

THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

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This World is Not My Home

Jay Graham

For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels (Mark 8:38).

I am confident most of you, if not all of you, have sung this song from Crum's Sacred Selections for the church. This song has always held a special meaning for us, but it seems like singing this song may hold even more of a meaning to Christians here in this 21st century of modern America. Over the past two generations, we have seen our society fall into wickedness. But it seems like the past 2 to 3 decades have seen us spiral out of control into the depths of evil deeper and deeper. It truly helps us as His Christians to better appreciate the truth of this song, for this world is **NOT** our home.

The more comfortable we as the Lord's people are, the more easily our spiritual eyes can be distracted from Christ and His will for our lives. And Christians have been comfortable for many generations, at least in this country. The wickedness of this generation has brought us back to a better and clearer reality. When Jesus uttered the above phrase, He certainly was referring to the first-century Jews, especially in regard to the majority of the leadership of the Pharisees and Sadducees. However, I wonder if every generation is wicked and perverse. Perhaps they are, and ours certainly is reaching this depth.

More and more Christians are being ostracized. We are becoming more and more different in our way of thinking compared to the world. For this reason, it has become more common for the Lord's people to be called names for what we believe is morally upright. Being called names is certainly not new to His Christians. It is my understanding the Romans would call those who followed the Lord "Christians," but it does not seem to have been a name of honor at first. It was a type of slur intended to embarrass Christians. It is also worth noting the Romans did not persecute Christians because they worshipped Jehovah through His Son, Jesus Christ. They persecuted Christians because they did not worship or show honor to the gods of the Romans. We can also see this happening today. Idolatry is still very much alive and well, though today's gods go by different names, whether it is worshipping Creation or worshipping ideas. We are made fun of by those who worship such inventions.

Just consider all the vile wickedness the world is trying to "shove down our throats," as it were. Just consider the commercials that are advertised on our TVs and even in the midst of the shows we watch. Even in some of the newer Star Treks, it is becoming obvious. Many lift these vile things up as worthy of honor. It is interesting that at one time, these ungodly lifestyles only wanted to be left to their own devices, but now it has reached a point where we are pressured to honor them as just as honorable as the Lord's ideal for marriage. When in reality, they are perversions.

Another tactic that is being used to "silence" Christians is to urge us to keep our messages within our "church buildings." We are encouraged not to speak of the Lord's Ways outside them. This was a similar tactic the Jewish leaders used against the apostles. They did not seem to care what the apostles believed; they just told them not to preach it to the people! Fortunately, the apostles did not keep the Lord's truths to themselves, for they did preach and teach them to the people! We dare not do otherwise. The Lord never intended for us not to preach to any and all who are interested. And do not be deceived. There are still those who are looking and searching for hope in the midst of this seemingly darkening world. The darker it gets, the more easily the light can be seen.

One of the other tactics used against Christians is accusing us of "hate speech." Preaching the need for repentance is considered "hateful" to many. There are some Western nations that have made it illegal to preach the need for repentance. Bibles are a prime target for such laws, for the Holy Scriptures are considered "hateful" to many. The fact we believe in right and wrong is repugnant to many. Nowhere is this more obvious than what is being perpetrated in many government schools in regard to gender issues.

Christians are beginning to be considered a detriment to society, for we look to the Lord and His promises as worthy of hope. The very popular Bill Nye, "The Science Guy," has stated such publicly. A growing number of people are demanding Christians stop teaching their children about the Lord creating the Universe!

We certainly have a number of things in common with those saints of faith mentioned in **Hebrews 11**. Consider what they were searching for, at least on an unconscious level, as noted in **Hebrews 11:13-16**. Yes, we have found what they did not. We have found the "heavenly country" they sought for, the Lord's church, but we also are searching through faith and hope. The church is not a final destination. While it does provide a pathway to that final hope, our final goal is to be

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joined with the Creator we are indeed searching for.

Why have I brought these things to your attention? Certainly not to make you afraid. But to rejoice, for we have messages of hope for those interested whom I mentioned previously. We have children and grandchildren to teach the Lord's righteous truths. We have the "Rock" as our solid foundation to build our lives upon, even while living in the midst of this "wicked and perverse generation."

Let us not be afraid of what man can do to us nor what man thinks of us. Let us continue to speak boldly and with the love of His marvelous works and nature. Let us continue to worship the Lord in spirit and truth, for in so doing, we are pleasing our Lord, we are in the process of being saved eternally, and we can and must help others along the narrow path. "Come quickly, Lord Jesus!" To quote another song, "Lift up your heads! Redemption draweth nigh!"

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Christlike Communion

Joshua Riggins

Now in giving these instructions I do not praise you, since you come together not for the better but for the worse. For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it. For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you. Therefore, when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper. For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others; and one is hungry and another is drunk. What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise you (1 Corinthians 11:17-22).

From its earliest beginnings, the church established fellowship through shared meals as a primary time to build unity (Acts 2:42, 46). Jude alludes to these meals as "love feasts" (Jude 1:12). Ignatius of Antioch notes in a letter to the congregation at Smyrna the connection between the Lord's Supper and "love feasts," saying, "You should regard that Eucharist as valid which is celebrated either by the bishop or by someone he authorizes. Without the bishop's supervision, no baptisms or love feasts are permitted."

Paul's message to the congregation at Corinth stems from this connection between a love feast and the Lord's Supper. In pattern with Christ's having instituted it during a meal, the brethren appear to have incorporated communion with the

eating of a meal. Interestingly, Paul does not concern himself with their having communed in connection with a meal. Instead, his concern had to do with the way they treated one another during this meal.

Several congregations I meet with participate in semi-regular love feasts. We called them basket dinners in Bloomfield because everyone brought their food in a basket. As a young boy, I can remember being especially excited to enjoy exceptional homemade chicken nuggets prepared by one of the ladies. It wasn't just the children who enjoyed them, as several adults also looked forward to them. Imagine, for a moment, the reaction if one of us children had decided to take them all, leaving none for the rest. Paul described it as some going hungry and others getting drunk in verse 21. Their attitude was, "Oh, you wanted that last nugget. Too bad, it's mine."

Brethren in Corinth divided themselves into factions. The important ones and the less important ones. The ones deserving of the extra helping, and the ones going hungry. Paul alluded to these factions earlier in the book (1:12, 4:6-8), and in the passage above, he pointed to the harmful impact of this divisiveness on their love for one another.

Paul, therefore, continued in his effort to repair unity among them by pointing to the uniting force responsible for their fellowship as children of God. In 1 Corinthians 11:23-28, Paul highlights the Lord's Supper, its origins with Christ, its purpose in remembering Jesus, proclaiming Jesus, and examining oneself. Its goal is to put us back in our place. We all need the same body and blood of our Lord. Together, then, we remember the love expressed, we proclaim in a unified voice the blessed savior, and we examine ourselves in relation to him.

They weren't doing this, and so they would be judged for "not discerning the Lord's body." They couldn't see how Christ's body and blood made them one together. "For this reason, many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged" (1 Corinthians 11:30-31). It wasn't supposed to be about them and their glory. These feasts were to be about the glorifying God. God's children are to joyously remember Christ's sacrifice and feast together in communal love through his example.

Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. But if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, lest you come together for judgment (1 Corinthians 11:33-34).

Traditionally, we don't combine communion and "love feasts" as they once did, and there don't seem to be scriptures requiring this or excluding it. However, both events are significant anchors for developing love for one another. As we serve God together, it is to be done through the shared table, whether sharing the bread and the wine or sharing the food in our baskets. God designed this brilliantly for his people to

invite them to experience one another's value and thereby grow in their ability to show him love. *"Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another"* (1 John 4:11).

That love is only evident when we *"wait for one another."* Whether it be for the Lord's Supper or a *"love feast,"* we are to think about and plan for each other's needs ahead of our own. These moments of communion should be times to put into practice the example of our Lord. Even though deserving of great glory, he humbled himself in obedience to serve man (Philippians 2:5-11). Therefore, none of us ought to see ourselves as more important than another. *"in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself"* (Philippians 2:3). We are the servants of God. No one is ahead of others, and nobody is taking all the chicken nuggets.

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Remembering Charles

Louis Garbi

Charles Ross was an evangelist sent from the Excelsior Springs Church of Christ. He loved the Lord's people and was a friend to many. He met people from all walks of life and met them with ease and friendliness. He had no arrogance, nor did he set himself above others. He was easy to engage in concerning matters of faith. At the end of the day, you were better for being with him.

He was a highly intelligent man with a unique way of looking at life. Charles could stretch your mind by being two or three steps ahead in the conversation. He would converse as if you tracked the process without explanation. His point of view would often come from an unexpected angle. For example, while discussing the value of elders in the local church, he observed, "Our elders pray for us." Another time, Charles made this startling comment, "What that situation needs is an old grouchy elder to set things right." There was an occasion where gifts of benevolence were being distributed. He stated the obvious; "The best way for this to be done would be for the church to have deacons. They would know the needs of the congregation." His distinct perspective was always stimulating and edifying.

He had a high regard for the Lord's plan. He believed that churches should practice within the framework the Lord gave. He respected the work of elders and deacons appointed from within the congregation. He applied himself to the support and maintenance of this.

Charles came from a rural area where the density of population was small. He worked for many years with small congregations and saw their value. His actions declared that where two or more are gathered in the name of the Lord, Jesus

would be there; the purpose of God was being carried out. He was often accompanied by his wife, Diana. They loved the brethren and never made them ashamed of being few in number. Thus, they were always welcomed and appreciated.

On two occasions, I had the opportunity to accompany him to the Philippines. We were together for an extended period, and he was an easy companion. He was not demanding. This quality made him an easy fit with the many people we met and the change of culture we experienced. He didn't meet our hosts and new acquaintances with expectations of preferential treatment. Rather, he respected them and their culture. He rolled with the changes from Metro Manila to the remote areas. He was loved by the brethren in the Philippines. They knew he loved them and cared about them.

Charles had two areas of focus in our travels to the Philippines:

1. The spiritual – teaching the value of mutual edification and development of elders and deacons. He encouraged the growth of everyone.
2. The question of what could be done to aid the material needs of the brethren – particularly where there was more poverty.

Charles' emphasis on these areas was tied together with love.

A great quality Charles possessed was love for the Lord's saving power. I think this was the reason he could meet all manner of people well, regardless of their social status, acumen, or cultural framework. He saw the deep importance of salvation and the great value the Lord placed on each soul made alive in Christ. When there was a rift among friends, he sought to aid in the mending of fences. When there was disagreement over a point of doctrine, he was thoughtful. When there was rejoicing for a soul's victory in the service of God's love, Charles was thankful.

It is the Lord alone who can say, "Well done." His declaration will be for eternity. But for us, there is the comfort of hope and appreciation for a life lived among us. Charles will be greatly missed. To summarize, here are words given by the Spirit of the Lord:

Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel (2 Timothy 1:8-10).

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Please check your expiration date!

Glory to God!

The church that meets on **Dean Avenue, Des Moines, IA** was overjoyed when **Jessica (Strable) Higgins** was restored to the congregation.

The church in **Pleasant Hill, IA** rejoiced when three precious souls were baptized into Christ: **Sam Pritchard, Eden Brady,** and **Ava Brady**.

The church in **Vandalia, IA** praised God with the angels when **Abigail Ingle** confessed Jesus and was baptized for the remission of her sins.

The church in **Martinstown, MO** rejoiced when **Arianna Stanley** was buried with Christ in baptism.

Here and There

We received the following note from **Dan Green**, elder of the church in **Kirkville, MO**.

Brothers and sisters in Christ:

The **Kirkville Church of Christ** has been blessed to oversee the evangelistic work of **Jeff Yost** since 2009. Jeff has worked with congregations in Missouri, Kansas, and California and is currently working with a congregation in Oklahoma. His work has focused on a congregation's desire and ability to reach out into their community with the Gospel and encourage the spiritual growth of each member. I personally have been thankful for his work in the Lord's kingdom.

In the last couple of years, the leadership at the Kirkville church of Christ has changed, and I am now the only elder. Jeff and I have discussed the advisability of having another congregation assume the oversight of his work. After much prayer and discussion, the **California Acres Church of Christ** in **Topeka, KS** has agreed to assume the oversight of

Jeff's work beginning on Jan. 1, 2024. We are thankful and fully supportive of this transition. As a congregation, we have valued Jeff's work for the Lord and will continue to show our monetary support of Jeff through the California Acres congregation.

We would encourage any individual or congregation to investigate the work that is being done by Jeff and prayerfully consider adding your monetary and prayerful support to his work in the Lord's kingdom.

Editor's Note: If you would like more information about Jeff and his work, or if you would like to speak with his elders, please get in touch with your editor.

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