

The Old Paths

Volume 14, Issue 32

October 7, 2007

“21st Century Problems In The 1st Century”

Jarrod Jacobs

For all the technological advances mankind has made through the years, we have not really changed much have we? Though many think that we are experiencing certain problems and difficulties for the first time, this is not so (Ecc. 1:9-11)! We have the same basic concerns and needs as every generation before us, don't we (ex: Matt. 6:25-33)? In this article, let us study some of our 21st century problems, and notice that the problems we face today were solved by our Lord and the Apostles in the 1st century.

Apologizing For Speaking The Truth.

Today we see people who are afraid for the truth to be preached for fear someone may get mad or upset. On one occasion, I read where a preacher stood before a group of people and told them, “If you don't believe in some degree, and repent to some extent, you are liable to be damned somewhat.” This would be funny if it were not true.

The amazing thing is that this attitude of apologizing for the truth is nothing new! In Matthew 15:1-12, Jesus told the people that they were worshipping in vain, and were making God's commands of none effect (Matt. 15:6-9). When Jesus finished speaking, the disciples came to Him and said, “Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying?” (Matt. 15:12). We

can just imagine the apostles putting their arms around Jesus' shoulders, and “explaining” what He did wrong, can't we? We can hear them trying to tell Jesus that there had to be a better way than what He had done. After all, He had “offended” the Pharisees in His teaching! Notice the answer Jesus gives: “Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone ... if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch” (Matt. 15:13-14). Please understand, the pulpit must never be used to brow-beat a person, or used for publicly belittling a person. However, when the time comes to preach the truth in its purity and simplicity, then may God help me to do so regardless of the consequences (Jude 3; Col. 1:27-28)!!

What is your attitude toward the truth when it is preached in its purity and simplicity?

Denominationalism

Just as there are people today who wear the names of certain men (e.g., John Wesley, John the Baptist, and Martin Luther), so also there were people in the first century who wore the names of men. In the first century, people wore the names of Paul, Apollos, and Peter (I Cor. 1:10-13). Paul said that such things were characteristic of those who were “yet carnal” (I Cor. 3:1-9).

The questions we need to ask are, “Why would these people want to wear the names of men?” and “Why would they want to wear names that would produce division?” Some wore Paul's name,

thus dividing with those who wore Christ's name. The same was true for those who wore the names of Apollos or Cephas! The apostle Paul asked these people, “Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?” (I Cor. 1:13). The answer obviously is “no.” The question we must then ask is, “Why wear the names of men who were not crucified for you?” Should not this question be posed to those in the denominational world today who insist on wearing the names of men?

True unity comes when we decide to live by the same rule, wear the same name, and speak the same thing (Phil. 3:16; Acts 11:26; Eph. 3:4)! It is possible, but who is willing to do it? Rather than dividing over matters of faith, and pretending to have “unity” like so may do today, let us cast off our preconceived ideas about the Bible and study the truth together. Instead of merely hearing about God, let us hear God and obey Him (I Sam. 3:9-10; II Tim. 3:16-17; I Pet. 4:11)!

Hero Worship

This is not a new thing in society. Some will look to certain preachers, or other saints in the kingdom as “bigger than life.” To some, they can do no wrong, and even if they do something wrong, it is right! No one could ever replace him or her after he or she is gone. The idea of hero worship can include our feelings toward our parents, friends, and many others.

How did God deal with this in the first century? One answer can be found in I Corinthians 2:1-5. The apostle Paul says, “I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified ... my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom ... That your faith should not stand in the wis-

dom of men, but in the power of God." Why did the apostle Paul not come to them and enamor the people with wonderful words and sayings? It is because he wanted their faith to be in the power of God, not in the wisdom of men!

There are some today who strive for the praise of men rather than the praise of God. Rest assured, they have their reward (Matt. 6:1-8)! The Corinthians were told, *"I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up"* (Read I Cor. 4:1-6).

Likewise, when thinking about the "hero worship" of family members, let us remember the words of Jesus who said, *"He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me"* (Matt. 10:37). Are we worthy of Him? Are we any better than some in the 1st century?

Not Making Personal Applications In Our Study.

When we refuse to apply the spiritual lessons we learn to ourselves, we are like a man that is starving from hunger who sits at a table full of food but refuses to eat! Those in the 1st century were no different. They needed to apply the spiritual lessons they had learned to themselves.

James addresses this problem by contrasting a wise man who takes heed to God's word with a foolish man who refuses to listen (Jas. 1:22-25). Which man best describes you? Be honest!

The apostle Paul wrote, *"Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do..."* (Phil. 4:9). Passages like this show the great emphasis placed upon applying the spiritual truths we learn in

God's word to ourselves!

If we in the 21st century refuse to study our Bible and make pointed applications to ourselves, what good are we to the cause of Christ? What good are preachers and teachers of the gospel who refuse to make pointed applications in their preaching and teaching? If we are not applying what we learn, how can we expect anyone else to do it?

Stunted Spiritual Growth

In the 1st century, there were Christians who had not grown as they should. Consider the Hebrew Christians. They had been Christians long enough that they ought to have been teaching others, but they could not do it. Their growth was stunted (Heb. 5:12-14). The good news was that these people did not have to stay like that! They could reverse this by immersing themselves in God's word, and exercising their senses to discern both good and evil. The apostle Peter told the Christians, *"Beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ"* (II Pet. 3:17-18).

Worldliness

Worldliness is one of the worst problems we face today. This is because of all the ways worldliness manifests itself. Worldliness can manifest itself in the form of im-

modest dress, modern dancing, vulgar language, the drinking of alcohol, the use of drugs, pornography, and in many other ways.

The Bible makes it clear that God's people have always had to fight worldliness. One passage that shows this is Colossians 3:1-10. The apostle Paul contrasted how the people used to be with the way that they are now. He shows them that worldliness was one of the things that they put to death when they crucified the old man and buried him in the waters of baptism (Col. 3:5-7; Rom. 6:3-6; Col. 2:12). He then shows what they needed to do now that they were free from sin and cleansed from unrighteousness (Col. 3:8-10). It was up to them to listen and make the application. The same is true with us. We need to listen carefully to the word of God and then make the proper applications so that we can be a better people, a godly people, prepared for Heaven.

Conclusion

No, our problems are not new. Yet, this does not diminish their serious nature just because people have "always" had these problems! Let us be aware that Satan is using the same tools today that he used in the 1st century because they are effective! Let us not fall prey to him (I Pet. 5:8), but be strong in the Lord (Eph. 6:10)!

Have You Read Your Bible Today? Bible Reading Calendars Are Found At: www.southside-churchofchrist.com



I want the truth, give me book, chapter, and verse!

Come and meet with the church at Southside.

Our address: 2920 New Hartford Rd. Owensboro, KY 42303

Meeting Times:

Sunday Morning Bible Study _____ 9:30 a.m.

Sunday Morning Worship _____ 10:20 a.m.

Sunday Evening Worship _____ 6:00 p.m.

Wednesday Evening Bible Study _____ 7:00 p.m.

"What Is Written": Sunday (12:30 p.m.) on 94.7 & 100.5 FM.

Call: 683-9246 (WBIO) with your Bible questions.

"The Ancient Landmark": airs Monday (9 p.m.), Wednesday (5 p.m.), & Thursday (11 p.m.) on channel 52.

Website: www.southside-churchofchrist.com (Updated weekly!)

Preacher/Editor: Jarrod Jacobs Elders: Paul Dubois & Jeff Lankford

Phone: (270) 683-5386

"Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls." (Jer. 6:16)