

A Quarterly Journal

(Presented by email)

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“LIGHT” FOR OUR AGE”

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

Psalm 119:105

Feature One: Editorial

Worship or Entertainment?

On the ride to the restaurant after a Sunday morning church service:

Jack: I get so tired of our song leader dragging songs.

Jane: Yeah. And did you hear Susie singing at the top of her lungs again?

Jack: She is always off key. I don't even try to sing when I hear her.

Jane: Brother Bud preached his usual again.

Jack: Yep! Long and boring. I don't remember his ever preaching a lesson that kept my attention.

Jane: And that couple came forward again. What's that make? Three times this year already?

Jack: We'll have to wait in line at the restaurant again. Brother Bud always takes so long talking to those people that go forward.

Jane: Oh, and did you taste how stale the communion bread was again?

Jack: You would think with what we give, they could at least buy fresh communion bread.

(Noise from the back seat)

Jane: Will you kids get quiet? Can't you hear we are discussing church stuff?

Does that sound familiar? There seems to be a big push in many congregations to move more toward entertainment and further away from making God the object of worship. My real concern is not of traditions that congregations hold. I am speaking of the purpose of what we are doing. I have heard since my teen years that we need to move away from a stuffy, formal, worship service. We need a service that will cause people to want to come and worship.

Some of the changes that have been made I applaud. The singing of devotional songs enjoyed in the past by our teens can add reverence to our worship. The use of PowerPoint lessons have caused many that did not listen to follow and understand the lessons. They have also aided our singing by causing people to look up at the screen and sing out. But what is the object of our worship? Is it man, or is it God?

I want to refer you to Romans 15:4 which says: "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." In this text we find that God expects us to examine the Old Testament to understand much about God and his ways. Notice first that God was very concerned about worship.

2 Kings 7:16 "And they left all the commandments of the LORD their God, and made them molten images, even two calves, and made a grove, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served Baal.... [18]

Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel...."

But, you might say, who today is making "molten images" in the church? It was not just the "molten images" but that the worship was not directed to God. The Israelites were worshipping something other than their God. I contend we do the same thing when we go from worshipping the Father to entertaining ourselves. The worship is no longer being directed toward God; hence, we see from the Mosaic covenant that God is very angry.

What are some ways we can tell the direction of our "worship"? One way is by clapping. Clapping is a form of communication. We are telling the "performers" that we

enjoyed and approve of their “performance”. The performance is directed toward the audience, just as it is in a theatre.

Another way we can know is by examining the sermons that we hear. Is the minister of the congregation following the apostle’s teaching in 2 Timothy 4:2?

“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. [3] For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; [4] And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.”

If the sermons do not follow Paul’s pattern, then it is likely that the preacher is preaching as an exercise of entertainment. That is, he is preaching to build up his own following. The preacher has in essence become a performer.

A third way is to examine the music that we sing. If we note Ephesians 5:19, Paul writes:

“Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.”

Are we more concerned with the music than the words? The songs must come from the heart, not just the lips. The heart is the instrument. If we focus only on the sound, we could be singing for our pleasure and not for the Lord’s.

Am I saying that worship must be boring to be correct? Not at all. What I am saying is we should receive a spiritual boost not from being entertained but from knowing we are in the presence of the Lord and that we are given the opportunity to actually worship him.

Feature 2: an article by Robert Wineinger

In the 1940’s two of my parents’ closest friends were Bob and Velma Wineinger. In their younger years Bob accompanied dad on preaching appointments and religious debates. Dad continued his work as a minister, and Bob became an elder in the church. They remained friends through out their lives. Velma is now in her 90’s and all of the others have gone on to their reward.

Their daughter, Betty Duncan, sent me a precious manuscript written by her father. I am honored to be able to share that article with you. While it was written to Christians that work in factories; the principles he brings out apply to each of us that work for others.

A Christian Working In A Factory

By
Robert Wineinger

A Christian must not be ashamed to have people know that he is a Christian for Paul said in Romans 1:16, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation...” We must be willing to confess Christ to the world and let them know that we are a Christian. Matthew 10:32 says, “Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. 33 But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.”

One reason for a person being ashamed of Christ and the gospel is because they do not know the gospel well enough to tell it to the world. One should take time to study the Bible so he will be able to tell and explain the gospel to those with whom he works. In fact, it is your duty to know the gospel, 2 Timothy 2:15, “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”

Before one leaves for work it is important to pray to God for guidance during the day. During the day work hard toward the goal of saying the right things and doing the right things. Do not indulge in any practice of evil that will cause you to lose your reputation as a Christian. Do not participate in such things as gambling with your check numbers in a check pool trying to win easy money or playing baseball or football pools. Many workers lose a lot of money trying to win some. If you never participate in this activity and always say “No” when they ask you, they soon will not bother to even ask you. The Bible says in Romans 12:17 “Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men.”

This brings up another thought to remember. We must be willing to give a full day's work to our employer. If we do not do this we are guilty of stealing from our employer. Many times your fellow employees will say, "Don't work so hard. Take it easy. Don't kill the job." Jesus said in Mark 12:17 "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

Let your speech be like that of a Christian and not as men of the world. Colossians 4:6 says, "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man." Study James the third chapter. It tells us how we must try to bridle the tongue. James 3:10 says, "Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be." Our greatest job is watching our tongue. The things that we say to people can kill our influence quicker than anything else in the world. Our words can cause a soul to be lost or saved for eternity.

If we can practice these things in our life both at home and in the factory, we will go a long way in living the Christian life before the world. Your Christian life will be seen and appreciated and your influence will be felt wherever you are.

Feature 3: Our Communication ---

I have taught communication skills now for thirty-five years. When I am evaluating my high school students, do you know what is first on my critique form? It is appearance. Many people do not realize that we communicate much about our self by the way we dress. My students are often surprised that even they make these judgments. My wife, Sandy, is the financial aid officer at McCallie where I teach. I use this story to illustrate my point. Suppose, I tell my students, that I just had a call from my wife and she told me that she had read a file of a student taking the entrance exam for our school. She then told me that one of two students taking this test across the hall from my class is incredible. His former principle wrote that he has never made a grade in his life below an "A". Every test, every quiz, every paper has been an "A" or "A+".

After class is over and I dismiss the students we notice that the door is open where the two students are taking the entrance exam. Obviously, they are going to look in the

door after hearing what I told them. They see one boy dressed in a pair of wrinkled jeans, and a shirt that looks as though it had never seen an iron. His hair was a tangled mess, and his shoes were ripped and untied. Sitting about four seats away was a young man dressed in a pressed white shirt and tie. His dress pants were clean and actually matched his shirt. His shoes were polished and his hair combed.

Which of these two was the “A” student? Without hesitation, and without question, the answer is always, “the well dressed student”. In our society we equate intelligence, and being serious about what we are doing, with being well dressed. We know that dress is not always a perfect indicator, but it is an indicator none-the-less. God sees the heart, as we sometimes sing a song taken from Psalm 139:23 which says, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts”. But what is in our heart? Is our appearance telling us as well as others that we are concerned about self and not God? Or does our appearance show outwardly that we respect and reverence God?

Feature 4: Bible Questions

If you have a Bible question send it to me by email and I will enjoy studying it with our readers. If it is a question to which you would like an immediate answer, indicate that and I will try to return it to you personally. Remember, if you would like to communicate with me, use my school email address in that this is the one I most often use.

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Brother Oliver: Will you discuss James 5:14-15. Does this passage teach that elders in the church today are to pray for members and anoint them with oil?

The Text: James 5:14-15 Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: [15] And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

I recently found several hundred radio sermons written by my father dating back to the 1950’s. Among the lessons were some comments on this text. I will begin my remarks by giving some explanations given by him. “*This is a text which is often referred to... as ‘the divine prescription for disease’.... If this indeed be so, its demands must be*

followed minutely....

Please observe that the first thing verse 15 affirms is: 'And the prayer of faith shall save the sick'. Please notice that the text does not say, 'And the prayer of faith may save or might save, or will perhaps save the sick,' but it is very emphatic. 'And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up. There is no room for question or doubt here! The sick shall be saved, and the sick shall be raised up!

Suppose then (an elder) prays over a sick person, anointing him with oil. But instead of recovering he remains sick, or dies. We can know one thing for sure; he prayed a prayer of unbelief. But how could he pray other wise, for the simple reason that we are not living during the era of which this apostle speaks.

The apostle James wrote this letter about the year AD 60. This was several years before miracles were to cease. It was some time before the New Testament was completed, the writings of our text itself being part of 'that which is perfect', the coming of which was to cause miracles to cease. Healing was therefore a common practice of that particular day in which James wrote. He is here simply stating the rule that was to guide in the healing of the sick in that day. We do not live in the days of miracles as they did. This text is no longer applicable therefore, seeing the age of miracles is over."

An example of another text similar to this one is in the book of Mark.

Mark 16:16-18 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. [17] And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; [18] They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.

While we can see in this and many other passages that baptism is essential for salvation, we also understand that the miraculous portion of this text was fulfilled (Acts 28:2-6) we also understand that this age of miracles has past. This is also true in the text in James. Elders should be praying with and for the sick. That is part of their work. However, the age of the miraculous is past.

As to the anointing with oil, that was more medicinal than a spiritual anointing. The word "anoint" (GK G230) is not the usual word for sacramental or ritualistic anointing. Furthermore, it is a well-documented fact that oil was one of the most common

medicines of biblical times (Luke 10:34 and Isaiah 1:6). The evidence also indicates that the “anointing with oil” was medicinal in nature and more of a bodily covering, and not a drop or two on the head.

In Closing:

As we come to the end of the first year, I want you to know how much of a blessing this has been for me. I really want this little epistle to be of benefit to you. If you have a question, please send it in. If there is a topic you would like addressed, I will do my best to be prompt, and if you know of anyone else that might enjoy this e-paper, just send me their email address.

I will be in Russia (near the Arctic Circle) as January rolls around, so my next edition may be a few days late. Charlie Cochran, the minister at the East Ridge congregation, and I will be visiting congregations of the church in Sosnogorsk and Sosnovka, two little towns in the Komi region. They are located about a thousand miles north of Moscow. We are due back in the states about January 9th. I will try to have the first edition of next year ready by the time I return. I do ask that you pray for us and our trip. Till we meet again....

In the Master’s service,

Bob Oliver