

Church?

Joe Slater

“Church” gets a bad rap these days. God? In most cases He’s ok. Jesus? Yeah, He’s fine. But church? No, thanks.

We wish folks in the world saw the difference between gimmickry like “miracle spring water” and the church. Really, though, it’s our job to demonstrate that difference. But how can that happen when many who have obeyed the gospel still display a faulty and even negative concept of the church? Paul’s letter to the church at Ephesus gives us vital understanding:

First, “*Christ is the head of the church*” (Ephesians 5:23). God the Father didn’t send Jesus to become the president of a civic club! Rather, the church is the spiritual body of Christ (1:23). Just as your body has a head, so does Christ’s.

Second, “*the church is subject to Christ*” (Ephesians 5:24). The members of your body do as your head says – if they don’t, you find a doctor to see what’s wrong! “*Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually*” (1 Corinthians 12:27). **You** are the eyes, ears, fingers, and toes of Christ’s body, doing the things Jesus wants done. If you, as a member, are not carrying out the wishes of the Head (Jesus), both your attitude and actions must change!

Finally, Christ loves the church, nourishes it, and cherishes it (Ephesians 5:25, 29). People may turn up their noses at the church, but Christ loves it so much He bled and died for it! He nourishes it through His word. He cherishes it (i.e. cares with it with warm affection). To denigrate the church, then, is to belittle Christ’s body which He loves and for which He died.

Now what do you think about the church?

The Book

Junior bit the meter man.

Junior kicked the cook.
(Junior's anti-social now
According to the book.)

Junior smashed the clock and lamp.

Junior hacked the tree.
(Destructive trends are treated
in chapters two and three.)

Junior threw his milk at mom.

Junior screamed for more.
(Notes on self-assertiveness
are found in chapter 4.)

Junior tossed his shoes and socks
out into the rain.

(Negation - that is normal -
disregard the strain.)

Junior got in Grandpa's room,

Tore up his fishing line.
(That's to gain attention;
see page 89.)

Grandpa seized a slipper and

Yanked junior 'cross his knee.
(Grandpa's read the Bible
since 1953!)

-- Vance Havner (adapted)

CEMENTED FOOTPRINTS

". . .count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience" (James 1:2-3).

Many may remember the commercial of an older man laying cement, troweling and smoothing it out. Along comes a young boy, trudging on the newly laid sidewalk, totally oblivious of his steps, perfectly remembered in the cement as he says "Hello." The older man looks at him and one can read his eyes. "You gotta be kidding me!"

He sighs, smiles, and gently lifts the boy off the sidewalk and repairs the damage. I've never forgotten that commercial and the look on the man's face. I've remembered his patience and love he displayed to the innocence in the young boy wishing him a good morning.

I've often wondered how many times we fail to be that old man. Instead we fly into a fit of rage and lash out at our perceived opponent, whether the action was intended or not. A driver cuts you off. Perhaps someone cuts in line in front of you and you start complaining to others.

Life isn't fair, and it never has been and it never will be. Christians should expect unfair treatment. When we act out in anger, how can the world differentiate between Christian behavior and worldly behavior?

Peter tells us "*to knowledge add self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness*" (2 Peter 1:6). Paul said, "*But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified*" (1 Cor 9:27). These are powerful words. Both Peter and Paul had their faults, yet in imitating Christ, they became great.

Did Jesus have patience? Look at His response to Philip: "*Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip?*" (John 14:8). How about the Garden of Gethsemane in His last hours. And on the Cross when Jesus says, "*Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do*" (Luke 23:34).

So next time someone steps in your newly-laid cement, will you lose control in a harsh reply, or respond in kindness, knowing wet cement can be repaired?

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