

News & Notes

Sunday, November 16, 2008

Remember in Prayer: Daryl Alberson; David Anderson; Arland Anderson; Mary Bailey; Mary Childers; Vikie Cobb; Diana Hayes; Bobby Hopkins; Lettie Mae Hunt; Dot Ketchum; John and Deliah Mann; Diane Mize; Wayne Orman; Ann Ray; Brandon Ray; Verra Roberson; Austin Robinson; Katherine Shaw; Gary Spence; Jamie Spence; Calvin Ursery; Alvie Williford;

Sympathy is extended to the family of C.B. Bright.

Pantry item for the month of November is decaffeinated tea bags.

For those who have **internet access**, our website is updated on a weekly basis. Check it out: www.ashlandcoc.org.

Be sure and check the **bulletin boards** in the foyer for additional information.

Ashland Events: Today: Prayer meeting at 4:00 PM;

Sermon in Preview:

AM: Discovering the Pearl of Great Price

PM: Protecting Our Faith

For the Record (November 9, 2008):

Attendance: 66 Contribution: \$1151.00 Budget: \$1452.00

The Ashland Church of Christ

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Ashland, MS 38603-0025
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Sunday:

Bible Study 9:30 AM
Worship 10:30 AM
Worship 5:00 PM

Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 PM

Shepherds:

Barney King
Jeff Roberson
Carrol Street

Romans 11:33

ASHLAND ANNOUNCER

Increasing in the Knowledge of God



Worldly and Inconsistent Living...

David R. Pharr

The feigned righteousness which is called hypocrisy is simply a deliberate or careless lack of consistency between the life one professes and the life he actually lives. *"If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth"* (1John 1:6). What "we say" suggests more than a statement. It is the pretense of religion without the commitment to live consistently with the principles of righteousness. *"He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked"* (1John 2:6).

There are those whose lives are described as having *"a form or godliness, but denying the power thereof"* (2Timothy 3:5). These are people who religion makes little difference in their lives. Except for possibly participating outwardly in some religious activities, such would be hardly less Christian if they professed infidelity.

Certain things ought to be characteristic in the lives of all who are in the church. They should be faithful in worship and active in the work. They should happily affirm their membership in the church of Christ. They should be committed to learning and to upholding the authority of the Scriptures. They should oppose all forms of religious error. They should even be boldly outspoken in their stand for truth and right. These are some of the things that identify their religious profession.

But there are other things which also ought to be evident in all who profess to follow Christ. They should be scrupulously honest in all their business dealings, paying debts in a timely way and being fair and reliable in all transactions. They should be modest in apparel and chaste in behavior. They should abstain from all intoxicants. They should avoid any appearance of immorality. Their speech should be wholesome and helpful, never hateful, vulgar or suggestive

or evil. They should be careful in what they say to, or about, other people. Anger must be controlled. Charity in word and deed should characterize their relations with neighbors and co-workers, as well as with church and family. They should be equal in their good treatment of all people regardless of race, culture, education, or economic standing. Material prosperity should be balanced between personally enjoying it and applying it for the good of others to the glory of God. They should be known for their good deeds. They should understand and gladly accept that there are differences in the ways of a Christian and the ways of the world.

The concern of this article, however, is that sometimes, too often, there are those who want to be identified with the Lord's people, but who by their worldly and inconsistent living are in reality causing the church to be despised. Many encouraging stories have been told of how Christ-like examples opened hearts to the gospel. We are less likely to advertise them, but doubtless there are as many stories, or more, which could illustrate how the influence of ungodliness has turned souls away. When the world despises the church for its stand for the truth, that is to the shame of the world. When the world despises the church because it finds hypocrisy within it, that is to the shame of the church. It is not typical that members of the church are guilty of what civilized people consider gross moral evil. Such was the case with the infamous fornicator in Corinth, who was guilty of such "*as is not so much as named among the Gentiles*" (1Corinthians 5:1). We can be thankful that scandal to that degree is not common, however, it is willingness to accept worldliness in general that is the problem.

There are some questions that need to be asked about our conformity to the world. Are we seeing that same movies, watching the same programs, hearing the same music? Do our youth find their heroes in Hollywood and concert halls? Is our modesty (or lack of it) defined by current fashion? What is left which will cause us to blush (see Jeremiah 6:15). Are our Sundays truly the Lord's day? Where are the parents who won't allow their sons and daughters to attend the prom, and the youth who determine to stay away on their own? Does the notion that "every else is doing it" make it seem appropriate to pad expense accounts? To exaggerate insurance claims? In the affluence of our churches have we excluded the poor and unfortunate? (See James 2:1ff). With our associates so often divorced, are we finding it easier to justify adulterous unions? Is

there really much difference in the way we use our wealth? How is it that adolescents and young adults, who grow up with the church, can enter into immorality with so little pain of conscience? Unfortunately, it has come to the place that the world is rarely shocked when they see professed Christians living the same way they do. In the observation of many, religion is little more than an affiliation. Many no longer expect that church people will behave much differently than the unchurched. It seems that both have the same ambitions, pursuing the same temporal goals, go to the same places, laugh at the same things, and make the same excuses.

Giving ourselves as living sacrifices that we "*be not conformed to this world*" (Romans 12:2). Worldliness begins with wanting to fit in. Sanctification means living apart. We cannot have it both ways (1John 2:15-17; Matthew 6:24). "*Friendship of the world is enmity with God*" (James 4:4).

A story is told of a denominational preacher who justified being unable to answer a scriptural point by saying, "You people are better at arguing the Bible, but we are better at living it." Regardless of the bias in his claim, it does remind us that sound doctrine needs to be accompanied with sound conduct. Paul urged the Philippians to "*conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ*" (Philippians 1:27 NASB). The same emphasis is in Ephesians 4:1-2, "*I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called...*"

Deliberate, or even careless, wrongdoing may cause harm far beyond what we imagine. We may be able to logically explain why "hypocrites in the church" should not keep someone away, but logic rarely keeps a man from seeing what he is sure he sees. A woman asked the preacher, "Isn't there a difference in sin a Christian commits and the sin committed by the unsaved?" "Indeed, there is," he replied, "it's worse!"

Influence is expressed positively as being "*the salt of the earth*" and "*the light of the world*" (Matthew 5:13-16). The figure is repeated in **Philippians 2:15**, with emphasis on being apart from the world. "*That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.*" But the lines between Christian living and worldly living are blurred, the salt loses its savor and the light is dimmed. One who is unwilling to "walk worthy" is worse than worthless to the cause of Christ!