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PRESENTS

Frankly Speaking

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“SPEAK WHERE THE BIBLE SPEAKS”

Of course the rest of that slogan is, “be silent where the Bible is silent.” I grew up on that slogan and still believe in it.

Several years ago I heard a preacher ask, “Would the apostle Paul recognize the church if he were here today?” His conclusion was that Paul would not know the church because of the changes that have been made through the years.

Here is another conclusion that I have come to: people who grew up in the 40’s and 50’s like I did, making comparison with the church we knew then and the church we see today, would not recognize them as the same.

While the slogan is not quoted from the Bible, it is biblically based. “Now these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes; **that in us ye might learn not to go beyond the things which are written;**” (1 Corinthians 4:6 Emphasis mine) Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness. That the man of God may be complete, **furnished completely unto every good work.** (2 Timothy 3:16 Emphasis mine) There are multiple scriptures in both the Old and New Testaments that teach the same principle.

In what way has the church changed? Looking at the churches today, the churches I knew growing up, and the churches where I worked as a young preacher, will make the changes rather striking.

What we call our servants today is not found in scripture. In the Bible those who preach the gospel are called “**preacher.**” (Romans 10:14; 1 Timothy 2:7; 2 Timothy 1:11 ASV) They were also called “**minister.**” (Colossians 1:23; 1 Timothy 4:6.) Twice in the New Testament preachers were called “**evangelist.**” (Acts 21:8; 2 Timothy 4:5) No other descriptive terms are used for those who preach the gospel. By the way, “minister” means “servant,” and was never intended to be a title.

Today we hear about a lot of preachers and what they are called: “Pulpit Minister,” “Preaching Minister,” “Minister of Education,” “Family Minister,” “Family Life Minister,” and “Youth and Family Minister.” One church has a “Minister to The 39ers,” whatever that means? “Minister of Buildings and Grounds,” is not hard to figure out. He is the “janitor” or “custodian.” Of course there is nothing said in the New Testament about “buildings and grounds.” We know churches in the First Century didn’t have buildings and grounds, that is. None of these terms, and many others I could include that are being used today, are to be found in the New Testament.

When it comes to our worship services, we do several things that have no biblical precedent. Many of them, most of them are not wrong within themselves, but by doing them every week or every service without fail, we leave the impression they are authorized.

For instance, where in scripture do you find that they sang a **song “to prepare their minds for the Lord’s Supper?”** Yet many do it each Lord’s Day without fail and it is even expected. Where did the idea come from that we needed something external to “prepare our minds” for this solemn act of worship? Are not our minds prepared by the fact that we are there? “**And upon the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread.**” (Acts 20:7 Emphasis mine) The purpose is clearly stated.

While we are talking about the Lord’s Supper, what about the prayers that are prayed when taking the bread and fruit of the vine? Instead of thanking God that Jesus died and these represent the body and blood of the Lord, a brother goes into a long “general” prayer, giving thanks for a beautiful day, for our assembling, for the forgiveness of sins, etc. Paul wrote “For I received of the Lord that which also I

delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which he was betrayed took bread; and when he had **given thanks**, he brake it, and said, This is my body, which is for you: this do in remembrance of me. In like manner also the cup, after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood: this do, as often as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till he come." (1 Corinthians 11:23-26 emphasis mine) The purpose of this important part of our worship is necessarily narrow. Our prayers should be centered on giving thanks for the bread and the cup, just as did our Lord. Long, general prayer at this time distracts from a most serious occasion.

It has long been the procedure in most churches of taking up the contribution at the same time we partake of the Lord's Supper. There has been criticism of this for as long as I can remember. People think the contribution is a part of the Lord's Supper, which it isn't. I remember as a child, the elderly men who "waited on the table" after taking the emblems would explain, "the contribution is separate from the Lord's Supper but is done at this time because of convenience." It is sort of strange to me that we concern ourselves with misperception on one thing and other things not.

And whence came the "invitation song?" Some have started calling it "the song of encouragement" to get away from "invitation song" but it is still done. Again there is no place in the New Testament where it can be found. I have never heard anyone in a worship service try to explain that it was something we decided to do, so the next generation grows up thinking you have to do it, it's biblical. Wonder what would happen if a preacher would just end his lesson and sit down? I have long wondered why we have to "persuade" folks to act on their conviction, by the use of "artificial" means? It seems to me if a person were REALLY convicted of their sins and errors, they would find a way to respond to the "LORD'S" invitation. (Matthew 11:28) **"Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."**

Perhaps more will be written later on "speaking where the Bible speaks."

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