

Trends

Most Americans (55%) believe that homosexual behavior is a sin, while 33% disagree. Strongly religious people are far more likely to see homosexual behavior as sinful than are the less religious. Nearly nine-in-ten (88%) highly committed white evangelicals say homosexual behavior is sinful, and 64% of committed white Catholics agree. Nearly three-quarters of black Protestants (74%) see homosexual conduct as sinful. But just 18% of secular respondents feel this way.

- via The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life

I Corinthians 6:9-10: "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, 10 nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God."

Sentence Sermons

"The only difference between a tax man and a taxidermist is the taxidermist leaves the skin."
—Mark Twain

Matthew 22:21: "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

News & Notes

Please pray for those mentioned in the announcements after services and others listed on the bulletin board in the foyer of the church building.

Please be sure to pray for all the needy saints. *Be sure to pray for all the members at Westside! Please pray for the Ferrell family in Michigan. In previous Words of Life I informed the brethren about Susan Ferrell and her illness with a brain tumor. Shawn, Susan's husband, informed me Susan recently had very "clean" scan and resumed chemo on 3/11. She is having difficulties with the chemo, therefore, they are using a special regimen. Please continue to pray for Susan, Shawn and their three boys: Samuel, Micah, and Eli.*

Let us keep Virginia, Lana, Trudy and Phil in our prayers as they grieve over the passing of Bill McGinnis. Check in and see if you can provide any assistance.

"The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." (James 5:16)

If you know of any in need of our prayers please let us know so we can include them in the announcements and/or put their name on the bulletin board.

Please continue to remember Wilma Cardwell in your prayers. Also, remember all the faithful preachers and brethren laboring in difficult places (e.g., Philippines, India, Zimbabwe). **There are many needy saints! Can you help? Let me know.**

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"Lord, to whom shall we go? You
have the words of eternal life."

John 6:68



Denominationalism Is Unnecessary

Craig Thomas

Denominations in general, and Catholicism and Protestantism in particular, are unnecessary institutions. *First*, if they were essential, they would be found in the Bible and Christ would have told us how to create, sustain, and support them. That He did none of this shows they are not required for man's salvation. *Second*, not one spiritual blessing is in any denominational body that cannot be received outside it. There is no eternal benefit claimed by any denomination that cannot be obtained in Christ, whether or not one ever heard of any denomination.

1) **Denominational Membership Unnecessary.** If one lived and died as a faithful Christian, what would he lack if he never became a member of a Protestant or Catholic church? If one is saved by Christ's blood by grace through faith (Eph. 2:8-10) and lives a life dedicated to the Lord (Col. 1:21-23; Rev. 2:10), what does he lack if he never joins a Baptist or Lutheran church? If one is born of water and of the Spirit (Jn. 3:3-5), and he grows up in Christ through the Word (1 Pet. 2:2), of what is he deprived if he never becomes a Methodist or a Mormon? If one believes on Jesus, confesses Him as Lord, and serves Him faithfully (Rom. 10:9), what does he miss if he never learns of the existence of the Presbyterian or Pentecostal church? If it is possible to be saved and cleansed by Christ's blood through the washing of water by the word (Eph. 5:26); if it is possible to be baptized by one Spirit into Christ's body and to serve the Lord therein all of one's life (1 Cor. 12:13), and go to heaven at death, denominationalism is unnecessary!

2) **Membership in Christ's Church is Necessary.** One cannot be saved outside the body, or church, of Christ, for Christ "is the Savior of the body," the church (Eph. 1:22, 23; 5:23). All spiritual blessings are "in Christ" (Eph. 1:3). Not even one spiritual blessing is outside of Christ. To be "in Christ," one must be in his body; "the church...is his body" (Eph. 1:22, 23; Col. 1:18). Thus, to have all spiritual blessings in Christ, one must be in his body, his church. One may be saved by grace, be faithful unto death, and enter heaven whether or not he ever enters a denominational church, thus,

denominationalism is not essential to spiritual life or salvation. The same, cannot be said about the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22, 23; 2:16; 5:23, 30-32).

In light of the plain truth of the Scriptures, will any claim denominations are necessary? Will any declare the body of Christ is unimportant and unrelated to the soul's salvation and every spiritual blessing? If not, why are so many devoted to these unnecessary, non-essential bodies and remain outside Christ's body? If membership in the body of Christ is a Bible doctrine, why do so many of our brethren seem to be apologetic and/or ashamed of this scriptural teaching? Why not let us simply "speak as the oracles of God" (1 Pet. 4:11) and let those oracles make of us what they will? Why not let us all strive to get back to true New Testament Christianity where there are neither Protestants nor Catholics, where all are simply Christians, no more and no less (Acts 11:26)? When we faithfully follow only Christ's doctrine (2 Jn. 9-11) this is what will happen!

God Rules in the Kingdoms of Men

In Daniel 4, Nebuchadnezzar had another dream he needed interpreted. Daniel again delivered a message to the king. However, this time, as opposed to chapter 2, the message was not pleasant. In fact, Daniel said, "My lord, may the dream concern those who hate you, and its interpretation concern your enemies" (Dan. 4:19).

The dream concerned Nebuchadnezzar's arrogance. He believed all he had was due solely to his own power. He left God out of the equation and for this, he was told a hard lesson would be learned (Dan. 4:20-27). The king would be driven into the field where he would live like a beast for seven years "till you know that the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses."

You would think from his prior experience with Daniel, he would take heed to Daniel's words and avoid the painful ordeal by acknowledging God. This was not to be as twelve months later the king boasted, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty?" (Dan. 4:30). At this, the king was driven into the field (Dan. 4:31-33). After his time living as a beast, Nebuchadnezzar learned this lesson: God rules (Dan. 4:34-37).

What is more amazing than Nebuchadnezzar's stubbornness is the utter foolishness of his son, Belshazzar. He knew his father's experience, yet lived a life of debauchery and irreverence toward the Almighty (Dan. 5:1-29). God informed him through Daniel that the kingdom would be taken from him, which happened the very night he received the message (Dan. 5:30, 31).

There are some valuable lessons we can learn from this:

First, God rules in the kingdoms of men. With all the turmoil and violence in our world, we can take comfort knowing the same God that raised and debased the kings of old, is the One who rules today. We do not always understand why certain men are allowed to rule or why particular events occur. We can be confident, though, that the Creator of the

universe is "the God who holds [every ruler's] breath in His hand and owns all [their] ways" (Dan. 5:23). Let us put our trust in Him.

Second, we ought to learn by hearing words of wisdom and admonition. Nebuchadnezzar was told what would happen, but did not heed. We are told we must believe, be baptized, and be faithful (Mk. 16:16; Rev. 2:10). The word tells us we will die and be judged (Heb. 9:27). We also know that living a holy life is a blessing, while not living one is a curse to us (1 Pet. 3:8-12). Do we need to experience the bad to understand the good? No. Yet, many of us "must" live unrighteously and suffer before we wake up and realize the only true way to go (cf. Lk. 15:11-24).

Finally, and similar to the above, the experience of others ought to sink in and inform our ways. Why is it we can see so clearly the attitudes and behavior of others causing them trouble, but are completely blind to such in ourselves? Take heed to the examples of those living in rebellion to God and do not follow them or allow them to influence you (Ex. 23:2; 1 Cor. 5:9-13; Matt. 23:2-4).

--Via Hebron Lane church of Christ

Needs

There remain many brethren in need of your help. For example, faithful gospel preachers in the U.S. and foreign lands are in dire need of financial support. Brethren in Zimbabwe are still suffering through another year of drought. They and their families faithfully labor in the gospel and suffer from material deprivations due to their stand for the truth, concern for the soul's of men and love for the Lord and His Christ. Other brethren are in acute need of the basics of life (food, clothing, shelter, medical attention). If you would like to help please send me an e-mail (craigthomas82000@gmail.com) and I'll put you in contact with a needy brother. Remember 1 John 3:17: "But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?"

