

Rom. 14:19
"So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another."

John 8:32
"And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."

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HAVE WE LEFT THE LAW OF GOD

by Jim Stauffer

Nehemiah **Chapter 9** is a detailed confession of the sins of the people of Israel as they left the law of God and lived a life of pleasure of their own choosing.

In this confession Nehemiah and Ezra lead the people in confessing the promises of God and His goodness to them in contrast to their ingratitude and rebellion to His commands. There is no denying the pagan religions of the nations around Israel offered the sensual pleasures of the flesh. This was what made it attractive to Israel. Israel continued to offer sacrifices to God while they were serving themselves in their "religion".

Life today for many has become a similar pathway. Even those who claim to be religious are accepting things contrary to what God has both taught us and demands of us.

The sexual revolution supposedly began in the 1960's. Such events as Woodstock seemed to confirm the world had decided the "normal" restrictions of modesty and morality were old fashioned and should be discarded. Drugs and other uninhibited behavior became the "norm" for many, especially young folks. Parents became torn between what they had been taught from their youth and what their children began to display before them and as a result did not take an appropriate stand against these sinful activities.

It is no more acceptable to commit fornication in 2023 than it was in 1960 or than it was in the first century when the Lord Jesus walked on the earth. God has never varied in His demand for His people to be righteous in conduct. He sent the Holy Spirit to His apostles (**John 16:13; Acts 2:1-4**) to offer guidance in righteous living and faithful adherence to His commands.

Therefore, when we as individuals begin to accept or even allow or ignore the demands of society for immoral conclusions about any unrighteous conduct, we become complicit in their actions. Oh, I realize when governmental powers lend their influence to such, we cannot overrule them in a legal sense. But we can continue to teach and demand adherence to the morality of the *Righteous One* in the face of such activity. We must teach our children and our brethren and any who will hear the message the morality of the gospel.

God has spoken through His Spirit, *Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God. (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)*

So, the question before us today is, "Have we also left the law of God?" Have we begun to *recline on beds of ivory and sprawl on our couches* - **Amos 6:4** and enjoy the pleasures of life so fully we no longer desire to oppose evil. Are we guilty of what Jeremiah said of the people of Judah? *"They have healed the brokenness of My people superficially, Saying, 'Peace, peace,' But there is no peace. 'Were they ashamed because of the abomination they have done? They were not even ashamed at all; They did not even know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; At the time that I punish them, They shall be cast down,' says the LORD. (Jeremiah 6:14-15)*
Brethren, we serve a God Who is, *the same yesterday and today and forever* - **Hebrews 13:8**. Let us be sure we are not drifting into worldliness.

One Church is as Good as Another, if...

1. **Biblical authority is not a requirement for all we do.**
 - a. However – it is required (**Col. 3:17; Matt. 28:18; I Pet. 4:11**)
2. **Truth is not narrow.**
 - a. However - it is narrow (**Matt. 7:13-14; Gal. 5:16-21; II Jn. 9**)
3. **Truth is not absolute.**
 - a. However – it is absolute (**Jn. 8:32; Matt. 22:29; Jas. 3:10-12**)
4. **Being religious is enough.**
 - a. However – people can be religiously wrong (**Jas. 1:26; Acts 26:5; Matt. 23:9-36**)
5. **Acceptable faith is just a strong feeling or being sincere.**
 - a. However – people can be sincerely wrong basing faith on feelings (**Heb. 11:1; Rom. 10:17; Matt. 7:21-23**)
6. **Jesus didn't build just one church.**
 - a. However – Jesus built just one-universal (**Matt. 16:18; Acts 20:28; Eph. 1:22-23, 4:4**) – there are many local churches that are the Lord's (**Rom. 16:16**).
7. **Unity is achieved with division.**
 - a. However – unity can't exist where there is division (**Jn. 17:20-21; I Cor. 1:10; Gal. 1:6-9**)
8. **Pleasing God is not important.**
 - a. However – pleasing God is a must (**Heb. 11:6; Gal. 1:10; I Thess. 4:1**)
9. **It doesn't matter how one is added to the church.**
 - a. However – the Lord is the one who controls who is added (**Acts 2:47; Matt. 16:16; Acts 9:1-6; 22:16**)
10. **Any kind of worship is acceptable.**
 - a. However – man doesn't get to decide what is proper worship (**Matt. 15:7-9; Jn. 4:24; I Cor. 11:17-22**)

The fact is, Jesus is the head of His church (**Col. 1:18**). Local churches, that belong to the Lord, must follow Christ (**Rom. 16:16**). It just isn't right to think that one religious group is as good as another. The fact that they all use the term "church" creates all kinds of confusion.

The good news is, we can study the word of God and know which church is the one you read about in the

Bible. Knowing what the church is, helps us learn what the church is not!

Chuck Bartlett

THE CONVERSION OF THE EUNUCH

Those who earnestly desire to know and understand God's word can do so. This is evident in the accounts of conversion in the book of Acts. No honest mind could read these simple, straightforward lessons, and not get the point. Consider the conversion of the eunuch from Ethiopia.

This account of conversion could be called: The work of the four. There were four agents involved in this conversion (**Acts 8:26-40**). First, we read about the angel of the Lord; the angel told Philip the evangelist to travel south to Gaza (**v.26**). Angels are extremely popular in our society. People are looking for ways to validate their "better felt than told feelings." The movie Michael (played by John Travolta), portrayed angels in a less than favorable light. Please note that the angel exerted no direct influence on the eunuch. The eunuch did not need the angel in order to be saved. The angel was sent to instruct Philip, and that is all. Do you find it interesting that Philip never gave his "testimony" about seeing an angel?

Consider the work of the Holy Spirit. **Acts 8:29** says: *"And the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot."* The Holy Spirit guided Philip in his work; the Holy Spirit did not need to work on the eunuch directly to bring about salvation. There was no miraculous communication between the Holy Spirit and eunuch. Does the Holy Spirit work in conversion today? No one who knows the Bible would deny otherwise. The Holy Spirit guided inspired men *"unto all truth"* (**John 16: 13**). The Holy Spirit worked in the matter of revealing and confirming the Word of God (**Mark 16:20**). Yes, the Holy Spirit works today. He works through the medium of the Word to effect change in the hearts of men and women who will listen to His words.

Consider the work of Philip. This preacher asked the eunuch if he understood what he was reading (**v.30**). Note the emphasis on what the word of God said. Philip did not ask the eunuch to recite his own personal feelings, or to tell some story, or to relate some emotional experience. Philip simply began at the place

from which the eunuch was reading (**Isaiah 53**) and preached Jesus unto him. Conversion always starts with God's word; there is no substitute for it.

Consider the role of the eunuch in this matter. He was an important government man; he was a religious man (**v.27**). What more did he need? He needed the gospel of Jesus Christ. He was interested in being further instructed about Jesus Christ (**v.31**). There are many things Philip could have said to this man, especially when we consider the portion of scripture they were studying. The eunuch got the point! After coming to a certain body of water, the eunuch wanted to know what would keep him from obeying the Lord in baptism. He had heard the word of God. He obviously believed the words that were preached to him. He understood that his life was incomplete without the Lord and so, by faith, he yielded to heaven's demands and was baptized for the remission of his sins. God did not make him do this. Philip did not make him do this. The angel and the Holy Spirit did not make him do this. He obeyed because he was convicted he needed to obey the Lord. If you have not joined the eunuch in obedience to the Lord, you need to do so NOW!

Randy Harshbarger

Something is Missing

This writer freely admits that different preachers have different personalities. For every Apollos who may be eloquent (**Acts 18:24**), there may be a Paul who is less so (**2 Cor. 10:10**). If we reject one for the other, we are doing the very thing the Corinthians were doing (**1 Cor. 3**). As long as a person is teaching the truth, we rejoice. Indeed, even if a person is teaching the truth with impure motives, we should rejoice. Paul did (**Php. 1:18**). But the truth is exactly what is seemingly missing in many sermons, both spoken and written, today. Consider a few different types of "preaching".

➤ **The Story-Telling Preacher** - Timothy and Titus were both warned to steer clear of fables, even though these myths would probably have had a religious connotation to them (**2 Tim. 4:4, Tts. 1:14**). Stories today are usually there just for entertainment purposes. Stories, in and of themselves, are not wrong. Parables are stories, but what is a parable? It is a story that makes a point. One might notice that the Lord used parables to see who would become a disciple (**Matt. 13:10-17**). In the letters to the churches, there

are still occasional figures one might call a parable, but they are minimal. That is interesting.

➤ **The History Preacher** – Along with fables, both Timothy and Titus were told to avoid "*endless genealogies*" (**1 Tim. 1:4, Tts. 3:9**). While a person may be interested in their own personal ancestry, that isn't preaching. Again, history is not altogether wrong. Stephen gave a history lesson in **Acts 7**, but there was a point, and it wasn't entertainment. We should be careful of how we think of the former days (**Eccl. 7:10**). Many get caught up in personal history as well as church history. "This church has been here since..." and down through the generational rabbit hole we go.

➤ **The Comedian Preacher** - While a merry heart does good like a medicine (**Pro. 17:22**), one might notice the condemnation of foolishness in the preceding verse. Some preaching today seems to be more court jester than godly counsel. Many sermons and invitations have been critiqued with, "You needed more humor." One wonders if those who say such things would have said the same to Jesus, the Man of sorrows (**Isa. 53:3**). Like stories, humor itself is not wrong, if the truth is being taught. Sadly, it is usually just entertainment. **What should preaching be instead?** "*Until I come, give attention to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, and teaching*" (**1 Tim. 4:13**). Scripture equips us and is profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness (**2 Tim. 3:16,17**). And so, we "*preach the Word*" (**2 Tim. 4:2**). Stories about the good old days with a joke thrown in is the popular route, but something is missing.

John Hines

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We believe in worshiping and serving the Lord as He has instructed in His word.

Psa. 1:1 *Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers: 2 But his delight is in the law of Jehovah; And on his law doth he meditate day and night. 3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the streams of water, That bringeth forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also doth not wither; And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. 4 The wicked are not so, But are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. 5 Therefore the wicked shall not stand in the judgment, Nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. 6 For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous; But the way of the wicked shall perish.*

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- Sunday A.M. 9:30 Bible Study
- Sunday A.M. 10:20 Assembled Worship
- Sunday P.M. 5:00 Assembled Worship
- Wednesday P.M. 7:00 Bible Study and Worship

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What Must I Do To Be Saved?

- ▶ **Hear** the gospel - Romans 10:17
- ▶ **Believe** in Jesus Christ - Hebrews 11:6
- ▶ **Repent** of sins - Acts 17:30
- ▶ **Confess** Christ as Lord - Romans 10:9,10
- ▶ **Be Baptized** for remission of sins - Acts 2:38
- ▶ **Be Faithful** unto death - Revelation 2:10