

QUESTION: Who or what should be the final authority regarding the most important issues of life?

ANSWER: This is an excellent question. To answer it one must first seek to identify the important issues of life. The Bible gives us a knowledge of the existence of God, creation, Jesus Christ, salvation, heaven and hell. It gives us a knowledge of God's will for us (Eph. 5:17). The Word of God frees us from sin and all its evil consequences which reach out to grab and destroy us. It frees us from the power of sin (Col. 1:13-14). It frees us from the pollution of sin, that is, guilt and fear (2 Tim. 1:7). It frees us from the pleasure of sin (Heb. 10:25). It frees us from the old man of sin (Rom. 6:3-4). It offers us heaven where we will be free from the presence of all sin. The Bible tells man of his origin, his purpose of existence, and his destiny (Gen. 1:1; Eccl. 12:13-14; 2 Cor. 5:10). The Bible is the only book that deals sufficiently with the subject of death (Gen. 2:17; Gen. 3:1-6, 19; Rom. 5:12; 6:23).

The same book which answers these significant questions also teaches that God pleased when men seek authority only from Him in His word with reference to salvation, Christianity and religion. This is the case since, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). God is displeased when men either add to or subtract from His word (see Deut. 4:2; Prov. 30:5-6 & Rev. 22:18-19). Men must not tamper with God's written revelation from Heaven. In every age since the beginning of the world, God has required men to recognize His authority. To those who lived under the Law of Moses, it is written, "The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law" (Deut. 29:29). In the New Testament Age in which we now live, God's inspired word commands, "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Col. 3:17). Therefore, men today must have a book, chapter and verse from the New Testament of Christ for whatever they teach or practice with regard to salvation. We are to abide in the doctrine of Christ if we expect to have a saving relationship with God the Father (2 John 9). In view of this fact, someone who respected Bible authority once stated, "Let us speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent." Another correctly stated, "In the Bible there are facts to be believed, commands to be obeyed, and promises to be enjoyed." These statements are in harmony with the teaching of Colossians 3:17.

Accepting God's standard of truth by which we live and seek eternity with God, we must reject the false standards which men seek to impose upon us today. Some of these faulty, unauthorized standards are: feelings, human wisdom, conscience only, dreams, personal experiences, false traditions, and false "gospels." In place of giving priority to feelings, study (2 Tim. 2:15); in place of human wisdom, get God's wisdom (I Cor. 1:18-25); in place of the conscience only, educate your conscience by the word of God (Acts 9:1-2; 23:1; John 8:31-32); in place of so-called modern-day miraculous dreams, accept only the meaning of the recorded miraculous dreams of certain ones in the first century (Acts 2:17; I Cor. 13:8-10); in place of personal experiences, let us appreciate the testimony of the Lord (Rev. 1:9; 6:9); in place of false gospels, let us accept the one and only gospel of Christ (Gal. 1:6-9).

Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God said, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). May we let Christ be the authority in our lives today by hearing, believing and obeying His teaching. In so doing, we may expect Him to receive us at the last day, taking us into heaven where we shall live eternally in joy and peace (read John 14:1-3).

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Cookeville, TN

BELVEDERE BEACON

"Ye are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14)

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THE COMPANY WE KEEP

Throughout the Bible the company a person keeps has been very important. Paul states a universal principle in I Corinthians 15:33: "Evil companionships corrupt good morals" (ASV). Indeed this has been the case in every generation.

Consider that God's people were forbidden to marry pagan tribes. God knew that being around idolaters would turn them away from God. This was a great problem with Solomon. "But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonites, and Hittites;...And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart" (I Kings 11:1,3). Had he not so closely aligned himself with sin and with the foreign women and the ways of the world, he would have stayed strong for God. James stated a great truth that applies to Solomon and many today: "Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (James 4:4).

The company we keep is, therefore, important to God. The company we keep is also important to the church and the elders. When Paul spoke to the Ephesian eldership, he told them: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). "Take heed" means that the eldership needs to be watching the church, much like a shepherd watches his sheep, to make sure a wolf does not devour them.

What kind of company do you keep? Are you found often in bars, drinking, dancing around people of a rough nature? It is God who knows your heart. God knows you better than you do. What does God think of the company you keep? He did not like the company Solomon kept. God tells us that we are not to be "unequally yoked together with unbelievers" (II Corinthians 6:14). Paul is simply advising of an unequal alliance with people who are not Christians. Paul, no doubt, knew about Solomon, and did not want Christians to turn away from God.

Let us all beware of the company we keep. God loves us. He wants all of us to be in Heaven with Him. He desires that we follow His ways. We cannot do that if we let the wrong people influence us. If we stray, God is willing to welcome us back.

Bill Brandstatter, Vienna, IL

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

SUNDAY:

Bible Classes for all ages 10.00 am.
Morning Worship 11.00 am.
Evening Worship 6.00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY:

Bible Classes for all ages 7.00 p.m.

EVANGELIST: Ken Chumbley - Tel. No. (803) -279-8663

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SITUATIONAL THEOLOGY?

In the North Augusta Star, August 31, September 6, 2006, on the editorial page, under the byline, "Phragments from Phyllis, the news editor of the paper, the above title appeared above her column. She stated:

"I've always had certain 'issues' with Paul the Apostle. The first century missionary was actually the first person to write about the teachings of Jesus in an organized format and he was, shall we say, prolific. He spent much of his time writing to start-up churches and trying to help them deal with how to be good Christians in their fledgling churches.

I took a course in college devoted entirely to Paul and I didn't have any better feeling about him after concluding the course. Again, I acknowledge his letters to the various congregations have been the standard by which churches even now judge whether they are appropriately responding to the gospel. While I admit his teachings about Jesus and what it means to be a Christian are very helpful, I have certain problems with the wholesale application of those teachings to modern life. For one thing, Paul obviously thought the 'rapture' was coming in his lifetime. His teachings reflect this – For example, he makes a big deal about folks who were not already marriage remaining that way unless they were too weak to refrain from the 'ways of the flesh.' As I remember, the class I took speculated that his infamous 'thorn in the flesh' might have been a nagging wife...Paul was never specific."

This whole article would be amusing except for the fact that Phyllis Britt has been taught these things and is now propagating them and, sadly, there will be those who will be deluded by the error that is taught. Clearly, the writer has no concept of the inspiration of the Scriptures, that they are "God breathed" (II Tim. 3:16,-17; II Pet. 1:3). To her, they are nothing more than the writings of men and if one doesn't like what he/she is free to accept or reject that which is written.

Further, the college course that she took concerning the writings of Paul did not, apparently, teach her much concerned what Paul wrote. She indicates her belief that Paul believed the "rapture" was coming in his lifetime." Neither Paul nor the Bible teaches anything with respect to any 'rapture.' If she really mean to say she believes Paul expected the return of Christ in his lifetime, that also shows her ignorance of what Paul actually taught. As her example to show that Paul believed the 'rapture,' she references what Paul wrote concerning some remaining unmarried, and takes it out of context. Paul's reference is to a "present distress" (I Cor. 7:26) not to a supposed 'rapture.'" The speculation regarding Paul having a "nagging wife" is just that, with no evidence to back such a ridiculous claim.

What brought on this diversion into what the writer entitles, "Situational Theology?" It was her attendance the previous Sunday at a church service in which what the Apostle Paul wrote to church at Ephesus respecting wives being in subjection was read and the "priest" spoke with respect to that text in his sermon. More on her article and comments with respect to what Paul wrote to the Ephesians next week.

Suffice it to say at this point, I believe the News Editor, Phyllis Britt, would be better off staying with news that branching out and discussing theology and thereby showing her ignorance of the Scriptures.

Ken Chumbley

MARK YOUR CALENDARS:

October 1 through 5 will be the dates of our Gospel Meeting. Sunday meeting times will remain at their regular times with services Monday through Thursday being at 7.30 p.m. Our visiting speakers will be Jimmy Aaron, Sheman Offord, Matt Shelton and Ted Rush. The theme will be "Our Perfect God". Plan to be here for all services.

NEWS AND NOTES

Let us continue to keep in our prayers Helen Culpepper, Pam Gossett and her mother, Kathy Treadway's mother, Lanny Niver's father, Tim Arnold's father.

Keep Fern Bolton, Ron Wilson's aunt, in your prayers. She had a bad fall.

Heeln Culpepper is still not able to be out.

Keep Ted Rush, preacher at Mauldin, SC in your prayers as he continues his recovery.

Odie & Dot McLemore have gone to Pidgeon Forge for a few days with Odie's sister and her husband.

The angels were rejoicing Wednesday night as five precious souls put on Christ in baptism - Adriane Mitchell and her children Parys, Da'Jon, Xavier and Montier. Please keep these babes in Christ in your prayers/

There will be a pot luck meal after the morning services on September 17. Plan to stay and eat.

Gospel Meeting, North Columbia Church Sept. 24 through 28 - see bulletin board for details.

LISTEN TO THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST RADIO PROGRAM
1050 AM -- WFAM
Sundays 8.00 a.m. to 8.30 a.m

When asked why believers in Christ are divided, some answer "We can't all see alike." To see alike is to believe alike.

Jesus taught that a kingdom divided against itself will fall (Mark 3:24,25).

Jesus prayed that all who believe on Him should be one as He and the Father are One. that the world might believe on Him (John 17:20,21).

Paul besought the church at Corinth, "To speak the same thing, that there be no divisions among (them); but they be perfected together in the same mind and the same judgment." (1 Corinthians 1:10).

All Christians can see alike, be one in Christ, speak and practice the same thing, when we throw away all man-made creed books, preconceived ideas, and inherited notions, and are willing to accept Christ as all authority in religion, and His Word, the New Testament, as our only rule of faith and Practice.

"The Word of God unites, the word of man divides."

George Arthur Jackson
Baltic, NC