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Following Christ.

Ekklesia, the Greek word, which is translated in our English Bible as church, really means "a body of called out people." A dictionary might define church as "a place of worship," and this is so because most people today have accepted it that way. But from the beginning, as Christ said concerning divorce, in Matthew 19:8, it was not so. Being a body of called out people, called out from the world of sin and translated into the kingdom of God's Son (Matthew 16:18, 19; Colossians 1:13), Christ's Church consists of individual members who are called Christians (Acts 11:26; 1 Peter 4:16). As followers of Christ Christians are expected to follow His steps (1 Peter 2:21). Looking at Christ we find:

He gave much importance to prayer in His life. When He was baptized in obedience to God's command and as He came up from the water (Matthew 3:15, 16), the record says, He prayed. (Luke 3:21). Each work He did, He prayed before doing that. For instance, when he fed five thousand people with just two small fish and five loaves, He gave thanks for that before giving it to the disciples for distribution among the crowd. (John 6:11).

Again, when Lazarus was raised from the dead, He prayed to the Father in heaven before raising him up. (John 11:41). Throughout His life on earth, in every circumstances, Christ did not cease to pray. And just a little before He was betrayed to be crucified, He was found in the Garden of Gethsemane, again, praying to the Father in heaven and saying, "not as I will, but as you will." (Matthew 26:39). Then, as He hung on the cross He was praying for His enemies, saying, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." (Luke 23:34). And finally, He said, "Father, into Your hands I commend my spirit." (Luke 23:46). As Christians we need to pray like Christ did in all circumstances.

Obedience to the will of the Father in heaven was another priority in the life of Christ. As we have read above, His words were "not as I will, but as you will." Philippians 2:8 says, "He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross." According to Hebrews 5:8, 9 "Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him." He taught, "Not every-one who says to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven." (Matthew 7:21). As followers of Christ we must then obey all things that Christ Himself, and through His Apostles, has commanded.

Even though He was God, Christ made Himself of no reputation and took the form of a servant and came on earth in the likeness of men to save men. (Philippians 2:6, 7). He taught His followers to become humble as a little child to enter into heaven. (Matthew 18:3). So much humble was our Lord that He would not accept the title of "Good Teacher" from a man who came to Him seeking the way of eternal life. (Matthew 19:16, 17). How sad it is, though, to see today those who are claiming to be preachers of His gospel desire to be addressed by men as "Pastor", "Reverend", "Padri", and "Father," etc. (Matthew 23:9; Psa'm 111:9). Before He sent His disciples with the command to "Go and preach the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15), He poured water into a basin and began to wash His disciples' feet, and then

He said, "I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you." (John 13:5, 15). Without being humble, as our Lord Jesus Christ was, we cannot be His followers.

Another thing that we learn from Christ is that He was always ready to forgive. Once some religious leaders had caught a woman in the act of committing adultery, and according to the law of Moses they wanted to stone her to death. As they all stood before Christ and asked Him, "What do you say?" (John 8:5). Christ said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first." (John 8:7). None did. Because they all knew that they had all sinned. When they had all left leaving the woman and Christ, He said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more." (John 8:11). Christ was without sin. He could have condemned her. But He did not. Because He did not come to condemn but to forgive and save. Even when He was writhing in pain on the cross and His enemies were making fun of Him and were mocking Him. We read, He pleaded with His Father in heaven to forgive them. (Luke 23:34). As Christians we should always remember that our Saviour taught, "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Matthew 6:14, 15).

Also, we learn from Christ that if we are going to be His followers then we must love all people as He did. His love for the lost humanity was so great that He was willing to leave heaven, become a man, and die for the sins of whole world as a propitiation for our sins. He loved the world with His own life. The price He paid to redeem man from sin was His own blood. (1 John 2:2; and 4:10). As Christians we cannot ignore people lost in a world of sin. Jesus left heaven, emptied Himself of all the glory and power that He had from the beginning with the Father, (Philippians 2:6-8), and came seeking the lost to save them. (Luke 19:10), because of His great love for the sinners. As Christians this is our responsibility that we should proclaim His message of love, the gospel of His cross, to this world which is full of hatred and wars. Our Lord said, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you

also love one another. By this", He said, "all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. (John 13:34, 35).

On the other hand, even though Christ was humble and loving, and compassionate, yet He was a man of courage and the one who would not compromise. He could not tolerate when they had turned His Father's house into a house of merchandise. The record states that He made a whip of cords and drove them all out of the temple with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and over-turned the tables, and boldly told them to take those things away. (John 2:14-16) In following Christ we also need to become courageous like Christ. We must speak out against sin and worldliness, against wrong and against denominationalism and sectarianism in Christianity. We must write and speak against error. Indeed we must preach and practice the love of Christ, but at the same time we must contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. (Jude 3). This is exactly what we have been doing for the last twenty years through the pages of this magazine, and the Lord willing, we will continue to do so for many more years to come. We wish for more people to join us in our plea for a return to the Bible's Christianity, to speak where the Bible speaks and to be quiet where the Bible is silence.

"By The Way Of Remembrance"

J.C. Choate

The Apostle Peter wrote, "This second epistle, beloved, I write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour..." (2 Peter 3:1, 2). Peter says that he is writing concerning matters that they had already been taught, to stir up their thinking to enable them to remember those things, so that they might not be led astray by false teaching. He warns them of various false teach-

ings and then concludes by saying, "Ye therefore beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in the grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever, Amen." (2 Peter 3:17, 18).

Have you ever been taught something, but after some time you forgot the main points, simply because you didn't use the information often enough or because you did not continue to study that particular subject? But perhaps later someone came along to remind you of what you had known, or because you had a particular need for it so that you restudied it, it gradually began to come back to you. Had you not been reminded of it, however, that information might have been permanently lost to you.

The same is true of our knowledge of God's word. If we have once been taught the truth, have come to know God's will, and have obeyed it, we were saved by it. Because that truth is simple and basic sometimes we are prone to think that it will not be necessary to go back and re-study those simple lessons that we learned in previous years. Furthermore some brethren may feel that it is unnecessary for the local preacher or a Bible teacher to go back to the first principles in presenting lessons from God's word. Because of such reasoning they deprive themselves and others of truths that will help to sustain them and to keep them on guard against false teaching.

Much of life is made up of the simple, basic things. Physically, we continue to eat those foods, even milk, that we have eaten all of our lives. We continue to need to drink water, to sleep a number of hours each day, and to get a sufficient amount of exercise. If these basic needs are not met, we will eventually die. The soul also must continue to be fed on basic spiritual foods to enable it to grow. It must constantly be reminded of those truths to keep it alert to God's will, and to be able to oppose false teaching.

For any congregation of God's people, a portion of the

sermons and lessons presented should be on these basic truths that have previously been taught. Old members need to have their memories refreshed concerning these matters. They may think they remember them well, but do they remember them well enough to teach them to others and not to be misled by false doctrine? New members need them so that they may be grounded in these truths. Those who are not Christians need to hear them so that they may learn the truth and be encouraged to obey it. Children and young people need to be hearing these truths so that they will grow up understanding them and obeying them.

For example we need to be kept reminded of the God of heaven, of how he created all things, of the love that he has for us, and of the grace and mercy that he has extended to us. (Genesis 1:1; John 3:16; Ephesians 2:8, 9). We need to hear the story of Christ again and again, how he came and lived among men, of his sacrifice on the cross for the sins of the world, of his resurrection, and of his return to the Father in heaven. We need to be familiar with the gospel, of the cases of conversion listed in the book of Acts, of what one must do to be saved, that the Lord requires the sinner to believe in him, to repent of his sins, to confess Christ as being the Son of God, and to be baptized for the remission of sins. (Romans 10:9-17; Mark 16:15, 16). We need also to know the scriptures that support these commands and to be able to give the references.

What about the church? How much do we know about it? Do we understand that Christ died for the church, that he built it, that there is but one, that when one obeys the Lord he is saved and added to that church? (Matthew 16:18, 19; Ephesians 5:23, 25; Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:1-6; Acts 2:47). Do we know the name of the church, the name that individuals are to wear as followers of Christ? (Romans 16:16; Acts 11:26).

Then there is worship. How much do we know about it? Can we tell our friends what God requires of us for acceptable worship? What about the day of worship? (Acts 20:7). Why do Christians not use mechanical music in worship to God? (Ephesians 5:19). Why are we to partake of the Lord's Supper? (1 Corinthians 11).

Now if we think that we as Christians do not need to hear

lessons on these topics, these questions are in order: How well do we understand these truths? Are we able to teach them to our friends? Can we give scripture references for what we believe and practice when it comes to religious matters? Why are we different from other religious people?

Brethren, one of the best ways to keep these truths in mind is to make use of your knowledge by teaching them to those around you. Even if you will bring your friends to worship, you will delight to hear the simple truths of God being presented because you will be hearing them through the ears of your friends, making it new and refreshing. Even though you may know the truth being presented, and have heard it many times, still it will sound so good and wonderful because you know that your friends need to hear these saving truths.

Yes, we need to go on with our Christian growth beyond the first principles, but regularly we need to be reminded of those basic teachings that serve as a spiritual foundation for us. This will take us back to our spiritual beginnings, to give us reassurance of the truths that we believe in and practice, and of the hope that we have because of them. It will also remind us again of our need for the Lord and of our need for teaching these simple truths to our fellow man. For sure, none of us will ever outgrow them.

Where Do We Go From Here ?

J. Curtis Manor

The world is a frightful place, isn't it? So much suffering especially by innocent people. Our loved ones stricken with pain, disease, or the infirmity of age, and our hearts aching with helpless sympathy. Crime against the innocent young and the helpless elderly, and society with too much concern for the "rights" of the criminal to do very much about it. Dangerous criminals walking the streets freely because the prisons are so full, partly with people who are guilty of nothing more than bad business judgment, that there is no room in jail for the thugs.

People being shot on the highways by strangers for thoughtless or unskilled driving maneuvers. Poverty stalking thousands of homes, and legions of people with no home at all, in the richest nation on earth. Social diseases threatening the entire population because the leaders of our society don't want to offend those "free spirits" who regard perversion as normal and insist on their right to practice it (We don't mind trampling on the "rights" of people afflicted with leprosy, whooping cough, diphtheria, or smallpox, but we must not quarantine the human time bomb who carries AIDS among us.). And though the specter of drug abuse grows more ominous every year, we must tolerate the ravages of the most destructive and deadly of all narcotics because "alcohol has always been a part of the good life," and the people who make our laws can't restrict its legal availability without indicting themselves. This of course dilutes the effectiveness of any measures taken against heroin, cocaine or marijuana. And religion, which is supposed to fortify humanity against the evils of the world, has all too often degenerated into a tool of greed, politics or other exploitation of its followers. We know, of course, that the devil, though currently under divine restraint, is responsible for all of this misery, chaos and inconsistencies, and we certainly don't want to go to a place where he could work his wicked will with no hindrances at all, and we'd have to live in close fellowship with him forever!

The world is a wonderful place, isn't it? So much beauty of blue sky and green hill and sparkling stream, to be enjoyed by anyone who cares to look. So many wonders of life and natural design to challenge the mind and delight the heart. The joy of living, learning and doing. So much love, honor and friendship among families, neighbours and people of mutual interest. So much opportunity for achievement, self-realization and happiness. So much laughter and good-will. Freedom and ability to work, and to enjoy the fruits of labour. So many ways to enjoy leisure time, and so much leisure time to enjoy. The privilege of communion with God, even in this world, and the joy of knowing you can be his friend, his partner, his very child. The satisfaction of knowing the good in the world has been increased, and

its evils diminished, because you have done your best—at least most of the time. We know, of course, that our Father in heaven is the giver of all that is good and pleasant in this wonderful world we enjoy so much, and if he can work such wonders with a world that is polluted with misery and evil, we certainly would want to go to a place where he can work his perfect will without any hindrance from the evil one, and we'd get to live in security and close fellowship with him forever!

You see, whichever way you look at it, this world offers us every incentive to look forward to a better one. Let us not fail to get the message, nor waste the opportunity.

Are You Coupled With Christ ?

Frank Starling

It is a hard thing to acknowledge that very frequently many with whom we assemble for worship on the Lord's day have never acted upon their faith in Christ. Theirs is a dead faith. (James 2:17). By their refusal to commit themselves by gospel obedience to the Saviour, time and again they shun the beauty and blessing of being "coupled with Christ." Still, such an individual would be quick to insist that he is on the right track, religiously, even while rejecting the invitation of the Lord.

The question arises in our concern for the souls of the type of people described in the above paragraph: Even by living a good moral life and being on the "right track," can a person honestly expect to make it to heaven without being "coupled with Christ," the Pulling Power? Life comes with a considerable number of built-in challenges; it is an uphill struggle more often than not. And without Christ showing us the way, we are destined to failure. With him, our efforts will be crowned with success. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13), said the apostle Paul, recognizing that a coupling with Christ by obedience to his gospel is absolutely necessary for genuine happiness now and in eternity. To be

"coupled" with Christ is to be united with him upon obeying the conditions of God's redemptive plan—hearing and believing (Acts 15:7, 9), repenting of sins (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30), confessing Christ (Romans 10:10), and submitting to baptism (immersion) for the remission of sins. (Acts 2:38). The coupling with Christ then must be maintained throughout life here on earth. (John 8:31; 2 John 9; Revelation 2:10; 22:14).

Two travelers, it is said, having fancied that they were quite able to take care of themselves, climbed aboard a railway coach when the train was being made up and found themselves comfortable seats in a nice section. They had dropped into conversation when a porter looked in and told them to go forward to the next car. "What's the matter with this car?" they impatiently asked. "Nothing," he grinned, "only 'tain't coupled onto anything that'll take you anywhere!"

Remember—you can be on the "right track" in moral conduct and on a religious track that the majority would approve of, but unless you are "coupled with Christ" through compliance with God's will as the New Testament reveals it, you'll not be pulling in to heaven's station. Our appeal must not be for an approval rating from the human perspective but that our heavenly Father might say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." (Matthew 25:21). A spiritual coupling with Christ can only be accomplished and maintained by adherence to the revealed will of God as set forth in the New Testament. (Matthew 7:21-23; 1 John 1:7).

Initial obedience to Christ's gospel is required to establish the aforementioned coupling with Christ essential to eternal happiness. Maintenance of one's spiritual health is likewise realized in complete loyalty to the primitive pattern of things. Inspiration records the betrayal of the so-recently effected coupling with Christ by Simon in Acts 8:13 and the solution in verses 14-24. May we all secure our souls by gospel obedience as we become Christians and live faithfully whatever number of days we have. Are you "coupled with Christ?" It's the only way to heaven. (Read John 6:44-45). To be coupled to the creeds, manuals, and philosophies of men is to be going in the wrong direction!

Faith And Evidence

David L. Lipe

It is false to say that faith means the absence of evidence. God does not want us to accept anything as true for which there is not sufficient evidence. This claim is disputed by Christians and non-Christians. It is claimed by some that if a claim rests on sufficient evidence, then the claim is a matter of knowledge and faith has to do with considerations lacking evidence of their claim. According to this, knowledge begins where evidence begins and ends where evidence ends. Faith begins after the evidence ends. Thus, if one wishes to hold to doctrine X and the evidence is such that the doctrine may or may not be true, one may take a "leap of faith" (a leap beyond the evidence) and espouse doctrine X though there is not sufficient evidence for the doctrine.

Richard Robison, an atheistic thinker, charges that the above picture of faith is Christian faith. Christian faith, according to him is believing that there is a god no matter what the evidence on the question may be. 'Have faith' in the Christian sense, means 'make yourself believe that there is a god without regard to evidence.' Christian faith is a habit of flouting reason in forming and maintaining one's answer to the question whether there is a god. (*An Atheist's Values*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1964, p. 121). This may be the view of faith for some, but it is not biblical faith. Biblical faith is a reasonable faith. Nothing in the Bible teaches that faith is unreasonable. On the contrary, everything concerning faith is reasonable. Thus, if biblical faith is to be reasonable one must recognize the law of rationality which says to draw only such conclusions as are warranted by adequate evidence. Bertrand Russell states it this way: "Give to any hypothesis that is worth your while to consider just that degree of evidence which the evidence warrants." (*A History of Western Philosophy*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1945, p. 816).

By "evidence" I mean a statement used in an effort to sup-

port the view that a given conclusion is true. Thompson says, "By evidence we mean what the term literally suggests, that which 'shows' or 'exhibits' or 'brings into view.' The evidence shows or brings into view the basis upon which the claim of truth rests." (p. 44). Thompson on the same page, further brings out that evidence includes statements which imply the statement/s in question: If a conclusion is implied by a statement/s and this statement/s is true then the implied statement must also be true.

Evidence may be said to be "adequate when it is as good or convincing as it can be, when further investigation into the truth of the proposition in question is pointless." (Stephen T. Davis, Faith, Skepticism, and Evidence, Cranbury, New Jersey. Associated University Press, Inc., 1978, p. 19).

The Bible (a body of factual information about God and his will for man) constitutes adequate evidence. Since God cannot lie, the integrity of the Scriptures cannot successfully be disputed. Faith comes after knowledge of the word of God. (Romans 10:17). Thus, faith is based on evidence. Nowhere in the Scriptures is anyone called upon to have faith without evidence. John says that the signs in his gospel were in order "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." (John 20:30,31). Further, 1 John 5:13 says, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." In the first recorded sermon (Acts 2:22-40) following the resurrection of Christ, Peter appealed to four kinds of evidence: (a) miracles (22); (b) prophecy (25-28); (c) the resurrection (27-32); and (d) the events of the day (33). Peter continued by saying, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." (Acts 2:36).

Our supreme example, Jesus, shows the necessity of gathering evidence. Jesus met the temptations of the devil in every case with an "it is written." The second temptation is particularly interesting. The devil quoted Psalm 91:11 in challenging Jesus

to throw himself from the pinnacle of the temple. Jesus responded by quoting Deuteronomy 6:16, thus emphasizing that the totality of biblical teaching on a particular subject should be gathered.

If biblical faith is to be reasonable one must gather not only the evidence on a particular question but that evidence must be handled correctly. To be rational is to draw only warranted conclusions and this means that we must use the principles of valid reasoning. To do otherwise is to espouse the view that biblical faith may "out run" the evidence, and this is to say that such faith is a kind of "leap into the dark." This is a false view of the Christian faith. Study carefully I Peter 3:15; 1 Thessalonians 5:21; 1 John 4:1).

It may be objected that there are occasions when Jesus appealed to people to believe without sufficient evidence, Jesus says to Thomas in John 20:29 "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed : blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

The claim could be made that Jesus is pronouncing a blessing on those who believe without evidence since "seeing" is a means by which to gather evidence, yet, in the passage Jesus commends those who believe without seeing. Though Jesus commends people for believing without seeing, it does not follow that he commends people for believing without sufficient evidence. Thomas should have had reason enough to believe the resurrection of Jesus from the dead based on Jesus' own statements and the testimony of the rest of the apostles; however, he would not believe without seeing firsthand. (John 20:25). The Samaritans believed (without hearing or seeing for themselves) because of the evidence of the Samaritan woman's testimony. (John 4:39). After hearing Jesus firsthand, they believed—not because of the woman's testimony—but because they heard him with their own ears.

Togetherness Honors The Master

Edsel Burleson

Togetherness is the key to success in just about every undertaking. One musician who is off-key will destroy the harmony of the entire orchestra. He may be the best musician of the entire group, but unless he harmonizes, he mars the production of good music.

Togetherness in the Lord's work is so vital to the salvation of the lost; Paul said, "For we are labourers together with God..." (1 Corinthians 3:9). This emphasizes the fact that the task of keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace is one for every individual. A congregation that is working together in unity is a happy church.

Eddie Bowman tells of attending an old fashioned horse pulling contest years ago. The strength of the competing teams was tested by the amount of weight they could pull on a sled. The first was easy because the sled was empty; but with each subsequent round, concrete blocks were placed on the sled until all but one team were eliminated. The factor that caused failure was not lack of power, but lack of pulling together. The shouts of the nervous drivers just added confusion.

One well trained team stole the show. Very quietly the driver stopped his calm horses while a little boy hooked the doubletree to the load. Then giving slack line and the words "easy, easy" the tugs began to tighten. Taking short steps, slowly and carefully, and perfectly together until all the slack was taken up. At the appropriate time the driver shouted "Git it!" With hoofs digging in and pounding like sledge hammers the load began to move! Spontaneous applause arose from the audience as the team passed in revue.

Nehemiah attributed the success of the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem to the fact that the "people had a mind to work." (4:6). Far greater would be the results of our efforts if together, carefully and surely, we undertook each task.

According to Halford Luccock, "a snobbish woman once

asked Abraham Lincoln what his family coat of arms was. Perhaps she thought the question would embarrass him but he replied, 'My coat of arms is a pair of rolled-up sleeves.' There is no better coat of arms in the world! For the rolled-up sleeves represent the true royalty of humanity. We have a good motto for the ancient and honorable order of rolled-up sleeves, in the word from Ecclesiastes, 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might.' Abraham Lincoln was acquainted with grief, yet he never gave up his labour to preserve the Union and to bring slavery to an end. We honor his memory when we roll up our sleeves and join in the labour of bringing greater welfare and blessedness to mankind."

We honor the memory of him who said, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day:" (John 9:4), when we join in the labour of bringing salvation to the lost.

Significance of the Lord's Day

When The Lord had completed his six days of creation, he rested on the seventh day. Giving Israel a command to keep the sabbath holy was for a specific reason. "But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God. . . For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth. . . and rested the seventh day: (Ex. 20.10,11). We can understand then that Israel was to rest on the seventh day because God had rested on the seventh day.

It is no marvel then that in planning a special day for Christians and the Christian age, the Lord would plan a day that would be distinctive in its significance relating to him and Christians. Since the Lord was planning a complete change from the old law to the new, a distinctive change in the day was necessary.

The first day of the week is properly signified as the Lord's day (Rev. 1:10). It was on this day he arose to a new life. (On the sabbath, his body had rested in the tomb). On this day he first met with his apostles. On this day, his day, *his church*

began (Acts 2). The first time men ever asked "What must I do to be saved", was on this day. On this day the church, in apostolic days, met together to commemorate Christ's sacrifice for our sins by partaking of the Lord's supper. The Lord's day is indeed a very distinctive day. There is none like it. There has never been one like it. There will never be another like it. It overshadows the sabbath day as much as Christ is greater than the paschal lamb, or Moses, who gave Israel the old law. The Lord's day has a distinctive memory, a significant meaning, notable position (*first* day), a distinguished glory, universal acceptance, and honors the greatest character that ever graced God's earth.

To love the lord is to love *his* day. Any person you really love, you enjoy honoring and giving admiration to. *So*, if we love the Lord we will enjoy doing everything we can to use his day in a manner that will please him and give glory and honor to his name.

Who said, that one hour Bible study on the Lord's day is all he expects of us? Or, one hour of worship is all he requires? Or, three services on the Lord's day is sufficient to honor our saviour? Or, four assemblies a week is enough for the Lord. It's like saying that I will pay my debt but will do no more. Jesus said if a man compel you to go *one* mile, go with him *two*. We express our love in our service and worship.

The Lord's day is the day for us to serve and worship the Lord. Not rest, or visit friends. I've heard numerous people say they planned nothing for Sunday but things for the Lord and the church. In what more noble way could you spend the Lord's day than half of it in worship and service and the other half in serving, visiting and having fellowship with fellow Christians. Visiting the sick, the lonely, the sorrowful, or those of our brethren we do not know very well. Let us not make our "convenience" a measure of our worship and service to the Lord. Let us seek first the Lord and his kingdom. Seek first to serve and worship the Lord on the Lord's day, studying the Lord's word, praying to the Lord, meeting around the Lord's table, commemorating the Lord's death, returning a worthy portion of our

goods to the Lord, and encouraging our Lord's weak servants. Let us give due honor and time to the Lord and the Lord's day.

What Will Build A Strong Church?

Maxie Boren

Not sensationalism! Not gimmicks! Nor more committees or mere programmes, or a "fun and games" emphasis! These things may be "right-on" for civic clubs, social clubs, and country clubs, but not for the Lord's Church!

1. **Strong Bible preaching and teaching!** God's word, when it is disseminated plainly, forcefully, uncompromisingly, and yet kindly, will Build up! Paul said, "I commend you unto God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up . . ." Acts 20:32.
2. **Exemplary leadership!** Men who make themselves "examples to the flock," and who are careful in tending it. I Pet. 5:2-3. To grow, the church must have quality leadership—men who know how to lead and will do so!
3. **Christian living on the part of every member!** Unimpeachable conduct clearly evidenced in the lives of Christians will illuminate the way for many in the realm of darkness. Read Matt. 5:16 and Phil. 2:15.
4. **Congregational warmth and love!** The fellowship of the Lord's church should be so sweet and precious that the whole community takes notice, and observes, "See how they love each other!" Without this a congregation will never be what God would have it to be!
5. **Compassionate hearts!** The Church of Christ needs to be known as the most tender-hearted bunch of people in all the world . . . ready and willing to help all; and especially those of the household of faith. Gal. 6:9-10.

6. **Evangelistic fervor!** The emphasis of the early church was soul-winning! The church will grow when we cease not to "teach and to preach Jesus as the Christ" every day, when-ever we have opportunity! Read Acts 5:42.
7. An "I want to serve" attitude permeating the congregation! People serving the Lord because they love Him, and they want to serve, and not out of a spirit of drudgery.
8. An atmosphere of happiness, friendliness, cordiality, hospitality! No stranger should ever come into the midst of the Lord's church without being graciously greeted and welcomed by a happy, friendly membership! We must reach out to others, and not just "visit" with friends only.

It is my conviction that these eight ingredients will build a strong church! I pray fervently that all eight will become a reality in us, more than ever before!

Miraculous Gifts—How Received?

Ivie Powell

A study of the scriptures will reveal that Christ, the apostles, and some early Christians received the power to work miracles. The question is, "How did they receive such power?"

Christ received His directly from the Father (Jno. 10:37-38), The apostles were given this power by the Holy Spirit (Jno. 14:26; 16:13; Acts 1:5,8; Acts 2). Some early Christians received this power through the laying on of the apostles' hands (Acts 8:5-17).

Note very carefully the text of Acts 8 :

1. Philip (who was *not* an apostle) performed miracles (v.6).
2. Those that believed were baptized (v. 12).

3. Yet, they did *not* receive miraculous gifts at this point (vs. 15-16).
4. Philip could *not* impart miraculous powers to others (vs. 15-17).
5. *Only* through the "laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given . . ." (vs. 17-18).

Therefore, the only way for one to receive miraculous gifts was through the laying on of the apostles' hands! This means when the apostles died only those who had the hands of an apostle laid on them could work miracles. When those Christians died miracles ceased!

The apostles have long been dead, hence, no miraculous gifts are received today.

The Amazing God

Bill Dillon

God is amazing. He is universal, timeless, boundless, and limitless. The voice of the everlasting and omnipotent Creator calls to man in Isaiah 40:25-26, 28 which says, "To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth. Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of his understanding."

This would truly be a frightening world if God were just like all the rest of us, anxious, fearful, unsure and uncertain. But God has made known that he is "God and not man." (Hosea 11:9). God is exalted high and lifted up. (Isaiah 6:1). Being infinite, eternal and unchangable, he remains forever distinct from all that he has created.

The contemplation of God is the most noble aspiration of which man is capable. In the words of one, "Nothing will so enlarge the intellect, nothing so magnify the whole soul of man, as a devout, earnest, continued, investigation of the great subject of Deity." As God is amazing, everything about him shares his nature. Let us consider the amazing things of God.

God's Amazing Son

Christ is incomparable. The golden confession of Simon Peter in Matthew 16:16 was definite and deliberate, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." It could not be said of Moses, Elijah or John or any other "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." The great confession spoken in reference to any other than Jesus of Nazareth is the vanity of vanities!

Jesus Christ the amazing! "He never wrote a book, yet all the libraries of the country could not hold the books that have been written about him. He never wrote a song, yet he has furnished the theme for more songs than all the song writers together. He never practiced medicine, and yet he healed more broken hearts than the doctors have healed broken bodies.

"He is the Star of astronomy, the Rock of geology, the Lion and the Lamb of zoology, the Harmonizer of discords and the Healer of all diseases. Great men have come and gone, yet he lives on. Herod could not kill him. Satan could not seduce him. Death could not destroy him. The grave could not hold him. He is the ever perfect One."

A preacher once said, "Jesus is the only Somebody you can't match."

Any man will do well to keep the matchless life of God's Son ever before him. Put his life into yours and life becomes saner and more sensible. The apostle Paul had the correct view of things when he said, "I am crucified with Christ, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." (Galatians 2:20).

God's Amazing Book

Only a book from God, inspired by the Holy Spirit, and preserved by divine providence could have withstood the battering of skeptic's heavy hammers of centuries.

The Bible, often judged by men, is rather to judge all men. (John 12:48). It is indestructible (Matthew 24:35) and unchangeable. (Psalm 119:89). It instills faith (John 20:30, 31) and exposes error. (2 Timothy 4:2). As man's guide it instructs on how to live. (Titus 2:11, 12; Romans 12:1, 2). It is a book, like its Author, "despised and rejected of men." Yet man rejects the Bible at his own peril. Proverbs 13:13 says, "Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed, but he that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded." Our attitude toward the Bible is heaven's attitude toward us. No book transcends in value or power, God's amazing book.

God's Amazing Church

There is no greater nor higher institution than the church for which Jesus died. The church of the Lord is God-designed (Ephesians 3:9, 10); blood bought (Acts 2:47; 20:28); and heaven bound. (1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17). Christ is its head (Ephesians 1:20-23); the Bible is its guide (2 Peter 1:21); and God the object of its adoration. (John 4:24; Ephesians 3:20, 21).

It is a gospel church (1 Corinthians 15:1-4); a peoples' church (Acts 10:34, 35; John 6:37); an obedient church (Acts 2:42); a praying church (1 Thessalonians 5:17); a united church (Acts 2:44; 4:32); an evangelistic church (Acts 8:4), and a triumphant church. (Matthew 16:18).

The wonderfulness of this glorious kingdom cannot be improved. All men and women have the happy prospect of becoming members of God's amazing church.

God's Amazing Grace

Grace is the great source from which salvation flows. Ephesians 2:8, 9 carries the glad announcement that "by grace are ye saved." Though mankind, for its sins, was hell-deserving,

yet God condescended to send his worthy Son to die for us as unworthy creatures, "For while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8). By God's undeserved and unmerited favor, man can come to accept the resplendent offer of salvation. The Corinthians were a people of sensuality and immorality, doing things beyond reproach and shame. Yet, by God's grace, they were washed, sanctified and justified from their way of living. (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). They who were once the scum of the earth became saved of the earth by accepting God's offer of grace by hearing, believing and being baptized. (Acts 18:8).

Is there a Christian who does not love John Newton's wonderful hymn "Amazing Grace"?

"Amazing grace how sweet the sound;
That saved a wretch like me;
I once was lost but now am found;
Was blind, but now I see.
'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved.
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed!"

It is with humility and happiness that we know of God's amazing Son, book, church and grace. How great is God; the amazing God; our God!

Glorying In The Cross Of Christ

Dabney Phillips

The apostle Paul could have gloried in his education, his writings, and his mission work. However, he chose to glory only in the death of our Lord. Today men glory in their education, in their wealth and in their talents. Christ's death is no

shadowy legend or sentimental myth. Christ changed the cross from an emblem of shame to one of love.

What do we see at the cross ?

We see God's eternal purpose. Read carefully Isaiah 53, Psalm 22:16-18; Ephesians 3:10-11. The cross was not an option, but a must for the Father. One can also see the subjection to the Father's will. In Luke 22:42 Jesus said "Not my will but thy will be done." Paul states that Christ became obedient unto death. (Philippians 2:8). One can see the awfulness of sin. Here is the just dying for the unjust, the perfect one for the imperfect ones. There is to be seen the end of law of Moses. (Matthew 5:17; John 1:17; Romans 3:28; Colossians 2:14; Hebrews 7:12).

Finally we can see the price of the church. The following verses teach this great truth : Acts 20:28; Ephesians 2:16; 5:25.

What is the Place of the Cross Today ?

It must be first place in our preaching according to the inspired Paul. (1 Corinthians 2:2; 15:3). The cross must be central in our worship. Every act of authorized worship revolves around the death of our Lord. The cross is paramount in salvation. There is the divine and the human side to this vital topic. God's part is spelled out in the New Testament; (John 3:16; Hebrews 2:9). Man's part is found in Romans 6:3-4. Then there is a connection between the cross and Christian living. Memorize Galatians 2:20 and quote it every day.

Why one Needs the Crucified and Resurrected Christ

All humankind has sinned. (Romans 6:23). While in a meeting a few years ago, a man told me, "I'm as good as Jesus Christ and getting better every day." Then sin must be punished. Verses such as Hebrews 2:2-3; 2 Peter 2:4-6 verify this truth. Man has nothing with which to obtain salvation. Not money (1 Peter 1:18-19); not education or good works. (Ephesians 2:8; Titus 3:5).

How can the Cross be made void Today ?

If one refuses to become a member of the body of Christ. If

there is no desire to obey the gospel. (Revelation 22:17). If there is a lack of willingness to crucify self. (Matthew 16:24). The demands of discipleship are too high for many souls. There must be the willingness to make Christ the Lord of our lives. (Matthew 6:24; Luke 6:46).

Conclusion

Eternal vigilance is the price of spirituality. We must watch and pray. It is no mark of intelligence to let sin go unchallenged. Apostasy seldom occurs immediately. It took the Ephesian church forty years to fall, note Ephesians 2:8 and Revelation 2:5. Salvation is free, but it is not cheap. You are urged not to crucify the Son of God afresh. (Hebrews 6:6). Neither make void the cross of Christ. (1 Corinthians 1:17).

Do You Remember "Coma" ?

Sellers Crain

Have you heard of the frightening movie a few years ago called, "Coma ?" It was a science fiction flick about a hospital for wealthy patients which took poorer healthy patients and put them on cold storage in coma like sleep and used their organs, as needed, for the wealthier patients who paid a premium price for good functional spare parts. A scary bit of fiction. Right ? It could not happen in America. Right ? Wrong! It may be happening very soon if some people have their way. Here is the frightening truth about this repulsive practice:

Recently an article appeared in Time Magazine stating that some women had approached their doctors with a proposal that they be artificially inseminated, carry the baby almost to full term and then abort the baby. Why would a woman deliberately become pregnant, carry the baby almost full term, and then give organs, bone marrow, blood serum, etc., from the aborted baby either to treat a disease they had or that of another loved one (husband, another child, or a parent). In other words, create your own spare body parts business.

Could such a thing actually occur? The fact is, it may already be going on. Only last week on the National News in America there was the story of a woman who wanted to have a baby, then abort it, in order to use some organ from the child to give to her father. I question the logic in her contradictory conclusion.

Why has this happened? The same mentality that gave us legalized abortion caused this to come about. Today over 1.2 million babies are aborted each year in America alone. The cost exceeds \$500 million a year. Babies can be aborted legally anytime during the entire 40 weeks of pregnancy, all that is required is a licensed physician and a woman's ability to pay for the procedure. It should stop! How can we allow such madness to continue? We must use every available method to stop the genocide slaughter of millions of human infants. God help us if we don't.

Snake Handlers

Don K. Preston

Paul Harvey reported recently that a preacher was in the hospital in Knoxville, Tennessee. It seems the preacher is a member of a group that believes in handling poisonous snakes as a demonstration of their faith. According to their doctrine since Jesus promised in Mark 16:17ff that those who believe in him would be able to take up poisonous snakes without suffering harm, this means they are to literally handle snakes to prove their faith. If a snake bites one of them and he suffers from the bite it means his faith is deficient. This preacher handled a diamond-back rattlesnake and it bit him. He was in critical condition at the time of this writing.

Such tragedies are the result of bad theology. A few remarks are in order.

Jesus did not command believers to take up poisonous

snakes. In the Markan text he said "IF" a person took up snakes and were bitten it would not harm them. To insist that "IF" means "must" is just not good Bible interpretation!

Further, the real problem is the belief in continuing miracles. The Bible plainly teaches that miracles were given to equip the early church to do its work only until all of God's word was revealed and confirmed. See I Corinthians 13:8-13 and Ephesians 4:8-15. John foresaw the time when there would be no more miracles but still the need for faith. He thus wrote of the miracles and that written testimony continues to produce faith in Jesus as Lord. (John 20:30-31).

The so-called miracles of today bear strong proof that there are no genuine miracles today. There are no miracles that can bear up to close scrutiny. Upon examination it is easily seen that either there has been no legitimate ailment; there has been no genuine cure; the "cure" has been somewhat less than perfect; the "cure" has been only temporary, suggesting the effect of emotionalism or the power of suggestion; the "miracle" was in reality the result of normal medical procedures taking effect. Jesus' miracles withstood every test of enemies and skeptics. Today's so-called "miracles" will not.

As always we welcome and invite honorable public or private discussion of these important topics.

Harmony Is Essential

James M. Allen

One great joy of the Christian life is to live, walk and work in harmony with fellow Christians. In the same way, nothing can be more discouraging and damaging than to have the harmony broken by discord and strife.

Among the more solemn outpourings of the Lord's heart is that prayer of oneness that He uttered in John 17. His will is

that His people walk together in peace and harmony. Only in this way can Christians be undivided and undenominational.

Each family member is responsible for seeing that such harmony in body of Christ is maintained. When singing with others, each singer is responsible for seeing that he stays on key and in harmony with all other singers around him. I cannot put out discordant notes without disrupting the harmony that is around me.

The following suggestions for a harmonious walk with the brethren are adapted from the *Fort Oglethorpe Fisherman*.

Remember that all men are subject to failings of one kind or another. None of us has perfect pitch at all times.

Remember to bear with and not to magnify each other's faults. The Golden Rule and Galatians 6:1,2 require this.

Remember to pray fervently for one another, especially if some fault or problem has arisen.

Speak of the discordant note only to that person and on his behalf to the Father above. Do not sound it far and wide.

Lay no charge against another, and believe no evil report of a brother unless such is well-documented in fact and then only in the spirit of Galatians 6:1.

Watch against shyness and withdrawal of each other, and let warm and loving communication always flow freely. If someone around you has hit a sour note, do not draw away; help.

Always consider the godlikeness of forgiveness. We all need the Lord's forgiveness, so let us not withhold our forgiveness of one another (Matthew 6:12).

Always remember that the devil gains a great victory if he can break the harmony of the children of God. Satan is the one who seeks to put distance and animosity between the children of God. We must watch carefully everything that furthers this end.

Some Sharp Saws

Confessing your sins is no substitute for forsaking them.

Before you criticize a person, walk in his shoes a while.

It takes a big person to refrain from small remarks.

Friends are made by many acts, but can be lost by one.

Finding Strength

Tom Kelton

Recently I read the following words from the last sermon of a man who was quitting the ministry. "I have been like a pump beside the road with a sign on it that said to everyone passing by, 'I am here for you. Take my handle and pump me and slake your thirst'." And gradually, he said, he had been pumped dry. There wasn't anything life-giving left for him. He didn't have any time for his family or himself.

All of us serving the Lord face this challenges of being able to give and give and give and still have something left over for our families and ourselves.

Our problem is that we run dry. The energy goes, the pump gives out, because we get so busy supplying everybody's needs that we forget our own; we neglect being alone with Christ; we fail to get refilled through a personal study of the Word for our needs.

Let's not pretend, with each other or ourselves.

Preaching is a lonely work without Christ.

Preaching is exhausting without Christ.

Preaching is impossible without Christ.

Feeding on Christ through the Word is the only way to make it through the trials of preaching. It is only to find strength to serve.