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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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“MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST BELIEVE THEY ARE THE ONLY ONES WHO WILL BE SAVED”

Criticisms About the Church of Christ

Part Two

By Ted J. Clarke

REVIEW

Last month we discussed the criticism against the church of Christ that said, “Members of the church of Christ always want to argue about religion.” We pointed out that we should always be sensitive to criticism and examine ourselves to see if there is any merit in those who charge the church with wrong-doing. We also contended that the Holy Scriptures must be the only standard of authority in determining whether or not the criticism has any validity and, if so, what must we do to correct the matter. Likewise, we noted that those who make the criticisms must be willing to investigate their charges by what the Bible teaches regarding their objections. If their criticisms are not justified they must repent and withdraw their charges.

DO MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST TEACH THAT ONLY MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST WILL BE SAVED?

Usually this criticism is made by people wanting to prejudice others against the church of Christ or by those who do not understand what the Bible teaches regarding salvation. **First**, it does not really make any difference what “members of

churches of Christ say,” for uninspired people are not the standard by which any of us will be judged! **Second**, it does make a difference what the Bible says for it is **the** standard by which all of us will be judged. “*He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak*” (John 12:48-50). “*And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?*” (Luke 6:46). See also Second Timothy 3:16-17. **Third**, if anyone says what the Bible says that person ought not to be criticized but commended!

Fourth, people who make this criticism against the church of Christ often do so because they believe members of the church of Christ are speaking from a denominational standpoint, meaning, “Only people who are members of the church of Christ denomination will be saved.” If any member of the Lord’s church speaks in such a manner he or she ought to be corrected, for the church of Christ is not spoken of in Scripture as a denomination. Those who belong

to factions or denominations are in serious error. “*Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?*” (1 Corinthians 1:10-13). It is only too obvious that denominations do not all speak the same thing and are not united, otherwise they would not be denominations. A denomination is only a part of a whole, like the sects mentioned above, following after a particular person or the teachings of a particular group. There are no teachings in Scripture that justify being known as Baptist-Christians, Methodist-Christians, Pentecostal-Christians, Catholic-Christians, etc. One can be just a Christian without wearing denominational names or following denominational doctrines (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16).

The Lord’s church is not to be divided. Neither is it to denominate itself by following the teaching of men or a particular doctrine. The churches of Christ are saying, “We are not a denomination, nor do we want to be. We desire to be simply the Lord’s Body, the church of which He is the Savior.” Consider these verses:

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*“Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be **the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all**” (Ephesians 1:20-23). . . **“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”** (Ephesians 4:4-6). . . **“For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. 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” (Ephesians 5:23-27). **Since Jesus is said to be “the head of his body, the church,” and the “saviour of the body,” which is His church, that He gave Himself for the church, how can anyone claim to be saved out of His body, the church?** This is the sense in which members of churches of Christ claim that only those who are members of Christ’s church will be saved! We are not talking about joining some denominational religious group to be saved, but of being added to the church by Christ in order to be saved (Acts 2:37-39, 47, KJV). We know that salvation is in Christ’s body, the church. Where is anyone from Acts 2 onward said to be saved outside the body of Christ?

SALVATION IS IN CHRIST AND BEING IN CHRIST IS BEING IN HIS CHURCH

Here is an essential matter in this discussion. *“Therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sakes, that they may also obtain the **salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory**”* (2 Timothy 2:10). Salvation is “in” Christ; Christ is the Savior of His body, the church; therefore, to be saved is to be in Christ’s church. Furthermore, one cannot be “in Christ” and not be in the church of Christ. God gave Christ *“to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, **the fulness of him that filleth all in all**”* (Ephesians 1:22-23). **If the church is the “fulness” of Christ, there is no room to be in Christ but not be in the church!** This is one more reason why members of churches of Christ say that one cannot be saved unless one is in the church of Christ, being a member of His body over which He is head.

How does one become positioned “in” Christ, where salvation is located? How does one enter “into”

Christ so that one can make the claim of being “in Christ”? Faith in Christ, repentance from sins, and confession of Christ as God’s Son move us in the direction of being placed into Christ, where salvation is located (Hebrews 11:6; Acts 17:30-31; Romans 10:9-10). However, it is the act of baptism by which we are transported into Christ. *“Know ye not, that so many of us as were **baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life**”* (Romans 6:3-4). *“For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been **baptized into Christ have put on Christ**”* (Galatians 3:26-27). Once we have been baptized “into” Christ we can claim to be “in” Him; we have “put on Christ.” As a part of His body, the church, He is our Savior (Ephesians 5:23).

When members of churches of Christ say that only those who are members of Christ’s church will be saved, they are speaking of the one church Christ promised to build. *“And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it”* (Matthew 16:18, NKJV). We are speaking of the church for which Jesus paid the purchase price of His own blood. *“Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood”* (Acts 20:28).

CONCLUSION

If you are not a part of the church Jesus died to save, His church, the church of Christ, the Scriptures teach that you will not be saved. If you have not been baptized **into** Christ in order to receive the remission of sins you are not saved (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3-4;

Galatians 3:26-27). If you have not been so baptized into Christ, where salvation is located (2 Timothy 2:10), you will not be saved.

Members of churches of Christ do not feel superior in teaching these things. We want all people to obey the gospel and be added to the Lord's church in order to be saved. We have no creed book we have to answer to. We have simply presented what the Scriptures say on this matter. We realize that such teaching will stir opposition, but we can only ask that you study these verses from your own Bible and obey them. We will gladly study or discuss these matters publicly or privately with everyone of a sincere heart. [Continued next month – We will discuss the criticism, “The Church of Christ thinks it is the only church with the right name.”]

WITHDRAWAL OF FELLOWSHIP

Corrective Discipline in the New Testament

(Part Two)

By Ted J. Clarke

REVIEW

Part One dealt with a number of introductory matters, concluding with the following Scripture. “Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us” (2 Thessalonians 3:6). We ask again, “How can Christians refuse to do something that is commanded in the name of Christ?”

WHAT WAS GOD'S PRACTICE IN THE PAST?

“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” (Romans 15:4). While

this verse does not deal specifically with corrective discipline, it would be included since God practiced this in the Old Testament (OT). In the Garden of Eden God told Adam and Eve: (1) what to do; (2) what not to do; and (3) the consequences for failing or violating His commands (Genesis 2 & 3). This was both positive and negative instructive discipline, with the purpose of molding, strengthening and perfecting man's character. Sadly, Adam and Eve did not follow God's instruction and it became necessary for God to administer corrective discipline. “*And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life*” (Genesis 3:22-24). Man was thus impressed with the need to obey God's authority because of the threat of corrective discipline.

Under the Law of Moses this practice continued. “*Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall*” (1 Corinthians 10:6-12). Corrective discipline was also

practiced upon the sabbath-breaker (Numbers 15:32-36); the priests Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10:1-3); Achan and his family (Joshua 7); those who failed to eat unleavened bread of the Passover (Exodus 12:15); those who ate blood (Leviticus 7:27); and those who failed to sacrifice in the proper place (Leviticus 17:8-9).

No one was exempt from God's corrective discipline. Even Moses and Aaron were disciplined by God for their failure to honor His word (Numbers 20:7-12). “*And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them*” (verse 12).

Why this need for strict corrective discipline? To demonstrate that God's word is Sovereign and Absolute. He is holy and demands that we obey Him and be holy. These accounts from the OT are examples, admonitions and warnings for those of us in the New Testament (NT) to avoid or heed (1 Corinthians 10:6-12). Why would God put them there if there were no consequences for us if we did as they did?

Note that in some cases God acted directly to administer corrective discipline, but in other cases He expected His people to act as His agents in carrying out some cases of corrective discipline, particularly in withdrawing fellowship from those being corrected. [To be continued next month.]

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR LIKE YOU LOVE YOURSELF

By David Macy (deceased)

Love for God and man cannot be separated. “But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother

continued from page 3

have need and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth," (I John 3:17-18). Those who love God from the heart love their neighbors as themselves, because love for God and man cannot be separated, like you separate the paper backing from a bumper sticker. If you have one, you automatically have the other, and if you don't have one, you don't have the other. You cannot, will not, shall not obey the first and great commandment without obeying the one which is like unto it, "Love thy neighbor as thyself." If the needy condition of our brother or sister does not move us to supply the things, which are needful, we do not have the love of God dwelling in our hearts, period. Those who truly have this love residing in the chambers of their hearts respond quickly and gladly to the needs of their fellow men, whatever they might be. "Joe Cool" lived only for himself and himself alone, but our man is "Jonathan Helpful," who sincerely loves God and demonstrates his love throughout his life by daily helping others. "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen," (I John 4:20). We love God because he first loved us and sent His only son to die for our sins so we could escape eternal punishment, and inherit life eternal. But, if we hate or despise our brother or sister, we do not love God, no matter what we say with our lips. The inspired Apostle John shoots straight from the hip and calls a man a liar who claims to love our invisible God and hates his very visible brother. This is absolutely impossible for any human being to do, and it just ain't gonna happen!

"And this commandment have we from Him that he who loveth God, love his brother also," (I John 4:21). The man who loves God is

commanded to love his brother also. This is not a matter of choice like a sumptuous buffet. All the children of God who truly love their Father are obligated to love their fellow men and especially their brethren. We should love them even when they make themselves unlovable, because of their frailties and human weaknesses. Men were quite unlovable when God sent His only son to die for them. We should always keep this in mind in our dealings with others, especially our brethren, when we are called upon to go the second and third mile and sometimes even beyond.

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GOD'S PLAN OF SALVATION

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

THE CHURCH OF CHRIST

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

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