

TRIUMPH

“Do you know that in a race all the runners compete, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it” (1 Cor. 9:24)

“My soul desired the first ripe fruit”

Gabriel Rodriguez

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God, as well as Jesus, compared their followers to trees/vines who bore precious fruit (Ps. 1:3; Matt. 12:33-35; Mrk 11:12-14). This imagery served to instruct God's expectations of His followers, one of bearing fruit (i.e., righteous conduct) for Him (cf. Jn. 15:1-8). We read in the book of Micah, chapter 7, verse 1: “*Woe is me! for I am as when they have gathered the summer fruits, as the grape gleanings of the vintage: there is no cluster to eat: my soul desired the firstripe fruit.*” In this context, God desired to delight in the righteousness of Israel, but what He found was wickedness: “*The good man is perished out of the earth: and there is none upright among men: they all lie in wait for blood; they hunt every man his broth with a net. That they may do evil with both hands earnestly....*” (Micah 7: 2-3).

God's expectations for his people is great. He commands and demands moral excellence (2 Pet. 2:9). He desires that His people be the first ripe fruits of all men, meaning they must be of impeccable grade and quality of mind and action. This makes sense because if we identify ourselves with God who is holy, then shouldn't those who follow Him be holy?

(1 Pet. 1:14-15). But too often we disappoint our Maker because we're simply too lazy or disinterested in conforming ourselves to the will of God. And when we choose to disobey God's will, we then become “*as a brier*” (7:4a), causing pain and disappointment unto God and in the world.

But if we truly identify ourselves with God, then it behooves us to “*look unto the Lord*” and “*wait for the God of my salvation*” (7:7). The idea of receiving the summer fruits suggests that time must pass before the fruit can be taken. During that time, you'll have some trees/vines that will produce great fruit, while others will not. This is why James said, “*Be patient therefore brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain*” (5:7). God waits patiently as time elapses to see which tree or vine will produce the first ripe fruits he anticipates, and consequently, be taken up with Him to rejoice forevermore.

As God looks down upon us, what does He see? First ripe fruits or decayed fruit? May God be praised!

Church News and Announcements

CONGREGATION

The fellowship lunch is today after morning service. All our visitors are invited to enjoy a meal with us and fellowship.

The new service opportunities sheets for the year 2015 are in the foyer. Members, please take time to volunteer your time, talents, and home for the various works of the church. We need your help to continue to make Shenandoah an active body of believers. Thanks.

All are invited to the renewing of vows ceremony of Ronald and Vianey Garcia on January 3rd at 1:00 pm here at Shenandoah. A reception will follow. RSVP with Blanca Garcia.

The New Year's Eve fellowship and devotional will be after services on December 31st in the annex. Please bring finger foods and games.

YOUTH

No news at this time.

YOUNG ADULT

No news at this time.

THE NEW INNOVATIONS OF THE CHURCH (5b)

While the ideas of the new innovations in worship seem legitimate, they belie what God deems important to man - the building up of his intellect, reason, and common sense; not his emotions and feelings. As we have discussed so far, the issue of musical instruments doesn't (in no way shape or form) improve the psyche of man, but only seeks to improve the building's ambiance.

Now, we come to the issue of the words we sing. According to Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16, what we sing (which in actuality we are teaching and admonishing) is of import. This means that what we speak in song must conform to what the Bible teaches (1 Pet. 4:11). So as we consider many of our older and modern songs we sing, we would be careful to pause and reflect to see whether what we are singing is according to the truth. Remember, many songs we sing have originated from denominationalism. Now this is not to mean we can't sing these songs, rather we must be careful we're not speaking a song whose message is clearly false according to the Scriptures. A case in point would be those songs which suggest that the Holy Spirit is living within me, guiding and leading my life. For example, song 101, "*I Surrender All*" says in verse 3: "*All to Jesus I surrender, Make me, Savior, wholly Thine; Let me feel the Holy Spirit....*"

Any song which teaches something contrary to Scripture must be

rejected. Why? As we've noted, since the worship of God is about strengthening and maturing the thoughts of men with God's mind, and the song service is used expressly for that purpose, then what we are saying must be according to the truth, because it is truth that builds up a person's mind and character (Jn. 8:31-32; 17:17).

So before we get caught up on the melody and ambiance of older or newer (praise) songs, let's be reminded that its lyrics must complement what the Bible teaches. The purpose of worship is to build up the mind, and certainly this cannot take place when our entire focus is merely about how we sound and what I feel.

But what about the feelings of God to whom the worship services is directed to? Doesn't it matter what He thinks in how we should fashion our services? Sadly, God and His word are no longer consulted and what we are witnessing today are worship services geared to make one emotionally subservient to the intellect of man. This is the reason why "organized" religion keeps failing, because man is lost in his conception of what true worship is. Sadly, it's become a place where tradition, rites, emotions, and feelings prevail. But little do they know, these are the things causing own demise. May God be praised!

Bro. G. Rodriguez

WHAT SAITH THE LORD?

Nearly two thousand years ago an important question was raised before the Apostles after they had delivered the good news of Jesus's life, death, burial, and resurrection (Acts 2:21-36). The hearer's conscience were pricked of sinful conduct (2 Cor. 7: 10-11) and asked: "*Men and brethren, what shall we do* (in order to be saved)? (Acts 2:37). Without hesitation, Peter elevated his voice and proclaimed: "*Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit*" (Acts 2:38).

Upon hearing the words of Peter, the people obeyed. This demonstrated their belief in Christ (Jn. 8:24). Hence, they repented of sin and confessed allegiance to the name of Christ (Matt. 10:32-33). Afterwards, the people were baptized for the remission of their sins (Acts 2:41, cf. Mrk. 16:16; 1 Pet. 3:21).

The people's submission to the words of salvation granted them a relationship with God the Father by accessing citizenship into the church of Christ (Acts 2:47, cf. Matt. 16:18; Mrk. 9:1; Acts. 2:1-4). As a member of Christ's body (Acts 8:4) the people were then encouraged to live faithful unto death by conquering sin in their lives (Rev. 2:10; Rom. 6: 4-12; 2 Tim. 4: 6-8). We then await for the coming day in which all men shall be judged the word of God (Jn 12:48; Acts 17:30-31; 2 Cor. 5:10). Will we be ready?

SHEPHERD'S CORNER

Sin Is Powerful

Why did God require obedience? Was it to keep us from enjoying the good things of life?

Moses answers, "For our good always" (Deut. 6:24). We need to see what sin does to us. Sin is the great separator, which is why Adam and Eve were cast out of Eden: "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God" (Isa. 59:2). As wise King Solomon wrote, "By the fear of the Lord, men depart from evil" (Prov. 16:6). Because Israel rebelled against God, a whole generation perished in the wilderness (Num. 14:22-32). Their unbelief and disobedience is a warning to us today "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief, in falling away from the living God ...To whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that were disobedient? And we see they were not able to enter in because of unbelief. Let us fear therefore" (Heb. 3:12-19; 4:1).

Sin kills. There is no pretty way to say it. "The soul that sinneth, it shall die...The wages of sin is death...Sin fullgrown bringeth forth death" (Ezek. 18:20); Rom. 6:23; Jas. 1:14). Only when we recognize the power which sin has will we be willing to turn back from it (Lk. 13:3) It is too easy to deceive ourselves with the idea of "everyone is doing it" and "everyone makes mistakes" and so belittle in our own mind what the real effect of in is. It is true that "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23). But it is also true that "the whole world lieth in wickedness" (1 Jno. 5:19). There will be no comfort in being lost eternally with numerous other who are as bad as we are! It was because of sin, yours and mine, that Jesus went to the cross "That he by the grace of God should taste of death for every man" (Heb. 2:9). If sin was (and is) terrible enough to cost the life of God's only begotten Son, it's power in our lives today should not be minimized.

We encourage you to examine your own life. If changes need to be made, please act today. There is no promise for tomorrow.

Bro. Wayne Holmes

CHURCH LEADERSHIP

BISHOPS/SHEPHERDS/ELDERS

(1 Tim. 3: 1-6)

Brother Elwyn Hipp (830) 510-6311,
Brother Wayne Holmes (210) 696-8597

DEACON

(Acts 6: 1-5; 1
Tim. 3: 7-12)

Brother Raul Baltierra
(210) 843-9730

GOSPEL PREACHER

(1 Cor. 9:1-16; 1 Tim.
4:6; 2 Tim. 4: 2-5)

Brother Gabriel Rodriguez
(210)315-4453



December 14

AM WORSHIP

Announcements: *G. Rodriguez*
 Opening Prayer: *J. Mokry*
 Song Leader: *A. Maldonado*
 Lord's Supper: *A. Martinez; M. Gibson; E. Lerma; M. Neaves*
 Sermon: *G. Rodriguez*
 Benediction: *M. de la Garza*

PM WORSHIP

Announcements: *G. Rodriguez*
 Opening Prayer: *B. Dorries*
 Song Leader: *J. Oakes*
 Lord's Supper: *E. Hipp; R. Baltierra*
 Sermon: *G. Rodriguez*
 Benediction: *A. Martinez*

After Greeter: *E. Creek*
 Greeter/Usher: *S. Hernandez*
 AV Duty: *J. Guillen*
 Elder in charge: *E. Hipp*
 Parking Lot Attendant: *AM, J. Oakes; PM, J. Mora*

REMEMBERING OUR BELOVED

(by writing, calling, and praying)

Wayne Holmes
 Juanita Mahan
 Richard Rodriguez
 Rina White
 Argelia (Janie's mother)
 Joe Guillen
 Sarah Cannon
 Roberto Garcia
 Lorenza Bejarano
 Olga (Joe's mother-in-law)
 Anthony Harris Sr
 Ina Dial
 Isabel (Lynn's mother)
 David Sudhoff
 Elijah Sudhoff
 Ashton Balyeat

BATTLING CANCER:

Barbara Oakes Johna Dorries
 Edna Wilks Abigail Reyes
 Lydia Cowan George Jackson
 Briana Nieves Margie Hargrove
 Sonny Cary Mary Purkey
 Elwyn Hipp Graciola Anderson

SHUT-INS:

Dorothy Harper
 Mary Louese Hughes
 Dazel Ball
 Mildred Geest

TRAVELING:

A. Jacob

DEPLOYED:

James Braun (Nephew of Michael) (Navy).

SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES DECEMBER

Organizing Monthly Luncheon:
Empett
 Preparing Lord's Supper:
Oakes
 Auditorium Service Duties:
Creek
 Wash baptismal garments; clean cry
 room
Creek
 Brother in charge of services:
J. Guillen

AM Theme:
 Remembering Why We Started
 PM Theme:
 Setting The church In Order

AM Sermon:
Maintenance (2)

PM Sermon:
How Do We Effect Change? (2)

WEDNESDAY NIGHT DEVOTIONAL

December 3: W. Holmes
 December 10: G. Rodriguez
 December 17: M. dela Garza

FOR THE RECORD

DECEMBER 7

Attendance:
 Sunday Bible Study 42
 Sunday AM Worship 62
 Sunday PM Worship 43
 Wednesday Bible Study NA
 Budget/Offering: **\$2,450.00/ \$2050.50**

Weekly Bible Readers 8 (Adult Bible class)

SHENANDOAH CHURCH OF CHRIST

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 Fax: (210) 696-5181

Church email Address:
shenandoah@shenandoahcofc.org

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES:

Sunday: Bible Study at 9:30 am; Worship at 10:30 am;
 Worship at 5:00 pm.
 Wednesday: Bible Study at 7:00 pm