**“Going to Church”**

This is somewhat of a puzzle for me – as are a few other things these days. While we all ought to know that “Paul” is never going to “*make TRUTH great again*,” but when you think about all that he teaches – and that he heard all of that straight from the mouth of the risen Saviour – one would certainly think all those in ‘Christianity’ would be thrilled to know how to live as the risen Saviour told Paul to pass it on to us. And to be sure, I don’t mean by the ‘law of Paul’ – I just mean by trying to be not conformed to the world and the simple fact that we can get up every time we fall - and we will - because his grace is sufficient. After all, it is our ‘reasonable service’ to try to live ‘acceptable unto God’ – as *a living sacrifice* – and who enjoys being a living sacrifice, ya know what I mean…

But we most certainly know that Paul didn’t make truth great (except at first with the Gentiles); truth still isn’t great today (as now even the Gentiles hate him and what he preaches); and truth isn’t going to be great anytime soon! (see **Romans 11:22**)

So, as I just seem to write more commentary into my sermons/bible studies, (must be that age thing…) I really just want to ask a few things:

“What sort of things should have changed since the Saviour rose and went to the Gentiles through Paul?

Why do Christians today insist on following a gospel that was directed to the Jews and NOT to Gentiles while rejecting the very words and teachings given TO the Gentiles!

Why do Christians insist on going to a place where a false gospel is preached – no matter how good the pastors words are and no matter how fair their speeches are – they are wrong – and we should know that!

Why do Christians need ‘church’ so badly that they will still visit church after church trying to find that one place where they can ‘worship together’ – when Paul even teaches entirely different on OT Gospel worship.

Why do Christians insist on justifying their local ‘Church Search’ with all their excuses - such as:

* 1) I just ‘feel’ better if I go to church;
* 2) My wife and kids need church;
* 3) I have to give my ‘tithe’;
* 4) We are supposed to go, right, whenever the doors are open? Etc. etc. etc.

If you want to skip this sermon and just get to the conclusion, simply read Ephesians 4, 5.

It really is that simple. WE ARE THE CHURCH today. You – Me – those of us who have put our faith IN Christ and have received the faith OF Christ. Those of us who not only believe that God hath raised him from the dead, but also have confessed the risen Saviour with our mouth, thus we trust the Scriptures that we are saved!

Not simply believing that Jesus is the Son of God; not by obeying any Great Commission – not by going to visitation every week – not by running to the altar dripping tears after every Sunday sermon - certainly not by going to church every time the doors are open!

Sure, if all of us out there in scatteredchristianland could get together someplace sometime, it would be great to have a building. Remember Ohio? It would be great to sing together. It would be great to hear a live sermon! It would be great for me to talk to ‘live’ people face to face (you have no idea how much I miss that).

Man, we could even have a potluck and let you ladies fatten me up again – wait, that was the way it was when I was younger – NOW it is different; I don’t need fattening! We better skip the potluck thing this time around.

We could pool our money together to help someone. We could go back to the fair booth and try to talk to people about the Risen Saviour – remember, the Greater Commission booth?

But we can’t do that - that is not ever going to happen. I don’t want to try to start another church and make the local pastors mad – and be attacked by any more women and their fear about their husband getting excited – or be targeted by any mad women with their rumors, etc.

There is that grace ministries crowd that we could jump into the pool with but I would not go there myself. I want to hear ALL the truth, not just some deeper truths about when the church started, etc. Not just brain food from some guy who has studied someone else’s books. Been there, done that – never again!

And honestly, there are some things about ‘going to church’ that I don’t miss, too! I won’t get into those, though!

Well, I could stop there – and call that a commentary on church going… but let’s go one and let me talk about the local church. In case anyone needs a bible study on the local church, read on into part II.

I have talked about this subject before – I do have a few audio sermons ‘out there’ about this very subject. I did a complete study of the word ‘church’ and I suggest you do the same. You will see, contrary to the opinion of the ‘scholarated’ pastors, there are TWO churches. The local – and the universal (or call it what you want), meaning the body of Christ. They certainly do not mean the same thing! One is ‘down here’ and the other one is ‘up there.’ One is ‘pretend’ and one is ‘real.’ One is physical and one is spiritual. One does not impress God anymore and one does (well, the word impress probably isn’t the right word… how about, “pleases’ God! – ya, I like that better)

Now, I am sure there are those who want me to go down the road of when the church started, who is the bride of Christ, etc. But sorry folks, I am just talking to those who either ‘miss going to church’ / or want to know what to say to others when they hassle you for not ‘going to church’ somewhere on a Sunday morning – or Sunday evening – and if you used to be that dedicated church goer, even on Wednesday evening – making sure you and your kids were up late and were tired for work / school the next morning.

So, let’s do my simple study!

**Acts 2:41-47** is the way church WAS and yet sadly, still is in most ‘local churches’ today. Just a reminder – that is the WRONG design / purpose / goals of any local church today. Simply put, that is the OT design – that is the design of the church during the Great Commission. That is the design when people did speak in tongues and did follow the apostle’s doctrine, etc. That is the design that **Mark 16** is alludes to. However, that is TO THE JEWS! Read my fingers – ***T O T H E J E W S.***

Now, I am going to go through these verses and I guarantee that you will recognize every one of these as your ‘former’ purposes from your ‘former’ church going experiences. Your pastor put this stuff on you on a regular basis and if you didn’t respond properly, then that pastor would nicely remind that you were ‘*living in sin’* and were a lousy church member and you had better get your heart right with God – then brother Rex would sing, “Is Your Heart Right With God and we all would rush to the altar, crying, etc. Oh ya – been there done that and like I said and will say – NEVER AGAIN!

***Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.***

There ya go – water baptism, either before, during or after one’s salvation – take your pick. None of them are commanded to us today – NONE OF THEM. It is a spiritual baptism – the ONE baptism we need is NOT a water one! Boy do I have stories on this subject!!!

***And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.***

There ya go – apostle’s doctrine, NOT PAUL’s. You hang around the Great Commission crowd and you are fellowshipping in the apostles’ doctrine. You are NOT fellowshipping around Paul’s doctrine!

Now we can always break bread together – especially that homemade bread… but we are talking here about “Lord’s Supper – Communion” etc. And if you missed a “Lord’s Supper’, your pastor really made you feel like you blew that one! I have a few questions and observations about communion I could ask folks…

And how about those prayer groups – those 24-hour prayer groups you would sign up for and wouldn’t dare break the hourly schedule for fear of being the reason the prayer wasn’t answered! Or those prayer meetings where some of those prayer warriors would wail their great words of compassion for others, etc. Or those prayer chains in the mail – or in the phone, etc. Did you ever see them work? I know, the response from the pastor was always 1) it wasn’t Gods will; 2) God answers in His own time; 3) God can’t hear your prayers because you folks are not giving enough, attendance is down, etc. etc.

***And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles.***

Now there ya go – the fear trick. Do it or God will ‘gitcha!’ Where is God’s grace to those pastors? And is that the goodness of God? No way, Jose and Hose B!

And then you have the many wonders and signs that you find Mark 16. If you are still a church goes, then ask your pastor why they skip Mark 16:16-20!!!

***And all that believed were together, and had all things common;***

Oh ya – and if you try to say anything about Paul, Great Commission, Goodness of God, etc. then you are creating division and we all know that God despises those that cause division. After all, your pastor has been to school – knows the Greek and Hebrew languages, etc. and who are you to challenge him. You know, ‘touch not the anointed!’

And the best and only way to have all things in common is to let the pastor decide for you all what is good and right – and who you should marry – and where you should go to school, where and how you should spend your money, etc.

***And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.***

Well, the pastors change that a little – they say give it all to the pastor – not to all men. While it is not wrong to help folks in need, but I have seen AND experienced myself giving when I really couldn’t (you know that sermon guilt trip) and never recovering for years, if ever… “It isn’t good, you know, that you have a better life style and possessions than your pastor.” I am sure you heard that, right?

***And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart,***

Again, your division is challenged – and you really should go to church whenever the doors are open (they also just have to use **Hebrews 10:25; 13:7,17** to make all this work for them!)

***Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.***

And so, let’s make sure we use the kind of music that will draw in the community. Let’s make sure we call our church name something that will show us friendly – like the “*People’s Church – where we are the friendliest group in town”,* etc. or the “*Church with the greatest common denominator.*” In fact, if you want get a chuckle, I suggest you do a ‘google’ on church names in your community and you will see an unbelievable amount of purely stupid names to try to get people to visit their particular church.

And so, if you can do something to make the community ‘accept you’ – then the Lord will add more and more members. So, if you build the building, the people will come, right? Churches now are finding out that is not right – and are in debt up to their holy temples!

If you do the kind of community involvement to show them that you are no different than them – you know, dress like them, act like them, talk like them, listen to the same music, etc. then they will surely want to come to YOUR church!

No wonder they don’t like Paul’s teachings! No wonder the pastor won’t touch Paul’s books!

It is all OT design. It is all designed after the desert tabernacle, with a touch of Great Commission, etc. In fact, many of them even call themselves a tabernacle or Baptist temple, or ‘house of worship’, ‘house of prayer,’ etc.

I remember one church we found in Las Vegas one morning, as we were on our own ‘church search,’ where we heard that the soloist was a ‘stripper’ from the local “Hallelujah Hollywood” show at a local casino. You can bet that church had a lot of active men in their services – but then, I can’t figure the wives were too thrilled, though. But then again, noticing how women dress these days, it all seems to be acceptable now.

OK, so then what SHOULD a ‘church’ be – what could / should be accomplished as Christians ‘down here’?

Well, if you want to read Paul’s stuff in **Ephesians 4 and 5**, the answer is there and is totally simplistic and understandable. I will, though, leave it up to you to read and think on those verses! This ‘sermon’ is long enough already! This could be a series, no doubt, to cover it all.

Be sure to add **I Corinthians 4:17*: For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church.***

If you want to waste good reading your own Bible time by driving all over town on a ‘church search’ or if you want to sit in on a boring church service so the pastor with his good words and fair speeches make you feel better about yourself – or if somehow you think it makes you a better Christian… then I just say “*whatever*.”

I certainly don’t judge you for it – I just would like to hear you say why you do… and be sure to use Scriptures to show me that God is pleased with your church-going.

And even at that, really, and honestly, and no hurt feelings intended… we all have to learn and grow in our own time, no doubt…It took me 25 years after the first time I heard about following Paul before my fire got lit!

So honestly, like an old cowboy once said, *“Ya can’t have no idea how little I care!”* I just had to say what I said in this commentary/sermon, and now I can go out work in my yard and enjoy my little yellow tennis ball birds (yellow finches) and continue my not feeling bad about not going to church anywhere!

If you want to experience that popular modern Christian phrase, “*Have a relationship with Christ*,” then remember it doesn’t happen in the local church anymore; it happens when you read your Bible and talk to him while you read! He will speak to you through those written words and you can speak to him with your thoughts and prayers – but no need to be fancy. Just read and talk to Him! And you can tell people THAT is how you DO church!

And that is part of the joy and riches of understanding that Paul talks about!

M. Paulson - May 14, 2017 / 12:15 a.m.