

The Lakeview Lamp

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." - Psalm 119:105

June 1, 2008

Does It Matter Where I Go to Church?

Rusty Miller

Does it matter where I go to worship God? Does God care which church I attend and make myself a part of?

First, we should consider whether or not God accepts all who call themselves Christians. Clearly, from the teachings of Jesus we can see that there will be religious people-many of them, in fact - who will not be accepted by God. Jesus said, *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of My Father who is in heaven"* (**Matt. 7:21**). He goes on to say there will be those who do many great works in His name, but they will be dismissed from His presence.

In addition, Jesus makes some very serious criticisms of some New Testament churches in the book of **Revelation**. The church at Ephesus is commended for their resolve in testing false apostles and teachers, but Jesus also says they have abandoned the love they had for Him. *"Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent"* (**Rev. 2:5**). He tells the church in Sardis that, despite a reputation that said they were alive, *"you are dead"* (**Rev. 3:1**). And He tells the church in Laodicea, *"So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth"* (**Rev. 3:16**).

So, if religious people can be lost, and if churches can fall from their standing with God, how do we locate a church that is right? What makes a church right?

First, look for right practice. A church that is violating the will of God (ex: chasing after the gospel of wealth, practicing charismatic gifts, not teaching the full gospel of Jesus in regard to salvation) can never be pleasing to God. It is important that churches do what God would have them do. God sets out essentially three important works for His church: 1) to preach the gospel to the lost (evangelism), 2) to teach those within the church (edification) and 3) to help brethren who are in need (benevolence). Anything beyond that is beyond the scope of scripture. When I worship with a church that is practicing wrong, I participate in their wrongdoing. When I contribute my money to a church that is practicing wrong, I have fellowship in their wrongdoing. Look for a church that is practicing right.

A second important thing to look for in a church is attitude. Old-time preachers used the terms "conservative" and "liberal," but those terms may have lost their meaning in our time due to the highly political nature of their usage. Today, to use the term "conservative" generally means "pro-family, anti-abortion" and a host of other political positions. But what did those old-time preachers mean by "conservative" and "liberal?"

It should first be noted that no church is perfect. The church is people, and as people are imperfect, so the church is. However, it is in dealing with our imperfections that it is easiest to recognize the differences

between “liberalism” and “conservatism” as applied to brethren. A man (or a church) finds himself at odds with a brother on a matter of doctrine. How is that problem solved?

If the man (or church) goes to the scripture and seeks authorization there for his practice, he could be considered a “conservative.” If he finds the practice to be authorized by scripture, he will continue in it, but if it is found to be unauthorized, he will immediately cease the practice. That is Biblical “conservatism.” That is what Peter is speaking of when he said, “*If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God*” (1 Peter 4:11).

However, if the man (or church) seeks other justification for his practice (i.e. it’s what we’ve always done, it’s a good work, other churches are doing it, etc.), that is Biblical “liberalism.” Rather than using the Bible as the standard for right and wrong, they have adopted a kind of subjectivism. The first man/church will draw closer to God as they seek His will to inform all they do, while the second will drift further from God into denominationalism. So, the point is not that a church is perfect. Rather, the point is how a church seeks authorization for its practices. A church seeking to do right, and searching the scriptures to inform that doing, is one that is closest to doing what God would have them do.

Finally, we ask the question again: Does it matter where I go to worship God? There can be only one answer: yes!

“Let them give thanks to the LORD for His lovingkindness, and for His wonders to the sons of men!” – Psalm 107:15

News and Notes

Mary Burnett remains at home on Hospice care. She had a relatively good week.

Connie Cobern continues to suffer from bronchitis. She is not able to take antibiotics.

Chris Crozier, a member where Melissa Moore worshipped in Chattanooga and brother to Edwin Crozier in Franklin, was seriously injured in a motorcycle accident and is in critical care.

Metty Fain remains in Highland Manor Nursing Home; Room B2; 215 Highland Circle Dr; Portland, TN 37148.

Cotton Read had some cancerous spots removed from his hand and now has blisters there as a result.

Nancy Read mashed a finger while doing laundry.

Ame White recently had an increase in her pain medicine, but her pain is still really intense. She has barely been able to get out of bed for any length of time.

Out of town, Visiting: David and Linda Bansemer (coast), Bonnie Brown (sister’s, AM only), the Nicholson children (AL).

New Reports from men we support: Gary Hunt (NY).

Note – If you have any news for the bulletin (out of town, sick, etc.), then please let me know. I will be printing it most weeks on Saturday night, so please get the news to me by then. Thanks! – Troy

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"Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks" (1 Thes 5:16-18).