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another at the point of baptism, they all can't be right.

The Bible says, "Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God." (2 John 9). It is a Bible fact that Jesus Christ has only one church (Eph. 4:3-6; 1:22-23). Jesus said, "Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted." (Matt. 15:13).

People often make the reply "I'm satisfied" as though that's all that matters. They think that since they are happy and content with the church they are in, all is well with their soul. However, one's primary concern should be, "Is God satisfied?" The Pharisees were very much satisfied with their religion, but Jesus said, "And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men." (Matt. 15:9). Jeroboam was well satisfied with his new religion and so were the thousands in Israel who embraced it (1 Kings 12:25-33). However, there are no harder words of condemnation found anywhere in the

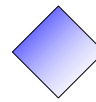
Bible than those spoken against Jeroboam and his followers (1 Kings 13:1-2; 14:10-11). Jesus showed that at the judgment there will be many condemned in spite of the fact they were pleased with what they were doing in religion (Matt. 7:22-23).

The "I'm satisfied" attitude is not a good attitude to have. Instead, the child of God has an open mind realizing there is always room for correction and improvement. Furthermore, he realizes that those who differ with him will point out his error, but those who embrace that same error will not. To overcome the danger of embracing falsehood, he is always willing to study both sides of the question with a good and honest heart. With this humble attitude the Christian will study and examine what others present; without it, he will be closed minded and will cut off all possible avenues of truth. The Bible says, "Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure..." (2 Pet. 1:10). "Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves." (2 Cor. 13:5). Credit: <http://oakridgechurch.com/riggs/> ♦

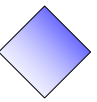
"Points With A Punch!"

- Never put a question mark where God has put a period.
- If you are too busy to assemble with the Lord's people, you are overworked.
- Some say a little talk with Jesus makes it right, but Paul had a little talk and had to "arise and be baptized" (Acts 22:16).
- People who are spiritually blind rely on feeling for Heaven.
- A hundred people will search the woods for a lost boy but won't move an inch to save a soul.
- Some folks have more of their "thinks-so's" than the Lord's "say-so's" in their religion.

Credit: www.southside-churchofchrist.com



The Voice of Truth



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May 23, 2010

The Lord's Church Must Stop Treating Sin Lightly

By Jimmy Pettigrew

The apostle Paul, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, said, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Timothy 4:2). Likewise he said, "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Ephesians 5:11). "Them that sin reprove in the sight of all that the rest also may be in fear" (1 Timothy 5:20 A.S.V.).

At times I wonder if some have even read this charge today. There are those who are disgusted, displeased, offended by sound gospel preaching. **REPROVE** implies that one is in error and needs arguments presented to convince him of the truth. **REBUKE** implies that one must be warned of wrong doing. There is a trend to believe that the possibility of offending someone in preaching the Bible is to be avoided. We are to preach the word not pamper the world. We are to reprove, rebuke, not relax in sin, approve, and exonerate it! We hear such remarks as: "None of us are perfect", "You will drive them away," "We don't want to make anyone mad", "That will split the church," being used by some. There is an attitude, a stance that has crept into the Lord's church to abolish, banish, expel, eliminate reproving, and rebuking from our message. "It is better to hear the rebuke of the wise, than for a man to hear the song of fools" (Ecclesiastes 7:5). In some areas, the Lord's church looks more like a "social club" of religion, than it does the blood-bought body of Christ (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 1:19).

Today, we hear, "Don't rock the boat," and "It will tear the congregation apart if you preach on that," "This is called getting too personal." Many preachers are afraid to take a strong stand and help the congregation see the need to bust sin out of the camp. God did not allow His people of Israel to continue in sin because He was afraid of stirring up a hornet's nest, or getting personal or that His name would suffer if He allowed His people to be taken into captivity. The Lord desires that His church be pure. "That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the

washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:26- 27). Christian's are to put off sin (Colossians 3:8); and, the word from whence put off is translated signifies moving out and away from. It is unthinkable that Christ will own His bride if she becomes unchaste, plays the harlot after the world, and has her affections taken away from Christ and set on things of the earth.

Paul told the elders from Ephesus, "Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:26-27). Paul is saying in these verses that we have the charge to point out brother sins (Galatians 6:1; James 5:19-20). We have many in the Lord's church who assemble with the saints when they want to, who haven't attended in weeks, instead of reproving and rebuking this member about his sin, we ask him to serve on the Lord's table or lead prayers. We act like nothing is wrong! And that tells the member he is fine in the sight of God, and this tells him also that he can miss and still be called on these duties. Instead of tolerating sin, we are to reprove it (Ephesians 5:11). Tolerance of sin is condemned (Revelation 2:20-21). If a congregation permits impure individuals to remain unchastened within its fellowship, it thereby becomes a partaker of their sin and will also drift out of favor of the Lord (Revelation 2). Failure to reprove, rebuke and purge out sin leads to toleration of sin, and toleration of sin leads to a love of sin, the love of sin leads to a practice of sin, and the practice of sin leads to spiritual death (Romans 6:23). The church is wounded when we fail to reprove and rebuke sin. A single sin which is permitted to remain in the body will destroy the whole body (Revelation 2:1-5).

When we cover up sins in the church, we corrupt the morality and virtue of the church and destroy its efficacy to

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www.hillcrestchurchofchrist.com		

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honor God or to save men. Sin must be exposed and purged out of the church or the church becomes corrupt and a synagogue of Satan instead of the church of Jesus Christ. God cannot be honored by covering up evil in the church. To expose sin, error and false teachers is to proclaim to the world that they seek truth, purity, holiness, and godlikeness. But sadly, Bible preaching that gets to the heart of the matter is often rejected. Sin is just a misunderstanding, not transgression of God's will. Sin is something you just do not bring up, even if it is true. One

Making Faith Your Own By Larry Rouse

How can we best help others go to heaven? As we gain experience we can see that there are many who begin the Christian life, but for various reasons give up the fight. Our Lord Jesus Christ knew that this would be true for many. In one instance Jesus likened the Christian life to that of building a tower, "For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it—lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish'" (Luke 14:28-30). Why did this man fail? Jesus gave the answer, "So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:33).

How are you building your Christian tower? That depends on how you view your relationship with God. Far too many who have named the name of Christ have yet to take seriously their personal responsibility to build their own faith. A Biblical faith will produce confidence in the scriptures and also humility to be constantly seeking and testing that faith. To this person the scriptures are alive because their faith teaches them that they serve a God who knows them through and through and has spoken so that he can see himself and be changed (Heb. 4:12-13). There is a huge difference between the one who has observed what men expect him to believe versus the one who has struggled and fought to find the answers that resulted in faith. One may have, out of peer pressure, memorized the pat answers concerning "what we should believe" and still have no real confidence and knowledge of God's word.

Our Limitations in Producing Faith in Others

As a parent I am greatly interested in learning how to

preacher was told that there were certain subjects which he was told not to preach. What happens when a man preaches on a Biblical topic and is then told his preaching is "too hard?" The cry is not to "repent of sin," but "get rid of the trouble maker, the preacher." We need to "hate every false way" (Psalm. 119:140). The key to the whole matter is love. "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent" (Revelation 3:19). To ignore or tolerate wrong doing among its members is not a sign of true love. How much do you love God, His word, the church, your brothers and sisters? ♦

produce faith in my children. Long before I ever had children, I was interested in helping others to find a living faith. Fortunately, God has given us some simple spiritual laws that if we learn and heed we can best help others to walk by faith.

The first hard lesson for me to learn was that I could not "make" another person believe. In my early years as a Christian I tried to impose my will on others through sincere, but misguided efforts. I tried to use personal pressure and personality to "make" someone serve the Lord. All this accomplished was to have others flee from me and in turn, to greatly raise my own frustrations. Fortunately, I quickly learned the difference between what the Lord wanted from me and what was the responsibility of others. "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase" (1 Cor. 3:5-7). The Lord wanted me to plant and water His perfect word. The rest would be left to the one being taught in his response to God.

Faith Takes Time

Genuine faith always takes time. Each man must go through the process of learning about the nature of God and then, through refection, come to trust God. Also in this process one must come to see the bad news about their own sin so that the good news of the sacrifice of Christ can be a life-changing force (Rom. 3:23; 5:6-8). There will be some who have previously given much thought to these things and thus can respond quickly when the pure gospel

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is preached (Acts 2:41). There will be others who will need much more time, because of their background, to come to know the one true God (Acts 17:16-17).

How Did Jesus Build Faith?

When you examine the teachings of Jesus, you will find that He placed challenges before His hearers and then let them struggle to find answers. How many times did Jesus ask a question, rather than giving a quick answer? Jesus asked his disciples, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" and then let them discuss it (Matt. 16:13-18). Why did Jesus speak in parables? He wanted them to think and in that process find God's truth. Sadly, most people would not have this spirit to seek and dig deeper and as a result they rejected the Lord (Matt. 13:10-15).

You can easily tell when a man has made faith "his own." He not only can plainly tell you why he believes what he does, but, more importantly, he will stand and fight for these truths, "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses" (1 Tim. 6:12).

Are we really teaching others to reason from the scriptures, or are we simply giving them a catechism, a man-made series of questions and answers, to memorize?

Consider these truths the next time your faith is challenged.

Avoid the emotional response to run and hide

It can be very stressful to examine long-held practices. As you build your trust in God you will not be afraid to put them to the test (Phil 3:4-10). If you make changes by

I'm Satisfied By David J. Riggs

Zealous Bible students are eager to persuade people to study the Bible with them, but more often than not, they are met with the reply, "I'm satisfied with my religion." These people seem to think that since they are pleased with their present religion there is not need for Bible study. However, just because one is satisfied with his religion does not necessarily mean that God is satisfied.

There are satisfied people in all churches, but all

faith, you will be willing to talk with others about those changes and not run from them. Some make changes because of peer pressure from false teachers. This new-found "faith" is then used by men to make one "run and hide" from those now considered "traditionalists." A Biblical faith will not do this! "They zealously court you, but for no good; yes, they want to exclude you, that you may be zealous for them" (Gal. 4:17).

Do not make sweeping generalizations

Just because you have found one item of past practices that must be changed does not mean everything must be cast away. You should not blindly accept everything that another has taught you, nor should you blindly reject everything that you have been taught. Walk by faith by reexamining the scriptures and allowing that alone to determine your stand.

Learn patience as you seek

Just like the farmer who must plant, water and wait, so you will be in the process of building your faith (Jas. 5:9-11). Give priority to establishing a strong foundation in trusting God, and then to the issue by issue studies that will arise. There may be times where a particular issue will be laid aside for now to be studied later. Let honesty, integrity, and a deep love for God cloth you as you walk before Him. He will give you time and opportunity to know His will (John 7:17; Eph. 5:17).

Do you really believe in the Lord? May the Lord bless you as you grow in His grace and knowledge. "You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen" (2 Peter 3:17-18). Credit: www.moodychurchofchrist.com ♦

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