

Milk & Honey

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Spiritual Food and Encouragement for Believers in the Lord Jesus Christ

If Thou Knewest the Gift of God

C. Stanley

Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. John 4:10

A weary one sat at Jacob's well; He had left the land of the Pharisees. It was Jesus. He came in love to His own, to save them from their sins; but they received Him not. Weary and grieved was His tender heart, as He sat about the sixth hour at Jacob's well.

There is a woman coming with her water-pot to the well. She is one to whom the proud Pharisee would scorn to speak. She is a despised Samaritan, and that is not all; she is a poor wretched being, living in open sin. She little knows that she is about to meet the eye of Him who knows all that ever she did. She arrives at the well, and is astonished that Jesus, being a Jew, should ask her to give Him to drink. "Jesus answered, and said unto her, *If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water.*"

He did not say, *If thou wert not so great a sinner.* He did not say, *If thou wilt reform and become a holy woman, then I will give thee living water.* No! No! No! He let her know, that He knew all that ever she had done. But there was such a depth of pity, grace, and compassion in the wondrous countenance; such tender love to the sinner in those words, that it won her heart, it converted her soul. Christ was revealed to her; and leaving her water-pot she went to the city so full of Christ, that forgetting her own shame, she said, "Come see a man which told me all that ever I did: is not this the Christ?"

My reader, can you meet the eye of Him who knows every thought of your heart from childhood? All at ever you did, open and naked to His eye! And can you say that you are not a sinner? How was it, think you, that there was nothing in Jesus to repel this wretched sinner? And what can those words mean, think you — "If thou knewest the gift of God"? Is this the one great thing needed by a poor wretched sinner? It is; there can be no mistake about it, for Jesus says it. Of whatever nation my reader may be; whatever the sins you may have

committed, the first thing you need is not the waters of the Ganges, or the intercession of saints, or works of amendment; no, the thing you need is to know the gift of God.

Do you ask who and what is that gift of God? The same that met that poor Samaritan sinner; Jesus the Son of God: as also it is written, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." "The gift of God is eternal life." "He that hath the Son hath life; he that hath not the Son of God, hath not life."

My reader, it is a *gift, a gift, a gift*; oh, if thou knewest this! Thou canst not buy it; thou canst not merit it. He that knows all that ever thou didst, all that thou art; sets before thee Jesus the crucified; Jesus the risen one; Jesus the glorified. Dost thou know Him, the gift of all gifts?

Dost thou say, "but my sins are heavy, they press me down, what must I do?" If thou knewest the gift of God! Yes, even though thou hast committed every sin that has been done in this dark world; yet God's gift, "redemption through his blood" abounds above it all. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." His very business was saving just such burthened, weary, heavy-hearted sinners as thou art. Blessed be His holy name, the work is finished. May God reveal to thy soul, my reader, Christ Jesus. Change of life and holiness of life will follow. But the first thing is *The gift of God.* *

Which Way Are We Leaning

Steve Hulshizer

When it comes to election time people are often asked which way they are leaning. In political terms the question means are you leaning left, or are you leaning right.

The Lord has expressed His view clearly. He would instruct us through His Word, "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart." (Prov. 3:5) One thought of "trusting" is leaning. It is in direct contrast to that which follows, "and lean not unto thine own understanding." Man leans on his own thinking, the Lord would have us lean on Himself. What are we leaning on? Education, social status, position, wealth, experts, or upon the Lord? "In all thy ways acknowledge him (His presence and superiority), and he shall direct thy paths. (v.6) We are wise to lean on One who is all-knowing, all-wise and all-powerful, and Who promises to direct our paths. May we lean hard on the Lord! *

Christians Gathered Together to the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ — Are They a Sect?

W. E. Vine

That a number of Christians in my locality, learning the will of the Lord as revealed in the Holy Scriptures as to the mode and purposes of their gathering themselves together, are found acting in obedience thereto, in contrast to adherence to the mere tenets and traditions of men, does not constitute them a sect.

1. *The Origin of Present-day Testimony.* Originally Christ Himself separated His followers from the apostate religion of Judaism, and this separation continued under the guidance of the Spirit of God in the *formation of churches* under the ministry of the apostles. Those who, together with Gentile converts, became obedient to the faith, are mentioned as “the sect” that was “everywhere spoken against” (Acts 28:22). This criticism, and the aspersions that were cast upon them, were to their honor in the sight of God.

2. *The Formation of Sects.* Gradually, owing to the rise of false teachers, and to other influences which led believers away from apostolic teaching, a system of clerisy developed, and, under the power of ecclesiastical domination, *churches were combined* into vast religious organizations. The result was that what is known as Christendom became characterized by a condition of things far removed from that which was instituted by Christ and had continued under apostolic teaching.

3. *Faint Yet Pursuing.* This general drift away from “the faith once for all delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3), and the growth of ecclesiastical organizations, did not, however, prevent numbers of true and faithful followers of Christ from *obedience to the Word of God*, either by the maintenance of a steadfast adherence to it, or by *separation from the humanly devised system* of ecclesiasticism. While its huge structure maintained its domination as the area of Christendom extended, there were communities of believers who sought still to follow the Scriptures of truth.

4. *A Partial Recovery.* When eventually in medieval times, there was a break away from the then existing ecclesiastical systems, organized denominations were formed under the effort to adopt a purer form of religion. *There was not, however, a complete return to obedience* to the faith on the part of those denominations. On the other hand, there are very clear traces of the existence both before and during that period, of isolated companies of Christians who gathered in simplicity and dependence upon the Spirit of God, and in independence of unscripturally organized denominations.

5. *Divine Plan for Collective Testimony.* The Word of God makes clear that the divine intention was for *local churches to be formed and developed, each on its own independent basis*, maintaining the truths of the faith, and spreading the light around them and in the regions beyond, the Holy Spirit Himself being sufficient for all spiritual requirements for the fulfillment of the Word of God.

6. *Advancing with Increasing Light.* Despite every effort to prevent the spread of the knowledge of its truth, copies of the Scriptures continued to multiply, and the true faith therein contained became more generally available. The various forms of organized clerisy were ever antagonistic to this, for the Word of God bears no uncertain testimony against such organization. This opposition could not, however, altogether prevent people from adhering to the will of God as it became known, even when the measure of liberty granted to them was small. Where such freedom became general, under the liberating influence of the gospel and the spread of the light, churches, or assemblies, of *believers guided by the Word of truth* in separation from the traditions of men, became more numerous.

7. *Scripturally Gathered Assemblies.* In the early part of the nineteenth century the return to Holy Scripture in this respect became *more pronounced*, and, in several places, independently one of another, that is to say without affiliation or centralization, believers found themselves *drawn together and formed into churches* under the operation of the Spirit of God.

8. *Not a Sect.* This did not consist of the formation of a new sect or denomination; it was a *continuation, on a more extensive scale*, of that adherence to the faith which, as we have seen, existed in one place and another *from the first century of the Christian era*. The absence of a local center or an ecclesiastical council or synod, the adoption of the Holy Scriptures as the sole guide, and the freedom from the humanly formulated creeds, should have been sufficient to prevent such churches from being regarded as a sect.

9. *Not “The Plymouth Brethren.”* The testimony thus given attracted particular attention in Plymouth, England, and for reasons beyond their own control, and utterly opposed to their wishes, they became known as “Plymouth Brethren.” The appellation was *by no means self-styled*, and has always been *repugnant to them*. That prejudice should dub them by that name does not constitute them a sect. Moreover, the New Testament itself has been sufficient to produce such communities in other lands, where nothing was known of what took place in Plymouth, let alone the fact that collective obedience to the Scriptures *had already taken place* in other places in the British Isles before such a community was formed in the said town.

10. *Not “The Brethren.”* It is true that, in the recognition

this by other Christians, the local appellation of “Plymouth” has been largely dropped. Nevertheless, such churches have been and are still spoken of by the denominational title of “The Brethren.” They *reject it equally* with the other appellation. No such title appears outside their places of assembling. But, again, the general use of a *misnomer* does not actually make such assemblies a sect.

11. *No Ecclesiastical Union.* Undeniably, certain circles or parties have been formed among these communities, and *there have been attempts* (some more or less successful) to form an ecclesiastical bond of union among them under the leadership of some prominent personage. But the *failure of such* to adhere to what is set forth in the Scriptures in regard to church truth has, in itself, become a rebuke to all such attempts. *Nor have such unhappy adventures prevented abstinence from such formations, and adherence to the Word of God, on the part of a very great number of other assemblies.* Apart altogether, however, from these movements, the use of the appellations “Plymouth Brethren” or the “Open Brethren” is *entirely unjustifiable.*

12. *Similarity Necessarily Exists.* As we have pointed out, *the Word of God is sufficient* under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to *form such an assembly anywhere, at any time.* *The similarity of the mode of worship and of the exercise of spiritual gifts* in such gatherings (*and they exist all over the world*) affords no ground for looking upon them as a sect. Had they an ecclesiastical, localized government, a council or set of councils, and were they formed into ecclesiastical association or federated churches, they would, *IPSO FACTO* (by the act itself), be a sect. But that is not the case.

13. *No Denominational Title.* Suppose, for instance, that in some region where such scripturally formed assemblies have not existed up to the present, and where believers have not heard of the so-called “Plymouth Brethren,” or “The Brethren,” a company of people who have received the light of the Word of God meet together *just as assemblies of which we have spoken have done,* knowing no other name than that of Christians, or disciples or believers, is a denominational title to be given to them? What are they to be called? Are they to be called “The Brethren,” because they do, under the guidance of the Scriptures, what those who are *miscalled* “The Brethren” elsewhere are doing? The idea is grotesque. Are they to be looked upon as a sect because they are obedient to the Word of Truth? And yet *the formation of such churches is constantly taking place,* and there are countries where Christians, meeting together like this, have *not received a denominational title.*

14. *Responsibility in Testimony is Ever Local.* It is easy, of course, to use certain failures among these communities, and certain unscriptural conditions that have existed in one place or another, as arguments against them, and as supports

for the use of a sectarian appellation. But individual or *local failure* affords no ground for regarding these churches in general as a sect.

15. *Attention!* It is needful too, on the part of such assemblies themselves, to bear in mind *the necessity of avoiding phraseology which unintentionally assumes that they are sectarian.* The use, for instance, of the personal pronoun “we,” with reference to such churches is *reprehensible.* For whom does the “we” stand? One assembly may be in a low spiritual condition. Another may have received error. Another may be divided. And these evils have existed, and do exist, in isolated instances. But it is folly to tar all with the same brush, or regard that as characterizing all such communities which attaches only to certain units.

16. *Fellowship versus Affiliation.* If a denominational title were accepted, it would be difficult for one assembly in the fellowship thus formed to escape identification with the failures of other assemblies therein, but when such a title is refused, it is made clear that *each church is responsible for its own conduct alone before God.* There is indeed *necessarily a close fellowship* between assemblies which seek thus to carry out the will of God, but that does not constitute the aggregate a sect. *Fellowship* is one thing; *affiliation* is another. *

Free business card tract

Looking Past The Glitter

With all the glitter of Christmas many people never see the importance of Christ’s coming into the world by way of the virgin birth.

Conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin Christ was holy. (Luke 1:35) He lived a sinless life and was the perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world. (2 Cor. 5:21; Hebrews 9:26)

God showed His approval of Christ’s sacrificial death by raising Him from the dead.

Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And...he rose again the third day according to the scriptures. 1 Cor. 15:3–4

Have you looked past the glitter of Christmas to see Christ coming to die that you might have eternal life?

Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. Matthew 1:23

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners. 1 Timothy 1:15

Read the Gospel of John to see how to obtain eternal life and peace with God through faith in the living Savior, Jesus Christ.

York Bible Study Program

November – December 2014

Date	Topic	Teacher
Nov 8	Being Men and Women of God	Bruce Hulshizer
Dec 13	Winning Spiritual Battles	Mark Kolchin

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He must increase, but I must decrease. John 3:30

November, 2014

“Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst”

Matt. 18:20

William MacDonald

When Jesus spoke these words, He was referring to a meeting of the church convened to deal with a sinning member who refuses to repent. Other efforts to handle the offender have failed and now he is brought before the church. If he still refuses to repent; he must be disfellowshipped. The Lord Jesus promises His presence at such a meeting called to deal with a matter of church discipline.

But the verse surely has a wider application. It is true wherever and whenever two or three are gathered in His Name. To gather in His Name means to meet as a Christian assembly. It means to gather together by His authority, acting on His behalf. It means to gather with Him as the attraction. It means to gather in accordance with the practice of the early Christians for “the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts. 2:42). It means to gather with Christ as the center, to gather to Him (Gen. 49:10; Psa. 50:5).

Wherever believers are thus gathered to the Person of the Lord Jesus, He promises to be present. But someone may ask, “Isn’t He present everywhere? As the omnipresent One, is He not in all places at one and the same time?” The answer is, of course, that He is. But He promises to be present in a special way when saints gather in His Name.

“...there am I in the midst.” That is, in itself, the strongest single reason why we should be faithful in attending all the meetings of the local assembly. The Lord Jesus is there in a special way. Many times we may not be conscious of His promised presence. At those times we accept the fact by faith, based upon His promise. But there are other times

when He manifests Himself to us in an unusual way. Times when heaven seems to bend very low. Times when all hearts are bowed beneath the influence of the Word. Times when the glory of the Lord so fills the place that a deep sense of reverential awe grips the people and tears flow freely. Times when our hearts burn within us.

We never know the times of these sacred visitations. They come unannounced and unexpectedly. If we are not present, we miss them. Then we share a loss similar to that of Thomas. He was not present when the risen, glorified Lord Jesus appeared to the disciples on the evening of His resurrection (John 20:24). It was a moment of glory that could never be recaptured.

If we really believe Christ is present when His people gather in His Name, we will be much more determined to attend than if the President were going to be there. Nothing short of death or terminal illness would hinder our presence. * [One Day At A Time]

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2400 Admire Springs Dr.
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Editor: Stephen Hulshizer

Fax/Phone (717) 467-5729 phone/fax

Web/Contact www.STW1982.com