



## Shameless Religion

By Randall F. Matheny

The past few decades have been harsh on evangelism. There seems to have been a virtual consensus among those controlling mass media that Christian thought, philosophy and political activity must be suppressed. Attempts continue from ungodly quarters to shame Christianity into silence, withdrawal and ultimately, destruction. It has been so since the first century. Those who profess Christ and adhere to the doctrine of the New Covenant have suffered tremendously through periods of intense persecution. Some surrendered to this ceaseless onslaught, abandoning the faith, yet others stood their ground upon the "Solid Rock," and as a result the church still lives, and Christ still refuses to be silenced. There is no reason to be ashamed of such a courageous, resilient, dynamic, living, kingdom shaking, history shaping force as the religion of Jesus Christ.

Paul said, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek (Rom 1:16)." I can almost hear the people of

# The Country Preacher's Newsletter

"...speaking the truth in love" Ephesians 4:15

Paul's day: "You people think you are the only ones who will be saved!" They would have been right! Why would Paul have suffered as he did, if there were valid alternatives to New Testament Christianity? Why would first century Christians, though driven from their homes and harassed even unto prison and death, go "...everywhere preaching the word (see 2 Cor. 4:1-11, Acts 8:1-4)?" If New Testament Christianity (as opposed to human religions to which the

## Why, indeed, do we even have the New Testament if what we believe, what we do, and how we do it is unimportant?

name has been misapplied) was not the sole religion approved by God the Father, to the exclusion of all others, why did Jesus die upon the cross? Why did he commission his disciples to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned (Mk. 16:15-16)?" Who's gospel? Believes what? If all churches are equal and have God's approval, and all that is necessary to salvation is that one be sincere in what he believes, then why did Jesus declare that some believers would be lost (Mat. 7:21-27)? Why were the epistles

written to direct and correct the church? Why did Jesus rebuke five out of seven churches in Asia Minor (Rev. 2-3)? Why, indeed, do we even have the New Testament if what we believe, what we do, and how we do it is unimportant?

When men, especially those who profess Christianity, reject the narrow, difficult gate which leads to life (Mat. 7:14), they hold in disrespect the Lord Jesus and all those who have served him faithfully as His church. The way of the world, the only other way, may be easier - the danger of rejection and persecution much reduced - but the end is destruction (Mat. 7:13). There is no other gospel, no other way to heaven, and no other church, but Christ's. Narrow-minded? Maybe. Exclusive? Without a doubt. But, I am not ashamed.

• • •

## A Framework For Discipleship

By Randall F. Matheny

Jesus, early in His earthly ministry in what is known as the "Sermon on the Mount" (Mat. 5-7), laid the framework upon which discipleship and Christianity would be built. He addressed virtually every important area of life, inclusive of inward attitudes, outward actions, relationships with others, the sanctity of

marriage, dealing with enemies, prayer, forgiveness, relying upon God, hypocrisy, identifying false teachers, acceptable service toward God, and how to build a life upon His teachings that would withstand the conflicts and trials of life, and emerge victorious in the end.

Jesus begins His sermon by emphasizing attitudes and characteristics which must be developed in every successful disciple. It is self-evident that these "Beatitudes" are not hereditary human characteristics, or everyone would have them. Neither are they the exclusive domain of a particular culture or ethnic group, for although Jesus' initial ministry was to the Jews (Mat. 15:24), he repeatedly uses pronouns such as "they" and "their" which would include both the Jews of the present and the Gentiles who would later be given access to the kingdom (Acts 11:17-18). The Beatitudes remain a vital starting point for anyone who would build a life devoted to Christ and destined for heaven. The one who would be greatly rewarded in heaven (Mat. 5:12) must humble himself (poor in spirit) to subject his own will to the will of God. "Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you" (1 Pet. 5:6-7). No longer must it be "my will" but, "...thy will be done" (Mat. 26:42). There must be a deep sense of mourning over personal sin against God (Psm. 51:1-4), over the devastating effect of sin

in the world (1 Jn. 5:19) and among those we love (Lk. 13:34; Rom. 10:1-3). Only this intense sorrow for sin is sufficient to motivate one towards repentance (2 Cor. 7:10) and cause one to take seriously Christ's "Go ye therefore..." (Mat. 28:19-20). There must be a will to fully submit (meekness) talents, abilities, strengths to the service of

expect two distinctly opposite results: resistance and persecution from Satan and his servants, and great reward in heaven for the one who overcomes (see also Rev. 2:10). Let every disciple determine to stop nowhere short of "the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18).

• • •

Visit

**Countrypreacher.com**  
And the home page for the church of Christ, Warren, Pennsylvania.

**Subscribe and Unsubscribe Information**

To subscribe, send an e-mail message to: <newsletter@countrypreacher.com> with the word "Subscribe," without quotation marks, in the Subject field. To unsubscribe, send an e-mail message with the word "Unsubscribe," without the quotation marks, in the subject field.

**"Lord, what would you have me to do?" (Acts 9:6) and "I was not disobedient" (Acts 26:19) ought to come easily and readily to the lips of every Christian.**

God (Rom. 12:1-2), realizing that all that the Christian does, with no exceptions, is to be viewed as done for God (Col. 3:23-25; 1 Cor. 10:31).

Building upon the Beatitudes, the disciple is prepared for the focus of life to become the desire to be right (righteous) in the sight of God, manifested by both the desire and the will to be obedient. "Lord, what would you have me to do?" (Acts 9:6) and "I was not disobedient" (Acts 26:19) ought to come easily and readily to the lips of every Christian. Compassion and mercy shown in every kindness (Eph. 4:32; 1 Pet. 3:8-9); a pure heart, kept and guarded against sin (1 Jn. 1:6-10; 3:1-3; Prov. 4:23); an earnest pursuit of peace between men and God (Rom. 12:18; 1 Pet. 3:11) become second nature to the one who has become so prepared and devoted.

Finally, the disciple who develops, nurtures and lives by the attitudes above defined must

<p>Visit the Country Preacher's Links to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sermon Outlines, Essays and Articles</li> <li>• Calendar of Brotherhood Events</li> <li>• Bibles and Other Specials at the General Store</li> <li>• Free Bible Correspondence Courses</li> <li>• Home Schooling Links</li> </ul> <p><b>Scandia Technologies</b> For Computers, Electronics and More!</p>
---

Edited by  
Randall F. Matheny  
PO Box 911  
Warren, PA 16365-0911

Permission is granted to copy and reproduce articles appearing in this publication as long as they are not edited for content and the author and the publication are appropriately credited.