

AM I YOUR PASTOR???

Jesus flatly forbids calling any man on earth Father (Mt 23:9, “*And call no man your Father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven*”).

I can’t answer for Trevor, but I’ve been called by brethren here “preacher” when speaking to others about me. That’s fine. I’ve also heard the word “Pastor” and “Reverend” being used to refer to other preachers of the Lord’s church. The world is so steeped in the clergy-laity system and its terms that it immediately equates preacher with Pastor or Reverend. I wince whenever I hear the titles being used by brethren in referring to others in the Lord’s church.

Let me tell you all, “I don’t want to be EVER known by these titles”. I fear the Lord will condemn me if I am content to let others call me that. Does it really matter that much?

Yes, it does!

First of all, it supports a system that exalts some over others in the church. It designates a class of “Clergy” above the masses or “Laity.” This custom of exalting is foreign to the concept of New Testament Christianity. It is soundly condemned by Jesus. “*It shall not be so among you!*” (Mt 20:25-28). Yet, these titles of distinction create and maintain this class system in the church.

Another objection is the distortion of the meaning of the terms themselves. They are perfectly good words, if used correctly. “Reverend” is a name which belongs only to God. “*Holy and Reverend is His name*” (Psalm 111:9). This is the only place where the word is used in the Bible, and it is applied only to God. No man is ever worthy to wear that name. It is blasphemous to usurp God’s place or His name. The only time this word should ever cross our lips is in prayer or in teaching about God.

A similar term is the use of the word “Father” as a religious title for man. It is a name which belongs only to God. He is our only spiritual Father. “*But to us there is one God, the Father*” (1 Cor 3:6). Jesus flatly forbids calling any man on earth Father (Mt 23:9, “*And call no man your Father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven*”).

Yet in the face of this plain passage, millions on earth insist on calling a group of exalted men “Father.” Stranger still millions of Protestants who disclaim the name Father insist on calling their preacher Reverend. The two terms stand or fall on exactly the same principle. Two other terms given the preacher are The Pastor and The Minister.

Pastor is another term describing the office of elder. The elders of Ephesus were to PASTOR (feed) the church there (Acts 20:28). Minister better refers to the office of deacon. DIACONOS, the Greek word for deacon is often translated minister. Yet, people want to take these terms for elders and deacons and heap them on the preacher! It is too much to put on one man. It creates a one man system- eldership, deaconship, preacher--all wrapped up into one. Some denominations are run like this, but not the Lord’s church!

The Bible designates the preacher according to his function, either preacher or evangelist (Eph 4:11; 2 Tim 1:11; 4:5). They are not distinctive titles. Denominational bodies have reserved the term evangelist for one who travels about holding “revivals,” and call the located preacher, Pastor. But this is an artificial distinction. Everyone who proclaims **the gospel**, whether temporary or located, is an **evangelist**. His function is not pasturing – unless he meets the qualifications of an elder and has been appointed to the office of elder. Then he is a pastor by virtue of his eldership, not because he is a preacher. Many preachers do not have the qualifications to be an elder and therefore could not be a pastor. It is ridiculous to hear someone call a young man preacher, Pastor!

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BELVEDERE BEACON

“*Ye are the light of the world*” (Matthew 5:14)

Volume 10

Number 15

April 12, 2009

A PUBLICATION OF THE BELVEDERE CHURCH OF CHRIST

535 Clearwater Road, Belvedere, SC 29841-2574

(Greater Augusta, GA area)

THE BAPTIZED CAT

One recent evening while assembling for Bible study, we decided to open the doors to Charlie, a neighborhood tabby. He was a mainstay around the church building and would sometimes dart inside as the people would enter. Since he was such a friendly feline, most of the members showed him plenty of attention. On the evening under discussion, our number was very few, so we saw no harm in letting him prowl and explore the auditorium.

The door to the baptistery was ajar and Charlie, with the curiosity typical of cats, decided to investigate realms and frontiers into which he had never been. Perhaps he was seeking the proverbial “quiet church mouse”. At any rate, while leading a song prior to the lesson, I suddenly heard the wild splashing of water directly behind me. Evidently, Charlie had ventured up the steps to the baptistery, fallen in, and was frantically but futilely endeavoring to claw his way up the slippery, smooth fiberglass wall. I reached over and pulled the soaked, panic-crazed cat out of the water, and he made a bee line for the front door. As of this writing, Charlie has not been seen since.

Save for Charlie, all of us had quite a laugh from the incident and one good sister sagely observed that our furry friend was like so many others ... they are baptized and then they are gone, never to be seen again. Despite visits, phone calls, and letters of encouragement, they vanish like wet cats. What a true assessment! **That** is not at **all** humorous. I have known, and I am sure you, the reader, have as well, so many who were baptized and then they are not seen “hide nor hair” of again. Could it be that they believe baptism is the finish of the Christian life and not the start; or rebirth (John 3:3-7)? Could it be they believe baptism is the end of the race and not the beginning (Heb.12:1)? Do they seem to be under the faulty impression that baptism guarantees eternal salvation in Heaven?

But doesn’t Mark 16:16 state he who believes and is baptized shall be saved? Indeed! But does it say “he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved forevermore in Heaven”? No. From what then does baptism save? Acts 2:38 and Acts 22:16 are splendid commentaries on Mark 16:16. The former verse says that baptism is for the remission (i.e., the putting away or forgiveness) of sins and the latter verse tells us that baptism washes away sins. Therefore, rather than baptism being an act that insures unto us an unconditional pass to a future salvation in Heaven, it is an act that, through God’s grace, insures unto us a salvation from past sins. That is to say, when the scarlet blood of Jesus removes our scarlet sins in baptism, they are no longer counted against us, and we are saved from our former sins, and now have a new life in Christ (Galatians 3:26-27).

But to be saved in eternity is a different matter. We need to continue to be cleansed by the blood by walking in the light (1 John 1:7), which is another way of saying that we must be faithful to Christ and His doctrine (1 Timothy 4:16). That is why Hebrews 3:14 admonishes that we are made partakers of Christ if we are steadfast unto the end. That is why Hebrews 10:36 instructs that we might receive the promise after we have done God’s will. That is why Romans 11:22 exhorts us to continue in His goodness or face being cut off. And that is why Revelation 2:10 informs us that we will receive the crown of life by being faithful unto death. A cat being “baptized” then “scatting” may be a humorous scenario ... a precious human soul doing so is not.

Steven D. Cline, Waynesboro, VA

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

SUNDAY:

Bible Classes for all ages 10.00 am.

Morning Worship 11.00 am.

Evening Worship 6.00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY:

Bible Classes for all ages 7.00 p.m.

EVANGELIST: Ken Chumbley - Tel. No. (803) -279-8663

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“STEALING IS SIN”

Over the past few months, the Bellview Church of Christ has experienced the theft of letters from the messages that have been posted on the sign outside of the church building.

Apparently, someone was coming during the hours of darkness and either stealing letters or changing their order. On one occasion, the word “God” was reversed to read “Dog.” The police could not find the perpetrator. The local media became involved, but still no thief was found and the stealing continued. Recently, Michael Hatcher, the evangelist, set up a video camera with a new sign “Stealing is Sin.” This video camera caught the thief in the act. The Pensacola News Journal ran a picture of the thief and the video was shown on their web site. Shortly thereafter, brother Hatcher received a call from the thief to confess his crime and he told him that he did not like the message. The man, identified as being in his twenties, said that he would come to the services of the church last Sunday (April 5) to apologize to the church. He did indeed show up with his father and a friend. He requested permission to speak to the church. After the services, with the permission by the elders, he addressed the church.

According to the report that was given in the local paper, Fred Stancliff, one of the elders said “That was his desire to (apologize),” and “We didn’t pressure him to do it.” The paper reported that the man made restitution to the church. It further reported that the elders issued a written statement in which it was stated: “The church’s immediate reaction was to forgive the young man for his admitted error,” and “We have no desire to prosecute the case any further.”

Brother Darrell Broking, who was at the service, posted the following e-mail to an e-mail list of which I am a member.

“The letter thief attended services today with his dad and a friend. After morning worship our elders allowed him to address the church. He apologized for his deed and expressed his desire to make it right with the church. The brethren then received him with open arms. He was in tears and told many of us that what he found at Bellview was not what he expected to find. That’s just the way it is with faithful brethren, they forgive and offer encouragement to the weak. Liberals offer sluff and stuff without substance but faithful brethren live the message. In all of my years in the church, I can honestly say without hesitation that I have never seen a congregation that practices Christianity as does the Bellview church of Christ. The elders will be in contact with the newspaper and the television news station to let them know about these developments. Brethren please pray that we can touch this young man’s heart with the gospel of Christ. He told several of us that he will be back.
— Darrell Broking.”

In commenting on these events, another preacher, Roelf Ruffner of Cheyenne, WY, made the following statement:

“I believe brother Broking expressed what I have known for a long time. Religious **liberals** portray themselves as ‘loving and kind’ and a conservative as ‘cold and heartless,’ while often just the opposite is true. If a Christian truly strives to follow the Bible they will be kind and forgiving. Just because our Savior referring to the Pharisees as ‘blind guides,’ ‘serpents,’ and ‘hypocrites’ (cf. Matthew 23) does not mean that he did not love them. **He proved His love** by dying on the cross for them and forgiving those Pharisees who repented in Acts Chapter 2.

Like Jesus, we should strive to love others; not just by ‘talking the talk,’ but by ‘walking the walk.’ *‘My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth!’* (1 John 3:18).”

Brethren, the example of the brethren at Bellview is one that should be emulated by all faithful Christians. As brother Ruffner points out, often times liberals portray conservatives as being “cold and heartless’ but such is not, in general, true and indeed, it should never be true. Let us, as brother Broking suggested, pray that this young man’s heart can be touched with the gospel of Christ and that he return so that he might learn the truth.

Ken Chumbley

NEWS AND NOTES

Keep in your prayers the following: Helen Culpepper, Pam Gossett, Lavonne McClish, Linda Chumbley, and Rachel Fitzpatrick’s aunt (Eula Baker) who has cancer, Maomi Aaron’ sister who is having health problems, Myrtle Grimsley, Lanny Niver together with his daughter, and Tim Smith.

The Wilsons are in Indiana where they have been visiting with Ron’s mother. They are scheduled to return later today.

Nolan Aaron was sick last Sunday and Natalie stayed home with him.

Lanny Niver was not out as he was having health difficulties.

The Arnolds and Kathy Treadway were in Florida last week.

Am I Your Pastor???? Continued from page 4

Deacons are more properly called ministers in a broader sense. A preacher is a minister in a restrictive sense, minister of the gospel. His function is to minister, that is, preach the gospel. Every Christian is a minister (servant) in its broadest sense. There are many ministries: ministering food, clothing, shelter, health care, encouragement, teaching, love, other labours; to the poor, hungry, sick, distressed, orphans, widows, aged, household and family, neighbour, friends.

Every Christian has a duty to serve in these ministries. The preacher has an equal obligation with every other Christian to serve in these ministries. Deacons are appointed to especially serve in these ministries and see that the work gets done.

Preachers are to minister the gospel. They have a greater task to proclaim the gospel. They have placed themselves under this obligation. It is right to call the preacher minister in this sense.

Names and designations are important. They mould and shape one’s doctrinal outlook. Let’s be sure ours is scriptural. To those in the Lords church here in the UK who like to be known by the above titles, I say, no not I, but the Lord; *“It shall not be so among you!”* (Mt 20:25- 28).

Oh, just call me preacher!

*Ricci Gambino
Birmingham, England*

(Editor’s Note: I have personally known of at least one preacher in the UK who has wanted to use the term “Pastor” to refer to him and has done so for over 20 years. Other preachers have misapplied Hebrews 13:7, 17, which has reference to elders, to themselves in order to insist that others obey them when they were not elders. Ricci has made some excellent points in this article for all to consider – Ken Chumbley)