

The Old Paths

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“Your Spiritual Nourishment”

Jarrod Jacobs

Not long ago, I was privileged to hear brother Raymond Harris of Plainfield, IN speak concerning preaching which was not focused upon God’s word, but focused upon what “tickled” men’s ears (II Tim. 4:3-4). One of the things he said was: “If you fill your bucket at the table of the Philistines and Samaritans, you’ll not find fit food for the people of God.” That’s a colorful statement, isn’t it? What did he mean by this? He meant that if our spiritual nourishment is coming from men rather than from God, our souls will be in jeopardy, and those whom we teach are in jeopardy as well. If the preaching we hear is less and less Bible, and more stories, anecdotes, jokes, etc., we are not going to maintain our identity as the Lord’s people for long. This is because our souls will not be nourished by the truth, but by the philosophies and thoughts of men.

What brother Harris said is true, and in fact, his warning is one that is repeated over and over in the Scriptures. For example, Jesus told His apostles that God’s word is truth, and they were to “preach the gospel to every creature” (Jn. 17:17; Mk. 16:15). In the last letter we have by the apostle Paul, he told Timothy to “preach the word...” (II Tim. 4:2). Jude wrote the brethren, telling them to, “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the

saints” (Jude 3). In his first epistle, the apostle Peter told the scattered strangers that they had “purified (their) souls in obeying the truth...” (I Pet. 1:22).

Why such emphasis upon preaching and following the truth of God? Among other things, we see that it is because God’s word is true nourishment to our souls. Just as our bodies need nourishment, so also our souls need nourishment. Just as we know our bodies “run better” when we are eating healthy foods as opposed to junk foods, so also our souls “run better” when they feed upon the truth, the pure word of God! Hebrews 5:12-14, as well as I Peter 2:2 compares God’s word to “milk and meat” which nourishes the soul. These and numerous other passages in the Old and New Testaments emphasize the truth, God’s truth, and how that this needs to be our “spiritual food”!

Of course, just as our body needs nourishment so that it can then exercise, or move about and work, so also, the reason for nourishing our soul is so that we can be active, and obey the truth we have learned (I Pet. 1:22)! Of course, obeying the truth requires that one hear it (Rom. 10:17)! This message is a distinctive, cut-to-the-heart, balanced message that points people to Christ. If we are unsure about this, consider Paul’s success in teaching and converting souls (Acts 19:10), and compare that with his message (Acts 14:7, 17:2, 18:5, 19:8, 28:23-24; I Cor. 2:2-5).

At the same time, these men

preached sermons that were applied to the hearers. For example, when Christ spoke against the sins of the Pharisees, “they understood that He was speaking about them” (Matt. 21:45, NAS). After the apostles spoke, those present in Jerusalem asked, “what shall we do?” They knew they were responsible for the death of Christ (Acts 2:37). Further, the sermons and writings of Paul make it clear that he applied the truth to the hearers. Too many in the Lord’s church are wasting their time listening to “general” sermons that make no applications to those present.

Brethren, what are we hearing from our pulpits? (I am not above criticism, brethren, and I certainly need to examine what I am preaching, as much as anyone, II Cor. 13:5.) Probably a better question is: What do we WANT to hear? More and more, we are finding people who do not have the “stomach” for gospel preaching. And, unfortunately, we see preachers willing to accommodate this attitude. These men do nothing to help the problem. They perpetuate the problem!

As a result of preaching which pleases men but not God (Gal. 1:10), Christians are not feeding upon the word of God, but on other things, whether it be the opinion of the preacher, of the world, of the family, etc. Christ said, “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled” (Matt. 5:6). For what do we hunger? For what do we thirst? Unfortunately, we have brethren like Israel, who have “hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water” (Jer. 2:13).

Let us hunger and thirst for righteousness. Let us demand that the distinctive gospel message be consistently preached in our hearing (Rom. 1:16). Let us be nourished on it and follow it that we might see Heaven (Rev. 22:14)!

“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)

“Fellowship, Just A Social Gathering?”

Justin Monts, Glasgow, KY

Today when the word “fellowship” is spoken, many say they can already smell the coffee and donuts. It is sad to see the Bible concept of Christian fellowship so devalued and distorted by men to mean nothing more than “food, folks, and fun.” I once asked a preacher where his authority for the “fellowship hall” was, and he replied, “Well, I believe it is in the command to fellowship.”

While it is true that spiritual fellowship and social activities are both part of the Christian life, we must understand that the two realms are actually mutually exclusive. If spiritual fellowship includes things of a social nature, then this preacher may be correct and authority for “fellowship halls,” and other church-sponsored recreational programs, would exist.

According to the American Heritage Dictionary, fellowship is simply, “The condition of being together and sharing similar interests or experiences.” This is a modern definition for the word but it’s not how it is used in Scripture. Twenty times fellowship, or koinonia in the Greek, is used in the New Testament, and in each and every case it has nothing to do with merely “being together” or verbally expressing “interests.”

Biblical fellowship is a spiritual acceptance of each other and an understanding that we can work and worship together while walking in the light (Acts 2:42; Rom. 15:26; I Cor. 1:9,

10:16; II Cor. 6:14, 8:4, 9:13, 13:14; Gal. 2:9; Phil. 1:5, 2:1, 3:10; Phile. 6; Heb. 13:6; I Jn. 1:3, 6, 7). Enjoying meals with fellow Christians or having a great time on a basketball court is commendable and praiseworthy, but it does not constitute Biblical communion.

Also, consider the conclusions of making fellowship nothing more than verbal interaction. When one socializes with the Methodist, Muslim, Buddhist, or even the Atheist, is he not having fellowship with them on the same basis? Yes, he is. But the Bible says, “*have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them*” (Eph. 5:11). So, obviously, fellowship and social interaction cannot be equivalent. That being the case, we ought not make it appear that way.

The intent of this article is not to be trivial but to make us aware of this fundamental difference. We must emphasize that Christian fellowship is “*with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ*” and not a casual, frolicsome social gathering (I Jn. 1:3). Accordingly, let us “*speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine*” (Titus 2:1).

Editor’s Note:

Brother Monts brings up a very important point, I believe. When

speaking with folks about Bible matters, let us make sure we use Bible terms in the correct way. We are a people who call Bible things by Bible names and do Bible things in Bible ways. Therefore, let us “*speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine*” at all times. Regardless of the subject/ topic, let us respect the Bible’s definition of terms, and not redefine words to match the definitions common for 21st century English (or Spanish, Russian, Portugese, French, German, etc.)!

- JJ



“Points With A Punch!”

- ◆ Never put a question mark where God has put a period.
- ◆ If you are too busy to assemble with the Lord’s people, you are overworked.
- ◆ Some say a little talk with Jesus makes it right, but Paul had a little talk and had to “*arise and be baptized*” (Acts 22:16).
- ◆ People who are spiritually blind rely on feeling for Heaven.
- ◆ A hundred people will search the woods for a lost boy but won’t move an inch to save a soul.
- ◆ Some folks have more of their “thinks-so’s” than the Lord’s “say-so’s” in their religion.

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