

May, 2004

Pause Ponder Profit

The Wrong Number

by James A. Brown

Ring . . . ring!
"Hello, this is the very, very Reverend I Am, of the Make You Feel Good Church; may I help you?" "Yes sir, you may. I am looking for a church where my family and I can worship God acceptably."
"Congratulations! You have called the right place. Let me tell you what we have to offer."



"At the Make You Feel Good Church we offer a wide variety of activities. Baseball will begin soon and we have the best team in town. Most of the games will be played on our own ball field. Don't worry about uniforms, they will be provided by the church. We also offer aerobics in our gymnasium three days a week and Karate for Christ two days a week. After you put on a few pounds dining in our fellowship hall during our pancake breakfasts, spaghetti dinners and catfish lunches, you will want to swim away those pounds in our pool. Our in-door pool allows for swimming lessons year

round. If you have teenagers, they will enjoy free bus rides to all their school ball games as well as trips to Six Flags and Disney World. The adults will be taking trips to Washington, the Grand Canyon and Las Vegas. We will be entertained several times during the year by the Christian Rappers and Rockers for Christ. They provide plays of drama and comedy as well as musical productions. They really make a person feel good! Other events you will not want to miss include: our annual Valentine dance, Easter egg roll, Halloween trunk or treat, and Christmas bazaar. Mothers of small children also love our Mom's Day Out program. Mom just drops the kids at our day care center and spends the day as she desires. The kids will be well cared for and will have a lot of fun on our playground equipment. You may also enroll your children in our year round kindergarten. Your whole family can also receive counseling at our family life center. We offer counseling on divorce and remarriage, juvenile delinquency, alcohol, and more. We also provide classes on money management, prenatal care, effective parenting, building self-esteem and stress management. If you qualify, you may also live in our low-rent housing complex. Can we expect to see you soon?"

"No, thank you! I surely have the wrong number. I am looking for the church that Christ built (Matt. 16:18), the one He purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28), the church which is His body and of which He is the Savior (Eph. 5:23). You see, I am looking for the church that offers spiritual benefits with eternal reward not a church that offers earthly benefits with only earthly rewards." Click! Which church are you looking for?

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Law

by Stan Cox

The concept of obedience to law is rather controversial among the religious today. Because of the Holy Spirit's teaching regarding the Law of Moses, as contrasted with salvation by Grace through Faith, some equate the idea of obedience to God's law with the concept of meriting salvation. This is not so.

Under the Old Covenant, or Old Law, salvation was not available. Salvation can not come through Law, it must come through Grace. As Paul stated in Romans 3:20, *"Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin."* As *"all have sinned"* (vs. 23), and as redemption can not come through law, it was necessary that Christ give himself as a ransom for all. This is grace. This is why Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:8-9, *"For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast."*

It must be understood that the call to obey Christ's law is not the equivalent of an attempt to be justified by the *"deeds of the law."* When we say there are things we must do to be saved, we do not believe that we have the right to *"boast"* before God because we have completed an act of obedience. Nor do we intend to in any way deny the truth that salvation is the gift of God to man. But, claims are made that such is so.

An illustration serves to establish the point. A man, before dying, establishes in his will certain prerequisites which must be met before the gift of his assets will be given. It may be that a loved one must reach a certain age, or do some

fulfill the qualification, they are given the proffered gift. They did not earn the gift, but they would not have received it, if they had not obeyed.

So it is with God. He has granted the gift of life to all men through His Son's sacrifice. *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life"* (John 3:16). But, not all men fulfill the requirements which God has established before the gift of salvation is given to each individually. *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned"* (Mark 16:16).

The fact that **The Law** has been nailed to the cross by Christ does not mean that we today do not have laws that God demands we obey. In fact, the apostle wrote about fulfilling *"the law of Christ"* (cf. Galatians 6:2). The difference is that those who follow the requirements and limitations set forth by Jesus Christ are then eligible to access the grace of God extended through the Messiah.

Those libertines today who believe that we are free to do as we wish would do well to heed the warning of the apostle Paul. *"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?"* (Romans 6:1-2). When the question is asked, what is sin? — the answer, given by the apostle John, is simple, *"sin is the transgression of the law"* (1 John 3:4, KJV). To put the principles established in these two verses together, we note: **We are no longer to continue in sin, (in transgressing the law!)** Those who say we are free from the bondage of the law or obedience clearly misunderstand the scripture!

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Some people do not like to be limited. They desire to do what they want, when they want, how they want. In areas of morality we call these people libertines. Fornication, Homosexuality and Adultery are characteristic of these people. They stand condemned before God. Paul said that those who practice such things, *"will not inherit the kingdom of God"* (Galatians 5:21).

It should be understood that this desire to do what you want, when you want, and how you want is commonplace among the professed "pious" as well. The use of an instrument in music is an example of this. There is no authority for the use of a mechanical instrument of music in New Testament worship. Such is practiced because men want it, not because God authorized it. It is lawlessness, or sin.

Some religious groups create holidays, such as Christmas, because they want to worship God in this way. God did not authorize it. It came into existence because men wanted to do it, and do it when and how they wanted, rather than obeying God. Note what God says about such men:

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name? And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'" (Matthew 7:21-23).

Law is necessary, and we must obey it in order to have the hope of everlasting life!

Via, www.watchmanmag.com

"If Your Body Prospered As Your Soul..."

by Jim R. Everett

"If your body prospered proportionate to the prosperity of your soul, what kind of a body would you have?"

John wrote to Gaius, "The elder unto the well-beloved Gaius, whom I love in the truth. Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth. For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth," (3 John 1-4).

Evidently, from the way John writes, he had some concern for the health of Gaius. And, he had the greatest confidence that if his body should prosper as his soul, then Gaius would be a very healthy man. That confidence was based, not only on his personal knowledge of Gaius, but, also, on the report of the brethren who bore witness of Gaius's walking in truth. And, in this short epistle, there is a strong implication, in contrast to Gaius, that Diotrophes did not love truth and was destitute in spirit. Gaius loved truth and walked in truth – Diotrophes loved the preeminence among men more than he loved truth.

I believe that contrast will continue to exist until the end of time. I know people who are frail of body but whose spirit is healthy and strong. I also know men who are proud, self willed, who love to be praised by men, and, when one views their souls in comparison to the word, one sees that their souls are malnourished and diseased. I would not pray that such men would prosper in body as thy prosper in soul, lest they should immediately pass from this life. It does not necessarily follow that if the body is weak, the

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soul prospers, nor does the body being strong indicate a weak soul. However, I fear that if John should write to us, he would say: "Beloved, I wish above all things that thy soul might prosper and be in health even as they body and pocket book prospereth."

Material prosperity is determined by family inheritance, the profession we choose and our wisdom in the use of money we obtain. A healthy body sometimes comes to one by virtue of ancestral genetics or by vigorous exercise and healthy eating. But the prosperity of one's soul is dependent upon whether or not he loves truth and walks in truth. If your body prospered as your soul, what kind of body would you have?

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Editor's note:

I first wrote this, little piece of satire, as a newspaper article for The Liberty Gazette, when I lived in Liberty Texas, in February 1994. Since that time, the "Make You Feel Good Churches" continue to flourish because of their appeal to "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life" (1 Jn. 2:16). Yes, these churches use the animal appetites of man to enslave him.

Pray that God will continue His longsuffering toward man and that man will come to a knowledge of the truth and repent.



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