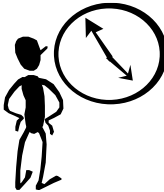


Inside this issue:

<i>Be a Barnabas</i>	1
<i>Singing to the Lord</i>	2
<i>Innocent Statues & Idolatry?</i>	4
<i>A.M. sermon outline: True Love</i>	6
Duty Rosters	7
Announcements & For the Record	8



Time of Assembly



Sunday:

Bible Study 9:00 a.m.
Worship 10:00 a.m.
(Or every other week)

Bible Study 4:00 p.m.
Worship 5:00 p.m.

Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 p.m.

Be a Barnabas

By Jefferson David Tant

We are familiar with Paul's companion in some of his travels. He is first mentioned in Acts 4:36: "*Now Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means Son of Encouragement).*" What a great description of Paul's brother and companion.

He is next mentioned in Acts 9:26-27. After Paul's conversion, he sought to meet with the Jerusalem Christians. They had heard about his persecutions and feared this was some trick. But Barnabas came to the rescue. "... *and they were all afraid of him, not believing that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took hold of him and brought him to the apostles and described to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had talked to him, and how at Damascus he had spoken out boldly in the name of Jesus.*"

Another instance deals with his defense of John Mark, who had abandoned the missionary journey of Paul and Barnabas but wanted to accompany them on their next trip. Paul was against this, but Barnabas disagreed. This resulted in a parting of the ways. Whatever Mark's shortcoming was, Barnabas took him under his wing and encouraged him by taking him on a preaching trip (Acts 15:38-39). Paul later changed his mind and asked for Mark.

Thus Barnabas was an encourager, a helper, and a preacher, as well. Shouldn't these words be descriptive of all preachers? Unfortunately, these words don't describe all preachers I know.

I have known preachers who seem to think they have been called to browbeat, demean and discourage those in their audience. Seldom does an encouraging word fall from their lips. This causes Christians to be discouraged, some to move to other congregations (when they can), and has caused some

to abandon their faith. Of course, they must realize that on judgment day they cannot hide behind those who have driven them away, saying “It’s their fault.” We come together to worship God, not man. Even in the case of Diotrephes John did not tell the members of the church to leave, but encouraged them to just do good.

“I wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say. For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does, unjustly accusing us with wicked words; and not satisfied with this, neither does he himself receive the brethren, and he forbids those who desire to do so, and puts them out of the church. Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. The one who does good is of God; the one who does evil has not seen God” (III John 9-11).

Yes, preachers have to deal with sin and shortcomings from time to time. Paul had to do this in some of his epistles, but he tried to encourage along with his exhortations. There were many problems in the church at Corinth, but Paul begins his letter with “*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God always concerning you, for the grace of God which was given you in Christ Jesus*” (I Corinthians 1:3-4). Then he closes the letter with “*My love be with you all in Christ Jesus*” (I Corinthians 16:24). In spite of the problems they had, they knew Paul loved them.

Time and time again, Paul encourages encouragement. “*And we urge you, brethren, admonish the unruly, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all men*” (I Thessalonians 5:14). Part of being patient is to be an encourager. See also Acts 11:23; Colossians 4:8; I Thessalonians 3:2; 5:11; Titus 2:4; Hebrews 3:13. It is evident that Paul took his own advice. (Maybe he learned from Barnabas 😊)

Preacher, you will do more to build up the church and save souls by being a Barnabas (an encourager) than by being a Diotrephes (a complainer).

Singing to the Lord

By Michael Hickox

"Speaking to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs; singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:19).

"Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly; in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your heart to the Lord" (Colossians 3:16).

These two verses teach the truth about how we must worship God through music. Notice toward the beginning of both verses that the phrases “*speaking to one another*” and “*teaching and admonishing one another*” are used. An important purpose of

“congregational” singing is to edify one another.

This does not mean though that the purpose of such singing is to please ourselves. Notice the ending of both verses says “*to the Lord.*” It is God who we must please. It is God who has the right to determine what is and is not acceptable in our worship. We must therefore follow His commands.

The New Testament commands He’s given concerning worship in song all reference singing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16; James 5:13). The examples He’s given concerning New Testament worship in songs also reference singing (cf. Acts 16:25; I Corinthians 14:15).

In the Old Testament, worshipping God with mechanical instruments of music was acceptable (cf. Psalms 33:2), as was offering animal sacrifices. The fact that animal sacrifices were willed by God under the Old Law does not make it so under the Law of Christ. Likewise, the presence of mechanical music in the Old Testament does not make it God’s will for worship today (cf. Colossians 2:14-17).

Some question how worshipping with mechanical instruments of music can be wrong if God has not directly forbidden it. Consider an illustration. If we are asked to paint someone’s kitchen white, we would recognize that it needs to be painted white. The person asking doesn’t have to say not to paint it green, blue, or any other color. The understanding is that white means white alone.

When God asked Noah to make an ark of gopher wood, God did not have to list hundreds of woods that could not be used (Gen. 6:14). The command necessarily inferred that gopher wood was the only kind of wood that was acceptable.

In the New Testament, God commands making melody in our heart by singing. Making melody (in worship) with a piano or other mechanical instrument is worshipping God differently than He authorizes.

Having said all of this, it’s important to note that the need for obeying God’s command to sing is not fulfilled only by ensuring our outward actions follow His pattern of “singing.” Our singing must be sincere, as indicated by the phrase “making melody in your heart to the Lord.” Our hearts should be moved as we worship in song. Those who are afraid their singing is not up to par should remember that God listens to our hearts.

We must also sing with thanksgiving, as Colossians 3:16 says. A thankful heart that means the words being sung pleases God. This should be the goal of our worship of God.

Mankind can devise numerous ways to worship that seem good. Yet, only those who follow God’s commands are showing the love for Him He desires (I John 5:3). May we sing with grace while making melody in our hearts, and thereby make a sound that is beautiful to God and edifies others.

Innocent Statues or Idolatry?

By Mike Thomas

Consider the following quote by Bob Stanley, written in response to the claim that Catholics practice idolatry when honoring statues and images in religion:

"That is what some say that Catholics do. Why do they say that? What is their reference? Where is their documented proof? Show me the genuine Catholic documents which "prove" this false charge? I have yet to see any Catholic document that says Catholics are to worship idols. ... Do you have a photograph of a loved one? Do you worship it? I doubt it. Maybe you only use the picture to remind yourself of that person. Isn't that right? What about the statue of Abraham Lincoln in the Lincoln Memorial? Do you or anyone else worship it or any other statue? Of course not. Then why is the statue there? It is to remind us of what a great man he was and in an image to which we can relate. It is the same situation in the Catholic Church. The statues in the Catholic Church are there to remind us of our founder, Jesus Christ, His mother, and the great saints of the Church."

Disturbing isn't it? He equates the memorials we have in everyday life (of soldiers, battles, family) with the images found in Catholicism. Perhaps he expects the average reader to be gullible enough to believe that the thoughts of a spectator at the Lincoln Memorial are no different than worshippers praying to a statue of Mary for guidance. Do you actually think that is the same thing as placing an image of a "patron saint" on the dashboard of my car to give me safe travel, or to bury one in my backyard to help me sell my house? I was born on a Tuesday, but it wasn't last week! There is a great difference between veneration and admiration. I may admire Lincoln for his leadership while observing the images of his life, but I'm not about to pray to his statue for help in life. That would be veneration, which is exactly what Catholics do with their images and statues. These symbols are more than metal, clay, and paint; they are powerful icons with a sacred presence to them. To defile these is as sinful as crucifying Jesus, which is vastly different than the perception of the statues in Washington D.C.

Stanley apparently feels justified in saying, "Catholics, when praying before a statue are not petitioning to the statue, but to the person of whom it represents." But in reality, neither practice is found in the Bible, especially that of praying to another human for help. There is One Mediator between man and God — and His name is Jesus Christ ([1 Timothy 2:5](#)). It is insulting and blasphemous, to say the least, to place anyone else in that position, no matter how godly they were in life. The apostle Peter, with all the good he did in preaching the gospel and healing the sick, would not permit Cor-

nelius to bow to him in praise (Acts 10:25). “*But Peter lifted him up, saying, ‘Stand up; I myself am also a man.’*” (v. 26). Does that sound like the attitude of one who was going to be a mediator between man and God? Is that the mentality of one who believed he was someone special, worthy of veneration and praise from man? God forbid! The apostle Peter knew he was no more sacred or special than any other Christian, from Mary to Paul to Timothy. Notice his response when people were amazed at his power to heal the lame: “*Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?*” (Acts 3:11-12) Again, he did not want people to honor him with their praise and faith, but to keep their attention and emphasis on God. He knew that God alone was worthy of praise, and not some weak, useless, imperfect human.

Consider also Paul’s response to people who wanted to sacrifice animals to him: “*But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard this, they tore their clothes and ran in among the multitude, crying out and saying, ‘Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you, and preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them!’*” (Acts 14:14-15).

How could Paul say this to people when he would eventually be a “saint” in heaven who intercedes on behalf of men? Why would he not let people burn animals to him when one day people would burn candles to his statue? I guess he didn’t have the same attitude toward human veneration that Catholics have today. Read carefully verse 15. What was Paul’s attitude toward the practice of sacred objects?

The ultimate flaws in religious icons are in elevating humans to the status of praise (“saints”) and in depending on these artificial images to give us special guidance in life. There is no more power in that cross around a person’s neck than in the chain used to hold it. It’s just a chunk of metal that has been fashioned in such a way to satisfy human superstition, which in the first century was called idolatry (I Corinthians 10:14). The faces on the statues may have changed, but the sinful motive in praying to these images remains the same.

I close with a quote from Charles Berry in the book *Far from Rome, Near to God: Testimonies of 50 converted Roman Catholic Priests* (by Richard Bennet):

"When I met in Cuba a genuine pagan who worshiped idols (a religion transplanted from Africa by his ancestors), I asked how he could believe that a plaster idol could help him. He replied that the idol was not expected to help him; it only represented the power in heaven which could. What horrified me about his reply was that it was almost word for word the explanation Roman Catholics give for rendering honor to the statues of the saints." (p. 59)

I guess I’m not the only one who sees the idolatrous nature of religious images.