

SOAP MUST BE APPLIED

A soap manufacturer, not a Christian, was talking to a minister. Said the soap maker: "The gospel you preach has not done much good for there is still a lot of wicked people."

The preacher had no immediate answer, but they soon passed a child making mud pies. He was exceedingly dirty. It was then the minister's turn, and he said: "Soap hasn't done much good in the world, I see; for there is still much dirt and many dirty people."

"Oh, well," answered the manufacturer, "soap is useful only when it is applied."

"Exactly," was the preacher's reply, "So it is with the gospel of Christ Jesus."

There can be no doubt concerning the application of this factual principle. Until the gospel is used (applied to the life of the individual) it is of no profit to him. One living in sin can be washed clean of the sins of his past life by obeying the gospel of Christ. That gospel "is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth" (Romans 1:16). Saul of Tarsus was told to "arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins" (Acts 22:16).

Before the gospel is of value to mankind, it must be applied (obeyed). Paul states very clearly, "In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God and

that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Thessalonians 1:8). Christ humbled himself and left heaven, lived in the flesh and suffered agony unto death that each one may enjoy eternal life. But, unless we respect the commandments given by Christ and obey every word of the gospel, we shall not benefit from what He accomplished.

There is no such thing as using soap once a week and expecting to keep clean all week long. So, likewise, one can not expect to be free from sins by only a casual or haphazard contact with the gospel of Christ. It demands constant, continual, unerring obedience. ~

Jack Thompson, preacher for the White Park church of Christ.

NAVARRE MESSENGER



The Church in Crisis, Part II

(We continue from our last issue with Ed Bragwell, Sr.'s article from The Reflector, July 2008, titled "The Church in Crisis." The previous installment discussed two things which are contributing to a series of current crises facing the church; first, the quality of preaching in some pulpits of the churches, and second, the corporate style leadership among some elderships. He continues with two more areas of concern.)

3. Redefining of marriage and liberalization of divorce. There has always been some differences of views on marriage and divorce among brethren. Until recent years these differences were very limited in their impact upon local churches because only a few brethren could be found that held views differing from the overwhelming majority of brethren. Even those who held those views differing from most brethren did not openly push their viewpoints because there were so few divorces in local congregations.

gations. But that has changed since divorce has become more socially acceptable and preachers and churches have had to deal with a huge increase in the number of divorces among members and prospective members of local churches. All of this has given more urgency to studying the subject and making application to situations as they exist today. As a result many Christians, especially preachers, are giving more time to the study of all aspects of the subject and coming to very conflicting conclusions about the institution of marriage itself and how a marriage can be scripturally dissolved.

Some of these conclusions that are being openly espoused will, if widely adopted, destroy the institution of marriage as we have known it and as it is revealed in the scriptures. They will also open the door for adulterous marriages within congregations.

These conclusions are not matters of individual conscience and personal practice, but matters that strike at the very foundation of the oldest God-ordained institution and they force local churches to decide whether or not they will fellowship adulterous relationships.

Among these erroneous conclusions is the concept that marriage is just a private agreement between a man and woman to be husband and wife before God and it is fast catching on with brethren. Meeting the requirements of civil law and cultural norms is just a mere formality that really has nothing to do with the validity of a marriage. Likewise divorce is just a mental act before God and that civil divorce proceedings have nothing to do with a real divorce. Then there is the conclusion that there are multiple scriptural reasons for divorcing a spouse that is gaining popularity in spite of the fact that Jesus said that "But I say to you

We meet on James M Harvell Rd next to the public library in Navarre. Call for directions and more information (850) 939-8109

Navarre church of Christ
8490 James M Harvell Rd
Navarre, FL 32566

Place Stamp Here

Assembly Schedule Sunday

Bible Class for all ages ___ 9:00 AM
Morning Worship Service ___ 10:00 AM
Evening Worship Service ___ 6:00 PM

Wednesday

Bible Class for all ages ___ 7:00 PM

VISITORS ARE WELCOME!

This entire publication and previous issues are available online at navarrechurchofchrist.net along with some more useful information

For a free Bible correspondence course by mail, call us.

that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery..." (Matt. 5:32 NKJV).

If these conclusions are not challenged and checked they will throw the marriage institution into chaos adversely affecting the church and society as a whole. God's marriage law is universal in scope and is for all of human society as a whole and not just a law for Christians. We would like to hope that those who have recently arrived at these dangerous positions and are advising brethren based on their conclusion will rethink their positions and consider the logical consequences and return to the position that most brethren have held for years. That being that marriage was ordained in the beginning for the good of the human race and is entered into by a covenant between the parties that is publicly ratified and recognized in a manner dictated by the society in which the parties live and that dissolving a marriage is also a legal or societal act based on the customs of the society in which one lives. That does not mean every marriage or divorce authorized by a given society meets God's approval. God's law tells us who it is that has a right to enter into a marriage covenant to be ratified by society and who has a right to petition society for divorce from a marriage (Matt. 5:32;19:3-9). If the situation continues as it is now and the number of advocates of these new positions continues to grow, I fear how it will direly affect unity among brethren. Those who believe that such doctrines will result in adultery will not be able to stand idly by and let such teaching have free course. This is a real crisis.

4. The creation and proliferation of unnecessary issues.

There has never been a shortage of things for brethren to argue over. Most of the time such discussions are of little consequence and are localized, never rising to the level of a "brotherhood issue." Many issues are of the nature that brethren can agree to disagree because their application is personal rather than congregational, nor do they cause a breach of morality or undermine the foundation of one's faith. Such issues have been around for years causing a minimal of strife among brethren. Most brethren agree that such differences are not worth dividing over.

So, it is not like we don't have enough issues to keep our argumentative skills honed, it seems that in recent years there are those who are bent on creating new controversies to throw into the mix to keep the polemic pot boiling. Among these are the "tradition busters" who dream up new and novel approaches to the church's worship and work. It is not that they, through serious study, have found that the "traditional" approaches need changing because they are unscriptural, but that we need change for change's sake. They push their proposed changes upon brethren knowing full well that they will be met with resistance from those who happen to believe that approaches already in place are scriptural and have proven to be expedient over the years. Even those who are clamoring for change admit that the old approaches were not necessarily wrong but in their judgment their new approaches are better. But are they enough better to warrant the strife that their introduction

causes?

Then there are those projects that are launched that depend on the approval and support of a goodly number of brethren to succeed. But, alas, a significant number of brethren view the existence and promotion of the said project to be at best questionable and at worst unscriptural and a dire threat to the purity of the church. Thus the fat is in the fire and a new major issue develops. We need to ask if all of this is necessary? The best defense that the promoters of these projects are able to make is that they are "authorized liberties." Then the question must be raised is: Is clinging to an admittedly "authorized liberty" worth the brotherhood strife its introduction has caused?

Then, on the other hand, there are some brethren who see apostasy lurking behind every bush. Their unwarranted and ill advised objections also create new unnecessary issues. We all need to be careful that our oppositions are well thought out and scripturally based and not just a product of our living in the "objective case and kickative mood."

There is hardly anything that is worth disturbing the harmony and good will among brethren. We are going to need unity to go forward in this new century. Nor can we afford to allow trends away from ancient order go unchecked for the sake of peace. So, we believe that the church is truly in a crisis that is going to require careful study of the Scriptures and sound judgment on the part of all to weather the storm and once again preserve a remnant bent on walking in the "old paths." ~

Matthew the Tax Collector and Simon the Zealot



by David King

"Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself; and from them He chose twelve whom he also named apostles" (Lk. 6:12-13).

The twelve men whom Jesus chose to be His apostles make an interesting study, but we want to single out two of them: Matthew the tax collector (Matt. 10:3) and Simon the Zealot (Lk. 6:15).

These two men represented opposite extremes in the political landscape of first-century Judaism.

The tax collectors were local Jews who contracted with the Roman government to collect taxes from the local populace. Their collection methods provided ample opportunity for skimming

excess profits for themselves. The Jews considered them traitors to their people.

The Zealots, on the other hand, were the right-wing extremists of their day. Their hatred of the Romans extended even to the advocacy of open rebellion against Rome (which actually happened in AD 66, leading to the destruction of Jerusalem).

Had Matthew and Simon been left alone in the same room, only one of them would have walked out alive. Yet Jesus chose these two men to work together as fellow apostles under His oversight. Why did Jesus take such an enormous risk? Having these two on His staff had a potential for a disastrous blow-up. But Jesus did not make a mistake. Remember, He spent the whole night in prayer before choosing these two. He knew what He was doing. In fact, Jesus' gamble paid off. If there was any friction between these two over their political beliefs, we have no record of it. As far as we know, these two men spent the remainder of their lives in harmony, working for a common cause.

How did it happen? The answer is not hard to figure out: Both men had a loyalty to Jesus that exceeded their political biases.

They both found in Jesus a purpose in life that was greater than their previous calling.

This same phenomenon was demonstrated repeatedly in the early days of Christianity. The church in Corinth included a former leader of the local Jewish synagogue (Ac. 18:8) — a paragon of virtue — along with former drunks, crooks, homosexuals, idolaters, and other assorted riff-raff from among the pagans (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

Can you imagine how awkward their church services must have been, especially at the beginning? But again, the unifying factor here was a commitment to a common Savior. When they came to Jesus, they found the power to overcome their prejudices and suspicions, and forged a new relationship based on a higher calling. To be sure, both parties had to make changes to adapt to this new role, and those changes were not easy to make. But they did it, and it worked.

The story of Matthew the tax collector and Simon the Zealot holds a powerful lesson for us today. It is possible for people from wildly different backgrounds to work together in harmony — but only if they are first willing to submit themselves to the rule of Christ. ~