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## *Frankly Speaking Notes . . .*

Published as time and opportunity permit, usually a few times a week.

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Ed Smithson, Editor

### **IS ANYONE LISTENING?**

I have a problem! Some of you will reply with “what’s new?” It is not a new problem and it doesn’t have anything to do with my health. I think I am about the healthiest unhealthy guy around. I still get up every morning and as long as I can do that I feel like I am in pretty good shape.

My problem is with the church! Again some of you will say, “So what’s new?” I don’t know that it is with the church exactly but with some of its members and some of its preachers.

What got me started on this, again, was a lady spoke up in a Bible class some time ago and it was rather off the subject. I guess it was on her mind and she wanted to express herself regardless. She was crying (not literally) about the way folks who had been divorced and remarried were treated by some members of the church. Now I know this subject has been dealt with before, and in her hearing. But, she had not agreed with the truth on the subject and wanted to express herself again. That subject is not what this article is all about.

Almost every time I turn around I hear someone express themselves in this way: “Well, this is what I think.” It matters little to these people what the Bible says or what God wants. What is important to them is “what they want or what they think.”

Then I hear a lot of folks, and some preachers saying, “We need to be more positive. You can’t get anything done by being negative.” What we fail to realize is that there are two sides to just about everything. If there is a front, there has to be a back. A coin always has two sides. If there is a plus, there must be a minus. You get the idea.

Before you get convinced that you cannot be negative, you might take a look at the Bible. When God created Adam and Eve and placed them in the Garden of Eden, He told them, “Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, **thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.**” (Genesis 2:17 ASV emphasis mine) Now brother, that is a negative idea in my book.

Jesus himself had some negative things to say. Remember when he threw the money changers out of the Temple? “**And the passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And he found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting: and he made a scourge of cords, and cast all out of the temple, both the sheep and the oxen; and he poured out the changers’ money, and overthrew their tables; and to them that sold the doves he said, Take these things hence; make not my Father’s house a house of merchandise. His disciples remembered that it was written, Zeal for thy house shall eat me up.**” (John 2:13-17) Now some would call that negative!

Perhaps one reason I write so much in the negative is because not much of that is being done today. I wonder how we can “convict” a person of wrong doing unless we show how much damage sin will do. Jesus said, “**I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for except ye believe that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.**” (John 8:24) Again He said, “**except ye repent, ye shall all in like manner perish.**” (Luke 13:3)

When Paul preached to Felix in Acts 24 “... **he reasoned of righteousness, and self-control, and the judgment to come, Felix was terrified,**” (v.25) Another version says “Felix trembled.” When was the last time you saw someone tremble at the preaching of the word?

The Bible says Jesus came to “**convict the world in respect of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:**” (John 16:8) Paul wrote to Titus “**holding to the faithful word which is according to the teaching, that he may be able to exhort in the sound doctrine, and to convict the gainsayers.**” (Titus 1:9) “**And to these also Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, Behold, the Lord came with ten thousands of his holy ones, to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their works of ungodliness which they have ungodly wrought, and of all the hard things**

which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.” (Jude 14-15) (Emphasis mine)

I remember John told people who came to him to “bring forth therefore fruit worthy of repentance.” (Matthew 3:8) It appeared the Pharisees and Sadducees just wanted to “join” the latest fad and John was serious about his work. I fear that many today are just changing their allegiance from one group to another and have little understanding of what repentance means or of the changes it demands in their lives.

When I see people casually present themselves for “membership in the church” with no signs of “change” in their lives, I am made to wonder why. When I speak of “conversion” I am talking about a change that is evidently seen. I am talking about a person who recognizes the awfulness of sin and a willingness and determination to change their lives, with the help of God.

However, folks will not understand that is the way it is supposed to be unless our pulpits demand the changes in accordance with the scriptures.

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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March 26, 2010