possible for all who will come to Jesus. The Master Teacher is not invoking some impossible, esoteric criteria that we aspire to but cannot possibly attain. Kingdom citizens are responsible people—they accept the challenge of striving to do better (**Matthew 5:20**). Then, too, the beatitudes point us not to a material, earthly kingdom; rather, we have a higher calling. Jesus is not unconcerned about physical needs; still, His kingdom "is not of this world." His kingdom provides a blessing or happiness to all. But remember: the blessing comes from God, His will, His

evaluation of what we have become. We might be happy, elated, and overwhelmed about the kingdoms of men. To that Jesus says: Follow me, and I will turn everything upside down. Follow Me and taste the rule of God now in this life. Follow Me and taste the rule of God on the other side of the mountain.

**Randy Harshbarger**

## Jump Start # 1665

**Revelation 3:1** *"To the angel of the church in Sardis write: He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars, says this: 'I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.'"*

The book of Revelation introduces us to seven churches. Those who have studied Revelation, recognize that there are some common threads found in all seven of these letters. There is a description of Christ. There is an awareness of the reality of what is going on. There are compliments for the things done right. There is a spiritual rebuke towards the things that are not right. There is a plea to overcome, repent and a promise of eternal fellowship for those who are faithful.

Our verse today begins the thoughts addressed to Sardis. They had a name that they were alive, but they were dead. What they were and what people perceived them to be were not the same. They had an image, but the reality didn't match the image. I know, says the Lord. I know, but you are dead.

Not only did the Lord know this, but now all the other six congregations knew that. Ephesus now knew this. Philadelphia now knew. Laodicea knew. Today, we know. I find this thought interesting. We tend to only talk about the good things being done in a congregation and often we stand behind Sardis in holding up an image that may not be true. "How are things going," one Christian asks another Christian. This is a common opening line used among preachers. "How are things where you are at?" Unless the preacher is wanting advice or is fed up and wanting to leave, the answer is always positive and glowing. "Great," is the answer. I find it interesting that God allowed the other congregations in Revelation and everyone today to know the inner workings of each of these seven churches. We don't do that today. We'd never do that today. We thrive on our independence and sheltering what is going on under the surface. We'd never let others know that among the eldership, there is tension and some who are ready to drop out. We'd never reveal that the preacher left because he was discouraged or dissatisfied. I don't think God intended for the revelation of these seven churches to be a standard for churches today. There is no reason nor platform to do this and as in the case of Sardis, how we see things and even report them, may not be how God sees things.

All of this brings us to another important thought. How is it that people in Sardis were blind to their own

situation? The same could be said about Ephesus or Laodicea. It's one thing to play this game of keeping a great image before others, a great showroom but nothing in the warehouse, concept. But it seems that they believed this themselves. Laodicea really believed that they did not need anything. Sardis really believed that they were alive. How is it that those in a dead church can think that they are alive?

This is concerning, because it forces us to wonder about where we worship and even about ourselves. Are we worse off than we think? Have we fooled ourselves? Have we believed a lie about our faithfulness? Is it possible for us to be dead, yet believe that we are alive? Could we have left our first love and not realize it?

The shocking truths about these letters to the seven churches is that so many of these congregations seemed to have deceived themselves. They didn't know nor did they get it.

So, how is it that a dead church believes that it is still alive? We understand that the makeup of these congregations is simply a reflection of the members. Sardis was dead because the members were dead. Ephesus had left their first love because the members had left their first love. Dead Christians who believe that they are alive-that's the situation in Sardis.

This happens because:

- Superficial worship keeps them doctrinally pure but it does nothing for the heart and soul. They sing, but they don't think about what they sang. They bow their heads but they don't listen to the prayer and the prayer that is uttered, is the standard, same safe things that are always prayed. The sermon is true to the book, but it doesn't move the people. Worship gets checked off, but the faith remains shallow, empty and does little for the people.
- There is little practice of their faith going on. Dead things don't show signs of activity. A dead tree doesn't grow. A dead animal doesn't move. Dead faith doesn't engage in good deeds. It lives to itself and nothing more. Instead of shinning the light, the light has been turned off. Instead in engaging in good deeds, the person stays home and just watches TV. Instead of meaningful discussions about spirituality, the talk is shallow and surrounds things that really do not matter.
- Faith isn't lived. Faith is action. Faith does things. In dead churches, as well as in dead Christians, the faith simply isn't there. There is no joy in the heart. There is no hope that they are walking in. There is no peace in their lives. Under the surface, the lives of dead Christians and the lives of someone who is not a Christian are pretty much the same. Worry, fear, materialism, stress

dominate their hearts. The dead faith Christians fail to grasp that God is upon the throne. They fail to see that in Christ they can do all things. They don't use prayer. They don't turn to Scriptures. Like the world, they are consumed with thoughts about money and stuff. They don't act any different from the guy who doesn't know the Lord. The word of Christ doesn't dwell in the heart of the dead Christian. He isn't seeking the things above. His mind isn't dwelling upon the things that are pure, honest and right. He is still stuck on himself. He doesn't see the big picture of the kingdom of God.

Dead, even though they thought that they were alive. They didn't see themselves as God saw them. That's a place that we never want to be. How does one keep that from happening? Keep yourself in the word. Look at the picture God gives us of a sound or healthy Christian and see if you match. Grow. Improve. Engage. Abound in the work. Never be satisfied. Never be content where you are. Push yourself, like an athlete. Plug in to the Lord. Talk about the church. Talk about your spiritual goals. Pray often. Moving water does not stagnate. It's the water that is just standing there that turns ugly. The same is true of our faith.

Dead but they didn't know it. Dead but they thought they were alive. Dead but they thought they were ok. It happened then, and it can happen today. Keep yourself alive by doing what "live" Christians do. Don't just go to church, worship. Don't just bow your head, pray. Don't just mumble words from a song, sing from your heart. Learn from sermons. Take notes. See yourself in the passage. Move closer to the cross. Live your faith. Walk by faith. Trust in the Lord.

I know, said the Lord. May we know as well.

*by Roger Shouse*

**Grant Martin Clothier**

**March 1, 1924 - August 6, 2016**

Grant was a faithful member of the Lenexa church of Christ at the time of his death. While we were only privileged to work and worship with him for the last several years of his life, we became well acquainted with his sharp mind, loyalty to the truth and wit and wisdom in matters of spiritual endeavor as we serve our King.

He will be sorely missed as we will no longer have access to his counsel and his collegiality. His desire in these last couple of years with health failing was to go home to his Father. His poems often stated his feeling best.

*There's no sickness and suffering in heaven  
No worries no pain and no care  
For the Great Physician, our Savior  
Gives us health eternal up there*

**Eph. 2:19** So then ye are no more strangers and sojourners, but ye are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, 20 being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the chief corner stone; 21 in whom each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord;

**1Pet. 2:9** But ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

**Psa. 1:1** Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers: 2 But his delight is in the law of Jehovah; And on his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, That bringeth forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also doth not wither; And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. 4 The wicked are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous; But the way of the wicked shall perish.

## **HOURS OF WORSHIP**

Sunday A.M. 9:30 Bible Study

Sunday A.M. 10:20 Assembled Worship

Sunday P.M. 5:00 Assembled Worship

Wednesday P.M. 7:00 Bible Study and Worship

**Visitors welcome**

**We conduct in home Bible Studies**

**We offer Correspondence Courses**

**Evangelist and Editor Jim Stauffer**

**Elders: Ron Peck and Jim Stauffer**

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**Check out the following websites:**

[facebook.com/LenexaChurchofChrist](https://facebook.com/LenexaChurchofChrist)

[lenexachurchofchrist.org](http://lenexachurchofchrist.org)

### **NEWS AND NOTES:**

REMEMBER J.R. DANIEL, JAN  
PATRICK AND J.T. PECK IN  
PRAYER. A MEMORIAL  
SERVICE FOR GRANT  
CLOTHIER WILL BE AT OUR  
BUILDING 8/25/16 11:00 AM.

SUNDAY BIBLE CLASS - A  
STUDY OF PRAYER - RON  
PECK - WEDNESDAY BIBLE  
CLASS - THE BOOK OF  
ROMANS - JIM STAUFFER

SUNDAY SERMON: LEARNING  
GOD'S WORD FROM JESUS



## **What Must I Do To Be Saved?**

**Hear** the gospel - Romans 10:17

**Believe** in Jesus Christ - Hebrews 11:6

**Repent** of sins - Acts 17:30

**Confess** Christ as Lord - Romans 10:9,10

**Be Baptized** for remission of sins - Acts 2:38

**Be Faithful** unto death - Revelation 2:10