



The Voice of Truth

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Failing To Obey The Gospel

By Jimmy Pettigrew

The gospel is good news, glad tidings about man's salvation (**Rom. 1:16; Jas. 1:21**). The gospel has fundamental facts men must believe (**1 Cor. 15:1-4**). The gospel must be obeyed to have salvation. "Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth ..." "Who hindered you that ye should not obey the truth?" Christ "became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation." (**1 Pet. 1:22; Gal. 5:7; Heb. 5:9**). "And to you that are afflicted rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus: who shall suffer punishment, (even) eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might" (**2 Thess. 1:7-9**). Some fail to obey the gospel. Why?

1. They are fearful! Some are afraid of what others will say to and/or about them if they obey the gospel.
2. They are faithless. Unless one believes both the facts and the commands of the gospel he cannot be saved.
3. They don't want to change. One does not want to break with the religion of his parents.
4. They are foolish. Some are so foolish as to imagine they have plenty of time to obey the gospel. God says now is the day of salvation (**2 Cor. 6:2**). Life on earth is both brief and uncertain (**Jas. 4:13-14**). You are foolish to imagine that there will be "convenient season" to obey the gospel (**Acts 24:25**).

Can I afford not to obey the gospel?

The Emptiness of a Culture-Based Worship

By Larry Rouse

We live in an age where numbers determine the success of everything. A business must be judged by its growing profit numbers, a team must be judged by the number of wins, and individuals are judged by their accumulation of things that are also given a numerical value. The religions of this world have fully imbibed this spirit and proclaim their successes by their numbers and by their growth rate. How does our God view these things?

While the early church had a phenomenal growth that produced real disciples for the glory of God, the Lord never judged these churches by just numbers. Among the seven churches of Asia faithfulness was not determined by numbers, financial success or popularity in the community. The one church that received nothing but praise from the Lord was the church at Smyrna. From a community standpoint this church was despised, and consisted of people who were not successful in the ways of the world. How did God view them? "I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich)..." (**Revelation 2:9**).

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Sincere, but misguided men, have thought to survey their communities and produce the kind of church that would appeal to the greatest number of people. In every age there have been fads that attracted people to these latest trends. However, the trends that are “hot” today are discarded for something else tomorrow.

During Bible times in the city of Colossae there were those who claimed to worship angels, while others showed their great “devotion” by depriving themselves of certain things. Their outward liveliness and the newness of their beliefs attracted numbers from the world who marveled at their “commitment.” How did God view their “success”? “Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God” (**Colossians 2:18-19**). Paul points out the only real test of success before God is “holding fast to the Head.” Is your success based on the Lord Jesus Christ, the only Head of the church? Are you building on His word or are you enticing people through the flesh? Numbers cannot answer that question.

“While the early church had a phenomenal growth that produced real disciples for the glory of God, the Lord never judged these churches by just numbers.”

In the Old Testament, one of the greatest Kings of Israel, Josiah, seemed to achieve a stunning success in bringing Israel back to God—if you judge by the numbers.

Josiah was truly converted to the Lord with his whole heart. He lived in a generation that had literally lost the word of God. During a cleanup of the temple it was told to Josiah that “Hilkiah the priest found the Book of the Law of the LORD given by Moses. Then Hilkiah answered and said to Shaphan the scribe, “I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the LORD”” (**2 Chronicles 34:14-15**). Josiah immediately wanted to hear God’s word and we see his reaction. “Then Shaphan the scribe told the king, saying, “Hilkiah the priest has given me a book.” And Shaphan read it before the king. Thus it happened, when the king heard the words of the Law, that he tore his clothes” (**2 Chronicles 34:18-19**).

When Josiah heard God’s word he heard a distinct message. It was not the feel-good message that “all is well” and that you should “live and let live.” It was a message of commitment, of holiness and of the consequences of sin. Josiah understood that his country was going to be destroyed because of their sin. He wanted to stop that from happening so he tore his clothes as a sign of mourning and then pleaded with God about what He would do.

God’s answer to Josiah was twofold. First, God spoke concerning the nation of Israel. “Thus says the LORD: ‘Behold, I will bring calamity on this place and on its inhabitants, all the curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah’” (**2 Chronicles 34:24**). Then God spoke concerning Josiah. “Concerning the words which you have heard; “because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before God when you heard His words against this place and against its inhabitants, and you humbled yourself before Me, and you tore your clothes and wept before Me, I also have heard you,” says the LORD. “Surely I will gather you to your fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace...” (**2 Chronicles 34:26-28**).

Josiah did everything within his power from that moment on to save Israel. He had God’s word read in the presence of all Judah. He then used his authority as King to call on the people to make a commitment. Here was the outward result: “Thus Josiah removed all the abominations from all the country that belonged to the children of Israel, and made all who were present in Israel diligently serve the LORD their God. All his days they did not depart from following the LORD God of their fathers” (**2 Chronicles 34:33**). Was Josiah successful?

The prophet Jeremiah began his preaching during the reign of Josiah. He personally ob-

served the good works of Josiah and the stunning success of having Judah pouring into the temple to pray and offer sacrifices as they once did. What did Jeremiah say about the success Josiah had with his people?

Nothing!

The prophet did recognize that many people were once again visiting the temple, but he also pointed out what men could not see with their eyes—that is the motive behind their “attendance.” “And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah has not turned to Me with her whole heart, but in pretense,” says the LORD” (**Jeremiah 3:10**). Yes, they outwardly did what was right, but for them it was a fad—a pretense—so that they could be a part of the latest popular movement.

For all the numbers, all the sacrifices, all the excitement of seeing everyone bringing their bodies to “worship God,” one thing was lacking. They had not given God their hearts. In Isaiah’s day God warned: ““When you come to appear before Me, Who has required this from your hand, to trample My courts? Bring no more futile sacrifices...I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting. Your New Moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates; They are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing them” (**Isaiah 1:12-14**).

How are you building your life and your heart? Please do not trust in numbers or in how good men make you feel. Take the narrow, neglected path that our Lord laid out for you and me. You can have fellowship with those who know the Lord and love Him. The Lord Himself will be with you also!

“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it” (**Matthew 7:13-14**).

No Place Like Home By Jonathan Perz

Where do you call home? Do you claim the United States as home? Perhaps you truly enjoy your hometown? Maybe for you home is limited to the house you dwell in with your family? On the surface the best answer might seem obvious, but it is not so plain for many who profess Christianity.

The apostle Paul reminds us, “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ...” (**Philippians 3:20**). A Christian’s home is not on earth. A Christian’s home is in heaven!

The problem is that too many Christians live like this world is their home. Rather than allowing themselves to be transformed into the image of Him who redeemed us from our sin (**Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18**), the Lord’s people are taking on more of the characteristics of this world. We have adopted many of the sinful aspects of American culture—this world’s standards. Instead of living like souls who are on a journey, we live like souls who have set up homesteads and are ready to stay for the long haul.

There should be a marked difference in one who is just traveling through, in contrast to one who has decided that this really is home. As a tourist typically sticks out in a crowd of locals, so should Christians stand out in this world. Christians are sojourners and pilgrims (**1 Peter 2:11**). Christians do not love this world or the things of this world (**1 John 2:15**). Christians are not to be conformed to this world (**Romans 12:2**). Christians are to be special people, peculiar, and zealous for good works (**Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 2:9**).

There is truly no place like home. The challenge before us is to possess the right perspective in our hearts of home and live like where we belong.

God's Ten Most Wanted Men

1. The man who puts God's business above any other business.
2. The man who brings his children to church services rather than sends them.
3. The man who is willing to be the right example to every person whom he meets.
4. The man who thinks more of Sunday Bible study than Sunday sleep.
5. The man who gives what he should to the church and lives on what is left.
6. The man who goes to church for Christ's sake rather than for himself or someone else.
7. The man who has passions to help others rather than to be helped himself.
8. The man who has a willing mind, not just a brilliant one.
9. The man who can see his own faults before he sees the faults of others.
10. The man who is more concerned about winning persons to Christ than about winning worldly honors.

Points to Ponder...

He who offers God a second place offers Him no place at all.

You quickly lose interest in the church if you have nothing invested.

What's In Your Bucket?

If you were walking from a well carrying a bucket of water and someone jostled you, there could be spilled from the bucket only that which it contained.

As you walk along the way of life, people are constantly bumping into you. If your life is full of ill nature, bad temper, and ugly disposition, those things will be spilled from it. If it is so full of proper Christian spirit, you will spill a smile or a pleasant remark. You can spill from your bucket only that which it contains.

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear and Learn - Rom. 10:17 m. 10:9-10 ; 1 Pet. 3:21 ; John 6:45; 17:3

Believe - Heb. 11:6; John 6:29; 8:24

Repent - Luke 13:3; Acts 3:19; 17:30

Confess the Lord - Matt. 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10; 1 Pet. 3:21

Be Baptized - Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16; Gal. 3:26-27

Continue in the Apostles' Teaching - Acts 2:42; 2 Tim. 3:14-17