



Preparing Souls To Serve The Lord

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Who Will We Choose To Serve?

By
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The five men who are graduating in May have already chosen to serve God. However, they cannot choose for us. All of us must choose for ourselves. When we are confronted with the word of God we have a choice to make. Will we follow Him or will we follow the “gods” of our own desires? Long ago, Joshua issued this challenge: *“Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the Lord. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord”* (Josh. 24:14–15). Rest assured, we are right now serving either God or “gods.”

Context

Before making application of Joshua's challenge, let us consider the context in which it is given. Chapters 23 and 24 of

Joshua record his farewell speeches. Joshua is about to die. In his first farewell address (23:1–16), Joshua reminds the people that he is getting old and the time of his departure is near. He also informs them that God will continue to do great things for them so long as they remain faithful to Him. They must not mingle among the nations and adopt their idolatrous ways of life. In his second farewell address (24:1–15), Joshua gathers the people before God at Shechem, where the Lord appeared to Abraham (Josh. 24:1 cf. Gen. 12:8). Upon this occasion the people present themselves before God, realizing the seriousness of the situation. Joshua reminds them of God's blessings (24:2–13). Israel was blessed because God chose her to be His people. God took their father Abraham from beyond the river, led him through Canaan, and multiplied his seed through Isaac. Israel was also blessed because God delivered her from bondage. God delivered them not only from Egypt, but from the Amorites and from King Balak who hired Balaam to curse them. In addition, He gave them victory over Jericho and entrance into the land flowing

with milk and honey. Therefore, says Joshua, you (Israel) have an obligation!

Joshua's Choice

In the challenge recorded in 24:14–15, Joshua tells them to consider the options—gods or God. They could serve the gods that their fathers served, or they could serve the gods of the Amorites since, after all, they were living in their land. However, to serve these gods would be foolish, especially in view of all that the true God has done for them. Joshua makes clear that a CHOICE must be made. God has given each of us the power to choose. Every accountable human being is responsible to choose, and he or she must bear the consequences of the choices made. While it is true that we have no choice about some things (birth, death, etc.), we do have a choice as to whom we will serve. Joshua made clear his choice, *“As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord!”* Service that is not free and voluntary is hypocrisy. God will not force us to serve Him. If God is to be served, He must be served with our free will and with all of our being (cf. Mt. 22:37). True

service to the Lord must have its roots in and spring from the heart. God does not draft us against our will. Joshua knew this and, therefore, chose to commit himself and his family to the only true God!

Our Choice

And so it is with us. We must chose right now whom we will serve. As Joshua and all of God's earthly leaders show us, present leaders in God's kingdom cannot lead forever. So long as this earth stands, one day the present leaders of the church will walk no more with the faithful on this side of eternity. Who will "fill their shoes"? Where will our next elders, deacons, preachers, Bible school teachers, and personal workers come from? They must and they will come from those who chose to serve the Lord. Will we be in that number? Like those to whom Joshua spoke, there is no reason why we should choose to serve other gods, especially in view of what God has done for us. Any excuse we might conjecture as to why we cannot serve God is lame. Someone might say, "You don't understand, I work too hard to have time for church." But, so what? Who isn't busy these days? Besides, is there such a thing as being too busy for the Lord? Is the church then only for retirees, or people who absolutely have nothing better to do? The truth of the matter is this: any business that comes between us and the Lord is "other gods." We must not make excuse. Instead, let us, like Joshua, choose to serve the Lord with all our being. With the Lord's help, we can make a difference for good in the lives that we influence (cf. Josh. 24:31). May God help us to that end by choosing to serve Him.



Parasitic Christianity

By

Jackie M. Stearsman

The American Heritage Dictionary, CD-ROM version, defines a parasite as "1. An organism that grows, feeds, and is sheltered on or in a different organism while contributing nothing to the survival of its host. 2. One who habitually takes advantage of the generosity of others without making any useful return." By Christianity we mean the religion taught by Jesus Christ as revealed in the New Testament.

True Christianity has always had problems with those who wanted to masquerade as genuine, but in reality were serious enemies to the cause of truth. Jesus and Paul make us aware of persons using such tactics—"wolves in sheep clothing" (Matt. 7:15; Acts 20:29). Jude describes the conduct of some: "For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jude 4). Paul writing to the Philippian Christians would have them aware of those with less than honest motives and desires: "Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end *is* destruction, whose God *is* their belly, and whose glory *is* in their shame, who mind earthly things.)" (Phil. 3:17-19).

The above statements should alert serious Bible students to the ever present danger of those who masquerade as something they

are not—Parasitic Christians. Often one extreme causes an opposite extreme. The church is saturated with liberalism today. When schools and publishing houses produce books that deny the full deity of the Christ and constantly berate His Church and Kingdom we can expect some to try to take advantage of the troubled times.

Another danger is equally present, overreaction. In such an environment we have a fertile field for those who make false charges against truth. False positions may be masqueraded as solutions but in reality may result in new positions as devastating and parasitic as the former.

Anti-ism Is Parasitic

Those who promote the philosophies of Anti-ism that we have described in past issues are doing the same thing a parasitic organism does to its host. The major problem with Anti-ism does not come from starting a new congregation in a given area and reaching out to the lost. Anti-ism, like a parasite, works from within the church and divides and sows discord among faithful brethren. Properties faithful brethren have purchased have been lost. This leaves faithful brethren in the

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position of having to start again and rebuild their meeting houses and live in an environment where the truth has been severely hindered by division that never should have been.

Crossroads/Boston Is Parasitic

How many churches were divided and disturbed by the parasitic movement known as The Crossroads Movement? The Crossroads Movement gave birth to The Boston Church of Christ that has now evolved into the International Church of Christ. The tactics have not changed. We received requests recently to help those in other countries that they are infiltrating and harming by this Parasitic Movement. They make inroads into the gullible and unsuspecting babes in the church and lead them away to make them disciples of men rather than God (Acts 20:29-31). Who can name any lasting good that has come from this movement? Those who once embraced her with open arms have had to escape her clutches. Yet, some seem never to learn from their experiences. They remind you of trees in the swamps of Florida with outstretched limbs that welcome the Spanish Moss to their own destruction. If someone does not remove the Moss from the trees in time, it will choke to death its gracious host. This is true of the Crossroads/Boston methodology.

Liberalism Is Parasitic

The masquerading "change agents" among us are great parasites. Parading as great benefactors to the poor and unloved of the masses of society and proposing to correct "Old Hermeneutics" so that the world can have greater respect for "us."

Some would have us believe that accepting "unity in diversity" would result in multitudes beating a path to our doors.

A challenge: Let them go among the denominational world and unite them, then let them come home and show us how they did it. The Denominational world has been practicing unity in diversity for centuries, what is the result? When the liberal change agents finish their task, who will be able to tell them from what the Denominational world has advocated for centuries?

By liberalism, I mean those in the churches of Christ that have in mind to make us accept mechanical instruments of music in worship, women preachers, fellowship with the denominations, etc. This is not the first time the churches of Christ have been weakened and received nothing in return from parasitic liberalism. Even a superficial knowledge of the real world may enlighten one. Read Restoration History and become acquainted with what is happening in the schools started by faithful brethren who wanted to develop nondenominational Christianity based upon the New Testament. The leaders in the liberal camp are vivid examples of Parasitic Christianity?

Conclusion

Let us close the thoughts with some reflective questions. These should help focus the issue before us—Parasitic Christianity.

(1) Liberalism: Is Liberalism like an organism that grows, feeds, and is sheltered on or in a different organism while contributing nothing to the survival of its host? Is Liberalism a movement who habitually takes advantage of the generosity of others without making any useful return? If the answer to these two

questions is yes, then Liberalism is a Parasitic form of Christianity and for the health and stability of the cause of truth, Liberalism must be rejected.

(2) Crossroads/Boston: Is the Crossroads/Boston Movement like an organism that grows, feeds, and is sheltered on or in a different organism while contributing nothing to the survival of its host? Is the Crossroads/Boston movement one that habitually takes advantage of the generosity of others without making any useful return? If the answer to these two questions is yes, then the Boston/Crossroads Movement is a Parasitic form of Christianity and for the health and stability of the cause of truth, the Crossroads/Boston Movement must be rejected.

(3) Anti-ism: Is Anti-ism like an organism that grows, feeds, and is sheltered on or in a different organism while contributing nothing to the survival of its host? Is Anti-ism a movement that habitually takes advantage of the generosity of others without making any useful return? If the answer to these two questions is yes, then Anti-ism is a Parasitic form of Christianity and for the health and stability of the cause of truth, Anti-ism must be rejected.



WORLD EVANGELISM INTERNATIONAL INFLUENCE FLORIDA SCHOOL OF PREACHING

The Threefold caption above shows the impact The Florida School of Preaching is having. Those of you who support the school should recognize that the student body has an international flavor. This enables students to draw from the backgrounds of each country and culture present. The teaching done must be with a world wide

implication and not totally colored by a time or cultural setting. It is a blessing to see how New Testament Christianity can go into any country of the world and make that nation and people better.

Representatives

Currently, we have on file applications that reach into many parts of the world. The greatest problem is raising support for foreign students and meeting the immigration procedures. Our government recognizes the school to issue student visas for two year studies. At the present time there are (six) 6 different countries and cultures studying with us.

**Haiti
Jamaica
Liberia
Puerto Rico
United States
Zambia**

We have needs of housing and transportation for foreign students. Meeting all the needs is not easy on the school, and puts additional strain upon our finances to do the best we can for all concerned.

Cultural Lessons

In teaching, they provide us an opportunity to emphasize matters that may be taken for

granted were it not for the variety of cultures present. (1) Marriage Customs. Recently in a class we were presenting materials designed to help preachers to conduct a wedding ceremony. The different cultures represented in the class had differing regulations that their cultures and civil states required. Each country had its own regulations and requirements. What we teach to do in the USA is not what is traditional in Zambia or Liberia. One of these students was shocked to learn that the family of the bride bore most of the expense for formal weddings in the USA. In his country the groom bears the expense for the ceremony including a dowry for the bride. (2) Local Autonomy of the church. How could I, as an American, provide expedient directions to cultures and traditions that are as foreign to me as the languages spoken by the natives themselves? Only native people could provide wisdom to function in a given society. We surely would not expect them to come into our society and be able to address every local situation, would we? In God's wisdom he left cultural differences that were neutral in their nature to be determined by the local setting. Elders are over the congregation where they are, how could they function efficiently otherwise?

We impart eternal truths to these men in study. When they

return to their native land, they can present these truths without having the obstacles of a foreigner or stranger among them. We may attract some by the novelty of a matter, white man in a land where most are black, but these so attracted will not be committed to Truth as they ought.

Expanding influence

When some of these men return home, they will be working to train other men to preach and teach the Truth. A school is already built in Haiti with some of your students going there to work. Those returning to Zambia and Liberia will be teaching their fellow citizens the good news that we so often take for granted. Our lives are enriched daily as we are privileged to work with these dedicated servants of the Christ. We pray that the truths they learn in the Florida School of Preaching go throughout their homelands. If you are in our area, stop by the school and visit one of our classes. If you do, you too will be impressed with what you are helping us do to reach the lost of the world.



Fall Semester

It is urgent that you get your applications in now. The next term begins in August. Contact the office for needed items.

FLORIDA SCHOOL OF PREACHING

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