

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



# THE LENEXA EDIFIER



John 8:32

"And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free"

MAY 28, 2017

## CAN I BE SAVED OUTSIDE THE CHURCH?

by Jim Stauffer

Years ago I had my first discussion with someone who claimed they were a faithful Christian and yet did not attend worship regularly nor associate with other Christians in any organized activity in service to God. The claim was that loving and respecting God and Christ in one's personal life was sufficient. There was no commanded or demanded association with the church necessary for salvation.

First, we must accept there is no salvation outside the church that Jesus died to build. Everyone who has been cleansed by the blood of His sacrifice (**1 Pet. 1:18,19**) has been redeemed from sin. We must accept that we fall in the category of the "all" who have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (**Rom. 3:23**). That sin has left us separated from God (**Isa. 59:1,2**), not of His choice but because we have turned our back on Him. Our redemption is in Christ by way of His blood on the cross (**Eph. 1:7; Rom. 3:24**). By the same token, His church, the one He promised to build in spite of the threat of death (**Mat. 16:18**) is the body of people he purchased with His blood (**Acts 20:28**). It is, therefore imperative we understand those purchased by His blood are referred to by the apostle when he speaks of them as *the church of God which He purchased with His own blood*. In **Acts 2:47** we learn that those who repented and were baptized according to the instruction of the apostle Peter (**Acts 2:28,41**), were added to that very same church Jesus purchased as they were saved (**Acts 2:47**). How then can one be saved outside the church?

It is clearly taught in Scripture that Jesus instituted what is called The Lord's Supper. On this occasion He taught us to eat the bread which is representative of His body and drink the cup, the fruit of the vine, which is representative of His blood (**Mat. 26:26-29**). We do this, Paul says, *to proclaim the Lord's death until he comes* (**1 Cor. 11:26**). The example given in **Acts 20:7** of the New Testament church teaches us they did so on the first day of the week.

Paul teaches us by way of the first letter to the Corinthians, *On the first day of every week each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come.* (**1 Cor. 16:2**) Observation of The Lord's Supper and the responsibility to give as prospered demands we meet no less than upon the first day of each week. This is the church coming together. The church consists of the disciples of Christ in any specific location. The Hebrew writer then addresses an attitude of his audience to forsake the assembling of the local church and condemns such as he teaches them to use those occasions to encourage and exhort one another to good works (**Heb. 10:24,25**).

How can anyone who has studied His word at all then make the statement we love Jesus but not the church?

It is easy to become dissatisfied with what we view as ritual worship where the worshippers appear to just go through the motions. This problem is solved by our continued encouragement and exhortation rather than by our withdrawal from the process.

God has created us in His image (**Gen.1:26**) and expects us to revere His word. Quite simply His word teaches us to *love one another* (**John 13:34,35**), *forbearing one another in love* (**Eph. 4:2**), *admonishing one another* (**Col. 3:16**), *comfort one another* (**1 Thess. 4:18**), *exhort one another* (**1 Thess. 5:11**), none of which can be accomplished by separating ourselves from the church the Lord added us to at the time of our redemption.

This mentality prevails even among our brethren who seek to be more expressive in their worship and withdraw from local congregations in an attempt to design their worship to better express *their feelings*. Careful consideration must be given to how *God feels about both our worship and our attitude*.

This mentality further divides them from other brethren who may well serve to encourage them and causes them to fail to encourage those who need it.

## **Who would believe this message came from George Carlin? Some basic common sense.**

*The paradox of our time in history is that we have taller buildings but shorter tempers, wider Freeways, but narrower viewpoints. We spend more but have less, we buy more, but enjoy less. We have bigger houses and smaller families, more conveniences, but less time. We have more degrees but less sense, more knowledge, but less judgment, more experts, yet more problems, more medicine, but less wellness.*

*We drink too much, smoke too much, spend too recklessly, laugh too little, drive too fast, get too angry, stay up too late, get up too tired, read too little, watch TV too much and pray too seldom.*

*We have multiplied our possessions, but reduced our values. We talk too much, love too seldom, and hate too often.*

*We have learned how to make a living, but not a life. We added years to life not life to years. We've been all the way to the moon and back, but have trouble crossing the street to meet a new neighbor. We conquered outer space but not inner space. We've done larger things, but not better things.*

*We've cleaned up the air, but polluted the soul. We've conquered the atom, but not our prejudice. We write more, but learn less. We plan more, but accomplish less. We've learned to rush, but not to wait. We build more computers to hold more information, to produce more copies than ever, but we communicate less and less.*

*These are the times of fast foods and slow digestion, big men and small character, steep profits and shallow relationships. These are the days of two incomes but more divorce, fancier houses but broken homes. These are days of quick trips, disposable diapers, throwaway morality, one night stands, overweight bodies, and pills that do everything from cheer, to quiet, to kill. It is a time when there is much in the showroom window and nothing in the stockroom. A time when technology can bring this letter to you, and a time when you can choose either to share this insight or to just hit delete.*

*Remember; spend some time with your loved ones, because they are not going to be around forever.*

*Remember; say a kind word to someone who looks up to you in awe, because that little person soon will grow up and leave your side.*

*Remember, to give a warm hug to the one next to you, because that is the only treasure you can give with your heart and it doesn't cost a cent.*

*Remember, to say, "I love you" to your partner and your loved ones, but most of all mean it. An embrace will mend hurt when it comes from deep inside of you.*

*Remember to hold hands and cherish the moment for someday that person will not be there again.*

*Give time to love, give time to speak. And give time to share the precious thoughts in your mind.*

**AND ALWAYS REMEMBER:**

*Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away.*

## **Why Was Jesus So Hard on Rich People?**

One thing becomes clear when we read the gospel stories about Jesus: he seldom had anything good to say about riches and rich people. He said that it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God (**Matt 19.23**). In his parables, rich people are usually the bad guys. He called money "*unrighteous wealth*" (**Luke 16.11**). In the parable of the sower Jesus said that riches are a hindrance to hearing the word of God (**Luke 8.14**). Sure, there are a few rich people in the gospels who are not bad guys, but that is because they get rid of all their riches (like Zaccheus, **Luke 19.8**) or they used them for Jesus (like Joseph of Arimathea). In fact, over and over in the gospels, Jesus teaches that the best thing to do with our money is to get rid of it (**Luke 14.33**: "*none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions*")!

This same attitude is continued in the letter of James. He speaks of rich people who blaspheme the name of Jesus, and who cheat their workers (**Jam 2.7; 5.1-6**). Similarly, Paul warns the rich in **1 Tim 6.9, 17f**, and Jesus criticized the rich church in Laodicea for their spiritual blindness (**Rev 3.17**).

Did Jesus and his apostles have some kind of chip on their shoulder against all rich people? Was this a political thing (like the modern anti-wealth movement in this country), basically driven by envy? Or was it just that the rich people in Jesus' day were particularly bad people? The answer is: none of the above. But is this fair, for Jesus to lump all rich people basically into the same group and roundly condemn them as a group? The basic answer is: yes!

This is no academic exercise. The fact is that everyone of us is rich by comparison not only to the people of Jesus' day, but by comparison to almost everyone else in the world. Because we live in the United States of America, we all share in a wealth that was unthinkable to the ancients, and is still unimaginable to most people elsewhere in the world. It should strike us that all of these passages about rich people are about us.

The fact is that riches are a temptation that hardly anyone can ignore. The fleshly side of our constitution sees them and covets them as having the potential to satisfy and make our lives easy. All of us, to some extent, have fallen for this lie. Riches are a temptation in both directions, as it were. First, they are a temptation to the poor, to those who "*want to get rich*" (**1 Tim 6.9**). Poor people can easily be deluded by the worldly idea that enough money will make us happy or that money would somehow mean that we have "arrived" and we are legitimate and successful (although Jesus said, "*not*

*even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions,” Luke 12.15).* But second, they are also a temptation to those who have them. That’s right, having riches can be just as dangerous of a temptation as not having them. How? Because the simple fact is that when we have money, we tend to rely on it.

And therein lies the problem. God wants us to rely on Him for everything, for our daily bread, our clothing, our shelter, and for everything we need in life (**Matt 6.25-34**). That’s what Israel was supposed to have learned in the wilderness, that man does not live by bread alone, but by God’s promise word to us. If we have anything, God gave it to us. And if we have more than we need, it is because God wants to use us as channels of blessing to others.

But that’s not how we are trained to think, is it? We think that if we are too generous with our money then we “won’t have anything” (as if that is a bad thing), and if we don’t invest in our IRA’s and 401K’s then we won’t have anything when we retire. Aside from the idea that “retirement” is never mentioned as part of a “normal” life in the Bible (it is an ideal we have cooked up), it is again the problem of trusting in our money and not in God. Do we think that God won’t take care of us?

We often say, “God doesn’t condemn riches, he condemns the love of riches.” But only a small part of that is true. First, that particular way of putting the matter is never stated in the Bible. It may comfort us to say it that way, but Jesus never said that. Second, we must not delude ourselves into thinking that “Even though I am rich, I am handling it properly.” Maybe you are, but the chances are good that we probably are not. Again, we tend to trust our money, regardless of the amount. Whatever “love of money” is, we tend to think that it is what the other guy is doing, not us.

Jesus spoke of the deceitfulness of riches (**Matt 13.22**), and this is why he seldom had anything good to say about them or about the people who love them. The plain fact is that riches deceive us into a false sense of security, and we become self-deceived by them. It is a powerful force that has ruined countless lives, including those of God’s people.

Furthermore, the quest for money is a form of selfishness that is exactly opposite of the love that we are to have for others. The love of money causes us to mistreat other people. This is why the rich man in the parable of **Luke 16** was condemned, because in his greed he had no love for others (namely, poor Lazarus, whom he saw every day). In short, wealth is the enemy of love.

This is why Paul told Timothy *“Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.”* This is the only right

way to view, and use, riches.

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## GOOD TREES AND BAD TREES

*“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them. Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name, cast out demons in your name, and done many wonders in your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness’”* (**Matthew 7:15-23**).

Is it possible to know, to really know, whether we are or are not true citizens of the kingdom of heaven? Can our doubts and questions be resolved with some kind of assurance? Jesus says that we must be on the right road. Walking in His way will result in our bearing fruit—good fruit—good fruit of change in our lives and hearts. To put it another way: Anyone can say that they have faith; many have said so. Yet, their lives don’t demonstrate any kind of change, no change of direction, no separation from the kingdoms of the world. The test of good and bad fruit is easily understood and seen.

Wolves who wear sheep’s clothing look safe enough. The false prophets are popular. They look pretty. They sound religious. They say that everyone has a right to his or her own opinion. They say that there is no exclusive way to heaven. Yet, they will destroy us if possible; their work is deceptive. Eventually, though, they will bear their own kind of fruit; then discerning disciples can see what is happening. The fruit of the wolf might look appetizing; eventually it will be seen for what it really is: poison. Grapes don’t come from weeds. Good trees bear good fruit; bad trees bear bad fruit. Remember that the false prophet says that the way of Jesus is broad rather than narrow.

It is one thing for the false prophet to manifest his bad fruit and then be judged. It is another thing altogether for you and me to show forth our fruit, whether good or bad, and then be judged accordingly. But isn’t that what Jesus is saying? He says: I am putting you to the test. I hold you accountable for the fruit you are bearing. You may call me Lord. You may prophesy in my name. You may act often in my name. You may even look like a true prophet. Have you, though, truly accepted me and my will? Or, have you acted on what you believe rather than what I have taught? Loud professions of religiosity are no substitute for true obedience. Jesus says: You must do my will, not your own will. And that is true even when you are planting trees.

**Randy Harshbarger**

**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.*

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## ***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