

URGENCY IN OBEDIENCE

I can remember pleading, over a period of months, with an elderly gentleman in Oklahoma to obey the Gospel and live his remaining years as a Christian. He never did. This year brought the tragic news of his death—a trip into eternity apart from Jesus Christ. This scene is repeated over and over, with untold numbers who know the Gospel but delay obedience.

Perhaps you are in this situation now, or you know someone who is. There are a myriad of divine exhortations that speak directly to the heart of procrastination. Consider these carefully. The Bible teaches that life is short and uncertain. James writes, “*Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away*” (Jam. 4:14). The Psalmist compares our short earthly stay to “*a tale that is told*” (Psa. 90:9), and reminds us that our days are soon spent and “*we fly away*” (90:10). The cemeteries around the land are filled with those who thought they had more time. Plans for tomorrow, or next year, are subject to sudden cancellation for tomorrow’s sunrise may see “just a grave in the vale and a memory of me.” Would you continue to walk apart from God in view of the fact that you do not know or control the events of the future? Another sobering consequence of delay is that the heart becomes hardened toward the Lord’s invitation as time passes. Because of this, the Hebrews writer warned, “*But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin*” (Heb. 3:13). As long as Satan can cause you to procrastinate just one more day, he will win.

The countless pleadings of loved ones, the frank Gospel sermons, and the Lord’s invitation eventually fall on deaf ears when one allows the tempter to continue dominating his life. To those walking in sin, we remind: “*behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation*” (2 Cor. 6:2). Yes, your heart can become hardened to the point that the Gospel will not penetrate!

Finally, to delay your obedience to Christ is downright foolish in view of a certain judgment day to come. There remains for us all a great appointment we cannot avoid (Heb. 9:27). We will all stand before the Lord to receive just recompense (2 Cor. 5:10). Divine vengeance will fall on those who “*obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (2 The. 1:8). These will be eternally separated from the Lord, and eternally punished (1:9). If your smoke alarm in the hall starts blaring, you arise from bed and smell smoke and feel the heat of the flames, a neighbor yells, “your house is on fire,” what one of us would be so foolish as to lay back down for a little more sleep? For you to hear the words of the Lord warning you to flee the fires of hell, and then continue on with your daily routine, without urgent attention and action to save your soul—this is the epitome and extreme of irrationality.

Why not obey the Gospel today? This very hour? Be a member of the only church for which Jesus died—the church you read of in the New Testament—the church of Christ (Rom. 16:16). If you have been baptized into Christ but have since lived in error and neglect, is it not past time for you to come home? As one hymn reminds us: “there’s danger and death in delay!”

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BELVEDERE BEACON
“Ye are the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14)
Volume 11 Number 10 May 16, 2010
A PUBLICATION OF THE BELVEDERE CHURCH OF CHRIST
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(Greater Augusta, GA area)
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WHOSE SHALL THEY BE?

God pronounced judgment on the foolish farmer who had stockpiled his harvests with only one aim—selfish indulgence. In one breath God labeled him a “fool,” told him he would die that night, and asked him, “*The things which thou hast prepared, whose shall they be?*” (Luke 12:20). The great lesson here is the folly and sin of covetousness and selfishness (v. 15). The farmer had laid up these things for himself, but he would have no further use for them where he was going. He forgot the principle Paul clearly enunciated: “*For we brought nothing into the world, for neither can we carry anything out*” (1 Tim. 6:7). Therefore, “*whose shall they be?*”

This is a good question for all of us to ask and candidly answer concerning whatever estate we may have. We must all die (Heb. 9:27). We should all soberly contemplate what will happen to whatever we have accumulated in life when we are no longer living in this world. When we think of wise stewardship, do we think only of our earthly lifetimes? Do we not also have a **continuing** stewardship concerning what we may accumulate, that it may used wisely and to the glory of God after we die? Verily, “*It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful*” (1 Cor. 4:2), applies in death, as in life. I have known of godly men and women who generously supported the proclamation of the Truth in life, but who failed to take proper steps to continue this support in death. I had a dear aunt who loved the Lord and served Him well for all of her life that spanned almost a century. She left her estate to offspring who have not the slightest interest in the Lord, His church or His Truth. Several years ago, I knew of a faithful elderly couple with no children who had discussed leaving their estate to the church. They “never got around to it” before death overtook them. Their considerable wealth went to nieces and nephews who were Mormons.

In all such cases, those who so strongly supported the Truth with their wealth in life allowed their resources in death to tear down what they spent their lives building up. Not only is their wealth lost to the cause of Christ by such negligence; it strengthens sin and error, making the advancement of Truth more difficult. Some saints intend to make provisions for the Lord’s work in their wills, but neglect it too long.

Consider some things a good steward of wealth will do regarding his estate, whether large or small:

1. You will make a will if you have not done so (even **young** people/couples should do this). Without a will you have no control over what happens to your estate; a judge will decide.
2. If you made a will several years ago, you should re-read and re-evaluate it in light of any changed circumstances.
3. You should ask yourself if those to whom you have willed or have thought about including as beneficiaries of your estate have your spiritual convictions and if they will continue to support the Truth as you now do? If not, wise stewardship requires that you alter your will to implement this continued support after you die.

Every faithful child of God should think seriously on this question: “*The things which thou hast prepared, whose shall they be?*”

Dub McClish, Denton, TX

“COME HOME TO ROME”

This statement is made on a sign for a local Roman Catholic Church. The implication being that the various religious groups proclaiming to be Christian came out from Roman Catholicism as being the original church. Some Protestant groups readily admit that they came out of Rome as a result of what is known as the Reformation Movement and that they just sought to reform Roman Catholicism. The Bible teaches that Christians should “*contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints*” (Jude 3). For one to determine whether that faith “*once delivered*” is the Roman Catholic Church one needs to examine whether that church teaches that faith.

One thing that is immediately noticeable is that Roman Catholicism claims that the Pope is the “Vicar of Christ” and thus the representative of Christ on earth. One can examine the “*faith which was once delivered to the saints*” from end to end and will not find mention of a “Vicar of Christ” or of a “Pope” as the “earthly head of the church.” Indeed, that faith nowhere teaches that a man, any man is the “earthly head of the church.” Roman Catholics would have us believe that Peter was the first “Pope.” However, by their own rules, Peter would not qualify as he was a married man – one who had a mother in law (Matthew 8:14). Also, that faith “*once delivered to the saints*” teaches that in the latter days some should depart from that faith (I Timothy 4:1-3). Two of the departures mentioned are “*forbidding to marry*” and “*commanding to abstain from meats*.” For centuries Roman Catholicism banned the eating of meat on a Friday, something nowhere commanded in Scripture. Also, to this day, the teaching of Roman Catholicism is that the priesthood is to be celibate (unmarried). Other doctrines of Roman Catholicism could be given to show that they do not adhere to that “*faith which was once delivered to the saints*” and therefore it cannot be the true church from which all other churches of men have departed but these we have mentioned are sufficient to make the point.

To determine which church is the right church, one must always make reference to the “*faith which was once delivered to the saints*.” If a religious group teaches that which is contrary to that faith, it **cannot** be the church that Jesus built.

When one studies history, it is clear that there have always been those who have sought to preach and teach that one faith. Sadly, because of the power of the Roman Catholic Church, many were classified as “heretics” because they determined to preach and teach the truth. As a result many faced severe persecution and even death because they would not bow to apostate religion. When the records are made available, one can see traces of the kingdom stretching back centuries before the Reformation Movement of the 15th and 16th centuries. One can be encouraged by reading of the sacrifices that were made by so many during what have been referred to as the “dark ages” when Roman Catholicism held sway across the western hemisphere.

May we, as God’s people today, “*contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints*” even when if we are pressured from those outside of the church and from those “change-agents” within the church that would seek to turn the Lord’s church into just another denomination.

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.

Tim Smith’s disability hearing went well this week. However, he will not know whether he has been granted disability benefits for a number of weeks. Let us pray that the decision will be in his favor so that he can have the financial assistance that he and his family so desperately need. Lanny Niver called this week. He is still in Tennessee and would appreciate continued prayers. The Wilsons were out of town last Sunday as they attended Kimberly’s graduation. Dawn Mason was also out of town.

The Teacher’s Love

Though I have all the Elmer’s Glue and scissors and have read the lesson five times, and have not love, I am not a teacher.
And though I have all the construction paper, glitter, and Bible posters, puzzles, and unit activities and have been in a special planning session and have not love, I am not a teacher.
If I have read all the books that men have written about teaching, but have not love for teaching, I am not a teacher.
And if I understand the use of all visual aids and if I have all the energy as to make a new poster every week, but have not love for teaching, I am not a teacher.
If I use all that I have, give all my time to decorating my classroom, but have not love for teaching, my students have profited nothing.
Where there be magic markers...they shall dry up.
Where there be chalk and blackboards...they shall crumble.
Where there be printed literature...it shall fade.
When I was a child, I spoke and understood and thought like a child.
When I became a teacher, I put away childish things, but I did not forget what it was like to be a child.
And now abides the teacher’s knowledge, the teacher’s aids, and the teacher’s love; and the greatest of these is the teacher’s love.

Author Unknown