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“The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest” (Luke 10:2)

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PEACE – WHAT THE CHURCH CAN MEAN TO YOU (PART I)

Editor’s note: This article was adapted from a sermon given by Bro. Kent Dickinson in 1982. Even though these thoughts were given many years ago they are still very relevant to today.

Men from every nation and every race search for ways to find peace. Peace of mind, peace with each other, and peace with the world. These seem to mean security. But as I have found in my life, there is still one ingredient missing. When you have peace of mind, and you are at peace with the world, as I have found it does not give us real security. In man’s search

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for peace, “real peace”, he must include God and he cannot overlook or bypass the church. There is no real lasting peace for man without God. God Himself is the author or the builder of the church. Therefore, man would be foolish to think that his search for a better way of life or peace of mind could be found outside the church.

He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (Mat. 16:15-19)

When God built the church, he intended for the church to mean something to those that would be added to it. The church offers man something for his inner self that he cannot find or experience anywhere else, among any other group, or within any other institution. God built the church so that we could be framed together and grow together so that we can become a body or people in an habitation with God through the Spirit.

For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. (Eph. 2:18-22)

There is nothing in existence that can take the place of the church in rewarding you as it can. In turn for the rewards we receive through the church, God intends for us to do something for the church.

Many people apparently misunderstand the reason and purpose of the church. They expect to gain, but they are not willing to give of their time. If you are one of those who do not get a blessing from being a part of the church and being with people who are a part of the church, then you must not be at peace with yourself and with God.

Some people don't really know the true value of the church and find themselves in the situation of having to compromise with the world. But if we realize what value Christ placed on the church, maybe we can better realize the value it has to us. Not only did he promise to build the church, and he kept that promise, but he also died for it that it might become a reality.

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. (Acts 20:28)

That we may better understand what the church can mean to us, let us first be made aware of what it really is. It is a sad mistake to think of the church, as some people do, as the building in which the church meets. The building is not the church. God does not dwell in houses made with hands, he dwells in our hearts.

Howbeit the most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, (Acts 7:48)

When we speak of the church, we do not mean the "church house." The Bible designates the church as the body of Christ.

And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. (Col. 1:18)

Although the church is made up of a multitude of individual members, yet, the teaching of God is that all of these members are combined into the one body in Christ.

For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. (Rom. 12:4-5)

This truth eliminates once and for all the idea that the church is denominational in its origin, practice, and place. It is the one body, composed of many members, over which the Lord Jesus rules as “the head.”

The Bible teaches us that the church is God’s house.

But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. (1 Tim. 3:15)

God’s house is his family. God wants all of his children to recognize Him as Father, and each other as brethren. His desire is that His children dwell together in peace, harmony, and unity. God’s family is the church. There is no greater family than the family of God. Therefore, there is no greater institution on Earth than the church.

Everyone who wants life to be the best that it can be should strive for the knowledge and understanding of the truth about the church. God has revealed it in His word that all earnest seekers may find it. The search for peace is inadequate and unfinished until one comes to a knowledge of God’s will concerning the church and accepts it.

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The Bible further teaches us that the church is a body of believers in Christ. We learn from a study of the second chapter of Acts that the apostles of Christ spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit to a great audience assembled, who had come to Jerusalem from the various nations of the earth. Those who heard them were convicted of their sins so that they were made to cry out: “Brethren, what shall we do?” To this question, the apostle Peter gave the inspired answer *“Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost”* (Acts 2:38).

We then find in our study that those who received the word were baptized. About three thousand souls were added to them that same day. Later it is said of those who obeyed: *“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers”* (Acts 2:42). Finally, it is pointed out in this same chapter: *“And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved”* (Acts 2:47b).

In the next issue, we will continue the thoughts given by Bro. Kent on this topic. Please consider all that he has said and use it to help you be the best member of Christ’s body that you can be.

KENT DICKINSON
(Deceased)

SACRIFICES

Under the Old Testament, God chose Aaron and his descendants to be the priests. These men were set apart to the Lord and were washed with water, anointed with special oil, and wore special priestly garments. Their responsibility was to serve God and the Israelite people. One of their duties was to offer up to God the required animal sacrifices to include bulls, rams and goats and the grain offerings. The first account we have of sacrifices was when Cain and Abel, the sons of Adam, offered sacrifices to the Lord (Gen. 4:3-4). From the time of

Cain and Abel until Aaron, people had offered animal sacrifices to the Lord. Under the Law given through Moses, many sacrifices were prescribed to be offered to the Lord through the priests. The priests were the class of people who had been set apart to offer sacrifices to God and be a mediatory agent between God and the people.

In some Christian denominations today, there is a certain class of individuals designated as priests. These individuals are often expected to make intercession and requests to God for other Christians who are not priests. But there is no instruction in the New Testament for making an office of a priest or a priestly class of individuals. All of us as Christians are priests.

But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. (1 Pet. 2:9-10)

Each one of us has the privilege of going directly to God the Father through Jesus Christ as our mediator. Each one of us can pray to God. Each one of us can offer spiritual sacrifices to God.

Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. (1 Pet. 2:5)

What is a sacrifice? It is taking something that you have and that you value and giving it away for a good purpose. Parents frequently sacrifice for their children; the parents may go without eating so that their children can have food or the parents may go without something they want or need so that their children can have what they want or need. A sacrifice in the Old Testament would be when an Israelite would take an animal from his livestock, slay it at the tabernacle, and give the animal to the priest, who would then place it on the altar and

burn it up as a sacrifice to the Lord. The purpose for such a sacrifice might be because of some sin committed or to thank the Lord for His blessings or to fulfill a vow. Today, a person might take something he possesses and values, such as a car, and voluntarily give it for the Lord's work; that would be a sacrifice.

The greatest sacrifice given was that of Jesus Christ. God sent His Son into the world. Jesus came to the earth, gave us the words of God, and then willingly gave Himself to be taken and crucified for the sins of the world. That is why He is called the Lamb of God. Just as lambs were offered as sin offerings under the Law given through Moses, Jesus was offered as the sin offering for the New Covenant.

And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour. (Eph. 5:2)

Jesus sacrificed Himself as a sin offering to God for you and me. God is your Lord who watches over you and blesses you. Sacrificing something to God is a way of worshipping Him. Since you are a priest to God, what are some of the spiritual sacrifices that you are to offer to Him? Let us begin in Hebrews 13:15-16:

By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

When you praise and thank God from your heart, that is a sacrifice that you give Him. When you do good and share with others, that is a sacrifice that pleases God.

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. (Mat. 16:24-25)

When you deny yourself the works of the flesh because you

have faith and love for God, you are sacrificing yourself and worshipping God. The apostle Paul exhorts you in Romans 12:1:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.
(Rom. 12:1)

When you give your whole body to please God as a living sacrifice to Him, this is the way you are to worship God.

You are a priest to God who is meant to offer up acceptable spiritual sacrifices to Him. Praise and thank God; do the good that He asks you to do; deny yourself; present your body as a living sacrifice to Him. Worship God with your spiritual sacrifices to Him.

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SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

Remember last month's questions?

1. What did Naboth refuse to sell?
HIS VINEYARD (1 Kings 21:2-3)
2. "Hope deferred" maketh what sick?
THE HEART (Pro. 13:12)
3. Which king had a feast using the gold and silver vessels taken from the temple in Jerusalem?
BELSHAZZAR (Dan. 5:2)
4. While John was baptizing, what did he call the Pharisees and Sadducees? GENERATION OF VIPERS (Mat. 3:7)
5. Which group of people stood and watched Jesus as he ascended into heaven?
MEN OF GALILEE (DISCIPLES) (Acts 1:11)

**YOU CAN GIVE WITHOUT LOVING
BUT YOU CAN'T LOVE WITHOUT GIVING**