

Discount Religion

Most people prefer to purchase their items at a discount. An advertised few cents off the regular price will generally bring out a flood of shoppers who desire to take advantage of the “bargains.”

We do not object to people being conservatively minded and to their trying to stretch the purchasing power of the shrinking dollar. In fact, this is probably wise. Man sets the prices on tangible items. And man can lower, change, or alter the original prices if business or competition makes it expedient, and man can take advantage of any mark-downs available.

However, man did not set the price on the religion of Jesus Christ! Man did not inaugurate the terms of pardon. Consequently, man can not find the religion of Jesus Christ at man’s bargain counter, nor can he mark down that which the Lord instituted. All things must be done “*in the name of the Lord Jesus,*” Col. 3:17. To add to or subtract from that which inspiration has decreed is to be condemned, Revelation 22:18-19.

But many possess a discount religion at best. The “faith only” advocate has marked everything else off the list which God gave for forgiveness. The sprinklers and pourers for baptism have marked immersion off. Denominationalists in general have taken the religion of Christ and removed virtually everything which inspiration demands.

But many of our own brethren throughout the land are no less guilty. In fact, the attitude of some appear to be that of doing just as little as possible while still remaining a “Christian.” Daily Bible study, fervent prayer, sacrificial giving, diligent service, regular attendance at all worship assemblies, personal evangelism, and bubbling zeal is considered fine if one is a preacher or an elder. Otherwise, many try to just skip over these items, while assuming they are “faithful,” without having gone “overboard.”

But this is religion at a discount! “*God is no respecter of persons,*” Acts 10:35. He has not given us a double standard. All will be judged by the **same** standard — the word of God, John 12:48. If the aforementioned items are necessary for some, they are essential for all — and they **are** necessary! Cf. 2 Tim. 2:15; Psalms 1:1-2; 1 Thess. 5:17; James 5:16; 1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 9:6-7; Hebrews 10:25; 2 Tim. 2:2; Titus 2:14.

Hold it! Did you skip reading the references just cited? That’s a part of what I am writing about! Now let us go back and read those scriptures both carefully and soberly. Do they bind this type service on a few of the “leaders,” or do they not bind such on **all** who strive to faithfully serve the Lord?

Let’s quit looking for mark downs in religion and content ourselves with doing the will of the Lord. Remember, if we subscribe to a discount religion, the Lord just may discount us in the day of Judgment!

One other point: Frequently the kind of merchandise that is marked down is shoddy to begin with. Discount religion is always shoddy and will never save. Be Safe, not sorry!
—Bobby Witherington

Things a Blind Man Saw

Saul of Tarsus, armed with authority from the high priest, journeyed to Damascus with the intentions of bringing back Christians “*bound unto Jerusalem*,” Acts 9:1-2. While enroute to his destination, “*suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven*.” “*The men which journeyed with him...*” led him to Damascus, “*and he was three days without sight...*,” Acts 9:7-9. but, though he was “*without sight*,” there are certain things which Saul saw while blind. Some of them are herein listed.

1. Saul saw that he was a sinner. Read I Tim. 1:15. He was not like so many today who seem to believe that sin is that which is committed by the other person.

2. Saul saw that conscience is not a safe guide He previously “*thought*” he “*ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth*,” Acts 26:9, and, though his purpose had been to destroy the religion of Christ, he nevertheless had “*lived in all good conscience before God...*,” Act 23:1. His conscience was not guided by the proper standard of authority before this time. Conscience, unguided by revealed truth (i.e., the Bible) will not lead to heaven!

3. Saul saw that his “father’s religion” was wrong. He was “*of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews..., a Pharisee*,” Phil. 3:5, but he turned from his “*father’s religion*” and embraced the religion of Jesus Christ. Too many are what they are simply because they inherited their religion from their parents, not having studied enough to know what to believe.

4. Saul saw that prayer does not save the alien sinner. Though he prayed (Acts 9:11), his sins were not forgiven prior to his obedience to the Gospel. Many people today seem to believe that they can disregard what God commands and just “*pray through!*” However, Jesus said “*not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven*,” Matt. 7:21.

5. Saul saw that it is not a disgrace to change when one is wrong. The record in Acts 9 shows that Saul changed after having been informed that he was in error. He didn’t just piously say “*I’m satisfied with my religion*.” He changed! Good, honest, God-fearing individuals will change today when they learn that they are religiously wrong. They will either change, or else they will cease being intellectually “*honest*” or “*sincere*.”

6. Saul saw that baptism washes away sins. Cf. Acts 22:16. He had not been taught the unscriptural doctrine that baptism is simply “*an outward sign of an inward grace*,” or that one should be baptized because “*God for Christ’s sake*” has already pardoned his sins. To the contrary, he was told to “*be baptized and wash away thy sins...*”

Kind reader, have you seen what Saul saw while blind? Have you obeyed what Saul obeyed? If you want to go to heaven you must in the same way obey the same Gospel that Saul obeyed after he “*saw*” what God required of Him. Think on these things! ***

— B. Witherington

Filling the Ranks

By Joe Price

On Wednesday (Mar. 7), General Robert B. Neller, the United States Marine Corps Commandant, told the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense that recruitment for the Marine Corps is “*hard work*” because less than 30 percent of the young men and women of our

nation are qualified just to join the military, either because of physical, mental, or moral issues” (Marine Corps Commandant: ‘Less than 30% of Young Men and Women’ Qualified to Join Military, Susan Jones, *cnsnews.com*). A capable fighting force requires soldiers who are competent to meet the requirements of being a soldier and fit to go to war.

So it is in the Lord’s army. Old Testament men and women of faith “*quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens*” (Heb. 11:34). Like them, we must be spiritually fit to be courageous in battle against sin (I Tim. 4:7-11). We have been enlisted to wage war against a wicked enemy, but one who is defeated by the power of Christ (Eph. 6:13).

Our struggle against evil requires that we be spiritually fit. We must “*put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil*” (Eph.,. 6:11). To do so require living by faith and trusting in the power of the Lord, not devising our own battle plans against the devil (Eph. 6:10; I Pet. 5:8).

Our struggle against evil requires that we not be hindered by the business of this life (2 Tim. 2:4). We are too easily sidetracked by temporal things (Matt. 6:31-34). We must first seek the rule and reign of God in our lives, not the things that pass away with time and use (Matt. 6:19-21).

Fighting the devil requires our undivided attention. It requires spiritual growth (I Pet. 2:1-2; 2 Pet. 3:18). It requires faith to look beyond the moment into eternity.

Sentence Sermons

When truth and righteousness are involved, fence straddlers are worthless.

Our best preparation for tomorrow is the proper use of today.

Faithful cross bearing ends up in crown wearing.