

The Better Way

Read Psalm 119:1-8 ...

This past summer we treated ourselves to a cruise. It was wonderful and we plan to enjoy another trip when time allows. One of the things that was so nice was the lack of any time schedule for which an activity had to occur. There were certainly many wonderful things to do onboard, but unless a person just wanted to do something, the entire day could be spent doing absolutely nothing at all. There was only one requirement for everyone on the ship – the initial Safety Drill before leaving port. No one was exempt. It was the rule of the Cruise Lines that all participate. Now consider this ...

“Even as God puts redeemed persons in the community, so he sets the standards of remaining in the community.”

Just as a Cruise Line has the right and responsibility to enforce a rule for the common good of those sailing with them, God also has the right and responsibility to outline those behaviors and beliefs that are considered acceptable within the body of believers.

This means that the desires and imaginations of an individual, or a group, do not have a factor in delineating those that are within acceptable criteria for being “church.” As much as men want to draw the terms of church membership, it simply isn’t within the purview of a follower to demand a certain right or privilege from a leader. Our current society is based upon personal freedom and responsibility, and many of our laws are designed to protect those freedoms from being impinged upon. On a societal level this is wonderful, but from a theological level this is devastating to the concept of God as Lord. Can that which is formed complain against its maker, or can the potter be equal with the clay (Rom. 9:20; Isa. 29:16)?

Some in our society not only over dramatize their belief, but also over spiritualize. Of course, there isn’t anything wrong with being a spiritually sensitive person, but to allow decisions regarding acceptable practice before God to be directed by personal feelings is to put the Lord of All Creation at our whim. Feelings are a wonderful and God given part of our psyche, but letting our feelings define our practice often leads to errant behavior (Jer. 10:23).

So, what is the better way? In the whole psalm of the reading noted at the beginning – Psalm 119 – David repeatedly makes note that the Word of the Lord is to be obeyed and trusted. “Oh, let me not wander from your commandments” (v.10); “Oh how I love Your Law! It is my meditation all the day” (v.97); “Your word is a lamp unto my feet and a light to my path” (v.105); “I long for Your salvation, O Lord, and Your law is my delight” (v. 174); and these are just a brief smattering of the repeated theme that runs the length of the chapter.

Over and over in the whole of scriptures this same refrain is clear, the words given by God are upright and lead to wisdom, but the desires of men lead to sin and destruction. The whole genre of the Wisdom Literature points to this conclusion. The Apostle John measures love by the desire to keep the commands of the Lord (1 John 5:3). In John 14:15 Jesus makes the direct statement that if we love Him, we will keep His commandments. The commands of God, as exemplified by Jesus, and passed to us via the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures are the measure, the gold standard, the rock upon which we **must** order our lives if we are going to be acceptable to Him.

Headline: Local Man Sees Jesus

** Question: "What is the role of the _____
_____ before a person becomes a Christian?"

The identification of the Holy Spirit's role _____ a person
becomes a Christian is a relatively easy matter to identify.

We even see that we receive the Holy Spirit as part of that process
when we _____ Christians.

But what is happening _____ we become Christians?

** Statement: "We need more _____ sightings
around town."

John 12:21 – "Sir, we wish to see _____."

If I am to see Jesus it will certainly be in the pages of
_____.

Yet when we talk about seeing Jesus, we are also talking about letting
others see Jesus in _____.

** Can it be said that where we are there is a Jesus
_____?

God does use both the _____ and _____
to affect the hearts of those in the world.

Romans 10:17 – "... faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the
_____ of _____."

1 Peter 2:12 – "... they may, by your good works which they
_____, glorify God in the day of visitation."