

The Duplicity of Popularity

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Paul's letter to the Ephesians divides neatly into two sections. The first section (what is now the first three chapters) is all about what we have been given in Christ. The second section (what is now the last three chapters) deals with our responsibilities to God and to one another in light of what Christ has done for us. Paul begins this second section by saying, "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to have a walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unanimity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (Eph. 4:1-3) This is Paul's first thoughts regarding what we are responsible for in light of Christ's sacrifice for us.

Flash forward two thousand years and we find that all of these instructions have been perverted, distorted and changed. Some even preach that for us to do anything in response to Christ is to practice "legalism" and "self-effort" so as somehow to be saved. Few indeed practice true humility but instead have to show everyone what a great "ministry" they have. At the first sign of disagreement, "pastors" and other "leaders" practice damage control to keep their "ministry," from which they derive their lucrative income, from being destroyed or depleted of people from whom they can obtain money. And the people who claim to follow Christ are divided into multitudes of sects and divisions that cause the outside observer to doubt and ridicule the idea that Christ and God are even real.

It is perhaps Paul's last instruction here – "endeavor to keep the unanimity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3) – that has received the most attention from the demonic beings who seek to change and distort the true way of following Christ. Few even recognize that followers of Christ have the responsibility to practice spiritual unanimity let alone know how that might be spiritually attained. Denominational fractures are so ingrained and considered as acceptable that this requirement, if ever even considered, is dismissed as merely some radical, idealistic fantasy that is simply not possible in today's religious environment and therefore there is no possibility it is any longer actually required of us. Forgotten is the fact that "Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever." (Heb. 13:8) If something has changed, it is not Him or His requirements upon us that have changed. Rather it is we who have changed something. Wherever those who speak in His name have distorted His message and requirements, to that extent these have only created a false gospel. (see Gal. 1:7-9)

To practice the unanimity of the Spirit first requires that we hear and obey Him. "My sheep hear My voice," Jesus said. (Jn. 10:27) This fundamental fact has been so overshadowed by intellectual "theology," by "advanced" spiritual experience and "knowledge," and by religious rituals that replace a simple, humble attitude toward God that even the notion that one is supposed to hear and obey God for oneself is discarded and even ridiculed in many "churches." Instead, one "needs" the interpretations and guidance of the "pastor" or "apostle" and one must sit passively, even silently, at the feet of these "spiritual giants" so as to be certain not to "go astray." Unfortunately, by seating themselves at the feet of these "spiritual gurus," the passive listeners have already gone astray and turned their ears away from the Spirit of truth and been turned aside to "theological" fables. (2 Tim. 4:3-4)

The entire machinery of institutional churchianity revolves around the ability of the chief speaker to draw in passive listeners. No longer do preachers go out and make disciples – instead they hang up signs on their "church" buildings that advertise what particular brand and franchise of denominational "Christianity" they represent and then they give eloquent lectures from a

raised platform to show how spiritually advanced they are. This will never produce the unanimity of the Spirit. In fact, this methodology, transplanted directly from the pagan temples of Greece and Rome and the pagan arts of rhetoric and sophistry (“wisdom”), is designed primarily to exalt the speaker. Any truths the speaker happens to drop in the laps of his or her listeners will be completely drowned out by the subliminal message presented by the position the exalted speaker takes over his audience. But the better the speaker is at telling his listeners what they want to hear, the more money they will give him to keep scratching and tickling their ears. Even when it is truth they want to hear, by continually speaking truths that are devoid of responsibility to obey truth, the speaker merely inoculates his listeners to the deeper works of the Spirit of truth. This is the deception the enemy has lured men to put into place around the world and this is the vehicle of the great falling away from the faith, the apostasy, that occurs before the return of Christ. (2 Ths. 2:3, Mt. 24:10)

Jesus never used popularity to draw followers after Himself. When He taught that He was the bread of life that gives eternal life, many of His disciples found this “hard to understand” and impossible to accept. Jesus then told His followers, “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.” From that very day, many followed Him no more. And instead of seeking to keep His followers and remain popular, Jesus then said to the twelve, “Do you also want to go away?” (Jn. 6:60, 63, 66-67) Jesus knew that if He changed the message just to gain and keep followers, He would change the followers back into what they already were – merely carnal (fleshly) adherents to yet another religious creed and dogma. Jesus came to make sons of God who interacted with and followed the Spirit of God (Rom. 8:14, etc.) – He did not come to make yet another variety of religious devotees devoid of the Spirit of God. Any deviation from the path of following the Spirit of truth, holiness and love is just that, a deviation from the path that leads to genuine eternal life. That today’s “pastors” and “churches” have lost sight of this fundamental facet of genuine salvation is simply evidence of how effective the apostasy is in deceiving the many – exactly as prophesied. (2 Pet. 2:1-2, Mt. 24:5, etc.)

We have been called to follow Christ wherever He might lead us, even unto death in some cases. We have turned that into an invitation to sit at the feet of some speaker, hear “gospel” words and do whatever we want (as much or little) for Christ and God as we please. Is it any wonder that the passion involved in truly following Christ has dwindled away and been replaced by apathy and self-centered religiosity?

Now the success of a “pastor” or “church” is measured almost entirely in its popularity, by the number of people who regularly come to the “services.” But so long as popularity is the standard upon which the preaching of the gospel revolves, for that long the gospel will remain ineffective in restraining the darkness of this world. So long as popularity is the standard upon which spiritual messages are designed, for that long the people will remain idle, passive and dependent upon some man for the things which Christ intended they should receive from the Spirit of truth. It is those ones who do not know how to refuel their lamps for themselves but who must instead run off to find those who sell oil who will be the foolish wedding maids who are denied entrance to eternal union with Christ and God. (Mt. 25:9-12)

Democracy is founded upon the idea that the power of government rests upon the consent of the governed. Since monarchs and ruling classes have so often proven themselves to be less than beneficial to people in general, we have come to believe that the will of the people is the basis of all power. Forgotten is the fact that *God* is the source and holder of *all* power and authority in heaven and on earth. (Mt. 28:18, etc.) Some, under the intoxicating influence of

democracy and self-rule, have even put forth the notion that the voice of the people is the voice of God! But this is not so. It is only those who have been trained to “endeavor to keep the unanimity of the Spirit” (Eph. 4:3) who know what God is saying. It is only these who can ratify whether someone is speaking from their own accord or speaking the words of God. (Jn. 7:17) It is only these who no longer partake of spiritual milk derived from some other man but who “by constant use have trained themselves to discern good and evil” (Heb. 5:13-14) who can confirm or deny what is of God and what is not. These do not need any man to teach them truth because they learn truth directly from the Spirit of truth. (1 Jn. 2:27, Jn. 16:13) But these are in such a minority that one is surprised when one finds anyone who even seeks this unanimity let alone who is able to practice it. This is one of the more serious indictments laid against the current generation.

The unity or unanimity of the Spirit – where all hear the Spirit and work in harmonious conjunction with His will and directions – is not something we have to (or even can!) manufacture. Nor are we ever instructed to manufacture it – we are only instructed to *keep* or *preserve* it. Until we repent of relying on our fleshly religious habits and notions, we cannot hope to experience or preserve the unanimity of the Spirit. And we will not see the grace of God exhibited in true leadership giftings (gracings – Eph. 4:11) that lead us into the unanimity of the faith. (Eph. 4:13) So long as we remain divided into our own “theological” camps and sectarian divisions, we will remain our own “God” and the world will have no reason to believe that Christ actually came from God. (Jn. 17:23)

For those who are determined to come out of the deceptive clutches of churchianity, there is a whole new realm to enter into, the kingdom of God. This is the realm where Christ and God are actually obeyed as King and Lord. (Mt. 6:10, also see 2 Pet. 2:1) This is the realm of “righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 14:17), a realm characterized by power and not mere talk (1 Cor. 4:20), a realm whose citizens practice godliness not as a mere outward form or presumptuous claim of “faith” but as a functional reality in their lives. (2 Tim. 3:5) The “church” has long overshadowed the kingdom but as the “church” age draws to a close, the sons of the kingdom will be enabled to shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. (Mt. 13:43)

The time upon us now is an opportunity to regain the passion for serving Christ and God that has been lost in apostate churchianity. It is no longer (not that it ever was in God’s eyes) acceptable to look upon God as a crutch that we can use anytime we want to. Those who look to heaven only when they’re going through some drama will find that *He* is really the source of the drama – and the whole point is not to help them avoid or remove the drama but rather to cause them to repent of some sin in their life! Those who only call on God when they are going through problems may fit in at some “church” but this is not how citizens routinely live and operate in the kingdom of God. In the kingdom of God, one must be “all in” or one day they will find that they are not in at all. (Mt. 7:21)

It is not enough to know what we have been given in Christ – we must also be faithful and obedient in our responsibilities before God toward Him and toward one another in light of what Christ has done for us. If we refuse to take up our cross and follow Him, we turn His death into a lie of monstrous proportions. We turn His work of redemption into a work that condones rather than removes our sin. Jesus came to destroy the works of Satan (1 Jn. 3:8), not to incorporate them into His kingdom so as to gain more followers. Only those who truly follow and obey Him will remain in His kingdom. Those who love and prefer lies will not be permitted to remain (Rev. 21:27) and in the place where those who knew the truth but did not obey it will

go, there will be weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth. (Mt. 13:41-42) The wise person will seek the Lord now so as avoid being sent to such a terrible place. Such a choice will not be popular with the many who are being deceived and one will not likely be able to remain in places that are currently popular but this is what is required for us to make secure and sure our own divine calling and election, a thing that is of much greater worth than temporary popularity, to say the least. Popular “theology” likes to rely on “eternal security” that has no real or experiential basis in Christ but on judgment day, Christ and God will evaluate each and every soul on the basis of what they *did*, not on what they heard. None will be excused from judgment just because their “pastor” or favorite ear-scratcher said that it would all be “okay.”

“The immovable foundation of God stands, having this seal, ‘The Lord knows those who are His,’ and, ‘Let those who name the Name of the Lord depart from every wickedness.’” (2 Tim. 2:19) This foundation stone, upon which all men stumble or stand (1 Pet. 2:8, Mt. 21:44, etc.), has not moved or changed in any way nor has there been any other name under heaven or given among men by which we may receive salvation. (Acts 4:12) If we will not obey God and adhere to the requirements He has laid out in His plan for our redemption, by what insanity do we think we have any right to His rewards? Rather, if this insanity is the basis of our eternal hope, we among men are most deceived.

Let he who has ears hear.

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