

The Servant



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The purpose of this newsletter is to pass along information and ideas to help the Lord's servants as they minister to others. Feel free to use any of it in your ministry

Reaching Heathen Nations

I heard someone talking about "Backward Nations" the other day. While he meant one thing, I thought of another. He was talking about countries without fast-foods or French fries, or where people "can't even speak English." "Imagine that," I said, "Yes Lord, deliver us from ignorant people," and he never had a clue to whom I was referring. I have been in some of the places he was talking about. I have been in places where people are shoeless and shirtless, and places where people still tell time by the height of the sun. I have been in places where there are few hospitals, no malls, and no running water. I have been in places where sewage runs in the street and where house roofs are still made of grass. I have been in places where eggs and cigarettes are still sold one at a time, and where goat-power is more common than horse-power. I do not consider any of these places "backward." Someone has to go forward before they can go backward. I do not think real backwardness can be measured by poor economics or poor education. It was of course Jesus Christ who warned about the "deceitfulness of riches." Riches can mask real backwardness and hide it from us.

Real backwardness, the backwardness that should bother us, is the one that is so close to us that we are unable to see it. Isaiah spoke of it: "Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy one of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward." This is the worst kind of "backward nation." It is the worst kind because it speaks of a nation that had once been *something* and now was *something less*. In our prayer meetings, let us not forget to pray for the world's most backward nation. ☪

Game Shows

The leaders were upset because Jesus would not play their religious games. "But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows. And saying, We have piped unto you and ye have not danced, we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented." (Mt. 11:16-17)

John would not play their religious games, and now Jesus would not play either. Life is too short and death is too serious to play games.

Today people are trying to be millionaires on television, and some have shown that they will do anything for money. The networks call it Reality TV. The Jewish leaders were playing games with Pilate. They brought Jesus into his court and demanded that he try him and condemn him. Pilate was forced to answer the most important question of his life. It is the same question every man must answer. "What shall I do with Jesus?" (Mt. 27:22).

Pilate tried his "three lifelines" but they each failed him: the 50/50, the ask the audience, and the call a friend. In verse 17 the 50/50 does not help. In v. 20-21 he polls the audience, but they were coached to give the wrong answer. His third lifeline was to ask a friend. He should have listened to his wife (verse 19) but instead he was more concerned about what Caesar would say if he let Jesus go free (John 19:12).

Pilate ran out of lifelines. He also ran out of time. He made the biggest mistake of his life. All the water in all the world could not wash away the stain of the guilt. History gives some evidence that Pilate committed suicide sometime between 37AD and 41AD during the reign of Gaius. If he did or not we cannot say, what we do know is that he missed the most important question on life's greatest test. "What shall I do with Jesus?" ☪

Strange Change?

Do you have any change? No, I am not talking about your pocketbook. I am talking about in your life? Peter and John were going into the Temple to pray when a man held out his hand and asked them for change. This man was a cripple and had been in the begging business for forty years. He picked out a good spot. If that day had been like all the other days he would have had a little pocket change for his effort at the end of the day.

Now the White House wants to help God's House in giving out alms and many are throwing up arms at what is being called "Faith-Based Initiatives." Woe to the church that is fooled by pocket change.

God wants to give people more. When the beggar saw Peter and John, the Bible says that, he "expected to receive something." People have a right to expect something from the church. People have a right to expect something when we preachers are making our way to the pulpit. Too often they get pennies when they need power. Too often they get religion when they need regeneration. Too often they are encouraged to turn over a new leaf when what they need is a new life.

The beggar asked for change instead, he got changed. He was born again. By the world's standards the Apostle's were broke. They had no money. But you know they had something far better than that. They said, "Silver and Gold have I none, but such as I have I give unto you, In the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk" (Acts 3:6).

Something is wrong when the church is no different than the world it is trying to reach. Something is wrong when its marriages fail at the same rate, lusts for

the same things, feeds at the same troths of amusement, worships the same idols, and secretly longs more to win the lottery than it does for the coming of the Lord. In many churches it is time for a change.

Many think the change should be in what really amounts to nothing but cultural pocket change. They want to change our music and make it "rip your face off" rock and roll. They want to change our attire and come casual (or careless) with dress-down Sunday as they mimic dress-down Fridays at work. They want to change the programs thinking that will solve the church's problems. Personally I think this is all off-target. God wants change, but not that kind of change.

Salvation is a change and transformation of life. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things are passed away, behold all things are become new." The message the church first preached was "Repent." (Mt. 3:1; Mt. 4:17; Mk. 6:12; Acts 3:38). Repentance is a **correction of direction**. The world is going the wrong way. Sinners are going the wrong way. Now it seems that the **church** is in danger of going the wrong way also. Making the church just like the world is the wrong kind of change.

On the other hand, there are those who are against any change. They are stuck in a religious rut. Contrary to what they think, they are not stuck in New Testament times. They are in a cultural time warp. Some are stuck in the 1940's, others pretend they are living in nineteenth-century England. Some still wear polyester suits and beehive hairdos. Being old fashioned is not necessarily being spiritual. God is as modern and up to date as tomorrow's news. He is not "back there somewhere" in Palestine or Plymouth. He is Now.

Do we have any change? I hope so. But I hope it is the right kind of change.

Salvation changes us three ways.

1) In Justification we are changed in our spirit. Our spirit is quickened and made alive. Our spirit witnesses with [God's Spirit] that we are children of God (Rom. 8:16). In Christ we are forgiven, we are "new."

2) In Sanctification we are changed in our Mind, our Will, and our Emotions. This is the Soul. "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul" Ps. 19:7. This is more than getting us into heaven. This is getting heaven into us.

3) In Glorification our bodies will one day be changed. The faith of the early church laid many a young man and woman in the grave without grieving as the world grieves. Today we live longer, but we seem to live less. The early believers looked forward to being changed "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye."

How is our spirit? Is it at peace? What about our minds, our will, and our emotions. Are they being re-made into the image of God's Dear Son? How about our bodies? Are they the only things we pray about when we come to the place of prayer? Perhaps God wants us to change.

The first century (New Testament World) thought believers "strange." Today, the world hardly notices us as we climb the Temple steps, and from past experiences with us "expects much too little." ☹

*Every time I open
the Bible I must be
prepared to change.*



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