

Safford Church of Christ

3888 S Hwy 191, Safford, AZ 85546

11 January 2015

Topics

A.M. Bible Class:

Objects of our worship (Psalm 86)

A.M. Lesson:

Who is God (Genesis 1:1 f)

P.M. Lesson:

God provides (2 Corinthians 8:1-15)

Wednesday:

Romans 6:5 f

Pulpit Evangelist

Ken Knowlton: 428-3494

Elders

Greg Briggs: 428-8756

John Cunningham: 428-0895

Sunday Bible Class	10:00 A.M.
Sunday Morning Worship	11:00 A.M.
Sunday Evening Worship	6:30 P.M.
Wednesday Evening Class	6:30 P.M.
Thursday Ladies Bible Class	10:00 A.M.

I was glad when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of the LORD!" Psalm 122:2

The Challenges of Growing Up in the Church

November 12, 2014 by Jack Wilkie,
<http://focuspressblog.com>

We're all well aware that the church is falling short in the area of evangelism, that we don't keep many of our young people faithful, and that the church has stagnated in areas. However, I think those are merely the external symptoms of a larger problem. I believe there's a fundamental area in which we fail those who grow up in the church.

It starts with our understanding of sin. Most of us who were brought up in the church can tell similar tales of our conversion. We were good kids who attended Bible class and worship with our families, stayed out of trouble, and knew the plan of salvation well before we were baptized. We all had that one day when we decided we were ready, so we were baptized. After that we walked in newness of life... a newness of life that happened to look almost identical to our old lifestyle. We were still the same good, obedient kids who attended Bible class and worship and knew some Scriptures, we had just added the assurance of salvation through baptism. Realistically, what many

of us experienced as we became Christians after growing up in the church was more akin to buying a life insurance policy. Life's going great, we're not doing anything terribly wrong, and now if we die we're good to go. Back to business as usual.

Because we spent such a brief amount of time feeling lost and because we changed so little in our lives, we can struggle with truly understanding the depth of what God did for us in sending Jesus to go to the cross. The person who was lost in a long-term lifestyle of sin but finally gave it all up and turned to Christ has no problem understanding the wickedness of sin, but those of us whose lives changed very little upon our conversion can have a tendency to struggle with that concept. This isn't a self-contained problem, though. When we don't have a proper grasp of our sins, it naturally leads to difficulties in other areas of our Christian lives.

Because of that, we feel justified by our own goodness. We all have a tendency to focus on our own ability to keep laws. When our first understanding of discipleship after baptism is "just keep doing what I've been doing, except maybe read my Bible and pray a little more," it's easy to see why we get caught up in our own goodness. We know that the Bible is clear that we are not saved by our own righteousness (Romans 3:10-20) but if our Christian walk starts with an emphasis on simply continuing to be the same "good" people we've always been, we're not going to understand that.

When we feel justified by our own goodness, we completely cut out the idea of grace. The concept of God's grace continually blotting out our sins is one that is seldom taught in the church, sadly. Because many have distorted what grace means and cheapened it to either include everyone who acknowledges God even in passing or to limit it only to those on whom God has forced it, we tend to shy away from it. And, our assurance of our own goodness cuts even further into the need for grace. We're saved because we have the right doctrines of salvation, we observe the proper practices of worship, we've properly sorted out what men and women are to do in the church, and we don't sin like those people outside the church or even that woman across the pew. Because we've reduced our salvation to such a list, we don't need grace anymore. So we don't talk about it, and people who grew up in the church feel an immense sense of pressure to be good enough, to meet a standard God Himself said was impossible (Romans 3:23). Some even leave the church because they tire of trying to please God, knowing they'll never be able to achieve perfection. What may be worse – some stay in the church with the implication that they have.

Another problem that arises from an improper understanding of the weight of our sins is that we won't have a proper zeal for the lost. It's always been interesting to me that, generally speaking, those who have been around the church their entire lives often have far less passion for reaching the lost than those who are converted as adults. I've seen plenty of people come out of a life filled with years of sin and immediately start talking about how they intend to tell others about Jesus. They know that there's no feeling like being saved from a past life of sin, and they want others to feel that as well. They simply can't contain the excitement, and it's the same sense of joy shared with those who were saved all throughout the book of Acts. When we don't understand the depth of our sins, we have a lesser appreciation for that feeling of being saved from them and so we have a harder time empathizing with the lost. Again, we simply go from being who we were the day before to being the same person with a baptism in his back pocket. Where's the urgency in that?

So, what do we do to fix this problem? Obviously the answer isn't to stop teaching young children

about God or stop bringing them to class and worship. Instead, we need to teach what it really means to be lost. We can't feel the depth of God's love and grace when all we know about being lost is that short time period between when we felt we started being accountable and when we got baptized. I'm sure we can all recall a time when we were terrified by the notion that we were going to hell if we didn't change, but we can't forget that we weren't destined for hell simply because we hadn't been baptized yet, we were destined for hell because our sins had separated us from God. That's a big difference. This realization should renew our appreciation for Him, fill us with a desire to grow in our relationship with Him, and give us that passion for those who are still in that lost state.

Within our congregations, that means getting uncomfortable. We can't stay inside the box of preaching how great we are on baptism, instrumental music, and women's roles or how evil and wicked someone else's sins are. Even preaching generically against sin doesn't cut it. What we need is to have preachers speaking the truth on all sins and unrighteousness and saying, "Thou art the man!" (2 Samuel 12:7), "such were some of you" (1 Corinthians 6:11) and "work out your salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12). Once we start to understand what we're being saved from daily (not what we were saved from one day years ago), it makes us a whole lot more appreciative of His grace when we fall. It's time young people start growing up in churches that teach baptism as a life sentence for the old man of sin rather than life insurance for the same person they've always been.

News

Dan and Rose Keele request prayers for **Tina Zonnie**, Rose's sister. She has stage 3 cancer. Many here know Terry Oliver and Deanna (Oliver) Short. Their mother, Pat Oliver, is currently hospitalized with a nasty case of pneumonia. Fellowship meal next Sunday, January 18.

Prayer List:

*Joy Gibson, Tatyana Knowlton,
Ken Cocke, Janet Radar, H.L.
Boling, Mike and Sandy Cavasos,
Nic and Ani Self.*

