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Church, A Place To Go?

Far too many Christians are "going to Church" and missing the point of the whole thing. How many times has the statement: "I'm going to Church Sunday!" or "We go to Church!" been made? Is this not frequently heard? One would be remiss to deny it. This writer desires to challenge the statement: "Church, a place to go."

The haphazard, unconscious, lackadaisical attitude that is emulated by many in Christ's church over the matter of "Church going" is seriously jeopardizing souls. The oft repeated statement has been uttered for so long that we have actually (I believe), convinced ourselves that we can "go to Church." As a result of this faulty awareness, we have created an "institutionalized Church", a Church of Christ. The church for which Christ died is not, nor has it ever been an institutionalized Church, i.e., an institution to which men can come and go just as they do their jobs, houses, and restaurants. Actually, we have made Christ's Church a big "Filling Station." This Church has become a place to go when one is hungry and thirsty. However, the church of my Lord is no such thing! Christ's church is the "blood-bought, apostle-brought, devil-fought, people-sought, spirit-filled, heaven-sent institution, where wrongs are righted, sins forgiven, aliens reconciled, and sinners are made Saints" (Jack Exum, "Prophet Number 401", Firm Foundation, May 19, 1970, Vol. 87, No. 20, p. 307). The church is not a "stable"; the church is a "mobile" i.e., it is in the state of becoming the bride of Christ at the consummating marriage feast. In other words, the church of Christ is not a "Place to go" but a "body that lives."

If the church is cold, melancholy, brick walled, mortar and cement, then Christ is cold, melancholy, brick walled, mortar and cement. The Church is Christ's body (Col. 1:18). If this body has all of the manifestations as suggested above, it has received them from the body head, which is Jesus Christ!

Young people have a legitimate complaint when they do not want to "go to Church." Can we blame them? Young people want to be "in the church", not simply "go to Church." The church is the recipient of "all spiritual blessings" (Eph.

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The Devices of Satan: II Cor. 2:11

By Kenneth Hudelson
McAlester, Okla.

"To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heavens," Eccles. 3:1.

In keeping with the thought here expressed by Solomon, I believe that there is a time for us to consider the devices of Satan, and I believe that that time is now.

The apostle Paul, in writing to the brethren at Corinth, II Cor. 2:11, said, "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us, for we are not ignorant of his devices." Webster defines a device as something made or thought up to bring about a desired result. Satan's devices then, are things he has made or thought up to bring about his desired result, which is the capture and the possession of the souls of men and women, boys and girls. Unlike Paul, however, I am afraid that many times we are either ignorant of the devices of Satan or else we simply refuse to acknowledge them as such.

The devices of Satan are many, and as time goes by his devices become more numerous day by day. The devices of Satan are at work in McAlester. He has thought up or made devices for the young as well as for the older. I believe that he concentrates his greatest energies in making plans for the young, for inexperience, and the great zeal for living, make our boys and girls his most fertile field for obtaining converts.

For many years I have dedicated my energies, in a considerable measure, to the protection of young people such as these, from Satan's devices. Every Christian adult, and especially every parent, should have this same determination. I am convinced of these two things. That in diligently striving to save others, we will perhaps save ourselves, and, that the parent who is giving the time necessary to the proper rearing of his child has no time to become entangled in the device that Satan has prepared for that parent.

Recent events have caused both young and old to be profoundly aware of the importance of living close to God. This has been extremely evident among our young people. God has made man in such a way, however, and he has made time to be such, that Satan's devices will one day again be more attractive to us than they may be at this time. Yes to everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven.

In our city there are at least three religious organizations which sponsor and conduct within their buildings dances which they usually announce as dime dances. I can imagine how the Lord must react when the announcement comes over the system at the ballgame, "A certain church will sponsor a dime dance for all teenagers following the game," I can think of no way by which his name could be more dishonored. Learn to recognize the devices of Satan when and where they appear.

In our city there have been numerous so called places or occasions of recreation. To name a few there was Teen Town, The Attic, the Holliday or Christmas Ball or dance for teens, the various sorority, fraternal, or club dances that can result in but one thing, and this is, to lessen the spirituality of those who participate. What a sickening thought to think that Christians, young or old, might be attracted to such places and activities as these. Satan's devices are many and varied.

There was a time when high school juniors and seniors looked forward to, and talked about, the Junior Senior Banquet. This has become an almost forgotten term, replaced by the Junior Senior Prom. The wholesome aspect of this occasion has become very minor as compared to the worldly aspect of it, the Prom. Parents are we ignorant of the devices of Satan? Where does our true love lie, with the world, or with Christ?

But Satan has other devices. One device tends to convince a few Christians that it is alright to come to Bible class, but to leave before the other services are completed. His device causes some to leave following the Lord's supper, before they hear the word proclaimed. A device of Satan causes some to proclaim that even tho' the elders have arranged gatherings of the flock for feeding at various times, one need not feel an obligation to be at these gatherings except as he chooses.

A few months ago a group of high school boys in our state, assaulted a 15 year old girl in a most inhuman and loathful way. Perhaps every person here who is of sufficient age to understand, read of, and knows the sordid details of this case. Daily routine causes me to

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The Devices Of Satan II (Cont.)

come in contact with some men whom I consider as extremely worldly. I would like for every girl here, and the parents of every girl, to hear the remarks of one of these men as this case was being discussed. The man who made this remark makes no pretense to being a christian. Instead he manifests an extremely low moral code of ethics. He said, "It would be interesting to me to know how the girl was dressed. If she was dressed in the short short suits, that many girls wear in summer, then," he said, "she got what she was asking for." In a few weeks, perhaps when the weather is consistently a few degrees above freezing, this type dress will begin appearing. It's early appearance testifies that for the most part its purpose is not for the sake of comfort. Environment and our present society have nothing to do with determining what true modesty is.

Profanity, use of vulgar language, disrespect of parents of adult disregard of children, disrespect for law and authority are all numbered among Satan's devices. Let's not forget too soon the events that have sobered us, that have caused us to be aware of life's realities. They that sow to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption. Gal. 6:8.

Pure religion includes keeping oneself unspotted from the world. Jas. 1:27.

SPIRITUALITY

By Ron D. Bryant

Spirituality — a requisite of true Christianity (Gal. 6:1; Col. 1:9). Spiritual poverty is the constant danger against which we must fight. Jesus makes clear to us even in the great commission that it is not enough just to teach and baptize; but specifically enjoins that these are to be taught to "observe all I commanded you." (Matt. 28:19-20). We must recognize there are second principles to Christianity that increase spirituality, as well as first principles to begin true Christian spirituality. A developing to spiritual maturity can be accomplished only if we "grow in grace and knowledge." (II Pet. 3:18 of I Pet. 2:1-2) only is we continue "steadfastly in the apostles doctrine, in fellowship, in breaking of bread and prayer." (Acts 2:42)

Spirituality is possible only if we abide in the doctrine of Christ (II John 9) not in an effort of legalistic "rule-keeping" but in a fulfillment of the promise of John 14:15 and a desire to fulfill inspired instruction "whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." (Col. 3:17)

Truth, pure and unadulterated by traditions and commandments of men, is paramount as the strength of spirituality. False doctrine stifles true spirituality. Truth reveals the way for man to go, the work for his hands, the control for his mind, the goal for his life. Truth declares not only the way but also the companion for the pilgrim. Jesus declared "I am with you always" (Matt 28:20). Peter declares "He left us an example that we should walk in His steps" and then declares "cast all your cares on him for he careth for you." (I Pet. 2:21; 5:7)

Truth makes us aware of God's care for us, stirring the spiritual chords of our being to an increase of faith, love, hope — i.e. spirituality. He cares, is voiced by the golden text, John 3:16; by the sacrifice of the cross, Rom 5:6-8; by the promise of sonship, I John 3:1-3; and the promise of provision, Rom. 8:28 cf Matt. 6:25-33, also I Cor. 10:12-13. The declaration of Paul, "If God be for us then who can be against us" bespeaks a confidence welling from the spirituality of God's child.

Truth reveals a great impetus to purity, faithfulness, yes spirituality by the pronouncement, "Know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have from God? And ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price: glorify God therefore in your body." (I Cor. 6:19-20 ASV)

Encouragement to confidence in Christian endeavor and prayer is brought by truth's revelation that the Spirit helps our weaknesses and makes intercession for us in ways beyond our understanding. (Rom. 8:26) And recognizing this fact enables us to lead lives of peace and joy and increase to allow the mind of Christ to be in us, (Phil. 2:5-8). This increase of spirituality is created by submission; a submission to God's truth that creates a daily walk in close communion with God, an increasing love for others and an awareness of the person to person spiritual relationships available in Christ.

In conclusion let's utilize two words: "spiritual" and "Mechanical" and a brief illustration of practical, yet possibly astonishing weight.

Most all congregations of the Lord's people have many members who do not attend Bible study, Sunday night services, nor midweek Bible study at all. Rare indeed is the congregation that has as many assembled Sunday evening as Sunday morning. We've even heard arguments about "essential services" as opposed to "non-essential services." Let's face the facts — all this indicates that many of our people are "clock punchers", legalists, whose love and spirituality is very small indeed yet they are strong on "obedience" with a minimum of commands. Their understanding of the Christian scheme is more "mechanical" than truly "spiritual". Many admit they doubt the power of prayer — doubt prayers are answered and state they pray only because they are commanded. A "mechanical" requirement to them, instead of a "spiritual" blessing and privilege of great benefit and power.

We must recognize the full significance of the fact of being "saved by grace through faith" (Eph. 2:8) and of what it means "to be crucified with Christ"; and "it is no longer I that live, but Christ lives in me. And, thus the "spiritual life" is the life of daily discipleship.

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The Covering of 1 Cor. II

We have been asked about this and many pages could be written concerning the matter and still not be clear. But for now, I will only present the conclusion. One would need to read the Revised Version of the Bible to know the different in the "veil" covering and the "hair" covering.

In Verse 16, Paul speaks of this as being a "custom" and that we believe it to have been. God is the head of Christ; Christ the head of man; the man the head of the woman and the woman was created for the man, not the man for the woman. So the woman was to have "a sign of authority on her head" (RV, Verse 10), that is the "veil", or covering showed (by custom then) that a wife was under the authority of her husband (her head). If she did not wear the veil she dishonored her head (her husband).

The custom was that if a woman appeared in public without her veil, she was considered a prostitute, therefore she WOULD dishonor her husband! She would bring reproach upon the church of the Lord if she were a member. So Paul was saying, that if she did not wear the veil, she might as well go all the way and "shave" her head, which was the mark of prostitution, by custom at that time. The woman's WHOLE HEAD WAS VEILED. A little hat on the top of a woman's head today, no more fulfills this custom, than does sprinkling fulfill baptism! If we must keep the custom, the woman MUST COVER her head in such a way that a man cannot tell one woman from another in public, or even if she is a woman!

Customs change, but in some countries today, it may be necessary for a woman who is a Christian, to cover her head if not to do so would be misunderstood. It seems to me that today there are ACTIONS which show whether a woman honors her head (husband) rather than the little hat on top of her head! I BELIEVE THIS IS TRUE.

May We Always Have

Enough happiness to keep us sweet;
Enough sorrow to keep us human;

Enough faith in ourselves to give us courage;
Enough wealth to meet our needs;

Enough trials to keep us strong;
Enough failure to keep us humble.

Enough friends to give us comfort;
Enough determination to make each day a good day.

—Selected.

Church Membership Essential to Salvation

Many people believe and teach that membership in a church is not essential to salvation. Now if one is speaking of the church where one "gets saved" and then joins it, this is true. But if one is speaking of the New Testament church, the one the Lord promised to build, purchased with his blood and adds the "saved" to it, then that is different, Matt. 16:18; Acts 20:28; 2:47. The "BODY" of Christ and His church, is ONE and the SAME institution, Col. 1:18, therefore, if one can be saved OUT OF the Lord's church, he can be saved OUT OF Christ! But we can NOT be saved OUT OF CHRIST, which is HIS church, therefore we can NOT be saved OUT OF the LORD'S church!

1. HOPE IS IN CHRIST, 1 Pet. 1:1-5.
2. MERCY IS IN CHRIST, 1 Tim. 1:2.
3. PEACE IS IN CHRIST, 2 Pet. 1:2.
4. GRACE IS IN CHRIST, 2 John 3.
5. ALL SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS ARE IN CHRIST, Eph. 1:3.
6. ALL SAINTS ARE IN CHRIST, Phil. 1:1.
7. THE SAVED ARE IN CHRIST, Jude 1, Acts 2:47.
8. FORGIVENESS IS IN CHRIST, Eph. 1:7.
9. NEW CREATURES, those born again (without which no one can be saved), ARE IN CHRIST.
10. CHILDREN OF GOD ARE IN CHRIST, Gal. 3:26-27.
11. REDEMPTION IS IN CHRIST, Eph. 1:7.
12. REST IS FOUND IN CHRIST, Matt. 11:28-30.

If you have not given this much thought, will you not do so now. It is easy to have "always heard", or "always thought" something, but this is not what will save you. ONLY the Gospel of Christ will save, Rom. 1:16, and ALL those who OBEY the Gospel, are ADDED BY THE LORD, TO THE LORD'S CHURCH. DO YOU NOT UNDERSTAND THAT SALVATION IS IN THE LORD'S CHURCH? HAD YOU NOT RATHER BE A MEMBER OF THE CHURCH OF THE LORD'S CHOICE THAN A MEMBER OF THE CHURCH OF YOUR CHOICE?

Prayer For The Week

Lord, give us the power to live each day as if we were living that day at thy side. Grant us the peace of love and understanding of our fellow man.

—tmb

The Works of the Flesh

By Glynn Purdy

"Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God," Galatians 5:19-21.

ONE THING THAT WE ARE SURE OF AND THAT IS THOSE WHO DO EVEN ONE OF THESE THINGS WHICH IS NOT FORGIVEN BY OBEYING GOD, SHALL NOT ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD. THEREFORE NO ONE SHOULD WANT TO BE GUILTY OF SUCH! THEN WHAT DO THESE THINGS MEAN?

ADULTERY, OR FORNICATION

THE KING JAMES VERSION STATES ADULTERY AND THE REVISED STATES FORNICATION. These is no difference in the meaning of the words; some apply adultery to unlawful sexual relations between some married persons and fornication between unmarried persons, but the act is the same. These can NOT enter the kingdom of heaven.

UNCLEANNES

This is self-abuse; unnatural practice, or sodomy, or on the animal level, 2 Cor. 12:21; Romans 1:24-25.

LASCIVIOUSNESS

This is any and all types of things that are unchaste. Thinking, or practicing that which is impure, or unholy. "Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life", Prov. 4:23. Opposite of pure and clean! OUT OF THE HEART comes such things, therefore we should read things that promote pure thoughts, which produce pure words and pure deeds. A person can have an evil thought, but one is not to dwell on it.

IDOLATRY

We think first of those who bow before idols, of false gods. This of course IS idolatry, but ANYTHING which can come between one and the true God is also idolatry! "COVETOUSNESS IS IDOLATRY", Col. 3:5. If ANYONE, or ANYTHING becomes the object of our love to God and service to Him, then THIS IS IDOLATRY and we CANNOT enter the kingdom of heaven in this state! WITCHCRAFT, OR SORCERY

Witchcraft, or sorcery was practiced in the Old and New Testament, but ALWAYS condemned! This is the art of using "spirits", whether pretending they are good, or bad (Acts 19:19) to obtain

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What Does It Mean To Be . . .

A real Christian is a faithful follower of Jesus Christ. A person may be very religious and not be a Christian — because though Christianity is a religion, a vast amount of religion is not Christianity. And a person may be affiliated with a “Christian” sect, or he may be associated with a true Church of Christ, for that matter, and not be a real Christian.

To a real Christian “Christ is all and in all” (Colossians 3:11). Christ is the core and the covering of his religion. It is Jesus Christ who gives meaning to everything that relates to his religion.

The faith of a real Christian is a loving response to all of this. His repentance has its motivation in the life and work of Jesus. Jesus is that “goodness of God” that leads to repentance (Romans 2:4). The baptism of a real Christian is the beginning of his conscious sharing of the death, the burial and resurrection of Jesus. He emerged from this to a new life in Christ Jesus (Romans 6:3f).

A Real Christian Is Active

It is at this point that being a real Christian demands an active relationship with the church. The church was designed as an organization to help people be real Christians. It was designed for the mutual improvement of its members through their relationship with one another. In this fellowship the weak and the strong, the new Christians and the mature Christians are brought together. In the exercise of the love they are taught to have for each other, Christians are renewed and inspired.

The church was designed as a teaching body. We come together to be instructed and exhorted. And all are admonished to let Christ’s Word dwell richly in them that they may teach in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs (Colossians 3:16).

The Lord’s Supper was given to the church to bring us again and again to the scenes of Christ’s suffering love — lest we forget. And the prayers in which Christians engage together and privately bring us to the throne of mercy in our need. And we may come boldly because we know One lives ever to intercede for us (Hebrews 4:14ff; 7:25).

So the real Christian is active in the church. He is a blessing in it and he is blessed by it.

Christ-Like in Everything

A real Christian tries to be like Jesus of Nazareth in everything that was essential and unique in his character. A real Christian follows Jesus (Luke 9:23). He strives for the spirit of Christ (Romans 8:9). He cultivates the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5-9). He would yield every thought into captivity to the will of Christ (II Corinthians 10:5). He wants to grow up to Christ in all things (Ephesians 5:15). He is willing to sacrifice all things

The Works Of The Flesh (Cont.)

unlawful results. That is, accomplishing things that God has not placed within the power of man. There is much of this deception going on in our own country today!

HATRED

This of course means to hate another, to have ill will toward another, which is the very opposite of LOVE which God requires that we have toward ALL MEN!

VARIANCE

This is contentions, or enmities, which is condemned in the first and third chapters of 1 Cor. This is not based on matters of faith, but on opinions and personal likes, or dislikes. This causes much trouble in many churches even today!

EMULATIONS, OR JEALOUSIES

THIS IS THE OPPOSITE OF ROMANS 12:15. We are to weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice. One who is jealous, will weep when the other rejoices and rejoice when he weeps. Contrary to the life of a Christian and the commands of God. WHERE DO YOU STAND ON THIS?

BLESSED

BLESSED are they who understand my faltering step and palsied hand.

BLESSED are they who know that my ears today must strain to catch the things they say.

BLESSED are they who seem to know that my eyes are dim and my wits are slow.

BLESSED are they who looked away when my coffee spilled at the table today.

BLESSED are they with a cheery smile who stop to chat for a little while.

BLESSED are they who never say, “You’ve told that story twice today.”

BLESSED are they who know the ways to bring back memories of yesterdays.

BLESSED are they who make it known that I’m loved, respected and not alone.

BLESSED are they who know I’m at a loss to find the strength to carry the Cross.

BLESSED are they who ease the days on my journey Home in loving ways.

—Selected

to gain that experimental knowledge of the fullness of Christ’s grace and power. He conceives of himself as slain, and the life he lives as the life Christ lives in him (Galatians 2:20).

To a real Christian, we repeat, “Christ is all and in all”. A real Christian is a faithful follower of Jesus Christ. He abides in His teaching. He becomes like Him.

—Bulletin, Church of Christ
Albany, New York

Church A Place To Go? (Cont.)

1:3). It is justified to wonder if anyone who “goes to Church” ever receives a spiritual blessing.

This is not to say that we should do away with our present meeting houses and worship “nature a la mode,” but it is saying we could use some real, genuine, honest, truth-seeking, spirit-loving, church “livers”. Have you ever pondered the idea of Christian living? Church living is Christian living!

Christ died that dying men and women might have “life and that they might have it more abundantly” (Jh. 10:10b). Christ did not die for men and women to erect a Temple in which they could go, once, twice or three times a week and receive guidance, serenity and forgiveness. The Temple, and Temple Worship, went out with the law of Moses when it was nailed to the cross (Gal. 3:23-25; Eph. 2:15-22; Col. 2:14). Our spiritual bodies have become the spiritual dwelling place of deity (I Cor. 6:19, 20; Eph. 2:22; 3:17; Acts 2:38; 5:32). When we amass our spiritual bodies together into one place, the church has then literally come together (Acts 2:41, 47). It is impossible to spiritually “go to church”. One is either in church (in Christ), or out of the church (out of Christ).

One enters Christ’s church by immersion in water (I Cor. 12:13; Acts 8:36). There is no other way to get into the church of Christ. (Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:1-6). Once in Christ’s church, we must live the life of Christ or die the death of an Institution (I Cor. 9:13, 14; Gal. 5:25). Realizing this, therefore, one cannot “go into church” on Sunday morning, Sunday night, or Wednesday night.

The youth of our land exclaim: “The Church is not relevant; the Church is antiquated; the Church is dead!” Truthfully, they are absolutely correct. The Church is exactly that, DEAD! Christ’s church, however, is relevant, current, and living.

—Mike Wilson
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