

Love Lets Us be Free

By Gary Henry

“... pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2 Timothy 2:22).

Love liberates us from the main thing we need to be liberated from: **absorption with ourselves**. Sin turns us entirely inward; it twists our thinking into a selfish shape. And if we've been sinning long enough that it's become a habit, our thinking and our values, motives, desires, and goals have probably come under the control of one basic consideration: **what we want**. Even when we do good deeds for others, we may do them because, basically, such acts of kindness help us to feel about ourselves the way we want to feel. Sin captures us in a very selfish cage.

One of the grand effects of the gospel of Christ is that it frees us from this preoccupation with ourselves. Paul said that the goal or object of Christian teaching is love: “The purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith” (1 Timothy 1:5). This kind of love is the very antithesis of selfishness. It lifts us out of the bog of self-centered thinking and sets us free to enjoy a new and better focus. It gets us out of ourselves and into a connection with all those things

external to ourselves that we were meant to be related to.

Love is clearly vital to our connection to other human beings, especially our fellow Christians. Without the self-sacrificial love produced by the gospel, we wouldn't be able to love others, at least with the highest kind of love (John 13:34, 35). But what a difference the gospel makes! “Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart” (1 Peter 1:22).

But more importantly, love is vital to our connection to God. Sin is the root of the problem, certainly, and until that barrier is removed by the gospel, we can't have any fellowship with God. But even with our past sins forgiven, there can be no fellowship if we remain self-centered. So if we're Christians, we need to let our hearts be transformed — **opened up** — by love. “Let all those who seek You rejoice and be glad in You; and let those who love Your salvation say continually, ‘Let God be magnified!’” (Psalm 70:4).



Classes this Week

Kid's Class at the Building at 5:15 All Are Invited	Monday Night Men's Class at the Davis' at 7 PM	Thursday Night Class on Acts at Jillian Petty's at 7 PM	Friday Night 1st—8th Grade Class at the Rouse's from 6-8 PM
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Sick

Fran Snyder (Mother of Carla Humphrey)	Pam Dial (Laura Weldon's Mother)
Albert Boyles (William Herd's Relative)	Rose Tate (Toni Herd's Cousin)
Adriana Mininno (Haley Chittam's Cousin)	Dave and Betty Bradford
Ed Mort (Friend of Sharon Bailey)	“Grandmama” Odessa Wyatt (Dyle's grandmother)
Blake Whatley (Hunt's neighbor)	Dave Brown (Friend of the Lanier's)
Marty and Aubrey Meeks (Toni Herd's Nephews)	Carrie Chavers (Friend of Sharon Bailey)
Carol Dickerson	Chick Wade
Rachel Bragwell	Lori Holloway
Wes Bowen	

News and Notes

- The college devotion and singing will meet tonight at the Tam's. Larry Rouse will be teaching on encouragement.
- Let's remember our expectant mothers: Laura Weldon, Anna Miller and Nichole Pender.
- Susan Sullivanne is having knee surgery this Tuesday at EMAC.
- Prayers are requested for the Bell and Brown families in the loss of their daughters (friend of Sharon Bailey)
- Our monthly men's business meeting will be this afternoon.
- Our monthly singing will be tonight.
- Audio CDs of Today's Sermon will be immediately available.

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The Auburn Beacon



Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

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Churches — God-Centered or Man-Centered?

By Sewell Hall



Religion by its very definition would seem to involve God. The word godly means God-centered. However, there are those who practice a religion that is all about man rather than God. To say that such religion is godly is not to say that it is wicked, but simply that it is not centered in God.

Jesus described such people in his day in the words of Isaiah: "These people draw near to me with their mouth, and honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. And in vain they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:8-9). Paul writes of those who are "lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God" while at the same time "holding a form of godliness" (2 Timothy 3:4-5). Jude describes some who are in the church, but are "ungodly men, who turn the grace of God into licentiousness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jude 4).

Why would ungodly individuals continue to profess religion? Some do so, "supposing that godliness is

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a way of gain" (1 Timothy 6:5). Others, like Diotrophes (3 John 9), love the preeminence that they have attained in the church. Or, like the rulers of (John 12:43), they may love "the praise of men more than the praise of God."

Contrasting Churches

Local churches may be led either by godly or by ungodly men — that is, by men who are most concerned for God and things of the Spirit or by men whose concerns are primarily human and temporal. Such churches can be distinguished by

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Do You Have a Bible Question?
Call (334) 734-2133 or E-mail: LarryRouse@aubeacon.com

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES Sunday

Bible Class 9:30 AM
Worship 10:20 AM
Evening Worship 6:00 PM

Wednesday

Bible Classes 7:00 PM

Ask about our home Bible Study Groups!

Larry Rouse
Evangelist and Editor

Check Us Out On the Internet: www.aubeacon.com

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the following:

Goals: Godly leaders have as their goal "the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things unto Him who is the head —

Christ" (**Ephesians 4:12-15**). Men whose thinking is not dominated by God have as their primary goal increasing numbers — a big church. They consider numerical growth proof of God's approval.

Doctrine: Godly leaders are determined to abide in the doctrine of Christ and not to go beyond it (**2 John 9**). Not godly men, knowing that most of the public "will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables" (**2 Timothy 4:3-4**), provide the teachers that will tickle their ears.

Discipline: Godly leaders will insist that, in harmony with God's instructions, the church "withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly" (**2 Thessalonians 3:6**). Ungodly leaders advertise: "Come as you are" and boast that they are not judgmental, receiving everyone regardless of lifestyle.

Worship: Godly leaders insist that God be worshipped "acceptable with reverence and godly fear" (**Hebrews 12:28**) while ungodly men place great emphasis on "worship" that pleases the public and they seem concerned only that everyone leave "feeling good about themselves" and eager to return. Preachers:

Godly leaders are not nearly as concerned with excellence of speech or of wisdom as that preachers be "determined not to know anything... save Jesus Christ and him crucified" (**1 Corinthians 2:1-2**). Ungodly leaders insist that preachers be entertaining and personally popular, even with the world.

Activities: Godly leaders test every proposed action by all the scriptures, determined to "do all in the name of the Lord Jesus" (**Colossians 3:17**), while ungodly leaders offer whatever people want — sports, entertainment, education, feasts, travel - with little apparent concern for what God wants.

Testing Ourselves

The Bible blesses those who "hunger and thirst after righteousness" (**Matthew 5:6**). By contrast it **condemns those who have "pleasure in unrighteousness"** (2 Thessalonians 2:12). Our taste in churches will help us determine which we are.

How will a person who has "pleasure in unrighteousness" feel about a church whose goal above all other things is to remake him into the image of Christ, whose doctrine is "the apostles' teaching," a church where he is put on notice that he must live a godly life or be disfellowshipped, where worship is designed exclusively to please God, where preachers preach only the word of God — reproving, rebuking and exhorting — where activities are altogether spiritual?

On the other hand, how will one who is hungry and thirsty for righteousness feel about a church he visits where he receives nothing but entertainment, where the "sermons" are little more than jokes and pop psychology, where sin is never rebuked, sinners never convicted or exhorted, and where activities are the same as those offered at a public school, theater or country club.

What kind of church are you seeking — the church of your choice or the church of God's choice? A godly church or an ungodly church?



Are You Tired of Doing the Right Thing?

By Steve Klein

Doing the right thing takes energy, determination and dedication. The effort can take a toll on a person over time. So much so that we may be tempted to slack up or just give up.

It was that way with the Israelites in Malachi's day. The offerings they were making to the Lord were not what they should have been because the Israelites were tired of offering them. In **Malachi 1:13** the Lord levels this charge against them: "You also say, 'Oh, what a weariness!' 'And you sneer at it,' says the LORD of hosts. 'And you bring the stolen, the lame, and the sick; thus you bring an offering!' 'Should I accept this from your hand?' says the LORD."

How much like these Israelites are we? Have we become tired of doing what we know we should do in the work and worship of the church? Do we even attend with the regularity that we should? And when we do attend, do we put our spirits fully into the worship? What about our home lives? Are we tired of striving to be the husband, wife, parent or child that God expects us to be? And what about our personal lives? Are we tired of an ongoing struggle against temptation; a struggle that we to often lose to our own shame and disappointment? The answer to such weariness is not quitting. The answer is finding renewed energy and a reason to keep going.

Here are three ideas from Scripture that might help you to keep going and continue serving the Lord with your best even when you are spiritually tired.

Are we tired of an ongoing struggle against temptation; a struggle that we to often lose to our own shame and disappointment? The answer to such weariness is not quitting. The answer is finding renewed energy and a reason to keep going.

1. Remember Whom you are serving. The Lord reminded the Israelites that He deserved better than what they were giving Him. "'I am a great King,' says the LORD of hosts, 'and My name is to be feared among the nations'" (**Malachi 1:14**).

2. Remember the reward for which you are working. The farmer who quits farming in the middle of the growing season because it's hot and he's tired is not going to produce much of a crop. Even so, "let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart" (**Galatians 6:9**).

3. Draw strength from the Lord. God never gets tired. Isaiah asks, "Have you not known? Have you not heard? The everlasting God, the LORD, The Creator of the ends of the earth, neither faints nor is weary" (**Isaiah 40:28**). Furthermore, "He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength" (**Isaiah 40:29**). Ask the Lord to renew your strength. Wait on Him and trust Him to do it! For "those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint" (**Isaiah 40:31**).

Yes, living a righteous life takes a lot of tiring effort. But then, nobody knows that better than Jesus. He showed us that it can be done! "For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls" (**Hebrews 12:3**).

