

Continued from Page Three, "Leaving Your First Love"

Conclusion

What can I learn from this? Let me learn that God is just as concerned about my motivation as He is my obedience to His commands! When it comes to my worship, my worship to God is to be done "in spirit AND in truth", not just one or the other (Jn. 4:24). In like manner, any aspect of my obedience and faithful living must be motivated by my true love toward God. This is made abundantly clear when Jesus said, "If you love me, keep my commandments" (Jn. 14:15). Parallel to this is another statement made by Christ: "If a man love me, he will keep my words" (Jn. 14:23). Again, we see love (God) as the motivation behind our every action (Col. 3:17)! Ignoring the warning to the Corinthians (13:1-3) and doing things because "I" think they are righteous, instead of because of love or God motivating me, will result in my being in the same place spiritually as the Ephesians!

Friends, let us examine ourselves (II Cor. 13:5). What motivates us to be obedient? Is it worry over what others

might think, or true love? Is our worship to God something we do from "habit" and "learned behavior" or something we are doing "in spirit and in truth"? Be honest!

Remember your "first love"! When we first obeyed the gospel (Mk. 16:16), we did it out of a love and admiration and appreciation to the God of Heaven who sent His Son to die as a sacrifice for mankind (Rom. 5:8; Jn. 3:16; II Cor. 5:20). We marveled at a salvation available to all (Titus 2:11-12), and were appreciative that we could share in it. Is our continued faithfulness (Rev. 2:10b; I Cor. 15:58) motivated by this same God, our "first love"? If so, remain faithful and steadfast and tell others of the love of God, the sacrifice of Christ, and the joy of obedience when we are in a right relationship with God (II Tim. 2:2; Mk. 16:15; Rom. 6:16-18; Acts 8:8).

If this is not the case, and we have different motivations now than we did when we first became Christians, then repent today, as the Ephesians needed to do (Rev. 2:5). Our works will be as nothing and be of no profit if we are not motivated by the right One (I Cor. 13:1-3)!

Credit: www.southside-churchofchrist.com ♦

HOW TO GET WHAT YOU WANT

- If you want friends — **be friendly.**
- If you want someone to smile — **smile.**
- If you want courtesy — **be courteous.**
- If you want knowledge — **study.**
- If you want a good name — **live right.**
- If you want to reap well — **sow well.**
- If you want to be a Christian — **obey God's word.**
- If you want to go to heaven — **live a Christian life**

About the Hillcrest church of Christ

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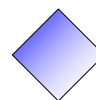


Schedule of Assembly

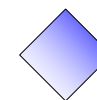
Bible Study: Sunday, 9:00am
Worship Service: Sunday, 10:00am
Bible Study: Wednesday, 7:00pm*

*A song service is held on the last Wednesday of every month

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The Voice of Truth



October 31, 2010

What Think Ye?

By Jimmy Pettigrew

Should we be upset, disturbed, saddened when he hear people of the world supporting abortion, homosexuality, same sex marriages or any other moral issues facing our country that goes against the Word of God? What think ye of Christians supporting such issues?

I say this because this November Christians will be voting for people running for office. I realize that it is not the responsibility of the church to be involved in politics, but this does not mean that individual Christians cannot be involved in the political procedure. God reveals through Solomon that "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people" (Proverbs 14:34). Again notice, "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord" (Psalms 33:12). Blessed is the nation who allows God to be Master and trembles at God's Word (Isaiah 66:2).

So, what think ye: Do you hate to see these moral issues supported by the world, and those running for office, or do you "have pleasure in them that do them" (Romans 1:32)? WHAT THINK YE? Do we condone evil practices mentioned above by not crying out against it, and voting for the very ones who support such evil moral issues? Does it break your heart to hear people that support such evil moral issues? Do you grieve? Jeremiah's heart was broken within him because of the false prophets. "Mine heart within me is broken because of the prophets: all my bones shake, I am like a drunken man ...," (Jeremiah 23:9). He was shocked and saddened by the corruption within the nation of Judah. His heart is broken; all his bones shake; why? Why is the prophet so deeply disturbed? Why is he overcome by grief? It is because of his reverence for Jehovah, and his respect for the Word of God which he hears being reviled and rejected! What think ye? Is Jehovah being revered when He is disobeyed? Is His Word being respected when Christians vote for ones who support such evil moral issues? What think ye? "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away," (Proverbs 4:14-15). "Abhor that which is evil;

**"Righteousness exalts a nation,
But sin is a reproach to any people."**

Proverbs 14:34 (NKJV)

cleave to that which is good," (Romans 12:9). You can't play in soot and remain lily white.

I want to say that God will either bless a nation or curse it based upon its righteousness. Righteousness is that which is morally right and correct. Moral issues should be of utmost concern to Christians in their determination of how to vote. The main factors will be who and what will lead this nation in the way of righteousness. Remember, ten righteous people could have saved Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:16; 19:24).

With these thoughts in mind, how could a Christian vote for any politicians who supports abortion, homosexuality, same sex marriage or any other moral issues facing country? The Christian **CANNOT** vote for these individuals! What think ye? As we decide whom we will vote for in the upcoming elections, let us always remember to uphold what is morally right in God's sight by the way we cast our vote. Christian's morals should reflect the character of Christ. Brethren, it's time to turn away from those who lower the moral standards of Christ! Turn away from those who disregard sanctity of life! Turn away from those who pervert God's marriage law! Turn away from sin and look to God, and His standard of morality. We **MUST** have the attitude of accepting what **GOD** says in His Words, even if that means we must give up our own ideas (Jeremiah 10:23; Isaiah 55:8-9). What think ye?

Brethren, if we want to make heaven our home, we need to think like God thinks and do those things the way God wants! What think ye? ♦

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Page 4 - How To Get What You Want

Giving God Your First and Best

By Jonathan L. Perz

By the end of the Old Testament, the Israelites had a problem. They ceased giving God their best and began sacrificing “*the stolen, the lame and the sick.*” Serving God had become “*a weariness*” to them. They “*sneered*” at the table of the Lord, declaring it “*contemptible.*” As a result, God cursed their blessings and shunned their sacrifices, making them contemptible before all the people (**Malachi 1:1-2:9**).

Herein lies one of the most fundamental and vital principles of Christianity, and at the same time, one of the biggest problems with Christians today. Every single worthwhile endeavor in our lives will be significantly enhanced if we will simply learn to put God first and give Him our best.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught us to “*seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness*” (**Matt. 6:33**). While the context here is one of worrying about the needs of this life, the principle stands—put God first and give Him your very best and He will take care of the rest.

The problem is that we are too concerned about our own things to give God our very best. Paul wrote on one occasion, “*For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus*” (**Phil. 2:21**). Is such a testimony of your life? Does this describe the end result of the decisions you make on a daily basis? It is far too easy to read this about someone else and affirm it. It is another thing altogether to humbly and honestly “own up” when it is stated to describe the reality of our own lives. Can we honestly say God is getting our first and best in every avenue of life?

Another problem is that we don’t trust God with our best, so He does not come first in our lives. As hard as it might be to hear, it is true. If we trusted God, we would give Him our first and best without reservation. As it stands—if we are honest—God often takes a back seat to us as we see to our needs first, then His will. This can be illustrated in our time management, our laying by in store, our assembling, our sharing of the gospel, our prayer lives, our Bible study, our recreation time, etc. While we may say

we are giving God our best, our works too often belie us. If we want to honestly say we trust God with our best, we need to daily put Him first!

Hardly realized and rarely practiced is one of the key elements in all of this. Giving God our first and best will result in us receiving the best. The best husbands and wives are first and foremost godly husbands and wives (**Eph. 5:22-32**). The best parents are first and foremost godly parents (**Eph. 6:4**). The best employers and employees are first and foremost godly employers and employees (**Eph. 6:5-9**). When we give God our first and best in all of these areas of our lives, we will inevitably be giving our spouses, our children, our employees and employers our best because it is the simple will of God that we live righteously and godly in all of these avenues of our lives. On the other hand, when we withhold our first and best from God, but try to fulfill the role of spouse, parent and employer/employee, the blessing of God is missing in our endeavors.

The same can be said of our worship and edifying the brethren (**Heb. 10:24-25**). Edifying and provoking the saints to love and good works in the assembly is truly a by-product of putting God first and giving Him our best in worship. Sing your best to God and all will benefit. But when we sing to men to be heard of men, can we honestly say God is getting our first and best? Pray most fervently to God and all will benefit. But when we pray to men to be heard of men, can we say we are truly giving God our first and best? Hunger and thirst after God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and all around you will benefit!

God deserves our first and best! Did He withhold His first and His best from us when He gave us His only begotten Son? Certainly not! Couple this with the fact that we didn’t deserve Jesus and you have all the reason you need to give Him your first and best in every aspect of your life! Think on these things... Credit: www.moodychurchofchrist.com ♦

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please contact us at: hillcrestcofc@live.com

“Leaving Your First Love”

By Jarrod Jacobs

The adult class began this quarter studying the book of Revelation on Wednesday evening. I find the book of Revelation to be an amazing book that unfortunately is ignored all too often by brethren.

As is normal for me, after the class, I continue to think about the subject studied. Last week was no exception. As I thought about our study, and the various points made, it hit me that I had missed an application point in our study. This point, I believe, will tie together several key New Testament Scriptures; and I believe, help us to harmonize more of the Bible. Our study begins in **Revelation 2:4-5**, where Jesus said, “*I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.*”

Some forty years after their beginning in **Acts 19**, the church at Ephesus was to be commended for many things. Yet, in spite of the many commendable qualities they possessed, Jesus said they had developed a very serious problem. They had “*left (their) first love*” (**Rev. 2:4-5**). What is their “first love”? Last Wednesday night, we spent time discussing this question, and some very well thought-out and appropriate responses were made. Yet, (as always happens with me) afterward, I thought of something else I believe would be appropriate and helpful to our study, and wanted to include it here.

First, when we think about “love” as was discussed in **Revelation 2**, we need to be reminded that God Himself is described as “love.” John (the inspired writer of **Revelation, 1:1, 11**) wrote to the saints, telling them, “*God is love*” (**I Jn. 4:8, 16**). Through a word study, we find the original word translated “love” in English is the Greek word “*agape*.” Therefore, in these verses, God is compared to love itself. (Like Jesus was once called the “door”, “shepherd”, “lamb” and other things in Scripture.)

When I think about “love”, my mind also goes to **I Corinthians 13:1-8** where the apostle Paul admonishes the Corinthians to remember to love. To paraphrase, he says that without love as the motivator for the things he was doing, he is nothing and there is no spiritual profit for him if he acts without love. Does this sound familiar? Friends, the warning Paul gave the Corinthians was something the Ephesians LIVED in **Revelation 2!** The context of **I Corin-**

thians 12-14 discusses miraculous spiritual gifts. In **I Corinthians 13**, they are reminded of their need for love, and letting love be their motivation for everything, INCLUDING the exercise of these spiritual gifts, for they would soon end, (**v. 8-10**); but faith, hope, and love remains to this day (**v. 13**).

Seeing this is true, we return to our text of **Revelation 2:1-8**. Here, the Ephesians were condemned for willingly leaving their “first love”. They were told to “*Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent*” (**v. 5**). Understanding that John equates God with love (**I Jn. 4:8, 16**); can we not then see that the Ephesians had in essence left God behind in their good actions (**v. 2-3**)? This they had done, and were condemned for it. They in a real sense had become like the Pharisees, who did good things at times (Christ never condemned their good, only their disobedience and hypocrisy), but were doing it for the wrong reason, or had the wrong motivation! For example, are fasting, prayers, and giving wrong? No! Yet, the Pharisees were condemned for their wrong motivation — to be seen of men (**Matt. 6:1-18**). In **Revelation**, instead of the Ephesians doing things because it was “of God” and allowing their love for God to motivate them, their good works became merely something that “they did”.

Another lesson for us is that what the apostle Paul warned of happening in **I Corinthians 13** was in fact something that had happened to the Ephesians! The warning that if things were done without love, it became vain, was something Christ said the Ephesians were living. They “*left (their) first love.*” This means the great and commendable things like their labor and patience, not enduring evil ones, testing the false teachers, and hating the deeds of the Nicolaitans, etc., (**v. 2-3, 6**) became of no profit to them! (**I Cor. 13:1-3**) If this is not true, then why did Christ demand repentance of these people? It was not that they needed to repent of their good works. Rather, they need to repent and return to the correct motivation behind those good works! Their “first love,” God (**I Jn. 4:8, 16**), needed to be their motivation, and at this point in time, He was not! Therefore, they were to suffer what the Corinthians were warned about (**I Cor. 13**) if they did not repent (**Rev. 2:5**)!