

Prayer List

Gene
Veda
Judy
The Williams' Family
Ophelia

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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Vol. 14, No. 41 - July 21, 2013

Elders:

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This Week's Question:

Who sat on a stone while the Amalekites fought the Israelites?

Answer To Last Week's Question:

Refusing to marry the widow of his deceased brother
- Deuteronomy 25:9

Published by the church of Christ which meets at 755 Pinole Valley Road, Pinole, CA 94564, Phone (510) 724-1994, (Mailing address: church of Christ, P.O. Box 453, Pinole, CA 94564)

Does It Make Any Difference?

Paul Earnhart

Some few years back at a meeting of preachers gathered to discuss differences over the work and relationship of local churches, I was asked by two brothers of the contrary persuasion if I really thought they would be lost just because they taught and practiced the uniting of the work of several churches by the voluntary combining of their funds under the management and direction of a single sponsoring church. It was apparent from the way they asked the question that they thought an affirmative answer unthinkable. My answer clearly dismayed them. I told them that though I was not inclined to take up God's task of deciding the eternal destiny of men's souls, my presence at the meeting would have made no sense unless I thought there was a real possibility that their practice could cost them their souls. Otherwise, why all this agonizing investment? After all, if a thing makes no difference, it is a waste of time even to discuss it—a meaningless strife over words (2 Timothy 2:14).

These same two men had already been at pains to dissociate themselves from the extremely liberal positions of others who happened to share their view of the work of the churches; and I was grateful to them for it. But it made me wonder if they felt

that those attitudes from which they had so strenuously distanced themselves were also a matter of indifference; and if so, why the concern. In Christ it makes no sense to exercise ourselves over matters which will have no influence over whether people are saved or lost. Jesus came into the world to save sinners (1 Timothy 1:15) and all concerns which do not touch on that issue would seem to have no part in His kingdom.

In all of this, right attitudes make a critical difference. God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble (James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5). He abominates haughtiness, smugness, self-conceit (Proverbs 6:16). They are at the heart of the anti-God mentality (Romans 1:28–30).

A vital part of the right attitude toward God is a reverence for His word (Psalm 119). Those who take God's word lightly could never in this world take Him seriously. It is in the Scripture that the Lord has revealed His gracious will for us. Because the wisdom of God is in those words we dare not treat lightly a single one of them (Matthew 5:19). I am always leery of those who admit that the Bible deals with a certain subject and then dismiss it as one of "the lesser matters" not at the "heart" of things. Whatever comes out of the mind of the Almighty demands my careful attention. Let it be admitted that some things in the Scriptures are not as weighty as others, but even these, Jesus said, are to be observed (Matthew 23:23).

What we need to understand is that it really doesn't matter where we decide to resist or treat negligently the will of God; the irreverent attitude expressed toward the One who has spoken remains the same (James 2:10, 11). We live by "every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Mt. 4:4) because we live by Him (1 John 5:11, 12).

I realize that some think that church order is a rather light weight issue and undeserving of great concern. Be that as it may, men have been powerfully rebuked in Scripture, even lost their lives, for refusing to pay careful enough attention to God's order for doing His business. Moses' sister Miriam thought it should not matter to God who spoke for Him. It did. She was stricken with leprosy (Numbers 12). Korah, Dathan and Abiram judged that who offered incense in the worship of God was of no consequence to Him. It was. They and those who shared their presumption all died (Numbers 16). Uzziah, king of Judah, felt strongly that he had as much right to officiate in the temple as the priests. He didn't. He died a leper (2 Chronicles 26:16–21). Even David thought that it was immaterial to God how and by whom the ark of the covenant was transported. It wasn't. Uzzah died as a consequence (1 Chronicles 13, 15).

The failure in all these cases which are recorded for our learning (Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11), was in not realizing that God's arrangements are designed in His great wisdom to perfectly accomplish some very weighty ends. We, from our place of ignorance, are in no position to judge those arrangements inconsequential to His overarching purposes. Now in all of this there is plenty of need for God's mercy and patience. Like David, none of us is immune from veering off the track that the Lord has laid for us. Yet what hope is there if, unlike David, we simply refuse to learn or to care about those blunders? Where there is a true heart to know and to do the will of God I believe there is assurance of achieving that goal (John 7:17) but what shall be the end of those who simply do not care?