

# THE BELLEVILLE MESSENGER

January 25

2009

## DOES LOVE MEAN APPROVAL?

In recent weeks I have read several articles in the local newspaper concerning the lack of love being shown by many who identify themselves as Christians. I would be the first to acknowledge that there are those who claim to be Christians who fail to demonstrate the love they should for others. I have seen professed Christians walk out of an assembly when someone entered who did not have the same color of skin as themselves. James speaks of those who show respect to one who is rich over one who is poor (James 2:1-7).

If the afore mentioned articles were condemning such prejudice and respect of persons I would certainly agree that a lack of love was being shown. However, this is not what is under consideration in these articles. These articles deal with those who are speaking out against the immorality so prevalent in our society in the form of homosexual behavior.

One of these articles states, *"With relentless attacks on homosexuality, conservative evangelicals communicate the message that diversity is dangerous and discrimination acceptable."* The author of this article goes on to suggest that this opposition to homosexuality is *"casting the first stone"* and is a failure to *"love thy neighbor."*

It seems that some have the idea that the only way you can love someone is to accept and approve their behavior, whatever that behavior may be. A failure to accept this immoral behavior is referred to as *"moral perfectionism"* and *"intolerance."*

What is even more disturbing is the fact that these individuals

want to appeal to Jesus and the scriptures to encourage the acceptance of this immorality. What they fail to acknowledge is the fact that the same Bible that reveals to us the love of Jesus for all mankind also contains God's hatred for sin, however it is manifested.

In truth, the love of God is manifested unto us to save us from our sins. Paul said, *"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"* (Romans 5:8). Does this mean that He died for us so that we could continue in sin and still be pleasing to Him? Paul answers this question very emphatically in the very next chapter. Paul, in emphasizing God's mercy and grace, said, *"But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound"* (Romans 5:20). You can easily anticipate some carnally minded individual reasoning, *"If where sin abounds grace abounds even more then the more we sin the more grace will abound."* Paul also recognized the possibility of someone reaching such an erroneous conclusion so he says, *"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"* (Romans 6:1,2).

Paul recognized that one redeemed by the blood of Christ must be *"dead to sin."* He can no longer live therein. Was Paul showing a lack of love by making such a declaration? Was he being intolerant? Certainly not!

Paul also said, *"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God"* (1 Cor. 6:9,10). Note, the sin of homosexuality (abusers of themselves with mankind) is included in this list. Can the homosexual be saved? He surely can, but not by continuing in his sinful conduct. In fact, Paul noted that some to whom he was writing these words had been guilty. He said, *"And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God"* (1 Cor. 6:11).

It is not an unloving act or an act of intolerance to condemn that which will cause one to lose their soul in hell. In fact, the greatest love one can show to one who is separated from God is to make that one aware of that which causes that separation (their sin – Isaiah

59:2) and to let them know how they can be cleansed of that sin.

Those who endorse acceptance of such sinful behavior not only show a lack of love, but also are rebellious to God.

*✍ James Hahn*



### ***Thank the Lord for Small Assemblies***

Sometimes it seems like the whole religious world has caught the “big church” bug. We want to have an impact. We do market assessments. We try to find the best way to appeal to a community. We want the power, prestige, and strength to act that comes from a mega sized congregation. According to our “church growth experts,” a small assembly of Christians says, “failure.”

In the midst of that environment, it might be worthwhile to remember that our God sometimes likes small things. Jesus said, “*Where two or three are gathered in My name, I am there in the midst of them.*” Matthew 18:20

What a great comfort it is to know that the Lord is more interested in faithful disciples than He is in “successful churches.” So much so that He says even small bands of believers will be blessed with His presence in their assemblies. The small country church, the two or three families meeting in a home, and the large congregation of hundreds or even thousands, then, all stand the same in importance to Jesus.

In Revelation 2 and 3, we’re told of seven churches, many of whom still appeared to be live, functioning houses of God but who were in actuality empty, dead, whitewashed tombs in danger of complete spiritual failure. Of the seven, only two come out of their meeting with Jesus with a completely clean bill of health – Smyrna and Philadelphia. Smyrna was a church in poverty, but spiritually wealthy. Philadelphia only had a “little power,” but they kept His word and never denied Him. Conversely, Ephesus was busy, active, and zealous, but had left their first love. Laodicea was rich, prosperous, and in need of nothing, but Jesus saw them as wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked because of their lukewarmness. Sardis had a name for being alive, but was really about to die.

This is not to say that a church is automatically more righteous

when it is small. Sometimes churches shrink and die because of ungodliness and unbelief. They can be filled with pride, ignorance and lukewarmness just like a big church can. The only point is, if we wish as a church to be pleasing to God, “big” is not the main goal. The first goal of the church is love and faithfulness to God in all things, big and small. If we do that, God will provide the increase. And whether we are many or few, He will be in our midst. What more could we hope for?

*✍ Brad Hopkins*



### **Self-Control**

The Bible clearly teaches that Christians are to exercise temperance or self-control (2 Peter 1:6) if we are to make our calling and election sure (2 Peter 1:10). There are those who profess to being Christians that do not exercise self-control and as a result they lose their temper; they use speech not fitting for a Christian to use or engage in actions unbecoming to one wearing the name of Christ. How can we develop self-control? Paul gives us the answer in 2 Corinthians 10:5; “*...bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.*” When our every thought is controlled by the desire to be obedient to Christ in all things we will be able to exercise the self-control expected of followers of Christ. (JH)

<b><i>Belleville church of Christ</i></b>	
<i>5635 S County Rd 200E - Belleville, IN - (317) 539-5258</i>	
<b>www.bellevillechurch.net</b>	
<b>Schedule of Services</b>	<b>Elders</b>
Sun. Bible Study..... 9:30 a.m.	Charles Carpenter.... (317) 839-3873
Sun. Morning Worship... 10:30 a.m.	James Hahn. .... (317) 745-1507
Sun. Evening Worship. . . . . 5:00 p.m.	
Wed. Bible Study..... 7:00 p.m.	
<b>Evangelist</b>	<b>Deacons</b>
James Hahn. .... (317) 745-1507	Leon Nevins . . . . . (317) 272-2966
	Don Perry..... (765) 676-5825
	Alvin Stanley. .... (317) 831-3514