

## Shameless Religion

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 and philosophy must be suppressed. There 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, 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 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 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. 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.

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