

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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MAY WE SPEAK FRANKLY?

by Chris Perry

No doubt those who hear preaching regularly grow tired of hearing about the changes that have taken place in society over the last several decades. Much like grandpa's stories of the "good ol' days" become overtold and tedious, so we can search too diligently for the differences between the former and current days. It was, after all, the wise man Solomon who said, "*There is no new thing under the sun*" (Ecclesiastes 1:9).

That having been said, allow me to reference one change that I believe has negatively affected our current world. By and large, it seems as if we have lost our appreciation for *frankness*. One who is "frank" would be described by Webster's as "open and honest in expressing what one thinks or feels; straightforward; candid" and "free from reserve, disguise, or guile." In fact, the word in English comes from a Latin word meaning "free." Thus, "frankness" is the quality of "telling it like it is," of hitting the proverbial nail on the head. However, from my vantage point at least, it seems as if our society is less and less willing to swallow frankness, and such a trend can be eternally dangerous.

Our aversion toward that which is frank might be traced back to two sweeping "modern" movements: political correctness and subjectivism. Certain people and groups in this nation are surprisingly bent on pushing that which is "PC."

Names and mascots for some sports teams are deemed "offensive" (and usually not by the groups they supposedly offend); people respond with anger and indignation at the use of "actress" or "chairwoman" rather than the politically correct "actor" and "chairperson." Seemingly every person, group, and organization has become hypersensitive, ever searching for something over which to raise a fuss. All of this is done in an effort to soften *everything* so that *nothing* is even *potentially* offensive. Now do not misunderstand me—I am not in favor of needlessly causing embarrassment or offense. But in some instances, we go too far.

As well, our society is growing ever more subjective. Truth has been offered up to the gods of self-love and individuality, and the result is a world in which *whatever* is right for *whoever*. In such a moral and philosophical climate, it is no wonder we shy from frankness—why reveal your beliefs and ideas when no standard for truth is recognized? Instead, we resign ourselves to accepting what someone else believes as "true for them," and frank and honest discourse becomes outdated and rude.

But friends, have we paused to ponder the spiritual consequences of such "progression"? Those of us who are fighting for the truth of the Gospel find ourselves constantly tempted to soften how we describe

sin in order to please the politically correct crowd. And if we do not compromise, we often receive the wrath of those indignant over our "insensitivity." Where is the place for Biblical frankness? Friends, *sin* is still *sin*! Any transgression of the law must be labeled as God's inspiration labels it: sin (1 John 3:4). Homosexuality is not "an alternative lifestyle," it is sin (Romans 1:21-32), despite how many people are fired—or in the future possibly arrested—for so saying. Alcoholism is not "a disease," it is sin (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)—no matter how many 12-step programs say otherwise. Adultery is not "following your heart," it is sin (Matthew 5:32; 19:9)—even though the decision to repent of such a situation is often heart-wrenching. We can rename and attempt to redefine such things a million ways, but "a rose by any other name would smell as sweet." And we must not give in to those who mistake frankness for a lack of concern. While every Christian must "*speak the truth in love*" (Ephesians 4:15), neither "truth" nor "love" is mutually exclusive. If we are to be saved, we must have the same mindset as the Psalmist: "*Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head*" (Psalm 141:5). I would hope that if the time ever came that I left the truth, my brethren and sisters in Christ would have the "audacity" and "disrespect" (actually, the love and concern) to "*expound unto me the way of God more perfectly*"

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P.O. Box 251

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Lee Moses EDITOR
Phone (870) 625-3217
E-Mail cocfcgn@centurytel.net
Website ... www.fultoncountygospelnews.org
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(Acts 18:26; cf. Galatians 6:1, etc.).

And dear friends, here is a newsflash for us all: we can all be wrong from time to time! Subjectivism cannot stand in the light of God's word (John 17:17, 14:6; Romans 6:17), and stubbornness has no place in the kingdom of God (Acts 7:51). The next time some good brother or sister corrects us with the spirit of love and kindness, the next time the preacher touches on something that makes us squirm, we can condemn them for being unloving, we can shake our finger at them. *Or* we can recognize the high premium that should be placed on frankness, especially in the spiritual arena, and open our hearts to God's truth. Jesus' words remind us that we often reject the truth "*lest [our] deeds should be reproved*" (John 3:20). On the other hand, our Savior described the "good soil" as those who "*in an honest and good heart, having*

heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience" (Luke 8:15).

So, to our brothers and sisters in the Lord's body, who face every day the temptations of Satan and the errors of false teaching; and to our friends in the religious world, who desperately need to return to the Biblical pattern, one question needs to be asked: May we speak frankly?

ONE THING THOU LACKEST

by Orbie Robbins

(deceased, from **FCGN** February 1961)

In the gospel according to Mark we have the rich young ruler who came to Jesus wanting to know what he must do to inherit eternal life. The Lord told him to keep the commandments; and he said, "*All these have I observed from my youth.*" Jesus said, "*One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me*" (Mark 10:17-22).

We see that the rich ruler had good points but lacked one thing.

Where are we lacking? Are we lacking in proper attitude toward money? This was the rich young ruler's trouble, and that of many today (Mark 10:22). "*The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil*" (1 Timothy 6:10, American Standard Version).

Israel offered the lame, the unwanted (Malachi 1:7-8, 3:8). Do we? We are to give as God prospers us (1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 9:6-8). The covetous will not inherit the kingdom of God (Ephesians 5:5).

Are we lacking in good works?

Paul says we are created unto good works (Ephesians 2:10). We are to glorify God with good works (Matthew 5:16). We are to abound in good works (1 Corinthians 15:58). We are furnished unto all good works (2 Timothy 3:16-17). We should be zealous of good works (Titus 2:14) and maintain good works (Titus 3:8-14). James tells us that faith without works is dead (James 2:17-22). Those who fail to do good works will be turned away in the judgment (Matthew 25:41-46).

Are we lacking in godly living? We are taught to live godly in Christ Jesus (Titus 2:11-12; 2 Peter 1:3). Grace is to be added (2 Peter 1:6). We should exercise ourselves unto godliness (1 Timothy 4:7-8). We are not to love and follow the world (1 John 2:15-16). Nor are we to walk after the flesh (Romans 8:12-13). The unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom (1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

Are we lacking in obedience? We must do the Father's will. Jesus said, "*Not everyone 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*" (Matthew 7:21). Jesus said, "*If ye love me ye will keep my commandments*" (John 14:15, 21, ASV). Obedience is from the heart and for salvation. Paul said, "*Ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness*" (Romans 6:17-18). Paul said Jesus "*became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him*" (Hebrews 5:8-9). But Paul says all have not obeyed (Romans 10:16).

Those who do not obey will be lost. Peter said, "*The time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at*

us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (1 Peter 4:17).

Are we to miss eternal life for lacking one thing? Think on this. James said, "*Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all*" (James 2:10). "*But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed*" (James 1:25).

WHAT ARE WE TRYING TO WIN?

by Lee Moses

This writer once had a conversation with a preacher who was intent on obscuring to non-Christians the fact that the church is to preach the Gospel. He believed that since people were more interested in self-help books and seminars, this is basically what the church should offer in its "preaching." He proceeded to warn me, "If that man who has no interest in God stays home instead of attending the church with which you meet, you lose." It was clear to me at that point that we were striving to win two entirely different prizes.

Certainly all Christians desire to see numerical growth in the Lord's body. And all Christians desire to see the Gospel appeal to those outside of Christ. Oftentimes, great multitudes would follow Jesus to see His miracles and hear Him preach. But this never in itself constituted "victory."

Consider what happened when

Jesus fed five thousand men, not counting women and children, with five loaves of bread and two small fish. After Jesus had performed this marvelous miracle, great multitudes followed Jesus across the Sea of Galilee, seeking Him. But when they found Him, Jesus rebuked them for their motive: "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled*" (John 6:26). Jesus then preached the truth to them, to which many of His disciples responded, "*This is an hard saying; who can hear it?*" (verse 60). Jesus continued to preach the hard truth, and "*From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him*" (verse 66).

For many churches, "to win" is to avoid the above scenario. When a large multitude comes to any type of "event" the church might hold, it is considered a great victory regardless of the motivation that brought them to the event. Indeed, the church sought to appeal to their baser desires in bringing them to their building. And once the multitudes are there, the church will avoid preaching any truth that might offend anyone (contrast with Acts 20:26-27). Inescapably, churches that initially obscure their purpose of preaching the Gospel continue to obscure the Gospel itself to those who continue to attend there. And if any of them purpose to "go back, and walk no more with them"? If what we are trying to win is merely more seats in the pew, further compromise is inevitable.

However, when the large number of disciples turned away from Jesus, our Lord said to the twelve apostles, "*Will ye also go away?*" (John 6:67). Compromise

was not a consideration with those who had departed or with those who remained. All were free to leave if the way of the Lord was not to their liking. Did our Lord **lose**? Did those who remained with him **lose** because their numbers were instantaneously decimated? The apostle Peter answered the Lord's query, "*Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God*" (verses 69-69). No, they had not lost—they had **won**!

What are we trying to win? The Lord's church certainly shares the Lord's goal of "seeking and saving the lost" (Luke 19:10). When a lost soul turns to the Lord, "*there is joy in the presence of the angels of God*" (Luke 15:10). But this does not authorize "seeking and seducing, **then** saving the lost." The apostle Paul was able to say,

*We were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention. For our exhortation was **not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile**: but as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the gospel, even so we speak; **not as pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts** (1 Thessalonians 2:2-4, emphases added).*

To the preacher who told this writer that we lose if the man who has no interest in God stays home, the response was given, "If we do what the Lord commands us, we win." Indeed, "*Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. . . . Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible*" (1 Corinthians 9:24-25). So what are you trying to win?

SUNDRY AND DIVERS MATTER

Have you recently made a change of any kind to your **Fulton County Gospel News** subscription? That is, have you changed, added, or dropped your address in the period between late September and mid-November? We had some trouble with our computer database, and lost all our stateside changes made during this period. All foreign changes are intact, and we believe we have recovered the changes made regarding all bundles. We have been able to recover some others as well, such as those made via e-mail. If you or someone you know changed their subscription between late September and mid-November, and you did not receive this month's FCGN with your address reflecting that change, please call, write, or e-mail us.

Also, a correction needs to be noted from last month's issue. In the article "Is My Baptism Valid? (Part Two)," the closing Scripture quotation is cited as Acts 22:26. Our eager readers who opened their Bibles to this location found not a word about baptism, but about the privileges of Roman citizenship. The reference should have read "Acts 22:16." For some reason, when the typewriter keyboard was laid out, the designers put the "1" and the "2" awfully close together. We make earnest efforts to catch such mistakes before we go to press, but some things escape the editor's searching but feeble eye until too late.

Did brother Orbie Robbins' article whet your appetite for more articles from the early years of FCGN? We hope you will take the opportunity in the near future to visit our website at www.fultoncounty-gospelnews.org, hosted by brother **Jody Apple** and **TheBible.net**. We are currently working toward posting the earliest issues of FCGN online. Brother **James Kinsey** of Sherwood, Arkansas has been carefully and diligently scanning their brittle pages,

and we are thankful for his work.

Next month we will begin a series on the teachings of Calvinism. Calvinism is a system of doctrine which denigrates the all-sufficiency of God's word, impugns the impartiality and love of God, and condemns countless souls. Yet Calvinism, or various components of it, is taught throughout the religious denominations. A number of excellent writers are contributing articles for this series, and it is our hope and prayer that these articles will help to arm you in the battle for the truth and the salvation of souls.

[Lee Moses]

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Lowell Church of Christ (Springdale, AR)50.00
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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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