

THE UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS MESSENGER

May 10, 2009

Sound Or Abnormal?

Three years ago an elder from a congregation called me to see if I would be interested in holding a gospel meeting. I was unfamiliar with that congregation and they did not know me. Before we could agree on the meeting, this elder said that he wanted to ask me a few questions about my views on certain spiritual questions. I have no problem with that so I agreed to answer them. It turned out that he only wanted to ask me one question and that was my position on the marriage, divorce, and remarriage issue. I told him I believe what Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 teaches. That's what he wanted to hear and told me that he was glad a "sound" preacher would be conducting their meeting.

After we hung up I sat in my office thinking about the conversation. How could answering one question determine my soundness? We did not discuss anything about my understanding of Scripture when it comes to the Godhead, the plan of salvation, grace, works, heaven, hell, or any other questions. For all he knew, I could have been as far off on those topics as a person could possibly be. We did not discuss any of the attributes that should characterize a Christian. All he cared about was that I agreed with him on the MDR question. In his mind that was enough to consider me sound.

We are an issue driven people, aren't we? Certain issues pop up among us from time to time and everyone runs to take sides. If a person stands with me on the issue of the day then he must be a "sound" Christian, right? Not necessarily. Consider Peter's words from 2 Peter 1:5-9. **"For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins."** Read also of the fruits of the Spirit from Galatians 5:22-23 and the Beatitudes of Matthew 5:3-11. Suppose I possessed knowledge and steadfastness but lacked brotherly affection and love. Am I sound? With knowledge and steadfastness I could stand in the pulpit and hammer away at every bit of false teaching that man has ever created, turn to every passage that deals with the issues of the day, write up everyone who steps out of line, and gain the reputation of being as firm and unyielding as a rock. Does that make me sound? No. What it does is make me very good at pounding on the pulpit, yet sadly lacking many of the essential qualities and inward characteristics that should define the Christian and motivate me to get into the pulpit to begin with. It makes me *abnormal*, not sound.

If I were to walk into the building one day with much of my body underdeveloped, with skin pale from malnutrition, yet with a massive right arm rippling with muscles, would you consider my

body sound or abnormal? The answer is obvious, isn't it? Yet do we not often think that way when it comes to spiritual things? A man stands in the pulpit and rails at false religions? Many Christians seem to think that the volume of his voice and his pounding on the pulpit equals proof of his soundness. He obviously does possess conviction, but does he possess love? If not, his conviction is a symptom of abnormality, not soundness. A man studies his Bible all day long? He possesses faith and knowledge, but does he possess brotherly affection? If not, his Bible study should point him to his abnormality so that it can be remedied. A Christian spends much of his time contacting brethren to see what he can do to help them? He possesses love and brotherly affection, but does he possess knowledge and steadfastness? Though he is doing good to others and will be very well liked, he must recognize that if he is lacking in those areas, his abnormality needs to be remedied.

The point is that we have got to strive to grow up *in every way* into Christ. There will never come a time where we can stop striving for greater spiritual maturity. There certainly can never come a time when we decide that our stance on a single issue somehow establishes our overall soundness. Let us strive for strength and soundness in *all* areas of our spiritual lives and let us never be content with where we are. Perhaps in so doing we will recognize that what we perceive to be a strength in reality shines a spotlight on other areas in which we need to improve and grow. Please think about these things.

In Need of Prayers	General Information
<p>Jackie continues to struggle with her pregnancy.</p> <p>Please remember Sister Kimberlin as she struggles with some health problems.</p> <p>Sharon Tirey will undergo surgery on Tuesday morning at 9:30. The surgery will be conducted at Central Baptist Hospital.</p> <p>Adam Daniels' friend, Will Markem, continues to recover from his motorcycle accident.</p> <p>Edwin Brown continues to recover from his recent heart attack and is doing well.</p> <p>Kristy Kidd, Ron Tirey's niece, is in the midst of a high-risk pregnancy and having some trouble.</p>	<p>If you have not filled out your member information sheet, please do so quickly. Only a few more weeks remain before they will be examined and the directory updated.</p> <p>Remember Peter and Judy McPherson as they mourn the sudden death of their daughter. Below is their address.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Peter and Judy McPherson 323 Lindan Ave. Peterborough, Ontario K9L 1KL Canada</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Farewell To A True Soldier For Christ</u></p> <p>Brother Robert Jackson of Tennessee, a wonderful Christian man and solid preacher of the gospel familiar to many, passed on to his reward this past Tuesday morning. Robert was a tremendous encouragement to generations of Christians. Farewell for now, brother.</p> <p>My new cell number is 859-492-9406 and Jackie's is 859-396-6152.</p>

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