

“THINK ON THESE THINGS”

Philippians 4:8

Change Agents in the Church

By John Isaac Edwards

We have some in the body of Christ who are trying to affect change in the church. The winds of change are blowing, brethren, and we must be warned, lest we find ourselves being pulled under by the swirling waters of apostasy all around us.

The Name of The Church

Some seem to think the name “church of Christ” has such a stigma to it that they are undergoing a name change. Signs that used to read, “The church of Christ meets here” are changed to say, “Christians meet here.” Some churches that have been recognized as the church of Christ for many years are dropping the name of Christ and are just called the church at _____. Paul was not ashamed to say, “*churches of Christ*” in Romans 16:16. Why would we, as the Lord’s people, not want to be associated with Christ. Christ built the church (Matt. 16:18) and purchased it with his own blood (Acts 20:28). Thus, the church belongs to Christ. Why not just call the church what it is – the church of Christ? However, if a group of people are not going to respect the authority of Christ in all things, they would do us a favor if they would change their name or put up a message, “This is not the church of Christ.”

The Kind of Preaching Being Done

Have you noticed a shift in the kind of preaching being done by some among us? Sermons are being preached from pulpits across the country that in no way conform to the New Testament pattern of gospel preaching, and sadder still, “*people love to have it so*” (Jer. 5:31). Instead of sermons that “*reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment to come*” (Jn. 16:8; Acts 24:25), we hear emotional stories and comical punch lines. Many are out-of-balance in their preaching, as more sermons are preached on grace than law, the goodness of God than severity of God, the blessings of obedience than curses of disobedience, and glories of heaven than horrors of hell. It is being said that we ought not call names from the pulpit or in our writings, when God, the prophets, Christ, and the apostles all identified those in error. Are we better than they? Preaching on How To Establish and Apply Bible Authority, Bible Baptism, The One True Church, Why We Sing and Don’t Play, and such like are rarely heard anymore. Sermons are being preached that could be preached without offense in any denomination in town. When such preaching is allowed to continue, it won’t be long until you will see no difference in that church and the denominations around them. You just mark it down! That nothing will weaken the church more than weak preaching.

What We Call Things

Our motto has been to “call Bible things by Bible names.” Many are getting away from that. A preacher told me that he refused to be bound by “creedal phrases of the restoration movement,” as he called it, and that’s scary! Churches are not distinctive as they once were, as they use denominational terms to express themselves. This reminds me of when the children of Israel “*spake half in the speech of Ashdod, and could not speak in the Jews’ language*” (Neh. 13:24). Why can we not be content to just use Bible language?

The Role Of Women

The woman’s role in the church is being expanded beyond the scope of scriptural authority. Women are included in decision-making business meetings and are even being put in positions of leadership in the church. When we point out passages like 1 Timothy 2:11-12 and talk about God’s place for women, we are told that we are being demeaning and degrading to women.

The Worship Of The Church

A move toward “a more contemporary style” of worship is being seen in many places. We are beginning to witness hand-clapping and waving creep in the assemblies of the saints. The instrument of music is making its way in as well, and the Lord just said to **“sing”** (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).

Attitude Toward False Teachers

I see a change in attitude of many toward who a false teacher is and how to deal with false teachers. A false teacher is being redefined from one who teaches something contrary to sound doctrine to one who has impure motives and is of corrupt character. We are encouraged to receive men who teach things the Bible does not teach as they are honest and sincere, when the Scriptures teach otherwise (Rom. 16:17; 2 Jn. 9-11). When we identify a man by name, document his false teaching, and expose it in the light of truth, we are falsely accused of biting and devouring.

Fellowship

Fellowship is being extended to those who teach false doctrine and practice immorality. Brethren are receiving into their fellowship folks out of denominations, like the Christian Church, without them being **“baptized into the one body”** (1 Cor. 12:13). When brethren think there are Christians in denominations and extend the right hand of fellowship to those in denominationalism, they will soon take on the characteristics of the denominations around them. Just wait and see!

The Way We Look At The Bible

Instead of appealing to direct statement or command, apostolic example, and necessary inference to establish scriptural authority for a thing as the apostles did in Acts 15, we are hearing things like, “purpose, principle, and precedent,” as a cry is made for a new way of interpreting the Scriptures.

Brethren, just let the church be the church as God designed it. Christ built it, and the Holy Spirit revealed it. These changing times call for Christians everywhere to **“search the scriptures”** (Acts 17:30), **“try the spirits”** (1 Jn. 4:1), and **“prove all things; hold fast that which is good”** (1 Thess. 5:21). Remember, the word of God does not change, but **“endureth forever”** (1 Pet. 1:25). – *Truth Magazine*, September 5, 2002. ■

False Teachers Among You

By Joe R. Price

“But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. And many will follow their destructive ways, because of whom the way of truth will be blasphemed” (2 Pet. 2:1–2, NKJV).

False teachers. They existed in Peter’s day. They still do. Their teaching is false; destructive and divisive as it denies the Lord and His truth. By their error they bring upon themselves swift and sure destruction of the Lord’s judgment. The **“way of truth,”** God’s word, is the standard that exposes false teaching and the false teacher. The false teacher’s error blasphemes truth, and tragically, **“many will follow their destructive ways”** of error. Make no mistake, it matters what you teach, what you believe and what you follow. Otherwise, this text is meaningless. Be sure you are teaching the **“way of truth,”** not error. And, be sure you are following the Lord’s way of truth and not false teachers who will lead you to destruction. Examine the Scriptures. Teach, believe and follow the truth of God (Acts 17:11-12). – *Sword Tips*, October 31, 2015. ■

Service Times - Sunday: 9:00 & 10:00 AM; 6:00 PM - Wednesday: 7:00 PM

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