

LIVING WATERS NEWSLETTER

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MARCH 2011

GUEST COLUMN

A few weeks ago a friend of mine sent me the following article by Coach Dave Daubenmire, founder and President of Pass The Salt Ministries in Columbus, Ohio. In 1999 he was sued by the ACLU for praying with his teams while coaching high school in Ohio. He now spends his energy fighting for Christian principles in the public domain. I wrote him and asked for permission to reprint the article in the Newsletter. His answer was, "It would be an honor".

HOW GREAT IS THAT DARKNESS

"But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness" (Matthew 6:23).

Ok Lord, I'll write it. But I really don't understand why you give me these dirty jobs. Why haven't you anointed me to write about evil Democrats, or say, those God-haters who want to take Manager Scenes off the courthouse steps? Why can't I be like Ann Coulter and just expose liberals? Why do I always have to write things about folks who are supposed to be on my side? The liberals hate me enough...why do I have to keep poking "conservatives" in the eye? It won't be long before I won't be welcome anywhere in Christians circles. But I promised you years ago that I would be faithful to write and speak what you put in my spirit. As President John Adams famously said, "Duty is ours. The results belong to God." So, I'll lay it out there and trust you have reason for putting the words in my heart.

Most Christians are not. Not really disciples of Jesus that is. As I go about my work, I have become more and more convinced of that truth. The American Experience is in trouble because those who claim to be followers of Jesus really don't follow Him. Oh, don't get me wrong, they "go to church," and most "believe in God," but they are not followers of Jesus. They don't even know what that means...to follow Jesus...even though they are "Christians." In fact, I doubt whether the Apostle Paul, or any first-century believers would even recognize the "religion" that we call "Christianity". Just wondering was Jesus a "Christian?" Read Matthew 23 to understand better what He had to say to "religious" leaders. He stated it better than I can. Look. Christianity is not a religion, it is not "going to church", it is not a set of rules and regulations after which you pattern your life, it is not a crutch for the weak, it is not an answer on the US Census, and it is not a home business designed to increase one's earthly possessions. Christianity is the life of Jesus living through you. It is an exchange of your life for His, a living out of, not a process where you "accept" Him, or "receive" Him or "come" to Him. It is a death, a dying of your old nature, a transformation really...out of an old life into a new one. "Christ IN you the hope of Glory."

Most folks who identify as Christians claim to know Jesus as Savior. Very few know Him as Lord. That's why Christianity

is so shallow in America. We love the "Savior" part of Jesus, but aren't quite ready to bow to that "Lord" thingee. Most are interested in having "their Savior" bless their endeavors, but few are willing to "lay down their lives" for Him. Everyone wants to "follow Jesus" until they find out where He is going...He is heading to a cross...and He asks you to take up yours and follow Him. This flies in the face of popular Christianity and its "felt needs". The hearts of Americans are hard to pierce. Stephen called folks like us "Ye stiff necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do ye." How did the religious folks receive Stephen and his honest rebuke? "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". Here is what I am getting at. Most "Christians" are not open to the true Gospel because they think they already have it. They have learned to compartmentalize it, to compromise it, to hang it on the coat rack. But they have heard a different Gospel. They have been taught to follow Christianity, but not Jesus! "For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ." - Jude

Do yourself a favor. Take the time to read the book of Acts. It is a record of the "Gospel" being lived out by those who were most familiar with the Savior. You will look long and hard, far and wide, to find anything even remotely resembling the modern-day Humanistic self-serving, Jesus-wants-me-to-be-happy-and-rich-Gospel belching out of the pulpits today. Would they invite Paul, the greatest evangelist the world has ever known, to appear on TBN? Would Rick Warren and Joel Osteen allow him to stand in their pulpits? Can you picture him "dancing with the stars?" Americans are following a "different" Gospel, which is "no Gospel at all." "Because you say, 'I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,' and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Rev. 3:17).

Permit me to state it more succinctly so there can be no misunderstanding of the point I am trying to make. Most church goers are not followers of Jesus. They are merely members of a social club called "Christianity". "Membership has its advantages..." How do you heal someone who doesn't think he is lost? "If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness..."

Americanized Christianity has everything backwards. Somewhere along the line the life-denying-Gospel has morphed into a life-enhancement Gospel. Instead of us giving ourselves for the advancement of the Kingdom we have been fooled into believing that Jesus gave Himself so we could be masters of our own kingdom. The idea of sacrifice and suffering is anathema to modern Americanized Christianity. How else can you possibly explain the calloused attitude that most "Christians" have towards the "increase of His government and Peace." Read Matthew 13. It is here that we

read of the wheat and tares which GROW UP TOGETHER. That's right. When you go to "church" it would behoove you to look around. Many of those sitting beside you are destined for the bon-fire. They look like Christians, sing like Christians, and they speak the Christian "language", but they are not children of the Lord. "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 profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity" -Matthew 7: 22,23.

Could it be that many are getting the wrong answer because they are being asked the wrong questions? It is not "do you know Jesus", but rather, "does Jesus know you?" In recent polls eighty-five percent of all Americans self-identify as Christians, yet this nation has become a moral wasteland. "Christians" complain about others "shoving Christianity down our throats." "Christians" declare that "religion" is a "private matter" while atheistic teachings swamp their children in public schools. "Christians" have abortions and vote for "pro-abortion" candidates. "Christians" embrace homosexuality. "Christians" fail to keep their marriage vows. "Christians" ignore the precepts that Jesus taught. How do you rescue someone who doesn't think he needs rescued? How do you bring sight to one who thinks he sees? How do you bring knowledge to one who thinks he knows? How do you bring truth to one who doesn't know he is deceived? How do you bring light to one who doesn't know it is dark? "and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them a strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (II Thessalonians 2:10-12).

America is the most "Gospelized" nation in the world, but my dealings with Americanized "Christians" have convinced me that the greatest mission field in the world is inside the four walls of most American churches. The darkness thinks it is light. "And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are you?" (Acts 19:15). "You believe there is one God. You do well; the demons also believe and tremble" (James 2:19). Most "Christians" don't know enough about Jesus to tremble. How great is that darkness...

THE UNREAD AND UNUSED DOCUMENT

On the second day of the 112th Congress a bit of political theater was described in the media. An article in *The New York Times* carried by newspapers across the country stated: "Congress read out loud, section by section, the U.S. Constitution. It was the first time the 222-year-old document had ever been read on the House floor. It might have been the first time some lawmakers actually read or heard it in its entirety. Not all of them attended, and their numbers gradually diminished as the 90-minute exercise wore on."

This event which was intended to be the guiding principle of the lawmakers in the new session of congress only points to the tragedy of the neglect of the constitution by the very ones whose legislative powers are supposed to be based upon

and guided by this document. However this tragedy is nothing when compared with the tragedy in our churches in the neglect of the reading of and attention given to the Scriptures by the very people who are supposed to base their lives upon them. And by the prissy preachers that neglect the preaching of the Scriptures for a substitution of a romanticized and sentimental message that has no basis in Scripture. There are few churches today that are even introduced to the word of God, much less having the "word hidden in their heart" (Psalm 119:11).

Our churches today are much like the temple in the days of Josiah the king. The Scriptures are "in" the church, but they have not been "found". The "book of the covenant" was lost in the temple and was found by Hilkiah the high priest and Shaphan the scribe (II Kings 22:8). When Josiah the king read the book he declared "The wrath of the Lord burns against us because our fathers have not listened to the words of this book, to do according to all that is written" (ver. 13). The answer to the problem of the idolatry in Israel after the exile was "the reading of the book of the Law" (Nehemiah 8-9:3).

Take note of the many times Jesus asked the people "Have you not read in the Scriptures?" Just a few examples: Matthew 12:2,5; 19:4; 21:16,42). The Apostle Paul told Timothy "Until I come give attention to the reading of Scripture" (I Tim. 4:13), and he told the Colossians to "have this letter read in the church" (Col 4:16). In contrast to the bland and insipid pabulum served from the pulpit today preachers need to take another look at II Timothy 3:16: "All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work." Several years ago I was preaching in a church "pulpit exchange" and after finishing the sermon and greeting the people at the door, a lady shook my hand and explained: "It's good to hear a sermon from the Bible *once in a while!*"

Some years ago James G. Van Buren wrote in *The Christian Standard*: "*The Bible is praised more than it is read. Many people laud the sacred word and yet spend very little time reading it. We must admit, if we are honest about this, that the Bible is not read as much as newspapers in many homes where Christ is known. The general accuracy of this indictment would, I feel, be vindicated by any careful and impartial survey. The Bible is read more than it is understood. That the Bible is read, many times, as a duty to be endured rather than as a delight to be enjoyed is an obvious fact. The tragedy is that so frequently it is mis-understood as well as not understood. It is not enough that the Bible be read, it must be read with the understanding. Many times it is read as a dutiful drudgery. The Bible is understood more than it is obeyed. After making all the qualifications about our lack of Bible study, we must admit that, as it is, we understand much more of the Bible than we follow. Jesus was most emphatic about the necessity, not only hearing and knowing His word, but of doing it. After giving His Apostles His example of lowly service by washing their feet, He said, "If you know these things blessed are you if you do them" (John 13:17). We must never forget His solemn admonitory word: 'Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it'" (Luke 11:28). It appears that our culture has penetrated our churches both in the pulpit and pew.*

