

Caring About the Truth

By Jonathan L. Perz

It never ceases to amaze me how little people care about the truth today! Whether it is in the form of a political lie, an e-mail that is nothing more than an urban legend, some new money making fad or craze or the telling of "little white lies" ... men have little or no esteem for the truth.

Knowing that Satan is the father of all lies and that most of the world remains in sway of the wicked one, this should not come as a surprise (John 8:44; John 5:19). Nevertheless, the impact of such a general indifference to truth upon the lives of men is monumental.

God's word is truth (John 17:17)! We can have absolute confidence in it! Yet it remains meaningless to one who is not genuinely interested in truth. Like some of the Jews in Jesus' day, it cannot help them, it cannot save them and it cannot reach them, because they do not want to hear it (John 4:45-47).

Until a person comes to terms with his attitude about the truth, he will never learn to appreciate the power of God (Rom. 1:16) and the importance of Jesus in his life (John 14:6). Those who suppress the truth in unrighteousness (Rom. 1:18) long enough will inevitably exchange it entirely for a lie and fall prey to much of the depravity that exists in this world (Rom. 1:25). Many have simply turned their ears away from the truth and have embraced the fables of men (2 Tim. 4:4). Those who do not obey the truth are self-seeking (Rom. 2:8), unloving (1 Cor. 13:7) and often deluded (2 Thess. 2:10-12).

It is fortunate for mankind that God cares for us and, in His longsuffering, desires that we all are saved and come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4). It all begins with our attitude toward the truth. Therefore, let us simply open our hearts to the truth and purify our souls by obeying it (1 Pet. 1:22-23). Credit: www.moodychurchofchrist.com

The Nature Of The Kingdom Of God

IS NOT

1. Of This World (John 18:36).
2. Eating and Drinking (Rom. 14:17).
3. In Word (1 Cor. 4:20).
4. With Observation (Luke 17:20).

IS

1. In Power (1 Cor. 4:20).
2. Righteousness (Rom. 14:17).
3. Peace (Rom. 14:17).
4. Joy (Rom. 14:17).
5. Within You (Luke 17:21).
6. Unshakable (Heb. 12:28).

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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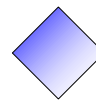


Schedule of Assembly

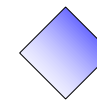
Bible Study: Sunday, 9:00am
Worship Service: Sunday, 10:00am
Bible Study: Wednesday, 7:00pm*

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

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The Voice of Truth



January 8, 2012

The Authority Of Christ

By Jimmy Pettigrew

The critical issue in religion today is the question of authority. Authority means the right to command and enforce obedience. What men believe and practice today in the name of religion must be authorized by the Lord Jesus Christ (Colossians 3:17). That we must do all "in His name" or by His authority. The teaching of Christ was from God (John 14:23-24), and today God speaks to us through His Son (Hebrews 1:1-2). God has given all things into the hands of Jesus (John 3:35). At Judgment, we will be judged by the words of Christ not Moses (John 12:28). The law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ (John 1:17). When the apostle Peter on the Mount of transfiguration desired to build three tabernacles, one for the lawgiver Moses, one for the representative of the prophets, Elijah, and one tabernacle for Christ, God said we should listen to whom (Matthew 17:1-5)? Christ! Did God pronounce a condemnation upon those who refused to hear His Son and thereby disregard divine authority (Acts 3:22-23)? Yes! If we do not abide in the doctrine of Christ, we have not God, that is, a person has no claim on God as being God (2 John 9)! We cannot go beyond the doctrine (teaching) of Christ. If we abide in the doctrine of Christ, we hath both the Father and the Son. And what does it mean to abide in the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9)? It means to be governed by the authority of the New Testament. Christ has the words of eternal life (John 6:68).

What we need to remember is whatever our Lord said on any given subject deserves the careful attention of all people (Colossians 3:17). "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it" (John 2:5). The chief priests and elders of the people demanded to know by what power Jesus did the things He did and taught the things He taught. He is credited in the New Testament with having taught with authority and not as the scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 7:29). All authority hath been given unto Jesus in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18). His authoritative teaching offended the Jewish rulers and they demanded an explanation

(Matthew 21:23).

It is common for people in our time to scoff at what they call authoritative religion. Such religion is said to do injury because it keeps people from feeling good about themselves. They want license to do whatever pleases them and will not put up with any system that makes demands of them, or accuses them. They do not want to hear commands or judgment. They don't want to be told what sin is. They will do their own will; and they tolerate only those who approve and applaud whatever they may choose to do. This is not right!

What we need to understand is that we are living in an age of compromise and there are those who are trying to compromise the Gospel of Christ. What men practice in religion today must be authorized by God's Word and since God speaks to us by His Son (Hebrews 1:1-2), the word of Christ is the authority that must be respected now, and this authority is exercised through the New Testament.

Question: Does James say that there is one lawgiver (James 4:12)? If the Law of Moses is still binding, then Moses is still a lawgiver. If Christ has a law binding on us, then he is a lawgiver. This would make us under two lawgivers and thus married both to Moses and the Christ. Yet James says there is one lawgiver. The New Testament is the law which we are under (Hebrews 10:9; 8:13; 9:15-17), we cannot be justified by the Law of Moses (Acts 13:38-39), we are no longer under the Law (Galatians 3:23-25), but became dead to the law by the body of Christ (Romans 7:6) and by the New Testament we will be judged (John 12:48). Christ is said to be "the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him" (Hebrews 5:9).

There is a great need for authority in all areas of our lives. We will never out grow being under the authority of someone regardless of how old or how powerful we be-

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come. Christ's authority is in His word, the New Testament. Thus, the Bible's authority is Christ's authority. We must strive to call Bible things by Bible names and to do Bible things in Bible ways. We must do only those things which the Bible authorizes and not feel free to do anything

“Institutionalism Is False Doctrine”

By Jarrod Jacobs

I suppose it is “normal” that after a sermon the preacher thinks, “I should have said ...”. I know I have thought this from time to time after finishing a sermon. Last week was no exception. After concluding the sermon from **Colossians 2:4** and **8**, I immediately thought, “I should have included the false doctrine connected with institutionalism.” Knowing that one doesn't always have the opportunity to say “everything” he might like in a sermon, I thought it good to speak about the false doctrine related to institutionalism in this issue of *“The Old Paths.”*

As we begin, let us read **Colossians 2:8**. *“See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.”* In this text, we note that false doctrine is based upon four things: man's philosophy, empty deceit, human tradition, and worldly principles. Upon these four things rest any false doctrine, including the false doctrine related to institutionalism.

Some Preliminaries.

Before we study this subject in detail, let us be reminded that when it comes to the church doing the Lord's work, we find that only the local group of Christians are authorized to act. In other words, God has not in any way “organized” His church as a universal, or world-wide body. All that is revealed in Scripture is that the Lord is the head and the church (all Christians, living and dead) is His body (**Eph. 1:22-23, 4:4; Col. 1:18, 24; I Cor. 12:12-14**; etc.). There is no work or organization connected with this church from this standpoint.

In contrast, we find that when a group of Christians, living in a certain geographic location (i.e., Owensboro, KY), agree to work and worship together, then God expects these people to be organized and do His work. For example, God expects a local church to have elders to oversee the flock *“among”* them and deacons to serve (**I Pet. 5:2; I Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9**). Local churches like the church in Jerusalem, Ephesus and Philippi were so organized (**Acts**

we want, or feel to do. We cannot believe error and live rightly before God. Make the scriptures your standard of right and wrong in religion. We must respect what the Bible says on any given subject. It is time for us to do that which is exactly right (**Ezra 7:23**). It is time we defend the authority of Christ, and the church. ♦

15:4, 6, 22, 20:17; Phil. 1:1).

In addition to this, it is the local church that is ordained to do such work as evangelism (**I Thess. 1:8**), edification (**I Thess. 5:11; Eph. 4:12**), and provide benevolence to needy saints (**Acts 11:28-30; I Tim. 5:9-10**). In the New Testament, we do not see an example or occasion where local churches “pooled funds” to do the Lord's work or hired some agency to do their work for them. Nor do we read of a local church showing benevolence to all indigent people. Rather, benevolence from the church was provided only to saints (**Acts 11:28-30; Rom. 15:25-26; I Cor. 16:1-2**; etc.).

In studying the Bible, we also see that the Lord makes the distinction between what an individual saint does and what a local church does (**Matt. 18:15-17; I Tim. 5:16; Jas. 1:22-27**; etc.). Without question, we need to respect the distinction that God has made.

Friends, note the simplicity of the Lord's plan for the work of the church! Each local congregation, regardless of location, is able to do what the Lord said to do without employing other means to get it “accomplished”!

What Is Institutionalism?

Institutionalism is an erroneous practice based upon the false doctrine that the church is not capable of doing what the Lord said it must do. Ironically, people justify this error by saying, “We are doing the Lord's work.” In truth, they are not! Remember the statements made by the apostle Paul in **Colossians 2:8**? Institutionalism is justified in those same four ways the Holy Spirit described: man's philosophy, empty deceit, human tradition, and worldly principles. I am sorry to say that many Christians have been caught up in this error, and today they are deceived by false doctrine that leads them away from God. (What all false doctrine does!)

Some specific examples of institutionalism include

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when churches pool funds so as to financially support a preacher(s). This is a product of worldly wisdom (**Col. 2:8**). It did not come from Scripture! In Scripture, we see where the preacher was supported by funds sent directly to him (**Phil. 4:15-16; II Cor. 11:8-9**). There was no need for churches to pool funds and select a “sponsoring” church who then decided who to support and who not to support. Such decisions, including the amount sent, was made by the local church sending the funds. This is the Lord's way. It is Scriptural, simple, and effective for spreading the gospel to all the world! (**Col. 1:5-6, 23**) It still works today everywhere that it is tried!

Another area of work includes providing benevolence to needy saints (**Rom. 15:25-26; Acts 11:28-30**). The church's support of “children's homes” (not orphan's homes in the US), and the like was nothing but a “cover” used to justify supporting “church colleges” from the budget. (Read your history and see.) The late N.B. Hardeman said that these two practices “stand or fall together.” He said this in an attempt to justify both wrong practices. Brother Hardeman was right, however, they should have both FALLEN! Sadly, they did not. Thus, “empty deceit” (**Col. 2:8**) was allowed to prevail over many churches, and it is still there today. In fact, it has gone on for so long in some congregations, that it is their “tradition” (**Col. 2:8**) to support “children's homes” and colleges out of their budgets, and folks don't know why. They cannot support their practice through Scripture, and many do not care! This is the result of this “tradition.” Of course, tradition justifies nothing. The question is: *“What saith the Scripture”* (**Rom. 4:3a**)?

In fact, we observe that the practice of benevolence in this area is not unlike what is done in evangelism. Specifically, we see local churches sending money to various benevolent “agencies” who then pool this money and send it out to those they deem “worthy” and sending the amount that the agency sees fit.

In both cases, churches lose their autonomy (ability to govern self) and by extension, elders lose their ability to oversee the Lord's money because the money has been sent to others to use as they see fit. No, this is not like “paying a bill” or “buying a service”, for in this case, men were convinced (**Col. 2:4, 8**) that God's way is inadequate, and so another system was devised! In contrast, note that in the New Testament, money for benevolence was sent

from a congregation to the elders of the needy congregation where distribution could be made (**Acts 11:28-30**). Why the elders? Who better to know the Christians' financial situations in that church? This practice is Scriptural, simple, and capable of relieving poor saints.

Man's philosophy and worldly wisdom has justified sinful practices by saying words to the effect that, “Whatever command was given to each individual to do, the church is commanded to do.” Is it true that what God commanded individuals, He has commanded to the church? Let the Scriptures speak (**I Pet. 4:11**). Please read **I Timothy 5:16**: *“If any man or woman that believeth have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed.”* Here, we see a simple statement — let the individual who believes (i.e., Christian) relieve the widow so that the church is NOT charged! Yet, a position that says the command to an individual implies a command to the church, then demands that the church WAS charged, even though the passage says the church was NOT charged! What a mess! Man's wisdom and reasoning truly ties one in knots! God is not the author of confusion, but of peace (**I Cor. 14:33**)!

Further, **Matthew 18:15-17** makes a clear distinction between an individual person doing something, a group of individuals doing something, and the church doing something. Do we respect the distinction the Lord has made? Unfortunately, many today do not! Many are so laden in the false doctrine of institutionalism that they cannot see that the Lord has made a distinction between an individual Christian, a group of individuals, and the church. Yet, this is true and it must be respected!

Conclusion

Certainly, much more could be said about this false doctrine and how it has affected brethren through the years. Yet, I hope this is enough to cause us to open our eyes and not be taken as a “spoil” through people's empty deceit and philosophy concerning the church's work (**Col. 2:8**). Making men a “spoil” and spreading false doctrine is as real today as ever (**II Pet. 2:1-3**). God has given us His plan for the church's work, just as He has given us His plan for worship (**Jn. 4:24; Acts 2:42**), for the plan of salvation (**Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38**), and for life itself (**Matt. 7:12; I Pet. 3:10-12**)! Let us respect what the Lord has said and love Him enough to obey Him (**Jn. 14:15**) wholly while we live! Credit: www.southside-churchofchrist.com

***A faith that will not take us to worship will not
Take us to heaven!***