

# 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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## SOULS UNSTABLE IN THEIR COMMITMENT TO MORAL LIVING

### *Unstable Souls Part Three*

by Lee Moses

*“Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children” (2 Peter 2:14).*

As Peter warned of those who would “beguile unstable souls,” he focuses particularly on the immorality of such beguilers and on how such beguilers will encourage unstable souls to commit immorality themselves (2 Peter 2). The beguilers are described as *“having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin”* (verse 14). While such utter depravity is lamentable, it is all the more so because this description is of people who claim to be Christians. Furthermore, this description is of people to whom other professed Christians look for guidance and instruction. When leaders of the church lack a sound moral foundation, spiritual chaos follows: *“And many shall follow their lascivious doings; by reason of whom the way of the truth shall be evil spoken of”* (verse 2, American Standard Version).

Sadly, temptations to commit immorality have shaken many Christians from their spiritual moorings. A Christian who has faithfully attended services and participated in the work of the church suddenly finds himself attracted to a co-worker, and forsakes his family and his Lord to begin an ongoing adulterous relationship. A young Christian lady conforms her attire to the immodest attire of worldly young ladies, which leads to further sexual

immorality, and finally to a life characterized by wickedness and rejection of the Lord. Another Christian succumbs to peer pressure to try alcoholic beverages or other drugs, leading to a blurred life of intoxication and addiction.

A Christian’s tilt to immorality typically affects more than one person. Preachers, preachers’ wives, elders, elders’ wives, and others who have proved themselves faithful for decades have made foolish indiscretions that have ended up destroying so much good that they had previously done. One act of moral impurity can have very far-reaching effects, shaking the spiritual foundations of family, close friends, and other members of the church and community, even though they had no involvement in the sinful act themselves. King David brought numerous severe hardships against himself, against Bathsheba’s husband and noble soldier of David, against his own family, and against the people of Israel because he foolishly committed one act of immorality (2 Samuel 11-12).

Peter spoke of certain immoral professed Christians, *“by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of”* (2 Pet. 2:2). One can observe at least two ways that such people cause “the way of truth [to] be evil spoken of”: First, because such people claim to be Christians, and some will blame Christianity for their conduct.<sup>1</sup> Immorality among professed Christians is a black mark on the Cause of Christ, even to those who are quite

worldly and ungodly themselves. Some will say, “If that is how Christians act, I do not want anything to do with Christianity.” Others will say, “Christians obviously do not believe what they say if they don’t **do** what they say—why should I believe what they say?” Others will use the immoral conduct of professed Christians as ammunition against Christianity, saying, “Look! Christianity is obviously not true because [some] Christians are immoral!” There are certainly flaws in such arguments, but that does not stop enemies of Christ from using such arguments and often finding success with them.

A second way in which immoral professed Christians cause the way of truth to be evil spoken of is because such people claim to be, and some believe them to be, authoritative teachers and preachers of the Gospel; causing people to follow lasciviousness rather than holiness.<sup>2</sup> There are false teachers today who openly encourage immorality. But the church more typically **ignores** immorality, thus encouraging it more subtly. Many preachers refuse to address essential moral subjects from the pulpit, including dancing, “social drinking,” modest and immodest clothing, mixed swimming, homosexuality, and marriage, divorce, and remarriage. Sadly, churches often allow erring brothers and sisters living in adulterous “marriages” to remain in good standing in the congregation, refusing to practice commanded discipline and withdrawal (Matthew

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*would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members”* (Romans 7:21-23). When temptation comes, it is often accompanied by a little voice that says, “What will it hurt if I just commit this **one** sinful act?” Resisting temptation and avoiding immorality requires resolve.

External pressures make moral purity all the more difficult. So-called “friends” pressure us to do wrong. Hollywood, Madison Avenue, and numerous other agents of Satan seek to inundate our minds with sensual images and self-serving thoughts. And today’s culture and mindset allows immorality unprecedented free course to our minds and to govern our actions.

The world is **immoral** largely because it is **amoral**, acting as though no moral standards even exist. We live in an amoral age. People no longer believe in choosing an action because it is **right**, or in shunning an action because it is **wrong**. They choose or shun an action based on whether or not it “**works**”—for them, and by their own personal assessments. Everyone is now told, “Choose whatever works for **you**.” Some people want attention, and they find they can obtain attention by immodest dress or rebellious acts—it works for them. Some people are afraid of loneliness, and they believe they can avoid loneliness through sexual promiscuity. Some people do not like their reality, and seek to escape reality through beer, drugs, and wild parties. Some people might find that they can climb the corporate ladder by telling occasional lies, or by having sexual relationships with key people—it works for them. In turn, some churches find that ignoring immorality from the pulpit and eldership puts more people in the pews—it works for them.

One can indeed answer such “stinkin’ thinkin’” by showing how doing wrong really does **not** work, certainly not in the long term (cf. Job 4:8; Proverbs 1:31; Galatians 6:7). However, whether or not something **works** is not the primary issue—the primary issue is whether or not something is **right** in the sight of God. As one denominational writer aptly put it, “Christian morality is not true because it works; it works because it is true.”<sup>3</sup> Churches need to quit doing what they think “works,” and get back to doing what is right. This is the only way to be faithful, and the only way to be built upon a stable foundation: *“Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity”* (2 Timothy 2:19). If the Lord is to receive our souls into eternal life, we must return them as spotless and unblemished as He gave them.

To find stability in moral living, one need look no further than Jesus. *“For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted”* (Hebrews 2:18). Having endured temptation, He can fully empathize with our struggles with temptation, and He wants to help us through them. When a Christian goes to the Father in prayer, Jesus serves as the Christian’s Mediator and Advocate—a role that **only** He could serve (1 Timothy 2:5; 1 John 2:1). *“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need”* (Hebrews 4:16). He also serves as the great example of overcoming temptation—He *“was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin”* (4:15). This gives us hope, that we are not forcibly doomed to fall into the trap of immorality. And the word of Jesus gives the Christian direction: *“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your*

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19:9; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6). So immorality goes unchecked, despite Scripture’s dire warning, *“A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump”* (1 Corinthians 5:6; Galatians 5:9).

The church desperately needs a renewed commitment to moral living. Faithfulness to the Lord is impossible without moral purity, and moral purity is impossible without commitment. Scripture commands, *“Keep thyself pure”* (1 Timothy 5:22). This is no small task. *“But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed”* (James 1:14). Temptation to sin is part of the human experience, so much so that even our Lord had to endure it, that He might be *“like unto his brethren,”* and that He might be *“a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people”* (Hebrews 2:17). Paul spoke of the struggle that takes place within even the most determined child of God: *“I find then a law, that, when I*

*mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12:2).*

Why would Christians be conformed to this world’s immoral mold when the Christian’s true home can be found nowhere in this world? *“Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul”* (1 Peter 2:11). Remembering that the Christian is a stranger and a pilgrim, wandering far away from his true home—his **heavenly** home (2 Corinthians 5:1-8; Philippians 3:20)—certainly aids in abstaining from destructive fleshly lusts. And this leads us to the final way we will consider in which souls are dangerously unstable...

*To Be Continued*

<sup>1</sup> Albert Barnes, *Notes, Explanatory and Practical, on the General Epistles* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1850), p. 271.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Timothy Keller, “Preaching Morality in an Amoral Age,” in *The Art & Craft of Biblical Preaching*, eds. Haddon Robinson and Craig Brian Larson (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), p. 169.

## IS THE CHURCH OF OUR LORD NECESSARY?

by Marvin L. Weir

It has long been the conviction of most denominational religions that one does not have to be a member of any church to be saved. One should then not be surprised to hear members of denominations say that it is not the church but Christ which saves. If a church cannot save, then why persuade people to become members of a church? If one is convinced that a church is not connected with one’s salvation, why take the time and expend the energy to attend church services?

It must be pointed out that manmade religious churches have nothing to do with saving a person. Our Lord built His church (Matthew 16:18) and promised to save only **His** body (Ephesians 5:23). This is the **one**

body (4:4) of which the Lord is its head and it is unmistakably called *“the church”* (1:22-23).

This denominational attitude has rubbed off on many members of the Lord’s church. There are an ever growing number of brethren who no longer respect the Lord’s church and have no loyalty to it. The Lord’s church in the minds of many has become a social club where people can meet for recreation, entertainment, and parties.

Have people not considered the truth that salvation is indeed found *“in Christ”* (2 Timothy 2:10), but the Lord adds to His church those that are saved? (Acts 2:47). The saved are thus added to the body (church) that Christ promised to save (Eph. 5:23). One who is outside the body (church) cannot be saved for salvation is found only in the body (church)!

The apostle Paul taught the young preacher Timothy the importance of the church. Paul states, *“But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth”* (1 Timothy 3:15). The house of God is the church and is composed of each person that the Lord adds to it.

The Lord’s church and His kingdom are one and the same. Christ made this truth obvious when He stated, *“And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven”* (Matthew 16:18-19).

One will surely notice that Christ built His church and then gave Peter *“the keys of the kingdom.”* Does one believe that the Lord built one thing

(the church) and gave Peter the keys to something entirely different (the kingdom)? Peter had the keys to the kingdom on the day of Pentecost, and upon preaching the gospel three thousand people who obeyed were added to the kingdom or church of our Lord. It is essential to grasp this point because of Paul’s statement to the brethren at Colossae. Paul declared, *“Who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love”* (Colossians 1:13). In obeying the gospel plan of salvation, one is delivered from sin and the power of darkness and translated into the Lord’s kingdom or church! Why does the Lord add to His kingdom or church if it has nothing to do with one’s salvation?

One will also observe that no one was added to the Lord’s church until he was baptized for the remission of his sins. Let us return to the book of Acts and the Day of Pentecost. The question to Peter after listening to his sermon is this: *“Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Brethren, what shall we do?”* (Acts 2:37). Peter’s answer was, *“Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”* (Acts 2:38). How would one who knows anything about language and grammar not understand that **both** repentance and baptism are required for remission of sins? The 3000 who repented and were baptized for forgiveness of sins were then added to the Lord’s church (Acts 2:47).

The Lord’s church **was** purchased with the Lord’s own blood. Paul admonished the elders at Ephesus in saying, *“Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood”* (Acts



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20:28). What can be more valuable than that which is purchased with the very blood of Christ? Was it not necessary for Christ to purchase His church with the shedding of His blood? Who can rightly believe that the blood bought church of Christ has nothing to do with one's salvation? Can one really believe that Christ saves, but His head and body have **nothing** to do with such salvation? (Ephesians 1:22-23)

Representing all of humanity, both Jews and Gentiles are reconciled unto God only in the Lord's church. Paul makes this truth crystal clear in saying,

*Wherefore remember, that once ye, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called Circumcision, in the flesh, made by hands; that ye were at that time separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus ye that once were far off are made nigh in the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who made both one, and brake down the middle wall of*

*partition, having abolished in the flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; that he might create in himself of the two one new man, so making peace; and might reconcile them both in one body unto God through the cross, having slain the enmity thereby" (Eph. 2:11-16).*

This reconciliation takes place in the **"one body"** which is the church (1:22-23; 4:4; Col. 1:18). Reconciliation is an impossibility for anyone today who is **outside** the Lord's church and not *"in Christ"* and a *"new creature"* (2 Corinthians 5:17).

How it must grieve God and His Son for one to declare that the Lord's church does not save! Churches founded by men **do not** save, but the blood bought church of our Lord will be saved (Eph. 5:23). One day the Lord will *"present the church to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing . . . holy and without blemish"* (verse 27). May we honor, respect, and cherish the Lord's church.

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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 11:23-24; 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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