Cherished Beliefs

(Al Sandlin)

Charles M. Schulz said, “In all the world, there is nothing more upsetting than the clobbering of a cherished belief.” How well did Jesus know the truth of this matter first hand! It was because of what He taught that the scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, priests, et al became so indignant toward Him. Jesus said in Matthew 10:35-36, “***For I have come to ‘set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law’; and ‘a man’s enemies will be those of his own household***.’”

 Probably one of the greatest hindrances to the progress of the gospel is the fear that we are going to clobber someone’s cherished beliefs. When the sons of Jacob reported to him that Joseph was alive and ruling in Egypt, Jacob was stunned and would not believe them (Genesis 45:26). For all those years, he believed the lie told him by his sons. In Genesis 37:29-35 Joseph’s siblings feigned evidence that Joseph had been killed by a wild beast. That was the conclusion of Jacob. His children never told him differently though they knew the truth. Jacob said, “***Surely I will go down to Sheol in mourning for my son***” (Genesis 37:35). Do you see that Jacob believed a lie which he accepted as truth for many years?

 The Sadducees rejected the signs, wonders and teachings of the apostles in Acts 5:12-17. The very things they rejected were responsible for multitudes of men and women being constantly added to the number of believers in the Lord (Acts 5:14). That which the apostles taught clobbered the beliefs of the Sadducees. An angel was sent to free the apostles (Acts 5:19). This is what the angel told the apostles: ***Go your way, stand and speak to the people in the temple the whole message of this life*** (Acts 5:20). They were not to cease declaring truth just because it was rejected by a band of prominent Jews.

 Innumerable religious people have been told they can worship God any way they wish. Such teaching cannot be proven from Scripture. As a matter of fact, just the opposite is true. Jesus is on record in John 4:23-24, “***But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.***” Truth is not defined by the masses. Jesus said in His prayer to the Father, “***Thy word is truth***” (John 17:17). So, if God is to be worshipped in spirit and truth then we must ascertain such from His word. God did not accept the worship of Cain (Genesis 4:4-5). God rejected the worship of Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10:1-2). God was repulsed by the worship of His people in Malachi chapter 1 because it was not from the heart nor was it according to divine commandment. Jesus very clearly told the Pharisees and scribes in Matthew 15:8-9 that their worship was vain. “***These people draw near to me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.***” Why was their worship vain? Because they taught precepts of men as doctrine– that’s why!

 Where in the New Testament do we find any inkling that music made on a mechanical instrument is acceptable in worship to the God of heaven? IT IS NOT THERE! Because it is not there, people today need to learn from Cain, Nadab, Abihu, and the nation of Israel as cited above! “***For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope***” (Romans 15:4).

 Another truth which clobbers the belief of many religious people is that one church is NOT as good as another. Jesus said in

Matthew 16:18, “***And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it***.” Notice two very important points made by the Savior: (1) The church would be His; (2) He spoke of it in the singular – church. The Holy Spirit who was sent from the Father as the entreaty of Jesus (John 15:26) inspired the apostle Paul to write: “***There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all***” (Ephesians 4:4-6). Earlier in the epistle to the Ephesians the apostle equated the body and the church as the same entity. “***And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all***” (Ephesians 1:22-23).

 There were no denominations in the first century. The epistle to the Ephesians was written about 60 A.D and by its own declaration there was still only one church (Ephesians 4:4). Consequently, any church established after Pentecost, 33 A.D., in any place other than Jerusalem is not the church which Jesus built. The inspired apostle Paul spoke to the elders of the congregation of the Lord’s church at Ephesus in Acts 20:28 saying, “***Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood***.” Jesus alone is its head. He is also head of “***the body, the church***” (Colossians 1:18). Since He is the Savior of the body (Ephesians 5:23), it does make a difference to which church we belong. If a church was originated by any mortal, it is without a savior. What a tragedy that will be when the day of judgment comes. Jesus said in Matthew 15:13, “***Every plant which My heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up***.”

Neighbor, truth can only be established from the Word of God (John 17:17). The words spoken by Jesus will be our judge on that great Day of Judgment. John recorded these words of Jesus: “***The word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day***” (John 12:48). Preachers will be judged for what they have preached. Teachers will be judged for what they have taught. Our lives will be judged according to the words spoken by Jesus – not by a catechism; not by the Hiscox Manual for Baptist Churches; nor the Methodist Discipline; nor the book of Mormon; nor any other book authored by men. It would behoove us to look into the Book of God and study it diligently. Having studied it, obedience is demanded if one’s soul is to be saved. Truth fears no investigation. The problem is that there are those who fear investigating the truth because doing so may expose the error of cherished beliefs. When faced with truth one has two choices: (1) Obey it, or, (2) Disobey it. To ignore truth is equivalent to disobedience and it does not change its validity – it is still truth. Obedience to the truth results in purification. “***Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls…*** ” (1 Peter 1:22).

 We appeal to all of humanity, “***Buy the truth, and do not sell it; get wisdom and instruction and understanding***” (Proverbs 23:23). Pay whatever price you must for the truth – it is a precious commodity. Do not let cherished beliefs come between you and the Savior. “***And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him***” (Hebrews 5:9).

(*Edited by Kevin Heaton*)