

THE WORK OF THE CHURCH

Todd Morrison, Chesapeake, VA

When we leave the services on Sunday morning, what do we resolve in our hearts to do the rest of the week? Are we satisfied with the progress we are making in our spiritual lives? Do we feel as if we are giving 110% to God? Many people believe there is more that they can be doing. The truth is they are right! Society today is entertainment driven. Every thing seems to be built for personal entertainment. It is all around us. It involves the senses and creates a different level of enjoyment. Television, music, video games, and even churches are using these tools of society to draw the masses, but at what cost?

Many today are being drawn from the Lord's church because of the lack of entertainment value. You might hear things like, "This church is not growing; I just don't get anything out of the service; My children are not learning anything in class; It is boring; The service is not motivating to me." What is this world coming to when things like this are being said about worshipping the Almighty? There are numerous groups whose numbers are growing daily because of the "fun" factor. They set up special events, special worship groups, children's church, and various church sporting leagues to keep people entertained and enthusiastic about "church". Unfortunately, the cost of enjoying such entertainment as "worship" is eternity in Hell.

Have we hardened our hearts so much that we feel as if we go to church to be entertained, as if we had gone to a football game where our team won? Do we forget our reason for living and existing? Has the

work that has been commanded been put to the side until we have had all the fun we can? Many today believe that church should be fun and support various activities that are fun to keep people motivated and involved. The mission of the church seems to have drifted from what the Word of God teaches.

What we need to do is get back to our Father's and our Savior's business. The Father sent the Son to save souls (John 3:16-17). Christ came to save souls (Luke 19:10). He gave His apostles a great commission to go teach the Word to the world (Matt. 28:19-20). Mark records this in a similar way (Mark 16:15-16). Thus, that commission which Christ gave His apostles is equally valid for every member of the Lord's church today. We are to teach others the Gospel. Paul so instructed Timothy (2 Tim. 2:2). We must each feel a personal obligation to teach others as we journey through this life (Acts 8:4).

We need to realize that the work of the church is not fun and games, recreation and entertainment, but the saving of souls. It will not be accomplished through "church leagues or special worship groups" but by boldly proclaiming the Gospel of Christ, exposing sin, and teaching the lost the things they must do to accept God's saving grace.

Search your heart to see if you are aligned with God's will. You will find more satisfaction by winning lost souls to Christ and teaching those who are hungry for the truth. And by remaining faithful, you will also find yourself enjoying the "place" that Christ has prepared for us (John 14:3-4). **WOT**

EDITORIAL

“SPEAK WHERE THE BIBLE SPEAKS, AND BE SILENT WHERE THE BIBLE IS SILENT”

The idea of speaking where the Bible speaks, and being silent where the Bible is silent is a rather outmoded concept to many who hold feelings and opinions in equal or higher regard than Scripture. It is a highly esteemed and noble ideal to those who value the precious authority of the word of God. Does the motto, “Speak where the Bible speaks, and be silent where the Bible is silent” have any clout, or is it merely the product of human derivation? It boils down to a matter of authority and our perspective toward such. Are the Scriptures the only source of authority for what we say and do religiously? Is the word of God just another authority among many (oral tradition, human experience, etc.)? Or is the Bible merely (as some among us claim) a collection of “love letters” which God never intended for us to use as a blueprint or a source from which to seek out Divine authority? Those who make light of the principle under consideration would point out that the saying, “Speak where the Bible speaks, and be silent where the Bible is silent” was born out of the American Restoration Movement, and as such, is merely of human origin. It is true that Thomas and Alexander Campbell affirmed this maxim in the early 1800’s as they sought to separate themselves from man-made religious traditions that at that time were commonly practiced, but such a declaration came only after they had studied deeply from the word of God, and found the precious Book Divine to speak to this end. In other words, though not stated with the exact phraseology as found in the title of this article, the principles espoused therein are certainly found within Holy Writ.

It is imperative that we seek authority for all that we say and do in religion from the word of God. “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of (by the authority of, SPM) the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God and the Father by him” (Colossians 3:17). To be sure, the Bible commands us to speak where the it speaks: “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which

God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (1 Peter 4:11). Certainly it is a fair question to ask concerning religious teachings and practices, “By what authority doest thou these things? And who gave thee this authority?” (Matthew 21:23). When Jesus was approached with this question, he did not respond by saying that no authority was necessary. He lived and taught the necessity of Divine authority to direct our steps. “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4). It is only by and through the word of God that we find and lay hold on eternal life: “It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life” (John 6:63). A refusal to accept God’s guidance through His word is the height of self-righteousness.

While we seek a “thus saith the Lord” for our spiritual guidance, what are we to do when the Bible does not address a particular question or subject? When the Scriptures are silent regarding a matter, how are we to interpret this silence? The silence of the Scriptures is either prohibitive or permissive. We are either allowed to do what we please religiously because “the Bible does not say not to,” or we are prohibited to act because God has not spoken. Sadly, most choose to view the silence of God’s holy word as granting permission for every innovation and practice imaginable. Speaking only where the Bible speaks necessarily implies that we maintain silence where the Bible has not spoken. As many have noted through the years, the Bible is its own best commentary. How do those men who were born along by the Holy Spirit to pen the precious Book Divine (2 Peter 1:20-21) view the silence of God on a matter? The inspired penman of the epistle to the Hebrews builds an argument about the priesthood of Jesus on what the Bible does not say. “For if he (Jesus, SPM) were on earth, he should not be a priest...” (Hebrews 8:4). But, why

could Jesus not serve as a priest upon earth. Hear the Divine answer: “For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood” (Hebrews 7:14). When God instructed Moses to select priests from the tribe of Levi, the command ruled out priests coming from any other tribe. The silence of God in regard to the other eleven tribes prohibited those from these tribes from serving as priests. Those to whom the epistle of Hebrews was written fully understood why Jesus of Nazareth could not be a priest upon earth. Can you imagine our Lord arguing that he could serve as a priest upon earth because the Law did not expressly forbid the selection of priests from the tribe of Judah? Yet, how many argue in similar fashion regarding all sorts of teachings and practices in the name of religion today? Someone once said that God is as wise in His reservations as He is in His revelations. There are many things left unanswered, many subjects not broached in the word of God that, for our own good, are better left that way. “The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law” (Deuteronomy 29:29).

God has revealed unto us His precious word in order to guide us to an eternal home with Him. May we order our steps according to the commandments of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Let us never be so guilty as to assume that we are wise enough to speak where God has not spoken, nor so rebellious that we fail to act where God has spoken. Speak where the Bible speaks, and be silent where the Bible is silent.

WOT

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BEFORE YOU DIVORCE

Bill Burk, Seagoville, TX

The institution of marriage goes back to the beginning. The book of Genesis describes its commencement this way:

And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the Lord God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said: This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh (Gen. 2:21-24).

God's ideal regarding holy wedlock is one man for one woman for life. Death dissolves the marriage bond (Rom. 7:1-3). In worst case scenarios, marriages may end due to marital infidelity (Mat. 19:9). However, we must remember that the Bible teaches that God hates divorce (Mal. 2:16). If you know someone who is considering divorce, or if you are, then consider these truths...

1. Divorce is not a problem solver. Someone might say, "If I get rid of my spouse, I will get rid of this problem and then I will be happy." However, it has been shown that divorce tends to bring more problems than solutions. Some think that if they divorce they can finally find the companion of their dreams and start over. However, the grass is not always greener on the other side. One study suggested that some sixty percent of second marriages end in divorce.

2. Divorce is often a creator of problems. First, most divorces fly in the face of Bible teaching and directly contradict the words of our Lord (Mat. 19:1-9). This is a problem. But there are others that one might want to

consider. First, there are money problems, especially among women. The standard of living for divorced women has been known to plummet on average some seventy-three percent. Second, there is the problem of loneliness. Again, women seem to suffer the most. It's been estimated that forty percent of women over thirty who divorce never remarry. Rather than finding Mr. Right they live the rest of their lives alone. Finally, divorce typically becomes the source of ongoing pain and depression. A number of divorcees report that they continue to experience hurt even ten years after the break up of their marriages.

3. Divorce hurts children. Several years ago, Claire Berman wrote a book entitled, *A Hole in My Heart: Adult Children of Divorce Speak Out*, in which she said, "The most striking impression one comes away with is that for children, the divorce of the parents never goes away. It may be welcomed. It may be understood. But even when it is a positive solution to a destructive family situation, divorce is a critical experience for its children. Although there may be relief that a painful situation has been ended, there is also regret that a healthy family could not be created." With these thoughts in mind, we must be very careful. We dare not cause any little child to stumble (Mark 9:42).

WOT

A TRIP TO MOONLITE

Mike Benson, Hattiesburg, MS

Larry and Jane Hudson are dear friends from the Main Street church. They recently invited me to Sunday dinner following the AM worship assembly. This special couple was celebrating their 40th wedding anniversary and so they asked me to go along and commemorate the happy occasion.

Our destination...? Owensboro, Kentucky and Moonlite Bar-B-Q. Everybody in this neck of the woods knows about Moonlite. Think "casual dining." Think "family feel." Think "all-you-can-eat" BBQ buffet. Underline the word "all." Hungry guests stand in line with a plate and then help themselves to a smorgasbord of tasty, home-style dishes.

Buffet. Choose what you want. Skip what you don't want. Go back as many times as you wish. This is gastronomical heaven. I loaded my plate with country favorites -- mashed potatoes, pulled pork, and green beans, but then skipped the macaroni and cheese, gravy and rolls. I left the restaurant full as the proverbial tick. Okay, maybe not full -- I stopped just one bite shy of gluttony. The meal was great. The Christian company was even better.

It occurs to me that many preachers treat the Word like a trip to Moonlite. They fill their theological dinner-ware with perennial favorites. They "eat" what their doctrinal belly desires (Phil. 3:19), but then pass over those food items which their denomination deems unpalatable. For instance, some heap their plate with faith, but then consciously omit what the Scriptures teach about baptism. They select SOME of God's word but not the SUM of God's word. They claim to be "Bible-believing," but then do a "Moonlite" on those passages which teach the necessity of immersion.

Does the New Testament require baptism? No? Look again. According to Matthew 28:19-20, baptism is involved in my becoming a disciple of Christ. According to Mark 16:15-16, baptism is something I must engage if I want to be saved. According to Acts 2:37-38, baptism is something I must undergo in order to be forgiven of my sins. According to Acts 8:12-13, 38, baptism is something I must submit to, even if it means changing my religion. According to Acts 10:48, baptism is something I must obey because it has been commanded. According to

Acts 16:14-15, 33, baptism is something I will yield to -- immediately -- in order to be faithful to the Lord. According to Acts 22:16, baptism is something I must do if I desire my past sins to be taken away (cf. Acts 9:6). According to Romans 6:3-7, baptism is that which makes a difference (slave of sin vs. slave of righteousness) in my life. According to 1 Corinthians 12:13, baptism is the means by which I enter the body or church (cf. Eph. 1:22-23). According to Galatians 3:26-27, baptism is the way that I become a child of God. According to 1 Peter 3:21, baptism saves.

Got your Bible handy? Read through [Jeremiah 36](#). Jeremiah prophesied during the closing days of the Southern kingdom of Judah. On one occasion, the prophet received a divine message from God and then had the words written on a scroll (vv. 1-3). This inspired document was later read to king Jehoiakim by Jehudi (vv. 21). When Jehudi read that the kingdom-nation would be overthrown by the Babylonian empire, Jehoiakim decided he couldn't "stomach" anymore. The arrogant ruler took a scribe's penknife, cut up the scroll, and then cast it into the fire until it was consumed (vv. 22-24). Jehoiakim would have liked Moonlite. Eat what you want. Skip what you don't want. Mashed potatoes "yes," dinner rolls "no." Authoritarian rule "yes," servile bondage "no." Faith "yes," baptism "no."

Dear reader, the Bible is not a self-serve restaurant. We can't pick out the parts that we like and then reject or cut out the portions that don't strike our fancy. We must declare and consume (Jer. 15:16) the whole counsel of God ([Acts 20:27](#); cf. 2 Tim. 4:2-4), including those passages which teach the necessity of baptism. Is your preacher offering some of God's Word, or the sum of God's Word? *"The sum of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous rules endures forever"* (Psm. 119:160).

WOT

THINKING OF HEAVEN

Riley Nelson, Richmond Hill, GA

The word of God is a one of the great blessings mankind has been given. God explains to man how he came to be, how to live, and how to prepare for eternity. In the pages of holy writ we are told of just how “wonderful” heaven will be. The passages serve to give us comfort when we have experienced the loss of a loved one, and hope for ourselves when we are over burdened by the troubles of this world. Paul wrote, “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; (2 Cor. 4:17).

When one thinks of heaven, many different Bible verses come to mind. For instance; “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:1- 4). Perhaps one of the most comforting passages concerning heaven is, “And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Rev. 21:2 – 4). As human beings are limited in understanding the realm of spiritual beings, God used accommodative language to help us have an idea of the splendor of heaven. We know of the beauty of gold, pearl, and rare jewels, therefore we can have an idea of this wonderful place The Revelation letter is man’s portal to glimpse the home of the faithful for all eternity. Truly what a “wonderful city” heaven will be. Knowing such a place is waiting should help persuade lost souls to seek for this place, causing them to desire to leave the things of the world behind. All should have heaven in their mind’s eye as they go about their daily tasks, and strive to obey God so heaven can be their home.

What a great blessing it is to know that

heaven will be ours for eternity. Many times it is said of heaven that it is a going home. The use of the word “home” gives a sense of peace and comfort to the idea of heaven. A home is the place where no matter what befalls us during the day we know it is our safe haven, for there the ones who care about us and who love us reside. This, being coupled with the idea of a garden of rest, makes one long even more for heaven.

The Hebrew writer spoke of heaven as entering into a rest. “Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left *us* of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard *it*. For we which have believed do enter into rest ... There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God *did* from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief” (Heb. 4:1 – 11). Rest is something we all seek from time to time. Have you ever been out working all day, tired and hot? Now think of how you felt when you went home, cleaned up, and sat down in your favorite chair, propping your feet up and closing your eyes to enjoy a few moments of sweet rest. What a wonderful description of the rest that awaits the faithful. Yet, it should also be understood that the rest to be enjoyed in heaven will not mean the ending of activity, for there will be worship of God around His throne (Rev. 5: 1ff). Some would say this is a contradiction, but think back to the Sabbath day. This was a day of rest, but also a day of activity as they served God

Paul by the eye of faith knew that heaven awaited him and all the faithful of all time. He longed for heaven, but he knew that he had much work left to do for the Lord (Phil. 1:20 – 26).

Jesus assured His disciples, as well as all who read this passage, that in heaven there are abiding-places prepared, and He “bids us a welcome to come”. Matthew recorded, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you

rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matt. 11:28 – 30). It is God’s desire that all be saved and enter in to the rest of this glorious city (1 Tim. 2:4). This idea shows the mission of Jesus, He came to save mankind (Matt. 1:21, Luke 19:10, John 14:6).

Heaven awaits all who will prepare. Believe in Jesus, repent of sins, confess Him as the Son of God, be baptized for the remission of sins and live faithfully for Him, and heaven can be yours.

WOT

www.sixthavenuechurch.org

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IT'S PEACE

Eva Nell Brown Naramore

Deep in my heart there's a settled peace,
Not offered by the world
Of fast decaying treasures,
Of silver, gold, or pearl.

It's peace that comes from God above,
With something better still;
Peace eternal after death,
Where we'll forever live.

If my cup of joy runs over,
And tears fall on the ground
I don't need your sympathy,
'Cause I've not been cast down.

It's just that born-again feeling,
That Christians tell about.
It makes you love your neighbor;
It makes you want to shout.

When the cross of life gets heavy,
It's peace beyond compare,
To think what God has promised,
Across death's sea somewhere.

In the city of the righteous,
No pains of death to bear,
Where peace will then be perfect,
No tragic scenes appear.

It's peace; it's peace
That brings me consolation,
In the darkest hour of night,
In the time of tribulation.

ASK A BIBLE QUESTION

QUESTION: One of our family members, who is a Christian, is at the present time living in adultery. Does 1 Corinthians 5:11 apply to a Church gathering or would it also apply to us as a family as we are together to eat in my home?

ANSWER: The phrase “not even to eat with such a one” (v.11) has reference to a time when the congregation is gathered (cf. 1 Cor. 5:4, “when you are assembled”). The context of 1 Corinthians 5 is a command to the Corinthian church for the purpose of maintaining their purity (1 Cor. 5:7, 8). The concept of fellowship in meal gatherings (2 Thess. 3; 1 Cor. 5; Jude 12) indicates religious endorsement, a concept which is not usually applicable in family meals. Persons in adulterous relationships can be present at family meals without indicating religious endorsement. However, we must exercise extreme caution not to allow ourselves or our children to become desensitized to sin through association with loved ones who habitually practice it (Galatians 6:1b; James 1:27). Let the adulterous person know where you stand; that you oppose his/her way of life. We should never remain silent about sin. Jesus was clear in His teachings and actions that sin is wrong (John 8:11, 34, 44; Luke 13:3, 5). We must strive to restore to faithfulness those living in sin (Luke 15:3-7; Gal. 6:1a; 2 Cor. 5:11; Jude 23). As Christians, we cannot distance ourselves completely from the world (1 Cor. 5:10). Christians must live in the world in order to teach the lost and be an example for that which is right (Philippians 2:12-14). What a Christian CANNOT do is participate with the world in sin (1 John 2:15-17; 2 Cor. 6:14-18). We are to be in the world, but we are to be unlike the world, living out the life of Christ as lights in a dark place (Ephesians 5:3-14; Colossians 3:1-17; Matthew 5:13-16). Jesus ate with sinners (Matthew 9:11-12; Mark 2:15-16; Luke 5:30; 15:2) but never participated in nor endorsed their sin (Heb. 4:15; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:21, 22). Jesus lived in the world, but the world did not live in Him. We must be like Jesus (Phil. 2:5; 1 Cor. 11:1).

—Mark N. Posey
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