

Rom. 14:19 So then let us follow after things which make for peace, and things whereby we may edify one another.



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

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HOW MUCH IS TOO MUCH?

By Wayne Goff

Churches of Christ in America are slowly drifting off into apostasy and most are loathe to admit it! Preachers are not preaching on it. Members are not aware of it. A certain apathy has overtaken churches that once were stalwarts of the faith. Only the Lord knows why this is happening now, but I have an idea that it is connected with no longer enduring sound doctrine, **2 Timothy 4:3**.

Let me explain, and you readers can consider the evidence and come up with your own conclusions.

Changes In Preaching

I have been preaching now for 48 years and during that entire time I have watched as brethren have subtly turned away from sound, convicted gospel preaching.

You can see it when brethren will travel across the state for a softball tournament but will not drive 30 miles to attend a gospel meeting.

You can see it when brethren shift uncomfortably in their pews when the preacher mentions (1) denominations; (2) false doctrine; (3) public debates; and other things considered as “negative preaching.”

You can see it as gospel meetings have slowly evolved into almost nothing — from two weeks to seven days, to six days, to five days, to four days (two of which are Sunday and Wednesday!). The argument for this is that we live in a modern time when so many things demand our time, energy, and attention. But the truth of the matter is brethren do not love the truth enough to study it, believe it, and attend to the preaching of it.

You can see it when brethren want to be accepted by their worldly friends and neighbors at school, work, and public meetings, and to do so they compromise their convictions or hide them altogether. Most of these things have been around for the last 50 years or more, so this is nothing new.

Newer Changes

Recently things have turned worse as churches have “canceled” Sunday night services for a myriad of excuses but not for any really justifiable reasons.

Imagine elders forbidding brethren from assembling on Sunday night at 5 or 6 o’clock because they no longer have scheduled services then. Imagine elders “locking the doors” to prevent brethren from using the building at that time! Yet that is exactly what has happened in Kansas City at a local church near us.

The argument for doing so is that the Bible doesn’t require us to meet on Sunday evening, the habit of meeting then evolved from World War II and shift work, and therefore we are just promoting “human tradition” by having it! Then Covid-19 hit America and this drove everyone to stay at home. Now that the pandemic is nearly over, few have returned to services on Sunday nights, while I suspect the truth is that they really do not want to attend.

The arguments against canceling any worship service are several: (1) one less hour of gospel preaching is a hazard. Strong churches are created by strong preaching. When churches eliminate Sunday night, they are keeping their preachers from preaching much needed sermons; (2) brethren need to hear more sermons, more classes, not less! The first church in Jerusalem met “steadfastly” and were taught the “apostles’ doctrine” thoroughly (**Acts 2:42**). I see churches and brethren today who are spiritually weak and biblically ignorant — even when they attend four hours per week! (3) sports teams are increasing the number of their events due to demand and money while religion is taking a back seat; (4) the modern-day “weekend” is the time brethren use to get away from it all. While I am for “recreation” and I need much more of it, the supposed “week end” actually encompasses the

“week beginning” (Sunday, the first day of the week, the Lord’s day) and Satan has subtly deceived us into thinking that this is ok! But brethren fail to see how much harm their ever-increasing absences are weakening the local church where they are members! (5) “Human tradition” has now become no Sunday night service in most churches of Christ, but nobody seems to complain about that! What are sound brethren to do when they WANT to attend more often?

Conclusion

So I wonder now as I near my own “retirement,” how much more apostasy brethren will accept before they finally stand up and say “enough is enough!” Or “we have gone too far!” Or “what has happened to us?” (And I haven’t even begun to discuss the numerous departures from “sound doctrine” that brethren have accepted!)

Happy New Year

With “Happy New Year” you greet your friends,
And they wish the same in reply;
But will it be “happy”, and will it be “new,”
Or like the one that has just gone by?

For tearing a page from the calendar pad
Doesn’t change the kind of a year;
They all have their share of the good and the bad –
Of happiness, sorrow, and cheer.

Would you have a new year in your life, my friend?
Full of blessings unnumbered for you?
It may be had, beginning to end,
For in Christ are all things made new.

Would you have real happiness day after day,
With peace that the world cannot give?
Let Jesus come into your heart to stay,
And then you’ll begin really to live.

For the things of this world will all pass away,
Their luster will fade and grow dim;
But the joy of Christ Jesus will last you – aye—
You will find “Happy New Year” in Him.

**Taken from StoneRidge church of Christ
Bulletin**

UNCERTAINTY OF RICHES

“And Ephraim said, ‘I have certainly become rich, I have found wealth for myself; In all my labors they will find in

me no wrongdoing, which would be sin’” (Hosea 12:8 NASV). God’s people never escaped the lingering influence and deceit of their father Jacob. God did say that the older brother would serve the younger brother; still, God was not advocating or condoning deceit and lies. The two brothers, Jacob, and Esau played out their human drama; and years later, Israel practiced the deception of their infamous forebear.

Ephraim practiced deceit in his business dealings. False balances tipped the scales in his favor. The Lord expected His people to be fair in their dealings with each other and with all others. *“You shall have accurate balances, accurate weights, an accurate ephah, and an accurate hin; I am the Lord your God, who brought you out from the land of Egypt” (Leviticus 19:36).* Ephraim became rich at the expense of others. The *New King James Version* of **Hosea 12:7** says: *“A cunning Canaanite! Deceitful scales are in his hand; He loves to oppress.”* Here is an example of God’s people mimicking the sins of the nations around them. Amazingly, Ephraim believed that no wrongs had been committed. *“There is no iniquity in me.”* And there was no recognition of where his blessings came from. *“I have found wealth for myself.”* It is possible, in the short term, to sell one’s soul for a pot of porridge.

Jehovah brought Israel out of Egyptian bondage. As a reminder of their deliverance, they would celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles every year. They had been in bondage but escaped by God’s outstretched arm; dwelling tents should have reminded them of their dependence on their Creator. Did the Israelites forget about God’s power, even when, at the same time, they dwelled in tents? Why did God reenact this former time? *“So that your generations may know that I had the sons of Israel live in booths when I brought them out from the land of Egypt. I am the Lord your God” (Leviticus 23:43).* God’s message? Repent or I will again make you live in tents. You will forfeit your prosperity, your riches, your favored status as children of the living God. Israel did not listen to God; they did not listen to God’s prophets.

Israel followed the lead of idolatry and trusted in Baal. Incense and immorality crowded the tops of the mountains (**4:11**). Like a silly dove, Israel flitted from foreign nation to foreign nation, seeking security (**7:11**). They did not need God; they lived in palaces and fortified cities (**8:14**). Yet, they continued to offer sacrifices and continued to worship. *“My God, we of Israel know thee” (8:2).* In their self-delusions, they forgot about God. Their hearts were far away. *“For I*

desire loyalty rather than sacrifice, And the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings” (6:6).

It is hard to trust in God when you trust in your riches. A New Testament church did this. *“Because you say, “I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have no need of anything,” and you do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked” (Revelation 3:17).*

We need to be careful about the things we love and about how we get them.

Randy Harshbarger

THE CURIOSITY OF ZACCHEUS

He entered Jericho and was passing through. And there was a man called by the name of Zaccheus; he was a chief tax collector and he was rich. Zaccheus was trying to see who Jesus was, and was unable because of the crowd, for he was small in stature. (Luke 19:1–3)

There are some obvious observations to be made from the story of Zaccheus. It is clear his curiosity had been piqued by the reputation of Jesus of Nazareth. Jericho, while located in the original territory of Benjamin was not far from Jerusalem. Judea was not as receptive to Jesus as was the cities of Galilee. Yet there remained folks like Zaccheus who were aware of the many mighty works of this man of Nazareth. They were also aware of His claims as the Son of God (**Matt. 4:3; 8:29; John 10:36**). Zaccheus was one of those and he wanted to see Jesus.

We know he climbed into a tree in order to see Jesus passing by, due to his lack of stature. When Jesus called him down from the tree we see one of the first lessons from this story. While he did not yet know Jesus, Jesus knew him. The same lesson is applicable to us today. We may not know Jesus. In fact the world is filled with folks who not only do not know Jesus but deny that He walked the earth as the Son of God just as folks did in His day. *The Jews answered him, “We have a law, and by that law He ought to die because He made Himself out to be the Son of God.” (John 19:7)* But the fact is, Jesus knows them as He did those Jews who crucified Him.

Jesus is God. In fact Jesus is the God Who created the heavens and the earth (**John 1:1-3; Col. 1:16**). As God, Jesus knows all there is to know about everyone who has or will live (**Matthew 10:29-31**). View these two statements about the Lord Jesus the Christ. In **Matthew**

11:28-30 He invites all to come to Him for relief of the burden of sin. Then in **2 Corinthians 5:10** Paul advises us we will all stand before Him in judgment to give an account of the things we have done in this life. Jesus knows each of us as He must as He serves as the judge of all mankind (**Acts 17:31**).

Another lesson learned from this story is how men do not see the value of each individual soul as the Lord does. After all, it was Jesus who said, *“For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? (Matthew 16:26)* Jesus realizes each of us will spend eternity in heaven or hell and pleads with us to realize the opportunity to be saved from eternal destruction. The conclusion of the people on this occasion was Jesus was wasting His time associating with such a man. But the lesson we learn is Jesus came *to seek and save that which was lost (vs. 10)*.

The final lesson for our discussion is how the lost are saved. Zaccheus was viewed as a man who had taken advantage of others and had become wealthy as a result. True or false, the story tells us in response to those charges he immediately agreed to make any restitution necessary. *Zaccheus stopped and said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, half of my possessions I will give to the poor, and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will give back four times as much.” (Vs 8)*. It is appropriate to note this was when Jesus said, *“Today salvation has come to this house, because he, too, is a son of Abraham. (Vs. 9)* Zaccheus, just as those on Pentecost and all others must repent of sin, change their lives, develop a new focus on the spiritual rather than the fleshly things of life.

Jesus desires to come into the life of each and every person who has or will live. He pleads with us to be saved from our sins by His cleansing blood given to redeem us through the forgiveness of sins (**Colossians 1:13,14**) People who desire to see and to know Jesus will hear Him (**Matthew 17:5**) and will do so by studying His word which will lead them to salvation (**Romans 1:16; 2 Timothy 3:16,17**). And they who come to know him will be recognizable by the way they conduct their lives (**1 John 2:4-6**).

What about you? Would you desire to see and know Jesus?

Jim Stauffer

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. 10:00 Assembled Worship

Wednesday P.M. 7:00 Bible Study and Worship

Visitors welcome

We conduct in home Bible Studies

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FELLOWSHIP - BILL MILLER
WEDNESDAY EVENING BIBLE CLASS:
MINOR PROPHETS - JIM STAUFFER
SUNDAY SERMON: **WHERE DOES IT BEGIN?**



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