

Psalm 118:8

“It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man.” *Trust* is from the Hebrew word *chasah*, meaning “to take refuge.” *Refuge* is defined to be “shelter or protection from danger or distress; a place that provides shelter or protection; a means of resort for help in difficulty” (*Webster’s Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary*).

One of the terrible weaknesses of fleshly Israel was their seeking shelter or protection in human helpers. Spiritual Israel, the church, shares the same weakness. The psalmist instructs the spiritually minded to seek “shelter or protection from danger or distress” “in the Lord.”

Too often we allow this admonition to go unheeded. We make friends too quickly with those whom we presume to be dedicated to New Testament Christianity. Later we sadly find that such walk in the commandments and doctrines of men. Council is sought from those we have too hastily trusted in. We learn too late that they are betrayers. We are deceived by the great swelling words of vain men into thinking that they are the stalwarts of the faith. Too late we find their true nature to be like sepulchres that are outwardly white, but inwardly are filled with corruption. One of the first things a babe in Christ should learn is to be exceedingly slow in trusting men.

Take advice from men only as it corresponds with God’s Word. Never be surprised or hindered when those who give sound advice do not follow it when they are under fire from Satan. They too are subject to fleshly frailties. Always remember that no matter how dedicated men seem to be, many of them will selfishly commit or omit anything in order to save themselves. Satan described many people when he answered God concerning the faithfulness of Job, saying, “Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life” (Job. 2:4).

Paul admonished, “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise” and “Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men’s sins: keep thyself pure” (Eph. 5:15; 1 Tim. 5:22). We close with the words of a Gospel song that echoes the sentiment of Psalm 118:8.

*Stand up, stand up for Jesus,
Stand in His strength alone;
The arm of flesh will fail you,
Ye dare not trust your own
Put on the gospel armor, and
Watching unto prayer,
Where duty calls or danger,
Be never wanting there.*

David P. Brown,
Spring, TX

BELVEDERE BEACON

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

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“I Commend Unto You Phoebe”

Paul wrote to the Roman brethren: “I commend unto you Phebe our sister...That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints” (Rom. 16:1-2). I conclude from this passage that as faithful saints move about it is both scriptural and wise to take with them such a letter from respected brethren. The Ephesian church did the same for Apollos when he went to Achaia (Acts 18:27-28). Paul instructed the Corinthians by letter to receive Timothy (1 Cor. 16:10-11) and Titus (2 Cor. 8:23-24).

Such salutary letters of commendation produce at least two benefits: (1) They introduce those who are moving as worthy of fellowship, allowing them to be accepted and put to work immediately. Paul well knew the value of a respected introduction, having at first been refused fellowship in Jerusalem for lack of it (Acts 9:26). (2) They preserve the church from immoral persons and/or advocates and practitioners of error who would corrupt the church.

We need to restore this practice generally, especially in these days in which doctrinal and moral liberalism abound. I am not suggesting that all who neglect to secure such a letter are automatically to be mistrusted, but those who bear such a letter are certainly a welcome sight to any congregation concerned about doctrinal and moral purity. With the current widespread moral permissiveness and doctrinal error among brethren, plus the element of general mobility, congregations are extremely unwise not to use caution in accepting those who wish to “place membership.” A smooth-talking false teacher can move in and divide a congregation, large or small, in a few months’ time, as careless, unwary brethren have learned to their great dismay.

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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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WORSHIP OR ENTERTAINMENT?

...Neil Postman described serious problems in modern culture in his insightful 1985 book, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*. His thesis was that public discourse has been reshaped to such an extent by television and entertainment that thoughtful discourse is missing. “Show business” hype has affected advertising, politics, and religion. Postman's conclusion is that none of these changes have made for improvement.

In our entertainment-oriented culture, many churches find themselves trying to “outdo” themselves with more and more elaborate additions to worship. What began as special music by a choir becomes a full orchestra with professional soloists. A dramatic reading necessitates a full Broadway stage production. And as long as those who come to worship enjoy what is offered, anything goes. The expectation is that sermons will be shorter, wittier, and more uplifting. Anything in worship that cannot be “jazzed up” must be abandoned as boring--and there is nothing worse than being boring, we are led to believe.

The problem with this entertainment orientation is that the very object of worship is forgotten. God is the “audience” in worship. Jesus told the Samaritan woman that ignorant worship was unacceptable to God, even though it may have been sincere or enjoyable. “God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him that spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). To worship God in spirit and truth means that worship must be from the heart, not just outward acts, and that it must be done in exact obedience to God's commands. The worship must be directed to Him, not to the whims of the worshipers.

God's regulations for worship as set out in the New Testament are neither boring nor out-of-date. They are God-centered, while entertainment is man-centered!

Culture relevance is important--thus many churches are implementing modern technology such as projection systems to enhance sermons. And there is nothing wrong with the worshiper enjoying worship. God intended worship to bless His children. But when worship is merely window dressing for an entertainment performance, it cannot please God. The apostle warned, “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God” (2 John 9). Paul condemned things that “have indeed a show of wisdom in will worship” (Col. 2:23). “*Will worship*” is that which is fashioned after man's desires.

Bob Pritchard

[Editor's note: *Will worship* involves a disobedient spirit. Regardless of a lack of Bible authority, people affirm, “I will do it because I like it.” It does not matter to some Christians if a practice such as instrumental music or handclapping is not authorized and that they cannot take the Scriptures and show that it is approved. They like it, and they will do it - even at the cost of division. - Gary Summers]

--from *Spiritual Perspectives*- Sept.21, 2008
via The Biblical Journal (Fort Worth)

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.

Lanny Niver is having health problems as is his daughter – please keep them in your prayers.

Myrtle Grimsley is still not doing the best but is improving – keep her in your prayers also.

Ken Chumbley is in San Mateo, CA for a Gospel Meeting and will be back Tuesday night.

Please pray for a successful meeting and his safe return.

Our next pot-luck will be after the morning worship service on December 14. Plan to stay and enjoy this time together.

“I Commend Unto You Phoebe” Continued from page 1

I commend the following practice of various congregations concerning those who wish to identify with a congregation. When strangers to a congregation respond for this purpose, it is premature to announce that they **have** placed membership. It is wise to announce at the time that they “**have expressed a desire** to be members.” It should be announced at the same time that the one(s) **desiring** to place membership will be contacted by the elders (men of the congregation, as in our case, where there are no elders) for the purpose of discussing our work with them. In this discussion, they are given a questionnaire that deals with doctrinal and moral issues, their marital condition, their status at their previous congregation, and that states the congregation's determination to faithfully follow God's Word.

Frankly, there are some brethren who move to town to whom we cannot extend fellowship and whom we do not want to be with us. Why should any congregation feel “obligated” to accept someone or ones just because they walk down the aisle, sign a card, or otherwise express a desire to be a member thereof? How much better it is to find out who (and what) brethren are before they are welcomed with open arms. Many congregations have experienced grievous problems by quickly and prematurely embracing those who sought membership, only to learn after doing so that the ones embraced were not worthy of fellowship. Some spiritual “preventive medicine” is certainly the right “prescription” for this situation.

Dub McClish
Denton, TX