

Fulton County Gospel News

Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World

“... Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body.” - Ephesians 5:23

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MORE BIBLE!

by Lester Kamp

“Why take my Bible to church? I never use it.” “My [preacher] doesn’t use the Bible; he just tells stories.” {We} speak of being “a people of the Book.” But is that only in name? In a growing number of churches, the Word of God is not referred to as it used to be. In some churches hearing the Bible in any significant way is rare. Even the best of churches would benefit from Scripture being heard more. In too many of our churches there is a famine for the Word of God, as well-meaning [preachers] attempt to substitute sermonettes and stories for dynamic Biblical preaching. The result is a growing hunger for the Bible.¹

What a sad commentary on the present condition of the church in many places today! Among those who used to be known as the “people of the Bible,” the Bible is only “rarely” heard “in any significant way.” What a shame! Do we not still recognize the power of God’s Word? Shouldn’t the assembly of God’s people be a place in which the Word of God is heard regularly? Shouldn’t preachers of the Gospel preach the Word (2 Timothy 4:2) as Paul instructed? If we expect our people to be edified and “grow . . . in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18), shouldn’t the Bible be referred to, quoted, read and preached? If it is the case where you attend that the Word of God is not heard very often, let’s commit ourselves to emphasizing again God’s Word in classes and in worship!

Many reasons could be stated regarding the importance of emphasizing God’s Word. Let’s notice only a few of them.

1) When the Word of God is neglected, we have denied ourselves of the power of God (Romans 1:16). The power to save is in God’s Word! Since the power to convert is in the Word, souls are being lost when “sermonettes and stories” describe the content of the messages in our worship. Souls will not be converted to Christ and His church if they hear only amusing stories and entertaining illustrations from the wisdom of men. Many of us need to wake up (Romans 13:11-12). It may be later than we think! Souls are dying without the saving Gospel of Christ.

2) When the Word is not heard, many lose their spiritual appetite (Matthew 5:6), and the result is spiritual death from starvation (:). When a person is born into the kingdom, he naturally has the craving for the “sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (1 Peter 2:2). When those individuals are not fed a proper diet of God’s Word, they become first become weak and then die. When they are fed other things they may think they are full, but what they have eaten provides no spiritual nourishment. New and older Christians need the Word of God that they might grow.

3) When the Word of God is not emphasized, then Christians cannot grow in their knowledge of our Lord (2 Peter 3:18). Worship assemblies and Bible classes are not to be the only time Christians open their Bibles and study from God’s Word; but it is certainly the case that when we are together we should be able to gain more knowledge about our Savior. How can Christ and Him crucified be

preached without preaching and teaching God’s Word?

4) When the Word of God is not thoroughly taught, how can we be edified? Paul told the Ephesian elders, “*And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified*” (Acts 20:32). Is it any wonder that there are so many weak Christians when we see the famine of the Word of God (Amos 8:11) which exists in so many congregations today? The Word of God is that which is able to build up and encourage those who are Christians!

5) When the Word of God is not known, then Christians are unable to distinguish between error and Truth. When the Word of God is preached and taught, then those that hear are reproved and corrected by the authoritative Word of God (2 Timothy 4:2). One reason that so many are being swept into error today is because they are not hearing and/or heeding God’s Word. Many of these people do not know the difference between the Gospel and a perversion of the Gospel (Galatians 1:7), simply because they have not heard or studied the Word of God. It is indeed sad when one can be present during any worship service or Bible study period without hearing much, if any, from the Bible.

6) When the Word of God is not in mind, it is impossible for Christians to “*continue steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine*” (Acts 2:42). What is the “apostles doctrine”? It is the message that these inspired men taught orally during the first century which was then through inspiration written down so that we might read and understand the

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Will of God (Ephesians 3:3-5). It is the “*pattern of sound words*” (2 Timothy 1:13), and **that** pattern must be followed. But if we are not exposed to the pattern (we do not know what it is), then we are lost.

Many other reasons could be cited for placing a proper emphasis on God’s Word in our assemblies and otherwise, but these should suffice. We need more Bible—personally, privately **and** publically, collectively! Let’s restore the Bible to its proper place in our worship – in all of our assemblies!

Note: The quotation at the beginning of this article came from an unusual source. *Ministry* is a Seventh Day Adventist publication. The [] which appear in the quotation show where I have replaced the word “pastor” with the word “preacher,” and the { } show where I replaced the word “Adventists” by the word “we.” The article described so well what is taking place in so (too) many congregations of the church today that I borrowed these words. Other religious groups are apparently experiencing the same

problems we are. It is sad indeed that many of our brethren don’t even recognize the problem. The author of the original article emphasized the public reading of Scripture, but I believe the problem can be solved only by more reading, preaching and teaching of God’s Word. We must do a better job!

Denver, CO

¹“Putting the Word Back in Worship,” *Ministry*, July 2001

SOULS UNSTABLE IN THEIR VISION OF HEAVEN

Unstable Souls Part Four

by Lee Moses

In his Second Epistle, the apostle Peter warned of apostasy that would befall the church (2 Pet. 2:1ff). As such, he endeavored to undergird Christians with the stability necessary to withstand the alluring “*great swelling words of vanity*” that false teachers would speak to lead brethren into error (verse 18). Those with whom such false teachers would find success would be “*unstable souls*” (verse 14). One way in which souls would be “unstable,” and thus easily seduced by sin, is in their failure to maintain a clear vision of their heavenly hope:

But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins (1:9, emphasis LM).

“*These things*” are the Christian graces enumerated in 2 Peter 1:5-8—faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience (or steadfastness), godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity (selfless love). Adding these graces is crucial to Christian living. Failure to add these graces is the result of a failure to “see afar off.” The word in the original for “cannot see afar off” is *myōpazō*, from which we get the English word *myopia*, the medical term for nearsightedness. As the American Optometric Association says, “Nearsightedness, or myopia, as it is medically termed, is a vision

condition in which close objects are seen clearly, but objects farther away appear blurred.”¹ Here the Holy Spirit portrays this nearsightedness as an affliction with fatal spiritual consequences. But what is that far-away object that Christians need to ensure never becomes blurred in their vision? It is that realm “beyond the gate of life eternal.”²

For human beings to perform at a high level, and especially over a prolonged period, requires a high level of motivation. A high school athlete who has hope of earning a college scholarship, and perhaps eventually playing professionally, will in all likelihood train harder and otherwise show greater determination to improve than his teammates who have no aspirations of playing beyond high school. A student who keeps thoughts before him of a future successful career will doubtlessly be more diligent in his studies than others who are simply trying to get through school. And the child of God who remains mindful of the reward of the righteous is infinitely more likely to remain faithful than one whose mind is not upon heaven. The Christian walk is a demanding life, demanding complete self-sacrifice. But in His promise of heaven, God provides more than ample motivation.

Paul “*laboured more abundantly*” than even his fellow apostles (1 Corinthians 15:10). He willingly endured a litany of hardships where most would have wilted (cf. 2 Corinthians 11:23-29). Knowing that his execution lay shortly ahead, he was able to say, “*I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand*” (2 Timothy 4:6). What provided Paul such calmness and confidence? The first factor providing this was the fact that he could say, “*I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith*” (verse 7). From the time of his conversion to Christ, Paul lived a life without regret. The second and even greater factor providing Paul’s

calmness and confidence was that he could say, “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” (verse 8). Paul knew that life lay beyond the executioner’s sword. Paul knew that although unrighteous Nero Caesar might declare him “guilty,” the righteous Judge would declare Paul “righteous.” Paul knew that relative to the “*far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,*” the most agonizing and gruesome torture was merely “*light affliction, which is but for a moment*” (2 Cor. 4:17). This is why he had lived a Christian life without regret before God, and this is why he could speak of his death as a “departure” (2 Tim. 4:6), an exodus from the bondage of earthly existence to paradise, and ultimately to the land of eternal euphoria in the Godhead’s presence.

Not only did Paul constantly keep before his mind thoughts of his own eternal bliss, but also of others’ entrance into the comprehension-defying land: “*Therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory*” (2 Tim. 2:10; cf. 2 Corinthians 1:14; Philippians 2:16; 2 Thessalonians 2:19). Our perseverance can help others receive the eternal reward. When we think in such a way, it cannot but affect how we conduct ourselves toward others, and it cannot but give us motivation to persevere in the faith.

Sometimes Christians simply grow weary of living the Christian life. Some can no longer stand against pressures to conform to temptation. Some find yielding to temptation less taxing than resisting. I have heard of older preachers moaning, “I’m just tired of fighting error.” However, if all these brethren would look up and see the shining light at the end of life’s tunnel, it would not be nearly so demanding to travel the final length of that tunnel. “*Cast not*

away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise” (Hebrews 10:35-36). Indeed, “Heaven will surely be worth it all”!

The problem is that too many suffer from chronic “nearsightedness,” a fatal focus on the world. Whether it be a focus on the aforementioned struggles, on illness, on material wealth, on career advancement, on hobbies, on leisure, on worldly family and friends, or on alluring pleasures, it is this worldly focus that transforms a dedicated child of God into one who “cannot see afar off.” Demas forsook Paul—and, apparently, the Lord—because he “*loved this present world*” (2 Tim. 4:10). But Demas has long since died, and what can the world offer him now? What could it **ever** have offered him to compare with the comfort he could presently be enjoying in paradise (cf. Luke 16:22-25; 23:43), much less with the endless rapture to commence on the great Resurrection Day? Sadly, too many people either do not know, or forget that “*to live is Christ, and to die*”—for the faithful Christian—“*is gain*” (Philippians 1:21, emph. LM). But for the disobedient, to die can only mean tragic, terrible loss (Matthew 7:21-23). Since, unless the Lord comes first, we all will die, why would we not choose to have our death lead to gain rather than loss? Why would we choose to lay up for ourselves perishable, fleeting treasures upon earth, when there is “*an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you*”? (1 Peter 1:4; cf. Matthew 6:19-20; Luke 12:15-21).

Those mansions the Lord has gone to prepare the faithful should constantly be in our thoughts. Such thoughts provide stability. Such thoughts prevent Satan from snatching the souls of God’s people, because they know the wicked one can offer nothing

to compare with the splendors of heaven. I have occasionally heard some object that a disproportionate number of the hymns sung in churches sing about the Christian’s heavenly home. While it is certainly possible that the songs of the church neglect important subjects, it is **not** possible to sing too often about the heavenly home or for Christians to encourage each other too often in their hope of heaven. Christians should frequently sing about heaven, pray about heaven, read and reflect upon the Scriptures speaking of heaven, and encourage each other in the hope of heaven. As those who persevere faithfully are assured, “*For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*” (2 Peter 1:11).

Conclusion

Far too many once-faithful Christians and churches have fallen victim to faithlessness and apostasy. This has happened due to a lack of Biblical stability. Innovative human doctrines and pressures to compromise to the world will continue to beset the church. However, as brethren stabilize their souls in their faith in God, on the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures, on the Biblical age of the earth, in their commitment to Bible study, on the essence of unity and fellowship, in their commitment to moral living, and in their ever-present vision of heaven, they can secure their position on the immovable foundation of Christ.

Brethren now as much as ever need to approach their lives with resoluteness and to approach the Father’s throne in prayer, lest their souls be destabilized and ultimately victimized.

¹American Optometric Association, “Myopia (Nearsightedness),” *Glossary of All Eye & Vision Conditions*, <http://www.aoa.org/patients-and-public/eye-and-vision-problems/glossary-of-eye-and-vision-conditions/myopia?ss=y>.

²Guy N. Woods, *Commentary on Peter, John, and Jude* (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Co., 1991), p. 153.

ASSORTED MATTERS

We would like to encourage our Internet-connected readers to peruse the FCGN website found at www.fultoncountygospelnews.org. Many additions have recently been added to the past archives there, thanks to the computer-savvy work of Joseph D. Chase, who has scanned past issues for us, as has Michael Hatcher as well. We now have many years previously unavailable now easily accessible.

Not only can readers view past archives at the website, but current issues are always available there. One can also use the website to set up and modify either a regular subscription or an e-mail subscription. We appreciate many who have chosen either to view the current issue online or to receive it via e-mail in order to save printing and shipping expenses.

Also, I would like to let readers know that this will likely be my last issue serving as editor. I have begun a new work with the Berea church of Christ in Obion County, Tennessee. The role of FCGN editor (or co-editor) has been served almost from its inception by the local preacher at the

Mammoth Spring church of Christ. As of the publication of this issue, it has not yet been announced who it will be; but readers can likely look forward to an introduction to the new editor in the next issue. I would like to thank the members of the Mammoth Spring congregation for their tireless work in putting the paper together each issue. I would also like to thank the readers of the *Fulton County Gospel News* for your support, encouragement, prayers, letters, thought-provoking questions, and the many ways in which you have helped this to be such a rewarding work for me personally. It is my hope and prayer that it will prove rewarding for readers eternally.

Should anyone wish to reach me personally, my new address is:

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john_lee_moses@hotmail.com.

Thank you all from the bottom of my heart, and may the Lord bless you abundantly as we all strive to serve Him faithfully and to enter together into His gilded courts.

[Lee Moses]

GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

1. Hearing the word of God. (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (I Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; I Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2, 3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God's commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; I Corinthians 12:13).

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