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Announcing
A Series of
GOSPEL SERMONS

SPEAKER

Mike Willis
of Danville, IN

April 18-24, 1988

Night Services at 7:30 P.M.

Sunday Morning 9:45 and 10:45 A. M.

Fultondale Church of Christ

2005 Elkwood Drive
Fultondale, Alabama

'Your Church and Mine'

by Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.

A popular country music/comedy television show's so-called gospel segment featured a song that probably expresses the sentiments of most religious Americans. The quartet sang,

"You go to your church and I will
go to mine,
And we will walk along together."

The song went on to suggest that both will also walk together in heaven. Is this really how things work? Is this really what the Bible teaches about religion?

I am glad that I live in a country where we can choose where we attend church. One can be what he wants to be in religion without government interference. This is great. The freedom that gives me the right to be what I am also gives you the right to be what you are. Neither of us can take that freedom from the other without it threatening our own freedom. I believe that this is the way that a political system ought to work. I would not like to live where Catholics, Baptists, Methodists, or whatever could not teach, practice and publish their beliefs. Nor would I want to live where the system forbade oral or written opposition to my views. The same system that would forbid another might soon forbid me.

However, being free to choose does not mean God sanctions every man's choice. God wants man to be in an environment where he is free to choose so that man may, of his own free will, serve Him. He told Israel of old, "I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live." (Deut. 30:19). They could freely choose their course, but it did not mean that they could not make a wrong choice. If they chose wrongly, then they were warned of the consequences from God. God wants us to be free to choose, but He has revealed His choice for us in His word and has warned us against choosing to go against His will.

Two people, for their own reasons, may choose different courses in religion. They

are within the rights granted them in this great country, but that does not mean that both are pleasing to God. God does not have different plans of salvation for different people, but has one plan for all. Christ endured the cross that all men might be reconciled unto God in one body. (Eph. 2:16). The body is His church. (Eph. 1:23). "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." (Eph. 4:4-6). Some may ask, "If there is one body or church, then why does the Bible speak of churches (plural) of Christ". (cf. Rom. 16:16). When the New Testament speaks of churches (plural) it is speaking of congregations in various locations and not separate churches in the sense of various denominations as it is so often used today. These churches (congregations) were organizationally separate from one another but not doctrinally distinctive in faith and practice. They all were to practice the one faith. No wonder that Paul would say that what he ordained in one church (local congregation) he ordained in all. (1 Cor. 4:17; 7:17). If one, who was doctrinally sound, could conscientiously worship with any one of these congregations, he should be able to worship with any other one. They were doctrinally uniform. They all taught the doctrine of Christ.

If two people are following what Christ, through His apostles, ordained then there is no need for "you go to your church and I will go to mine". We can "walk along together" right on through the front door. We will be in the one body and be of the one faith. If we cannot do this it is evident that one or possibly both are not in tune with what has been "ordain(ed) in all the churches". Oh, we may agree to walk along together while each goes his separate way in religious faith and practice, but that does not mean that both please God and will be saved in the Last Great Day. Still worse, we might bring "your church and mine" together under some unity umbrella allowing each to maintain its doctrinal

peculiarities. The only right way that churches can be brought together is under the umbrella of what has been ordained by God for them to be and do.

Maybe while these two people walk along together, with "you go(ing) to your church and I go(ing) to mine", they need to talk about what Christ and His apostles "ordain(ed) in all the churches". It is likely that they disagree on what has been ordained or they would be singing "we go to the same church". The reason they can not walk together all the way through the front door is in Amos' rhetorical question: "Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?" (Amos 3:3).

If they talk about religion as they walk along together, each to his own church, they will likely disagree on several basic questions: What must one do to be saved? What is baptism? What should we call ourselves in religion? What should our worship be like? What should be the structure of the church? What should be the mission of the church?

Likely, they will give different answers to these questions. How can both be right if they answer so differently? If they gave the same answers to these questions, would there be any need for "you go to your church and I will go to mine?" Would they not likely be going to the same church?

Does it really make no difference how one is saved? Can baptism be just any thing that one wants it to be? Does it really not matter what one calls himself in religion? Does God not care what we do in worship to Him? Does it really not matter how the church is organized? Does it not matter at all what the church perceives its mission to be?

What if your neighbor's church taught the following on these vital questions: To be saved one had to believe on the name of Beelzebub. To be baptized one had to be bathed with buttermilk. The sign over the door reads, "The Church Of Lucifer". For worship each week they meet together to dissect frogs like students do in biology labs. They pattern their organization after the Russian government. They believe it their mission to replace all the books in public libraries and schools with pornography. Would you still be willing to sing with him, "You go to your church and I

will go to mine and we will walk along together..."?

My friend, I am not trying to be frivolous or ridiculous but am just trying to get us to think. If God does not really care what we do or are in religion, why would the above hypothetical church not be acceptable to Him? If it does make a difference what we are or do in religion, what is it that makes a difference? If we say there is a difference, are we not really saying there is some standard by which to measure religious faith and practice rather than every man's subjective standard? If it is left to each man's subjective standard, then why would he not be right if he were to decide that the kind of religion described above is right for him? Who is to say that he is wrong and by what standard?

The Bible says, "All Scripture is given by the inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Tim. 3:16,17). The scriptures only equip or furnish us with "one body...one Spirit...one hope...one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father..." (Eph. 4:4-6). In view of this do you really think that God would not care if we changed it to "ANY body...ANY spirit... ANY hope... ..ANY Lord, ANY faith, ANY baptism; ANY God and Father" that seems good to us?

Really, now, can we truly walk together as long as either of us follows a different course than the one course of the Scriptures? Does not the fact that the two in the song are in different churches show that one or both are not in the "one body (church)" of the Bible? Think about it, my friend.

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

Sunday:

Bible Classes. 9:45 a.m.

Worship 10:45 a.m.

Worship 6:00 p.m.

Wednesday:

Bible Class 10:00 a.m.

Bible Classes. 7:30 p.m.

The Death Of A Wildcat

Doug Matlock

Some years ago my father had a chicken and egg business in California. It wasn't a large operation, just something he and mom could care for themselves. Near the chicken houses there was a small ravine that may have extended to the mountains some distance away. Animals sometimes travelled it for the cover it provided them while searching for food. Once a wildcat came out of the ravine and began attacking and killing some chickens. The cat was not afraid of my father's presence but continued his pursuit of the chickens, even when he returned from the house with a shotgun and pulled the trigger on the largest wildcat my father had ever seen. Where was that animal instinct that should have warned him of danger? What happened to those keen senses that animals have? Was it all blocked out by the desire to kill and eat?

Perhaps this illustration will help us understand why some people will not hear the gospel when it is taught. They can laugh at the mention of death and judgment. The thought of hell doesn't cause them to tremble. There is only one thing on their mind, the here and now. In a poll taken some time back, it found that only one out of five is chiefly concerned with preparing for eternity. In this Gallup poll 20% said their foremost concern is preparing for a future life. 46% said they're living comfortably here and now. 30% tried to straddle the fence by saying, "both." 4% said they didn't know. The

least surprising statistic, when we remember Mk. 10:23; 1 Tim. 6:9-10; is that poor people are twice as likely as rich people to focus their thoughts on what lies beyond the grave.

Satan has so many distractions that dull our senses and makes us unaware that death and judgment draws nearer every day. For some it is, eat, drink, and be merry, chase the world and feed those lusts, until they are taken from this life with only torment to know forever. For the wildcat, his life was over when the trigger was pulled, but for man it is just the beginning in another realm. Let us use our time to the glory of God and the salvation of our souls and those we come in contact with. Surely, our lives are to be lived on a higher plane than just gratifying fleshly lusts like an animal.

A Correction

If you had trouble making sense out of the fourth paragraph on page 2 of last month's paper, then you are not alone. It should have read:

"Maybe someone can tell me how often and for how long one can wilfully miss assembling before he has *forsaken, left or abandoned* assembling -- if occasional wilful missing is not *forsaking*?"

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ATTEND OUR NEXT SERIES OF MEETINGS
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MIKE WILLIS, Speaker