

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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ARE YOU HEARING THE TRUTH?

By Ted J. Clarke

INTRODUCTION

Last month we wrote on the Lord's instruction for us to "take heed what ye hear" (Mark 4:24). "What" we hear refers to the content of the messages we allow ourselves to be taught. This month we will look at Christ's admonition to us to "take heed **how** ye hear" (Luke 8:18). To take heed "how" we hear places the burden of responsibility squarely upon us. How do we react to the teaching of the truth when it convicts us of sin and we have to change our lives to do right and meet God's expectations? Merely hearing the truth without a proper response will not please God. When Jesus said, "Take heed," He is saying "behold, beware," here is something that needs our attention!

SOME WHO DO NOT REALLY LISTEN

Consider the Lord's teaching in Matthew 7:21-29. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of the Father which is in heaven. (22) 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? (23) And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. (24) Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: (25) And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. (26) And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:

(27) And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it. (28) And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: (29) For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes."

Reflect with me upon what the Lord Jesus said. There are people who call Him, "Lord, Lord," but that is not enough! One must do the will of God (verse 21). There are some who claim they are doing great works for the Lord, but in reality they are not doing what He said to do. Consequently, the religious works that they are so proud of amount to sinfulness and Jesus will not recognize them as His own. They will be cast out from the presence of the Lord (verses 22-23). Because of this, Jesus emphasizes again the need to take heed how we hear. We must **hear** His sayings **and do** them! To do this is like building on a rock; we will have a solid religious foundation no matter what comes against us. We cannot be defeated by any of the forces of evil (verses 24-25). Those who hear Jesus' sayings "**and doeth them not**" are like those who try to build on the loose and shifting sands. They have no real foundation and fall flat with a resounding thud. There is no security in just hearing Christ's words; we must do what He says to do (verses 26-27). We should be amazed every time we think of Christ's greatness and power. He has all authority in religious matters (verses 28-29; 28:18-20). Are you living and obeying what Christ has said or following your humanly devised denominational creeds written by men? Christ is the Rock, they are sand.

In John 12:42-43 it is written, "Nevertheless among the chief

rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." How sad. Here were religious leaders who heard Jesus and "believed on him," but "they did not confess him." They heard, but did not take heed how they heard, for they heard but did not do Christ's will. Why? Because some powerful and influential men who did not believe what the Lord said put pressure on those who did. They threatened believers with being cast out of their religious association. In the end, the believers did not have enough faith in Christ, for they wanted the praise of their longtime friends more than they wanted the praise that comes from God. Do you know religious truths that you are afraid to put into practice because you are afraid your present friends will abandon you or make fun of you? If so, you are not really taking heed how you are hearing the truth. God is Supreme, Jesus died to save you! Hear and obey the truth. Earlier in John's gospel Jesus told a group of Jews, "How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another and seek not the honour that cometh from God only" (5:44). What bothers you most - what other people may say about you or to you, or what God says about you?

When the evangelist Stephen has been preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ before a group of Jews, he was called to give an answer for his faith in front of the Sanhedrin council and the high priest (cf. 1 Pet. 3:15; Jude 3). He gave an accurate account of the history of the Jews, including their murder of the prophets and Jesus (Acts 6:9 - 7:53). How did these Jews "hear" Stephen? "When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth. But he, being full of the

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Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul!" (Acts 7:54-59). When you hear someone preach or teach the truth from Scripture and you know it is the truth, but it is not what you believe and practice and yet you cannot show it is wrong, do you become so angry that you would like to do something harmful to the person telling the truth?

Sometimes the best chance you have to learn the truth is to go to the Bible and try to prove the other person wrong. Sadly, most people do not really know what the Bible says about a topic. They just believe what their preacher says and never investigate it for themselves. Often, their preacher will not tell them to go to the Bible be-

cause he knows he cannot defend some of the things he teaches. I encourage you to look up every verse of Scripture we use in our paper or that I use in my teaching and preaching. One must handle the word of truth properly, but you cannot learn the truth of God's will any other way (2 Timothy 2:15).

THOSE WHO TRULY TAKE HEED HOW THEY HEAR

Some of the best examples on taking heed how you should hear are from Acts 17. The apostle Paul had only been in the city of Thessalonica about three weeks, preaching that Jesus was indeed the promised Messiah. Some Gentiles and Jews in the city believed, but many of the Jews were jealous and caused an uproar that caused Paul and his helpers to leave the city (verses 1-9). When Paul later wrote to the church in Thessalonica, he praised them because *"ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God"* (1 Thessalonians 1:9). He further said, *"For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard from us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe"* (2:13). He goes on in verse 14 to praise the Jews who obeyed, for they had "suffered" at the hands of the Jews because of their faith. The pagans who turned from idols no doubt also had to deal with opposition and ridicule, but they heard the truth, obeyed it, and stuck with it!

A second example in Acts 17 is that of the Bereans. Paul went from Thessalonica to Berea and began teaching in the synagogue of the Jews. Of these Jews Luke wrote: *"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so"* (17:11). What a great example on "how to hear." They listened with a ready mind, checked in the Scriptures to see if the things Paul was teaching were so, and because of that, *"therefore many*

of them believed" (verse 12). **Preachers and teachers of God's Word have a responsibility to teach you the truth, but you have the responsibility to make sure it is the truth and to obey it!**

CONCLUSION

In our little paper we endeavor to teach you nothing but the truth of God's Holy Word. We encourage you to search the Scriptures from your own Bible to see whether or not the things we are saying are true! Be as a noble Berean. First, have a ready mind desiring to know the truth. Second, check out what you hear and read in a reliable translation of the Bible. Third, when you find out the truth obey it, live it, and share it.

Remember too that Jesus said, *"And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"* (Luke 6:46). If you know the truth and do not obey it, beware that the Lord may send you a *"strong delusion"* because you *"received not the love of the truth, that [you] might be saved"* (2 Thessalonians 2:10-11).

If you have questions we can help you study, or if you need some study material on a particular subject, we will do our best to assist you in whatever way you request. We not only want you to know the truth, we want you to obey it and be saved eternally. Not everyone who calls Jesus Lord will go to heaven. There are things we must do to be saved (Matthew 7:21). Read Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 8:37; 22:16; Romans 6:3-5; 10:9-10; Galatians 3:26-27; 1 Peter 1:22-23; 3:21. Any questions? Are there things you need to do that you have not done? How are you hearing God's truth?

EQUIVALENT MATTERS

By Eddy Gilpin

The Bible employs a grammatical tool called parallelism on several occasions. Although Hebrew writers were most noted for it, it is used in the New Testament as well. A quick example of parallelism can be found in Psalm 119:105. The Psalmist said, *"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."* Both of these

phrases express the same thought, but use different words in doing so.

In the New Testament there is an interesting and quite informative use of this grammatical device found in 1 Peter 1:22,23. In the former verse the Bible states: "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." The latter reads: "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever." Of these two passages, the latter explains or expounds upon the former. Notice the parallel statements:

- 1) "obeying the truth" (vs. 22) is equivalent to "being born again" (vs. 23).
- 2) "through the Spirit" (vs. 22) is equivalent to "by the word of God" (vs. 23).

From these it is readily seen:

- 1) When one "obeys the truth" (cf. Rom. 6:17,18; 6:3,4; etc.) he is "born again." Thus, the "new birth" described to Nicodemus by Jesus (Jn. 3:1-13) is simply obedience to what God has commanded concerning salvation. As Peter states in this same verse (22), the soul is "purified" in "obeying the truth." This being the case, can the soul be "purified" without "obeying the truth?" The answer, of course, is "No" (cf. 2 Thes. 1:8).
- 2) When one is directed by "the word of God," he is being directed "by the Spirit." The Holy Spirit operates through the word, and only through the word.

If you write in your Bible, you might want to draw an arrow from the phrase "obeying the truth" (vs. 22) to "Being born again" (vs. 23); and, from "through the Spirit" (vs. 22) to "by the word of God" (vs. 23). This might assist you in remembering that these are parallel passages and the two thoughts equivalent.

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MARRY A CHRISTIAN

By Marvin Rickett

The Wise Man said, "Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord" (Prover 18:22). This is also true the other way: "Whoever finds a husband finds a good thing." He could have added that whoever finds a **good** wife or a **good** husband is blessed. The New Testament says, "Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled" (Hebrews 13:4). Most people will marry, a few will not.

There are several important things to consider in selecting a wife or husband: Whether love is present is a very important consideration, whether he will make a living and whether she will live within their means, whether he will be a good father and she a good mother, whether or not he/she is too selfish to make the marriage work, whether he/she has learned self discipline, whether they are mature enough, etc.

The most important consideration of all is to marry someone who is a Christian (assuming you yourself are a faithful Christian). You should be primarily concerned with marrying someone who will help you get to heaven. This is all important. Your soul is your most important possession. Saving it should be your most important consideration. Jesus poses the question: "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his own soul?" (Matthew 16:26). To make a decision to pair up with someone who will be a continual hindrance to his divine goal is nothing short of foolishness. The ideal to strive for is to be "heirs together of the grace of life" (1 Peter 3:7).

The Lord knew His people would have problems when they married outside of their faith. That's why he told His people Israel not to marry among the heathen. He said, "Lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they go a whoring after their gods, and do sacrifice unto their gods, and one call thee and thou eat of his sacrifice; and thou take of their daughters unto their sons, and their daughters go

a whoring after their gods, and make thy sons go a whoring after their gods" (Exodus 34: 15,16).

One consequence of their marrying outside the faith can be seen in Nehemiah's time. Some of God's people had intermarried with the heathen and it had resulted in serious consequences, "In those days also saw I Jews that had married wives of Ashdod, of Ammon, and of Moab: And their children spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews's language, but according to the language of each people" (Nehemiah 13:23,24). It is true that in the Old Testament the Lord was concerned about maintaining the purity of the race, but when explanation was fully given, it always boiled down to the intrusion of other gods into their religious faith.

We know of numerous instances where a Christian married someone outside the church and was led away from the faith. First of all, even if one does not allow himself to be led away, he is likely to be in for a lifetime of tension and struggle with the mate to maintain his faith. Some get tired of the struggle, quit the church and lapse into indifference. Others grow weary of the tension and join their spouse's religion to keep the peace. They convince themselves that it doesn't make that much difference to which church they belong. Somewhere along the way they unlearn many of the truths of New Testament Christianity.

Although the most important consideration in selecting a life's mate is whether he/she is a Christian, there are further things to consider. One consideration is to be sure and select a wife/husband who is eligible to marry. The Lord does not permit just any one to marry. Not a few Christians have gotten themselves into a mess by marrying someone the Lord has not permitted to marry. Rather than listing all who are not eligible to marry, it is simpler to give those who are eligible to marry. First, be sure **you** are eligible to marry! (1) Those who have never been married are eligible to marry. (2) One whose spouse has died is eligible to marry (Romans 7:1-3). (3) One who put away one's spouse for for-

nication is eligible to marry (Matthew 19:9). All who are excluded by these three categories are not eligible to marry.

It has been the case that some who claimed to be Christians were not good marriage material. They did not live and act as Christians and treated their spouses shamefully. In a word, they were hypocrites. (And some of them were elders' or preachers' children.) It sure would have been helpful if those who married them had looked a little deeper and saw to it that they were not just Christians, in name only but faithful Christians.

It's hard to be too careful in selecting a wife or husband. Some people seem to give more thought to selecting a house, an automobile, a job, a bank, or an investment - than they do a spouse. In marriage, you are investing body, soul and spirit in a lifetime relationship. Take your time! Investigate! Listen! If in doubt, don't go through with it! When you do finally decide, resolve to make it a lifetime commitment. This is the Lord's way.

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CRUCIFIED WITH CHRIST

By Bruce Stulting

In **Galatians 6:14** Paul says, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." In this verse, Paul shows the proper place of glorying and in focusing on the Christ. he also speaks of two "crucifixions" here: The world is crucified to the child of God, and the child of God is crucified unto the world. To be crucified to something means to be dead to it. So, Paul's meaning here is to be dead or separated from the world.

In **Romans 6:3-5**, Paul teaches that baptism is patterned after the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Paul then explains in **verse 6**, "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." This is the idea in Galatians 6:14. The Christian will not

now let the world and its appeals, lusts, and enticements attract him. Because Paul had experienced the new birth at baptism, he was able to say, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me". (Galatians 2:20).

To be crucified with Christ is to turn from sin and the world and live to God. One is crucified with Christ when he is baptized. Only those who have been baptized can say that they have been crucified with Christ. By being crucified with Christ one becomes pleasing to God, so it is desirable.

However, one can turn from the truth and back into the hardening process of sin. When this happens they are said to be "crucifying the Son of God afresh" (Heb. 6:6). In order to keep this from happening we must follow the exhortation found in Colossians 3:1. "If ye then be risen with Christ seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."

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**GOD'S AUTHORIZED WORSHIP
- COLOSSIANS 3:17**

1. **LORD'S SUPPER** - The New Testament and early church history record that Christians met on the first day of every week (Sunday) to worship God and remember Christ (Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 11:23-34; 16:1-2).
2. **PRAYERS** - (Acts 2:42; Philippians 4:6-7; I Thessalonians 5:17-18).
3. **SINGING** - God's word authorizes only vocal music and specifically singing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; Hebrews 2:12). The New Testament shows no use of mechanical instruments of music in worship to God by the church Christ established. Church history notes no such use for nearly 700 years after the New Testament was completed. It is an innovation of men, not of God.
4. **GIVING** - Free-willed, cheerful, generous, and every week (Acts 20:35; I Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8 & 9).
5. **PREACHING OF THE WORD** - The gospel of Christ, not men's doctrines nor entertainment, saves and strengthens us (Acts 2:42; 20:7; Romans 10:17; I Corinthians 1:18-23).

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