

IMITATING THE IMITATORS

1 THESSALONIANS 2.14

INTRODUCTION:

1. Reasoning about Christ in the synagogues of Thessalonica yielded the beginning of the local congregation. (Acts 17.1-4)
2. The congregation flourished and were quickly known for their faith, love and patience. (1 Thes. 1.2,3)
3. What made the congregation prosper? *“For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God...”* (1 Thes. 2.14; 1.6)

I. THEY RECEIVED THE WORD OF GOD

- A. Perhaps the greatest challenge to the modern day church is showing the respect of the inspired word. (1 Thes. 1.6; 2.13)
 1. Do we respect the authority of scripture? (1 Cor. 4.6)
 2. Does it work *“...effectively in you...”* (1 Thes. 2.13)
 3. Do we grasp the power to perfect? (Ps. 33.8,9; 2 Tim. 3.17)
- B. **James 1.21:** *“...receive with meekness the implanted word”*

II. FROM THEM THE WORD HAS SOUNDED FORTH

- A. Because of their efforts, the word of God was known in the surrounding regions, and *“also in every place”* (1 Thes. 1.8)
 1. Not only the knowledge of the gospel, but their *“faith toward God has gone out...”* (1 Thes. 1.8,9; 2 Thes. 1.4)
 2. Faith displayed needs no introduction. (2 Cor. 3.2)
- B. Does the word of God sound forth from us?
 1. Teaching those who can *“teach others also”* (2 Tim. 2.2)
 2. Sending and receiving messengers. (3 John 5-8)
 3. Demonstrating faith in a faithless world. (Phil. 2.15)

III. THE ANTICIPATION OF THE COMING OF CHRIST

- A. **1 THESSALONIANS 1.10:** *“and to wait for His Son...”*
 1. Waiting for the coming of Christ was an eager Anticipation -- hope. (Rom. 8.24,25; 2 Cor. 4.18)
 2. Hope shapes our lives as it compels us to act so has not to hope in vain. (2 Pet. 3.10-14; 1 Cor. 15.1,2)
- B. Hope that does not disappoint is hope that...
 1. Keeps us from sinful actions. (Heb. 10.26,27; Rev. 3.3)
 2. Detaches us from this life. (1 Tim. 6.7; Phil. 3.8)
 3. Gives reason to an otherwise empty life. (2 Tim. 4.7,8)

CONCLUSION: Are we a congregation worthy of imitation?

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MEETING TIMES:

SUNDAY MORNING BIBLE CLASS :	9:00AM
SUNDAY MORNING WORSHIP:	9:50AM
SUNDAY EVENING WORSHIP:	6:00PM
WEDNESDAY EVENING BIBLE CLASS	7:30PM

*Worshipping
God “in Spirit
and truth”
(John 4.23)*

JUNE 21ST, 2009

RELIGION FOR THE NON RELIGIOUS

Those of us who believe things spiritual and live their lives accordingly are called religious -- a term not unheard of in the Bible. Not all religion is pleasing and acceptable to God, for some in their worship of idols (Acts 17.22), or *“self-imposed religion”* (Col. 2.23). may feel spiritual, but their belief have no basis in truth. However, James teaches that there is *“true and undefiled religion”* (James 1.26,27).

Some may not show any interest in spiritual things saying, “I’m not really a religious person.” Is it ever proper and right to impose one’s religious beliefs on those who are non-religious? The problem with this kind of question is that it assumes that religion is a matter of opinion and personal preference rather than a design. It is suggested that a person may choose to be religious or choose not to be, but either way it is a lifestyle choice rather than an issue of right and wrong. Therefore the morals and practices one chooses for themselves are personal and ought not to be imposed on another.

The fact is that everyone is religious whether they like it or not. Everyone is created in the image of God with an eternal soul that will face eternal consequences in the last day. The fact that one may not be religious does not change this. He is still bound by the expectations of God.

Religion is not a matter of personal preference but an acknowledgement of the fact that we are spiritual beings that are created to serve God and keep His commandments. Indeed, at the end of time, everyone will be religious. CLP

THE GREAT INVITATION

MATTHEW 11.28-30

INTRODUCTION:

1. The invitation of the gospel is not exclusive to the wise, mighty and noble (1 Cor. 1.26), but is open to all (Luke 14.21).
2. The problem of sin has plagued mankind with very little offered to provide relief. But Christ has a better way.
3. The greatest need from the greatest number of people calls for the greatest invitation ever offered.

I. THE INVITED: THE LABORERS AND HEAVY LADEN

- A. The burdens of life can be heavy and difficult to bear.
 1. The Mosaic Law provided neither comfort or relief, but weighed heavily on the Jews. (Acts 15.10; Matt. 23.4)
 2. No greater burden do men carry than the heavy burden of sin. (Ps. 38.4; John 8.33-36; Rom. 7.14-17)
- B. Why is sin heavy to bear? The consequences are unbearable!
 1. All are invited, for all are burdened by sin. (Acts 2.39)
 2. Under the burden of sin, many cry out for a solution. (Luke 15.17; 18.13; Acts 2.37; Rom. 7.24)

II. THE CONDITION: TAKE MY YOKE UPON YOU

- A. The yoke of Christ makes us free from the bondage of sin.
 1. **GALATIANS 5.1:** “*Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free...*” (cf. Rom.8.2)
 2. Yet still under a yoke. (1 Pet. 2.16; Rom. 6.18; Gal. 2.4)
- B. The yoke of Christ is lighter and easier. (Matt. 11.30)
 1. Under Christ there is forgiveness. (1 John 2.1,2)
 2. The commandments of God burdensome? (1 John 5.3)
 3. As it compares to sin all that we endure as Christians are considered “light afflictions” (2 Cor. 4.17; Dan. 3.25)

III. THE OFFER: I WILL GIVE YOU REST

- A. Those who labor in Christ are promised rest. (Heb. 4.9,10)
 1. This rest comes after judgment. (Rev. 14.13; 2 Thes. 1.7)
 2. He ceases from his labors. (1 Thes. 1.3; Heb. 6.10)
 3. But we must be found faithful. (Rev. 2.10; Matt. 10.22)
- B. **HEBREWS 4.11:** “*Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest...*” (2 Pet. 1.10; 2 Tim. 2.15; 2 Pet. 3.14)

CONCLUSION: The yoke of sin or the yoke of Christ?

THE BOOK OF LIFE

The awesome scene of judgment vividly portrayed at the end of Revelations describes those who stood before God awaiting judgment. There was none exempt; but everyone “*small and great*” stood before the throne of God (Rev. 20.11-15). As they entered into judgment, two books were opened. Only one of those books were identified by name. **REVELATION 20.12:** “*And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life.*”

The Book of Life is a book which contains all the names of those who are saved. For in the judgment scene those who were in the Book of Life stood before God and were judged as their life was compared to another set of books (Rev. 20.12), which was the Law of Christ (John 12.48). And only those who are faithful, whose names are found in the Book of Life shall enter into Heaven (Rev. 21.27). However, “*anyone found not written in the Book of Life was cast in the lake of fire*” (Rev. 20.15).

If the Book of Life contains all the names of those who are saved, then all would desire to have their name entered. It is only by entering into a relationship with God through obedience to the gospel of Christ that one’s name is recorded in this book. Paul praised the faithfulness of those in Philippi, “*...whose names are in the Book of Life*” (Phil. 4.3). To the unfaithful church in Sardis, Christ acknowledged that even among them there were some who remained faithful. These, Jesus writes, “*I will not blot his name out of the Book of Life*” (Rev. 3.5).

This brings up another critical point. One can initially have his name written in the Book of Life, but because of unfaithfulness have his name later removed (Ex. 32.33). This defeats the doctrine of “once saved, always saved”. One cannot become a Christian, then after baptism fade away and not fulfill their responsibilities and commitments as a servant of God. For in doing so, his name, once written in the Book of Life, will no longer appear in the day of judgment.

The Book of Life is not a book that can be found and read on earth. But we can be assured of our name’s appearance by the book that does reside with us – the Bible. For by this word we can know the certainty of our salvation as those who abide in it are recipients of His approval. So the question we ask is this: When the roll is called up yonder, will your name be there? CLP