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Where Are The Brethren?

By Mike Pace

Every Christian should be actively engaged in the service of God. Since becoming a Christian is becoming a component part of the church, the Christians of a given locality band themselves together in a congregation -- a local church -- for the worship and service of God. This "local congregation" is the church at that particular place. When Paul addressed the church at Corinth, he wrote to the Christians at Corinth, considered collectively, congregationally. Every Christian should work with, and be a member of the local church where he attends the services. Since the church, as a whole, is composed of the various local churches, the individual who is not a member of the local church is not contributing to the strength of the divine institution, the church of our Lord.

If we look around us, we will very often find Christians who have been in the community (this is especially true in the cities and larger towns) for weeks, months, and even years, who have never become identified with any congregation. That does not mean that he is not a Christian, but it does mean that he is a "secret disciple" whose influence is all but "nil". Perhaps this individual has been active in the work where he has formerly resided. And upon moving to a new location, he perhaps attends a few times and considers himself a member of the congregation, and the congregation does not consider him a stranger, but he has not been publicly welcomed. Then he begins to feel that he is not welcome, and that the church is not friendly. And too often, he ceases to attend regularly. He blames others when he is the cause of that condition.

Others move away from their home congregation and seem to leave all their interest in the church they move away from. They never attend anywhere after

moving. These people are too often lost to the church completely.

Christians, when leaving a community, changing residence, should ask the church from which they are moving for a letter of identification and recommendation (which should not be given to any who are not in good standing, but always to those who are). Then upon arriving in their new home, this letter should be presented to, and membership taken in, the congregation most conveniently situated with respect to their new location.

But too often this is not done, and since it is not, I shall offer a few suggestions which might help us in "keeping track" of people who are moving about.

1. Let us urge brethren to inform the elders or preacher when they are about to move and where they intend to locate.

2. Let the elders and the minister of each congregation use diligence in learning the departure of members of the congregation, and at once notify the church where they are going.

3. Let each member realize that he is his "brother's keeper" and keep in close touch with other members of the congregation. The members are in position to help the minister and the elders to keep their membership records correct.

Continually people are moving. This is true in the cities and towns and even in small communities. They should be made to feel at home wherever they move, but how can we make them feel that way if we do not know who or where they are. So advise those who move away from you to take a letter, then let the elders or the preacher where they are moving know who and where they are. And also of what they are best fitted to do in the work of the church.

Another good thing to do: if you know of any one moving into a new community who is not a member, but who might be interested, drop the elders or the preacher a "note" of information about them, that they may be visited in the interest of their souls and the Lord's work. Possibly a special call and an invitation from the church would lead to a conversion to Christ.

Let us not limit our interest to people where we live and work and worship. The souls of men are of equal value everywhere. The salvation of souls and the growth and development of the church throughout the world should be of interest to every child of God.

SIN IS A HORRIBLE THING!

By Dillard Thurman

One of the most difficult tasks facing preachers in this, or any other generation, is to convict people of sin. It is readily admitted by all that sin blights the family of man. But there is not the personal consciousness and contrition demanded for conversion from sinful living. It is neither pleasing nor flattering to awaken to the seriousness of personal iniquity, and one's own doom because of sin. As a result, it is found only nine times in all the book of God where anyone ever confessed, "I have sinned." Of all the huge gallery that is catalogued in the Bible, only nine times was this confession made. It is the hardest of all things to confess. Yet there must be a full realization of sinfulness before one desires to be made free from sin.

It is not necessary for one to be a gifted seer or prophet to discern certain signs on the social horizon that bode ill for civilization. The fires of uncontrolled passion and lust burn brightly in the lurid front-page stories of our newspapers, with scenes of adultery, fornication, murder,

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SIN IS A HORRIBLE THING

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theft, drunkenness, strife, covetousness, lasciviousness, revelings and war. In a mad world, gone even more mad by the throwing off of one final restraint — the consciousness of the reality and the fatality of SIN, surely these are days that try men's souls.

The Wise Man wrote centuries ago: "*Fools make a mock of sin*" (Prov. 14:9). Yea, only a fool would make a mock of that which is so serious: "*The wages of sin is death*" (Rom. 6:33). All the words of anguish, horror, pain, hurt, disappointment and despair could never portray the ravages of sin. It would take the moan of all the dying, the wail of all those bereft, the cry of all orphaned, the lament of all widowed, the terrorized scream of all the lost, and the pitious shrieks that emanate from the torture chambers of hell — and this would only be a partial picture of what sin has done to man.

It was sin that closed the Garden of Eden to Adam and Eve, and brought death and destruction into the experiences of man. Sin it was that banished Cain into a foreign land. Sin opened the fountains of the deep and released the deluge from the sky that destroyed the whole world, save the family of Noah. The iniquity of man brought the children of Abraham into Egyptian bondage. Sin later caused this people to wander for forty years in the wilderness, and sin also prevented their leader, Moses, from entering into the great land of promise. Sin brought down a shameful defeat at Ai, and when they took the matter up with God, His terse reply was, "*There is sin in the camp!*" Sin led the children of Israel into captivity. Sin persecuted the prophets of old,

killed the holy men of God, and finally had its field day when the Son of God was crucified! Thus the whole panoramic view of man's history on earth has been marred and scorched by the tragic inroads of sin. But we must always bear in mind that it was by man that the stain of sin was placed upon the canvas of this picture! God is not at fault in this at all!

Surely we must contenance the reality of sin and face its terrible consequences. Why, then, is there this hesitation in recognizing our own guilt? Are we so much more righteous than others that we have entirely escaped this corruption? How insidiously the devil has wormed his way into our thinking to destroy the personal acknowledgement of sin! But the guilt still remains, and David aptly said, "*The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no not one*" (Psalms 14:2-3). The fact that all others have sinned against God does not minimize nor mitigate our own guilt, for we are not excused thereby. Solomon placed upon all a personal, as well as a blanket indictment, when he declared: "*There is not a just man upon the earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not.*" (Eccl. 7:20). That includes you and me.

It was because of Man's departure from God that a Savior was sent to redeem us from the ravages of sin; "*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all*" (Isa. 53:5). The need of a Savior and the reason for His coming is simply stated by Paul: "*For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God*" (Rom. 3:23). Man must come to realize that the whole world is under condemnation without the Christ.

The preaching of the cross falls on deaf ears only because this generation doesn't feel a keen need of a Savior. Every sermon that depicts sinfulness in the world is made to apply in a general way — but seldom in a personal sense. Good moral men are epitomized as examples and a world asks, "Am I not as righteous as he?" But one passage still confronts us all: "*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unright-*

eousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us" (1 John 1:8-10). Shall we not then confess our sins before the Lord and accept the redemption that is in Christ?

We still need strong, forceful, fearless proclamation of the gospel of Christ. But there must also be a consciousness of sin on the part of them that hear. The world must be taught to distinguish between truth and error, between the church of the Lord and the counterfeit institutions foisted upon society by false teachers, between Christ and Satan, between righteousness and sin. Sin must be condemned that souls will recognize the result of sinfulness will be eternal rejection from God Almighty.

The horrible anguish and torment of those that are lost becomes revolting to the vanity of some who would impeach the justice of God. But can we affirm that God is unjust? The terrible price to be paid for sin only accentuates the awfulness of SIN! When we contemplate the punishment God reserves for the wicked, we are not to criticize God for not allowing us to sin with impunity. Rather, we are to learn that sin is such defilement that God cannot tolerate it, nor admit it to His presence. If we try to minimize the guilt of sin, or the punishment prescribed, we are only attempting to belittle God and His Word. It is another step in belittling the work done by Jesus Christ in saving us from sin. We will have a greater appreciation for Christ and a greater love for God when we contemplate how tragic a thing sin is, and our eternal salvation from it. This escape is provided by and through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Yet it still remains for us to obtain the freedom from sin that is proffered unto us. We still hold the key that allows us to escape, but we must make use of it. God has done His part in the scheme of our redemption in sending His Son to save us. Christ accomplished His work in our salvation when He gave His blood on the cross for us, and sent forth the Words of Life. The Holy Spirit consummated God's great plan in bringing and confirming the words of salvation. But there is still something that must be done. This is man's part. In Romans 6:17-18 we read, "*But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.*"

The form of doctrine here referred to is set forth simply and plainly in I Cor. 15 verse 14. There Paul states that it is the death, burial, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ for our sins. Now, we must obey a form of that doctrine, that is, a death, burial and resurrection. In the first part of the sixth chapter of Romans, Paul pointed out precisely what he meant — *“How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”* In the first of this chapter, Paul shows over and over again that we enter into Christ when we have died and been buried in baptism from past sins. But one must believe sufficiently in Christ to want to die to sin. Only then can he be buried from those sins, and raised to walk in newness of life. Then one becomes free from sin (Rom. 6:17-18), and death hath no more dominion over him (Rom. 6:8-9). But one must obey this form of doctrine to enjoy this freedom and escape the punishment of sin.

Friend, you hold the key. You can continue to grovel in sin and reject the salvation God is offering: you can revel in iniquity, and drink deeply from worldly pleasures. But you can't reject the consequences of this wicked behavior. On the other hand, you can rise above the sinfulness that binds you by accepting Christ upon His terms of pardon. You hold the key -- what will be your decision?

WHY EVERY CHRISTIAN SHOULD GIVE MORE THAN 10%

By Mac Layton

1. WE HAVE FAR SUPERIOR BLESSINGS THAN THE JEWS, who were required to give more than 10% (Hebrews 8:6). Jesus demanded that His followers exceed them (Matthew 5:20).

2. OUR RESPONSIBILITIES ARE GREATER. More lost souls are depending on us for salvation than in any age.

3. THE FIRST CHRISTIANS GAVE MORE THAN 10%.

4. WE HAVE MORE THAN 10% IN OUR BUDGETS FOR LUXURIES. Most Christians could triple their giving to Christ and not miss a single luxury!

5. ALL AROUND MEN ARE GIVING MORE THAN 10% FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF ERROR. Can we do less for Christ and the truth?

6. MANY TIP ON A HIGHER PERCENTAGE THAN THEY GIVE TO CHRIST.

7. MANY CHRISTIANS PAY FAR MORE INCOME TAX THAN THEY GIVE TO JESUS. Isn't it a far greater blessing to belong to the Heavenly Kingdom of the church than any earthly kingdom?

8. MORE THAN 10% GIVING PUTS US ON SAFE GROUND. Less is dangerous, without authority.

9. TRUE GIVING MUST INVOLVE SACRIFICE. We must give out of life, not after life. The Lord looks at what is left as well as what is given.

church is not due to anything special in me, but something special in Christ. Before He died on the cross He said “I will build my church and the gates of hades shall not prevail against it.” After His resurrection He promised “I will be with you always, to the very end of the age.” So all through His life, Jesus committed Himself to **people**. Even though we have guilt, pride, and many, many problems, we have the guarantee of divinity that Jesus will never leave us.

I've decided that means several things for my relationship to the church:

I will never leave the church **emotionally**. We must be available to each other to share our lives, to confess our faults, worship, to laugh, to cry and to walk together through the places of life. We must not commit emotionally adultery against each other. We need to be each other's best friend.

I will never leave the church **theologically**. Jesus built one church and He is its head. The purpose of “no creed but Christ, no book but the Bible, no message but the gospel and no aim but to save” is a good summary of what the New Testament church was all about. I'm committed to those principles.

I will never leave the church **spiritually**. They are my brothers and sisters in Christ. God is our Father. It is the greatest family on earth. Though sometimes our lives are chipped and broken, we are still the vessels of God's treasure. We must never leave each other.

To love is to never leave one another.

I'm Not Leaving The Church

By Douglas F. Parsons

One decision that I have come to in my adult life is that I will never leave the church. What I mean is that I will never leave the people who are the family of God. Yes, they have weaknesses, make mistakes, and commit sins, but I'm not leaving them. Occasionally, someone will say, “Why should I be a member of the church; I'm as good as any of those hypocrites down there!” My response has been “Of course, there are hypocrites in the church. People have always tried to counterfeit that which is of value. Why do people counterfeit twenty dollar bills instead of gum wrappers? Because the currency is worth something!” Even though hypocrisy, materialism, and pride may surface in the life of my brothers and sisters, I'm not leaving!

The reason that I will never leave the

CONTRIBUTIONS

INDIVIDUALS

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Elizabeth Church of Christ 10.00
Viola Church of Christ 5.00
Garfield Church of Christ 15.00
Maple Grove Church of Christ 100.00

HARDING 13-in-1 WORKSHOP

The Harding University 13-in-1 Workshop, with three days of concentrated study hosted by 13 Searcians and a faculty of more than 75 qualified teachers, will be held on the University campus in Searcy, Arkansas July 31 - August 2 with program designed for improving Christian service. Eddie Cloer, assistant professor of Bible, will be the workshop director.

Three members of the Harding Bible faculty, Avon Malone, Neale T. Pryor and Jimmy Allen, will keynote the three evening lectures, which will follow 30 minutes of congregational singing led by Kenneth Davis, Jr., chairman of Harding's music department.

Classes will be held Tuesday through Thursday from 8:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., with workshops in the following: Biblical Studies, Paul Pollard, host; The Christian Home, Barby Smith; Counseling, Lew Moore; The Cradle Roll, Sheri Shearin; Death and Dying, Will Ed Warren; Early Childhood, Lynn England; Mental Health, Jack Thomas; Spiritual Life, James Walters; Visual Aids, Jennifer Hurd; Youth, Ken Spoor; World Evangelism, L. V. Pfeifer; Local Evangelism, Allan Isom; and Topical Studies, Tom Eddins.

Malone will open the series on Monday night at Benson Auditorium with an address on "This is the Will of God, Even Your Sanctification." Pryor will speak on Tuesday night on "Christ In You, The Hope Of Glory."

Registration fee for the event will be \$20 per person, and air-conditioned dormitory rooms will be available at \$7.50 per night.

How To Become A Christian

The most important question ever asked is: "*What must I do to be saved?*" (Acts 16:30). Then, the **HOW** becomes equally as important. Notice the step by step process. First, we must have faith in the Author and Finisher of our faith, Jesus Christ. (Heb. 12:2). This faith comes by the hearing of the Word of God. (Rom. 10:17). "*But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*" (Heb. 11:6). With the belief and trust that Jesus is the Redeemer, we must repent of sins. "*And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent.*" (Acts 17:30). In repentance, we turn from sin, **STOP** serving Satan and **START** serving the Lord. (Matt. 3:8,

Luke 13:3). With this new attitude we are ready to confess our faith, "*That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*" (Rom. 10:9-10). Read Matthew 10:32-33. Acknowledging our faith, repentance and confession, the last step into Christ is baptism. "*For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*" (Gal. 3:27). Read Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38. Now that our past sins have been forgiven, the Lord has added us to His church and we are Christians. (Acts 2:47; Acts 11:26).

BECOME A CHRISTIAN

MAIL ALL ADDRESS CHANGES TO:
CHURCH OF CHRIST
P. O. BOX 251
MAMMOTH SPRING, ARKANSAS 72554