

When Church Is Boring

What do you do when you find that church is boring? It's time for a change! Now the question is, change what?

Many folks think the answer is to change the church. I just read an article about a new church created for men only, men who find church boring. Discarding more traditional environments, they meet in a gymnasium one Saturday evening a month. A rock band provides entertainment. The preacher speaks in front of the scoreboard, with the clock running. He guarantees to have them out in one hour! This sort of innovation is not unusual. Many religious leaders hail it as a positive development, a way to reach out to those who otherwise would have no interest in church.

Some might not go that far, yet they still insist on change. Contemporary music, drama, and short sermons that are little more than pep talks are the order of the day. Clapping and cheering have replaced old fashioned amens. *Celebration* and *praise* are the buzzwords, with the world's calendar dictating the subject celebrated.

Malachi lived at a time when people found "church" boring. Speaking of Israel's worship, God said through the Prophet, "You also say, 'My, how tiresome it is!' And you disdainfully sniff at it" (Mal. 1: 13).

God proposed two changes to these who turned up their noses at His worship. One was to just stay home. "Oh that there were one among you who would shut the gates, that you might not uselessly kindle fire on My altar! I am not pleased with you" (v. 10). The better solution, the change He preferred, was to repent. "'If you do not listen, and if you do not take it to heart to give honor to My name,' says the Lord of hosts, 'then I will send the curse upon you'" (2:2). Notice what God did not approve: changing the structure or activities of worship to accommodate individual tastes.

The preacher can work to make his sermons more interesting, the song leader can try to select more meaningful hymns, and the one who leads in prayer can give more thought to what he says. However, when worship as God directed is boring, the main change that is needed is in the heart of the worshiper.

- by ***Frank Himmel***

Perils to the Soul

Have you noticed the growing fascination that some have with other people's perils? They pay good money to watch stunt drivers jump a string of cars, or a tightrope walker make his way across a tiny rope 200 feet above the pavement. We marvel when someone unnecessarily puts himself at risk.

The greatest risk of all is the danger that threatens our soul. Paul warned that perilous times would bring dangers that threaten to undo us (2 Tim. 3-4). These perils include:

1. Ignorance of God's Word. Some will "creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (3:6-7). Those who do not know God's word are fair game for religious racketeers.

2. Doctrines of Men. "Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith" (3:8). The Egyptian magicians resisted Moses by imitating his works. Satan is the great imitator. What God does, he counterfeits, forcing us to distinguish between truth and error.

3. Prejudice. "But they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also was" (3:9). One who judges before he knows the facts is prejudiced. Some students searched the Scriptures and rejected the truth, while the Bereans searched the same passages and received the truth (read John 5:39; Acts 17:11). How can the same act (studying the Bible) produce such different results? The first group was prejudiced; the other, honest.

4. Desire to Please Men. Paul warns Timothy that God will judge him (2 Tim 4:1), and therefore he must continue to tell people what they need to hear, whether they like it or not (vs. 2). One of

Timothy's greatest problems would be the "itching ears" of those who demand something besides truth (3-4).

Covet correction and don't let these perils steal your soul!

- by *Rick Duggin*

Painting Possums

Several years ago we knew a man with the unusual hobby of trapping possums. No, he didn't eat them. He painted them! That's right - he would catch these critters in a box trap, and then he painted them with fluorescent paint and released them. Sounds weird, doesn't it? But this fella had a ball with his "off the wall" hobby. And imagine the folks in the small town where he lived! What would you think if you saw a bright orange possum rummaging through your garbage? And if you came in late one night, it probably would not be wise to tell your family that you saw a "hot pink" possum crossing the street - they'd have good cause to wonder about you! One thing about those possums though - there's was no mistaking it when you saw one of them.

It would be nice if religious false teachers could be marked in a similar way. Wouldn't it be something if everyone who taught a false doctrine or practiced religious error suddenly sprouted orange hair? It sure would look funny when some religious groups met together for worship. It would look something like a convention of "punk rockers"! These days, almost everyone would be sporting some unnatural hair color.

It will never happen though. False teachers don't stand out that plainly in a crowd. Paul warned of "deceitful workers disguising themselves as servants of righteousness" (2 Cor. 11:13-15). We must be on our guard: "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 Jn. 4:1). We can see them clearly by comparing their teachings to the plain word of God.

- by *Greg Gwin*