

Who Cares?

Did you ever think about who turns out the lights and locks the doors at the church building? It may seem a small thing, but it could create some problems if no one did it. The point is, someone accepts the responsibility that most members give very little thought to. The same could be said of cleaning and maintaining the building, parking lot, lawn, etc. Usually, some few willing souls will volunteer their services — and most others are perfectly willing to let them. Many Christians simply do not relate themselves to such work, and worse, may not appreciate those who do. But, in the absence of paid janitors and yardmen, why is any one member any more or less responsible than any other? What if no members cared about the appearance of a dirty building, or a weed-filled lawn or broken windows? Such neglect would soon become embarrassingly apparent.

On the other hand, other and more serious neglect is not so apparent. Take, for instance, the erring brother. Whose responsibility is he? Who cares? Must he finally embarrass the church like an unpainted door or a broken window to merit attention? God says, "Ye which are spiritual" should restore such a one (Gal. 6:1). As none will admit to not being spiritual, that makes the erring member the business of every member! When Christians are motivated by genuine love and concern for each other; when they have the same care one for another (1 Cor. 12:25); and when each looks to the needs of others (Phil. 2:4), little time will be wasted in trying to figure out who has to go and help "save a soul from death" (Jas. 5:20). What if no one in the whole church cared about the weak brother? It's bad when Christians don't care about unkempt meeting places; but it's far worse when they neglect the erring brother, one for whose sake Christ died.

Equally important is the responsibility every Christian has in regard to teaching the lost. The faithful are to be able to teach others (2 Tim. 2:2). All are to be ready always to give answer concerning their hope (1 Pet. 3:15). To that extent they can teach others how to gain such hope. When the early Christians were scattered abroad, they went about preaching the word (Acts 8:4). Unscattered Christians can and should do the same. Paul writes of how most of the Roman brethren were bold to speak the word of God without fear (Phil. 1:14). The world urgently needs such bold brethren speaking that same word today! But who will do it? Those who turn out the lights and lock the doors? Only those who preach from pulpits? God looks to His people — all of His people — to help others in the way of salvation. The blessings of truth and salvation are not to be hoarded, but shared — else, we risk losing them. Jesus came to seek and save the lost (Lk. 19:10). How can His followers not be interested and involved in the same work? How can they not care?

Shunned and shifted responsibility has hurt the Lord's church immeasurably. The slothful spirit of "doing-as-little-as-you- can-get-by-with" may suit the world, but it is grossly inappropriate for those who care — and those who have been blessed with God's best.

- by Dan Shipley

What Men Have Done to Hell

- Atheists, skeptics and modernists have eradicated it by their "wonderful" powers of "reason".
- "Christian Scientists" have attributed it to improper thinking, the figment of bad imagination, or "malicious animal magnetism".
- Universalists have removed the need of fearing it since they teach that all will be saved anyway.
- Unitarians and others have decided that the only real heaven or hell are encountered by men in this life by pleasant or unpleasant experiences.
- "Jehovah's Witnesses" have reduced it to annihilation, eternal non-existence rather than eternal punishment.
- Many Protestant denominations have taken away any concern about being lost from millions by their doctrine of "once saved, always saved".
- Catholicism has assured millions that they will not go there because of her sacraments and rituals, and has caused many to be more concerned about an imaginary "purgatory".
- Many have sought to remove the eternal duration and the awful torment of hell by their own concept of God's love.

• But what the Bible says about hell remains true. You may read about it in: Matthew 18.8-9; 25.41,46; 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9; Revelation 14.10-11; 20:10, 15; 21.8.

- *by Bill Crews*

Change

We hear a lot about 'change'. Politicians frequently talk about changing things in government. Educators discuss changing our schools. Societal trends and technological advances have powerfully changed things in our daily lives. We now hear of 'personal trainers' who try to help people modify their living habits and routines. So, with all this talk about 'change,' what about 'change' when it comes to religious matters?

First, we should observe that some things should not be changed. God has clearly revealed His will for our lives in the inspired Word. What He has taught us – the things the Scriptures command and authorize (Colossians 3:17) – should NOT be altered (Revelation 22:18). Men have imagined that they can change such things, and they have proceeded to do so with abandon. At their whim, via a 'church council', or by a human vote, they make revisions to the 'perfect law of liberty' (James 1:25). Do they really think that they can improve on God's plan? Apparently so! This is wrong, and these 'changes' must be avoided.

Second, some things absolutely should be changed. Here we have in mind any sinful things that exist in our personal lives or in our collective endeavors. It is never too soon to rid ourselves of evil. John the Baptist urged his hearers to "bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance" (Luke 3:8). We should do the same, and we ought to do in NOW. Such change is not only good, it is commanded and necessary.

Finally, some change is neither inherently good nor bad. Some things are judgment matters. When this is the case, we can be flexible. We should "be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility" (1 Peter 5:5). It does not have to be 'my way'. I can and should yield to others. This type of change may help to advance the kingdom and do much good. In such cases we must be careful about stubbornly resisting 'change'.

- *by Greg Gwin*