

## **Truth Makes Christians**

A perverted gospel cannot save. Jesus declared that it is the knowledge of truth, not the belief of error, that makes men free. (John 8:32). Though a perverted gospel may have in it all the elements of the true gospel, its power to save is lost in perversion. Bread is God's power to quell the hunger, but the admixture of a poisonous element - a spoonful of arsenic, for instance, in a loaf of bread - would destroy its power. Water is God's power to quench the thirst, but the admixture of salt will destroy the quenching power of water.

The gospel is God's power to save the soul, but its admixture with error - the doctrines and commandments of men, when heard and believed - destroys its saving power. Hence, Paul's alarm concerning the perverters at Galatia: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ." (Gal. 1:6-7)

Error preached, error heard, and error believed cannot result in the truth obeyed. No man can accidentally obey God. The truth preached, the truth believed, and the truth obeyed makes a Christian. Nothing else does. How careful then men should be in their handling of it!

**- by Foy E. Wallace, Jr.**

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## **A Reuben Marriage**

*'And Leah conceived and bore a son and named him Reuben, for she said, "because the Lord has seen my affliction; surely now my husband will love me." Then she conceived again and born a son and said, "because the Lord has heard that I am unloved." So she named him Simeon. And she conceived again and bore a son and said, "Now this time my husband will become attached to me." Therefore he was named Levi.'* (Gen.29:32-34).

"Surely now my husband will love me" cannot refer to sex - she had that. "I am unloved"? Did not Jacob provide her housing, food, and clothing? Is that not "love"? It is, and it is important. But something was still lacking. There is another kind of love - a love she needed and wanted. "Become attached"? But wasn't she married to Jacob? What does she mean? She felt Jacob was "detached." Not legally - they were married. Not physically - they had children. There is obviously another kind of "love" - a love of emotional attachment.

"Reuben," "Simeon," and "Levi" - names that stand as testimonials to what Leah (and many women today) wanted so badly but did not have. Remember men, the Lord "sees"(Reuben) and "hears" (Simeon) the "affliction" of a woman that longs for such "attachment" (Levi).

**- by Steve Fontenot**

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## **Children's Behavior in Worship**

One of the greatest responsibilities parents face is that of teaching their children proper behavior in worship. Children's interest in spiritual matters depends so greatly on their parent's success.

Teaching children that they are to be quiet is important, but good behavior in worship reaches far beyond this. Children must be taught reverence and respect for God. They must learn to stay awake, to sing, to listen, to participate. Their interest should grow as their capacity for learning grows. We offer the following suggestions.

**Sit near the front.** There are fewer distractions up front. If adults are distracted in the back (and they are bound to be), children may totally forget where they are. You might teach them to be quiet back there, but you will hardly be able to teach them to listen and participate. Make a rule very early in your children's lives that they never, never sit behind you.

**Don't let your children routinely go to the restroom.** The time for using the restrooms is before they leave home or just before the worship begins. Then they probably will not need to go during the worship period. Exceptions should be few and far between for normal children. The restroom parades that occur in most worship periods are unnecessary and distracting. Never let your children go to the water fountain. They can wait.

**Don't let them play.** Toddlers will need something for their entertainment, but when children reach four, five, or six years old, they are old enough to sit quietly without entertainment. You will be surprised at how soon they will learn the words of songs and what they might glean from a sermon.

**If possible, see that they get proper rest the night before.** Lack of sleep increases irritability and restlessness.

**Set a good example before them.** Children whose parents demonstrate little fervor, interest, and reverence in worship will likely demonstrate little of these qualities themselves.

**Pray for God's help.** The task is not easy, but great joy awaits those who are successful.

**- by Bill Hall**

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## ***Speaking Evil of Rulers***

When the apostle Paul had been wrongly arrested and was being unjustly persecuted by the unbelieving Jews in Jerusalem, he unknowingly directed some harsh words towards the high priest. When those who were standing nearby informed Paul that the man was, indeed, the high priest, he quickly recanted by saying: *"I wist not, brethren, that he was the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people"* (Acts 23:5). Although the man was thoroughly corrupt and dishonest, Paul still understood that the 'office' deserved respect and honor.

The principle illustrated by Paul's example needs to be imitated by all men. Application can certainly be made to those who hold office in civil government. While we may disagree with the political views of those in power, it is still our duty to *"honor the king"* (1 Peter 2:17).

But the concept of *"not speaking evil of the ruler of thy people"* has particular relevance to the church and those who oversee local congregations. We are commanded to *"obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls"* (Hebrews 13:17).

Unfortunately, Christians are often too quick to complain about and find fault with the elders. It seems that every judgment they make and every decision they offer is scrutinized and inspected with a harsh, critical eye. They are sometimes the subject of gossip, slander, and wrongful accusations. Many have not learned to *"esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake"* (1 Thessalonians 5:13).

Can elders make mistakes? Of course! Can they even make sinful errors? No doubt. But even when this happens, we are told to be very careful in how we deal with them. *"Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear"* (1 Timothy 5:19-20). The conduct of some Christians shows that they have not taken these clear instructions to heart.

Paul understood the importance of respecting the office of those in leadership positions. We should do the same. Think!

**- by Greg Gwin**