

It Doesn't Take a Genius

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It doesn't take a genius to recognize that our world is plagued with deep problems that defy solutions. Nor does it take great discernment to see that many things are progressively and systematically getting worse even as various entities who press upon us sunshine reports reassuring us about how things are really improving or who preach or propagate a blind optimism that things will somehow get better. Perhaps no group stands more in the way of beneficial changes in our society than does that dying institution men most commonly call the "church" – not because they promote sin, abomination and evil (though a growing number of "churches" indeed and actually are doing just that!) but because they refuse to embrace the solution they hold in their hands. If those who claimed to follow Christ did indeed follow Christ, what a different world this would be. But as it stands, the average "Christian's" indifference to the truth and Lordship of Christ stand as stark testimony to the impossibility of making this world a much better place. Simply reading *The Revelation* shows the futility of all of men's fleshly efforts to make this world a better place. No, one does not need to be a genius to see all this.

Those who would truly follow Christ must deny themselves their own personal response to this world's darkness and evil, no matter how difficult this may be. Peter in the garden rose up in anger and ineptness with a sword (Jn. 18:10) and, if left unchecked, would have short-circuited God's plan of redemption for mankind by reducing it to a mere insurrection. This same Peter, who is typical of those who attend modern "churches" (Lk. 9:33), had previously attempted to dissuade the Christ from pursuing the will of God (Mt. 16:22) and it would not be until after Peter's denial of the Christ (Mt. 26:75) that Peter would be broken enough that he could be restored as one trustworthy to feed the flocks of Christ. (Jn. 21:15-17) No, we certainly must not give in to and respond from anger, despair, fear, doubt or any of the "dark" emotions for those are certainly the way of death and darkness – the very things we are to overcome. (Mt. 16:18, 1 Jn. 3:8) But we must also guard against the more acceptable emotions as well – compassion, optimism, diligence, tolerance and other "positive" traits, that when focused upon anyone but Christ or anything other than the will of God, are just as destructive. Peter's bravery and courage in the garden and his love for his Teacher Jesus were as much a part of his motivation as were the "darker" emotions of impetuosity, fear and anger – and they were just as equally opposed to God's will. (see Rom. 8:7)

The greatest problem that this world faces is the refusal to let God be God. God is dead (according to the philosopher Nietzsche who died insane) or He never existed or He is not really like what the Bible says He is like (according to the views of people who want to justify or who must excuse their own evil or self-focused lifestyle) and He is certainly not speaking to or through individuals today (those individuals are just suffering delusions of grandeur and self-importance). But if God were to be recognized as worthy of being God – in all that that term implies – again, what a different world this would be. And again, there is no group who routinely distorts the realities of God – in many of the things they say but even more so in the way they live their lives – than does the average "church"-ite who seeks the blessings and benefits of knowing God but does little to truly follow and obey Him wherever He leads. (Note well that the many beautiful exceptions to this generalization does *not* negate or cancel out the validity of the generalization!)

Reformers and critics alike have observed for centuries the behavior of “church”-ites – behaviors that range from demonic and aberrant (in varying degrees and forms) to spiritually ignorant, negligent and lazy (the majority, often the affluent majority) to beneficial and blessed (usually a tiny minority) – but these reformers and critics have not gone to the true root cause of the behaviors. They see much to commend in many a “church” – until they stop judging according to appearances and righteously discern (Jn. 7:24) that although the “churches” are filled with well-meaning activities, the people have no time to “walk in the Spirit” or to respond to the real situations (often in or near their own lives) that the Lord would have them involved in. Yet having seen this, the critics and reformers will still say there is nothing “unScriptural” or “carnal” going on here.

Paul wrote, “The Spirit wars against the flesh (the carnal) and the flesh against the Spirit.” (Gal. 5:17) If a “church” is so filled with well-meaning activities that the people have no time to follow the Spirit, then this is carnality, fleshly behavior. What is being evidenced here is that the critics and reformers simply do not yet have true or deep enough spiritual discernment to know what carnality really is.

Equally overlooked is that the “church” leadership is not training the people to follow the Spirit but is instead training them to attend to something else (usually the needs of the “church” by which the “pastor” gains his lucrative salary, emotional gratification or fulfillment of his own need to seem significant in the lives of others). Thus, the “church” *system* is both carnal and unScriptural. Pouring money into a real estate pit, putting one man in lordship over the people, placing the people in submissive postures and supportive roles characterized most by passive listening, all these and more clearly indicate that the Scriptures are not followed and Christ is not the real King.

Jesus said He would dismiss those who practiced lawlessness, no matter what powerful or good deeds they had done in His name. (Mt. 7:22-23) The Greek word, poorly translated “iniquity” in the KJV and other translations, is *anomia* [458] and literally means “no law.” Well, if we’ve been delivered from the law – which the New Testament clearly sets forth that we have (Col. 2:14, Rom. 7:6, etc.) – why is living under “no law” such a sin that it earns eternal dismissal? The word entails the idea of not having any *outside* standard by which to order one’s life and behaviors. The description of the Israelites in the time of the judges encapsulates the idea well: “In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” (Jdgs. 21:25)

Because the “church” does not truly submit to the King Christ Jesus, the only activities the “church” can pursue (which it must do so to “prove” that it is a live and not a dead thing) is lawlessness, what is right in one’s own eyes. Thus *anomia* (which is best translated as lawlessness) is not rampant evil (in the way we usually would think of that) but instead people doing what is “right” and “good” and “true” *in their own eyes*. Jesus said this lawlessness (or relativism as it is known in philosophical circles) would be rampant (“abound”) in the last days and would cause the love (the highest attainment of true spiritual maturity – Col. 3:14, 1 Cor. 13:13) of many to grow cold. (Mt. 24:12) Lawlessness *is* being too busy with well-meaning activities that prevent people from personally following the Lord and attaining to the will of God for their lives. Thus it is not the evil that “church” people do (or even don’t do) that is the worst enemy of the will of God for their lives – rather it is the “good” and “right” and “true” (but only in their own eyes and not in *God’s* eyes – see 2 Cor. 6:14) that is the real and most dangerous enemy of the blood and cross of Christ.

It does not take a genius to recognize our need to turn away from gross and overt sin (though some “churches” have turned from even this obvious element of living Christ’s life.) It remains true that “the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: ‘The Lord knows those who are His,’ and ‘Let *everyone* who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity (sin, lawlessness, *all* forms of unrighteousness).” (2 Tim. 2:19) We must take care that the good things we do are “the good works which *God* prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10) and are not the things which are good merely in our own eyes. And the only way we can know this is by communicating directly with God for ourselves and being in unity (Eph. 4:3) with those others around us who also communicated directly with God for themselves. This is precisely why Jesus said, “My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.” (Jn. 10:27) The one who does only what is good in his own eyes does not need to hear Christ’s voice and does not follow Him – he is not known by Him and this one will *not* receive or inherit Christ’s life, neither His abundant life nor His eternal life (Jn. 10:10, 28) – nor will such a one be willing to submit to the *unanimity* of the Spirit of God. (again see Eph. 4:3)

Paul wrote, “I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells.” (Rom. 7:18) As necessary and important as it is for us to learn this truth for ourselves, we must press on to the point where we can say, “I know that in *us* (our corporate flesh) nothing good dwells.” Jesus said that the true worshipers of God *will* and *must* worship Him in spirit and truth. (Jn. 4:23-24) God – in spite of modern churchianity’s actions and even messages to the contrary – has never once or yet changed these requirements and decided to tolerate those who “worship” Him with mere lip service and serve “Him” with lawlessness, hypocrisy or carnality. This abomination is welcome at many a “church” but it will never deceive God who will render without partiality to *every* man according to his works (deeds – Rom. 2:6, 11)

It doesn’t take a genius to see that there is something very wrong with our ideas of “church” and of what God calls acceptable worship and religion. Nor does it take a genius to find and know the true way of following Christ and God. Only those who are led by the Spirit of God – even if they’re an uneducated “Galilean fisherman” dumber than a rock – are the sons of God. (Rom. 8:14) It takes spiritual ears that hear what God is saying to His people (Mt. 13:9, Rev. 2:7, etc.) and a heart that truly loves Christ and God and shows it by obeying their commands. (Jn. 14:23)

Perhaps it would help if we could picture ourself standing in a small crowd of people. Suddenly a man we do not know, followed by some other men, walks up and says, “Repent! The kingdom of God is here.” The man walks on. Our first thoughts shows us our own heart.

- “Who is that guy?” betrays our attempt to destroy or at least question the credibility of the messenger so as to dismiss the message.
- “I don’t see no kingdom” reveals our stubborn, rebellious heart unwilling to surrender to the King.
- “Repent of what?” exposes our tendency to deny, to intellectually or “theologically” explain away the reality of our own sin(s).
- “Yeah, that guy next to me sure needs to repent but I’m good” evidences our own judgmental and hyper-critical self-righteousness.

- “Be merciful to me a sinner!” as we recognize our own particular sin or sins, shows that we have been prepared to enter into the kingdom of God.

When in repentance and faith we surrender to God, we experience God’s new birth. (1 Pet. 1:23) With the faith we are given from God (see Eph. 2:8-9), we must then submit to the leading of the Spirit of God. “With all diligence [we must] add to our faith goodness, to goodness knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.” (2 Pet. 1:5-7) As we submit to this process under the leading of the Holy Spirit, our lawlessness and sin will fall away from us and we will endure to the end of our course. (Mt. 24:13) As we encounter and gather with others who are in this same process, we will do things that make the world around us a truly better place, at least for a time and season.

“Saint,” in the New Testament, is *not* a super-holy, miracle-working monk or nun – far from it! A saint is simply one who, having answered God’s call to repent and believe, is “set apart” for God’s purposes, “set apart” from this world, sin, self and Satan to seek after and do God’s will. In this context, *every* man, woman or child truly in Christ is a *saint*. “Saint” is simply the term or label the New Testament applied to the average, usual citizen of the kingdom of God. *Every* person who has truly entered into God’s kingdom is a saint – the “church’s” distortions of that term are only tools the devil uses to keep more people from becoming saints!

No, it doesn’t take a genius to make the world a better place – it only takes a saint, one willing to lay down his own life and take up the cross and resurrected life of the risen Lord of life. It takes someone who knows he or she has been bought with the blood of the Lamb who was slain from the foundation of the world (1 Cor. 6:20, Rev. 13:8), who knows “the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints” (Eph. 1:18), who dares to diligently “press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.” (Phlp. 2:14) No, it doesn’t take a genius – it only wants a saint.

Let he who has ears hear.

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