

Fulton County Gospel News

Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World

“. . . Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body.” - Ephesians 5:23

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DON'T FOLLOW ME!

by Lee Moses

Much could be said for the power of example. Many faithful Christian parents have by their example led their children, and their children's children, to live faithful Christian lives. Many have left lives of debauchery because they were each influenced by the example of a Christian co-worker whose distinctively pure conduct pointed the way to something better. As long as there have been faithful Christians, there have been human examples to follow. To the Thessalonian church Paul could say, "So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia" (1 Thess. 1:7). The Holy Spirit compelled Paul to instruct the Corinthians, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1; compare with Philippians 3:17). Of course, Christ Himself gave the perfect example—as He said, "Follow me" (John 21:19).

But the power of example goes both ways. As many have been encouraged to the path of righteousness by a faithful Christian's example, an innumerable host have fallen from that path because they followed the wrong example. Many continue to do so, failing to realize the danger. Some refuse to obey the Gospel because their parents were not Christians (compare with Matthew 10:37). Some refuse to be restored to the Lord because their close friends are no longer faithful (cf. 2 Timothy 4:16-18). Some follow false doctrine because a preacher they admire has embraced a particular false doctrine (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:4-7; 7:23). Some think the wrong way must be right because larger numbers follow

that way (cf. Exodus 23:2; Proverbs 11:21; Matthew 7:13-14).

Perhaps those providing the poor examples enjoy having others follow them. But consider that no person who provides a wrong example is in his right mind. The only right example is a Christ-like example, and a Christ-like example comes from a Christ-patterned mind. Why could the Thessalonian Christians be the example they were? They were enabled to be exemplary because they first "became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word . . ." (1 Thess. 1:6). When Christ spoke of "the blind leading the blind" he was not speaking of visual blindness, but of minds that were spiritually clouded. Blind leaders may love playing the pied piper for the time being. A person fallen into the miserable pit of disfellowship with God may want others with them—as it is said, "Misery loves company." However, what would those bad examples say if they were in their right minds?

Jesus spoke of a rich man who, as the world would see it, "lived life to the fullest"—he "was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day" (Luke 16:19). He probably enjoyed the companionship of many friends, and wanted his family to live as he did. He probably looked with contempt on Lazarus, the beggar at his gate who "put first things first." The rich man was not in his right mind—he was **not** putting first things first. However, he was given a double dose of reality upon his death, when in Hades "he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off,

and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame" (verses 23-24). The rich man was reaping what he had sown; he had reached the destination of the path he had walked.

By their thinking, many would be forced to conclude that the rich man would have wanted those closest to him to follow him to his destination. After all, those people say, "My mom, dad, grandma, and grandpa were members of (insert manmade religion of your choice), and if that condemned them to an eternity in Hell, then I'm going with them." Their parents and grandparents apparently wanted them to follow them while they were alive.

But does anyone really want those he cares about to follow him to eternal misery? As self-consumed as the rich man appeared to be, he no longer wanted those he loved to follow him when he was in his right mind. As he pled with Abraham, "Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment" (verses 27-28). The rich man did not want to see those he loved ever again, if it meant their joining him in torment. Misery may love company as a general rule, but no person experiencing **that** misery wants to see those for whom he cares ever again.

I have three children, and am striving to do all that I can to rear them to become faithful Christians throughout their lives. But if, God forbid, I should ever fall from the path of righteousness, my plea is to them—and to anybody else—"Don't follow me!"

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FAITH

by Leland L. Reed

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8).

So many in the denominational world want to say we are saved by faith alone. Neither this verse nor any other says we are saved by faith alone. However, I think we need to consider what the biblical definition of faith is.

The Bible does not give us a definition like the dictionary does but I believe we can come to a conclusion of a biblical definition by studying the scripture. *“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith”* (Hebrews 11:7). It is plainly stated that by faith Noah prepared an ark. Why did he build an ark? God warned him of things not seen as yet. How did he build the ark? Did he just say I believe that something I have not seen is going to happen and stop there? No! Noah went

to work and built an ark. His belief of what God told him caused him to do what God had commanded him to do (Genesis 6:11-14).

“By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise” (Hebrews 11:8-9). Again we can see that faith caused Abraham to follow God’s command. *“By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure”* (Hebrews 11:17-19). What did Abraham’s faith cause him to do? He believed God’s promise about Isaac being the seed in whom the world would be blessed; therefore, he did not hesitate to obey God. *“Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar?”* (James 2:21). So we can see that the faith of Noah, Abraham and the others in Hebrews chapter 11 did not stand empty handed; their faith was accompanied by obedience. James goes on to say, *“And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God”* (James 2:23). We have to conclude that the biblical definition of faith contains the idea of obedience.

Let us consider what Christ said in the book of John: *“Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent”* (John 6:28-29). Now considering what was said about those in Hebrews 11, how they believed and took action, is it possible that Christ was telling them all they had to do was believe? *“Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils*

also believe, and tremble” (James 2:19). James in this verse shows that just believing is not enough.

Our faith has to be like the examples in Hebrews 11; it has to be an obedient faith. *“But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?”* (James 2:20-22).

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10). We were created in Christ Jesus by baptism. *“For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ”* (Galatians 3:27). What were we created for or unto? Unto good works. What are those good works? The works Christ has commanded throughout the New Testament. We are to hear the word of God (Romans 10:17); we must believe (John 3:16); we must confess Christ before men (Matthew 10:32; Luke 12:8); and we must repent (Luke 24:47). If we stop here, as many denominations do, we have not obeyed the commands of Christ. Our faith has to be an obedient faith which provokes us to be obedient to Christ and he has told us in Mark 16:16: *“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”* Biblical faith requires us to obey all of Christ’s commands not just the ones we choose.

We are told in Revelation 2:10 to remain faithful unto death and we will receive a crown of life. How do we continue in faith? We continue in good works. Now we all understand if we have obeyed the gospel of Christ in baptism we don’t need to be baptized again. However, we need to continue to hear, believe and our lives should be a confession of Christ, and when we sin we need to repent. The many good works listed in the Bible are more than we have space to enumerate; however, I would like to point one out that is very

important. Christ gave a command to his apostles in Matthew 28:19-20 that covers all of his commands: *“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.”* Christ commanded them to teach those that they taught to obey all things he had commanded them to do. This in turn commands us to do the same. If our faith is an obedient faith, as that of Noah and Abraham and all those listed in Hebrews 11, we must obey all the commands of Christ. We cannot pick and choose.

You may be thinking this is not what Ephesians 2:8 says, it says we are saved by grace through faith, which is absolutely true. But what kind of faith saves? When we look at the way the Bible uses faith, it is an obedient faith, one that causes us to do the works of God.

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THE POWER OF DISCOURAGEMENT

by Claude E. Parker (deceased)

Because the task of occupying Canaan seemed so great, all but two of the twelve men sent to spy out the land became convinced that the job could not be done. Every one of these men was a *“ruler among them”* (Numbers 13:2); and each knew that God had led them out of Egypt, overthrowing the army of Pharaoh (Exodus 14:29-31). They also knew that the land of Canaan was a wonderfully rich land that flowed with *“milk and honey”* (Numbers 13:27); yet they, and the multitude of others, whom they had discouraged, lived and died in a miserable wilderness. This is what discouragement will do!

The task before the church is a great one. The world seems filled with *“giants”*; and to many of the members, we are *“in our own sight as grasshoppers”* (Numbers 13:33). Nevertheless, there are a few who say, as did Caleb, *“Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it”* (Numbers 13:30). It is this attitude that we must have is we are to win the battle of life that is by faith.

The church of Christ should never

forget this example. Not all of the multitude who ate of the manna from heaven and drank from the Rock were allowed to enter the promised land. Many were not allowed to enter because their hearts were still *“by the flesh pots”* in Egypt (Exodus 16:3). They did not remain faithful to God during the trying time that lapsed from the crossing of the Red Sea to the crossing of the Jordan. Likewise, only those members of the church who remain faithful in worship and service of God from the time they are baptized for remission of their sins (Acts 2:38), until the end of their time of trial on this earth, will enter heaven.

“Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city” (Revelation 22:14).

[EDITOR’S NOTE: Just as one’s example can influence others for good or bad, so can one’s “couragement,” whether it be “en-” or “dis-.” I am very thankful for the encouragement I received from brother Parker and his wife Pearl when I first started preaching. He tried to instill in me the mindset of Caleb: *“Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.”* Brother Parker was both an exemplary and encouraging Christian man.]

CONFUSING MESSAGES

by Lee Moses

There are a number of confusing messages being widely propagated through the world today. Many of these are promoted by very well-meaning people who apparently have not considered the logical consequences of their messages. Let the reader consider some of these messages.

1. Drink responsibly.

Is this possible? One loses his sense of responsibility when he drinks. Yet this is the message given in advertisements regularly seen on television. Recommending that one drink moderately, or responsibly, is still a recommendation for him to drink. A far wiser counsel is found in the book of

Proverbs: *“Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright”* (Proverbs 28:31). One should make every effort to avoid alcoholic beverages in any amount. Although many people may begin an evening with the full intention of *“drinking responsibly,”* they often realize the next day that they were far from successful in their endeavor. How can one be demonstrating responsibility when he is purposely consuming a beverage specifically designed to rob him of his good sense?

2. Don’t drink and drive.

This is a slogan widely heard during times of pervasive imbibing, such as the

holiday season and the high school prom season. However, is it acceptable for one drink as long as he does not take the wheel of an automobile? By this slogan the idea is given that as long as someone has a *“designated driver,”* he then has license to designatedly drink himself into oblivion. However, drinking without driving can be just as injurious to one’s health, not to mention one’s spiritual well being: First Corinthians 6:9-10 still teaches that drunkards shall not inherit the kingdom of God.

3. Don’t drink or smoke if you are underage.

There are activities in which adults may acceptably take part, yet are unacceptable for children, such as driving an automobile. There are activities which are particularly unsafe

for children, but drinking and smoking are neither safe for children nor adults. What kind of message is an adult sending to a child when the adult who drinks or smokes tries to correct the child engaging in these same harmful activities? *“Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye, and then thou shalt see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye”* (Matthew 7:5).

4. Practice safe sex.

This slogan truly came into its own when AIDS first became a widespread problem in the 1980’s. Parents and schools alike are teaching children to practice “safe sex.” However, if one is to practice “safe sex,” he must practice sex. The only true way to remain safe from sexually transmitted diseases is to abstain from sexual immorality. Strange, but this is exactly what God teaches mankind to do: *“FLEE FORNICATION. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body, but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body”* (1 Corinthians 6: 18). Is it not possible that God knew exactly what He was doing in I many different aspects when He ordained that marriage was to be between one man and one woman for life? (Genesis 2:18-25).

Those who promulgate these four messages likely have spiritual concerns far from their minds. However, they are not even thinking logically about bodily concerns. They simply promote an option which is not quite as bad as other options. Instead of dancing in the gray area of every issue, Christians *“by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil”* (Hebrews 5:14). One does not have to accept confusing messages as truth. If one does become distracted by these or any other of the confusing messages of the world, he can turn to God’s message of absolute truth, *“for God is not the author of confusion”* (1 Corinthians 14:33).

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GOD’S PLAN OF SALVATION

1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (I Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; I Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2, 3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God’s commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; I Corinthians 12:13).

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