

PRAYERS & ENCOURAGEMENT

Those who are sick or need our prayers — Pat Espy, Linda Reagan, Bud Mixon, Richard Branum, Margaret Blake, Phillip Stevens, Joe Turner

Continue to remember in your prayers those who are unable to attend worship services regularly: *Billie Sue Atkins, Freda Dunn, Romona Stokes, and Marjorie Baringer.*

Please pray for those who have forsaken the Lord that they may be reconciled to God.

READING THE OLD & NEW TESTAMENTS IN ONE YEAR

Monday - 2 Chr 29-31; 1 Cor 8

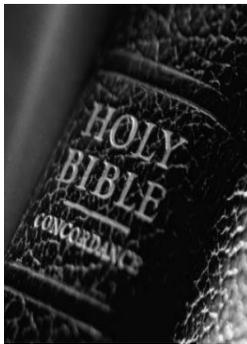
Tuesday - 2 Kgs 18-19; 2 Chr 32; Ps 67; 1 Cor 9

Wednesday - Isa 36-37; Psalm 123; 1 Cor 10

Thursday - 2 Kgs 20; Isa 38-40; Ps 68; 1 Cor 11

Friday - Isa 41-44; 1 Cor 12

***Week #36
Sept. 3 – Sept. 7***



VISITORS - We would like to get to know you better, and ask that you stay a while after services. We encourage you to visit our website at <http://www.parkhillchurchofchrist.com> where you will find sermons, articles, and daily bible studies to encourage you in your daily walk with God.

QUESTIONS? *We Welcome the opportunity to study God's word with you any time.*

*All sermons are recorded on CD & DVD -
If you would like a copy, please ask one of the men.*

ELDERS

Carl Dolan.....479.414.1972 ~ Ron Roberts479.452.0347 ~ Joe Turner....479.459.6023.

DEACONS

Wayne Carson...479.648.1087 ~ Luke Dolan.....479.357.9547 ~ Joe Dugas479.629.4046 ~ David Meek.....479.459.0820

PREACHER

Bryan Loughmiller.....479.434.3939

September 2, 2018

THINK ON THESE THINGS

Welcome to the Park Hill Church of Christ

3536 GRINNELL AVENUE FORT SMITH, AR 72908 479.782.2415

It is our desire to worship God in spirit and in truth, and to glorify Him in all we do.

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

SUNDAY MORNING
Bible Study.....9:30 am
Worship.....10:15 am

SUNDAY EVENING
Worship..... 5:00pm

WEDNESDAY EVENING
Bible Study.....7:00pm

My Problem with Having a Problem with “the Church of Christ”



When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed. (Acts 14:21-23)

This description of the first preaching journey of Paul and Barnabas reflects the commission Jesus gave to the apostles. Jesus instructed them to “make disciples”; Paul and Barnabas “made many disciples.” Jesus gave this commission on the basis of his authority in heaven and earth; Paul and Barnabas “committed them to the Lord.” And Jesus told the apostles to teach those who responded to the gospel to observe what he commanded them; Paul and Barnabas encouraged them to “continue in the faith.” These apostolic instructions also included the organization of leadership in local congregations as they “appointed elders for them in every church.”

This snapshot in the spread of the gospel is a succinct summary of my concept of simple Christianity. The preaching of the gospel to convert people to Jesus Christ, the encouragement of growth as disciples of Christ, and the organization of local churches according to apostolic teaching. No denominational structures, no ecclesiastical machinery, just disciples of Jesus growing in the faith and working together in independent congregations.

If I wanted to expand on this summary, I could talk more about what it means to be converted to Christ. I could explain that conversion to Christ involves faith in his death and resurrection (Romans 10:9-10); the turning from sin to his Lordship in repentance (Acts 2:38); and union with Christ and his death and resurrection in baptism (Colossians 2:12). Or, I could go into more detail about the apostolic order of local churches, such as the leadership of a plurality of elders (as in Acts 14:23) or the absence of instrumental music in corporate worship.

“Aha! You are just ‘Church of Christ!’” someone might say at this point. And without question, there are lots of congregations that have that phrase on a sign where you might hear lots of the same sort of ideas.

“Well, I have a problem with the Church of Christ!”

In one form or another, I’ve heard this sentiment expressed many times over the last few years. Almost always, it is by someone who used to be a “COCer” but has decided to chart a different course. And what I want to say in this article is that I have a problem with having a problem with “the Church of Christ.” And my issue has nothing to do with trying to defend any sort of orthodoxy. It merely has to do with the logic (or illogic) of such a sweeping claim.

Let me illustrate what I mean. Many years ago on an internet bulletin board, I read this complaint:

Try preaching that there’s nothing wrong with musical instruments, and see if another Church of Christ will hire you. Try allowing a Pentecostal into your fellowship and see if they are welcomed. The CoC is exclusive. Acceptance is based on your doctrine lining up perfectly. And if you’re not walking thru a set of double doors on Sunday that say “Church of Christ”, then people don’t think you’re saved.

As I see it, there are several assumptions built into this broadside:

- There is a known entity known as “The CoC.”
- This entity known as “The CoC” is exclusive.
- What one “Church of Christ” decides is always accepted by another “Church of Christ.”
- To be accepted in this entity, your doctrine must line up with its doctrine “perfectly.”
- To be saved, there must be a sign somewhere on the property that says “Church of Christ.”

There are other assumptions, but this is already quite a list. So let’s tackle the first. When this person complains about “the CoC,” just exactly what are they complaining about? They are surely not upset by the notion of the body of Christ in its universal sense. But they aren’t complaining about a particular local congregation, either. No, what this person is bothered by is a conception of “the CoC” that is some kind of hybrid, a bunch of churches taken together as a corporate entity. In other words, a denomination. And that is the first fallacy I see in complaining about “the Church of Christ.” Without a headquarters, a governing body, or a confessional statement, such an entity can only exist in the minds of those who imagine it. And to be sure, some people do – both approvingly and unapprovingly! But this is just not a concept found in the New Testament.

A further fallacy, building on this one, is the notion that “the CoC” is exclusive. Just who exactly does the excluding from an imaginary denomination? Those who imagine they have the power to do so, of course! And throughout history, there have undoubtedly been those who believed they indeed possessed such power, but their Diotrephesian dictates have no impact on those who are

genuinely trying to be committed to the Lord.

Closely connected to this fallacy is another one that I see in the statement above. According to this critic, you will be excluded from “the CoC” unless your beliefs are in perfect alignment with its doctrine. Well, I’d like to know, where can I find that doctrinal checklist? Oh sure, there have always been (and will always be) people who are eager to set themselves up as the adjudicators of the fundamental doctrines and the correct views of each. But why would anyone listen to those who presume to “sit on Moses’ seat” (Matthew 23:2)?

Are there believers who are so in the grip of sectarianism that they genuinely believe “to be saved, there must be a sign somewhere on the property that says ‘Church of Christ’”? Sadly, yes. But may I suggest that this is merely the mirror image of the same sort of sectarian mindset that thinks there is an entity called “the CoC.” Just as there are unscriptural concepts of “the CoC” there are also unscriptural distortions of some biblical descriptions into denominational titles. Both mindsets fall short of the scriptural ideal.

So here is my main point. If you have a problem with something you have heard, some doctrine that is taught, some attitude you have observed, don’t just lump your concern under a label called “the CoC.” Be specific. Is the problem a denominational view of the church? Say so. Is it shallow sectarianism? Say so. Is it proof-texting to justify a tradition? Say so! But don’t just grouse about your beef with “the Church of Christ.” That kind of vacuous statement can mean just about anything and consequently means nothing.

Those sorts of clumsy tirades are also frequently ill-informed. The critic I quoted earlier clearly thinks that issues like the use of instrumental music or charismatic gifts are only the grist of “the CoC” doctrinal mill. This lack of basic historical perspective is astonishing and leads to conclusions that are patently absurd. And it reflects a narrow-minded spirit that assumes the only reason a person could come to believe that churches should use only *a cappella* music or that miraculous gifts were confined to the apostolic era is because of blind adherence to “the CoC.” Maybe – just maybe (I speak as a madman!) – some followers of Jesus have reached these conclusions because they have actually thought things out for themselves!

Look, I get it. Some Christians do have a sectarian mindset. Some teaching does subvert the context of biblical texts to prop up pet arguments and traditions. Some preachers and elders have acted like little popes. All of these things were true in the first century, and they are true in the 21st century. Why, I may have been guilty of some of these things myself! (I speak as a madman, again!)

But let me tell you what I also see. I see lots of Christians who are committed to following Christ without lapsing into sectarianism (or its evil twin, cynicism), and who maintain serious convictions while leaving final judgment in the hand of the Lord. I see lots of preachers who are careful students of the Scriptures, and who urge those they teach to take the Bible seriously, including its original context and meaning – even when that means jettisoning certain cherished interpretations. And I see lots of disciples who refuse to truncate down the gospel to a few bullet points, but who desire to apply the whole of Scripture to the whole of life for the glory of God.

And the hope of all who love Jesus is to someday “attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:13). Until then, let’s “grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ” (Ephesians 4:15).

Shane Scott, via Focus Online