

Prayer List

Sheila
Ophelia
Josh
Daniel
Olene

Services:

Sunday

Bible Class 9:00 a.m.
Assembly 9:50 a.m.
Assembly 6:00 p.m.

Wednesday

Bible Class 7:00 p.m.

Pinole Tidings

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This Week's Question:

What prophet refused to use anointing oils during three weeks of mourning?

Answer To Last Week's Question:

Hiram - 1 Kings 7:13-14

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Restoring Restoration

Dee Bowman

"If Christianity would go back to its origins, cleanse itself resolutely from the silt of time, and take its stand with fresh sincerity from the personality and ideals of its founder, who could resist it?" That's an observation from Will Durant from an article written for the Saturday Evening Post in August, 1939.

Isn't it amazing how things don't change? The statement is as relevant to our needs today as it was when Mr. Durant wrote it. It speaks of restoration. It's a call for restoration.

But that's not the first time a call for restoration has been made. Both the Old and New Testaments are replete with calls for restoration. The Prophet Jeremiah called for it when he said, "thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, wherein is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls" (Jeremiah 6:16). Things don't really change much, do they? The people then, like some people today, were not obliged to listen. "But they said, we will not walk therein."

Man wants his own way. He always has. It seems that no matter how many times he is called back to God, he can't stay for long. He has to dilute, to re-arrange, to make alterations. He has to do it his way.

God's truth will not tolerate mismanagement (II John 9). Whether it is done in some sincere manner or out of gross rebellion, God will not allow man to tamper with His will (Psalm 119:89).

It's hard to believe what's happened to the restoration concept in the past fifty years. I use that figure because I've been acquainted with it for that long. When I was a young man the restoration motif was alive and well—in fact, it was dynamic. People were constantly telling folks about the need to return to the Bible, to “speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent.” They wanted “book, chapter, and verse” preaching and would not be satisfied with less. They—most of them at least—could take you to that same book, chapter, and verse and show you why they believed what they believed. What has happened, folks? Why am I not hearing those same thoughts expressed today?

In many churches of Christ today those slogans—cries for restoration—are not being heard. In fact, in many places they've not been heard in so long a time that people are not even familiar with them. Are they no longer relevant? Do they no longer apply? Are they outmoded and antiquated, no longer pertinent? Just how is a thing justified as scriptural today? Well, in many churches there is little effort made to give scriptural reasons for what is being done. And some preachers have gone so far from the restoration plea they will tell you openly, and without shame, “what the big deal? We're just another denomination anyhow.”

And do you now what's sad? In many cases, it's so. We have screamed out, “Give us a king so we can be like the nations round about us!” (I Samuel 8:5). Churches in many places don't call for Bible authority for what they do (I Peter 4:11). They do what they want to do. If they want to have women participate in leadership roles in the worship services, they do it. If they want to have a choir, they do it (some have even put the instrument in their song services). If they want to

have a “contemporary service,” one with so-called “casual worship” (complete with coffee and donuts), they have it. And when asked where is the biblical authority for such thing their reply is simple. “What's the big deal? We do lots of things for which we have no Bible authority.”

Churches in many places no longer subscribe to the Bible concerning the plan of salvation (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2; 22; I Peter 3:21). For instance, many deny that baptism is even essential to salvation. “Churches of Christ say that?” you say. Yes, sir. They will tell you it's just an outward sign of the salvation that comes when one “accepts the Savior.” And they will tell you that with a degree of ecumenical pride—sometimes even arrogantly.

Churches in some places are tainted with the seeds of metropolitan-ism. Local autonomy is breached with impunity. One eldership oversees the work of several different churches. The work done by congregations reaches into areas of psychology, home-health care, social and benevolent organizations, much of which work is funded by churches without regard to whether or not the Scriptures approve it. Para-church organization, as well as colleges and universities are funded by local churches without regard to whether or not the Scriptures approve such actions. It seems that so long as a thing is done in the name of religion, it has God's approval. Pshaw!

Is the Bible the final authority for salvation, as well as for the work and worship of the church? Answer yes or no. Then read Romans 10:1-2 and John 14:6. Will we be held accountable for what we teach and practice? Answer yes or no. Then read Galatians 1:6-9. Is our plea for a return to the Bible no longer relevant? Should we just abandon it as a cliché? Just answer yes or no. Then read I Peter 4:11.

Don't you think it's about time we decided again whether or not the Bible should be our only rule of faith and practice? It's a matter of life or death, folks.