

# THE BELLEVILLE MESSENGER

February 15

2009

## *Two “Churches of Christ”?*

While speaking to the elders of the church at Ephesus Paul said, *“Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them”* (Acts 20:30). When this came to pass, it would result in at least two groups emerging from what had been the church at Ephesus: those who continued to faithfully follow the Lord, and those who followed after men. Further, it is often the case that those who apostatize continue to profess religion (Cf. 1 Kings. 12:26-33; 2 Thess. 2:3, 4). If this happened at Ephesus, the result would be two churches in town – one right and the other wrong. If you came to Ephesus, how would you decide which church to be a part of? Remember, both could trace their origins to the apostle Paul’s preaching. The only thing you could do is take your Bible out and see which one was keeping harmony with it.

1) Such things as “First Principles” and the “Church Name” would be insufficient standards to measure by. Inasmuch as Christians would be drawing away disciples from *“the flock”* of v. 29, the two groups could both consist of baptized believers and teach the truth on how one is saved from sin. They could both call themselves “the Church of Christ.” Modern day Christian churches which baptize believers and take on the name of “Church of Christ” (many do) show that such a scenario is not farfetched. The simple point that we seek to make here is that one can follow men and still teach parts of God’s will. In such instances one cannot say someone is wrong for teaching what truth they do. They are wrong wherein they have departed from the truth and followed men.

2) You would have to compare what each church is teaching with the New Testament. Inasmuch as Paul expounded *“all the counsel of*

*God”* to the brethren there at Ephesus (v. 27), you would want the same in your seeking the true church. You would want to hear what a church taught with reference to such moral questions as drunkenness, homosexuality, divorce and remarriage, etc., and compare it with the Scriptures (Matt. 19:8, 9; 1 Cor. 6:9, 10). This would also be the case in doctrinal matters. You would open your Bible to compare what is written therein to what a given church taught. Jesus’ words of Matthew 15:9 tell us that His word must be taught on all matters: *“But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”*

3) You would have to compare each church’s activities with the New Testament. The Bible teaches us the danger of *“saying and doing not”* (Matt. 23:3; Titus 1:16). We realize, therefore, that it is not enough for a group of brethren to simply claim to be a true church, or to say that they recognize Christ as their head, or to profess belief in the Bible principles such as the oversight of elders, or the autonomy of the local church, etc. When it came to the church’s activities, you would want book, chapter, and verse for everything the church was involved in (Col. 3:17; Acts 20:32; 2 Jn. 9). This is born of the realization that Christ can only be *“head over all things”* to a church if that church submits to Him in all things (Eph. 1:22, 23).

✍ Steve Wallace



## **But They Are Really Friendly**

Friendliness is an outstanding quality and should certainly characterize the Lord’s people. Visitors to the services should be impressed with friendliness shown to them. It is a good thing for a congregation to have the reputation of being friendly regarding visitors. More emphasis should be given by members in making people feel welcomed at the services. There have been occasions when visitors are virtually ignored when a warm handshake and a few words could mean so much. Such could easily determine whether they would return and be in the assembly again, to hear the gospel of Christ. The unfortunate thing is that some members never seem to feel the importance of being friendly.

Years ago, we were coming home from a meeting in one of the western states. We needed a place to worship on Sunday and found the location of a church that was said to be conservative. We even

made a trip from the motel Saturday evening to locate the building where we would attend on Sunday. We were there early for Bible Study and remained through the worship that followed. We stayed around after service and didn't run out at the moment the amen was said. In all of this, there was not one soul that made any effort to speak to us or make us feel welcome. Mind you, it didn't keep us from worshipping the Lord and doing what was expected in praising him, but how much more joyful it would have been for a little friendliness to be shown those visiting. This reminds me of the account of a man attending a service when the preacher was discussing would there be recognition in heaven. After the cold reception the man received, he commented that the preacher ought to preach about would there be recognition on earth for it seemed to be lacking in that congregation regarding visitors.

The wise man wrote: *"A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother."* (Proverbs 18:24) Some individuals do not give others an opportunity to be friendly. They come in late and leave early, commenting later about how unfriendly the people were toward them. It is difficult to be friendly with those who do not desire such. There are times when some are looking for something that will give them fuel to speak derogatory about a congregation. Perhaps no one could please such individuals, but we should do our best to show ourselves friendly as servants of the Lord.

We now come to the real heart of this article. We have known members of the church who would attend services where the truth on various issues are not being taught. Some of these have been forewarned about such situations. Nevertheless, they attend and when it is discussed with them, their justification was: "But they were really friendly". In essence, they were saying the friendliness shown them made the wrong that was being practiced all right. Friendliness is admirable, but it can never make right what is being practiced that is wrong. Yes, God's people are to be friendly. We have related how true this is, but friendliness does not determine what is truth. Think about where this could lead. On occasions one might be impressed with the friendliness of Methodist, Baptist, Catholics, Mormons, Jehovah Witnesses, Lutherans, Quakers, etc. Are we saying that the showing of themselves friendly to visitors will make what they teach the truth? If brethren can justify their visiting with congregations not

standing for the truth by saying "but they are really friendly", why couldn't the same apply to denominations? Why wouldn't their friendliness make their corrupt doctrines right in the sight of God? I suppose one could say the Devil is friendly. Paul wrote: *"...for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light"*. (II Cor.11:14) Without doubt, Satan wants to be on the friendly side of all of us, but is that making him any less wicked? Just more of his deceitful tactics of which we must not be ignorant.

With the view that some manifest about friendliness, a number of passages should read differently. II John 9 should read: *"Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in friendliness, hath not God. He that abideth in friendliness, he hath both the Father and the Son."* They seem to dwell on being friendly and place such above recognition of the doctrine of Christ. Hence, friendliness is inserted to take place of the doctrine of Christ. We notice I Timothy 4:16: *"Take heed unto thyself, and unto friendliness; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee"*. Why bother with the doctrine? Leave it out of the verse and replace it with friendliness. We could do this with all the passages that refer to the doctrine of Christ. Friendliness has its virtue and we readily admit that such exists. But friendliness like everything else can be abused and we must guard against such. Know the doctrine of Christ and always stand for the truth. All the friendliness in the world can not take the place of truth. Don't let Satan deceive you by thinking it.

✍ Bobby Thompson

|  |                                     |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| <b>Belleville church of Christ</b>                                     |                                     |
| 5635 S County Rd 200E - Belleville, IN - (317) 539-5258                |                                     |
| <a href="http://www.bellevillechurch.net">www.bellevillechurch.net</a> |                                     |
| <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>Deacons</b>                      |
| <b>Evangelist</b>  | Leon Nevins... (317) 272-2966       |
| James Hahn... (317) 745-1507   | Don Perry... (765) 676-5825         |
|  | Alvin Stanley... (317) 831-3514     |