

Fulton County Gospel News

"The Churches of Christ Salute You"

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AUTHORITY IN RELIGION

Much is spoken and written concerning the division and confusion in the religious world today. Some ask WHY these conditions exist? Others think that it does not matter one way or the other. Still others reason that this is God's way of pleasing ALL the people. But where do we read that God ever changed His will to please man? Yes, the conclusion of millions is that a person FIRST determines the KIND of religion he wants and then proceeds to "shop" for it much as he would for a new car. Then when he finds the religion which conforms to his opinion, he "joins" it. So if he is pleased why should God not be? After all who is "getting religion" him or God? Of course the religious "leaders" in the world are responsible for this attitude. For if they did not teach it the average man would never think of anything so foreign to God's word.

The reason for this division could be summed up in many forms and shades, but here we are interested in the "root" of the trouble. If you find and destroy the "root" of the tree of division, the tree will die. To only "cut the branches" is to invite it to spring out again. The 'root' then is a lack of respect for the authority of God and Christ. Man does not realize that God is the object of his worship and it is HIS prerogative to command the KIND of worship, and obedience which he WILL, or WILL NOT accept. That it is God who accepts and rewards. That he ONLY blesses the obedient, Matt. 7:21. The disobedient shall be punished by God, II Thes. 1:7-9.

Jesus Christ NOW has ALL authority "in heaven and on earth", Matt. 28:18. This leaves man NO authority in religious matters. And it is a wise man who knows and accepts this truth! Jesus has all authority and man's only prerogative is to either ac-

cept or reject the authority. It is not within man's power to CHANGE God's commands. To TRY to do so constitutes VAIN worship, Matt. 15: 8-9 and NO man wants his worship to be vain. True worship is no more trouble to engage in than vain worship, so if we worship God why not be sure that our worship is accepted and rewarded of God?

While the apostles lived the inspired truth of God was in the inspired man, the apostles and other writers of the Bible. But when the Holy Spirit was sent by Jesus when he returned to heaven. He (the Holy Spirit) guided these writers in to "all truth" and caused them to remember ALL things Jesus had said to them, John 14:26 and 16:13. Jesus did many things which are not written in the Bible, but enough is written that we might believe and be saved, John 20:30-31. So if we believe on Christ, live the Christian life and are saved in heaven, what else can we want or need? Then today Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth, and he ONLY saves those who "obey HIM", Heb. 5:8-9. His authority was revealed to the inspired writers of the New Testament, they recorded and "confirmed" it (Heb. 2:1-4) and today it needs no further confirmation.

Once a truth is confirmed it is for ever confirmed, The Lord confirmed the inspired men's works and writings by miracles, Mark 16:20. Now the fake healers are not needed for the Lord confirmed His own words. Today man can do only one of two things. He has only two choices, no more. He does not need to write creeds of man or established man governed religious organizations. He must either submit to God's authority, the Bible, and be saved; or reject God's authority and be lost. He does not have to reject the Bible AND embrace error to be lost. Just reject God and he is lost. ALL who do not OBEY the Gospel will be LOST, 2 Thes. 1:7-9. The Gospel is God's POWER to save, Rom. 1:16. NO OTHER, save the one Paul

preached will save us, Gal. 1:8-9. If God's Gospel which Paul preached (Gal. 1:10-12) will save a Man's soul, then WHY should man write another creed. If man has a perfect law (James 1:25) then WHY try to improve on something which is perfect? Jesus died that he might be the "author" of "eternal salvation unto all them who OBEY HIM", Heb. 5:8-9. Now do you believe God will have mercy on a person who will reject the authority of HIS son, or write a creed to take the place of the "perfect law of liberty"? THINK now and be SAVED IN THE JUDGMENT.

Jesus has ALL authority in heaven and on earth, which leaves man NO authority in religious matters. Man must either accept God's way and be saved, or reject it and be lost. There is no such thing as understanding the Bible MANY different ways and all are right. We may either understand, or NOT understand, but NO command can be understood different ways. The division in the religious world is NOT because one can not understand the Bible, but rather that there is not the proper respect for what is understood. If all would respect the authority of God then the rest would be simple. We might ask the question, "IS man saved by faith only"? The question is simple. Now if we ask man what he thinks about it, many answers would be heard, But if we go to the Bible the answer is found in language that any honest man can understand.

"We see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only", James 1:24. "But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead"? James 2:20. "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone", James 2:17. Can this be understood? The answer is YES! Then why do ALL not believe and teach the same thing? The answer again is simple. So very many do not RESPECT the authority of God. Several hundred years ago, a-

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bout 1530 A.D., Martin Luther wanted to get as far away from the "works only" doctrine of the Roman Church as possible. so he placed in his creed that man is justified by "faith only".

Continued—next month

by Glynn Purdy

The Poor

Jesus said, "For the poor always ye have with you." Matt. 26:11 and John 12:8.

One objection that I have heard filed against the churches of Christ is that we are all poor people. To this charge, in the main, we plead guilty. I would rather be poor and be right than to be rich and be wrong. Jesus Christ our Lord became poor that we through his poverty might become rich (2 Cor. 8:9). "hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him." James 2:5. "BUT YE HAVE DESPISED THE POOR": Jas 2:6. The rich young ruler said that he had kept all the commandments from his youth up and ask: What lack I yet? Jesus said, "One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me." Mark 10:21. From these SCRIPTURES it may be clearly seen that an indifferent and haughty attitude towards the poor will be enough to keep us out of heaven. After John was placed in prison he sent two of his disciples to Jesus and ask, "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said to them, Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see; The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, AND THE POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM." Matt. 11:3-6. Thus it may be easily seen that Jesus offered the fact that he preached the gospel to the poor as an element in the evidence that proved that he was in deed and in fact the Christ. The church that neglects and despises the poor does not identify itself as a New Testament church.

activities, we are highly impressed the fact that there seems to be a carelessness upon their part in reference to equipment, numbers and social standards; but though not having yet built a meeting house suitable to their position, that sustained a relationship among themselves to the end that "all that believed were together and had all things common; and they sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all, according as any man had need." "Not one of them said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common...Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet; and distribuion was made unto every man according as he had need." In fact, the earliest form of systematic work of the first century by christians was established to care for the poor and needy (Acts 2: 44-45; 4: 32-35; 6: 1-3).

As far as I recall, although Paul taught the churches to support those who labored in the Gospel, and even took wages of them himself, still his writings on giving were always an urge to the relief of the poor. Especially the saints, however, others were included too. (I Cor. 16:1-2; II Cor. 8:9; Gal. 6:10; I Tim. 6:17-19; Heb. 13:15-16.) Paul calls giving a "grace" and even refers to it as an additional "beatitude" in Acts 20:35. James defines "pure religion and undefiled" as acts of charity as well as purity of daily conduct.

Finally, May I say, the POOR, as well as all others, are cordially invited to attend the services of the churches of Christ. You will always find a hearty welcome in the house of God A.F.S.

PRACTICE WHAT YOU PREACH!

To the early Christians John wrote: "My children, love must not be a matter of words or talk; it must be genuine, and show itself in action." (I John 3: 18) We are still confronted with the temptation to try to prove our love by words rather than by works. Much of what we call Christianity is more acting than action. Our religion is made up more of "talking about" than "taking action."

Doing what we know ought to be done, working the plan after having planned the work, following through resolutely on the

resolutions we make — or however you express it, the problem with most of us is the failure to act.

Evidently it is a problem that has always been with the human family. Concerning the tribe of Reuben, Deborah sang. "But in the shires of Reuben were divisions and debates. Why did you lounge in shepard's cotes, with only an ear for pastoral notes?" (Judges 5:15-16, Moffat). When the call to battle was sounded, the Raubenites organized, not a military force, but lively debates and discussions—a counterpart, perhaps, of ineffectual committee meetings of our day.

Many a good work, undertaken with resolution and enthusiasm, dwindles to inaction. Paul advised the Corinthians. "You were the first not only to do anything about this, but to want to do anything, and that was last year. Now finish doing it, so that your readiness to undertake it may be equaled by the way you finish it up" (2 Cor. 8:10-11, Goodspeed)

Words come easily, actions more slowly. Yet a man is measured, not by what he says, but by what he does. A farmer asked his sons to work in the vineyard. "He went to the first and said, 'Go and work in my vineyard today my son.' He said 'All right sir' — but he never went near it. Then the father approached the second son with the same request. He said, 'I won't.' But afterward he changed his mind and went." Jesus' question is rhetorical: "Which of these two do what their father wanted?" (Matt. 21: 28-31)

James reminds us that to be "hearers only" without being "doers of the word" is self deception. It is not the hearer but the "doer that acts" that is to be blessed. (James 1:22-25)

Jesus warned the crowds and his disciples to observe what the scribes and Pharisees taught but not to follow their example because, he said, "they preach, but do not practice!.. In the final analysis the genuineness of our religion is known, not by proclamation, but by demonstration..

Johnny W. Jackson

My Thanksgiving

Even though I clutch my blankets and groan when the alarm rings each morning, thank you, Lord, that I can hear. There are many who are deaf.

Even though I keep my eyes closed tightly against the morning light as long as possible, thank you, Lord, that I can see.

There are many who are blind.

Even though I huddle in my bed and put off the physical effort of rising, thank you, Lord, that I have the strength to rise. There are many who are bedfast.

Even though I sometimes maintain a martyred silence when I should speak, and spout forth when I should remain silent, thank you, Lord, for the gift of speech. There are many who are dumb.

Even though the first hour of my day is hectic, when socks are lost, toast is burned tempers are short, thank you, Lord, for three wonderful children to get off to school. There are many who are childless.

Even though our breakfast table never looks like the pictures in the ladies' magazines, and the menu is at times unbalanced, thank you, Lord, for the food we have. There are many who are hungry.

Even though we sometimes forget our morning prayers, thank you, Lord, that you do not forget to guard and protect us during the day, and thank you, for the gift of faith. There are many who are atheists.

Even though the routine of my job is often monotonous, thank you, Lord, for the opportunity to work. There are many who are unemployed.

Even though my spouse complains that I don't listen to his words, and he pays less attention to my wise instructions, thank you, Lord, for my husband. There are many who have none.

Even though I seldom have time to visit, thank you, Lord, for good neighbors and relatives. There are many who are exiled from their home land.

Even though I don't always approve of the way the country is run, Thank you Lord, that I live in the greatest nation on earth.

Even though I grumble and gripe and bemoan my fate from day to day, and wish my modest circumstances were not quite so modest, thank you, Lord, for the gift of life. Help me to improve my manners and show that I am grateful. Amen.

-- Marie Hayden Michaud

sitors are always welcome, but there are imposters who will claim citizenship and claim all privileges of any other citizen. All imposters will eventually be deported. Visitors may receive blessings by being among the citizens for a time, but will never be considered as citizens unless they comply with the terms of admittance.

The same is true in the spiritual realm. Paul said to the Ephesian church, "Ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the Saints." (Eph. 2:19)

These people were citizens of the Kingdom of God by virtue of the fact they had been 'born again of water and the Spirit'. (Acts 19:1-5). Paul established the church at Ephesus by converting many and after they were baptized into Christ, he gave them gifts of the Spirit by laying his hands upon them. The Gift of the Spirit' was promised to the baptized believers in Christ. (Acts 2:38) A 'birth certificate' was necessary before receiving the gift of the Spirit. Acts 8: 12-17. These people had evidence of citizenship, therefore the Apostles were called to come and impart by laying on their hands, gifts of the Spirit. Many claimed to be the Christ. Many claimed to be Apostles but they were tried and found to be liars. (Rev. 2:2) Many claim to be Christians, citizens of the Kingdom of God today but have no birth certificate' (evidence of pardon). Only those in the Kingdom have their names written in heaven. (Heb. 12: 22-23).

Only those whose names are written in the 'Book of Life' will enter heaven to enjoy all the blessings prepared for the Saints. Once our name is written there we must use great care that it not be blotted out. (Rev. 3:5) We must repent or perish. (Lk. 13:3) We must Confess Jesus before men, or we reject Him. (Matt. 10:32) We must be born of water and the Spirit or be left out. (Jn. 3:3-5. Rom. 6:3-5. Gal. 3:27) Not only will you need your birth certificate, you will also need a good report from your Bishops with whom you have served. Heb. 13: 17) to assure you of entrance into heaven.

Guy H. Couch

and collapsed. His home and goods were lost. He waited too late to prepare for a fire.

A man's doctor warned him of a bad heart condition. From the doctor's office, he went in all haste to the insurance broker to secure protection. The physical examination for the policy disclosed facts that prevented him from acquiring security for himself, his wife and family. It was too late. Neglect had worked its ill results.

When the operation begins, it's too late to take vitamin pills, When the battle begins, it's just too late to train troops. Noah's neighbors over the world realized too late that as the flood waters rise, it is just too late to seek "the Rock that is higher than I." When Satan attacks, they only can resist and stand who have put on the whole armor of God - Eph. 6:10-17.

Some refuse Bible teachings outright, are indifferent to opportunities such as Bible classes, worship, fellowship with the saints, daily Bible study, opportunities to serve their fellowman not really because they do not believe in it or desire it, but they want to wait, delay commitment for a while for the world, "until things are just right."

Then, the day dawns, the morning of the Judgment is here, or as in the parable, this night is thy soul required of thee." Each day comes to us all but once, and once past, is past recall.

Contributions For March

| | |
|------------------------------------|--------|
| Joe Todd | \$1.00 |
| Mrs. L.O.Karns | 2.00 |
| Wheeling Church of Christ | 5.00 |
| Mammoth Spring Church of Christ | 20.00 |
| Agnos Church of Christ | 5.00 |
| Ring Church of Christ | 5.00 |
| Elizabeth Church of Christ | 5.00 |
| Johneey Furminem | 2.00 |
| Fred Humphreys | 1.00 |
| McFadden Church of Christ | 5.00 |
| A Friend | 5.00 |
| Jack Fox | 10.00 |
| Mr. and Mrs. William Roth | 2.00 |
| Mrs. J.H.Laman | 1.00 |
| Lee Flood | 2.00 |
| Mrs. O.C.Martin | 3.00 |
| Arilla Turner | 5.00 |
| Crystal Horton | 3.00 |
| Clarence Price | 2.00 |

YOU WILL NEED YOUR BIRTH CERTIFICATE

Your birth certificate is evidence of your citizenship. If you are a citizen of USA you are entitled to certain privileges, liberties, blessings and opportunities that non-citizens are not privileged to have. Vi-

Don't Wait Until Too Late

A man's house was burning. He needed a fire extinguisher. So he rushed out to buy one! Before he returned, the roof and walls of his house were engulfed in flames

This And That

We are approaching the time of year when church activities become more numerous. We will try to keep our readers informed of the meetings and other services if they will drop us a card with the details of their activities. We need this information by the twenty-fifth of the month previous to our month of mailing.

Much is being said these days about the empty pulpits in all the different religious beliefs. Fewer and fewer young men choose the preaching profession. Not only are young men not taking up the work of the ministry, but many older men are quitting and going into secular work.

The church of our Lord is feeling the effects of this trend. Every so often I learn of an acquaintance who is taking a secular job and who will probably preach only on appointment. All too often they are men of talent that are badly needed in many places to do the work of a gospel minister. In a day when Christianity is being challenged by the wave of sin that is sweeping over the world this only weakens the efforts to head off the complete moral breakdown of our present civilization.

What are the reasons for this fast developing shortage of preachers? Several reasons, varying with the individual, can be cited for this problem. Two reasons are most prominent. Inadequate support and too much expected from a full time preacher.

Though preacher salaries are rising, they have not kept pace with salaries offered in the business world. Most preachers have college training and have some gift of speech as well as ability to meet the public. They make good salesmen and public relations men. The business world tempts them with attractive salaries. Many are young men with family obligations that require a good amount of money to meet the standard of living of our day. They can excuse their conscience by taking a part time preaching job and they are no longer a burden on the church. The congregation where they work would probably have no preaching had he not of quit full time work and become available at a price the congregation was able to pay. But there is another side to this problem. The church can ill afford to lose a talented young preacher, even if he does continue to preach some. With the growth of our urban area, many new congregations are being started each year. They need able men to grow as they should. When no one

is available or less talented men have to do the work, the church is hindered. The cause of Christ suffers.

The other reason that many quit the pulpit is because a preacher is expected to be a stirring speaker, a gifted teacher, public relations promoter, baby sitter, marriage counselor, social worker, church secretary, etc. all in one person. It causes many nervous breakdowns among the preaching profession. Overwork and the worry of other peoples' problems, send many a preacher into secular work.

Much more could be said on this problem, I merely point out some of the main reasons given as something to think about.

There are many methods of acquiring Biblical knowledge. One of the best is to attend regularly a Bible class where an able teacher directs the study. A Bible class teacher has a great responsibility. Teachers of this area should avail themselves of the opportunity of improving their talents by attending the teachers workshop at the West Plains church, April 28-May 1 from 7:30 to 9:00 p.m.

Clovis Ragsdale

THE FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS is a monthly publication distributed free of charge to any who care to receive it. We will be happy to add any names to the regular mailing list. If you send in a name, be SURE to include the Zip Code Number, It must be with each address according to the Postal regulations. This paper is supported by unsolicited contributions for which we are grateful. If you care to know of its financial status and expenses, that information will be furnished upon request.

EDITORS : Clovis Ragsdale and James E. Henley

News

The Sturkie Church of Christ will host a special series of Lectures on the Church. Beginning May 12 through the 16th. Brother N.E. Honeycutt will be the speaker.

There will be a Gospel meeting at the Church of Christ in Thayer, Missouri June the 23rd through the 28th. Brother Charles Coil will be the speaker.

The Church of Christ in Gospel Hill, Missouri will host a gospel meeting April 21, through the 27th.

There will be a gospel meeting at Mountain Grove, Missouri April 21, through the 27th. Brother Boyd Morgan will be the speaker.

A THOUGHT FOR PARENTS

Just imagine that you suddenly found yourself to be a teacher of a Bible class. No parent ever came to introduce himself to you as the parent of one of your students. No parent ever gave you an encouraging word. No parent ever told you of any good influence you were having on his child. No student of yours showed by his class participation that his parents ever helped him prepare his lessons.

How long would you last as a teacher? I am afraid that most of us would lose interest and give up trying. Yet we go on week after week thoughtlessly inflicting our Bible teachers with this very discouraging attitude.

There is not a person anywhere who is trying to do work for the Lord but who needs words of encouragement—not that they might become puffed up with vanity—but that they might determine to work harder because someone gave them a lift with a few kind words of appreciation, not only in teaching but in every phase of the work of the church.

As a parent, you ought to get acquainted with your child's teacher.

Call him (or her) on the phone. Ask about your child; offer any compliments which you can truthfully make, and make a good constructive criticism if necessary. You will be a better parent : the teacher will feel better, and as a result your child will receive better teaching and the Lord's church will be strengthened. -Sel.

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