

THE BELLEVILLE MESSENGER

July 23

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No Sign of Health

A medical student was on his first day of work in the hospital in which he had occasion to make examination of the patients. It was his assignment to examine certain patients and write up a report on any significant symptoms which could aid in diagnosis. He hurried down the hall and into the room of what he thought was the correct patient. Nervously (for this was his first patient examination) he made his observations and wrote the following report:

"The patient did not complain of any pain or discomfort of any kind. There was no unnatural breathing and no irregularity of pulse. When pressed in various vital spots, the patient did not complain of soreness or tenderness. There was no indication that the patient had any fever."

The student was optimistic. There were no signs of any of the symptoms which would indicate that his patient had any of the diseases which the student expected. He concluded that the patient must be in excellent health. When he made his report to his supervisor, the supervisor was astonished. After some further investigation the supervisor told him, "While all that you have said about the patient is correct as far as it goes, your conclusion is grossly in error. You correctly observed that your subject lacked a number of conditions which you would have found pathological, but you failed to note that the subject you examined was dead. You went to the wrong room. All the facts you reported were true of a lifeless corpse in the morgue."

Sound, or Dead?

The above reported incident is entirely imaginary. If any such medical student ever existed, we have not heard of it. We cannot believe that any student ever so lacked in intelligence that he could examine a person and not detect the difference between one in excellent health and one that was dead. Yet in many spiritual matters, too many of us use the "reasoning" of this imaginary medical student. In judging the soundness and healthy condition of a church, we all too often evaluate it upon the basis of what it is not doing. In making an evaluation of a man, we too often consider him spiritually healthy if he shows none of the alarming symptoms for which we are accustomed to look. In fact he may be spiritually dead.

In the tenth chapter of Mark, we read of Jesus' encounter with a man who felt himself to be in pretty good spiritual health. When Jesus cited a number of the commandments of the law, he could reply, "*Master, all these have I observed from my youth.*" This man, then, did not commit adultery, did not kill, did not steal, did not bear false witness, did not defraud, and did not dishonor his father and mother. On the other hand, what did he DO? Apparently he did nothing by which he could lay up treasures in heaven.

In the Revelation, chapters two and three, there are letters written from the Lord to seven churches in Asia. It is astonishing how many times these churches are praised for not doing certain things, but were also censured for not doing things which it was their duty to do. The church at Ephesus (chap. 2) could not bear them "which are evil" (vs. 2) nor did they consent to the deeds of the Nicolaitans (vs. 6), but they were subject to the Lord's warning for not remaining true to their "first love." The church at Pergamos had not given up the name of Christ nor denied his faith (2:13), but neither had they purged themselves of those who held the doctrine of Balaam or those who had the "doctrine of the Nicolaitans."

In some quarters, today, the question of a man's soundness is settled to everyone's satisfaction on the ground that he does not teach or urge any outstanding false doctrines.

As a preacher he is considered acceptable provided he has not been known to promote any of the trends which have become divisive

issues in the church. It may be that he has not been awake enough or alive enough to teach the truth on the matters, either. Such a preacher may not be sound; he may only be dead.

Churches, too often, are given the reputation for being in sound spiritual health on the basis of the symptoms which they do not have. It is not enough to say that they have not digressed to the point of adding instrumental music to the worship. A further question needs to be raised, do they wholeheartedly engage in worship in *"psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your (their) heart to the Lord"* (Ephesians 5:19). It is not enough to know that a church does not participate in such digressions as the missionary society arrangement or the benevolent society arrangement, or even that it does not subject itself to another church in a "sponsoring church" arrangement. In contrast to these unscriptural devices of men, is this church actually doing the work which God wants his churches to do? If not, its lack of "fever, pain, vomiting, convulsions, etc." may not be a sign of good health. That church may be dead.

✍️ Bob Crawley



Doing

The preceding article was written by my dear friend, the late Bob Crawley. As Bob noted in this article, many judge their faithfulness or soundness by what they are NOT doing. Jesus said, *"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven"* (Matthew 7:21). James said, *"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves"* (James 1:22).

Yes, there are many things we must not do if we would please the Lord, but let us never lose sight of the fact that we must be doing his will if we are to be acceptable in His sight. We often think of a wicked person as being one that engages in immoral and sinful behavior. However, Jesus called one a wicked and slothful servant for doing nothing (Matthew 25:26).

Sometimes, when teaching one the importance of obeying the

Lord's will the reply is given, "I'm not doing anything wrong." The question we should be asking is, "What are you DOING?"

✍️ James Hahn



A Preacher's Work

A lot of a preacher's work is never seen by anyone but God. This includes the preacher himself. This can be frustrating at times, because everyone needs to see that their efforts have some value. Voicing these frustrations to an older preacher once, I was given this advice: if you want to see results, go cut your yard. I've valued that advice more and more over the years. It is by faith that a preacher finishes the Lord's day hoping his efforts will have some – if only a little – lasting value; but it is by sight that he can look with satisfaction at a well-cut and trimmed lawn.

✍️ Mark McCrary



"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry" (2 Timothy 4:2-5)

Belleville church of Christ

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www.bellevillechurch.net

Schedule of Services

Sunday Bible Study 9:30 a.m.
Sunday Morning Worship 10:30 a.m.
Sunday Evening Worship 5:00 p.m.
Wednesday Bible Study 7:00 p.m.

Evangelist

James Hahn (317) 745-1507