

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"

JUNE 8, 2014

VENGEANCE OR LOVE?

(Flesh or Spirit)

Jim Stauffer

One of the most prominent characteristics of Christianity is the love of God. The fundamental concept of redemption is the love of God in sacrificing His own Son that the price for our sins could be paid apart from our death. (**John 3:16**)

But like many organizations inhabited by men, we can lose sight of our founding principles if we are not careful.

Throughout scripture we have both examples and instructions to remind us of just who we are to be as children of God.

Abraham allowed Lot to choose which directions to take his herds. He specifically states his action is to avoid strife between Lot's people and his. (**Gen. 13:8,9**)

When James warns against the infighting that happens among brethren, he identifies the problem as lusting and coveting things to satisfy the pleasures of the flesh. The passage goes on to say those who would be friends of the world were enemies of God. (**Jas. 4:1-6 cf. 1 John 2:15-17**) We simply cannot accomplish the will of God by practicing the principles of the world.

When Jesus taught the lessons in the Sermon on the Mount, He regularly said, 'Ye have heard that it was said, but I say unto you.' This He did to illustrate the contrast of that occurred when the Law of Moses was used selectively and the "spirit" of the law was excluded. For this purpose, Christ taught us to 'turn the other cheek', and to give our cloak also to the one who would sue us for our coat. (**Mat. 5:38-40**) The Lord was not only teaching purity for His disciples, but also setting an example for His enemies.

Paul uses this same principle to teach the Corinthian brethren to avoid settling their disputes in human courts. **1 Cor. 6:7** *To have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded?*

We are, Paul says, to leave vengeance to the Lord and live as peaceably as we can will all men. **Rom. 12:17** *Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all.* **18** *If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.* **19** *Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord."*

In fact Paul says we bring a distinct kind of

suffering to our enemies when we are kind to them.

Rom. 12:20 *To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head."* It is apparent the Lord wants men to learn the lessons of kindness in whatever way is most efficient. What is more effective than returning good for evil? All the sermons spoken cannot equal the message of one lived.

Paul repeats this message to the Thessalonians as does Peter in his first epistle. (**1 Th. 5:15; 1 Pet. 3:9**) Hopefully we can see then, the importance of this principle which represents the very core of the gospel of Christ.

Of course, the greatest example ever delivered to man was that of Christ. And Peter says we are called to follow in His steps. **1 Pet. 2:21** *For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.* **22** *He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.* **23** *When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.* Again, imagine the lesson delivered when Jesus heaps those coals of fire on the heads of his killers when He says, *Father forgive them for they know not what they do.*" (**Luke 23:34**)

If we are to allow Christ to live in us as the Apostle Paul spoke of in Gal. 2:20, we must practice the principles of love and forgiveness He lived and died by.

Now let us view an example of what happens in the church of the Lord when these principles are forsaken. **1 Cor. 1:10** *I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.* **11** *For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers.* **12** *What I mean is that each one of you says, "I follow Paul," or "I follow Apollos," or "I follow Cephas," or "I follow Christ."* **13** *Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?* We readily understand the conditions in the above passage when Paul tells us they were still "carnal" and must be handled as "babes"

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in Christ" rather than as spiritually mature. (**1 Cor. 3:1**)

Woe to us brethren if because of the dominance of our flesh our spirit is unable to prevent the division and alienation of brethren from each other. Of course the Lord said, *The spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak.* (**Mat. 26:41**)

It is noteworthy when Paul spoke of our responsibility to give diligence to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, he expressed some qualifications one needs to be competent to the task. See the condition of heart needed in these verses that precede that call. **Eph. 4:1** *I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

We must be willing to suffer fleshly loss or to swallow our pride for spiritual gain. When this is learned we will begin to observe a similar percentage of "splits" in the churches today as we can find in the New Testament accounts.

PROTECTING CHURCHES AGAINST ERROR

Recent events at the Richland Hills church in Fort Worth, Texas (said to be the largest church of Christ in the country) have focused attention on the question as to how congregations can protect themselves from digression. This congregation, which has been aligned with the institutional movement, has recently begun serving the Lord's supper on Saturday night and using mechanical instruments of music in some of their services. Rich Atchley, the "senior minister," has defended these changes and claimed that ten years earlier he received a revelation from the Holy Spirit that this should be done. His arguments in defense of mechanical instruments of music are the same ones which gospel preachers have refuted again and again for many years. They may appear new to a younger generation of preachers. The April issue of The Spiritual Sword has a thorough expose of this whole episode with a complete refutation of the arguments made in defense of mechanical instruments of music.

Alan E. Highers, editor of The Spiritual Sword, detailed the change from the restrictive clauses in the deed in 1967 to an amended deed in 1994 which still prohibited the use of any mechanical instruments of music on the premises, to the most recent change on November 16, 2006 when another amendment was filed which deleted the prohibition against mechanical instruments of music. Within three days of this new amendment, it was announced that there would be a service with the Lord's supper and mechanical instruments of music on Saturday nights.

For many years, congregations have sought to protect themselves from innovations by restrictive clauses in the deeds of the property. This came in the wake of the divisions which occurred in the early part of the twentieth century along with lawsuits over the

property and who should maintain possession of the property. It was natural to try to prevent such from happening again. But when the will of the majority changes on various issues, then deeds can be rewritten, as this case in Fort Worth shows.

WHAT IS THE BEST DEFENSE?: -- The answer is simple, but the application requires firmness, diligence, and persistence. No congregation can ever be any more secure than the quality of the teaching it receives. *"They shall all be taught of God"* (**Jno. 6:45**). *"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world"* (**Ti. 2:11,12**). Titus was charged, *"These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority"* (**Ti. 2:15**). Timothy was instructed, *"These things teach and exhort"* and he was warned against those who *"teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness"* (**1 Tim. 6:2,3**). Paul said to Timothy, *"the things that thou has heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also"* (**2 Tim. 2:2**). *"Preach the word...for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of their ministry"* (**2 Tim. 4:2-5**). Paul practiced what he preached. At Ephesus, he was evangelistic for *"all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus both Jews and Greeks"* (**Acts 19:10**). But he also taught them publicly and from house to house, keeping back nothing that was profitable, and did not shun to *"declare unto them all the counsel of God"* (**Acts 20:20,27**).

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?: -- Elders are charged to feed and guard the flock (**1 Pet. 2:2,3; Heb. 13:17**). They must keep a close watch on what is being taught, not only in the pulpit but in the Bible classes as well. They need to keep themselves informed as to currents of thought and practices among brethren. If they do not study and keep up, then they will be blindsided and trouble will follow. Some elders have their heads in the sand. They do not know what is going on and do not seem to care. Sometimes they try to fence in preachers to keep them from dealing with issues which churches need to know about. What is being studied in Bible classes? Do the young people know the difference between the New Testament church and denominations? Do they know why mechanical instruments of music are not used in the worship? Do they understand why the church does not provide entertainment and recreation? Are they really studying the Bible or watered down pablum? If elders do not watch, then don't be surprised if a generation arises which do not know the Lord.

Preachers have a large role to play in this matter. Pretty little sermonettes filled with snappy one-liners, stories, stories sharply illustrated in living color with our Power Point displays, may get and hold attention, but

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where are the expository studies of books of the Bible? Where is the refutation of the religious error which is all around us and which some members are absorbing like sponges from the religious channels on cable TV? Where are sermons on the need for Bible authority and how to establish it? Where are the sermons on the nature, work, and organization of the church? Where is the exposure of false teaching on the plan of salvation? Too many churches are suffering from spiritual malnutrition because of pitifully weak preaching being heard from week to week. When you "*speak things that become sound doctrine*" (**Ti. 2:1**), some in the pews will squirm and complain and some elders may get up and try to smooth it over. Worldly minded folks are not comfortable hearing sin plainly identified exposed, and condemned. Yes, we have to "*speak the truth in love*" (**Eph. 4:15**), but we must be sure to speak the truth. All of it.

Faithful Christians all bear responsibility in protecting the church against error. Informed Christians should insist that pulpits and classrooms echo with the sound of the old Jerusalem gospel. They should appoint men as elders who are unquestionably sound in the faith and committed to defend it. They should demand that the truth be taught, and then commend it and uphold it when it is done. Unless elders, preachers, and all Christians are committed to the truth, then all the restrictive clauses in deeds will not protect congregations from the shifting opinions of untaught and uncommitted members.

By Connie Adams in Truth Magazine, Vol. 51, No. 8, August 2007.

MISSION OF THE CHURCH

The true object of the church of Christ has been greatly misunderstood by even the members themselves. Its design was never to bring about a state of indolent peace and ease with any given standard of morality. But its object was and is to induce the members of that church to submit themselves unreservedly to the law of God. Peace in the church of Christ is not only impracticable, but even undesirable unless it is attained by the whole church coming up to the perfect standard of God's law. Until this is attained, continual, earnest effort, investigation and discussion upon the part of the members of the church must be kept up until they all come "in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." The unity and harmony of the faith are to be attained but only through "the knowledge of the Son of God." A unity, then, of faith itself, is desirable only so far as it may be in complete harmony with the teachings of the Bible. The schisms and divisions of Christendom are certainly to be deprecated as the works of the evil one. Yet, a union of these sects in error, would certainly be a more fatal, and more to be dreaded calamity.

The great object of the church then, is to assist its own members and the outside world in learning the truth of God, the law of Christ, and their persuading and encouraging them to obey that law. Its true unity then can

never be attained by compromising the truth, or winking at and tolerating error, but by a diligent and earnest and continual striving to learn the whole truth, and to teach it to others, by an increasing effort to bring the church up to the perfect standard of Christian truth and Christian practice. We should be much more fearful of tolerating error, which breeds sin, than of tolerating investigation. We should be more anxious to make the impression upon the world that we will use every means in our reach, and make every effort possible, for the discovery of truth, than to make the impression that we are in perfect peace and undisturbed quiet. Such an impression will command the respect of every man that values truth higher than popularity, and will give a new, high, holy, incentive to activity and energy in the church of Christ.

David Lipscomb, Gospel Advocate, February 20, 1866, pp. 123,124.

"IT'S TOO FAR TO DRIVE

It never ceases to amaze this writer that people who are so meticulous concerning their physical well-being often times become so careless about their spiritual welfare.

When this editor lived in New Mexico it was not uncommon for people to drive the twenty miles from Portales to Clovis just to save the city sales tax of one penny on the dollar which Portales collected and Clovis did not. Of course, it cost more to drive to Clovis and back than could possibly be amassed by the few pennies of tax saved, but that did not matter as long as it seemed that there was the slightest chance to save money. However, talk to someone about driving twenty miles to worship with a faithful church and the response would be, "It's too far to drive."

People in our area will drive for miles to a little town in order to eat in a restaurant which is considered by many to have the best food and most reasonable prices. If we can save a few cents on clothing by shopping in another town, whether ten, twenty or even one-hundred miles away, we scarcely give it a second thought. Why, we would not think of buying our groceries at the store next door if the supermarket down the street or in the next town has the same items at a cheaper price. But, when it comes to feasting on the word of the Lord with faithful brethren in a sound church a few miles away, the expression is heard, "It's so far to drive."

There must be something wrong with one's thinker who believes it all right to drive a few miles in order to feed and clothe his body but too far to drive in order to feed and clothe his soul. Brethren, is your spiritual well-being any less important than your physical welfare? Is ten or twenty miles so far when your soul hangs in the balance? When there is a faithful church only a few, short miles away where you can worship God without stultifying your conscience, is it too far?

Your soul is too precious for you to worship in a church where there are unscriptural practices just because it happens to be a little closer to where you live. If you consider your soul more valuable than money; then worship with a faithful church.

By: James B. Lusby

Phil. 3:7 Howbeit what things were gain to me, these have I counted loss for Christ. 8 Yea verily, and I count all things to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse, that I may gain Christ,

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

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NEWS AND NOTES:

SICK IN NEED OF PRAYERS:

J.R. DANIEL REMAINS AT HOME. LILLIE KEECH IS RECUPERATING FROM ADDITIONAL SURGERY. PAT CLOTHIER HAS RETURNED HOME FROM THERAPY. SURGERY SHOULD BE IN ABOUT ONE MONTH. WENDY TAYLOR IS IN THE HOSPITAL WITH AN INFECTION.

BEGINNING 6/11 WE WILL STUDY JEREMIAH ON WEDNESDAYS AND THE CHURCH ON SUNDAYS - WE FINISH MALACHI 6/8/14.



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