

Ministers:
the congregation

Kenny Chumbley
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Sunday:
8:00 AM: WGCY
9:00 AM: Worship

Wednesday:
7:00 PM: Bible Study

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This Past Week:
Worship—24
Wednesday—11
Contribution—\$1795

For meditation:
Proverbs 31.25–27
These three verses provide an inspired commentary on 1 Peter 3.3–4 and Peter's teaching that a woman's true beauty is what's found on the inside, not the outside. What virtues make for a beautiful lady?

Radio program:
WGCY FM, 106.3
Sundays at 8 AM

Four tests of faith, 2

According to the “great commission” (Matt. 28.18–20), discipleship involves a change of *state* and a change of *character*. God changes our spiritual state when we “believe and are baptized” (Mk. 16.16), but we are responsible for changing our character, which we do by “observing all things” taught by the apostles.

Changing our character is what is meant by *sanctification* or being *holy*, and in James 2.14–26, James, the brother of the Lord, provides four tests by which we can gauge our character development.

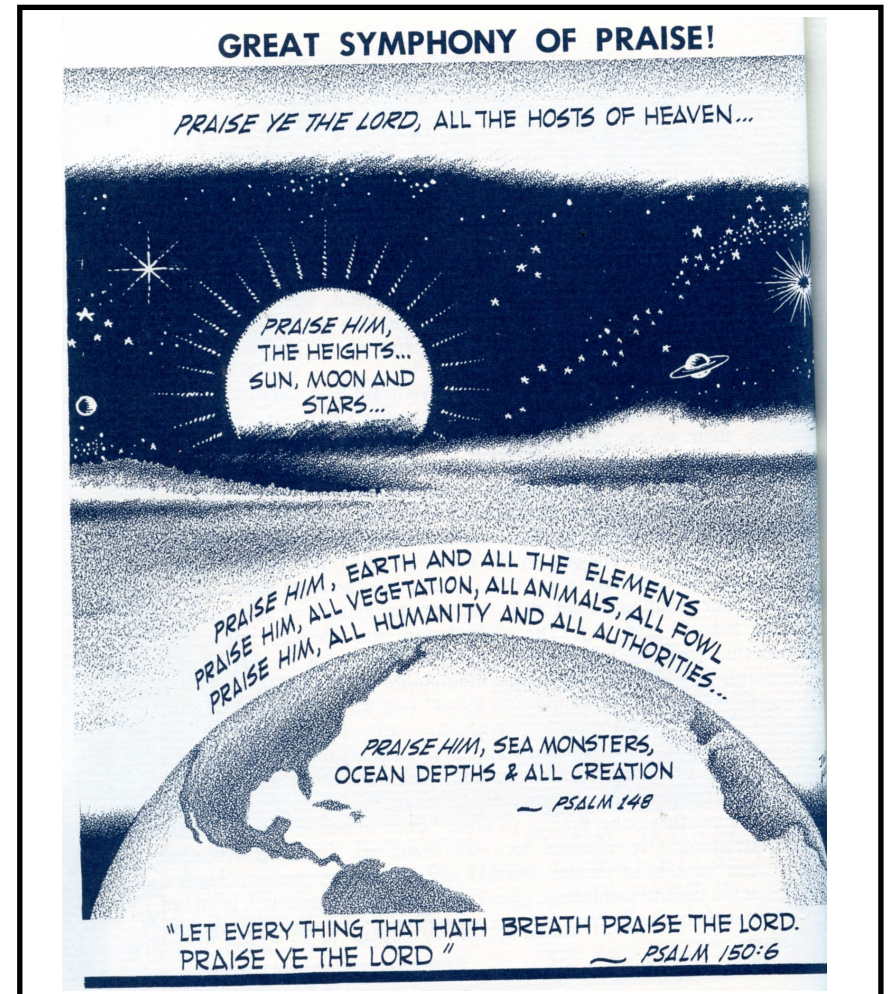
Analysis of James 2.14–26 reveals four paragraphs: vv 14–17, vv 18–20, vv 21–24, and vv 25–26. Each of these end in a summary statement of what we're to learn (vv 17, 20, 24, 26). The first two paragraphs argue negatively; the last two argue positively. The first and fourth paragraphs discuss our character with regard to people; the second and third with regard to God. Here, then, are the four tests for determining whether our faith is truly a sanctifying, holy faith.

1. **The test of charity** (v 17). Are we helping the needy? Do we help vulnerable (orphans and widows) in their trouble (1.27)? If not, our faith is dead.
2. **The test of serenity** (v 20). The demons believe and tremble, but justification by faith gives us peace with God (Rom. 5.1). Do we have peace?
3. **The test of fidelity** (v 24). Do we obey God even if He asks us to sacrifice a child (v 21)? Is our belief backed up by our behavior?
4. **The test of jeopardy** (v 26). Rahab's faith caused her to risk her life for God's people; as did Epaphroditus (Phil. 2.30). Is our faith willing to risk life, health, wealth, reputation, etc. for our God?

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Gibson City church of Christ

Highway 47 South, Gibson City, IL



Sermon: Philippians 4.4–9

The peace of God, the God of peace

27 October 2024

The Gospel and creeds

Divine revelation has always been followed by human exposition, which is as God intended (Matt. 13.52). But whenever man's interpretation *replaces* divine revelation, trouble follows.

History has shown that one of the biggest mistakes Bible students can make is to formulate a creed. A creed—from the Lat. *credo*, “I believe”—is a checklist of Biblical doctrines meant to identify true believers. The Nicene, Athanasian, and Apostles' creeds are some of the more famous. (The Apostles' Creed wasn't formulated by the apostles but was pieced together over several centuries after the apostolic era.)

Many cannot imagine Christianity without the creeds, but I maintain creeds are a corruption of Christianity. Here are two reasons why.

First, although creeds are like each other, they are very unlike Christ's preaching. Christ could have provided a checklist of beliefs for identifying the orthodox and heretics, but He didn't. His gospel begins with a list of blessings (Matt. 5.2–12). Place any creed next to the Beatitudes and it's hard to believe both are talking about the same thing. To decide, “Who is a Christian,” the creeds say, “the one who *believes* these things,” whereas the Sermon on the Mount says, “the one who *is* these things.” Christ built Christianity on *being*, not mere believing. More than having certain beliefs in our head, Christ wants us to have a certain shape to our soul. He emphasized character; the creeds say nothing about character. They claim to definitively define doctrinal issues (like the nature of the Godhead) but ask for no commitment to character at all.

Second, creeds leave out the most important thing of all! So what if a creed is a list of Bible truths? Knowing truth is essential (Jn. 8.32), but there's more to Christianity than just knowing truth. Do you know that the word *love* is not found in any of the major creeds? Do you also know a person could believe every word of every creed and still not be a Christian (1 Cor. 13.1–3)? How can a document that doesn't say a word about love—the most important Christian requirement of all—identify who is and isn't a Christian? In John 21, Christ didn't ask Peter who created the world, or whether the church should eat the Lord's supper, His question was, “Simon . . . do you love Me?”

Anyone who purports to define Christian orthodoxy without mentioning love isn't qualified to define Christian orthodoxy.

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The greatest miracle in the Gospel of John

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1.14

Prior to all the miracles cited in the fourth Gospel, the most fundamental miracle of all is the one mentioned in the first chapter—namely, the *incarnation*. “Incarnation” is the Latin word (*incarnāre*) for “became flesh”: “And the Word *became flesh*.” The greatest miracle in John is that God became man (“flesh” here being metonymical for “man”).

In becoming man, the Creator and revelator became the creature and the revelation Himself. In becoming man, Christ became something He hadn't been before. In becoming man, Christ continued as all He had been; He came into flesh, not out of it. He was not a man who grew into a god, but God almighty becoming a man. The term Christ commonly used to describe His humanity was “Son of man,” which meant He embodied all that is meant by the term “human.” He had every attribute common to humanity.

But why was the incarnation necessary?

So that men could “see” God. Many have wanted to see God as God (e.g., Ex. 32.18; Jn. 14.8), but no man can see God as God, and live (Ex. 33.17). Just as the eye cannot take in the expanse of the heavens, finiteness cannot take in the totality of infinity. The best we can do is to see “the edges of His ways” (Job 26.14). Our “little box of brains” (H. G. Wells, *The Soul of a Bishop*) can't grasp God as God. So, He became a man that we might see Him (Jn. 1.18). And it's not His visage, but His virtue—full of grace and truth—that we are to see (Jn. 1.14, Ex. 33.19).

So Christ could die for the sins of the world. The God who became flesh was “The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (Jn. 1.29,36). Hebrews 2.10–18 does a splendid job of explaining the importance of the man, Christ Jesus, in the work of forgiving sinners and helping them live above sin.

Without the incarnation, we would have not clear revelation of God and no certain redemption from sin.

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News about us

- There's so much congregational news to mention this week, but I'll only mention the item that is possibly the greatest thing of all: Aspen Miller was baptized into Christ this past week!