

The Old Paths

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“Entertainment Or Religion?”

Jarrod Jacobs

I was impressed with an observation made recently by brother Tom Roberts in an article he wrote. He said, “Entertainment has become our religion; religion has become entertainment” (*Truth Magazine*, Vol. XLVI, No. 6, March 21, 2002, p. 7/167). How true this statement is! Look around at the multiplied millions who wish to be “entertained,” or wish to be made to “feel good” in their religion; but do not wish to be told that they are guilty of sin, or that there is a need for repentance. When many hear teaching on sin or similar subjects, they get upset and look for “a church that will fit our needs.” They look for a place which will talk about “love, and not commandments.” (As if they were mutually exclusive, Jn. 14:15, 23-24; I Jn. 5:3!)

The denominational world caters to such an attitude with their: potlucks, parties, “special” music, “special” services, concerts, political rallies, etc. Unfortunately, this is also going on among brethren today, by those who wish to be “entertained” in the preaching, rather than being reproved, rebuked, and exhorted in the word of God (II Tim. 4:2). Many that we might consider “conservative” remind me of the Jews in Malachi’s day who said, “Behold, what a weariness is it!” to worship God as He commanded (Mal. 1:13). They are like the Jews who said, “When will the new moon be gone ... and the sabbath...?” (Amos 8:5). These

people were not interested in pleasing God, but in satisfying their own whims. Not much has changed, has it? Many today are repeating the mistakes of the past!

Are We Here To Be Entertained?

Why do we gather to worship God? Why are we Christians? Is this something done in “name only,” or do we truly mean what we say and do? Paul said, “*And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him*” (Col. 3:17). What we do religiously, at home, at work, and in all things, must be done “*in the name of the Lord.*” Is this what we do? Many do not, and will leave the Lord at the first sign of struggle or hardship because it is not “fun” or “comfortable” to them anymore. Shame on us for being so fickle!

We do not gather together to be entertained, but to worship God! We are not a Christian merely to be seen of men, or for possible business contacts, etc., but because we wish to be a follower of the Lord and go to Heaven one day (Jn. 15:18-20; Rev. 2:10, 22:14).

Remedy For Mixed-Up Priorities

When we find ourselves being swayed and seduced by the allure of “entertainment,” and the drive to be popular with the masses, may we be reminded of what our purpose is on earth. It is not to fulfill our will and have everything go our way, but it is to serve God lovingly and faithfully while we live (Heb. 5:8-9; Ecc. 12:13-14).

Our purpose in worship is to worship God! Jesus said, “*God is a*

Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (Jn. 4:24). Have we forgotten this? Many have! Our time together in worship to God is to praise and extol our Creator for His mercy, and love. It is to remember our Lord’s death, burial, and resurrection; it is to sacrificially give back a portion to Him; it is to learn more of His will that we might be better servants in His kingdom (Acts 2:42, 20:7; Eph. 5:19; I Cor. 16:1-2). This is not a glorified baby-sitting service, nor some kind of “fashion-show,” nor is it gossip hour. One should not have the attitude that this is just something “we do,” to kill a few hours each week, in order to avoid getting a phone call! All the things we do in worship must give praise, honor, and glory to the God of Heaven!

In order to fight the carnal attitude which craves “entertainment,” let us remember who we are. Our lives are not our own, but belong to another (I Cor. 6:19-20). We have been bought with the precious blood of Christ (I Pet. 1:18-19), therefore, let us live as His servants, and not the servants of Satan (Rom. 6:16-18).

Entertainment and similar things appeal to our physical senses, but do not appeal to the inner man, the soul. In order to appeal to the inner man, one must use spiritual means. This comes through God’s word, the spiritual nourishment for the soul (Heb. 5:12-14; I Pet. 2:2). One problem we face today is the fact that many think that simply preaching and teaching the gospel to people is not enough. Yet, God said men are called to Him by the gospel (II Thess. 2:14). It is through the gospel that men are saved (Rom. 1:16; Jas. 1:21). It is through God’s word that men are “*begotten*” and “*blessed*” (Jas. 1:18, 25). Therefore, who are we to change things to suit our whims? Let us be satisfied with the Lord’s way, and know that the blessing comes when we do things in the way He wants them done.

“Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk

Jesus Loves Me

Steve Walker (deceased in 2002)
Copied

This article was written by Steve Walker as he lay dying with cancer. Steve was a deacon of the Eastland church of Christ in Louisville ... and he sent this to one of the elders, hoping it might benefit others.

Concerning his illness, he writes, "...Without prayer, I don't think I would have made it thus far. This is such a daily struggle. I'm so thirsty, but nothing tastes good. My bones ache. I've lain around so much my back is sore and it is hard to sleep at night. My sense of smell is sharp. I can smell things others can't. The dressing they placed on my incision is a stench to me. I wonder if this is the smell of death." He passed from this life and was buried March 5th. He was 47. He is survived by his wife Aleta and two children, Jacob and Katie. *"Through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks"* (Heb. 11:4). The next paragraph begins bro. Walker's article.

"Jesus loves me this I know for the Bible tells me so, little ones to him belong, they are weak but he is strong. Yes, Jesus loves me, yes, Jesus loves me."

We often refer to this as a children's song, but if you look in most songbooks in most auditoriums across this country, you will find it. Regardless of age, we all need to be reminded that we are his children and we are all too weak. But Jesus is so strong.

We need to be reminded of the love of Jesus. No matter how big our problems seem to us, we can lean on Him, He cares for us. Look what all He did for us. He left His heavenly home and came to the sin filled world to redeem us for His own (Phil. 2:5-9). He suffered, bled, and died for all our sins. He was sinless, but bore the sins of the

world. He did this because He loves us (Rom. 5:6-11). God the Father is love (Jn. 3:16), so it is only fitting for Jesus to be full of love.

Yes, the Bible tells us so. The greatest book ever written is there for our reading and understanding (Eph. 3:4). At times like this, I wish I had spent more time in The Word. I fully intended to, but where did the time go? There is no substitute for regular Bible study (II Tim. 2:15).

We find out how weak and helpless we are when the doctor says, "It's cancer and it has spread, all we can do is treat it." Or, when the hospital calls and the voice says, "There has been a terrible accident, you need to come quickly." At times like these, there is nothing in our power that we can do to change things, no matter how hard we want to. All we can do is remember that Jesus loves us, that we are His children, and that He cares for us more than we can ever imagine. At times like these, we need to pray and summon the prayers of fellow saints around the globe for strength.

Often we run ahead of God and foolishly make plans, like we have endless tomorrows. A few weeks ago, I had planned to be in Florida this week saying good-bye to my daughter. Instead, I went home from the hospital today with a long road ahead. I have all but forgotten, *"if it be thy will."* Please remember that we have no guarantee of tomorrow; our

life is like a vapor (Jas. 4:14-15). My life changed drastically in the course of a few hours. Yours can too.

Are you ready? You can only be His child if you are obedient to His word (Heb. 5:8-9). Love, Steve Walker (deceased)

Editor's Note:

The above article makes a good point that we ought to consider well. Are we ready for eternity? Our lives can change in a moment. Solomon said, *"Boast not thyself of to morrow; for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth."* (Prov. 27:1). God loves us, without a doubt, but now the question is: "Do we love God?"

Do we love God enough to obey Him (Matt. 22:37-40; Jn. 14:15; Rev. 22:14)? Do we love God enough to serve Him willingly (Ps. 110:3; II Cor. 8:12)? Do we love God enough not to blame Him when hard times come? Brother Walker realized the source of his blessings, and did not blame God for the hard times he was facing with his cancer. Would you (I) have that same attitude if it was you (me) in such a condition? Be honest! Some blame God for far less.

Let us learn the lesson brother Walker learned, and let us lean on God, spending time in His word daily that we might be what we need to be. David said, *"Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."* (Psalm 119:11). Let us live in such a way that we can say what David did. Let us not put our trust in a dying world (I Jn. 2:17), but in the living God!

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