

CAREFUL NOT TO ROCK THE BOAT

There are brethren who avoid controversial issues within the brotherhood like it was the seven year itch. Figuratively they don't want to rock the boat if it might disturb the peace and good will among brethren. This is a noble endeavor as long as it does not involve compromising a "thus saith the Lord."

Some of my fellow preachers in the church are little more than hirelings. Receiving a regular pay check may cause them to either blink their eyes to avoid being confronted with sinful conduct among brethren where they preach or openly embracing teaching and/or practices contrary to the New Testament therein. The church at Corinth was guilty of tolerating a brother of that congregation who was committing fornication with his father's wife. Instead of mourning because of that heinous sin they were puffed up about it. The term "puffed up" comes from the Greek word *physioo*, which means to be proud, arrogant. It is hard to conceive that any brethren would be proud about such immorality of a brother in the church. This was not even known among the sinful society in which they lived. Corinth was a very immoral city. The Apostle Paul commanded the Corinthian brethren to withdraw from that immoral brother (I Corinthians, chapter five). I wonder how many local churches of Christ would look the other way under similar circumstances. The good news of the church at Corinth adhering to Paul's command to withdraw from the brother was that it brought him to repentance. He then urged those brethren to receive the penitent brother back in loving fellowship.

Many congregations of today neglect to exercise discipline on erring brethren who refuse to repent. Those local churches of Christ sin by failing to do so. Of course such a step should be the last resort after taking the scriptural steps in a loving manner to bring them to repentance (Matt. 18:15-18). If such is consistently done in a loving manner then many erring brethren would be recovered. It certainly worked in the case of the brother at Corinth who was committing fornication.

Many church bulletins either never have doctrinal articles of much depth or seldom do. If there is an indication of the type of sermons their preacher preaches then it is not surprising why many local churches of Christ are drifting away from the practice and upholding of a "thus saith the Lord."

*Dub Mowery
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THE OMG AND OTHER CULTURAL COMMENTS...

Almost daily now I come in contact with kids and, occasionally, teachers at school who, without a thought, will utter the now ubiquitous OMG comment. It has become quite common in conversation today, and many of the people are not even aware of just what this type of speech is saying.

The acronym stands for "Oh My God", or "Oh My Goodness", or "Oh My Gosh", and is in everyday slang a use of God's name that is not appropriate because of the verse in Exodus 20:7 and (repeated in) Deuteronomy 5:11 that implores us not to misuse the Lord's name. The Third Commandment reminds us of the importance of the manner in which we use God's name. It speaks to the fact that the way we use God's name is an indication of how we understand our relationship with Him.

"Vain", as used in that verse is defined as "uselessly", "worthlessly", and in "emptiness of speech". The original meaning of this verse is literally, "You shall not lift up the name of Yahweh unto vanity." To "lift up," means to invoke God's name in taking an oath. In other words, when we take an oath, we are calling upon God as a witness to confirm the truth of our word. God is saying, "Do not call upon My name to confirm the truth of your word when it is a vain, worthless, empty cause." To attach God's name to emptiness is to misuse it. If we think of how many people in the world today casually throw out the Lord's name (and how often this occurs) we can understand even better the general disregard there is for all things spiritual. This means nothing to them as can be testified by the fact that this acronym is commonly used on the Internet in chat sessions, whether facebook or Twitter, or any other sites.

When we (God's children) call on the Lord we are to honor Him. To revere His Holy Name. Those in the world for whom the Lord means so little obviously are not only careless, but in some instances they are callous, as it belittles the Creator by associating and invoking Him with things that are secular and insignificant. "Did you see that, OMG?", or, "OMG, I almost LOL...", and such other blatant disregard for the Almighty. I remember just a few years ago it was so trendy for people to say, "hella" as if it was just the coolest use of the English language. "Oh, that was just, hella cool man...", or some such derivative. Christians have to know the difference, and this is especially important for young people, as they are usually the group most influenced by these loose standards of speech. Our responsibility is to teach those we come in contact with that the Lord's name is not to be used lightly. "Think on these things."

*Johnny Oxendine
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ARE YOU READY TO DIE?

“I am ready not only to be imprisoned but even to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 21:13b).

The words of our text were spoken by Paul as he was going toward Jerusalem. A prophet said he was going to suffer at the hands of the Jews, and his friends had tried to dissuade him from going to Jerusalem. Why could Paul so confidently affirm that he was ready to die? Death is so serious that most of us dread the experience, but it held no fears for Paul. He had faced death so many times that he did not fear it. Furthermore, Paul had so prepared himself for death that he did not fear it. But how had he prepared himself for death?

Proper Relationship

Paul was ready to die because he had established the proper relationship with God. This relationship is expressed in the phrase “in Christ.” If anyone is in Christ he is a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17). In Christ we have redemption (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:14). In Christ we have all spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3). Those who die in the Lord are blessed (Rev. 14:13). Those who die in the Lord and sleep in Jesus will rise to meet him when he comes (1 The. 4:14–17).

The question comes, how did Paul get into Christ? Paul answers that question by saying, “We were baptized into Christ” (Rom. 6:3). And he speaks of others being baptized into Christ (Gal. 3:27). So we conclude that when he believed in Jesus, repented of his sins (Acts 2:38), and acknowledged Jesus as his Lord (Rom. 10:9–10), he was in a position to be baptized into Christ. Being in Christ where he enjoyed redemption through the blood, Paul was ready to die and sleep in Jesus until the Lord comes for him.

Divorced From the World

Paul could say that he was ready to die because he had so completely divorced himself from the world and the love of the world that he was ready for heaven. Many people who have been baptized into Christ still love the world and the works of the flesh to such an extent that they are not ready to die. Paul teaches that some people of his day, though in Christ, were walking after the flesh and warned that, if they continued to practice such things, they would not be permitted to enter heaven (Rom. 8:12–13; Gal. 5:19–21). Paul said he had suffered the loss of all things worldly, and now counted them as refuse that he might gain Christ (Phi. 3:3, 8–10). John tells us to love not the world or the things of the world (1 John 2:15–17). And Paul tells us to set our affections on things above (Col. 3:2).

Faithful in Service

Not only must those in Christ be heavenly minded to be ready to die, they must also be faithful in the service to the Lord. Paul said he had fought a good fight, finished the course, and kept the faith (2 Tim. 4:7). He also said that it was required of stewards that they be found faithful (1 Cor. 4:2). The one talent man (Mat. 25) was punished in the day of accounts because he had refused to accept responsibility. He had not served his master. So if we fail to work for the Lord, we will be rejected in the Day of Judgment. We do not pay for our salvation by our service, but eternal life is promised to those who are faithful in their service[even to the point of death, KJC] (Rev. 2:10). Eternal salvation is for those who obey (Heb. 5:9). And one who has not obeyed the Lord's command to serve is not ready to die.

So we see that in order for one to be ready to die, one must believe in Jesus, repent of his sins, confess his faith and be baptized into Christ; he must divorce himself from the love of the world, set his affections on heavenly things, and be faithful in serving the Lord as long as he lives. Are you ready to die? Knowing not the day of our death, it behooves each one to be ready to die at any hour.

*Roy H. Lanier, Sr., Deceased
Ken Chumbley*

NEWS AND NOTES

Keep in your prayers the following: Pam Gossett, Lavonne McClish, Linda Chumbley, Maomi Aaron's sister, Leann Rogers, who is having health problems, and Lanny Niver together with his daughter and son, and Tim Smith.

Kimberly Wilson graduates from Terry Business College at the University of Georgia on May 1 and from the University of Georgia on May 8. Our congratulations go to Kimberly. She already has a job and will be working in the Atlanta area.

Kathy Treadway, Maomi Aaron, Dawn Mason, Noah and Aiden Arnold were all sick Sunday and not able to be out.

Rachel Fitzpatrick has been out of town the past two Sundays and Wednesday night she had a very severe headache and was not able to be out.

A Sermon Never to Be Forgotten

Throughout the years, I have heard many wonderful sermons which I have forgotten, but one sermon I saw, and it has remained in my heart until this day. It happened on a Sunday morning when I was on my way to one of the two small congregations in Munich, Germany on a cold, rainy day in November.

After I got out of bed, I looked through the window which was covered with ice ferns. New, deep snow had fallen during the night, covering the streets of the city. I tried to decide whether I should go to worship or stay at home and read my Bible.

I realized the congregation would miss me, for I was the only song leader they had. On the other hand, I would have to walk a half block to catch the bus to the building. Finally, I decided to go, but only because I must lead the singing.

While I was riding the bus, I noticed two people trying hard to make their path through the snow. I recognized the people and knew where they were going. They were brother and sister Trollman, a faithful couple who attended every service. Brother Trollman was a man in his 80s who had lost his eyesight. His only guidance was his 75-year old wife, who was lame in one foot. They lived in a little two-room apartment and received a little support from the government. Because they could not afford to ride the bus to the services which were about three miles away, they walked the distance every Lord's Day.

Here I was, sitting in a warm bus, unwilling to go to worship, forced by my duty as a song leader, and there, outside in the cold weather, were two old people, driven by their love for the Lord. I was not able to do anything but blush—ashamed of myself and the weak faith and love I had proven for my Lord. I felt like an evil-doer in court, being judged by his own conscience. This old couple, without their knowledge and without one word, taught me a greater lesson than could ever be said in words.

Author Unknown (an American Soldier)