

Seek The Old Paths

"Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths...and walk therein."

(Jeremiah 6:16)

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POWERFUL PREACHING

Marlin Kilpatrick

One day all of the "tell them what they want to hear" preachers will pay an awesome price, along with all who encouraged the weak, watered-down, don't hurt anyone's feelings type of preaching.

God's method of communicating His message to people has always been through preaching. Men such as Noah, Moses, the prophets, Stephen, and all the apostles in the New Testament, were powerful preachers. The power was in the message they preached. A preacher is powerful, not because he has great lung capacity, but because of the nature of his message.

Powerful preaching is pointed preaching! When the apostle Peter preached on Pentecost, he told the people what they needed to hear; not necessarily what they wanted to hear. He accused them of having (with wicked hands) crucified God's Son (Acts 2:23). It is evident that this kind of preaching is what the Lord wanted, because Peter, having been baptized in the Holy Spirit, was guided by that same Spirit in his preaching. Today, faithful Gospel preachers are guided through the instruction of the Word of the Holy Spirit (the Scriptures) to do no less.

Another case of powerful, pointed preaching is that of Stephen's preaching in Acts 7. When confronted by those who eventually stoned him to death, Stephen pointedly said, *"Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye"* (Acts 7:51). Powerful, pointed preaching has a way of getting the audience's attention. It certainly

arrested the attention of those to whom Stephen spoke, even though it cost him his life. His reward awaits him in heaven.

Powerful preaching is passionate preaching! The passion with which the preacher delivers his message is often determined by his sincerity. If the preacher has doubts about his message, it will come through loud and clear. How passionate was the great prophet Elijah when he confronted the false prophets of Baal (I Kings 18)? While the Scriptures do not reveal the tone of his voice, it's inconceivable that he spoke in an unconvincing manner. Had he done so, likely, the false prophets of Baal would have "laughed-him-to-shame." When our preaching is done passionately, the audience is more likely to respond in a positive way.

Powerful preaching is personal! We are not advocating a form of preaching that publicly humiliates the individual. Preaching that is personal reaches the individual's heart and causes him to make a personal application of what he hears. Not all who make a personal application of the message will respond favorably, but all who do, appreciate the fact the preacher had the courage to lovingly confront their sin and lead them to repentance. We should always remember that powerful preaching is not less powerful due to the audi-

ence's rejection of the message.

Today, one of the church's greatest needs is powerful preaching. Powerful preaching will produce numerical and spiritual growth. It did in the 20th century, and it will do so today. However, the sad fact is, most congregations will not accept such preaching. In far too many places, the church wants a preacher who will pat the members on their backs and in fifteen or twenty minutes tell them all is well. And, many of our preachers love to have it so.

If the Lord wanted powerful preaching in Bible times, and assuredly He did, does He expect any less of the church today? Where is the church that demands powerful preaching? Surely, there must be one or two. Where are the preachers that powerfully proclaim the Gospel truth? Surely, there must be some who do, but for every one who does, there are hundreds who do not. One day all of the "tell them what they want to hear" preachers will pay an awesome price, along with all who encouraged the weak, watered-down, don't hurt anyone's feelings type of preaching.

Brethren, we must awake to the problem of a weak pulpit and get back to powerful preaching. Think about it.

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Editorial...

KNOWLEDGE & IGNORANCE #2

KNOWLEDGE

The greatest choice one could make in their entire life is to learn the Will of God — having the knowledge of God's Will. Such knowledge gives one the essential information to prepare themselves to stand before the Lord in judgment.

The principle of one turning away from wickedness and evil to serve the true and living God is shown throughout the Bible. Ezekiel proclaimed, "But if the wicked will *turn from all his sins* that he hath committed, and *keep all my statutes*, and *do that which is lawful and right*, he shall surely live, he shall not die. All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live. Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: and not that he should return from his ways, and live" (Ezek. 18:20-23)?

One cannot keep the Lord's statutes and do that which is lawful and right if he does not have the knowledge of God's will. Therefore, one must choose to learn, assimilate, digest, understand and know. This comes through study, study, study as we're commanded in II Timothy 2:15, "*Study to shew thyself approved unto God*, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

The Psalmist said, "Teach me good judgment and knowledge: for I have believed thy commandments" (Psa. 119:66).

By inspiration, the wise Solomon revealed many great things regarding the subject of the knowledge of God's will. He wrote: "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of *knowledge*: but fools despise wisdom and instruction" (Prov. 1:7). Fools hate *knowledge* (Prov. 1:22; cf.

1:29). "Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the *knowledge* of God. For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh *knowledge* and *understanding*" (Prov. 2:5-6). "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the *knowledge* of the holy is understanding" (Prov. 9:10). "Wise men lay up *knowledge*: but the mouth of the foolish is near destruction" (Prov. 10:14). "Whoso loveth instruction loveth *knowledge*: but he that hateth reproof is brutish" (Prov. 12:1). "Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wise, and apply thine heart unto my *knowledge*" (Prov. 22:17). "Apply thine heart unto *instruction*, and thine ears to the words of *knowledge*" (Prov. 23:12).

When there is no knowledge of God's Word, dire consequences result. "Therefore my people are gone into captivity, *because they have no knowledge*: and their honourable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst" (Isa. 5:13). "Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, *because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land*" (Hosea 4:1). "*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge*: because thou hast *rejected knowledge*, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children" (Hosea 4:6).

The New Testament also speaks about knowledge and ignorance. In Romans 10:3 we read, "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God." Paul is speaking here of fleshly Israel. Though they looked for the Messiah and His coming kingdom, they had

no concept of the true nature of the Messiah and His kingdom. They failed to comprehend the prophecies that had been given for centuries and their fulfillment by John, Jesus and the apostles. They were ignorant of "God's righteousness;" that is, they did not know God's plan which would bring about righteousness — God's plan of justifying men. They had ample opportunity to know, as Romans 10:18-21 reveals. But, none the less, they remained ignorant. They did not have the knowledge they should have had — their ignorance was voluntary.

Hosea declared the word of the Lord saying, "My people are *destroyed for lack of knowledge*: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children" (Hosea 4:6).

God desires that men and women around the world know His will. God wants all men to be saved, but in order for that to happen, they must first "...come unto the *knowledge* of the truth" (I Tim. 2:4), "...for by the law is the *knowledge* of sin" (Rom. 3:20). So many people are religious and are zealous for God, "...but not according to *knowledge*" (Rom. 10:2). People, therefore, must "...be filled with the *knowledge* of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding" (Col. 1:9). But sadly, there are many who are "ever learning, and never able to come to the *knowledge* of the truth" (II Tim. 3:7). That is why it's so urgent that we grow in the grace and *knowledge* of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (II Peter 3:18). One grows by adding the Christian graces to his life. "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue *knowledge*; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness" (II Peter 1:5).

Wilful rejection of the Will (knowledge) of God brings spiritual destruction. "For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the *knowledge* of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins" (Heb. 10:26). "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the *knowledge* of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they

are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire” (II Peter 2:20-22).

WE EACH HAVE A CHOICE

What will we choose? What choice will we make? We can choose the KNOWLEDGE of God’s will that can make us free when we obey it (John 8:32), OR we can choose to be IGNORANT of God’s will which will cause us to remain in our sins and be lost eternally in a devil’s hell.

Those who are saved are those who choose to learn and know God’s Word and obey it. “Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, *IF ye continue in my word, THEN are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*” (John 8:31-32).

How sad it is when so many choose to ignore God’s word and believe a lie. If that is the choice one makes, God will allow them to make it. Paul speaks of that wicked one “...whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received *not the love of the truth*, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should *believe a lie*: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (II Thess. 2:8-12).

God does not force anyone to choose good or evil, right or wrong, one or the other. He simply allows men and women the liberty to make up their own mind, at least for now. There’s coming a day, however, when God will step in and make the choice for us. But then it will be too late for those who have made the wrong

choice to do anything about it.

The rich man who fared sumptuously every day in this world found himself in torments when he died (Luke 16:19-31). All the crying, wailing, begging and gnashing of teeth could not change his sad condition. He was in hell. He got what he deserved. He reaped what he sowed. He received the reward for the choice that he made. He’s crying out to all lost men and women today, saying, “do not come to this terrible place.” “Look at your soul’s condition.” “Think about the verdict you’ll hear on the day of judgment.” “Consider the consequences of your choices.” “Have you counted the cost if your soul should be lost?” “Wake up, Wake Up, WAKE UP, before it’s too late!”

There’s only two sentences that will be announced on the judgment day: “*...Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels*” or “*...Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world*” (Matt. 25:41,34).

Do you want to hear the words *depart* or *come*? Surely you want to hear the Saviour say *come*. If that is what you want to hear, then you must make the CHOICE NOW to **Believe** in Christ with all your heart (John 8:24; John 3:16; Mark 16:16), **Repent** of all your sins (Luke 13:3,5; Acts 2:38; Acts 17:30), **Confess** faith in Jesus as the Son of God and Saviour of the world (Matt. 10:32-33; Rom. 19:9-10; Acts 8:37) and be **Baptized** for the forgiveness of your sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3-6,17-18; I Peter 3:21). This will make you a child of God — washed clean, pure and white in the blood of the Lamb. You will be raised from the watery grave of baptism to walk a new life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 6:4). Being THEN made free from sins you will be a servant of righteousness (Rom. 6:18). You will be a “new creature” IN Christ where the old things are passed away and all things are become new (II Cor. 5:17).

We beg you today to choose the way that leads to salvation, not the choice that leads to damnation. For some day you’ll stand at the bar on high. Some day you’ll see the end

result of the choices you’ve made. Some day you’ll answer for what you’ve done in this life. What will your answer be?

So, why do you wait dear sinner? Why do you tarry so long? The Saviour is gently knocking on the door of your heart. Won’t you let Him in?

Choose eternal life, not everlasting separation from God in a devil’s hell.

See last month’s issue for the discussion on IGNORANCE.

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Superficial Christianity

Tom Wacaster

There are churches out there that are indeed sensational with their Broadway style productions and glitter and glamour that thrill men, but they do not offer what it takes to save the souls of men. In this, they have long ago compromised.

Webster defines “superficial” as “(1) being on the surface; not penetrating the substance of a thing; as a superficial color; a superficial covering; (2) hallow; contrived to cover something; and (3) not deep or profound; reaching or comprehending only what is obvious or apparent; as a superficial scholar; superficial knowledge.”

Superficial Christianity looks good on the surface, but it is of no “value against the indulgences of the flesh” (Col. 2:23). Our Lord calls for sacrificial, not superficial faith. There is a marked difference between the two.

First, *a superficial faith produces a comfortable Christianity; one that does not interfere with one’s predisposed life-style.* It is a Christianity that places no restrictions upon an individual, requires no repentance, exacts no restrictions, and asks for no sacrifice. Unaccustomed to feeding upon the word, superficial Christians are incapable of taking more than short doses of the spiritual medicine that is needed to cure their sin-sick soul. The meat of the word makes them gag. Moral principles are rejected for mere platitudes that make them feel at ease, and any sermon that runs more than fifteen minutes is viewed as a waste of time and an imposition upon their busy schedule. Once a week, or in some cases only once or twice a year, these nominal believers make their appearance, pay their dues, and punch their spiritual clock, and that, at the “church of their choice” that meets their personal taste in style of worship and brand of theology. Easter Sunday and Christmas are the apex of their spiritual activity. Daily cross-bearing means nothing to them.

Second, *superficial Christianity will produce a church that is foreign to the blood-bought institution we read about in the pages of the New Testament.* The leaders are quick to provide those things that will help

increase the numbers, but fall short of improving spiritual maturity. The denominations have long sought to entertain rather than enlighten. The church is viewed as some sort of organization designed to administer spiritual anesthesia; something akin to a haven of rest where the indolent and idle may congregate to escape their moral and spiritual responsibilities in a world of darkness and doubt. Those who have only superficial faith view the church as some sort of safety zone in the midst of the highways of life into which people can go to avoid the dangers they encounter every day. But once the danger is past, the weak in faith abandon the church like the proverbial rat that abandons a sinking ship. The church is nothing more than an old folk’s home where the spiritually defective might find shelter. Someone noted more than a century ago, the church “is not a sort of spiritual Florida to which people can migrate in order to escape the chilling blasts of a cold, unfriendly world.” I wish that such misconceptions were limited to those in the denominational world, but so much of this “give me” mentality has infiltrated the Lord’s church today. Oh, how I wish it were not so! Having had the opportunity to travel about our country seeking funds for my mission work, I have come to learn that we have spent so much on creature comforts and neglected the Creator’s commission to go into all the world. I have visited congregations willing to borrow millions to build an elaborate building, and make long term commitments to mortgage payments, but are willing to commit themselves to more than a year at a time to mission endeavors. One wonders if we have not been the victims of superficial Christianity.

Third, *superficial Christianity will not save.* I am writing to an audience who knows (or at least should know) the demands from our Father

and His Son. “...If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul” (Matt. 16:24-26)? “So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:33). “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matt. 6:24).

Superficial Christianity is the antonym of genuine saving faith. It is confined to the realm of convenience and comfort. Seldom is there a call for real sacrifice. Suppers, sales and entertainment are the means by which people are brought into the church, and through more exciting and more numerous entertainment and programs they are tricked into believing that they are making sacrifices and living the kind of life God wants them to live. No wonder the church has lost its influence in a world that seems to be overrun with evil and ungodliness. The Gospel is no longer considered the power unto salvation, but the power unto sensationalism. There are churches out there that are indeed sensational with their Broadway style productions and glitter and glamour that thrill men, but they do not offer what it takes to save the souls of men. In this, they have long ago compromised.

God help us to return to His great wisdom, and build churches that seek and save the lost rather than seeking to serve and satisfy the masses. Anything else is only superficial Christianity.

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A RESTORATION PLEA

Victor M. Eskew

The Restoration Movement of the 1800s grew out of disgust for religious division and a love for the truth of the Gospel of Christ. Men longed for the day when all would wear the name “Christian” only and pledge allegiance to the New Testament as the sole standard of faith and practice.

From this movement, many slogans came forth. The slogans were designed to implant crucial truths into the hearts of the listeners. “Speak where the Bible speaks, and remain silent where the Bible is silent” was one of these slogans. This was an amplification of Peter’s words found in I Peter 4:11. “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God.” Another slogan of the Restoration Movement was: “In matters of doctrine, unity. In matters of opinion, liberty. In all things, love.”

The preachers of the Restoration Movement recognized two major areas: doctrine and opinion. Doctrine involves the teaching of the New Testament. Paul wrote: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine...” (II Tim. 3:16-17). Doctrine cannot be compromised. It must be adhered to at all times. If all would commit to this teaching, unity would prevail. It is wrong to transform the teaching of the Gospel into matters of opinion.

However, the leaders of the

Restoration Movement realized that matters of opinion exists as well. In these, they asked for liberty. The practice of circumcision was a matter of opinion (option) in the New Testament church. “For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature” (Gal. 6:15). The eating of meat was also a matter of opinion. “But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse” (I Cor. 8:8). Again, these matters were optional. In these things, “liberty” needed to prevail. It was wrong to take matters that were “optional” and make them matters of “doctrine.” Some did this in the first century. Paul declared that those who “bound” (made a law) where God has not “bound,” had departed from the faith. “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is

sanctified by the word of God and prayer” (I Tim. 4:13-5),

The last section of the slogan under consideration is: “In all things, love.” This love is one that seeks the best interest of another. I Corinthians 13:1-3 reveals the importance of love. Without it, nothing else matters. “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and have all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.”

In doctrine, unity. In option, liberty. In all things, love. This plea is just as valid today as it was when it was first penned. May every member of the body of Christ give diligence to distinguish between doctrine and opinion. In doctrine, let us hold fast thereunto with unity in mind. In option, let’s grant liberty to our brethren. Then, let’s allow love to prevail in all things.

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THE LORD’S CHURCH IS DIFFERENT

Marvin L. Weir

Not everyone is happy with the fact that the Lord’s church is different! Those of denominational persuasion are quickly upset when the difference is noted between the Lord’s church and those churches built by men. Many do not know the Lord promised to build His church (Matt. 16:18) and that it had its beginning in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost (A.D. 33) as prophesied by godly prophets (Isa. 2:2-3; Micah 4:1-2). The apostle Paul makes it abundantly clear that Jesus Christ is the

“head over all things to the church, which is his body” (Eph. 1:22-23). Notice that the Lord’s church is “his body” and not some man-made body.

Sadder still is the truth that not all members of the Lord’s church are happy that it is different from all other religious institutions. The goal of many who profess to be Christians is to extend open arms of fellowship to any one who claims to believe in the deity of Christ. These who are eager to loose where God has not

loosed (cf. Matt. 16:19; 18:18) are not impressed with the distinctiveness of the Lord’s church. Their goal is to compromise and change to the point that churches of Christ cannot be distinguished from any denomination. This blending and mixing of religion is what they allege that the Lord had in mind for His followers. An ever-growing number of folks are quick to allege what they believe but they are arrogantly adamant at not desiring to prove their allegations.

The Bible still teaches, “*Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try (prove) the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world*” (I John 4:1). God’s Word is truth (John 17:17), and it is by that Word that one can prove truth from error. Three Scriptures will suffice to prove (for those who believe the Bible) that the Lord does not intend for His church to blend in and be a part of all man-made churches. First, Jesus prayed that there be unity and not division in religious convictions. The words of the Master ring loud and clear in praying, “*Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also that believe on me through their word; that they may all be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me*” (John 17:20-21). Second, the apostle Paul admonishes, “*Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment*” (I Cor. 1:10). This is one of those “un-get-over-able” and “un-get-around-able” verses of Scripture that so many prefer to ignore. Third, the

Holy Scriptures declare, “*Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship have righteousness with unrighteousness and what communion hath light with darkness? Or what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath a temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you*” (II Cor. 6:14-17). The principle contained in these verses is eternal — there can be no fellowship between righteousness and unrighteousness, between light and darkness, or the temple of God and idolatry. This is a call for God’s people to be separate, to be unique, and to be distinct from the world and all man-made religion that is in competition with and in opposition to the Lord’s church!

The battle with Satan begins with the mind. This is why the apostle Paul pleads, “*If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the*

earth” (Col. 3:1-2). It is impossible for one to succumb to “politically correct” thinking and live like a Christian. The truth of the matter is that distinctive and unique thinking is the only thing that will lead to distinctive and unique living! It would be well for all to remember that if the Gospel is veiled, it is because “*...the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them*” (II Cor. 4:3-4).

One who so desires can know the truth and that truth can free him from the bondage of sin (John 8:32). The Bible unashamedly declares that there is only one body, one spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all (Eph. 4:4-6). God’s will has always been distinctive because His thoughts are not our thoughts and neither are His ways our ways (Isa. 55:8-9).

A faithful child of God will always rejoice in the truth that the Lord’s church is distinctive, different and unique, and he will never compromise or apologize for the church of Christ or the glorious truth she stands for.

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“LET BROTHERLY LOVE CONTINUE”

Roger D. Campbell

Do we really demonstrate genuine love toward our brethren in the Christ? “Let brotherly love continue.” It pays huge dividends.

Hebrews 13:1 is made up of only four words — the four that serve as the title and theme of this article. Perhaps you have heard someone jokingly misquote the verse to read, “Let brotherly love begin.” It is true that brotherly love must begin to exist before it can “continue,” but the absence of such love is no joking matter.

Is it not a huge plus for the Lord’s Cause when His people have a genuine brotherly love among them? Here are a few pluses or positive things that take place when

brotherly love continues to abound among the members of God’s church.

Brotherly love sends a message. Jesus said, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35).

Brotherly love hides a multitude of sins. “And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins” (I Peter 4:8).

Brotherly love takes action, rather than just sit on the sideline

and just talk or simply offer suggestions. “But whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth” (I John 3:17,18).

Brotherly love helps provide a healthy atmosphere because love “is kind,” “envieth not,” “vaunteth not itself,” and “is not puffed up” (I Cor. 13:4).

Brotherly love presents an

attractive picture to small kids and teens that observe it, including our own children and grandchildren. How can brotherly love not make a good impression on them when it can honestly be said that “the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth” (II Thess. 1:3)?

Brotherly love binds Christians together. Since we, as members of the church, have the same Father, we are family (Gal. 3:26-27). That means because we are “kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love” (Rom. 12:10), we hurt when

our spiritual family members hurt. We share in their joys. We seek to comfort one another (Rom. 12:15; I Thess. 4:18).

Brotherly love causes us to be determined to handle personal conflicts properly (in the way the Lord instructs us). Jesus says for us to “go and tell” the brother that has offended us (Matt. 18:15-17).

Brotherly love reminds us of just how wonderful heaven will be. “Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face...” (I Thess. 3:10). Just as the apostle Paul longed to see his brethren in

this life, so we look forward to being reunited with the saints of God in heaven, where we will worship Him forever and never again be separated from our faithful brothers and sisters in the Lord.

Surely every disciple of Jesus enjoys being on the receiving end of brotherly love. But are you and I also on the giving side of such love? Do we really demonstrate genuine love toward our brethren in the Christ? “Let brotherly love continue.” It pays huge dividends.

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THE CHURCH CANNOT AUTHORIZE

Kevin Rutherford

Because the New Testament is our final guide and religious authority, we ought not accept the doctrines of the pope, priests, or preachers over the doctrine of Christ.

The Roman Catholic Church arrogantly states that it gave the Bible to the world. In reality, the Catholic Church has done all that it can in the past to inhibit the availability of the Scriptures. Roman Catholicism also believes that the church has the right to authorize religious practice, and that the religious practices authorized by the church take precedence over any practices authorized by the New Testament, or, if the New Testament does not authorize the practice, it doesn't matter in the eyes of Catholic leaders. The church can authorize whatever it wants to, even if what it authorizes directly contradicts the Bible.

I have noticed within the past fifteen years a dangerous trend within the church of Christ. That trend is for people to ask questions such as, “What is church of Christ doctrine on this matter?” Our standard of authority is not the Roman Catholic Church; and, it is not the church of Christ. The church of Christ is the one body established by Jesus (Eph. 4:4; 1:22-23), but, while it is the Lord's true church, it does not have the power to authorize religious practices.

Jesus Christ, who is the Head of the church, is the only One with the authority to authorize religious practice for His church (Matt. 28:18; Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18). How does Jesus lead, govern, and reign over His church? We might ask, “How does the church determine what Christ has authorized?” The answer is that Jesus rules through the New Covenant that became rule and law at His death (Heb. 9:15-17; Col. 2:14-17).

Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ revealed His law for the church (John 14:26; 16:13). Inspired

men wrote down the very words that Christ supplied through the Holy Spirit (I Cor. 2:13). Those words, which have been recorded and preserved for us, make up the New Testament. The New Testament of Jesus Christ is the law and authority for the church of Jesus Christ.

The Gospel of Christ is the authority and standard for man's religious practice and devotion to God. It is the standard that gives us all we need to make us spiritually complete (II Tim. 3:15-17). We need no other standard. Accepting another standard, including Roman Church tradition, will cause us to be lost (Gal. 1:6-9). The New Testament is our final guide and religious authority.

Because the New Testament is our final guide and religious authority, we ought not accept the doctrines of the pope, priests, or preachers over the doctrine of Christ. If we do so, we shall be lost (II John 9-11). Jesus Christ has already given us all the authority and instruction necessary for faithful service and worship. He did so through His New Testament. To accept any other standard is to be lost. Therefore, we need not be concerned about what the church authorizes, because it has no power to authorize religious practice. We simply ought to make sure the church is following the standard of authority that the Lord set out for us.

Don't ask, “What is church of Christ doctrine on this matter?” Ask, “What does the New Testament say concerning this matter?”



SEEK THE OLD PATHS

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