

“MONUMENTAL” LESSONS (1)

David Halbrook

I once watched “Monumental,” a movie about a few early American pilgrims who rejected the “Top-Down” human authority of the Church of England. “Top-Down” authority is centralized authority. The Church of England has one human leader who oversees many individual churches. This idea came not from the Bible but The Catholic Church, whose leader (“Pope”) is over many individual churches.

Only Jesus is head of *all* His churches (1 Pet. 5:1-4; Rom. 16:16). He gave *limited* leadership to qualified individuals **IN** each of His churches but gave *no* ongoing leadership to men **OVER** more than one of His churches (read Acts 14:23; 20:17, 28; 1 Timothy 3). When man claims authority over many churches “in God’s name,” this is man-made, “Top-Down” authority, lacking Jesus’ approval (Mt. 7:23; 28:18).

America exists because some pilgrims abandoned “Top-Down” authority. Sadly, it followed them to America and exists in many churches whose members will see this movie! Will they, like these pilgrims, escape this sinful practice?

Editor’s note: While history does not reveal God’s truth, it often illustrates the wisdom of God’s way. This movie did a good job of showing factors related to the beginning of our nation. Many of those factors relate to simple lessons long ago revealed by God. The next time the subject of “big government” comes up, can you help someone to see that big, man-made “church government” causes more problems? Consider using this week’s *Arkansas Weekly* article to begin or continue that discussion. Maybe that subject will open someone’s eyes to the teachings of Jesus for His followers in the Bible.

We assemble each Sunday at 10AM, 10:45AM, 5PM & Wednesday at 7PM

Church of Christ—Quail Valley
4104 E. Harrison St.
Batesville, AR 72501
Office- (870) 793-6700

Evangelist:
David Halbrook 569-4491

The Exhorter

Acts 11:23 *Exhorted them all... cleave unto the Lord*

Church of Christ--Quail Valley

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TRUTH IS TRUTH, NOT “POSITIVE” AND “NEGATIVE”

Ron Halbrook

The Bible knows nothing of the human practice of categorizing of truth as "positive" and "negative," but the Bible simply reveals the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Jesus said, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (Jn. 8:32). Labeling truth "positive" and "negative" is a manmade conception, a human grid imposed on God's truth. Since we live in the world, it is not surprising that we are sometimes influenced by these worldly conceptions about truth and preaching (Rom. 12:2).

What some complainer will call "negative" teaching turns out to be "positive" to the hungry humble soul seeking for God and truth and righteousness. When Jesus exposed the religious leaders for their hypocrisy and error, they considered it "negative" and mean-spirited, but "the common people heard him gladly" (Mk. 12:37) - the same truth was "positive" and constructive in their ears. How can that be? The difference is not in the nature of *the message* but in the nature of *the hearer's heart*. The same truth one soul receives and rejoices to hear, another soul resents, resists, and rejects as "negative" - the difference is in the souls of men not in the truth of God.

If we preach all truth without worrying about whether someone will call it "positive" or "negative," we will present a balanced diet of teaching which fulfills the obligations revealed in Acts 20:27 and 2 Timothy 4:2: "For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God," and, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:2).

We may need to refocus our thinking both as preachers and as listeners to conform to God's perspective that all truth is needed and healthy for our souls. Let us wholeheartedly embrace all truth rather than labeling it by human categories. With the author of Psalm 119 let us say, "Therefore I love thy commandments above gold;

yea, above fine gold. Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way" (vv. 127-128). "Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever" (vs. 160).

"My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments are righteousness" (vs. 172).

THE FIRST FAMILY TROUBLE (2)

Billy W. Moore

The First Family Trouble Developed Over Religion. Cain should have repented when he learned that his offering was not acceptable. How difficult it is to work repentance. Some just will not admit, "I am wrong, I have sinned." Cain should have rejoiced that his brother was acceptable unto God. But some men can never rejoice in the goodness of others.

Many other families have had trouble over religion. I suspect it shall always be so in this world. The Lord once said, "A man's foes shall be they of his own household." (Matt. 10:36) Some in a family will believe and obey the truth, while others will not. Sometimes those who do not obey the truth will come to hate those who do.

The Consequences of the First Family Trouble. First, an innocent man died. This is frequently the case, the innocent are made to suffer in family trouble. Children suffer when their father and mother have trouble. A mother is hurt when her child is in trouble. Second, Cain was "cursed from the earth" (Gen. 4: 11-12). The earth would not yield her strength for him. Third, Cain was to become a fugitive and a vagabond. He begged for mercy. The Lord placed a mark upon him, and decreed that whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken sevenfold. (Gen. 4:13-15) Fourth, Adam and Eve suffered greatly as a result of this family trouble.

How To Avoid Family Trouble. While I make no claim to being an expert in family troubles, and certainly do not seek to involve myself in the trouble of other families, yet through years of Bible study, twenty years of gospel preaching, and observing trouble in many families, I can offer some suggestions as to how to avoid family trouble. These suggestions are merely Bible principles. For what they are worth:

1. Do not hold anger and jealousy in your heart. "An angry man stireth up strife." (Prov. 29:22) "He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly." (Prov. 14:17)

2. Husbands love your wives as your own bodies. (Eph. 5:28-29) There will be no lack of trust, no jealousy, where this is obeyed. This will prevent criticism of your wife before others, which often leads to family trouble.

3. Wives see that ye reverence your husbands (Eph. 5:31) and submit unto your own husbands. (Eph. 5:23) A contentious woman is sure to cause family trouble. (Prov. 21:9, 19)

4. Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath. (Eph. 6:4) "The forcing of wrath bringeth forth strife." (Prov. 30:33)

5. Children obey your parents. (Eph. 6:1) Disobedient children are a cause of much family trouble. The rod and reproof give wisdom; but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame. (Prov. 29:15) A foolish son is a grief to his father and bitterness to her that bare him. (Prov. 17:25)

6. Practice the golden rule. Do unto others as ye would have them do unto you. "A soft answer turneth away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger." (Prov. 15: 1) Wouldn't you rather have others speak to you with a soft answer instead of grievous words? Sharp words spoken in haste cause much family trouble. Be kind, courteous, and thankful, as you would have others be unto you.

7. Do not try to run the lives of others. Trying to manage your children's home could cause serious family trouble. Trying to tell someone how to raise their children also causes trouble. (Usually those who know the most about how to raise children have had no first hand experience.)

8. Try to implant in the mind of each member of the family the importance of doing the will of God. If everyone in your family believes in God and wants to please him, there is less chance of serious family trouble ever developing.

If family trouble does arise, do not blame the Lord for it. The Lord has a balm for every wound, a blessing for all who seek it. If you have been the cause of family trouble, repent of your sins and make things right with your family and right with God. There is enough sin and sorrow in this life without having to live with it in your own family. God help us to be close as families, and to live close to Him.

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"Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious." 1 Peter 2:1-3

*Put aside wickedness.

*Take in the word of God.

*Why? The Lord is gracious. Other passages supply other reasons, but these verses make it clear that a true appreciation for the goodness of God will change our lives.

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