

EMPTY FAITH

“And your faith is also vain” (I Corinthians 15:14). Empty preaching produces an empty faith. “Faith comes from hearing God’s word” (Romans 10:17). Paul refused to use “excellency of speech or wisdom, declaring the testimony of God.” He preached Christ and Him crucified. He did not use “enticing words of man’s wisdom” and the reason was that he did not want the faith of the Corinthians to stand in the wisdom of men” (I Corinthians 2:14). The wisdom of man is but an empty shell and can produce only an empty faith.

Much that goes for faith today is only a shell, empty of all contents, for it is without any Bible basis. Paul uses the word “vain” again in verse 17 of this same chapter. “Your faith is vain,” but the word “vain” here does not come from the same Greek word as the one in verse 14. The word used here means “wanting in results, fruitless, futile.” Empty preaching can only produce a faith that lacks results, fruitless and without works, one that is futile. How much of what is called faith today is described by this word? Read Hebrews 11 and see the reality of their faith. It was not empty therefore the results are described in that chapter. This kind of faith will not make empty lives.

EMPTY WORSHIP

Empty preaching leaves an empty faith and empty faith makes worship empty. “This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips: but their heart is far from me. In vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matthew 15:8, 9). The word “vain” here is not the same word as the one in I Corinthians 15:17. Empty preaching makes empty faith. Empty faith makes empty worship.

Gimmicks are not the solution to the problem. Preachers are in the lead in trying to think up something new to try to make “worship meaningful.” It is strange that if has not occurred to them that the place to begin is in the pulpit. Holding hands, turning out the lights, chain prayers and women leading will not produce faith and no worship will ever be anything but empty that is not worship “in faith.” One cannot get “nigh unto God with his mouth, nor honor God with his lips, while his heart is far from God.” The doctrines of men, substitutes for Bible preaching, will not create a faith that is necessary for spiritual worship. Faith is not magic. It is Bible based and only a Bible faith gives meaning to worship.

EMPTY LIVES

“But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?” (James 2:20). Empty preaching results in empty faith, empty faith results in empty worship: empty worship ends in empty lives. A faith that is only a shell cannot make a life that is full. A dead faith does not bring about fullness of life. Here is the answer to so many empty lives today. To expect satisfaction in living from a dead faith is to expect the impossible. One hour sitting on a pew on Sunday morning is the outcome of empty faith and this in turn leaves the life empty while people watch T.V. on Sunday night. It leaves life empty on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday. The round starts over again if one happens to feel like making it for the one hour on Sunday. Such lives will be empty in time and eternity. This is the root of empty lives.

EMPTY RELIGION

“If any man among you seemeth to be religious, and bridled not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart this man’s religion is vain” (James 1:26). Empty preaching leaves empty faith, empty faith means empty worship: empty worship ends in empty lives and empty lives ends in empty religion.

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BELVEDERE BEACON

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

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535 Clearwater Road, Belvedere, SC 29841-2574

(Greater Augusta, GA area)

THE CAUSE AND CURES OF EMPTINESS

One of the complaints made against religion today is that it is empty. This has led many to completely reject Christianity and turn to various forms of pagan religions. Even in the church are found people that have become disillusioned and decide that it is empty and needs restructuring. I am ready to admit that there is emptiness in the lives of multitudes, including many in the church. What is the cause of all this? Is it because there is something wrong with Christianity? Is our plea for a return to the New Testament an outdated thing? I do not believe so. The cause is somewhere else.

EMPTY PULPITS

“And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain” (I Corinthians 15:14). The word “vain” means empty, hollow, lacking in reality. It is possible for preaching to be just an empty form. Paul’s statement to the Corinthians states this. What makes empty preaching? Paul said to the Corinthians that if Christ was not raised from the dead, then the preaching of the apostles was empty. This strikes at the very heart of modernism. Modernism rejects the resurrection of Christ along with all other supernatural teaching of the Bible: Rejection – of the supernatural—the inspiration of the Bible, miracles, the virgin birth as well as the resurrection—leaves only empty preaching. In view of this, just think how much empty preaching is being done today.

The Bible is a revelation from God containing the mind of God (I Corinthians 2:10-13). It contains the thoughts and ways of God (Isaiah 55:8). The purpose of preaching is to proclaim the Bible. When the great fundamental truths of the Bible are ignored and the wisdom of men is substituted for the wisdom of God, preaching is empty.

The very word for preaching in I Corinthians 2 refers not to the delivery of the sermon, but to its content. Preaching that does not deal with what the Bible says about sin, faith, repentance, confession, baptism, love, hope, the church, worship, Christian living, falsehood and error is just an empty form. A great amount of the emptiness in religion can be traced to empty preaching. We can never cure the empty hearts and lives until we fill the pulpit with Bible preaching again.

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SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

SUNDAY:		WEDNESDAY:	
Bible Classes for all ages	10.00 am.	Bible Classes for all ages	7.00 p.m.
Morning Worship	11.00 am.		
Evening Worship	6.00 p.m.		

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

www.belvederechurchofchrist.org E-mail church@belvederechurchofchrist.org

MORAL DECLINE

As any student of history knows, the moral decline of a people anywhere, is soon followed by a “taking over,” or becoming “in bondage to another.” The great Roman Empire of centuries past is a prime example of this. One of the main causes of its decline and fall is known to be the crumbling of moral values. It makes one shudder to look and see how our great country of America is following close in the footsteps of old Rome. And, yes, there is a “standard for morality.” Jesus gave it to us.

The way our leaders are bowing to the pressures of the “homosexual people” across this country is very alarming. Bills are constantly being presented for passage in various states, giving those “illicit marriages” between people of the same sex, the same privileges which “God-ordained marriages” enjoy. Some states have already passed bills permitting same sex marriages with all the same “rights.” In the spring of 2000, the state of Vermont passed their law in this regard. I wrote Governor Howard Dean a letter registering my disgust with his signing that bill, but never heard from his office. In the past, I have enjoyed travel in Vermont, but, since that time, I have made sure to avoid it.

And it disturbs me too, to hear sounds of the great state of Arkansas striking down its sodomy law which has been in place for a long time. I chose to come here to the hills and live in a state which seemed to respect the laws of God, as recorded in the Bible. The one good thing that can come out of all this is for it to so enrage the people of God everywhere, that they will rise up and fight like they have never fought before. And that is just what I am calling for. The Christian’s warfare is with the “sword of the Spirit,” which is the Word of God. Every dedicated Christian should get really involved with this battle and write their senators and representatives, protesting these new laws being enacted. And if that does not do the trick, make their votes count on election days.

Keep in mind, that the “homosexual issue,” as bad as it is, is not the only way God’s laws are trampled on. People have gone to the marriage altar with the idea that “if it does not work out,” we will get a divorce and marry another. Or, we will just forget about remarriage and just “shack up” with someone and live that way, God-ordained “marriage for life between a man and a woman,” and gave the order to replenish the earth. Divorce was never in God’s plan, it is a thing He hates. But, we have flaunted it in the face of God and will be giving God an answer one day. He will have the last Word. The Bible tells us that His Word will not return unto Him void. It will accomplish that for which it is written. All we have to do is look in history. It has been proven true time and again. It is only a matter of time.

Will our great country go down that tube of destruction or bondage? Or, will enough Christian people who “fear God,” rise up and use His Word to try to save it? If you do not know how to use God’s Word, it is time to get the book out, dust it off, open it up, and start to see what He has really said. If I can help, let me know.

*Alton W. Fonville
St. Paul, AR*

With the local, state and national elections coming up this Tuesday, November 4, 2008 the above needs to be kept in mind as votes are cast and prayers need to be offered that the moral decline in this land might be halted.

Ken Chumbley

NEWS AND NOTES

Keep in your prayers the following: Helen Culpepper, Pam Gossett and mother, Lavonne McClish, Linda Chumbley, and Rachel Fitzpatrick’s aunt (Eula Baker) who has cancer, Maomi Aaron’ sister who has having health problems, and Tim Smith.

Myrtle Grimsley is still not doing the best but is improving. Her son in law’s mother passed away this week.

Ken Chumbley arrived home safely later Friday night after a successful visit to England working with the brethren. A report will appear in the bulletin next week.

THE CAUSE AND CURES OF EMPTINESS Continued from page 4

Listen to all the complaints about the church today. I just do not get anything out of the services.” James says that religion that is all talk and no practice is empty. Religion that is full is found in the next verse. “Visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and keep unspotted from the world.” Bible preaching makes Bible faith, Bible faith produces real worship, real worship produces full lives and full lives are active in serving the needs of others. Widows and orphans are terms that are intended to suggest the whole area of Christian service.

EMPTY BIBLE STUDY

“But avoid foolish questions, and genealogies, and contentions; and strivings about the law, for they are unprofitable and vain” (Titus 3:9). The study of the Bible ought to be profitable. Too many of our classes are unprofitable and empty. Instead of seeking out the meat of the Word as food for the soul, too many times the discussion is about trivial things or questions that will never be answered. I sometimes have the feeling we are having classes, not because we are hungry for the truth of God, but simply having classes for classes sake. It is something that we have been doing a long time and we just keep going through with it. Such empty Bible study is of no value.

THE BIBLE IS NOT EMPTY

“Do you think the scripture saith in vain?” (James 4:6). Our talk may be empty but the scriptures never speak in vain. We can make it empty in various ways but that is our doing and not the Bible.

*Franklin Camp
(Deceased)*