

Church Business and Jesus' Gifts (1)

David Halbrook

A friend sent me an article about leadership in the church, part of which said faithful elders "will take the church out of the secular education, entertainment and recreation business. Youth activities often siphon funds from the church treasury to support fun and games . . . There is no Bible authority for the church support of such things [citing Colossians 3:17]. It is the work of the home to supply these needs, not the church."

This raises the question—What is the business of the church? Ephesians 4:11-12 says that Jesus gave the gifts of apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors (elders), and teachers to help saints. Some apostles were fishermen or tentmakers, but their work as apostles was not to equip saints to fish or make tents, to fish or camp together, or to teach others to do these things. With what did they equip and strengthen saints? In verses 13-15, we see it was with the faith, knowledge, and truth. With this, every person, every family, and every church can know what God expects, permits, and forbids.

So what business does God demand, permit, and forbid from the churches? See our article next week (or at our website today) for further study.

Simple opportunities to teach the lost and assist each other.

Pray for: Ed & Janice White, The Ledgerwoods, Novela Puckett, Noleka Hopper, Joyce Ratliff, Ed Koettel, Maxine Epperson, others with ongoing trials, new Christians among us, and Ben Calderon with whom we fellowship (share) in Conway.

Check the lists on the bulletin board at the back from time to time.

Join us each Sunday at 10AM (classes), 10:45AM, & 5PM and Wednesday at 7PM.

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The Exhorter

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

church of Christ--Quail Valley

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The Profitable Word

Irven Lee

It certainly makes sense for one to suggest that man should study the Bible. The Bible is a revelation of the will of God. This revelation includes His authoritative commandments which man must obey if he would please his Creator, and it includes the exceeding great and precious promises concerning the good things laid up in heaven for the faithful. (2 Peter 1:3-4.) We may observe that every transgression and disobedience receives a just recompense of reward. (Heb. 2:2-3.) He chastens every son whom He receives that strength of character may be developed. (Heb. 12:6.) How could one carefully examine the profitable word and not be impressed by the goodness of God? God is love (1 John 4:8), and those who would know of His mercy and of His plan for man may learn from His revealed will.

A FIRM BASIS

Man is capable of having many similarities to a vicious wild animal, but he is also capable of being a lively stone in the temple in which God dwells among men. (1 Peter 2:5.) Man can so follow the example of Christ that purity, unselfishness, and strength of character can remind us that he was created in the image of God. There is an indescribable difference in the man most like the wild beast and the man who best exemplifies the image of his Maker. What is the difference? One is taught of God. The other follows the leadings of his carnal animal nature.

The sacred writings are able to make one wise unto salvation. (2 Tim. 3:15.) They completely furnish man the instruction he so sorely needs, since the way of man is not in himself. (Jer. 10:23.) The way that seems right unto man may lead to destruction and ruin. (Prov. 14:12.)

The same holy scriptures are able to furnish the motivation for the good life. The goodness of God leads to repentance. We love Him because He first loved us. The example of the Christ in His life on earth and the love revealed in His death on the

cross draw men to Him. Many have died for their faith. Many have given all that they might gain Christ and lay hold on the hope set before them. It follows, as night the day, that those who have hope, as sons of God, of obtaining the prize of the high calling of God purify themselves. There is no stronger pull toward righteousness than that exerted by the gospel of Christ. It is able to save. (Rom. 1:16). It attracts one into the way that leads unto life.

Is there sufficient evidence that the Book is of God? Did the holy men speak as they were moved by the Spirit of God? (2 Peter 1:21.) These men gave the world the perfect standard of righteousness. They were holy men, and they said they obtained it by revelation. Would liars write such a book? Surely they were not pathetically deceived. Would ignorant men have given such a wonderful standard of behavior? The influence of the Bible in this scientific age in America is still as wholesome in the hearts of those who are led by it as it was nineteen hundred years ago in Palestine. The test of the pudding lies in the tasting. Those who know most about the Bible appreciate it most. It will bear acquaintance. When we see the lives most influenced by it, we are led to glorify God.

The well proven fact of the resurrection, other miracles, fulfilled prophecies, along with the unity and perfection of the message give us a firm basis of hope. What more could He do than He has done to give us a written revelation? No men on their own in any generation could have approached its perfection.

PLANTING IS NECESSARY

The word is the seed of the kingdom. (Luke 8:11.) America could have the word, but few there be that find the way that leads to life. (Matt. 7:14.) Many who have eyes have never read from its pages. Many who could have heard many sermons were not listening. Their hard hearts were engrossed in arrogant fulfillment of the lust of the flesh and in the search for money by any means. Animals they are, and without the wholesome influence of the powerful word.

Preaching to some is like casting pearls before swine, while some hunger and thirst after righteousness so they receive the word with all readiness of mind. If men have no love for truth, but have their pleasure in unrighteousness, God will send a strong delusion that they may believe a lie and be damned. (2 Thess. 2:10-12.) The lake of fire is for the unbelievers as well as for the liars. (Rev. 21:8.) The flaming fire of vengeance is for those who know not God as well as for those who obey not the gospel. (2 Thess. 1:8-9.)

Many men say they appreciate the Bible and believe it to be the word of God, but they remain babes in knowledge. They evidently do not desire the milk or the meat of

the word. They are without excuse for their lack of skill in the use of this great discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Ignorance is alarming even among those who should be teachers. (Heb. 5:12-13.) They are not rooted and grounded, but they are as unstable and as easily tossed about by the winds of doctrine as the wave of the sea by the winds of the storm cloud. (Eph. 4:14.) The wave is fastened by nothing. The willingly ignorant are in no position to give an answer to those who may ask a reason for their hope. (1 Peter 3:15.)

AWAKE FROM SLEEP

The night is far spent. (Rom. 13: 11-12.) It is high time for America to awake to righteousness. The atomic bomb is not the only thing that can destroy America. The increasing number of burning, looting, angry anarchists can do it. It may now be too late to preserve this land as a land of opportunity for the free. It is not too late to try to save it.

The gospel was not given to make America or any other country great. Christ came to seek and save the lost. (Luke 19:10.) The gospel is God's power to salvation, but, as a by-product, Christians receive a hundred fold in this life. Their righteous lives are as the saving and lighting influence in a crooked and perverse nation. (Phil. 2:15.) This nation needs salt.

Let more people meditate on the law day and night. (Psa. 1:2.) This is our way up from the gutter in which we now find ourselves. The church is in distress, the nation is in confusion, and the world is in turmoil. What can help? The profitable word always leads to the abundant life here and here after. It is the word of God. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" (Rom. 11:33.) We need to open our eyes that we may behold wondrous things in His law. Is there anything more important for us?

Isa. 55:6-11 Seek the LORD while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but water the earth, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it.