

YESTERDAY

Have you ever noticed how much today is influenced by yesterday? The close observer of history is familiar with the repetitive nature of man and world events. Lessons that were learned the hard way generations ago often have to be learned again today by the current generation. Experience is a great teacher, but often man is a poor student.

For purposes of this writing, we shall look at the world in terms of three days: yesterday, today, and tomorrow. I shall too briefly discuss the idea that yesterday should serve as our guide for today and our map for the future as well as to bemoan the failures of men today to profit from the experiences of yesterday.

For example, look at the Middle East. Modern Israel hates the Palestinians and the Palestinians in turn hate Israel and we scarcely see a day pass without some news coverage about the violence that continues to destroy lives in that part of the world. Why is that? The answer is well known: yesterday. The Palestinians consider themselves the descendants of the ancient Canaanites and the Israelites of today consider themselves the descendants of David's Israel of Old Testament fame. The Palestinians, like their forerunners, look at the Israelite occupation of "their" land as illegitimate and long to drive them out. Israel feels compelled to do now what God told their forefathers to do long ago—rid the Promised Land of the heathen. These things have their roots in yesterday, we deal today with them, and we fully expect that they will still be here tomorrow. The politics of yesterday are still with us today.

The religion of yesterday is still working today also. Of course, Truth should so operate, as it was fully delivered yesterday (cf. Jude 3), but sadly truth is not the only thing in religion to find its way from yesterday to today. Religious error is alive and well today. About three hundred years after the time of Jesus and the Apostles, men, with no authority from heaven, took it upon themselves to introduce the mechanical instrument of music into the worship of the church. As they had no authority yesterday when they introduced it, so they have no authority to allow it to stay today, but still it is there. The Bible was (and continues to be) clear: "But in vain they do worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men" (Mat. 15:9). If the teaching does not come from the Bible then it comes from men, and if our teaching comes from men and not God that teaching renders our worship vain. Still, we are dealing today with the religious error of yesterday and it would appear that we shall still be contending with it tomorrow.

Morals are not immune from such influence. Take the infamous Roe v. Wade decision of the Supreme Court. The Justices held that the "rights" of the woman over her own body are paramount—even if that means killing the life within the womb. The Bible recognizes no difference between the life that is in the womb and the young child. Our laws (or at least our courts) do see a difference. It is quite a difference—kill a two-year-old child and you will go to jail or maybe even get the death penalty; kill an unborn child and, provided you are a doctor and file the right papers, the government will pay you! A few men with lifetime appointments yesterday made a law forcing God-fearing American citizens to pay for the systematic murder of thousands of babies today and there is little hope for a better tomorrow.

I hope that some today we will learn the lessons from yesterday and thus work to make a better tomorrow.

*Tim Smith
Dothan, AL*

BELVEDERE BEACON

"Ye are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14)

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Preaching the Gospel

One certain characteristic of the first century church was its evangelical nature. Today men deplore efforts to convert others. We hear charges of proselyting, infringement on personal rights and "bad taste" if we solicit the interest of others. Requests are made that we go to the "unchurched." May we remind our readers of these examples of conversion in Acts. Most all of the recorded cases had a religion. The three thousand converted on Pentecost were "devout" Jews (cf. Acts 2:5). The eunuch may have been either a Jew or Jewish proselyte. Cornelius was a God-fearing, devout Gentile. Saul was a zealous Jew and "a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee" (cf. 23:6). Lydia was a practicing Jewess (cf. 16:13-15). God had a message for these religious folk and likewise He has a message to religious people today who have not obeyed the commands of Christ. To adopt the policy of never asking another person to become a Christian is completely out of harmony with New Testament Christianity.

The church was mission-minded. As we restore apostolic Christianity, may we not fail to restore mission work. Every congregation must see to it that it has a part in missionary work. A congregation cannot afford to spend all its income so selfishly on itself. We fall short of the Lord's will if we are indifferent to the spread of the Gospel.

The church in Antioch of Syria is a worthy example of evangelism. It sent forth Paul and Barnabas to the harvest fields. Luke says they sent them away (cf. 13:2). After months of toil and hardship, they returned to Antioch with a delightful report of what "God had done with them.

And thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled. And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles (14:26-27).

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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.

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IS IT AUTHORIZED?

Near the close of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said: “*Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name do many mighty works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity*” (Mat. 7:21–23).

This passage teaches a great fundamental Truth: the emptiness and presumptuousness of doing anything that is not authorized by the Lord. Every item that one might list as an ingredient of faithfulness to God and His Son is subsumed in this sweeping principle. If one has his heart set on doing “*all in the name of the Lord*” (Col. 3:17), he will be faithful in all things.

It is not enough to like something. It is not enough that something attracts large crowds. It is not enough that a “big” congregation somewhere is doing this or that. It is not enough that some “great name” among us supports, endorses, or teaches it. **All that matters is, does God authorize it?**

To merely speak the Lord’s name over something we are doing is no sign of His acceptance or approval. The sons of Sceva quickly learned this to their own dismay and discomfort (Acts 19:14–16). The Lord’s statement conclusively shows that God requires more than mere faith and its confession, more than mere sincerity, more than human effort, and more than religious acts if one is to be saved. Unless one is engaged in behavior God has authorized (i.e., doing “the will of my Father”), one’s efforts are all in vain. **That which God does not authorize, He does not recognize.**

Faithful men restored the church in modern times on the premise of book, chapter, and verse—explicit or implicit—Scriptural authority for all that we do and say. My, how we constantly need to be reminded of this fact. So much preaching and practice among us nowadays has no more authority for it than John Calvin, the denominations in town, some popular psychologist or philosopher, “I don’t see anything wrong with it,” or “I like it”—or a combination thereof.

One is not faithful to God who is not faithful to Christ (John 15:23). One is not faithful to Christ who does not honor His doctrine (John 12:48). God has given His Son “*all authority*” (Mat. 28:18) and we must scrupulously submit to it. Those who try to “freelance” in religion, whether in the church or out, will arrive at the Judgment to hear the Lord ask, “Who are you? I don’t believe we’ve met and it’s too late to get acquainted now.”

—*Dub McClish, Denton, TX*

Brethren. We live in an age when many congregations and brethren – even those who would be considered “conservative” – are failing to examine a teaching or practice to see if it is approved or authorized by the Scriptures. Many are assuming because a congregation, a school or a well-known brother endorses such – it must be acceptable to the Lord. Similarly, some will accept a false teacher for the similar reasons. May we always be ready to ask and answer the question: “Is it authorized?” even if others are unwilling to do so, realizing the cost of a failure to do so.

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.

Pam Gossett is staying at her daughter’s for a few weeks and will not be with us.

Lanny Niver is to have some more procedures done this week.

Sister Grimsley’s daughter in law, Glenda, has being diagnosed as having cancer in her left lung and the prognosis is given as good. Sister Grimsley thanks brethren for their prayers as they have awaited word as to her daughter in law’s condition.

Michael Farmer’s mother is scheduled to have cataract surgery May 13.

Glenn Nichols who preached for the Beech Island church was killed in a car wreck on Wednesday. Services were held Saturday. Our sympathy goes out to his family in their time of loss.

We will have a pot-luck meal today after the morning services. Plan to stay and eat together.

Preaching the Gospel continued from page 1.

Some must go and some must send. Paul and Barnabas went and the Antioch church sent and both received a reward for assuming the responsibility. Let it be observed also that the church was capable of sending and receiving missionaries without the aid of a missionary society. The church is its own missionary society. It is superfluous to utilize a human missionary society. Loose thinkers do not believe that the world can be evangelized without a centralized society, but it was done in the first century. God’s plan for each congregation to be independent is workable even though this may not coincide with human wisdom.

Luke writes that “daily” the apostles preached Christ (5:42). People were “added to the church daily” (2:47). Discipleship calls for daily cross bearing (Luke 9:23). The brethren enjoyed daily fellowship (Acts 2:46). The devil, our adversary, never takes a vacation. “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8). We therefore, should feel compelled to say something for the Lord each day.

*Harrell Davidson
Obion, TN*

Editor’s Note: The congregation here is to be commended for allowing me to be gone to be involved in mission efforts in England. Your continuing to support me while I am away is greatly appreciated and is in keeping with the Lord’s will of being involved in the preaching of the Gospel to the whole world.