

Exalting Christ

How do we exalt Christ? We exalt Christ when we preach His word, when we follow His teaching, when we do only that which He authorizes, when we wear only His name, when we make Him the center of our affection and adoration, when we recognize Him as our only Head, Lord, and King. To do otherwise is to fail to exalt Him.

- by **Bill Hall**

Changing Churches

Someone who had moved his membership from one church to another was asked why he had left his former church. He answered, "I didn't leave my church; my church left me." By that he meant his former church had made some fundamental changes in doctrine and practice from what had been believed and taught when he had first become a member. The changes, of course, had been in the direction of a very liberal attitude toward the scriptures. Perhaps the church had begun to deny the virgin birth of Jesus or His resurrection from the dead, or maybe homosexuals were accepted into the membership or were allowed to serve in the ministry. When a church begins to make such changes a member must make a choice either to go along or to change churches.

We've heard of such changes as this, either being discussed or actually made in some of the major denominations, causing dissension and turmoil among their members. That shouldn't surprise us too much, however, since many denominations long ago abandoned their respect for the scriptures as an authority in religion. It probably would be surprising to many of us, though, to learn that some churches of Christ are making the same kind of changes. I recently read statements made by a preacher who is working now with a congregation where I preached a little more than forty years ago. He said that he believed Christians could observe the Lord's supper on any day of the week; that he would no longer oppose the use of instrumental music in worship and that he would not object to a group of Christians putting on an interpretative dance program as a part of their worship. He has no regard for authority established by approved apostolic examples and denies the validity of any authority learned by means of necessary inference. He did not say as much, but one would assume that he is teaching these ideas in the sermons and lessons he delivers to the congregation. I know people who are members of that congregation, and I can only wonder how they are reacting to such teaching.

Any congregation can make such changes. All it takes is a few, maybe only an elder or a preacher, with loose and liberal attitudes to be given an opportunity to teach, along with enough members who are unlearned and react indifferently to what is being taught. When people react indifferently to and do not respond when truth is being taught, they are likely to be just as indifferent and unresponsive when error is being taught. Indifference is the soil in which apostasy thrives!

"Let us give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away ... for how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord?" (Hebrews 2:1,3).

- by **Benjamin M. Shropshire**

Mysteries of Life

Once when I was going to Columbus, Ohio, I stopped to eat in a restaurant and ordered a slice of watermelon. I took the seeds home with me to plant in my garden.

That night a thought came to my mind. How many watermelon seeds would it take to make a pound? The next day I weighed them and found that it would take about 5,000 dried seeds.

A few weeks later I planted just one of the little seeds. Under the influence of sunshine and shower, that little seed had taken off its coat and gone to work. It had gathered from somewhere two hundred thousand times its own weight and forced enormous weight through a tiny stem and built a watermelon. On the outside it had a covering of green and within that a rind of white and

within that a core of red; and then it had scattered through the red many little seeds, each one capable of doing the same work over again.

What architect drew the plan? Where did the little watermelon seed get its strength? Where did it find its flavoring extract, and its coloring matter? How did it build a watermelon?

Until you can explain a watermelon, do not be too sure that you can set limits to the power of the Almighty. The most learned men in the world cannot explain the watermelon, but the most ignorant man can eat a watermelon and enjoy it. God has given us the knowledge necessary to use these things and the truth that He has revealed to us is infinitely more important for our welfare than it would be to understand the mysteries that He has seen fit to conceal from our faltering view.

- by *William Jennings Bryan*

A Question About Grace

We received the following question from a listener to 'The Virtual Bible Study':

“. . . I listen to different podcasts and found yours a few years ago. I have really enjoyed listening to your shows . . . I am writing because of a passage of scripture in Titus. In Titus 3:4-7, Paul writes, *“But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.”* . . . My question has to do with the phrase in verse 5 that God saved us “not because of works done by us in righteousness.” That is confusing to me because it doesn't seem to fit within my understanding of your explanation of works . . .

Here's our reply:

Yes, we believe we are saved by God's grace - it is not by works of righteousness we have done. No one can 'earn' salvation through meritorious works. Without God's grace we could never be saved.

However, while God's grace has appeared unto all men (Titus 2:11), it is also clear that not all men will be saved (Matthew 7:13,14). It is necessary for us to meet the terms or conditions of the gracious pardon that He holds out to us. So, it is not by works we have done that we earn our salvation - salvation is always by grace - but we must obey the commands and comply with the terms set forth in God's Word in order to enjoy the blessings of His grace.

- by *Greg Gwin*