



The Voice of Truth



December 16, 2012

The Only Sure Way! By Jimmy Pettigrew

The most sole facet of Christianity is its all-sufficiency in things pertaining to life and godliness (**2 Peter 1:3**). The cause of our Lord does not need gimmicks, entertainment, family life centers, gyms, or any projects of men in order to attract the people. The gospel of Jesus Christ can stand on its own merits as the one and only message of redemption. Gimmicks have no power to make men faithful to Christ. God's Word has the power, His only power to save men from sin and place their feet on the way of holiness (**Romans 1:16**). People listen, the gospel has not lost its power! When people were attracted to Christianity and the church in the first century, they were drawn to Jesus by means of His doctrine! The Holy Scriptures truly supply us with the complete revelation of all that mankind needs for time and eternity (**2 Timothy 3:16-17**). Sergius Paulus was interested in hearing the truth. When he responded, he responded to the word of God, not to the "warmth" that flowed from Paul or Barnabas or the assurance that his "felt needs" would be met. The text says he believed because he was "astonished at the doctrine of the Lord" (**Acts 13:12**).

The system of faith, once delivered (**Jude 3**), shall never be broken (**John 10:35**). God's word is enduring (**1 Peter 1:25; Matthew 24:35**), "is quick and powerful" (**Hebrews 4:12**). The power of the word of God is compared to the crushing impact of a hammer which breaks a rock into pieces (**Jeremiah 23:29**). "Buy the truth, and sell it not ..." (**Proverbs 23:23**). The truth is the only means of salvation (**1 Timothy 2:4**). It is the only deliverance from sin (**John 8:32**), the only principle of holiness (**John 17:17**), and the one thing needful (**Luke 10:42**). There is only one thing which will build up the saints of God and that is the "most holy faith" (**Jude 20**). It is exceedingly clear, as one

reads the New Testament, that God's power (**1 Corinthians 1:18**) does not rely upon gimmicks of men. James says, "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls" (**James 1:21**). We are made clean by His word (**John 15:3; 1 Peter 1:22**), not by our wisdom! People, when we think the plan of God, the One who rules in the kingdoms of men (**Daniel 4:25**), needs help from our schemes and gimmicks we are sadly mistaken (**Acts 7:48-50**). Man cannot direct his steps (**Jeremiah 10:23**); his heart is not a dependable guide (**Proverbs 28:26**); his way may be in error (**Proverbs 14:12**); man's thoughts are not God's thoughts or God's ways (**Isaiah 55:8-9**). God's word is active and working, powerful enough to do what it is designed to do (**Isaiah 55:11**).

Listen, the very nature of God's word is such that it will do its job in the one who hears it. It gives men the "power to become the sons of God" (**John 1:12**). The word of God is a lamp to guide us (**Psalms 119:105**); to make us free (**John 8:32**); make us wise and complete (**2 Timothy 3:15-16**). It is the standard in which all men will be judged by in the last day (**John 12:48**). So, we must all abide in the teaching of it (**2 John 9-11**); preach and teach only that which is in the Bible (**Galatians 1:6-9**); do not add to or take away from it (**Revelation 22:18-19**); speak as the oracle (words) of God only (**1 Peter 4:11**). "For do I now persuade men or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ" (**Galatians 1:10**). Only those who do God's will will be saved (**Matthew 7:21-23**). God's written word is the only sure way (**2 Timothy 3:15-17**). ♦

Can You Imagine?

1. Paul saying: "You don't have to obey the gospel to be saved?" Read **2 Thessalonians 1:7-9**.
2. Paul saying: "We are sprinkled with him in baptism?" Read **Romans 6:4**.
3. Jude saying: "I don't think it is right to argue the scriptures?" Read **Jude 3**. ♦

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“Striving For That Which Is Better”

By Jarrod Jacobs

It is sad to see people who have become satisfied and complacent with their life the way it is, from the physical as well as the spiritual aspects! Some have the attitude that if they reach a certain point equal to, or perhaps just above the “Jones’,” then they are happy. Unfortunately, there is a growing element in our society that presses for everyone to be the “same,” and cries “foul” if anyone seems to have a more enjoyable life than others.

Those who become Christians are to strive for that which is better. The fact that they wish to become a Christian shows that they want to improve their lives. They want to leave their relationship with sin and Satan (**Eph. 2:12**) and enjoy a relationship with God (**II Jn. 9**). They believe that Jesus is the Son of God (**Jn. 8:24**), they repent of their sins (**Lk. 13:3**), they confess their faith in Christ (**Matt. 10:32**), and are baptized for the remission of sins (**Acts 22:16**). In doing this, a precious few are saying that they are striving for that which is better. They know that following their own wishes and thoughts will not get them to Heaven (**Jer. 10:32**). They know that God is wiser, and wish to be in His presence in eternity (**Isa. 55:11**; **I Cor. 1:20-31**; **I Jn. 1:7**).

Once one becomes a Christian, he is then free from his past sins (**Rom. 6:17-18**; **Col. 2:12-13**). Then, the true test begins! One who is a Christian recognizes that God’s word is the standard he follows. He does not follow the consensus of the people (**Jn. 12:48**). He recognizes **II Timothy 3:16-17** and knows that no act, word, or thought is a “good work” unless it is authorized by God in the Bible! He understands that God’s thoughts are important. His thinking must conform to the will of God, and he must think on things that are pure and upright; not on things that are debased and degrading (**Rom. 12:2**; **Phil. 4:8**). He sees that he is not to act like “everyone else.” In fact, most will be astonished at the degree of change that has taken place (**I Pet. 4:3-5**). This person recognizes that his speech must also be in line with the word of God (**I Pet. 4:11**). To talk as the world talks is unacceptable to a Christian, for he is striving for that which is better; to a higher standard! The apostle Paul wrote: “*Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*” (**Phil. 3:13-14**). The word “press” means, “to pursue, ensue, follow, given to” (**Strong’s**). In other words, Paul said he was following, or pursuing that “mark” set before him! He

was active. He had a goal/purpose, and was given to better things because of Christ!

When Jesus talked of the two roads one may travel in this life, He said, “*Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able*” (**Lk. 13:24**). To “strive” is to, “struggle, lit. (to compete for a prize), fig. (to contend with an adversary), or gen. (to endeavor to accomplish something):--fight, labor fervently” (**Strong’s**). Christ was saying that in order to be on the strait and narrow road that leads to life we must struggle, or fight for it. We must be contending and active in reaching this goal (**Matt. 7:13-14**)! The Christian cannot be complacent. We will not accidentally go to Heaven. It takes determination! It takes effort! It requires striving for that which is better!

Unfortunately, there is an element of lazy people who do not work toward this end. As a result, they are like the prodigal son who, after having wasted his living, was found in the pig sty (**Lk. 15:15-16**)! When Jesus spoke that parable, we rejoice to know that the son did not stay there, but repented and returned to his father (**Lk. 15:17-21**). I am sad to say, however, that instead of leaving, we see some folks today who are satisfied to stay in the proverbial “pig sty” long after the prodigal son has gone home to his father!

1) Some are satisfied to stay in the “pig sty” if it means they can have another drink! Alcohol so controls their lives that they would rather have it than the Lord. Remember, “*Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise*” (**Prov. 20:1**). There are a lot of “unwise” people around today!

2) Some are satisfied to stay in the “pig sty” if it means that they can be like the world. If they can dress like the world, talk, think, act, and die like the world, then they are satisfied. The apostle John showed us, “*The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever*” (**I Jn. 2:17**). Why would we wish to be like the world when we can strive for that which is higher, nobler, and better and be with God one day? This shows the pull that the world has on us that we must resist!

3) Some are satisfied to stay in the “pig sty” if it means that they can still listen to their “favorite” teacher. It matters little to some whether or not this one is teaching the truth of God’s word! “Just give me good ol’ brother so-and-

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so" is their cry, without any regard for whether or not this "brother" holds fast the pattern of sound words (**II Tim. 1:13**)! Have we become complacent in this area of our spiritual lives?

4) Some are satisfied to stay in the "pig sty" if it means that they can have a "soothed conscience." If a preacher preaches the truth (**II Tim. 4:2**), and does so as a "good minister" of the gospel (**I Tim. 4:6**), reminding people from whence they have fallen (**II Pet. 1:12-15**), then this man is considered by those in the "pig sty" to be "offensive," "rude," "a meddler," and someone for whom they have little or no respect! How sad, when this same one is respected and loved by the most high God, because he is doing what he is supposed to do (Remember **Heb. 11:38**)!

5) Some are satisfied to stay in the "pig sty" if it means that they can wallow in their denominational dogma, their creedal crutches, or their pseudo-unity, in which they "put aside" various differences for a time, but return to them when in the "safety" of their own meeting houses! The Bible says that true unity can be had! Yet, it comes only when we lay down these man-made opinions and philosophies, and unite under the blood-stained banner of the cross, to rely only and solely upon the book of God for our guidance (**Col. 3:17**). Yes, there can be unity. In fact, it is commanded (**I Cor. 1:10**). But, unity only comes when we agree to follow the right standard. True Bible unity is not attained by following what our parents did or did not do, by simply doing what we like or avoiding what we do not like. Nor is unity based upon what society approves, or does not approve!!

Conclusion

Yes, God calls those who are His children to a higher

and nobler standard. He calls us to that which is better. Seeing that the New Testament is a "better covenant, which was established upon better promises" (**Heb. 8:6**), doesn't it make sense that His people would be called to a higher, better standard!

Don't you want to be a part of this? If so, why not start today by becoming a Christian. Do not listen to what the denominational world says is necessary for salvation. Do as the Bible says! Why not live for God? Do His will; be "faithful unto death" that you might receive "a crown of life" (**Rev. 2:10**). Do as Paul says and "be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (**I Cor. 15:58**). Being a Christian is not for the lazy. It is not for the one satisfied to stay in the "pig sty"! Being a Christian is for those ready and willing to make the effort to live by a higher standard. It is for those who are willing to live by what God says, and not what the world says (**I Pet. 4:11**). It is for those who are spiritually minded, and not worldly or carnally-minded (**Rom. 8:6**). It is for those striving for that which is better!

What about you, dear one? Where do you find yourself? Why not make your life right today before it is too late? Let us help you get started on that road that leads to everlasting life (**Matt. 7:13-14**)!! When you do what the Lord says, and strive for that which is better, God will bless (**Eph. 1:3**), and you can look forward to a home in Heaven one day! *Credit: www.southside-churchofchrist.com* ♦

THE ONE BODY

The church is the body of Christ, "And he is the head of the body, the church (**Col. 1:18**). There is only one body, one church. "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (**Eph. 1:22-23**). The New Testament teaches that there is only one body; this one body is the church. We are "fellow heirs of the same body" (**Eph. 3:6**). We are "reconciled to God in one body" (**Eph. 2:16**). Christ is founder of only one church. "Upon this rock I will build my church" (**Matt. 16:18**). Jesus did not say that we would build a church, His church or one of His churches. He said, "I will build my church." The word "church" signifies singularity. Jesus did not build many different churches, but one! None should encourage any to seek the church of your choice, but the church of Christ's choice, that is, the one that is Christ-built, blood-bought (**Acts 20:28**), the one in which He is the Saviour of (**Eph. 5:23**).

Since there is one, and only one church and since Christ saves only those in that one church; thus, if one living today is not a member of that church (**Rom. 16:16**), then he is not saved. ♦

*Either the Bible will keep you from sin . . .
Or sin will keep you from the Bible.*

As Good a Time as Any!

By Jonathan L. Perz

The phrase almost seems passé. In many ways it seems careless and flippant, rather than careful and planned. In some ways, it is almost too casual a phrase for what I am about to suggest. Nevertheless, with the New Year just days away, is it not as *good a time as any* to evaluate the condition of your soul and then do something about it?

It is high time many sleepwalking Christians awake from their lethargic slumber and get about the Lord's business! "And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed" (Rom. 13:11). Has the spiritual funk you are in rendered you fruitless in things eternally important (Prov. 6:4-11)? Are you leading souls to the Savior (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16)? Are you maintaining and abounding in good works (1 Cor. 15:58; Tit. 3:14)? Are you growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 3:18)? Perhaps it is as *good a time as any* for you to get back to work!

There are many who have known for a long time what they must do to begin their walk with Christ. They have sipped from the well of salvation—God's word. They know what it is the Lord wants of them. They know what it is they need from the Lord. Yet, for one relatively ridiculous reason or another, they choose not to drink deeply and demonstrate their faith in God by obedience to His word (Rom. 10:17; 6:17; 2:8; 2 Thess. 1:8). "Therefore, lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls" (Jas. 1:21). Perhaps it is as *good a time as any* to do more than just hear the word, but to act on it (Jas. 1:22-25; 2:14-26)!

One thing is certain, God's longsuffering will not endure forever (2 Pet. 2:9ff). Indeed, now is as *good a time as any* to avail yourself of His grace and mercy.

Credit: www.moodychurchofchrist.com ♦

Sin will take you farther than you
Ever wanted to go.
Keep you longer than you ever wanted
To stay and cost you
More than you ever wanted to pay. ♦

Either the Bible will keep you from sin . . .
Or sin will keep you from the Bible.

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

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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