

# THE BELLEVILLE MESSENGER

June 7

2009

## HINDERING THE GOSPEL

In 1 Corinthians 9:12 Paul, in explaining why he had not taken financial support from the church at Corinth, said, *"If others partake of this right over you, do not we yet more? Nevertheless we did not use this right; but we bear all things, that we may cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ."* Paul recognized that his conduct, even in things that were right within and of themselves, could be such as would *"be a hindrance to the gospel of Christ."* I wish there were more like Paul today. It seems as though many, including some of my brethren, are more intent on "exercising their rights" than in furthering the gospel of Christ. Others show more zeal and interest toward some social or political cause than they do toward the teaching of the gospel.

I am thankful to God that I live in this country. I believe, even with all its problems and weaknesses, that it is the greatest country in the world. However, I need to be very careful not to equate "being an American" with "being a Christian." It seems to me some are having a very difficult time making this distinction. I believe it is possible for one to be a faithful Christian and not agree with all my personal beliefs in the political realm. I guess most of us have our opinions about what is or is not best for our country. I need to understand, however, that those things which have to do with the social and political matters of this country should not be made a test of faithfulness to the Lord.

I can be opposed to abortion, Secular Humanism, the theory of evolution and any other immoral practice or false doctrine without being a part of any right-wing political organization. It could be that

I could be a *"hindrance to the gospel of Christ"* if in teaching someone who does not share my conservative political views I try to force him to change his "liberal" views on social and political matters before he can become a Christian. I believe that my time is better spent in teaching men and women the gospel of Christ and seeking to save their souls from a devil's hell than in trying to recruit them as members of some human organization. Of course, this effort will mean that I must speak boldly in opposition to some things that many consider to be social or political issues. Many in our society today consider differences on abortion, homosexuality or evolution to be merely differences in judgment on these social or political issues. However, all these are condemned in God's word and must be rejected and opposed by those who love God. There may come a time when speaking against these sins will result in our being viewed as law breakers and imprisoned. If so, we must obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29).

What if we lived in a country where we did not have the freedoms we enjoy in this country? What if we lived in a country where the king (or emperor) insisted on our worshipping him and denying Christ? What if we knew we would be put to death if we faithfully served God? The first century Christians faced such. However, they were not told to rebel against the government nor form political groups to overcome such corrupt political action. Note what the Lord said to Christians in this situation: *"Fear not the things which thou art about to suffer: behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days. Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life"* (Revelation 2:10). This teaching is still needed today. Any other course of action will find us on a course which will result in the loss of our own soul and also one of hindering the gospel of Christ.

✠ James Hahn



## THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST

In his letter to the Ephesian brethren Paul said, *"how that by revelation was made known unto me the mystery, as I wrote before in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ; which in other generations was not made*

known unto the sons of men, as it hath now been revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; to wit, that the Gentiles are fellow-heirs, and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel" (Ephesians 3:3-6). This verse has been used by some to try and prove their contention that God's plan for the redemption of man is so difficult to understand that the average individual simply cannot read and understand it for himself, for even Paul, they say, declared that it is a "mystery."

They seem to have the idea that Paul's reference to the gospel as "the mystery of Christ" means that it is something "mysterious" or difficult to understand. This is not true. The word "mystery" is defined as "anything secret, unknown or unexplained." Even the simplest and easiest to understand matter can be a mystery if it is not made known. If an item is missing from your home and you do not know how it disappeared its disappearance is a mystery. Upon further investigation you may learn that you simply put the item in a different location and forgot about doing so. Is this difficult to understand? Certainly not; however until you located the item or remembered what you had done you had a mystery, i. e., the whereabouts of the item was unknown.

Paul uses this same terminology in describing the gospel. God had promised Abraham that "in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:3). How this promise would be fulfilled was hidden in the mind of God. It was unknown, hence a mystery. However, Paul says that this mystery "which in other generations was not made known unto the sons of men" has "now been revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit" (Ephesians 3:5).

Not only does Paul say that this mystery has "now been revealed" he says to these individuals "when ye read, ye can perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ" (Ephesians 3:4). So, the very passage some use to try to prove that one cannot read and understand the "mystery of Christ" teaches the very opposite. That which had been hidden in the mind of God in ages past has now been revealed by the Holy Spirit to the holy apostles and prophets. It is no longer hidden or unknown. We now know how God planned to bless all nations in the seed of Abraham. Paul goes on to explain this in detail when he says "to wit, that the Gentiles are fellow-heirs, and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ

Jesus through the gospel" (Ephesians 3:6). In Galatians 3:16 Paul says, "Now to Abraham were the promises spoken, and to his seed. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." Yes, the plain and simple truth is that in Christ all nations of the earth were to be blessed. There is nothing hard to understand about this, nothing mysterious, if men will lay aside all preconceived ideas and opinions and accept the teaching of God's word.

Paul continues in the latter verses of this chapter (Galatians 3) to make it vividly clear how we can be identified as "Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise" (v. 29). In verses 26 and 27 he says, "For ye are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ."

This is in keeping with what Jesus declared to His disciples before He ascended back to the Father. He said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned" (Mark 16:15,16). We encourage all to believe and obey.

✍ James Hahn



**REMEMBER, OUR SUMMER BIBLE STUDIES THIS WEEK AT 7:00 O'CLOCK NIGHTLY.**

<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>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