

I DON'T KNOW AND I DON'T CARE

Johnie Scaggs, Jr.

Introduction

I want to thank the elders and the congregation here at 39th street for the invitation to be on the lectureship. I appreciate the good work that each of you do in making sure that things go well with the work here at 39th street. May God bless you in your labors for the kingdoms sake.

I appreciate the assignment that was given to me, "I don't know and I don't care". If you say this phrase over and over for a bit, you will see how horrible it really is.

Ignorance and apathy permeates the church. There are many who want to remain willfully ignorant. There are many who claim to be members of the Lord's church, but do not care about the condition of the church. And then there are those who are content to put their head in the sand, like an ostrich. They act as if there is really not anything wrong with those who are trying to destroy the church, even to the point of being offended if we should say anything about those in error. They usually claim something to the affect that they are just misunderstood. Their attitude is that if they see no evil and do not hear any evil, then there must not be any evil. But the problem is, they have willfully closed their eyes, so that they cannot see evil. Also, they have willfully shut-up their ears, so that they do not have to hear.

Many who are ignorant and who don't care are in the leadership. Elders, deacons and preachers have fallen into the Devil's snare by being willfully ignorant and having an I don't care attitude. Because of this attitude on the part of leaders, the sheep have gone astray. Toward those who have gone astray, there seems to be the attitude of it's none of my business what they do. One elder said to me, "They left on their own accord and if they want to come back, they know the way". This seems to be the attitude of many and it is one that must change if we are going to save the souls of mankind, and save our own as well. The Bible is extremely clear that we are to love one another and care for each other; to look out for each other. "Let brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body" (Hebrews 13:1-3).

Some Don't Know and Don't Care about What the Bible Says

Many in the church don't study the Bible and could care less about what it says. It is attitudes of this nature that destroys the body of Christ. It is imperative that we have a good understanding of the Word of God and make proper application of the same.

Those of old became lazy in their study of the Word of God and fell because of their unbelief. "Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief" (Hebrews 4:11). "Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief" (Hebrews 4:6). In the days of Nehemiah, the Word of the Lord had been lost to the people and the Bible tells us that Nehemiah "read in the

book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading” (Nehemiah 8:8).

The Lord said that He had “...a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land” (Hosea 4:1b). It was not that there was no truth, but rather because there was no truth in the land. They had ignored the Word of the Lord and had gone astray. Because of this the Lord pronounced a curse upon the people. “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children” (Hosea 4:6). Like those of old, if we ignore the Word of the Lord, we also will be destroyed for a lack of knowledge. The Lord will reject us just as sure as He rejected His chosen generation of old. Remember the words of Jude. Jude called upon us to remember what the Lord did to the Children of Israel after they left the land of Egypt because of their unbelief (ver. 5). Then he reminded us of the angels who kept not their first estate (ver. 6). He noted Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities about them, (ver. 7). All this to remind us that if He destroyed these because of their “don't know and don't care attitude”, then who are we to think that He will not do the same to us?

It is time that the church gets back to the fundamentals of studying the Word of God. Remember the words of Paul, “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness” (2 Timothy 2:15,16). When we have preachers who are standing in pulpits of the Lord's church who don't know the Word of God, the church is in trouble. When elders don't know the Word of God, they cannot “stop the mouths of the unruly, vain talkers and deceivers who are going from house to house spewing out their false doctrine (Titus 1:10-11).

If we are going to be men of God, let us get back to putting God first in our study. David said, “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper” (Psalm 1:1-3).

Some Don't Know and Don't Care about Bible Authority

More and more we are seeing members in the body of Christ compromise in the area of Bible authority. When asked about authority, they look at you with a bewildered expression as if to ask what is that. As a whole, many in the church have no idea about how to go about studying what is authorized and what is not.

Men have rejected the authority of God from the very beginning of time. It was Adam and Eve who rejected God's authority when they ate of the forbidden fruit (Genesis 3:1ff). Cain rejected the authority of God when he offered that which God did not command him (Genesis 4). Uzzah was smote by the hand of the Lord. He died because he rejected the authority of God (2 Samuel 6:6,7). Nadab and Abihu rejected God's authority and a fire of the Lord devoured them (Leviticus 10:1-3). So it is today, if we rejected the authority of God, He will reject us also. It is imperative that we

understand that authority begins with God; not man or a group of men, nor does it come from some college/university. Paul said, "But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Galatians 1:11,12). The word which Paul preached came from God and not mankind. Paul said that if he or anyone else, even an angel from God, preach anything other than that which he had preached to let that person be accursed (Galatians 1:6-9). Why? Because any other "gospel" would not be the Word of God, thus not by His authority.

Jesus said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matthew 28:18-20). Jesus has been given all authority, therefore we need to look for Him for what we should do and say.

Some today have rejected the authority of God for the small still voices in the night that guide them in what to believe and what not to believe. But we need to be reminded that God has given us all things which we need. "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:" (2 Pet. 1:3). If we have been given all things through Jesus Christ then why do some still cry for this "better felt than told" religion? We do not need the Holy Spirit guiding us, directing us, etc., in any fashion other than through the Word. The Spirit uses the Word of God to exercise His power. Paul tells us to put on the whole armor of God in order to battle the Devil. He states, "And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Ephesians 6:17). What we need to do, is to heed the Holy Spirit's warnings and study the things which He has revealed. We need to know these things because in them, we have eternal life.

Many today have become so entangled with the entertainment craze that they are willing to sacrifice that which is good for the soul for that which feels good to the body. Like those of old, "they have rejected the word of the LORD; and what wisdom is in them?" (Jer. 8:9). Remember, Jeremiah said, "O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jeremiah 10:23).

Many today have become so immersed with what the so-called "Christian Colleges/Universities" are saying that they also have rejected the authority of God. Paul warned Timothy, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud,... lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. ... Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Timothy 3:1-7). Many today have let their education rot their brain. They care more for the praise of men than they do for the praise of God. The Lord says that those of this nature have their reward (Matthew 6:2).

Some Don't Know and Don't Care about the Church

Many today are making compromises with the Lord's body. Many believe that the church of Christ is just one denomination among many. Max Lucado, Rubel Shelly, and a host of other so-called gospel preachers would have us to believe that the church of Christ is just a branch on the vine

which denominations say is each and every denomination. There is only one major problem with what they believe and teach! It just is not true. The branches of John 15:1-6 are not different denominations, but rather the branches are men, "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned" (John 15:6).

We must have a clear understanding and an unshakable love for the Lord's church. We must understand that the church of Christ is the Lord's only means of transportation from this world to the next world where the faithful saints of all ages will gather to worship the Lord, God almighty.

Christ did not establish any denominations. Hence, denominations exist without the authority of Christ. Christ said that He would build His church when He stated to Peter, "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build by church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18). This He did on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). Not before Pentecost nor after Pentecost did our Lord ever establish any kind of denomination.

Any religious body which came into existence after Acts chapter two is not the church which Christ established. Therefore, it has no authority from Christ to exist. It is true that all denominations came into existence many years after Acts chapter two, and therefore they cannot be the Lord's body or church.

Denominations are all man-made, that is, they came from the mind of mere men. They are built by men, governed by men, and they rest upon the authority of men. Jesus said, "But in vain do they worship me, teaching for the doctrines and commandments of men" (Matthew 15:9).

Denominations have men who govern what is taught within each denomination. The New Testament Church has only Christ as its head and only He has the right and authority to govern what will be taught within His church. Men do not have such authority. All things are to be under our Lord (Eph. 1:22,23). Also, "And he is the head of the body, the church" (Colossians 1:18). From these two scriptures we can see that Christ is indeed the head of the church and not some man or group of men.

Denominations also bring about division. With their many different doctrines, they cause men to remain in darkness. Jesus prayed that such would not happen (John 17:20,21). Denominations DO NOT bring about oneness, but rather division (1 Corinthians 1:10). Max Lucado and others believe that when the Lord was praying for unity in John 17:20,21, that he was praying for all denominations to be accepted in their diversity and that we would all just get along with each other. However, this is not what the Lord prayed for. Notice His prayer, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17:20,21). Notice, "...that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee". Who would believe that the Father and the Son would accept each other in diversity? No one! God, the Father and God the Son are in perfect harmony with each other they are not divided! They do not believe different doctrines. One does not say "You can be saved by grace only" and the other says "No, you must have faith coupled with grace."

It is our sincere desire and prayer that all those who are involved in a denomination would seriously study what the Bible reveals concerning the New Testament Church. God does not want anyone to be lost "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). However, God will not save one person, at all, who is in a denomination for they are of men and they will perish with men.

Some Don't Know and Don't Care about False Teachers

It seems to be the case that many do not believe that there are any false teachers today. I was visiting with a fellow preacher on one occasion that I greatly respected at one time. He was worshiping and serving as an elder in a congregation who accepted Jimmy Allen's position on re-baptism. That is, that if you were baptized to obey Jesus, then you did not need to be "re-baptized" into the Lord's church. Your baptism was okay-even if it was baptism into some denomination. I ask him about this subject and how he felt about it. He stated that he believed that they were in error and did not agree with them. I then asked him just how far or what false doctrine would they have to teach before he would discontinue fellowship with them. He hung his head in shame. I am thankful that about a month latter, he resigned and began worshiping with a different congregation of the Lord's people.

We need to remember the word's of Paul, "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables: (2 Timothy 4:1-4). Paul said to the elders at Ephesus that some would rise up among their own selves teaching false doctrine and taking disciples away with them (Acts 20:28-31).

Are there any false teachers today? Someone may think that this question really doesn't deserve an answer. However, in light of the many false doctrines which are being proclaimed within the body of Christ, I believe the question does deserve an answer!

I wonder how those who are now promoting the "New Hermeneutic" doctrine would answer such a question. Surely they could not be true to their "doctrine" and state that there are false teachers today. How would those who are teaching that we should unite with the First Christian church and other denominations answer such a question? If these brethren who are promoting their false doctrines today are true to the full thrust of their particular doctrines, then they must admit that there are no false teachers today! Many want to remove the idea that false teachers exist for in doing so they remove the basic fundamental belief that there is a right way and a wrong way.

However, regardless of what men may say, either directly or indirectly, the Bible still teaches us that there are false teachers even today. There have always been false teachers and there always will be. In many cases when the Bible refers to false teachers, it makes reference to those who rise up out of the church and begin to teach their "doctrine" (cf. Jude 3-4; 3 John 9; Revelation 2,3; 2 Peter 2:1; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; etc). These brethren did not announce to everyone

that they were false teachers. However, it seems to be the attitude of many today that unless a person walks in and announces to all that he is a false teacher, then he isn't one. I wonder how many false prophets of old told everyone that they were false prophets. NONE! Did the old prophet tell the young prophet of 1 Kings 13 that he was a false prophet? NO, not a word! Even in the New Testament days, we do not see false teachers telling everyone that they are false teachers.

Jude describes to us how false teachers conduct themselves. "For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation..." (Jude 4). The idea of "crept in unawares" is "to enter secretly, to slip in stealthily, to steal in." Further study reveals that the complete idea of the verb is to "go down into and alongside." Thus, teaching that these men, who crept in unawares, came in and settled down into a place alongside of those who were already there. They did not tell anyone of their intentions! They did not say, "Folks, we are false teachers."

Peter said, "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you..." (2 Peter 2:1a). Paul said to Timothy, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears: And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned into fables" (2 Tim.4:3-4). Yes, the Bible clearly teaches that there are and will be false teachers in the church today. Hence, how can we know who is a false teacher? We most certainly cannot leave it up to the false teachers to inform us of their intentions! The only means we have of knowing whether someone is a false teacher or not can only be found within the pages of God's Word. As John said, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). We must learn to let the Bible be our guide for deciding who is a false teacher and who is not. And then we must act in accord with that which the Bible instructs us to do with false teachers.

Yes, my friends, there are false teachers among us today. It is time for the church as a whole to wake up and see what is happening around about them. It is time for the church to say, "We will not put-up with any more false doctrine being taught in the pulpit of the Lord's church!" It is our prayer that all of our brethren will come to their senses and realize that false teachers do exist today and be watchful against this threat to the church.

Some Don't Know and Don't Care about the Work of the Church

To many in the church, "church" is all about attendance. That is, many have the idea that if the come to church services each time the door is open, they have done their duty and their ticket is punched for heaven. Such non-sense is not taught by the Lord. Does the Lord want us to attend all the services of His church? Absolutely! We are to put the kingdom first (Matthew 6:33). We are to come together that we might help each other to be fortified (Hebrews 10:25). But, is this the work of the church? No! The work of the church is much greater than these things. The church has often been called "a sleeping giant" - a mighty force for good if it would only awaken. It seems to me that when it comes to "Personal Evangelism", the church is more asleep today then she has been in any age before us. So often we find ourselves acting like the cartoon "Snoopy" who is day dreaming on top of the doghouse about fighting the Red Baron instead of boldly joining in the fight.

There really is only one term that describes the overall work of the church, "Save Souls." But how is it that we are to do this? It is threefold.

(1) Evangelize. We are a people who are to go forth evangelizing the world. Peter said, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9). The church has many obligations all of which are important, but the most important obligation is to Evangelize. Jesus said that the "...Son of man came to seek and to save that which is lost" (Luke 19:10). Our Lord was so concerned about the lost souls in the world that He gave His life. But not before he taught them about the coming kingdom of which He would be ruler. Jesus showed His concern about evangelizing the world in Mark 1:38 where He said, "...Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth."

Far too often it is the case that the church spends too much time in planning different programs for the church and then never doing any of them. We spend far too much time moaning, griping, complaining and arguing about matters which are of little importance. And because of this, countless of souls are dying and being lost forever. Are we just keeping house, or are we building the house of God?

Look at the words of Jesus in Matthew 28:18-20. We seem to have trouble going to our next-door neighbor let alone the world. The eternity of God and the eternity of God's purpose, relating to the church, are expressed by the apostle Paul in Ephesians 3:8-11. Are we fulfilling the mission of the church today? Evangelism is the personal obligation of each and every member of the body of Christ.

The wise man said, "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he that winneth souls is wise" (Proverbs 11:30). Also Daniel spoke on the subject: "And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever" (Daniel 12:3).

There is great value in pulpit preaching. There is great value in media evangelism - utilizing radio, television and the printed page. But nothing can take the place of one person who has the gospel sharing it with one person who needs it.

(2) Edify and teach the saved. The term "edification" means, "to strengthen, build, nurture, exhort, teach, or chasten". As one studies the scriptures, he will find that this is an extremely important part of the overall work of the church. Each person within the church has the responsibility to edify the members. Someone once stated that the reason we have many of the problems in the church today is that when we baptized people, we failed to teach them the whole truth. Hence, we still have people in the church today who are members, but have never been converted to the Lord's truth. They may be members because they married into the church, or because their mother or father became members or perhaps because the children became members. Those who feel that way will always be a problem to the church and hurt its overall work.

As there are responsibilities that must be met in our relationships one with another in our physical families, the same is true in the church. In the family of God, truly, we are our brother's keeper.

Read what Paul wrote in Romans 12:9-18. Baptized believers were to be taught, "to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:20). There can be no greater work that for one to teach another the gospel of Jesus Christ. We need to help each other come back to the Bible; back to Christ before it is too late, (Galatians 6:1,2).

(3)Do Benevolence. A diligent study of the scriptures that relate to the subject of benevolence will reveal that our entrance into heaven is greatly dependant upon this service being fully demonstrated in our lives. Conversely, a failure to render this service will result in a rejection to everlasting punishment (Cf. Matthew 25:31-46). Paul said, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto to them who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10).

Paul teaches that we are to help those in need, "Distributing to the necessity of the saints; given to hospitality" (Romans 12:13; Romans 15:25-27). James said, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this. To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27). The word, "visit" means, to look upon those in need in order to help or benefit them. The word includes looking after, caring for, and providing for those who need these services. Much good can be done through benevolence.

Conclusion

If ignorance and apathy continue to overshadow the church, we are in deep trouble. Elders and preachers must begin today to take a stand that cannot be moved. As Paul said, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58). Paul further stated, "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong" (1 Corinthians 16:13).

Be active in every good work of the church so that you are a shining light in a world of darkness. Learn to love the church and defend her great name. Study your Bible. Learn the Word of God and then help others to do the same because when it comes to God's Truth, one cannot have an I don't know and I don't care attitude.