

The Christian Exodus

(A special message for the Christian youth)

By Ellis P. Forsman

Introduction

Jesus said in Luke 19:10, “*For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.*” He did not come to solve the political problems of Israel, nor to break the back of Roman tyranny, nor for bringing improvements in agriculture, trade, medicine, or education, nor for any other similar thing. He came to redeem men from sin.

I want you young men and women to pay special attention to this message, because if you have not already been confronted with spiritual difficulties in your life, or have been thinking about challenges to your faith, you soon will be. Christ is losing members (especially those in their late teens) to a lost and dying world at an alarming rate, and there are several reasons for this.

The task of reaching the lost with the gospel is great because of the distractions of ungodliness and immorality in our permissive society. These influences inhibit one’s desire to live a Christian life.

Today’s society says, “If it feels good, do it!”, “I will do what I want to do when I want to do it, and it’s nobody else’s business as long as it makes me feel good.”, and “It’s my body, I can do anything I want to it.” Such is a very selfish attitude! It is presumptuous (to assume contrary to given information or authority) to think it is always right to do what one wants to do; it is rebellion against God because our body does not belong to us, it belongs to Him who created it.

In Romans 12:1-2 Paul wrote, “*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*” We have a responsibility to God to take good care of the body He gave us.

The children of Israel repeatedly did not listen to God’s messages to them through Moses, choosing rather to listen to others perhaps “more eloquent and persuasive” than him, and presumed to know better than Moses, yet were ignorant of God’s righteousness.

In one instance, when the children of Israel were encamped at the base of a mountain where the Amorites lived, God told them to move on in the wilderness and to leave the Amorites alone. So-called “wise-men” of Israel decided instead to go up and fight against the Amorites, thinking “God will help us as He has done before”, but they were miserably wrong. God was not with them because of their disobedience. He told them in Deut. 1:43, “*So I spake unto you; and ye would not hear, but rebelled against the commandment of the LORD, and went presumptuously up into the hill.*” Because of this they were defeated soundly, “*And the Amorites, which dwelt in that mountain, came out against you, and chased you, as bees do, and destroyed you in Seir, even unto Hormah. And ye returned and wept before the LORD; but the LORD would not hearken to your voice, nor give ear unto you.*” (Vss 44-45).

Many people today presume that God is with them because they act in a religious manner that seems right to them. They chant and sing praises to God with waving, uplifted arms, yet are ignorant of what He has commanded them to do, or they consider what He has said as irrelevant. They make the mistake of thinking that worship is entirely for their benefit — whatever makes them feel good. Worship is an action word; something that has to be performed to God — to pay homage to Him, or reverence and please Him.

A few years ago, President John F. Kennedy said, “Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.” What probably should be said today is, “Ask not what God can do for you; ask what you can do for God.” After all, it is a worship service. This is not to say that we don’t benefit from worship service ourselves, because we do. Our spiritual energy is restored every time we meet, especially when we partake of the communion. But our focus should be on doing what pleases God, not what pleases ourselves.

God told Israel in 1 Sam. 15:22, “... *to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.*” Jesus said in John 5:30, “*I can of mine own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.*” Do you hear what Jesus said? He sought what pleased God, not His own. What pleases God in our worship service is when we do exactly as He says. When we do otherwise, we are committing a presumptuous sin, just as did the Israelites.

David said in Prov. 16:25, “*There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.*” He knew that to presume something to be acceptable to God where God was silent was a great sin. David’s prayer that he might not commit presumptuous sins is recorded in Psalms 19:13, “*Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.*”

Peter was corrected by God for presuming that it was all right to build an altar for Jesus, Moses, and Elias, “*Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.*” (Matt. 17:4-5).

Just because something seems right to us, doesn’t mean that it is acceptable with God.

Influence of the World

Sin in the world appears very attractive, especially to the youth of today. Most people know what is sin and what is not sin. Sin is indulged because of the weakness of the flesh. There are many sermons and articles brought of this aspect of sin, and that is not the focus of this article which covers the type of things that can, and does, confuse the youth of today, and pulls them from the church. Simply, follow the Apostle Paul’s advice to young Timothy: “*Flee also youthful lusts...*” (2 Tim. 2:22).

The Public Educational System

We’ll start with the public educational system. The world looks upon their educators as being wise and correct in their pronouncements and teachings. But many of them scorn the word of God and consider it irrelevant. They obscure true science and teach their false science instead; or they poke fun or ridicule those who try to uphold their religious beliefs.

When my children enrolled in our local high school I strolled through the campus and facilities. While exploring their library I noticed that several rows of books espoused the subject of evolution while only one very small book espoused the creationist viewpoint. It was very obvious to me that my children would be indoctrinated by the same false information that was taught when I was in school back in the 50's.

I had a very difficult time with my high school Biology teacher, who often ridiculed God and the Bible in his classroom. If any student took issue with anything he said they became the object of his scorn in front of the entire classroom. He once made the claim that if the Bible was true that man today would have one less rib than women because God "supposedly" took Adam's rib to make Eve. I tried to explain how ridiculous his argument was by saying that if you cut off a rat's tail, its offspring would still have a normal tail. There were a few like myself whose grades suffered because of challenges to such thinking.

When one of my children brought her books home from school, I took the opportunity to examine her Biology textbook. I was not surprised to find that God and religion was ridiculed in the very first chapter. The educators do not want religion taught in their classrooms, but they sure push their false religion of "God does not exist."

Many evidences of creation exist in nature and geology, but the public educators either refuse, or are not allowed, to present this material in the classrooms. This leaves the student with a false science. Paul in his letter to Timothy wrote, "*O Timothy, keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science falsely so called.*" (1 Tim. 6:20). There are many, many examples of false science being taught in our public school systems.

Textbooks today show early drawings on the walls of the Grand Canyon showing men and animals together, such as deer, bear, and mountain lion; however they fail to mention that some of these drawings also include dinosaurs. This is omitted in the textbooks because it does not fit their preconceived notion that dinosaurs preceded man and did not exist in the same time frame as the so-called modern-day deer, bear, and mountain lion.

These types of educators are in various levels of our schools, especially in our universities. They teach that "God is dead!" and cause many of our youth to be confused and leave the church. It is obvious that God is dead in their lives, and God says they are fools. "*The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God...*" (Psalms 53:1).

My family doctor, a number of years ago, told me that when he was going to college he believed everything the educators told him that science proves that there is no God. Then, when he was studying the structure of the human ear, he told himself, "There is no way the human ear could have evolved; this intricate structure was designed."

You young ones — if anyone teaches you in the name of science that there is no God, talk to someone in the church about it. Don't let your faith waiver because of false information. Some young men and women when confronted with this type of material become convinced that the grownups in the church are old fuddy-duddies and don't know what they are talking about. Actually, they were fed the same type of information when they were young, and saw the falsehoods in it, thus remained strong spiritually. There is a wealth of scientific information available that does not appear in the public school textbooks that does not contradict God's word. Seek it out! Ask for help if you need it.

School Activities

School activities also hinder the spiritual growth of today's youth. There was a time that no school activities were scheduled on a Sunday, but that time has long passed. More and more of our youth are missing during church services because of activities such as sports, drama, music, etc. You probably know of a number of other activities, as well, that interfere with your service to God. It doesn't have to be a school activity; it can be anything one does instead of going to church: camping, fishing, boating, golfing, sleeping...

Years ago, Bro. Tom Broadway showed me his scrapbook. It was filled with pictures and newspaper clippings of his baseball days in high school, college, and even when he played for the New York Giants (that was before the team moved to San Francisco). Tom was a good player in a few positions, but professionally he was a left-handed pitcher. He can tell you interesting stories of playing with some of baseball's greats, such as Willie Mays.

Tom was raised in the church. He said it bothered him when he was playing baseball, because he was always missing church. He finally gave up his professional career because he said it just wasn't worth it. His spiritual life became more important to him than baseball.

There are some today that feel they can't afford a college education, so they try to excel in something (usually a sport of some kind) so that they can get a full scholarship to pay their way. It doesn't have to be that way. These activities are usually a hindrance to a Christian life. Many times the universities they chose are hundreds of miles from the nearest loyal church, and by the time they finish their education, the Lord is the farthest thing from their mind. Those who feel they have to sacrifice their religious bent to seek their worldly profession are putting the cart before the horse.

Jesus said in Matt. 6:33, "*But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*" He has promised that if we seek Him first that He will care for us. Don't let these activities come between you and your Lord; don't feel like you have to excel in a sport to obtain a college education.

False Teachings of the Religious World

Preachers in the religious world downplay the gospel of Christ and instead present bedtime stories, nursery rhymes, little sermonettes, and dissertations on psychology, philosophy, current events, and politics. These are not going to convict the world of sin; these are not going to convert souls to Christ.

Many of the religious leaders in the world today do not accept the authority of the scriptures concerning God's plan of salvation. Even one church of Christ preacher in one church publication that I receive boasted that he preached a full year without mentioning baptism once. This is so unlike the very first sermon taught by Peter when baptism was taught for the remission of sins.

Too many are satisfied to let society influence their gospel rather than letting Christ's gospel influence their society. Even the churches of Christ have changed over the years. There was a time when all of the churches of Christ met just as we do. Then they fell to the influence of the religious churches of the world and modified many things in the service that were not authorized in the scriptures.

Back around 1920, Bro. George Scott, my grandfather's brother, went to Northern Rhodesia in Africa and set up a mission. He, with the aid of some others, translated the Bible

into the native language. They used only one cup in the communion during their worship services. After 20 years he came back to this country for a visit, and was so disgusted at how much the church had changed in so short a time that he went back to Africa and stayed until he died in the mid-1950's. Many churches of Christ today have drifted further from the gospel since then. My great-uncle would be heartbroken today if he knew that the mission he started and nurtured has since been taken over by the digressive churches of Christ.

One reason so many of today's youth leave the church is that they want to be entertained, rather than worship God.

I have to relate an experience I received while attending evening services at another church in our neighborhood of which my wife, Lynell, and I were invited. After services were started, all of the children of various ages were directed to go to their respective classes where a variety of craft activities awaited them. The adults not involved with these activities remained in the auditorium and were "treated" to a stage performance of a musical band, a male singer, and a woman accompanist singer. No song books were available for the "audience" to participate. The music had a lot of "feeling" and beat, but little scriptural value.

The preacher walked among those in the front of the audience when he spoke, touching them or patting them on the shoulder, perhaps to make them feel more "comfortable." He spoke encouragingly for the audience to live a greater life, presenting a number of non-biblical examples. He used only two scriptural references, and falsified both of those.

In one of these references he read Ezek. 1:4-6 and said it described the beast that Ezekiel saw, *"And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the colour of amber, out of the midst of the fire. Also out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures. And this was their appearance; they had the likeness of a man. And every one had four faces, and every one had four wings."* Read the book of Ezekiel and you will see there is a lot more to the description of the beast.

For additional entertainment throughout the entire service, an artist on the stage attempted to captivate the audience by painting a huge picture of the beast based on the scripture that was read by the preacher. His rendition was woefully incomplete when compared to the entire description given by Ezekiel. The artist also placed a small image of a person in a lower corner of the painting, depicting Ezekiel staring up at the beast.

The preacher claimed that Ezekiel didn't know what this beast was, but that something that great deserved to be worshipped, so Ezekiel fell down and worshipped it. I thought to myself, "Something is wrong with this picture."

I quickly scanned the entire book of Ezekiel and was not surprised to find that Ezekiel did not worship the beast. In truth, the 10th chapter of Ezekiel says the beast in Ezekiel's vision was four cherubims. Do you think that if Ezekiel had worshipped this beast, God would have been pleased with him? Remember, God said He was very jealous and commanded that only He was to be worshipped.

The other scripture that the preacher used was non-existent in God's word. He claimed that Paul said in his Ephesian letter (no chapter or verse given) that he prayed that they would live great lives. I didn't remember Paul praying about this subject, so I quickly read the entire book of Ephesians and found this preacher's statement to be a fabrication. Paul did pray that they might know God better (Eph. 1:16), but not for the things mentioned by the preacher.

Lynell mentioned to me that she was uncomfortable being there. I told her that I was not only uncomfortable, but also angry because this preacher was lying to his people. Only two

verses in the entire sermon, and they were falsified! It is sad that this is the case throughout the religious world. Are these preachers ashamed of the gospel of God to hide it from their sermons?

Paul said in Rom. 1:16, *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”* He also said in 2 Cor. 4:3, *“But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:”* It is hid because it is entirely lacking in their sermons.

Are these preachers’ consciences seared, because they don’t seem to care what they do or say as long as they get their desired results? Does this attitude of “the end justifies the means” please God?

When I was a young man in the church, I visited a Baptist gospel meeting with Bro. Howard McCay. During the sermon the preacher taught some assumptions as fact where the Bible was silent. When he offered the invitation at the close of his sermon he said for everyone to close their eyes and anyone that wanted him to pray to God on their behalf to indicate so by raising their hand. I dutifully closed my eyes and bowed my head, and then heard the preacher saying, “God bless you, brother!”, “God forgive you, sister!”, or something similar. He then interjected with, “Now, remember, I want everyone to respect the privacy of others and keep your eyes closed.” Afterward, Bro. Howard told me that he was watching the preacher pronounce his blessings on people where no hands were raised, so he stared into the preacher’s eyes defiantly. The preacher’s deceit was known, but he still continued his ruse. After the service was over He avoided Bro. Howard. Such deceit is common in the religious world.

The gospel is relevant today; it is, and always has been, God’s power to save. It cannot save if it is never preached! *“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”* (John 17:17). *“Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.”* (1 Pet. 1:22-23).

Why do so many people accept a watered-down religion? It’s because they want an undisturbed conscience; so they do not investigate what they are being taught. Whether they realize it, or not, they are being presumptuously disobedient to God and His gospel, and will eventually be lost if they don’t change. *“And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ:”* (2 Thess. 1:7-8). *“And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.”* (2 Thess. 2:10).

It is a shame that many would rather listen to an easy, non-judgmental message than listen to the word of God. Paul told Timothy (and to us as well) to preach the word of God, not some message that was to soothe their ears. *“I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.”* (2 Tim. 4:1-4).

Beware! If any religious man preaches anything and leaves out the word of God, he is a wolf in sheep’s clothing. It doesn’t matter if it sounds good, or even stirs up the people, that person is a false representative of God.

I have heard elderly visitors to our congregation, as well as to other congregations, after services say, “Now, that was a gospel sermon. That is how sermons used to be preached years ago!” They said it was refreshing to hear a good old gospel sermon. Many in the religious world today have never heard a good gospel sermon.

Tele-Evangelists

Some while back, one young man I know was watching a tele-evangelist who was supposedly healing people’s infirmities by hitting them on the forehead and they would fall to the floor after being overcome with the Holy Ghost. The young man asked me, “Why don’t we do that?” I told him it was all fake; that it was entirely unlike the scriptures. This disturbed him. He said, “It can’t be fake if it is on national TV.” I’m here to tell you that there is a lot of fakery going on in the name of religion.

A tele-evangelist once said, “When these people fall on the floor after I hit them on the forehead, they are in a semi-trance because the Holy Spirit has entered them and is working on healing their body.” I saw one woman on television lose her wig when she fell to the floor. It laid a couple feet away from her head. She quickly grabbed it, put it back on, and then showed signs of being in a trance. The camera had quickly turned to the tele-evangelist, but it was already too late. The deception was known to all.

Paul wrote, “*Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;*” (1 Tim. 4:1).

I remember reading a newspaper article several years ago of a gospel tent meeting in Texas held by Oral Roberts. The meeting was advertised as a healing meeting. Because of the fame of Oral Roberts, the tent was filled to capacity. A sudden wind storm (common in Texas) arose and blew the tent down upon the people. Several had injuries including broken bones caused by the support poles falling upon them. The newspaper account of the event told of dozens taken to the hospital because of their injuries. For a “healing meeting” this was an eye-opener to many, for Oral Roberts could do nothing for these obvious injuries.

The scriptures warn us: “*Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.*” (Matt. 7:15). “*Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.*” (1 John 4:1). “*For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.*” (Matt. 24:24).

Tele-evangelists are not in the business of healing people; they are not in the business of converting souls; they are in the money-making business. They get a great following (thus more donations) by deceiving people into believing they can be healed. One can hear their message from coast to coast to please send them money so they can continue God’s work (and thereby fill their pockets).

Titus 1:10-11, “*For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake.*”

“Church of Christ is Boring”

Some leave the church of Christ because they think it is boring. They say that listening to the word of God being preached is boring. It is not exciting enough for them, so they search elsewhere to be entertained. The problem they have is a lack of a deep fellowship with the gospel.

Paul said in Phil. 1:3-5, *“I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now;”* When we truly love God, our desire is to dwell on His words.

A young lady once laid down a book which she had just finished, with a remark that it was the dullest story she had ever read.

In the course of time, she became engaged to a young man; and one night she said to him, “I have a book in my library whose author’s name, and even initials, are precisely the same as yours. Isn’t that a strange coincidence?”

“I don’t think so,” he replied.

“Why not?” she said.

“For the simple reason, that I wrote the book.”

That night, the young lady sat up until 2 o’clock in the morning re-reading the book. This time it seemed the most interesting book she had ever read. Why is this? The once dull book was now fascinating because she knew and loved the author.

So, also does a child of God find the Bible interesting because he comes to know and love the Author! If you think reading the Bible is dull, it is time to re-evaluate your relationship with God.

“The Church of Christ is Too Small to be the True Church”

Some people leave the church of Christ because they think it is too small to be the true church.

Jesus said, *“For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”* (Matt. 18:20). The size of the church is unimportant. What is important is whether the assembly is pleasing to God. The Israelites thought their sacrifices were pleasing to God; however, this was not true because of their disobedience. Samuel told them, *“...Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.”* (1 Sam. 15:22).

It wasn’t always so that the church of Christ was so small. At one time nearly all of the churches of Christ worshiped just as we do, using only one communion cup.

It is discouraging when we lose so many of our members. We begin to think, “Where have we gone wrong?” Jesus indicated that it might be so when He comes again. *“And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?”* (Luke 18:7-8).

The large churches of the world simply do not fit this interrogatory question Jesus put forth whether there would be any members remaining when He returns. Coffman Commentary says: “... the church, at that last moment, will be reduced to a little remnant ...”

I believe we are getting pretty close to Christ's second coming. It is not known when Christ is going to return, but I'll give you something to think about.

- The Patriarchal Age started about 4000 B.C.
- God's promise to Abraham was about 2000 B.C.
- The Day of Pentecost (when the church was established) was 30 A.D.

If the 2000 years per dispensation holds true for this dispensation, God could very well send Jesus during this or the next generation's lifetime.

Jesus said, "*But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.*" (Matt. 24:36).

It is true that we don't know when Jesus will return, but we do know that Jesus wondered if there would be any faithful left in the church when He comes again.

Saying the church is too small to be the true church is a dangerous argument. Of course, that doesn't mean we stop trying to convert others to Christ because of this difficulty. Our task is just made harder than it used to be in ages past.

Marriage

Jesus told a parable of a man who prepared a feast and invited others to join him. Several excuses were offered by those who declined this offer. One of these said, "*...I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.*" (Luke 14:20). Numerous people have married out of the church and gave in to their mate's pressure to worship elsewhere. One young man told me that he was leaving the church because his wife insisted that they worship at a large church where their son could get better spiritual training in their classes. He said his wife pressured him for a year, and his marriage was in jeopardy if he didn't cede to her demands. He said he knew he was doing wrong and preferred to worship with us, but he didn't want to lose his wife and child, so he left.

The scriptures tell us that Christian widows are to marry only another Christian. "*The wife is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord.*" (1 Cor. 7:39). Would Christ make a demand on the widows that he wouldn't expect anyone else to obey? Any Christian when he or she marries is to marry only another Christian. Peter understood this when he said, "*...Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons.*" (Acts 10:34).

The prophet Amos said, "*Can two walk together, except they be agreed?*" (Amos 3:3). The apostle Paul said the Christian (and us, as well) is not to yoke himself with an unbeliever. "*Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?*" (2 Cor. 6:14). What greater yoke is there than the yoke of marriage? Paul (also Christ) commanded that if Christians were to marry, they were to marry other Christians.

The reason the Lord made this commandment is because He understood the difficulties created when the husband and wife have differing ideas spiritually. When their beliefs are different, how can they walk peacefully? Who decides what church the children will go to? Who decides what the children are to be taught? It just will not work.

Imagine a husband and wife saying they want to take a trip together; however one decides to go to New York and the other wants to go to Tampa, Bay, Florida. How can they take a trip together when they are going in different directions? The same is true spiritually. If what

they believe is so different, the only way they can have peace is for one to give up what he/she believes.

Choose your mate wisely!

Can the Bible be Understood?

Today it is declared by some religious teachers that truth is a relative thing, and cannot be understood. They think it is foolishness to live according to the word of God and call them “legalists” who do try to follow God’s word.

1 Cor. 1:18-21, *“For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.”*

Before Jesus ascended into heaven, He addressed this attitude of those who did not understand Him, or rather, who did not want to understand Him. *“Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear my word. Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.”* (John 8:43-44). It was for this reason they wanted to kill him. *“I know that ye are Abraham’s seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you.”* (John 8:37).

There is a trend today of young ones going to the internet to obtain answers for their questions. I want to warn you that although computers can be very useful, there is a lot of garbage on the internet in the name of religion. Don’t believe everything you read there; in fact, it’s better if you stay far away from all the religious teachings that appear on the internet. You will get confused! Instead, let the Bible be your guide.

Why do young ones go to the internet for their religious answers? It is usually because they don’t like what the preacher says on some subject, so they search for some answer that agrees with them.

One teenager before he had left the church had borrowed my computer and was checking out some other church websites. He wanted to see what they had to offer. He said that we might be missing something in our services that some other church has “discovered”. The place to see if anything is missing in our worship service is the Bible, not some worldly church that allows nearly anything in the name of religion in their worship services.

After studying these websites, he then wanted to incorporate some of these things in our services, and became upset when we would not allow it.

After talking with some fellow students, he wondered why we didn’t allow the women to speak in our services and searched the internet for some answers. He found that some of these websites were so set against the idea of women keeping silent in the churches that they came up with all sorts of explanations to allow it. One site claimed that since man was the head of woman, if he said that it was okay for her to speak, then she had the authority to do so.

Some of these websites actually denounced Paul as a man of God and even advocated crossing out any statements in the Bible made by him. They say that his words do not belong in the Bible because he was a woman-hater. They fail to understand that what Paul taught came not

from himself, but directly from Jesus Christ. *“If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.”* (1 Cor. 14:37).

This young man also became confused about baptism after studying about it on the internet. He came to the conclusion that faith and baptism are the same thing because the scriptures teach that we are saved by both; therefore (in his mind) they are the same thing. There are several things by which the Bible says we are saved. They all work together to complete one’s salvation. Jesus indicates that faith and baptism are different entities, not the same thing. *“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.”* (Mark 16:16). We know by the example of the eunuch’s baptism that water is necessary. *“And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized? And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.”* (Acts 8:36-38). If water is necessary for baptism, how believing and baptism be the same thing? What does water have to do with believing?

The internet is not the gospel.

Is Christ and His Church Outdated?

Religious leaders of the world make the claim the Bible is not relevant today, that it needs to be “modified” to a new and changing world. Thus, they teach a social gospel. They resort to name-calling and refer to anyone who tries to live by the scriptures as “uneducated”. They call themselves Bible scholars, yet are ignorant of God’s word. They give themselves “religious” titles and are offended if you don’t use these titles with their name (Reverend, Father, etc), despite the fact we are commanded otherwise. *“And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven.”* (Matt. 23:9).

Some religious leaders of the world will boast of their intelligence and educational accomplishments, but are ignorant when it comes to knowing what God wants. They instead preach what people like to hear. Paul taught the dangers of doing that very thing. *“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.”* (Gal. 1:10). *“For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!”* (1 Cor. 9:16).

Why is it any different today? John taught the importance of God’s word. *“Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.”* (2 John 1:9-11).

The religious world doesn’t like the word “doctrine”. To them it is a dirty word. Yet, John said if we don’t abide in the doctrine of Christ, God is not in us. Paul warned the Galatian brethren of not to accept anything but than God’s word. *“... But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.”* (Gal. 1:7-9).

We need to prove everything we hear to see if it is God’s word, and reject it if it is not. *“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many*

false prophets are gone out into the world.” (1 John 4:1). If it cannot be found in the Bible, reject it.

I once heard a preacher tell another man who disagreed with him, that he was the educated one in God’s word and no one should challenge him on anything he preaches. Such arrogance! Paul said, *“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”* (2 Tim. 2:15).

Many say that any church will do; that we are all going to heaven, we’re just traveling down different roads. How wrong they are! We are told in Eph. 4:4-6, *“There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”* We are taught in Acts 4:10-12, *“Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him doth this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.”*

It is said that all Christian churches are saved by Jesus Christ. The writer here said, *“none other name under heaven given among men”*; he did not say, “no other person”. Jesus said, *“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”* (Matt. 7:21-23).

The church is owned by Jesus Christ. The early church wore the name of Jesus Christ. *“Salute one another with an holy kiss. The churches of Christ salute you.”* (Rom. 16:16).

The church is also called the bride of Christ. *“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”* (Eph. 5:25-27). *“This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”* (Eph. 5:32).

However, even if a church wears Christ’s name is no guarantee that it is Christ’s bride. The church is the bride of Christ and should wear his name, just as couples have been doing since the beginning of time. *“Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created.”* (Gen. 5:2).

Some worldly churches do call themselves the church of Christ. They wear the correct name, but their description does not match the description of Christ’s bride, thus they are not His bride.

My brother Evert has the same last name as do I — Forsman. His wife Becky also bears the same name; however, even though Becky Forsman bears the same name as mine, she is not my bride. She does not fit the description of my bride. It is the same in the church. Even if it wears the correct name that does not make it the bride of Christ if the Biblical description does not fit.

Conclusion

We have an individual responsibility to see that we are doing things to please God and not ourselves. “*Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.*” (Jude 1:3). “*That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.*” (Phil. 2:15-16). “*Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.*” (2 Cor. 5:11).

Let us not give up when our efforts seem to fail us. As in the words of an old-time preacher, “We need to keep on keeping on.” “*And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.*” (Gal. 6:9). Stay the course and keep the faith.