

"THE LOST GIFT"

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I never cease to be amazed at the very clear teachings in the Bible, which were completely unknown to me until I started reading and studying the Bible for myself. Having been an amateur Genealogist for some twenty years, I quickly discovered that from Genesis to Revelation the Bible is full of genealogical teachings including racial descriptions, racial characteristics, as well as complete family trees. I began to wonder if God deemed it so important that he caused several books of the Bible to be filled with practically nothing but "who married whom," and "who was related to whom," why wasn't it important enough to be taught in our churches along with tithing, attending church, and supporting foreign missionaries? There is certainly much more in the Bible pertaining to genealogies than all of the above subjects put together! Why is this teaching, "that blood lines matter" either completely overlooked by most churches today, or taught that they are unimportant? THE ENTIRE BIBLE WAS WRITTEN BY ISRAEL, FOR ISRAEL, AND ABOUT ISRAEL – ONE RACE, AND ONE FAMILY OF GOD! Would God waste his time and effort on several books of the Bible, which deal almost entirely with race if it is not important to Him? I think not.

But this is not the only teaching which I found to be completely overlooked. Throughout the entire New Testament, Jesus Christ taught "You are either for me, or against me." This clear teaching, "THAT THERE IS NO NEUTRALITY" concerning our Lord, is also lost. This is strange indeed, since this tells Christians who our enemies are! But the pulpits across the land are silent on this teaching. Why? We sing "Onward Christian Soldiers" Sunday after Sunday; but no one tells us who the enemy is! NO WONDER WE ARE LOSING! And, we are certainly LOSING. As certain as rain falls down and not up, and the sun rises in the east and sets in the west . . . we are losing. This means simply that whatever your church, including your church leadership, has been doing these past three to four decades, has been either wrong or not enough! We are losing the battle for our homes, our schools, our government, and our children. A killer and rapist of our women is set free by a court and by a defense lawyer which we ourselves pay for, because his confession is not allowed as evidence; or that someone failed to dot an I or cross a T in the indictment. Our communities used to be protected by our Doctors who could suspect a carrier of a disease, test him, and quarantine him if necessary. We have lost this protection to the AIDS LOBBY! I saw on the news this evening where a Dr. Lorraine Day, in California has quit because she has no protection from this terrible disease, because she cannot test a patient for this disease without his permission. This is the only GOVERNMENT PROTECTED VENEREAL DISEASE IN THE WORLD. WHY? Children can now sue their parents. Parents can sue our governments. (the people) We have alimony, palimony, and less and less matrimony. Yes, we are LOSING! As surely as the American Buffalo disappeared from the range, we are losing!

Another teaching I found in the Book of James, (1:27) which is rarely mentioned is that *"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep him self (ourselves) unspotted from the world."*

When I began looking in our church budget for moneys for "Widows and Orphans," and found none, I started asking questions. In my quest for an answer to these, and other questions, I soon came to be looked upon as a "rabble rouser."

All of this is to simply get you to thinking that you may be missing something by not asking God to help you "rightly divide the word of truth," and to get you to begin reading and studying the Bible "for yourself." It is

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also to prepare you for another lost teaching in the Bible which is the subject of this chapter . . . the gift of exhortation! We found this "lost" teaching in **Romans 12:4-8**,

"For as we have many members in one body, all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith: Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teaching; Or he that EXHORTETH, or EXHORTATION. He that giveth let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness."

We see here, then, in the Book of Romans we have found the lost gift, and scripture says that it takes all of these "gifts," or "members," . . . to make "one body of Christ." If you believe this to be so, and it is certainly quoted correctly, and can truly say as I can . . . that in all of my years in the church, I have never been taught the gift of exhortation; then it must come as a shock to learn that our local "body of Christ," must be incomplete. ONE OF ITS MEMBERS IS MISSING! Perhaps now we can see why we are losing! The Devil is running loose with two good legs. Since the gift of exhortation has been lost to us, and we have not seen it practiced in our "local church," (our body of believers) then it behooves us to find out more about its meaning and application. For this we will go to Webster's New World Dictionary – Second College Edition:

EXHORT: "to urge, to urge earnestly by advice, warning, etc. (to do what is proper, or required); admonish strongly, Syn. Urg. See Hortatory –

HORTATORY: "to incite, encourage, to urge.

- 1) serving to encourage, or urge to good deeds.
- 2) Exhorting; giving advice-

Folks, I can tell you sincerely that I am so happy that the Lord led me to this teaching; because otherwise I would probably have come to believe that perhaps I really was a "rabble rouser" rather than a sincere fundamentalist Christian exercising one of God's gifts which is just as important, according to the scripture quoted above, as "MINISTERING," "TEACHING," or "PROPHESYING." Hopefully, through this "ministry," I can "incite" you to a more diligent study of God's word, which, of course, will lead you to greater works for our Lord! Remember, Jesus' brother James said that, "FAITH WITHOUT WORKS IS DEAD." Perhaps, this qualifies as another "lost teaching."

It is beneficial at this point of the study to go to God's word and review several of the many scriptures which are germane to this teaching. The following should give us a proper understanding of this "lost gift."

I. EXHORTATION IS NECESSARY:

II Corinthians, 9:5, *"Therefore, I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren.*

II. EXHORTATION IS AS IMPORTANT AS DOCTRINE:

I Timothy 4:13, *"Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine."*

4:15, *"Meditate upon these things, give thyself wholly to them: that thy profiting may appear to all . . . "*

III. HOW OFTEN IS EXHORTATION NEEDED?

Hebrew 3:13, *"But exhort one another daily, while it is called today, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."*

IV. WAS EXHORTATION PRACTICED BY FIRST CENTURY CHRISTIANS?

Acts 20:2, *"And when he (Paul) had gone over those parts (Macedonia) and had given them much exhortation, he came into Greece."*

V. EXHORTERS ARE BOLD FOR GOD:

Acts 13:15, *"and after reading the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue sent unto them (the Apostle Paul and his party who were sitting in the audience) saying "Ye men and brethren, if ye have any word of exhortation for the people, say on."*

The next verse states that Paul stood up, waved his hand in a salute to the people, and preceded to "urge," "excite," "Admonish," "correct," and "lift up" the members through the 41st verse of this chapter. The 46th verse says that "Paul and Barnabas waxed bold."

Folks, please read these verses from **Acts 13:15 to the 41st**, and you will see what exhortation is all about and why it is absolutely necessary in the local church body. You will see that this particular exhortation was not "lifting-up." Paul was exhorting them on a subject which they hated . . . Jesus Christ. His remarks were not "part of the program," so to speak. More than anything else, this is what our churches need today! We have departed from many of the teachings of the Bible. We are even heretical in some of these teachings. We have followed the way of the world, and have taken everything out of our preaching and teaching which would offend some believers, and non-believers as well. Our worship service has evolved into one of pure comfort and entertainment with plays, pageants, quartets, solos, bands, "power teams," "showmen," and the like. Our music has copied the world's musical system exactly. We have symphonic orchestras, rock bands . . . complete with "Christian" music charts, award ceremonies, etc. There is simply no room for "Exhortation" in these programs, and little time for Christ. I often wonder what would happen if someone got up in the middle of one of these "programs" on a Sunday morning, and "Exhorted" the people to quit putting their tithes and offerings into the preprinted envelopes with their names and amount of offering on the outside; to quit writing checks, etc. and start "giving their alms in secret," so that the "Lord will bless them openly," as the scriptures demand? Or exhort them to "beware of Jewish fables," which the Bible certainly admonishes us to do. The Bible admonishes us to be subjected to Exhortation daily so that we will not be "deceived by sin."

In politics there is a joke which is also a truism, that states, "the thing which takes precedence over everything else on the Potomac is longevity in office." Having been active in politics for some thirty years, I can tell you that this is absolutely true! Also, having made a living for some ten years doing organizational work, I can tell you with equal certainty that this same principle holds true for organizations. When the president (or chairman) raps the gavel, calling the meeting to order, the longevity, or well being of the organization, ("for the good of the order") takes precedence over everything else.

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The Southern Baptist take pride in their "fundamentalism," their church "autonomy," and well they should; because for the first several hundred years of Christianity there was neither a church building or a church organization outside of the "local church." This is true autonomy. However, today the local "autonomous churches" which belong to the Southern Baptist Convention (S.B.C.) are not as "autonomous" as they would have us believe. You see, the "Convention" is more than a loose confederation of "local churches." It is a full-fledged, highly organized Association of "churches" with all the "trappings," and controls, of any organization which are in place to assure the "longevity" of the organization. Only one of these controls will be considered here which should suffice to make the point that these church organizations are in effect, "church unions" with all of the attendant controls.

The Southern Baptist Convention, in addition to numerous other controls (programs), exercises one control over the local pastors which is little known to the membership of the local church. When a local church which is affiliated with the S.B.C., hires an S.B.C. pastor; (and only an S.B.C. pastor can be hired) in addition to his salary, the local church makes the contribution necessary to the "Pastor's Annuity Fund" located in the national offices of the S.B.C. in Nashville, Tennessee. This is for the pastor's retirement. Of course, it is invested like all such funds, and the Pastor-contributor gets a monthly check in his old age, as do union members, Exxon employees, etc.

There is a difference, however, and it is a major one! At Exxon, for example, if a person leaves the company prior to retirement, he receives the amount of his own contribution to date; but loses the portion contributed by the company . . . Not so with the S.B.C. If an S.B.C. pastor decided to become independent, or a Methodist, etc., and leaves the "convention," HE LOSES ALL OF HIS RETIREMENT BENEFITS-EVEN THOSE HE HAS EARNED. Certainly you can see the control this exercises over the "local," "autonomous," pastor of an S.B.C. church. Whereas, it is perhaps true to say that "the local pastor is free to make his own decisions," as we have shown, these "free" choices are certainly influenced by economics and both Exxon and the S.B.C. know this when they adopt such less rigid restrictions! Therefore, they are a consideration of practically every decision the local pastor makes, whether he realizes it or not!

No, we have not forgotten the subject of this chapter. We are simply practicing the thesis of this article. It is necessary that you understand the objectives and controls of these "church" organizations in order that you might be able to see how they tend to stifle exhortation. An organization does not want controversy! It is not "for the good of the order," so it is discouraged and stifled. My experience as a parliamentarian for a national organization for many years has taught me this truth. AN ORGANIZATION (OR CONVENTION) DOES NOT WANT CONTROERSY. It does not want sincere, truthful, REBUKE! It upsets the agenda, and is not for "THE GOOD OF THE ORDER." So they say!

I once formed a conservative, local political organization designed to elect non-partisan conservative candidates to local offices such as major, city council, the school board, etc. I selected ten close friends and business associates who "thought just like me." There could be no more than one hundred members, and each new member was voted in by a two-thirds majority of the entire membership in open session. Within ten years the organization had drifted to the point where it elected a bank president to the membership who not only was a political Liberal; but was proved to be a rather large contributor to the Liberal School Board faction! Of course, this was over my objections and the passionate pleas of other 'old timers;" but the younger more "modern" members of the organization prevailed. Shortly thereafter, I resigned from the organization which I had founded and served as it's first president; because it had completely departed from the original mission which

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we had so carefully concocted and nurtured. Even though its mission was now completely different from the one which gave it birth, the organization prevailed and is still going strong a quarter of a century later.

Now let us bring these experiences into play in a "convention" of my religious affiliation at the time. Incidentally, it was the last one I ever attended! The "convention's" organizational meeting was held in my hometown, and I was a delegate from a small church which I was attending at the time. The pastor invited me, so we went together. I had not read the "organizational newspaper" for some time, and therefore, was totally unaware of any "burning issue" within the "convention." However, it did not take me long to discover what they were! There were two that were by far, more controversial, thus more interesting to the members. One, was regarding a textbook which was both written, and adopted by a professor who was also the head of the Department of Religion at one of our large denominational colleges. Part of the textbook's teaching was repugnant to many of our members and they wanted the professor fired.

Of equal importance to our members in attendance was a controversy currently drawing some national attention. It seems that one of the convention's outstanding local pastors had apparently made the mistake of quoting the Bible on a subject which is verboten regardless of whether it touches religion, politics, economics, or whatever. The verse, or teaching, which the preacher referred to was John 14:6, in which Jesus Christ, our leader, said, "I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE: NO MAN COMETH UNTO THE FATHER, BUT BY ME." Now this would have been fine except that the preacher got a little zealous in delivering this great teaching, and explained to his flock that this included the Jews. In essence he stated that he was sorry that the Jews' prayers were not heard by Jehovah-God, because they did not go through his Son, Jesus Christ! Now folks, isn't this exactly what the above quoted scripture states? Is there any difficulty in understanding what is meant when Jesus said, "NO MAN COMETH UNTO THE FATHER, (GOD) BUT BY ME.(JESUS) These are the words of Jesus Christ, the FOUNDER OF CHRISTIANITY. You would also think that a preacher of the Gospel could speak them with impunity. You would also think that if the preacher quoted the scripture correctly, which he certainly did, that if any controversy arose from his having done so, he would certainly have the support and backing of fellow believers, especially from his own denomination, wouldn't you? Also, one would wonder if this teaching, "IF YOU DON'T HAVE THE SON, YOU DO NOT HAVE THE FATHER," was 100% scriptural, why then, was it so controversial? The answer lies in the fact that the Jews are a powerful political force in our country, and control a large segment of the media in which "controversies" can be enlarged and promulgated. This is the sole reason why this New Testament teaching became "controversial." It went against the belief of this powerful group which does not accept Jesus Christ as Lord, and as our Saviour said himself, "YOU ARE EITHER FOR ME OR AGAINST ME." We all know that if the preacher had been marching on City Hall for increased rights of criminals, or supporting homosexuals, or for the proposition that "a little toddy is good for the body," he would have received the adulation of the media. But this preacher was only doing his job and preaching "all of the Bible," and for so doing, he was vilified by the press, and a schism developed within the church organization. The results of this controversy resulted in a vote on a resolution, which, in effect denied the convention's support to this "embattled" preacher who had become stuck in the mire of media disapproval, and whose only sin was quoting the Bible and applying it correctly!

As for the professor who was filling our children's minds with faulty information at our own expense, it was announced from the podium that "the problem had been solved the way problems are always solved within the organization." The book, they said, was no longer a textbook, and had been placed on the "reading list" for the course instead! Well, this did not solve anything as far as I was concerned. The professor was still occupying his same position with the school, and the book in question, was still there. After learning of this development,

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I made my way to the room where the Resolutions Committee was meeting and I carefully worded a resolution to this effect:

“That the delegates to this convention go on record reaffirming our traditional belief in Jesus Christ, born of the Virgin Mary, Jesus Christ crucified for our sins, and Jesus Christ resurrected on the third day, sitting on the right hand of the Father in judgment of all the people on the earth; That it is the will of this convention that all employees in both