

USEFULNESS

at the expense of

FAITHFULNESS

Does God Accept Usefulness in Christian Service at the Expense of Faithfulness?

We reproduce the substance of a private letter, reinforced and expanded in places to make it intelligible to every reader, and only published now at the pressing request of a number who feel the matter to be one of extreme urgency.

We are encouraged to hope that what we have said will not make us appear dogmatic or unyielding. We extract from a letter made by a valued reader upon seeing the original correspondence:

‘It teaches us all a lesson. With great kindness, yet frank and without compromise, it points out from Scripture the clear responsibility of those who believe the marvellous truth of the Mystery; and what happens when they fail to meet it by failure to follow through.

Your clarification of the two dispensations now in operation should be very enlightening to many who do not see the distinction, and ignorantly assume that all believers today are in the same calling’.

Dear Brother in Christ,

How shall I attempt to write where the subject is so intimately connected with the private conscience of a believer? I so strongly believe in individual responsibility, the Berean spirit in life as well as in doctrine, that I have never usurped the prerogative of the Lord, nor dared to anticipate the verdict of the Judgment Seat of Christ.

I am exercised deeply, however, whenever I know that a ministering brother, who believes the Mystery, is being tempted to compromise in a denomination and yet hope to be counted a faithful teacher in line with the committal of 2 Timothy 2:2.

Perhaps if I turn to a portion of Scripture it may point the moral, and we can hope that He Who inspired the record will once again use it in His own good way. So I turn to the book of Exodus, and there learn the message given to Moses:

‘The God of the Hebrews hath met with us: let us go, we pray thee, three days’ journey ... ‘ (Exod. 5:3).

This is repeated in Exodus 7:16 without diminution. Pharaoh for the time relented (Exod. 8:8), but later went back on his word (8:15). At length Pharaoh offered a series of compromises:

Go ye ... IN THE LAND (Exod. 8:25).

Go ye ... NOT VERY FAR AWAY (Exod. 8:28).

Go ... but WHO? (Exod. 10:8).

To all this Moses had but one reply:

‘We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds will we go’ (Exod. 10:9).

Pharaoh lengthens the rope:

Go ye that are men ... not the little ones (Exod. 10:10,11).

i. e. be influenced by the needs of ‘wife and children’ left behind.

'Go ye ... only let your flocks and your herds be stayed' (Exod. 10:24).

i. e. let possession, property, the argument 'we must live' weigh with you.

Look at the attitude of Moses - 'not an hoof' (Exod. 10:26), and think of the attitude of Paul - 'not for an hour' (Gal. 2:5). ALL was necessary 'to serve God' - the flocks and herds, the little ones, the three days journey - and if Moses had faltered over one temptation, words fail to record the possible consequences.

It is impossible I believe for any believer to miss the solemn lesson here. PHARAOH has his successors today; would God Moses had as many too.

The dispensation of the Mystery cannot co-exist with a New Covenant which was made with the house of Israel and the house of Judah with their earthly hope and destiny. This necessarily means that to stand in a pulpit and preach the MYSTERY, and then partake of the Memorial feast of the New Covenant is to straddle the fence, and stultify one's teaching. What such an attitude must do to the conscience of one who thus acts we must leave with the Lord.

The apostle Paul has told us what our attitude should be to the temptation to 'soft-pedal' this or that doctrine or practice.

'We are not as many, which corrupt the word' (2 Cor. 2:17).

The word here translated 'corrupt' means to 'hucksterise', to adulterate wine as a taverner did, and is translated 'mix with water' in Isaiah 1:22.

James tells us that he who hears the Word, but is not a doer 'reasons himself on one side' *paralogizomai* (Jas. 1:6,8,22 literally).

Two arguments have been put forward as a justification for remaining in a denomination. (1) ALL believers today, willy-nilly, are members of the Body of Christ so the minister may as well stay where he is. (2) The other arises out of the failure to see the dispensational place of the Gospel of John.

The words written in Galatians 2:7-9 show that two very distinct ministries could and did run together, and the following items suggest most clearly that John's Gospel has a place now.

In the parable of Matthew 22:1-10 we have the following sequences:

- (a) The original preaching of the earthly Kingdom (1-3).
- (b) The repeated preaching at Pentecost (4-6).
- (c) The consequence A.D. 70 (7).
- (d) Yet after the destruction of Jerusalem, and after Acts 28, the command was given 'Go ye ... into the highways' (9).

John's Gospel, written according to tradition in John's extreme old age, appears to have been penned in the shadow of Paul's later ministry.

John could not have primarily had a Jewish reader in mind, for no Jew needed the words 'Rabbi', 'Rabboni', or 'Messiah' interpreted (John 1:38,41 and 20:16). Neither was it necessary to tell a Jew that the Passover was a 'feast of the Jews' (John 6:4). John's parish was THE WORLD, and his great message was 'life'. No distinct calling is indicated. The vast majority of Christians today are 'John 3:16 believers'. This is blessed indeed, but such belief does not make one a member of the Body of Christ by itself.

It has been suggested that as every believer today must be a member of the church which is the Body of Christ whether he knows it or not, that this justifies a minister who sees the truth of the Mystery continuing his denominational connexion.

We have no access to the Book of God's election, we can only deal with evidence. So Paul 'knew' the election of the Thessalonians by their 'faith' (1 Thess. 1:4,5), and the epistles to Ephesians and Colossians were not only addressed to 'Saints' but to 'Faithful'. Such were sealed, but only 'upon believing' - not otherwise.

I cannot help thinking that many ministerial brethren stop short at Acts 13 because it permits the early church position of 1 Corinthians with the 'ordinances' to be retained. All this sounds very comfortable, but it savours a little of the spirit that prompted the words:

‘Take thy bill, and sit down quickly, and write fifty’ (Luke 16:6),
but it is required in stewards, not that they should be successful, popular, happy, contented etc. etc., but just FAITHFUL (1 Cor. 4:2).

I most sincerely sympathise with all the problems that the perception of the Mystery imposes upon the believer, especially if such is already in a denominational ministry. I know by personal experience the strong pull of the argument ‘don’t hide your light under a bushel’, ‘teach these folk as far as you can’, ‘just soft pedal a bit, and you could fill so and so chapel’. I have had all this and more. But never have I been more thankful for anything than the resolve by grace to make no compromise. Can we imagine *The Berean Expositor* would be alive today or any of its literature published, if I had succumbed and taken over the ministry of a denominational assembly? I pray that you may be guided by the Lord, and that His will for you may be abundantly clear.

Yours, very understandingly, yet very
uncompromisingly by grace,
Signed, Charles H. Welch.

A Berean leaflet.

The title *Berean* is borrowed from Acts 17:11, as we seek to emulate the believers in Berea, who ‘Searched to See’ if the things taught them were ‘So’.

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