

The Maples and the Oaks

There is an old story about some trouble in a forest. It seems that, in the story, there were some maple trees and some oak trees growing wild on the countryside—all basically occupying the same general terrain. For a while things went well, but then the oaks began to “outgrow” the maples and, before most anyone knew what was happening, the oaks had grown tall and branched out and were basically taking all of the sunshine and leaving the shorter maple trees in the shade. The maple trees did not like this at all, and so they complained. “It’s not fair!” they said, “why, we have as much right to the sunshine as the oak trees and they are getting it all for themselves. We wish something to be done about this and at once!”

The matter was brought to the attention of the oak trees and they were quite amused about it all. One of them was heard to say, “Us? Taking the sunshine? Why, we are only doing what we do naturally. It is the mark of strength and longevity in a good tree when he reaches for the clouds and absorbs all the sunshine he can get. Why don’t the maple trees just take advantage of the nice shade we provide them? After all, we are blocking the burning sun from them in the summer. That ought to count for something.”

In short, the oaks did not agree with the complaints of the maples; and the maples did not accept the answer of the oaks. There was a standoff. Everyone waited anxiously to see what would happen. Would the oaks try to destroy the maples? Would the maples try to undermine the oaks? Tension grew. Spring turned to summer; summer to autumn; autumn to winter; winter to another spring. Nothing happened. Two years passed—still nothing. Three years, four years, five years, ten years—finally, after many decades, the maples and the oaks began to die—of old age. Their perceived problems were no real problem at all. A little complaining, a little arguing, great tension—but nothing.

Whose side do you take? Are you a maple-supporter or an oak-supporter? In reality, they both did have good points. Both just wanted sunshine. How was the issue resolved? Simply by each doing the best they could to survive and thrive—they obeyed the laws of their Creator and all turned out well in the end. It was perfectly proper for the maples to want sunshine and for the oaks to want sunshine. No wrong was done. When there are two **right ways** of doing a thing, maybe we humans would do well to learn a lesson from the maples and the oaks—without that part about the fussing and the tension, if possible.

*Tim Smith
Dothan, AL*

BELVEDERE BEACON

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

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535 Clearwater Road, Belvedere, SC 29841-2574

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Those “Arrogant” Apostles

Some statements of the apostles may sound downright arrogant to the casual reader. To the Corinthians Paul wrote:

If any man thinketh himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him take knowledge of the things which I write unto you, that they are the commandment of the Lord (1 Cor. 14:37).

To the Galatians he wrote:

But though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach unto you any gospel other than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema (Gal. 1:8).

Peter wrote:

Wherefore I shall be ready always to put you in remembrance of these things...that ye should remember the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and the commandments of the Lord and Saviour through your apostles (2 Pet. 1:12; 3:2).

John’s claim is unmistakable:

We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he who is not of God heareth us not. By this we know the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error (1 John 4:6).

For ordinary men to make such authoritative claims smacks of unmitigated arrogance, but were these “ordinary” men? In the sense that they were human beings with natural human appetites, yes, they were. However, in another sense, these men were not “run-of-the-mill,” everyday men. Even the enemies of Christ recognized this difference in them and identified it: “they had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13). The authority given to the apostles by the Son of God, who has all authority (Mat. 28:18), removes any trace of arrogance from their statements of doctrine and from their forceful, dogmatic claims to preaching and writing infallible Truth.

There is no plainer statement of the authority vested in the apostles of Christ (and in the infallibility of their teachings) than His promise of Matthew 18:18: “what things soever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and what things soever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” The verb tense in this pivotal passage indicates that Jesus was telling the apostles they would be able to bind or loose on men only those things **which had already been settled** in Heaven. This promise is an absolute guarantee that the message of these men would be the perfectly true, inerrant will of God.

To those who understand and believe this, the apostles are not arrogant at all. Their authoritative words came from the Lord. They were merely human, “earthen vessels” through whom the Word of God flowed (1 Cor. 2:13; 2 Cor. 4:7; 1 The. 2:13). Men err who seek to distinguish between the authority of the teaching of Christ and the teaching of the apostles. Men can hear/read their words and live or reject them and perish (Mat. 7:24-27; 10:40; John 12:48).

Dub McClish, Denton, TX

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.

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

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

Several years ago I read an article with the above title. I have adapted many of the thoughts that were in that article as I believe they contain a very important message.

The author of the article wrote about receiving an invitation to a social event. The time that was given for this event was “8 p.m. - *who knows when?*” What about our worship services, our Bible classes, our Gospel Meetings? Wouldn't it be great if brethren were so hungry for the word of God, so eager for Christian fellowship, and so desirous of worshipping God that a time of commencement could be announced and then indicate that the conclusion would be “*who knows when?*”

The author made the following statement: “Apparently, this attitude was present at the gathering of the church for worship and study at Troas (Acts 20:6-12). Most of the time when reference is made to Paul prolonging his speech until midnight, the reference is to make a dig at someone who has preached a little longer than 30 minutes. However, not only did Paul, speak until midnight, but even after raising Eutychus from the dead, the people **continued** in fellowship and stayed *until the break of day.*”

However, that is not the situation today. It has virtually been set in stone that a sermon should be preached in such a way that it is no longer than twenty to thirty minutes and that the worship service should take no longer than an hour. Why? Have we come to the point where we worship God *by the clock*? An article, written a number of years ago, in which one individual was quoted as being pleased that they had completed the Lord's Supper in a large congregation in eleven minutes, thus showing how efficient the congregation was!

Sadly, too many do not have time for God or for Jesus Christ. Too often we leave little room in our lives for God and Christ in our thoughts and in our time. We are so busily engaged with our materialistic lives, imbibing all of the pleasure that we can and thus Christianity is removed to a remote place in our lives except for when emergencies arise. The basic problem is that we are not seeking “*first the kingdom of God and his righteousness*” (Matt. 6:33). We joke about being able to beat others to the restaurant, but in reality, many times, such things as eating, recreation, business and so many other things have *higher priority* in their lives than worshipping God. We are not *hungering and thirsting after righteousness* as we ought, if we were, we could not spend enough time studying God's Word and hearing it preached.

It is said that in the early years of the Restoration Movement, John Smith rode on horseback for many miles to hear Alexander Campbell preach. As he was returning with a companion, Smith complained, “That was a long ride to hear a man preach only 30 minutes.” His friend replied, “You have misread your watch. Brother Campbell preached **three hours.**” Earlier in my life I had the opportunity to hear, on different occasions, two of the greatest preachers of the twentieth century, Foy E. Wallace and Gus Nichols and both preached for over two and a half hours, but it sure did not seem like it! How many of us today would listen to a three hour sermon today, even from the world's greatest orator? We can go to football games that can last up to three hours, but are unhappy when services take longer than an hour.

“*Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God.*” If we reduce our hearing of God's word, *we reduce our faith.* As we reduce our faith, we reduce our service to God. All of these work together to weaken the church and to cause the problems of lack of church growth. Let us “*hunger and thirst after righteousness*” and “*seek first the kingdom of God*” and be willing to devote the necessary time to our worship.

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 asked us to remember his aunt in prayer.

Janice and Steven Wilson were not able to be out Wednesday evening as they were not well.

Myrtle Grimsley has not been feeling well this week but hopes she will be able to be out today.

A PREACHER'S CLASSIC

When I preach there are some who say
They could listen to me all day
Others think I preach too long,
And some think I go about it wrong.
Some say my sermon is much too deep
To others it's shallow and they go to sleep.
Some report I hold them spellbound,
While others squirm and look around.
Some believe I have no light,
And others think I preach just right.
Some affirm that I'm too bold,
While others wink and say I'm cold.
Some used to say I was much too young,
But others declare my spring has sprung
Some folks tell I have met success.
Others think my work's a mess.
Some have said my pay is too low,
When they discover the pace I go.
Still others say it's above the peak
“Why, he only works three hours a week!”
From all of this plain to see,
That as a preacher, I'm up a tree.
Condemned if I do,
Condemned if I don't.
Criticized if I will,
Criticized if I won't.
I can't please men of such discord,
So I'll just keep trying to please the Lord.

Author Unknown