

Fulton County Gospel News

Good News About Christ And His Church For All Of The World

"...Christ is the head of the church: and He is the Savior of the body." - Ephesians 5:23

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IS IT WRONG TO SHOW PEOPLE THAT THEY ARE WRONG?

by Ted J. Clarke

Introduction

Most denominations promote a "live and let live" concept of religion. We are frequently told, "Just preach Jesus and leave others alone." Others may say, "Sure, different religious groups teach various ways to be saved or to organize the church, etc., but it would be wrong for any one group to tell another group that they are wrong." Perhaps the most common responses are, "We are all trying to get to the same place," and, "It doesn't make any difference what you believe as long as you are sincere."

It is unfortunate that this same type of philosophy is being peddled by the leading proponents for "change" in the Lord's church. We are being told that it is wrong for us to challenge the validity of denominational baptism and additions to the worship which are common to these groups. It would be funny, if it were not so serious, that these leaders for change tell us that **we are wrong** if we resist the changes they propose, even though they are without Biblical authority, and in the next breath they condemn us for telling the denominations that they are wrong for not teaching God's plan of salvation from the Scriptures!

Stop and think about that for a moment. They cannot tell us that it is wrong for us to tell others that they are wrong without violating their own rule! It is sinful and hypocritical to contend against something when you are doing the very thing you condemn. The Scriptures teach, "Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things" (Romans 2:1 - NKJV). If Paul is saying that it is wrong to practice hypocrisy, then it is not wrong to tell others that they are wrong, at least in regard to being hypocrites.

Why Tell People They Are Wrong?

Should we tell people that they are wrong, regardless of the situation, like

wearing an orange tie with a red sport coat? Of course not. Many things are purely individual matters of taste or opinion. Other things are optional and may or may not be done, such as standing or kneeling in prayer. No position in prayer is given to the exclusion of others (Matthew 26:39; Mark 11:35; Luke 22:41).

However, there are matters about which one cannot be wrong and still be saved eternally. Faith, repentance, baptism and Christ's teaching are matters about which we do not have a right to be wrong (John 8:24; Luke 13:3; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 2 John 9-11). How can it be wrong to tell people that they are wrong about something(s) which will cause them to be lost? It would be wrong not to tell them. The principle of being watchmen for others' souls is set forth in Ezekiel 3:17-21, warning both the wicked to repent and the righteous to not sin. Elders, preachers, and spiritually minded members of the Lord's church have this same kind of responsibility (Titus 1:9-11; 2 Timothy 2:24-26; Galatians 6:1-2; James 5:19-20).

Of course, a bone of contention is whether or not the matters which we say are wrong in the denominational world and the Lord's church are really matters which deal with our eternal salvation. Some are saying that belief in Christ is the only thing that matters regarding salvation. If one believes in Christ's death, burial and resurrection, that is all that is essential to some. We can be wrong about anything and everything else, if we are right about that. Is this true?

What Was The Lord's Practice?

Did the Lord ever tell people that they were wrong? Did Jesus say that the only thing men needed to be right about was His death, burial and resurrection? We are often given a distorted picture of the grace and mercy of God and Christ by those who want to restructure the church and make it another denomination. Some want only to look at the good deeds of

Christ and His positive teaching, omitting the passages where Jesus told the people that they were wrong.

The message that God had John the Baptizer and Jesus both preach was, "Repent!" (Matthew 3:2; 4:17). Did that message involve God's grace and mercy? Indeed, it did and still does. Note, however, that you cannot tell people to repent without implying that they are wrong. Repentance means to have a change from a wrong way of thinking and doing to a right way of thought and action. The principle of repentance is illustrated in the "Parable of the Two Sons" in Matthew 21:28-32, even though the Greek word for repentance is not in the original text.

The Beatitudes likewise imply that those who do not develop such characteristics are wrong and not blessed (Matthew 5:1-12). Every time Jesus said, "Ye have heard that it was said...but I say unto you," He is pointing out that we can be wrong, but His way is right (Matthew 5:21-48). In Matthew 6:1-18, the Lord warns about trying to worship God in the wrong way and with a wrong heart; in verses 19-34 He warns about placing a wrong emphasis upon material things. In the final chapter of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus condemns the terrible wrong of hypocritical judgment (7:1-6), but in 7:13-29 shows that we must make proper judgments about what "gate" and which teachers are right. The broad gate and the people who enter that gate and walk in that way are **wrong!** Since Jesus said that this gate leads to destruction, would it be wrong for us to tell such people that they are wrong? False prophets have a wrong message and produce the wrong kind of fruit. Was it wrong for some to tell the followers of David Koresh (the false prophet from Waco, Texas) that they were wrong in following him?

Finally, the Lord warned that even religious people who believed in Him and claimed to do great deeds in His name were wrong and would be lost in the judgment, because they were not doing the will of God (7:21-23). These people were believers in Jesus and they were

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religious workers, **but Jesus said they were wrong!** Why? Because God's will consists of more than mere faith in Christ. One could be right about Christ's death, burial and resurrection and be lost because of moral or doctrinal sin. Paul mentions a number of moral sins in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 and teaches that one cannot be wrong about these matters and go to heaven. In Galatians 5:19-21 he mentions both moral and doctrinal issues and says if we are wrong about these things we "will not inherit the kingdom of God." In 1 Corinthians 11:29, Paul teaches that we cannot be wrong about the manner in which we partake of the Lord's Supper (an item of worship) or we "eateth and drinketh damnation (judgment) unto [ourselves]." Acts 19:1-6 shows that we can be wrong about our baptism and need to be baptized properly. Since baptism is a part of our salvation, to be wrong about baptism would be to be wrong about our salvation (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21). Is it right to let people go on thinking that they are right about things like worship and salvation, when according to the Bible they are wrong and will be lost? Can we not see that things pertaining to worship, such as instrumental music and women having leadership roles, are matters about which we do not have a right to be wrong?! The same is true of God's plan of salvation or anything pertaining to God's will (Matthew 7:21).

Who Is Wrong?

All people who do not do the will of our Father who is in heaven are wrong. Jesus further said that one is foolish,

and therefore wrong, if one does not "heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them" (Matthew 7:26). We do not determine whether or not people are wrong by whether or not they have a good personality, by what the majority of people believe, nor by what pleases each of us personally. The way we determine if one is wrong is by the words of God and His Son (Matthew 4:4; 7:24-27; 17:5; 28:18). **Those who teach contrary to what the Scriptures say, either adding to them or taking from them, are wrong** (Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:5-6; Revelation 22:18-19). If we do not warn such people that they are wrong, we are wrong for not doing so, even if we are right in other ways.

Those who say we are wrong in contending for the essential Biblical truths which fueled the Restoration Movement are violating their own rule. They want an unfair advantage by being able to tell us that we are wrong, but want to silence us from telling them and others that they are wrong. We stand willing to have our beliefs and practices judged by the Scriptures, **the standard to determine what is right or wrong religiously** (2 Timothy 3:16-17). We demand the same of those who contend that we are wrong. Prove us wrong from the Bible and **we will "change"** (1 Thessalonians 5:21; 1 John 4:1). This is the right kind of change.

Conclusion

Not everyone and everything are right. False teachers and religious error are a reality. When we truly love the truth and want it above all things, we will gladly submit our faith and practice to a comparison with God's word to see if we are right or wrong (Proverbs 23:23; Isaiah 8:20; Acts 17:11). The one who can show us from the Bible that we are wrong is not an enemy, but a true friend. Those who run and hide, refusing to face the light of God's word in an honest investigation which will expose their errors, are not worthy of our trust. Some do not have a "love of the truth, that they might be saved" (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12). Elders, preachers, faithful Christians - **it is wrong for us to allow such deceivers to continue their work among men unopposed!** We are to "contend for the faith" and remain "set for the defense of the gospel" (Jude 3; Philippians 1:17). It is the right thing to do!

A fat purse will not compensate for a lean soul.

FIVE STEPS TO SPIRITUAL MATURITY

by Ted Knight

The Corinthian church was beset with many problems. Among those problems was the problem of SPIRITUAL IMMATUREITY. In 1 COR. 3:1-2 Paul wrote, *"And, I brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able."* It is not hard to sense the disappointment which Paul felt because of their lack of development in spiritual matters. We are admonished many times in the New Testament to grow. Peter tells us to *"grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."* 2 Pet. 3:18. He also tells us in 1 Pet. 2:2 to *"desire the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby."* Just as we are expected to grow and develop physically, we as Christians are expected to grow and mature spiritually. However, there are many spiritual infants in the church today who have been in that state for many years. Many of our difficulties arise because of spiritual immaturity.

There is a solution to the problem of spiritual immaturity. There are some ingredients which we may incorporate into our lives that will enable us to become spiritually mature people and thus more effective in serving the Lord. Five of these are found in 1 COR. 16:13-14. Let's look closely at these five steps.

Number One: **WATCH YE.** This is a military term where we see the watchman as he stands watch at the gate of the camp. The people were very familiar with this term and they were well aware of what happened if the watchman did not attend to his duties well. If he did not watch he could be surprised by the enemy and the entire camp would suffer, possibly even die. So, watching was a very important duty.

Is there a need for Christians to watch today? Indeed there is! We need to be alert. The apostle Peter wrote in 1 Pet. 5:8, *"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walketh about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour."* If there has ever been a need for alertness in the Kingdom of God, that time is now. (1) We need to be alert to the opportunities that we have to teach others the gospel of Christ. Doors opening all over the world and we must

grasp those opportunities. (2) We must be alert to the efforts of false teachers and their influence upon the Flock of God. Paul exhorts the Ephesian elders to *"take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the Church of God which He purchased with His own blood."* Why? The answer is given in **VERSES 29-31.** *"For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears."* I believe that the challenge to study the Bible and be ready to meet the false teachers with a *"thus saith the Lord"* becomes greater every day. This requires watchfulness on our part. Friends, let's wake up! Let's be alert. As the song says, *"Watch and Pray..."*

Number Two: **STAND FAST IN THE FAITH.** We need to be **SUPER GLUED** to the FAITH! We must never, never, give up, lose our faith, throw in the towel and quit! The apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesians and said that they should *"no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men..."* **EPH. 4:14.**

As we are determined to stand fast in the faith, we will be called upon to follow the directions of John in **1 JOHN 4:1** where he said, *"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world."*

How can we know whether we are "standing fast in the faith"? **BY STUDYING OUR BIBLES!** Study the word! Plant your feet solidly upon God's word and **STAND THERE!** Be ready to defend the faith as Paul was in **PHILIPPIANS 1:7, 17.** Do not take the coward's way out when confronted with error. **STAND FAST IN THE FAITH.**

Number Three: **QUIT YOU LIKE MEN.** The challenge is to **ACT LIKE A MAN.** There is a time to be like children. Paul tells us that there was a time when he was a child, acted like a child, talked like a child, etc. But, when he became a man, he put away childish things. **1 COR. 13:11.** As Christians we are to act like grown-up, mature people and not like little children.

Isn't it amazing that so many of the problems that we face in the Lord's church

are present because some of us act like children instead of acting like mature adults? Think back upon the problems which you have seen and heard about in the church through the years and ask yourself, *"How many of these problems were rooted in childish things?"* The challenge which we face today to preach the gospel to the world demands our full attention and effort. We do not have time to waste fighting over childish matters. We must resolve to build up, edify, strengthen, and never tear down the work of the Lord's church by bickering over childish things. May God help us to grow up and **ACT LIKE MEN!**

Number Four: **BE STRONG.** There is a great need for strength in living the Christian life. Weaklings in the faith will never remain faithful. Wishy-washy Christians will never accomplish anything for the Lord. Christian living demands strength.

There are many reasons why the Christian needs to be strong. (1) We need strength to face temptations daily. (2) We need strength in times of hardship. Death, illness, divorce, etc. come into our lives and our hearts are broken. This is the time to be strong.

Where and how do we obtain this strength? (1) Diligent study of God's word. (2) Fervent prayer. (3) Involvement in the work of the Lord. (4) Fleeing the devil and his friends. (5) Seeking the fellowship of Christians.

These are indeed perilous times and they demand that the Christian be strong.

Number Five: **LET ALL YOUR THINGS BE DONE WITH CHARITY.** Here is one of the supreme ingredients in becoming spiritually mature. We must learn how to love. Love God supremely! Love the brethren fervently! This is the key. If we love God and man as we should we will be watchful, we will stand fast in the faith, we will not act like children, we will be strong.

Notice that Paul says, *"Let ALL your things be done in charity."* If we would let all of our actions, our words, and our thoughts be governed by love, we would surely live a richer and happier life.

Let us be challenged to apply these five steps to our lives and practice them daily. If we will, we will be on the road to spiritual maturity.

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The easiest way to get tired is to do nothing.

THE SWORD OF JESUS

by Louis Mahaffey

"Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword." Matt. 10:34

Many have no intention of including this verse as part of our Lord's teachings. They have an image of our Lord as portrayed by the hippie movement of the sixties. They define love as something that never offends. Matthew 10:34 causes them embarrassment.

What kind of warfare was our Lord discussing in this passage? Physical warfare? No. In the garden, on the night of His betrayal, our Lord rebuked Peter for wielding the physical sword and cutting off the ear of Malchus. We realize the manner of warfare in Matthew 10:34 is spiritual. The sword of this passage is the sword of the gospel. A sword that will divide men in the religious world.

A doctrine growing stronger in our brotherhood tries to distinguish between gospel and doctrine. This is like trying to separate the body from the spirit. It causes death. The impulse leading to such thinking comes from a rejection of Matthew 10:34. For example, imagine a minister who decides to attend the local ministers' association meeting. At this meeting are "pastors," "priests" and others from various religious groups. Now comes the pressure. they seem like nice people. **VERY SINCERE.** Are their souls really lost? Should I discuss our differences? If I do this, they might not like me. They might get offended!

Given a little time, a new interpretation surfaces. Why, we all agree on one truth. Everyone at the ministers' association be-

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lieves in Jesus Christ (unless of course an Orthodox Jew is present). So we all agree in a "core" gospel; we just disagree on a few various doctrines. How comforting. This doctrine is called "unity in diversity."

Give a minister a few months and perhaps he has most of the congregation believing the same thing. They find it to be a very wholesome doctrine and full of comfort. Then, one morning in Bible class when the minister is teaching his new core gospel, someone states, "Jesus did not come to bring peace in the religious world but a sword of division. A sword so strong it will separate a daughter from her mother. It will even separate the various ministers in the area!" There is silence in the classroom.

Brethren, just because a certain doctrine brings comfort does not mean it is true! In fact, for many this is the ONLY proof needed to decide whether a doctrine is true: is it comforting? To fight for truth, to fight for the doctrines of our Lord, is many times scary. That is why our Lord told Paul in Acts 18:9, "...Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace." Those who put their friendships with the world before the doctrines of our Lord will lose their souls. Though wielded in love, the sword of the Lord still divides. Let us never be ashamed of our Lord, and may God have mercy on our ministers and elders who are now ashamed of Matthew 10:34 and have sheathed the sword of the Lord.

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What Would It Profit?

*If all the riches of this world were mine,
And all the lovely gems that brightly shine;
If I possessed a large estate and grand,
And choicest fruitful fields, and timber-land;
What would it profit me, if death should call,
And I should be compelled to leave it all?*

*If I could somehow win this world's applause,
And rise to lofty heights in some great cause;
If I could have my fondest hopes fulfilled,
And with the prestige won be greatly thrilled;
What would it profit if I reached my goal,
And then should die in sin, and lose my soul?*

*If I could boast myself of noble birth,
And consort with the greatest ones of earth;
If I could make some friends in every land,
And find in every place an outstretched hand;
How dreadful in the end would be my lot,
If Christ should then declare, "I know you not!"*

"CLERGY/LAITY"

by Bruce Stulting

In current usage, the "clergy" is that class of men in denominational churches who have been set apart by ordination for official religious duties and the "laity" are the rest of the members not thus ordained. These are not biblical distinctions, however; and the usage provides another illustration of how far afield from New Testament teaching the religious world about us has gone.

The word "clergy" derives from the Greek *kleros*, one form of which is translated "God's heritage" (1 Pet. 5:3). Here, the apostle admonished elders not to act as lords over God's heritage, but rather be ensamples to the flock. "God's heritage" (the clergy) over which the elders were to rule was the congregation in which they were appointed to serve. Peter taught here that the elders, far from exhibiting a spirit of arrogance and tyranny in the oversight to which they were set. On the contrary, they were to be ensamples to the clergy (the flock, the church). Therefore, in biblical usage, the entire congregation constitutes the clergy, and the word "laity" does not occur in the Bible.

The denominational distinction of "clergy" and "laity" not only involves improper use of the word, it also sets up a distinction in work, between people, not recognized in the New Testament. The preachers spoken of in the New Testament were so called simply because they preached. Their work was and is functional, not official. As we read in Acts 8:4, all disciples had a hand in the spread of the gospel and the evangelization of the ancient world, and the Lord will expect no less of us today.

The denominational concept of a "clergy/laity" system is completely foreign to New Testament terminology. We must emphasize the importance of using biblical words to convey biblical concepts. In this and all things let us strive to call Bible things by Bible names. This is the message contained in 1 Pet. 4:11 where we read, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God..." If we hold to these words and follow them implicitly, we will avoid using any Bible words in a context contrary to their sacred usage.

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Man is like water in that he seeks his own level.

GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

1. Hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Hebrews 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Romans 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; 1 Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3, 4).
6. After the above five steps, faithful Christian Living (1 Peter 2:11, 12; Revelation 2:10).

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

1. The Bible is its only guide (Romans 1:16; 1 Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical Name (Romans 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isaiah 2:2,3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Ephesians 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Hebrews 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God's commands including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; 1 Corinthians 12:13).

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