

96 – Fond of our own gratification or fond of God

It seems to me that Christians – of all people – should know better than to assume things from the word of God when they have the scriptures right in front of them. It has baffled me how 2,000 years of tradition has been established without at least a tacit nod to intellectual honesty. There are so many areas of Christian theology that are so full of holes, it is no wonder why there are some 38,000 denominations. Interestingly, most of those are protestant – they don't seem to agree on much, even within their own councils. The Catholics seem relatively united by comparison, but then they have an infallible Pope who tells them what's up.

This line of thinking hits me about once a day, as I look through Facebook and Twitter posts from various individuals and organizations. What I notice most are two things:

1. I see no one asking questions about fundamental Christian doctrines. Everyone seems willing to accept that whatever they've learned is how things are.
 - a. Example: TGC offered a TWEET a few days ago that I couldn't let pass without challenge:
 - i. "The church, if it wishes to speak into the culture around it, must regain its ability to tell testimonies."
 - ii. The tweet led to a blog post titled, "Tell Your Story, Tell It Well –
 1. The whole thing had to do with the absence and the need for testimonies as compelling stories to inspire and draw people into the Christian experience.
 - iii. I wrote back this comment to the blog: What if the church itself BECAME the testimony it desires to inspire in society? Stories are what brought the traditions down through the generations, but the testimony in the lives of those of whom the Scriptures "speak" inspires and teaches us even today. Their stories -- their testimonies -- are their lives. As my wife says, "I'd rather see a sermon than hear one any day."
 - iv. After someone else commented, I wrote the following: "Praise God for dialogue. I suspect -- no, prophesy -- that if "the church" seriously looks at its fruit, I pray it will reconsider its "stories," doctrines, and even its origins. This is an "iceberg" consideration ultimately; far more lies below than above the surface. I pray we will have the courage to look the Lord in the eye and ask, "What is Your word with Your heart for Your children today?"

- v. All of this, of course, fell on deaf ears. Every other comment had to do with working stories into the service...no one was home, it seemed.
- b. Someone posted a comment today about Jammie Church on Facebook, in response to someone asking, "What about the fellowship with the body? Like the Bible describes in Acts 2:42?" (*Now they were persevering in the teaching of the apostles, and in fellowship, and in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.*). There's another scripture I was surprised the questioner did not bring up: **Hebrews 10:25** – *Now they were persevering in the teaching of the apostles, and in fellowship, and in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.*
- c. In any case, I thought the response was brilliant:
 - i. Fellowship is heart to heart and is a part of what takes place in Jammie church. There are no geographical boundaries for the body of Christ to worship together. "Pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart." 2Timothy 2:22
 - ii. I fired off this comment: I'm convinced that Jesus, Paul, and "the boys," would have been on TV, Facebook, Twitter -- the whole nine yards. We'd all be "liking" them and "following" them on Twitter! Worship AND fellowship is truly without walls today.
- 2. It looks to me like everyone within organized Christendom assumes that "the church" is somewhere to go, to hear more about what you already believe, to "fellowship" with people just like you, follow along with a "worship service" that looks the same every week; listen to a "message" from a pastor or minister to whom someone gave a position. I don't see anyone anywhere asking, "How'd we get here and is it what the Lord would have us be doing? Is this what He would have us teach people? Is this how He would have us build and sustain His body?"

I'm asking, when I see an opportunity "What if our whole notion of the purpose of God, through the death, resurrection, and glorification of Jesus Christ, is flawed at its roots.

Let me share one more exchange:

The President of Lifeway Christian Resources wrote a post called, "5 Signs Declining Church Health "

I wrote back: WHY "church" at all, healthy or not? What's the mandate? From whom? "Kuriakos" & "ecclesia" are entirely different. To which the man replied: "No mandate. We are all the Church. Some folks do feel comfortable in a traditional environment."

I replied back: Yes, but is "comfort" the object? If the Gospel is an "offense," the cross a "snare," "un-comfort" may grow us more.

He shot back: We don't need buildings for Christ. We need people to be reached where they are.

The man's reply made it clear that no one was at home, so I let it die.

Why am I taking our time with this tonight? Simply this: our purpose, Barbara's and mine, is to declare whatever God is saying, to whomever He directs or draws in to hear.

You can't listen to Jammie Church and think that Barbara is likely going to be invited to speak at the Vatican or the Crystal Cathedral any time soon, but it would be well if they did, and God is a God of miracles, so we won't limit Him! I can't imagine some pastor calling to ask if he could use Light Up the Scriptures as a pattern for his congregation's own Bible study; but imagine what they'd learn and what could happen in their lives if they did?

The Ministry Center, ScriptureDoc, Jammie Church, Light Up the Scriptures, and soon, an outreach named, "Be Made Whole," exist to declare what no one else may be declaring, on God's behalf, for the sake of His children, and, for those who have ears to hear, let them hear. We can't care, any more than Jesus or Paul did, who agrees and who doesn't. Who gets it and who doesn't...and, I would suggest that neither can you.

You may be the only one in your world who knows what you know and believes what you believe. Aren't you glad that you aren't alone – by that, I mean that, through our technology today, we don't have to live next door to one another physically, or even in the same hemisphere! Our fellowship is, as the author I quoted before said, "it's heart to heart...There are no geographical boundaries for the body of Christ to worship together.

2 Timothy 2:22 - "Pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart."

We are assembling in fellowship tonight, just as much as if we stood side by side physically. Barbara had a dream she shared at Jammie Church, about Day Star satellite network wanting to broadcast Jammie Church from their studios, and Barbara said not, so they came here to the house to stream the live video to the world. But people did come, and they were everywhere in the house, and along the stairs, all listening; just wanting to be a part of what God was and is doing.

Jesus walked everywhere, and a "throng" gathered – a crowded concourse of people. He would speak to the 12 separately, usually after He addressed the throng. He spoke

to the 12 more intimately and in more detail, because they would go on to carry the gospel abroad. When Paul came along, he went farther than any other apostle, wrote more, revealed more, AND suffered more than any other apostle.

NEVER – not one time – did either one of them start, much less defend, an institution in a building...certainly not one called CHURCH, which is a word they never even knew! Ecclesia, yes! Assembly of the Saints, yes! Meeting from house to house, yes! Family of God, Yes! Body of Christ, you bet! In a men's Bible study about a year back, when we were going through Colossians, one of the guys mused, "I wonder what the "churches" looked like back then...how were they constructed, compared to what we have now. I was compelled to remind the group that they early ecclesias met in homes. There WAS no church as it came to be known. These groups were called ecclesias – a "called-out assembly.

2 Peter 3:13-18:

Yet we, according to His promises, are hoping for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness is dwelling.

14 Wherefore, beloved, hoping for these things, endeavor to be found by Him in **peace, unspotted and flawless.**

When Peter talks about being found in peace, he's talking about you being found in peace within yourself and with the Lord – not necessarily in peace with the rest of the world; that is highly unlikely. "Unspotted and flawless"...doesn't that sound like Paul's instruction to Timothy, in **2 Timothy 2:15?**

Endeavor to present yourself to God qualified, an unashamed worker, correctly cutting the word of truth.

But even Peter didn't get all that Paul revealed

2 Peter 3:

15 And be deeming the patience of our Lord salvation, according as our beloved brother Paul also writes to you, according to the wisdom given to him,

16 as also in all the epistles, speaking in them concerning these things, in which are some things hard to apprehend **[they're hard to perceive, let alone understand; they're hard to think upon, ponder, consider, heed – this stuff isn't just hard to wrap your brain around; it's tough to fall in line with them in your day-to-day character!]** which the unlearned and unstable are twisting, as the rest of the scriptures also, to their own destruction.

Peter may not have understood all of Paul's revelation, but he respected it, and he was familiar with people whom he called, "the unlearned and unstable," who "twisted" not

only Paul's teaching, but the "rest of the scriptures also, the result of which is their own destruction."

I'd be willing to bet that the people Peter was talking about may have been the same, or at least among the ones Paul wrote about in

2 Timothy (we have seen this a number of times):

1 Now this know, that in the last days perilous periods will be present,

2 for men will be selfish, fond of money, ostentatious, proud, calumniators, stubborn to parents, ungrateful, malign,

3 without natural affection, implacable, adversaries, uncontrollable, fierce, averse to the good,

4 traitors, rash, conceited, fond of their own gratification rather than fond of God;

5 **having a form of devoutness, yet denying its power. That last one is the scariest of all (read it again)**

6 These, also, shun. For of these are those who are slipping into homes and are leading into captivity little women, heaped with sins, being led by various lusts and gratifications,

7 **always learning and yet not at any time able to come into a realization of the truth. Notice: you can't teach these people, and they won't ask to be taught either!**

8 Now, by the method by which Jannes and Jambres withstand Moses, thus these also are withstanding the truth, men of a depraved mind, disqualified as to the faith.

9 But they shall not be progressing more, for their folly shall be obvious to all...

A quick aside here: These names, Jannes and Jambres, are mentioned nowhere else in the scripture besides Paul's letter to Timothy. The commentators, including rabbinical ones, suggest that they were princes among the Egyptian magicians – whose names were handed down by centuries of oral tradition – who sought to discredit Moses and Aaron as God's ambassadors by using magic to perform the same signs that Moses and Aaron did. The names would also have been known to Paul's protégé, and his comparison to them was to illustrate the manner of deception that men of Timothy's time were demonstrating. They'll claim the same power you claim, the same anointing; they may even use the same scriptures and twist it all to their own purposes.

Peter finishes his letter with a final warning...

2 Peter 3:

17 You, then, beloved, knowing this before, be on your guard lest, being led away with **the deception of the dissolute [having no place in morals]**, you should be falling from your own steadfastness. **Paul didn't take for granted that Timothy would spot these people, let alone led astray by them!**

18 Yet be growing in grace **and in the knowledge** of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.
To Him be glory now, as well as for the day of the eon. Amen!

Notice that growing in **grace** is one thing, but don't stop there; grow also in the **knowledge** of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Knowledge is the **perceiving, understanding; thinking upon, pondering, considering, and heeding truth** -- it is acquired by both experience and education, and we cannot afford to neglect either one!

Paul didn't care whether Peter, or any of the other apostles, understood what the Lord had revealed to Him. He taught and wrote, in the face of opposition, mostly from Jews – his own brethren; and from converted Jews who were trying to juda-ize the new Christians.

I sought the Lord as to why I seemed occupied with all this today, and He reminded me of what I had seen, in the Christian circles I've been watching and reading, but also in the words that have been spoken since Israel's PM, Benjamin Netanyahu addressed the American President and AIPAC (America-Israel PAC).

Things are heating up