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EDITORIAL

How To Begin A Church Of Christ Where You Live

Church of Christ means: the body of people who have committed their lives to Christ; they are followers of Christ's teachings; emulators of his life; citizen of God's spiritual kingdom; His household and His own special people.

The word church does not mean a concrete building or a house made with human hands. According to the Bible, church is the body of living people. Thus, church can hear, talk, work, go and come together.

How does one become a member of the church? Yes, we are discussing the church of Christ, which He Himself promised to begin, and He did, as we read in the Bible in Matthew 16:18 and Acts 2:47. Whose congregations multiplied throughout the world and began to be known as churches of Christ, according to Romans 16:16. According to the pattern shown in the pages of the New Testament of the Bible, those who had heard the gospel of Christ's death for the sinners and His burial and resurrection from the dead, became believers of Him. They were told to repent, or change their views, their thinking, their mind, their attitude, to leave sin and all that was against the will of the living God. Next, they were told to be baptized for the forgiveness of sins; which means they had to die to sin and be buried in the

tomb of water and come out of it, to signify Christ's death for sinners and his burial in the tomb and His resurrection. This we read in Acts 2:37 & 38 and Romans 6:3-5.

In other words, saved from sin were added to the church by Christ Himself—Acts 2:47; and, to be saved from sin, each one had to believe in Him that He was the Son of God who had died for the sins of man (Acts 8:35-39; John 3:16); each one had to repent of sin and each one had to be baptized in water for the remission of sins. All who did these were forgiven by the Lord and were added to the church which is the body of His saved people. They were called Christians, because they had become followers of Christ. (Acts 11:26 & 26: 28).

God's pattern for His church or kingdom has not changed since. God's word is still the seed of the kingdom or the church. (Luke 8:11). Just as every seed produces after its own kind, anywhere, so does the word of God. When it was preached in the beginning, the record in the Bible says; the listeners' hearts were pierced and they had asked the preachers, "What shall we do?" They were told to repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of sins; and immediately when they did that, they were forgiven and added to the church by the Lord Himself. (Acts 2:37-41 & 47).

The Lord's church has always existed on earth since A.D. 33, when the Lord Himself established it in Jerusalem. He knows the number of people who are in it today, who have obeyed His gospel from their heart. No matter where they are, of what colour or language they are; they could be poor and sick or rich and healthy; in whatever condition and in whatever place they are; He knows them and he recognizes them as His church; and to this church, which is the body of the saved people, He adds daily such as are being saved.

The members of His church wear His name, that is, they are called Christian. They worship Him in the way He has authorized in His New Testament; by singing spiritual songs, praying to God through Him, by studying from God's word, by partaking in the Lord's supper to remember His sacrifice of the cross for our sins, and by giving from their earnings which is to be used to help the needy both spiritually and physically. This they do every Sunday or each first day of the week; the day on which Christ had risen from the dead and on which He had established His church.

Regarding these matters we read in John 4:24; Acts 2:42; Ephesians 5:19; Hebrews 10:25; Acts 20:7 and I Corinthians 11:23-29; 16:1,2.

Now, is there a church of Christ where you live? I am not talking here about a material building, please understand. Rather, I am talking about such people who have obeyed the gospel of Christ, who are Christians, members of Christ's church, they worship each Sunday together in the manner shown in His book. If such is not there, then this can begin with you; with your family members; your relatives and friends and your neighbours. In other words, church of Christ can begin where you live. The church can meet together for worship on Sunday in a house or in any place conducive for the purpose.

Anything in the beginning need some help. So what can we do for you? We can explain to you the way of God more accurately by teaching God's word. We can assist you in your obedience to the Lord's command of baptism; that is, we can baptize you as the Bible teaches; we can assist you with the supply of Bible literature for your own reading and for distribution amongst others. Do you want to begin a church of Christ in your place where you live? Let us know.

Why Do Christians Fall Away?

J.C. CHOATE

The religious world tells us that once saved, always saved, that one cannot fall away. That is a most comforting doctrine and one that is very popular. The problem with this teaching is that it is not true, it is a false doctrine.

If one can be saved, he can also be lost. If one becomes a Christian, he can also quit being a Christian. Didn't Judas, of the Lord's apostles, fall away? Didn't Demas forsake Paul because of his love for the present world? (2 Timothy 4:10). What lesson is being taught in the story of the prodigal son? (Luke 15:11-32). then why did the Lord give all of those commands to Christians concerning worship, the Christian life, encouraging them to be faithful and warning what will happen to them if they fail to

remain faithful? I think it is obvious then that Christians can fall away.

The next question that comes would be: Why do Christians fall away? There are several reasons for this but none that are justified. Anyway, let us take a look at some of the so-called reasons why some of the Lord's people become unfaithful.

1. They are tempted to do wrong and given over to it. The temptation could lead to lying, stealing, becoming immoral, or any number of other things. Remember, however, that the Lord will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able to bear but will with every temptation make a way of escape. (1 Corinthians 10:13). He will help us to overcome whatever temptation comes our way, provided we are looking for a way of escape. Many evidently are not looking for a way of escape and therefore end up falling away. They didn't have to, but they did.

2. Some fall away because they love the world too much. They want to be like those of the world, dress like the world, talk like the world, and do the things that the world does. One cannot do that if he is going to be a faithful Christian. John warned, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever." (1 John 2:15-17).

3. They don't read and study the Bible enough. Unless one gets sufficient spiritual food, he will die. The Lord said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." (Matthew 4:4). When one obeys the Lord, the new birth takes place, a spiritual birth. (John 3:3-5). Then as a new born babe, he partakes of the milk of the word to grow strong (1 Peter 2:2). This growth then enables him to go on to partake of the meat of the word, or those things that are more difficult to understand. (1 Corinthians 10:3). Without this spiritual food one cannot grow and this leads to spiritual death. When one does not continue to feed on God's word by reading and studying, he is going to become weak, lose interest, and die.

4. Some get too busy with work, sports, or other things, quit attending worship, and drift away from the Lord. Christ wants us to meet each first day of the week for worship (Acts 20:7; John

4:24) and fellowship with the saints. (Acts 2:42). This keeps us close to God and his people. We need this help and encouragement to remain faithful. When one ceases to do this, he dies.

5. Some blame their problems on the Lord and quit. If one is sick, out of a job, or has some tragedy to take place in his life, or in the family, some are prone to blame God. Surely the Lord did not bring such upon them, and this is a time when they need him more than ever, but they allow their hurt to turn them away. How sad.

6. Others are deceived by false teachers and are led into error. Paul said, "Let no man deceive you . . ." (2 Thessalonians 2:3). Christ said, "Take heed that ye be not deceived . . ." (Luke 21:8). Paul talks about fair speeches deceiving the hearts of the simple. (Romans 16:17,18). Yes, there are many false teachers and all kinds of false doctrines. Their message sounds good but those who fall for it are the losers.

7. There are those who will quit the Lord and his church simply because of personality clashes and not getting to have their way about something. Once there is a disagreement, such members may have too much pride to admit they were wrong or to give in on some point. So, they are willing to lose their soul over such matters. Paul advises us to "Be ye angry, and sin not." (Ephesians 4:26).

8. Some are too lazy to serve the Lord. They don't have any interest. They have no zeal. They don't want to do anything and they don't do anything. The results of this is that they die spiritually. The scriptures picture the Christian as a worker (2 Timothy 2:15), as one who lets his light shine so that others may see his good works and glorify the Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16). The gospel is to be preached to the world (Mark 16:15), we are to help the poor (Galatians 2:10), and bear the fruit of the Spirit. (Galatians 5:22-26).

9. Some fall away because they marry outside the church. In other words, they marry someone who is not a Christian, or even if they are a believer in Christ, they are not members of the Lord's church. This means that they are weak to begin with, and once they compromise to the point of taking an unbeliever or a denominational church member, then they may give in to their companion and go with them to their place of worship. Or both may choose not to go anywhere to worship. As a consequence,

such a person is often lost to the Lord. But what should be done in such a case? The Christian should make up his mind that he is not going to marry a non-Christian. The same should apply to the young Christian woman. In either case, they should seek help in teaching and converting the one they plan to marry before marriage. This is the time to deal with this matter, not after marriage. Some do wait until after marriage, and as a result, they often fall away. Paul warns that we should not be unequally yoked together. (2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

10. Those who find themselves in isolated areas often fall away. They may have been converted where there were a number of Christians, and as long as they were in that setting everything was fine. Being around other members of the church, they were in position to receive the fellowship and encouragement they needed to remain faithful. But perhaps going back to their home, being transferred to another city, or to move into another area where the church did not exist, maybe that was too difficult for them to handle. While they could have put forth an effort to convert some of the local people or to have the preacher where they formerly lived to come to conduct some meetings, but not doing that, and being without the support of brethren, they become weak, and in time fall away. Some do not do this, thank the Lord, but many do.

Obviously we could go on to mention any number of other reasons why brethren fall away and become lost. The foregoing reasons are mentioned only to help us to see that it is possible to fall away, and to list some of the so-called reasons why various ones do fall away. By listing these, maybe it will help us to be more on guard and to put forth a greater effort to serve the Lord and to be faithful to him. The Lord doesn't want any one to be lost. Let us determine that we will not fall away.

Living By Faith

CLEM THURMAN

"The righteous shall live by faith . . . We walk by faith, and not by sight" (Rom. 1:17; 2 Cor. 5:7).

We marvel at the power God as demonstrated in the creation of the world: *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth"* (Gen. 1:1). God didn't have to go through a long process of a building program, either, for the psalmist explains: *"By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth . . . for he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast"* (Psa. 33:6,9). We build by starting with some kind of materials, then re-shaping or assembling the materials to form what we want. But God created, and that means he brought something out of nothing! *"By faith we understand that the world have been framed by the word of God, so that what is seen hath not been made out of things which appear"* (Heb. 11:3). Such power is beyond our comprehension, but *"by faith"* that power can be ours as we live for Him.

We read in Gen. 1:26—27, *"God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness . . . And God created man in his own image."* The apostle writes in wonder, *"Behold what manner of the love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are"* (1 Jno. 3:1). Our Father is the God who *"spake and it was done, who commanded and it stood fast"* (Psa 33:9)! He loves His children (Jno. 3:16) and gives us many promises in Christ (2 Cor. 1:20). His promises never fail (Deut. 6:3), for He will do what He says: *"He is faithful that promised . . . I believe God, that it will be even as he said . . . I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee"* (Heb. 10:23; Acts 27:25; Heb. 13:5). If we belong to Him, then God grants us *"all things that pertain to life and to godliness"* (2 Pet. 1:3) and gives us *"every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ"* (Eph. 1:3). It should be evident then, that when we are living for Him, He will take care of us: *"If God is for us, who can be against us?"* (Rom. 8:31).

God told Noah to prepare an ark, and gave him instructions as to how to do it (Gen. 6): *"By faith Noah, being warned of God concerning things not seen as yet, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house"* (Heb. 11:7). Noah *"lived by faith"* in building the ark, trusting God and His word. When David went out to meet Goliath, he expressed his faith this way, *"The God that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of*

this Philistine" (1 Sam. 17:37). Noah didn't trust in his own skill at designing a ship, nor did he trust his own weather forecasting; he trusted God, and lived by that faith. David did not trust in his sling, nor his skill with it; he trusted God, that God would act through him. Living by faith for us today simply means trusting God and living as He directs us to live. We do not always have to understand all the reasons why God tells us certain things to do and other things from which to abstain; all we have to do is trust that He knows what is best for us. Then our lives will reflect His power, as He empowers us to live for Him, and we can say triumphantly, *"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me"* (Phil. 4:13).

Does Mankind Need More Than The doctrine Of Christ? II John vs 9-11

BILL BROWN

"Give us something practical" is a statement used quite often relative to teaching and preaching. This statement is being used in an effort to get away from the doctrinal and fundamental items of THE FAITH. Its usage spells danger. However, there is practicality in every scripture. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be complete, completely furnished unto all good works." (II Tim. 3:16-17). One verse may be more practical at a particular time than another, but every scripture is profitable and relevant.

Some think Doctrinal topics are not practical, but God teaches otherwise. "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." (Matt. 15:9), Therefore, false doctrine renders worship vain. In fact, ignorance of the will of God leads to every kind of misconception. "Jesus answered and said unto them, "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God." (Matt. 22:29). When people do not know the will of God, they cannot understand the power of God. So true doctrine is practical. "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save

thyself, and them that hear thee." (I Tim. 4:16). Only when a person does this, will the scriptures be practical. People can live no better than they learn how to live. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world. . . ." (Titus 2:11-12). "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." (Eph. 2:10).

If adding to or taking from the scriptures will cause a person to be lost, then sticking to the Bible is practical. (Deut. 4:2; Rev. 22:18-19). If parents will *indoctrinate* (teach) their children as they should so they will not be blown away by every wind of doctrine, then they have given them something practical. "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive . . ." (Eph. 4:14).

If those who are converted are so taught to root and ground them in *the faith* so that they, the church, will not apostatize, then something practical has been given. "Teaching them to observe *all things* whatsoever I have commanded you . . ." (Matt. 28:20). "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound teaching; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned into fables." (II Tim. 4:2-4). When the charge of preaching of the word is done in its plainness; firmness and frankness, then something practical has been given.

When a congregation is no longer busy learning God's word and effectively teaching it in its purity and unadulterated form, that church will die spiritually. "To the intent that now unto the principalities and power in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord . . ." (Eph. 2:10-11). Every tree is known by its own fruit—not by the way the wind is blowing.

There are many in the church who want the church to grow, and they want good, sound, firm teaching and preaching. The

church will grow if teachers and preachers will teach and preach the truth in plainness, with firmness and frankness, and kindness and love, and care enough to do it, and elders require this to be done. The church needs to stop neglecting those things that make the church vital and alive. "How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto them that heard him . . ." (Heb. 2:2). "But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end . . ." (Heb. 3:13-14). Also (II Pet. 1:3-11).

Just What Is The Church?

DILLARD THURMAN

THE CHURCH: THE KINGDOM OF GOD!

No other term of reference is used for the church more often than "the kingdom" of God or heaven. Even of old, the prophet declared: "*Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.*" (Jer. 23:5). Thus it was fixed in God's revealed plan! The Seed of David had been promised as their future King! The Psalmist sang: "*Yet have I set my king upon the holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.*" (Psa. 2:6-7). When Daniel saw "*One like the son of man,*" he then prophesied, "*And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.*" (Dan. 7:13-14). This finds expression in the words of Heb. 12:28—"Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptable with reverence and godly fear." As Jesus became the Head over all things to that

church (Eph. 1:22-23), so He also was the King over the kingdom of God. The word *church* speaks of its relationship to the world as the *called out*. The word *kingdom* speaks of its governmental aspects, with Christ reigning over it as king.

Christ, A King With A Kingdom!

Before His birth, an angel announced to Mary, *"He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give him the throne of His Father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."* (Lk. 1:32-33). Thus when Wise Men from the East sought Him as a babe, their question was: *"Where is he that is born King of the Jews?"* (Mt. 2:2). It was known afar that this One would be King! When Nathanael was brought to Him, he exclaimed: *"Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel."* (Jno 1:49). Such accolades did not cease; at His triumphal entry, Jesus was greeted by those who cried, *"Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord."* (Jno. 12:13). Finally, during His appearance before Pilate, Jesus was asked, *"Art thou a king then?"* And to this He replied, *"Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth."* (Jno. 18:37). That was made abundantly clear when they made their charge against him, saying, *"We have found this fellow perverting the nation . . . saying that he himself is Christ a King. And Pilate asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And he answered him and said, Thou sayest it."* (Lk. 23:2-3). At no time did He deny being a King over the kingdom of God!

Jesus Taught Gospel Of Kingdom

As we studied earlier, John the Baptist, Jesus Christ, the twelve and the seventy, went forth preaching one central theme: *"Repent; the kingdom of heaven is at hand."* This was recorded as the work of Jesus. *"And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom."* (Mt. 4:23). Later, Jesus said, *"There be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power."* (Mk. 9:1). To His trusted

disciples He made promise: *"Fear not, little flock: for it is the Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."* (Lk. 12:32). It was to His disciples that He promised the keys of the kingdom (Mt. 16:18-19; 19:28). These keys Peter used on Pentecost to bring in the Jews, and at the household of Cornelius to bring in the Gentiles (Acts 2:36-42; 10:34-48). The same keys were used for both Jew and Gentile, and Jesus was King over both!

The Nature Of That Kingdom

It was the nature of the kingdom that men most misunderstood. They visualized an earthly kingdom, with Jerusalem its capital, reclaiming all the glory of David's and Solomon's! Even His followers had this erroneous conception, and sought to make Him king by force (Jno. 6:15). Jesus sought to clarify this: *"And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, He answered and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo here! or, Lo, there! for behold, the kingdom of God is within you."* (Lk. 17:20-21). Later, when on trial, Jesus said: *"My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence."* (Jno. 18:36). Jesus plainly taught that the kingdom would not come with the sound of trumpets, the waving of banners, and great parades! his kingdom was not of this earth, and would not have such world ostentations to draw attention!

You hear a constant, blatant harangue on radio and TV by religious racketeers who promote the same erroneous conception of the kingdom! They claim that Jesus Christ will return to the Mount of Olives in a "Flash Gordon Style," march across the Kidron Valley to the Beautiful Gate, which will miraculously open, and He will then set up His Throne where the Dome of the Rock now stands, and will reign for a thousand years! The error of this is it makes a liar of Jesus who said His kingdom was not of this world; and it also denies all that is said of Christ's second coming! He is not coming back to reign, but to abdicate His throne!

The Authority Of This Great King!

E'er He left the earth, Jesus stated: *"All power [authority] is given unto me in heaven and in earth."* (Mt. 28:18). Thus Paul wrote of *"the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall show, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords."* (1 Tim. 6:15). Also it was revealed unto John: *"And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."* (Rev. 1:18). Jesus well knew *"That the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he came from God, and went to God."* (Jno. 13:3). Thus He could say, *"The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son."* (Jno. 5:22). There is no limit on that authority: *"He is the head of the body, the church: who is the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the pre-eminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell."* (Col. 1:18-19). His kingdom will stand forever; but He will voluntarily give up that reign!

As stated before, Jesus will not return to reign and rule—He is coming back to abdicate the throne! *"Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death."* (1 Cor. 15:24-26). Read carefully the entire passage, and you will see there is no place to allow any reign of a thousand years! The kingdom (church) was established on Pentecost (Acts 2), and from that point, it was spoken of as being in existence! (See Acts 8:12; 20:25; 28:23; 1 Thes. 2:12).

Citizens of the Kingdom of God

Jesus emphatically declared, *"Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."* (Jno. 3:5). This new birth is more easily seen by studying what they did on hearing the first gospel sermon, as being led by the Spirit's word they were baptized for *remission* of sins (Acts 2:36-41). Or study Rom. 6:3-4, where it is shown we are led by the Spirit to obey the Lord in baptism, and raised to walk in newness of life. We are then *"translated from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son."* (Col. 1:13).

Remember that Jesus taught: *"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."* (Mt. 7:21). But all the more, after entering the kingdom, we must render obedience to the King!

Humility and Meekness in Citizens

The mother of James and John came to Jesus with the request that her two sons would sit on either side of Him in His kingdom. But Jesus used the occasion to teach a needed lesson on humility! Jesus said, *"Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."* (Mt. 20:20-28). The road to greatness is in servitude and ministering! A proper relationship is thus given: *"Likewise, ye younger submit yourselves to the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed in humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."* (1 Pet. 5:5). *"Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another."* (Rom 2:10). As the kingdom of God differs from the world, so the citizens of God's kingdom also are different.

Unity Among Citizens of Kingdom!

Regularly we receive "brotherhood papers" filled with acrimonious charges, lethal innuendoes, and slanderous accusations, which seem to drip hatred and malice against elders, preachers and churches. Of course, such are consigned to the waste basket: but what spirit prompts such writing? Is this the warfare the kingdom of God should wage? This paper does not engaged in such fratricide! We serve a great King, and it is beneath our calling to stoop to such low tactic and scurrilous behaviour! We do not malign any brother, nor promote strife in any congregation. Nor do we dignify such by replying! For as one brother stated it: "I learned long ago that I can't out puke a buzzard!" We question the spiritual state of brethren who allow

such trash to be sent into their homes under the label of "Religious literature." have we reached the point where brethren can't behave like brethren before the world? Let us underline words in Gen. 13:8: *"We be brethren!" Let the world see love, peace and harmony within the kingdom and then they will respect our King, and glorify our Father!*

To be in the kingdom of God is the greatest status to be achieved on earth! Enter therein to serve Him, knowing a reward awaits in heaven!

Why Doesn't The Church Do Something?

GLENN LOUIS ROBB

"I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."—John 9:4

The spiritual poverty in this world is shocking. People are depressed, discouraged, disoriented, lost. All of us know someone who needs visits, counseling or classes. We all know families with physical needs. Imagine those beyond our personal acquaintances. There are many many more. There's certainly no lack of work. And here's a question I get regularly in my work: "Why doesn't the church do something?"

It just so happens that the church is me! The church is you! Not one of us will ever be able to do everything. God doesn't even expect that. The kingdom of God is not made of super heroes. It is made of normal people, like me, like you, accepting one task or service that can be accomplished.

I'm so thankful for the Christians who are working. Your effort is worthwhile. Do not be discouraged. Thanks to you who are teaching in the Bible school, in the nursery, in coordinating the benevolence ministry, in planning special events of the church, in preparing Christian literature, in leading Bible studies and devotionals, in making visits, in cleaning up, in planning or directing worship services, or in whatever other good work. Your service is important.

And yet there's much more to do! We need more teachers for personal Bible studies, more Sunday school teachers, more correspondence course teachers, and more help in many other areas. This world always needs someone to speak a good word for Jesus. Every one of us can at least do that.

Don't sit idle wondering why in the world the church doesn't do something. Seek out a good work and do it right away. Let us work while it is still day.

Christ Is The Head Of The Church, His Body

ELWOOD HOLT

In Colossians 1:18, Christ is spoken of as supreme, and he is supreme. The members of the Church are represented as branches of a living vine. He is the good shepherd, who gives his life for the sheep. The church is spoken of as a kingdom. He is the king who reigns over that kingdom. The church is represented under the figure of a body, he is the head of that body in all things. Therefore, He *should* have the preeminence in our lives! there are other scriptures in which Christ is represented as the head of the church. To the Corinthians Paul writes, "I would have you know that the head of every man is Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:3). To the church of Ephesus, he wrote "The husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is head of the church, and He is the Savior of the body" (Ephesians 5:23). Again he wrote, God "hath given him to be head over all things to the church, which is his Body" (Ephesians 1:22). According to this order, we are to notice the character of Him who is the head of the church. The dignity of His divine character is clearly indicated by the works which are ascribed to Him. In the context it is said, "By Him were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions or principalities, or powers; all things are created by Him and for Him" (verse 16). Again, "All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made" (John 1:13). Surely no power short of the power of God could

perform such stupendous works. Indeed, finite minds cannot comprehend this mighty creation; how then could a finite mind contrive it, or a finite hand execute it? Contemplate, gentle reader, the vastness of creation. What a world is this which we inhabit with all its mighty mountains, its roaring and muttering volcanoes, ever and anon belching forth rolling torrents of lava! Behold its wide spread plains, its deep rolling rivers, and its mighty oceans, whose mountainous waves roll, ever lashing the shore at the feet of the awestricken beholder. Then contemplate the innumerable tribes of living beings, formed to inhabit every part of this mighty world of ours; the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, and the fish of the sea. But, above all, contemplate man, made in the image of God, and then remember that ALL were created by Him who is the head of the church. Then we may form some very faint idea of His glorious character.

Our little world is but a speck in creation, as but a grain of sand on the sea-shore, compared with the immensity of the created universe. The sun, moon, and the stars are the works of His fingers. He "in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of His hands" (Hebrews 1:10). Imagine every fixed star—even those that can only be seen by the aid of our largest and most powerful telescopes—to be a sun, placed in the center of a 'system of worlds, all performing their annual revolutions around their respective suns. Then imagine all these worlds, with their innumerable hosts of living inhabitants, to be a very small portion of the workmanship of His almighty power. Think then how glorious must He be who is the head of the Church and the Savior of the body.

Paul says, "He is before all things, and by Him all things consist" (verse 17). The apostle says, "God hath in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He hath appointed Heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds, and is the express image of His Person, and UPHOLDING ALL THINGS (Hebrews 1:1, 2, 3). The apostle here seems to represent the power of Christ as a mighty arch, reaching from eternity past to eternity to come, or spanning that broken off fragment of eternity which we call time, upon which arch is suspended the universe, all born up or upheld by Him "whom God hath given to be head over all things to the Church." Surely He is not simply a super-human or a super-angelic being. He who created all things, and who

upholds all things, must be divine. The very term which expresses divine nature, is applied to JESUS, the CHRIST.

John says, "In the beginning was the WORD, and the WORD was with God, and the WORD was God." And the WORD was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of GRACE and TRUTH" (John 1:1-14). This JESUS THE CHRIST is the one who loved us so much HE DIED FOR US. This JESUS IS THE SAVIOR OF ALL WHO WILL ACCEPT HIM.

Striving Against Sin

JOHNNY RAMSEY

Perhaps the best four-step decline in spirituality is set forth in Jeremiah 7:24: "But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walking in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward and not forward."

When men quit fighting against sin they have surrendered to the Captain of Hell. Far too many have waved the white flag before they even buckled on the sword. Why do we give up so easily?

One major reason that sin gains momentum is the startling fact that there is pleasure in sin. For a carnally minded individual it is far more appealing to associate with evil companions than with the saints in light. The bitter dregs of shame compel a sinner more than the pure waters of life. The devil will always see to it that leaving error is most inconvenient. As Byron stated in Don Juan: "Pleasure's a sin, and sometimes sin's a pleasure."

There are scores of folk who get their only pleasure in doing evil and this fully satisfies their worldly view of life. The tragedy is that they will continue without aim or purpose unless Christians begin anew to strive against sin!

Another contributing factor to the sinful predicament by which millions are captivated is the cunning progressiveness of sin. David, Demas and Diotrephes did not begin in the clutches of Satanic influences; but before they realized it adultery, spiritual infidelity and arrogance had enraptured them! What a

contrasting view springs from the lives of Joseph, Joshua and Jesus. These three fled from sin, purged it from the camp and gained the victory over it. Our Lord finally sounded the death knell over the prostrate form of sin in His triumphant death.

Too many well-intentioned people cultivate sinful attitude and allow pettiness to overwhelm them. We *do* make provision for the flesh!

If Ephesians 5:11 and I Thessalonians 5:22 were obeyed there could be no major problem in our lives. These verses tell us to have no fellowship with evil, abstain from it and rebuke it. Indeed, "let everyone that names the name of Christ depart from iniquity." The sin of compromise has led to complete departure from the Lord for convenience is the mother of apostasy. Unless we resist the Devil he will not flee from us.

Is it not a challenging, heart-warming promise that God provides a way of escape for us when temptation strikes? In I Corinthians 10, Paul, by inspiration, tells us of the decline and fall of some of Jehovah's people. But neither they nor we need to go astray. The rich provisions of grace and glory envelop our lives when the Prince of heaven enters our being. We can gain a victory over sin for "he that is in us is greater than he that is in them."

"Into My Heart, Into My Heart,
Come Into My Heart, Lord Jesus:
Come In Today; Come In To Stay,
Come Into My Heart, Lord Jesus."

The pleasures of sin are too high priced for wise men to pay. The joys of Christianity are too glorious to miss. The poorest man is the one bereft of Christ. Therefore, let us war valiantly for Truth that sin-cursed humanity can know the peace that Jesus brings.

M.B. Welch, in the famous poem about an old violin, said:

"And many a man with life out of tune and battered and scarred with sin.

Is auctioned cheap to the thoughtless crowd much like the old violin.

A mess of pottage, a glass of wine,
A game and he travels on

He is going once, he is going twice
He is going—and almost gone!
But the Master comes and the foolish crowd
Can never quite understand
The worth of a soul and the change that's wrought,
In the touch of the Master's hand."

May we so live that countless souls may live to see the hand of the Lord in their lives. If we do, the glories of eternal sunlight shall be our portion in the land of fadeless day. This is, indeed, our task and privilege!

What Wise Followers Find ***(Proverbs 21:21)***

NEAL POLLARD

A motorist encountered a road sign, which read, "Select your route carefully, for you will have to drive in them the next twenty miles." All of us decide to follow a certain track in life. We cut a certain path with the choices we make. Whether good or bad, those decisions affect what kind of life we will live. As the apostle Paul admonished.

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting (Galatians 6:7-8).

Paul's words are so logical! Why do so many follow the wrong path and the wrong guides? Why is spiritual stability so difficult for some? How can individuals repeat the same mistakes over and over?

Those who follow cult leaders often live the most miserable and die the most horrible deaths at the behest of those corrupt leaders. Good, religious people, who follow the teaching and traditions of men, violate God's word and keep themselves estranged from salvation. So many follow the Pied Piper of the world, the Evil Enticer, and the deluding Devil, Pleasure is their pilot. But, not all have bowed their knees to the Baals of atheism,

denominationalism, materialism, and hedonism.

Many choose a path which is paved by righteousness and mercy. The world has many individuals who fully embrace the Bible when it is presented to them and comply with the plan of salvation. These are among the wise followers mentioned by the writer of Proverbs 21:21.

"He that followeth after righteousness and mercy findeth life, righteousness, and honour."

Wise Followers Find Life. Those who find Christ and His church find everlasting life (cf. Romans 6:4; 16:16). These are fed by the bread of life (John 6:35), who satiates their spiritual hunger. Those who faithfully follow the giver of life will, in eternity, eat from the tree of life (Revelation 2:7), wear a crown of eternal life (Revelation 2:10), and have access to the water of life (Revelation 22:1)!

Wise Followers Find Righteousness. Jesus promises that those who hunger and thirst after it will be filled (Matthew 5:6). Such is a fruit of the Spirit (Ephesians 5:9). Christ is the great King of righteousness (Hebrews 6:20—7:1-2), and "if ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him" (1 John 2:29).

Wise Followers Find Honour. The promise of Christ is.

If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my father honour (John 12:26).

Honor comes in service, humility, and obedience. So comes wisdom.

The foolish follow a wide and comfortable road, a non-sacrificial and a self-indulgent, self-satisfying path. The wise follow a narrow road, a demanding and self-denying street. The blessings go to the wise!

Must We Change Or Die?

AL BROWN

Try as they may to conceal it, the infidelity of liberalism betrays itself in many ways. Some today insist that they believe

the Bible is inspired, but their concept of inspiration is not even close to the Biblical doctrine of inspiration. The claim that the church must change or it will die is one of many clues disclosing their lack of trust in the agelessness of God's revealed wisdom.

If the Bible were the product of mere men, such a contention would be valid. Man's wisdom is so limited he is incapable of developing guidelines for living which are apropos to every culture of every age through all time. Indeed, he can't devise a perfect pattern for living for even one generation. The combined efforts of all the social scientists in his last decade of the twentieth century can't even produce a consensus of how life ought to be lived.

Man's best insights, which have been incorporated into religious creeds and social mores over the last fifty years, are seriously flawed and have spawned chaos in American society. We are reaping the harvest of this atheistic humanism in the grim statistics blasted across the media every day. Crime is covering us up and the courts are helpless. People are arming themselves because they think the law enforcement agencies can no longer protect them. Drugs are everywhere. Sexual license is rampant. It is difficult to find an adult who has not been divorced at least once. Children are abused, misused, abandoned, and murdered by the millions each year. The prisons are full. Teen-age hoodlums terrorize whole neighbourhoods. If righteousness exalts a nation and sin is a reproach to any people (Proverbs 14:34), America's shame defies description. This deplorable situation is the fruit of situation ethics embedded in every facet of life, from religion to business to politics, and we are left with bankrupt social and moral conscience.

America's religious denominations have changed. They have totally abandoned what little of true Christianity they at one time embraced. They never did submit to the authority of Christ's teaching, but how they openly hold the moral standard of Christianity in contempt, and consider all New Testament teaching as only the wisdom of men.

Since all human efforts require periodic revision, people who believe the Bible is the handiwork of men naturally think it too is subject to imperfections and must also be updated at times. This is precisely the attitude the liberal holds. These infidels may claim the thoughts or ideas of the Bible are inspired,

but the very words are not; hence, they insist the Bible contains the word of God, but the words used in the original autographs are not the very words the holy Spirit of God moved those men to write.

Naturally, those who think the Bible was devised by man hold the authority claimed in the Bible in contempt. If the scriptures are only the sentiments of opinionated, chauvinistic men who lived 2,000 or more years ago, why should we be bound by the outmoded taboos of an ancient culture? Such an ethic may have sufficed for that day, but, they insist, it is totally inadequate for our sophisticated, complex society.

In contrast to this infidelity, we believe the claims the Bible makes—that it is, in fact, the product of God's infinite wisdom, knowledge, and power. Man is incapable of producing a perfect set of rules by which every one in every culture, in every age can live; but God, in his infinite wisdom and knowledge can—and he has. This is why Jesus said that heaven and earth would pass away, but His word would not (Matthew 24:35). Because it is the fruit of the infinite wisdom and knowledge of God, it cannot be improved upon. To insist it needs revision, or should be supplanted, is to deny that God's knowledge and wisdom is infinite. Such a belief is blasphemy. It is a rejection of the God of the Bible (Luke 10:16; 1 Thessalonians 4:8). One who holds such a view is an infidel (an unbeliever) to the religion of Jesus Christ!

These infidels insist they only want to cleanse the church of obsolete, useless traditions. This sounds innocent on the surface—even commendable. After all, who would want to be bound by unneeded, worn-out practices which actually hinder the cause of Christ? Some traditions may need to be abandoned, or at least modified. However, a close look at what they are calling "tradition," reveals they are not talking about traditional methods we have used to do the Lord's will over the year. By "tradition," they mean the facts, commands, and patterns for practicing Christianity given in the Scriptures. They want to revise and/or abandon the teaching (doctrine) of the New Testament!

They do not believe New Testament doctrine has any permanence but is on the same level with the doctrines of men. Since men must revise, alter, or abandon their teaching to fit the constantly shifting moral; or social climate, these infidels think God's eternal word should be subject to the same criteria. They

see the church of our Lord as one denomination among many and no better than any. It may even be worse; at least, that is the way their vicious, hateful criticism sounds. This is why they are insisting the church must change or it will die.

In fact, the very opposite is true. The only way the church will not die is to remain true to the Lord and His doctrine. Jesus said the very gates of hell would not prevail against His kingdom (Matthew 16:18) and that it would stand till the end of time when Christ would deliver it up to the Father (I Corinthians 15:24).

On the other hand, Jesus assess us: "Every plant which my heavenly Father planted not, shall be rooted up" (Matthew 15:13).

In the final analysis, it comes down to this: who will you believe—Jesus Christ and His apostles or the claims of infidels whose faith has been ship-wrecked? Let us put it another way: do you want to be saved or follow infidels to destruction?

The Real Dangers

AUTHOR UNKNOWN

Homosexuality is not what threatens the fabric of society. It has been with us for thousands of years. When homosexuality is considered normal, not wrong, an alternative lifestyle, society is threatened. Divorce is not the great threat to our country and the church. It has been with us almost from the beginning also. But when there is no stigma, when divorce is acceptable, the first option rather than the last resort, we are in trouble. Fornication or promiscuity does not threaten us. This sin is as old as mankind. Yet when fornicators become our role models, our heroes, we need to ask ourselves in what direction we are going. Unscriptural teachings or bad attitudes will not destroy the church. The church has been surviving these problems since her inception. But when those who are loose with the Scriptures becomes our ideals, and those who have bad attitudes are our defenders of the faith, then we had better take inventory of the future of the church.

In short, sin is not going to destroy us. Sin has been with us since Adam and Eve. When we no longer think of sin as sin, God's patience may run out.