The Christian Courier



Send all correspondence to ~~17103 Bixby Avenue~~, Bellflower, CA 90706

THE CHRISTIAN COURIER
9914 ARKANSAS AVE.
BELLFLOWER, CA 90706

MAY 1993

****

CAN OUR CONSCIENCE BE OUR GUIDE?

There have been publications put out by brethren of the Church of Christ that could have been published by any denominational church. They appear to be teaching that almost anything goes. According to some, if the Bible doesn't say "Thou shalt" or "Thou shalt not" our conscience can lead us.

No wonder so many of our young are going astray -- doing drugs, alcohol, sex without marriage. The Bible doesn't say thou shalt not have sex before marriage; thou shalt not do drugs; but we all know these things are not condoned by the Bible. Just because it doesn't say thou shall not doesn't mean it isn't taught against. Gal. 5:19-21 says fornicators won't inherit the kingdom of God. Our bodies are the temple of God. What do drugs and alcohol do to the temple? Alcohol and drugs let the body do things contrary to the Bible. Gal. 5:21 ...murderers, drunkenness, revellings... these usually go hand in hand with alcohol and drugs.

Why would christians want to be like the rest of the world? Some dress like, act like, drink like, talk like the world. We're supposed to be a peculiar people. We're not very peculiar if we do as the world does.

How many young people, as well as adults, are being sent

straight to hell because of what they are being taught by some Church of Christ preachers. You might as well go to denominations or not go at all if you don't do what the Bible says. We are to be Christ like. Are we Christ like if we are committing fornication, adultery, reveling, drinking? Do we have a case of wolves in sheep's clothing? Matt. 7:15 Are we teaching the commandments of men? Do we have itching ears? (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

In the case of letting our conscience be our guide - how can your conscience be your guide if you were never taught something was wrong? If you aren't taught not to murder every time you get mad, why not kill that person you got mad at? That would get him out of your way. If you aren't taught to be modest in your attire, your conscience won't tell you that it is wrong to go around scantily attired. If you aren't taught not to do drugs, not to have sex before marriage, not to marry more than once, how do you know it is wrong? If you aren't taught that a christian doesn't drink, gamble and carouse with the world, how does your conscience know how to guide you? It looks to me like the argument that a conscience will allow some to do one thing and some not holds water just about as well as a bucket with a hole in it.

I don't want my children and grandchildren taught these things. There is enough temptation in this world with peers and friends without the leaders of the church teaching such things. We are to abstain from the appearance of <u>all</u> evil (1 Thess. 5:22). We are losing too many of our kids to worldly pleasures and denominations without leaders in the church helping. After all, wide is the gate that leads to destruction.

True christians won't want to be associated with the world. We should want to be a peculiar people. If we do what the world does, we are of the world. We will look and act no different and we will end up in hell with the world. We had better start standing up and being counted on the Lord's side because the world is taking over the church. Permissiveness in the church is the key to the church's destruction. I've heard it said that we will lose our young people if we are too strict - well, they are lost anyway if they go to church and their worship is in vain. And it will be in vain if they are living for the world instead of Christ. We can go to church every time the door is open and still not be saved. We have to do God's will.

Sometimes the brethren that are trying to keep worldliness out of the church are called trouble makers. If being called trouble makers is part of our persecution, then so be it. We will be so labeled to keep permissiveness out of Christ's church. I wonder which ones are being written in the book of deeds as trouble makers - the ones standing up for what the Bible teaches or the ones calling some trouble makers.

The Bible is the same today as it was yesterday. It doesn't change with fads, customs, designs of men, or the part of the country you live in. Just because something is the accepted custom in your region doesn't make it right. Homosexuals are being accepted, especially in some regions. Does that make it right? There doesn't have to be a direct command for us to know we aren't to do a thing. Luke 6:46 ...And why call me Lord, Lord and do not the things which I say? Read 47-49. Persecution - Matt. 5:10-12 tells us that those that are persecuted for righteousness sake are blessed and great is their reward in heaven.

Of course it is easier to fit in and be accepted at school or work or wherever we go if we can do whatever is being done by our peers. But, are we supposed to fit in? I think not. Why would the Bible say we are to be a peculiar people if we fit in with the crowd?

For goodness sake, brothers and sisters, let's stop looking for hidden meanings and escape routes in God's word. Can't we take it in it's simplicity and do what it says. It's not going to do anyone any good to have a huge congregation of baptized people if that is all they are. We have to be doers of his will.

2 Tim. 4:2-4 tells us that the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. That time has come, hasn't it? It says in the Revised Standard translation...For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings, and will turn away from listening to the truth to wandering into myths. I believe this has happened in the church today. If christ returned today and found you drinking, gambling, living with your second or third spouse, would you say you are as ready as Paul was in 2 Tim. 4:7-8?

As much as I would love for there to be unity in the Church, how can there be when so many put their own wishes

and interpretations on what the Bible says? Christ isn't glorified if we are only baptized, come to church when the mood strikes, and live like the rest of the world the rest of the time. God is not a respector of persons. Why would it be okay for one person to do one thing and not okay for another. It is not doing our kids one bit of good to teach these things just to keep them coming to church. We have to teach them not to do as the world does. We have to have works for Christ. We cannot work for the devil - Matt. 7:20-23.

In Christian love,
Audley Barnes
Countryside Church of Christ

****

WEIGHTIER MATTERS

Matt. 23:23-24 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay the tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgement, mercy and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel." Some things carry much weight; others less. However, nothing is weightless. In the case in point "weight" refers to importance. How are we to evaluate importance, either great or small?

Our Lord indicated that is is hypocritical for us to place undue stress on a seemingly minor point of law, only to ignore those aspects of great importance. We can understand this. But what of the reverse? Are we to place stress on the "weightier" matters to the disregard of the smaller? To further the thought the Lord taught the importance of both great and small. "You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel." Vs. 24 (RSV).

Not a Matter of One or the Other - Our Lord did not instruct us to choose between the small and "weightier" matters, but to esteem both to be important, "-- these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." Thus we learn that all points of scripture are important whether "small" or "great" and none to be neglected.

Some Good Examples - A gentleman with whom I was discussing the subject of the sabbath (he insisted Christians must observe the sabbath) used the following expression to describe the verse of Acts 20:7 "An insignificant verse - used only once." This seemed reason enough to ignore the teaching of scripture relative to the first day of the week. Surely we all realize this to be an important scripture despite the fact it was used only once, and that in a passing narrative.

Many subjects are mentioned very few times in the scriptures, some only once, but this does not diminish their importance. Jesus reproved Satan for his temptation when he said, "--Man shall not live by bread alone, but by EVERY word that proceedeth out of the Mouth of God." Matt. 4:4

Justice, Mercy and Faith - Would we ever, for any reason, attribute something to our brother that he has not done or said? Justice (simple fairness) would forbid this forever. If we do this, how can we justify bearing false witness against our brother? Justice demands that we act even handidly with our brother. James 3:17. Yet this is exactly what we do not do today in so many ways!

Today the church of the Lord is divided into several de facto segments. These fractures generally follow several subject lines and the Body of Christ is suffering as a result. Divorce and remarriage, liberal vs. conservative outlooks, and fellowship are subjects on which we are divided. I am certain that these differences have existed in the brotherhood for a long time. What is alarming is the attitude that seems to be growing on the part of many today, concerning these differences.

It seems that any fellowship across these doctrinal lines is becoming impossible. If this is allowed to proceed it means the total dismemberment of the Church of our Lord. If this follows we will ultimately find the Church only in isolated pockets and these having no fellowship with each other! This is unthinkable!

Well within my 64 years (49 in the Lord's church) I have been privileged to know many aged brothers, men of great wisdom in the Lord. Many differed in their viewpoints. I remember many times listening to these find old brother "debating their cause" with each other, in a vigorous, but kind manner. Despite this, when Lord's day came, they were

there displaying their love and respect for each other. Not so now! We separate ourselves from each other if we differ in our viewpoints. Not only this, but there seems to be an attitude of harshness and rudeness in our dealings with each other. This is wrong! If we thus ignore the "weightier" matters of God's law, is it any wonder that the "smaller" matters are likewise ignored?

Ask Ourselves - (1) Do we consider others greater than ourselves? Mark 10:44, Phil. 2:3. (2) Do we consider the welfare of our brothers more important that our own? Phil. 2:4. (3) Do we think more highly of ourselves that we ought? Rom. 12:3. (4) Do we openly belittle our brother? Or behind his back? James 4:11. (5) Do we actively work to diminish our brother's reputation among the brotherhood? (Diotrophes) 3 John 9. (6) Do we show hospitality (or hostility) toward our brother? I Pet. 4:9

Are we practicing these things today? If so, let us abandon them. If not, let us be doubly careful not to begin. Moreover, let us be diligent to encourage our brothers to stop!

The Church of the Lord is suffering because of such things! "Brethren, these things ought not so to be."

Your brother in Christ,
J.D. Logan
Stockton, CA

****

"AS COLD WATERS TO A THIRSTY SOUL, SO IS GOOD NEWS FROM A FAR COUNTRY." - Proverbs 25:25

****

COMANCHE, OKLAHOMA

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

Just a few lines from the Countryside Church of Christ to let everyone know we are still here and still striving to do our Father's will. There seems to be fewer and fewer in today's world that are trying to live as we've been commanded. It seems we hear all too often of another

christian falling back into the world or ones still in the body that want to change things to their way of thinking. I am afraid that when the judgement day comes, many will wish they had left out some of the "I think so" statements and had done what the Bible says. Proverbs 14:12 tells us "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."

On the first weekend of November, we had a very good meeting with Brother Dan Teague doing the speaking. He and Sister Mary made a special effort to be here with us and we all appreciated it very much. Brother Dan gave us lessons that anyone could understand, straight from God's word. We want to thank them and all the visitors from afar and near that came to support us. We even had some from a non-bread breaking congregation come out.

Since the report of our meeting in July we have had some more from the surrounding area to drop by and worship with us. It's always nice to meet new people and to hope they can be shown the only way.

In christian love,
Audley Barnes

Editor's Note: We sincerely apologize to Audley and the congregation at Comanche. We received this letter and it was misfiled. Thank you for bringing it to our attention and we apologize that it was not printed on time.

****

BARON, OKLAHOMA

Greetings from the Baron Church of Christ:

The church here is doing well. Bro. David and Sis. Debbie Brown's twin boys, Travis and Trenton, were baptized Monday evening, April 19th. They are 14 years old. There is much rejoicing here and I'm sure in heaven.

We really enjoy the paper and appreciate the ones who are working so hard to put the paper out. Keep up the good work and may God bless you in the effort. I hope the brotherhood will take more interest in sending in more articles and newsletters. I have been lazy about it but I intend to do more.

We are looking forward to our gospel meeting June 13-20 with Brother Dan Ross of the Selah, WA congregation. We invite everyone who can to come and be with us in this meeting. As the scripture says, behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell in unity - Psalm 133:1. The closest to heaven we can get here on earth is with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love, in honor preferring one another, not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord - Rom. 12:10-11.

For the Baron Church of Christ,
James Brown
(918) 778-3240

****

GOSPEL MEETINGS

June 13-20	Baron, Oklahoma	Dan Ross
June 26-July	Cedaredge, Colorado	Camp
July 4-11	Bellflower, California	Eric Smith
July 24-August 1	Yakima, Washington	Mick Boen Eric Harper

****

HAVE THE LAST WORD....APOLOGIZE!!!