

THE SOWER
ARTHUR (IL) CHURCH OF CHRIST
Ron Bartanen, Evangelist

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Have you visited our web site lately? (www.Arthurcoc.com)

FREEDOM IN CHRIST

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage” (Gal. 5:1).

The Galatian Christians were forsaking their freedom in returning to what Paul calls “the weak and beggarly elements” of the law of Moses for justification. To do such was to forsake the liberty available in Christ alone.

Similarly, the Colossian Christians were warned against being “subject to ordinances” imposed, not by God, but “after the commandments and doctrines of men” (Colossians 2:20-23). Jesus said of those of His day, “In vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matthew 15:9). He had asked the people, “Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your traditions?” (15:3).

Proper authority in religion obviously matters. While we exercise tolerance towards others in allowing all freedom of choice, as well we should, there is no room for saying that all authority is equal. God looks with disfavor upon those who would subject themselves to human authority in religion rather than the authority of our Lord, who has “all authority in heaven and on earth” (Matthew 28:18). I read recently of a number of churches that have placed copies of the Koran alongside copies of the Bible in the pews, and read from both during services. This is troubling! What kinship can the Christian faith, that affirms Jesus to be the Son of God, have with the Muslim faith that declares, “God has no Son”?

Even within the nominally Christian setting, denominational decisions on matters of both faith and morals are increasingly favoring what may be politically correct over any “thus saith the Lord.” Dogmas and traditions not clearly based upon God’s word are to be avoided by all who would be truly free in Christ.

Freedom is so easily lost. When we begin accepting what respected preachers and teachers affirm to be truth, without subjecting it to a thorough test, with the Word of God as the standard, we are in danger of being “entangled again with the yoke of bondage.”

--Ron

The Constitution of the State of Illinois, 1870 begins: "We the people of the State of Illinois, grateful to Almighty God for the civil, political and religious liberty which He hath long permitted us to enjoy, and looking to Him for the blessing upon our endeavors to secure and transmit the same to succeeding generations...."

Another Chance

How often we wish for another chance

To make a fresh beginning,

A chance to blot out our mistakes

And change failure to winning.

It does not take a new day

To make a brand new start.

It only takes a deep desire

To try with all your heart

To live a little better

And to always be forgiving,

And to add a little sunshine

To the world in which we're living.

So never give up in despair

And think that you are through,

For there's always a tomorrow

And the hope of starting new.

--Helen Steiner Rice

SLIPPING INTO HEAVEN

Have you ever talked to someone who seemed to believe he was saved by “grease” and not “grace”? In other words, if he ever makes it to Heaven, he pictures himself barely making it, just slipping in before the gates are closed behind him on his coat tail. Such a view misrepresents how God saves a man. No one will ever “slip” into Heaven, and the reason is that we are saved by “grace” and not by “grease”. Those who enter Heaven will be granted an “abundant entrance...” (2 Peter 1:11), and won’t just slip through the gates as they close.

Instead of thinking of our entrance into Heaven being like a test in which we must score a certain percentage, think of it as a pass/fail test. We’ve either been saved by the blood of Christ or not. We’re either His or we aren’t. We’re either walking in the light or we’re walking in darkness. We’re either faithful or we’re unfaithful.

So, what about you? Are you saved (Ephesians 1:7)? Are you in Him (Ephesians 1:11)? Are you walking in the light (1 John 1:7)? If the answers to those questions are, “Yes,” you won’t barely “slip” into Heaven. You’ll be granted “an abundant entrance, and will get to hear the Lord say, “Well done” (Matthew 25:21)!

--Steve Higginbotham, GracEmail

BE WARY OF HALLOWEEN

Halloween can become a ghoulish time, with death and the powers of evil glorified. Occultists who seriously glorify witchcraft, spirit-channeling and the devil himself find it amusing that on this day Christians join them in their festivities. Unlike other holidays, Halloween has its deepest roots in paganism, not Christian faith. God’s word repeatedly warns us to avoid, and even war against, the powers of evil, such as in Deuteronomy 18:9-14:

When you enter the land which the LORD thy God gives you, you shall not learn to imitate the detestable things of those nations. There shall not be found among you anyone who practices witchcraft,, or one who interprets omens, or a sorcerer, or one who casts a spell, or a medium, or a spiritist, or one who calls up the dead. For whoever does these things is detestable to the LORD: BE WARY OF HALLOWEEN. –Ron

WANT TO LIVE LONGER?

A recent article in *Newsmax Health* asked the questions, "Want to live longer?", then adding, "Get thee to a house of worship, perhaps." The article referenced an Ohio State University research of 1,000 obituaries in the U.S., concluding "that people with religious connections lived nearly four years longer than those with no religious ties." I would add that a religion based upon God's revelation of Jesus Christ provides a hope for far more than four years. Jesus promised, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (John 11:26a).
-Ron

WE ARE SADDENED by the departure from this life of one of Doris's younger sisters, Louise, who died Wednesday morning. We were able to visit her in a Ft. Wayne, Ind. Hospital recently.