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PRESENTS

Frankly Speaking Notes . . .

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Ed Smithson, Editor

ARE WE PAYING ATTENTION TO THE WRONG THINGS?

Many questions have occupied my mind from time to time through my life and this one perhaps more often than most. I have sat and listened to sermons and lectures that have dealt with “brotherhood problems.” I have also listened to individuals discuss, in great detail, what the Greek meaning of a word or phrase really means. And I have been instructed by them.

In my preaching through these years, while I have discussed “problems facing the church” and things of that nature, most of my preaching has centered on things the Bible says and how it addresses life. I have not discussed the Greek meaning of words and phrases because I do not know Greek. This is absolutely not to take away those who do and use it to good advantage.

But I have seen problems in the church and how they have affected people and even split churches, and I have wondered, then an now, how important these things were.

A very good friend of mine, a preacher of long experience and knowledge, was lunching with another preacher of long experience and knowledge of another persuasion. (He is what we used to call “anti” and they didn’t like that so we started calling them “non-cooperative” and they don’t like that, so I don’t know what we call them today.) So my friend asked him if there were going to be “partitions in heaven.” Since they won’t fellowship us here on earth, were we going to be separated in heaven? The man replied that it wasn’t his job to “judge” that the Lord would take care of that. Now everyone knows the Lord is going to be the judge. The man would never answer the question even though it was put to him several times.

It got me to thinking about all this stuff that has divided the church and continues to divide. I lived through the division over what we now call “cooperation.” I am not going to discuss that here. But then as now, I wondered what all the fuss was about? A lot of time, effort and money have been spent on making certain everyone knew what side of the “issue” people were on. But have we been paying attention to the wrong thing?

When I started preaching and was preparing to preach, it seems to me emphasis was on what the Bible said and pointing people the way to heaven. Let me tell you what I think is important, since one opinion is as good as another, you don't have to agree with me.

First, the plan of salvation. I am absolutely convinced there is one way to be saved and that is through Christ. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus.” (Romans 8:1) “But now in Christ Jesus ye that once were far off are made nigh in the blood of Christ.” (Ephesians 2:13) “Wherefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new.” (2 Corinthians 5:17) and there is only one way to get into Christ. “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ.” (Galatians 3:27)

Now, this is important. In order for one to be saved, he must be “In Christ” and the only way to get “In Christ” is to be baptized. To this we gave our attention. Before one could get into Christ, he must hear the gospel. “How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?” (Romans 10:14)

After hearing one must believe, (John 8:24), and repent of one's sins, (Luke 13:3), confess Christ before men, (Matthew 10:32) and then be baptized into Christ for the remission of sins. (Acts 2:38) (Those who are not familiar with these passages should read them carefully.

At times some folks have insisted they were saved when “God spoke to them,” or they received some kind of “signal” from God that they were saved. The scriptures know of no such thing. No one was ever saved in Bible accounts of conversion without going through what I have just discussed. No one!

Second, it was important that Christ built one church. He only promised to build one, "...and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it." (Matthew 16:18) Then after establishing the church, "They then that received his word were baptized: and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls." (Acts 2:41) "And the Lord added to them day by day those that were saved." (Acts 2:47)

After one becomes a Christian there are many things one is supposed to do, "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray and make request for you, that ye may be **filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, to walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing, bearing fruit in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to the might of his glory, unto all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks unto the Father,** who made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love; in whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins: who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; (Colossians 1:9-15 Emphasis mine)

"Put on therefore, as God's elect, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving each other, if any man have a complaint against any; even as the Lord forgave you, so also do ye: and above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness." (Colossians 3:12-14)

We are also to take care of the widows and fatherless, (1 Timothy 5:15; James 1:27) remember the poor, (Galatians 2:10) restore those in trespass, (Galatians 6:1) bear one another's burdens, (Galatians 6:2) and a myriad of other things.

How are we to do these things? No specifics are given. So I believe that it is left up to our "judgment" how and when we are to carry them out.

But some have taken it upon themselves to instruct others that they know better the "how" of doing some things. So they begin to advise, argue and persuade others to think the way they do. What this has done essentially is divided and split the church for no good reason, in my judgment.

Some time ago one brother wrote a couple of rather lengthy articles on the subject of whether one can pray to Jesus. I do not intend to enter the fray, so to speak, because I do not think it is worthy of our spending time on it. Each man will pray as he wishes, according to the teaching of the scripture. In fact, I don't think, in my 60 years of preaching that I have ever heard anyone address Jesus in prayer. He is deity after all, so I don't know that it is a big deal. Certainly one not big enough to cause a rift in the church.

What our interest should be is what is it going to take to get people saved from their sins, live a godly life and be able to spend eternity in heaven. Our interest personally, could roam around to and include many things, but SALVATION is our business, is it not?

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ed Smithson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

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