



tians are to be **“harmless as doves”** (Matt. 10:16), our faith can be uncompromisingly rigid! Jesus said, **“No one comes to the Father except through Me”** (John 14:6). Finally, while Jesus described the requirements of following Him as **“easy”** and **“light”** (Matt. 11:30), they can also involve things that are highly demanding! Paul taught Timothy, **“all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution”** (2 Tim. 3:12).

himself” (Matt. 16:24). Although it is called **“the gospel of peace”** (Rom. 10:15; Eph. 6:15), it is also highly controversial! Jesus said, **“For I have come to set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law”** (Matt. 10:35). Although Chris-

Finding the *perfect* religion is not about finding what matches our desires and our expectations. It is about finding what God has revealed about His will for us. His people are **“to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints”** (Jude 3). Religion may free us or it may restrict us, but only when it conforms to God’s revealed word is it truly **“perfect, converting the soul”** (Psa. 19:7).



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Faithful Sayings Issue 17.18 May 10, 2015

Welcome Visitors

We are so glad that you joined us today.
Please come again.

🕒 **Let us know if you have any questions.**

ISSUE

17.18

BULLETIN OF
THE OLSEN
PARK CHURCH
OF CHRIST

Faithful Sayings

May 10,
2015

Services

Sunday: 9:30 AM
10:20 AM
6:00 PM

Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:

Pat Ledbetter
Jeff Nunn
Kyle Pope

Deacons:

Steve Dixon
Jack Langley
Neil Ledbetter
Brady McAlister
Walker McAnear
Lance Purcell
Rusty Scott

Evangelists:

Kyle Pope
Andrew Dow



Employees or Slaves?

By Kyle Pope

If you are a Christian, how do you picture your service to the Lord? Are you a soldier or an armor-bearer? Are you a builder or a repairman? Are you a representative or a salesman? Are you a friend or a relative? In some ways each of these roles may describe aspects of our relationship to God in Christ. If we aren’t careful, however, we may imagine our service to Him parallels things in life we know well, but that are not comparable in every way to our relationship to God or our responsibilities to Him.

For example, we may see our relationship to God as a type of employee-employer relationship. In other words, we do what our boss tells us, we show up for work on time, we show respect, we complete our assigned tasks, and at the end of work we expect to receive our pay. It is true that Jesus once used such a relationship to illustrate things about our service to Him. He compared obedience to the gospel to workers hired at different times of the day (Matt. 20:1-16). But this doesn’t mean that being a Christian is parallel to employment in every way. There are some striking differences we must understand.

One of the first is seen in the very parable where Jesus makes such a comparison. Although each of the workers was hired at different times of the day, when the workday ended all received the same pay (Matt. 20:8-10). When some complained about this, the employer asked bluntly, **“Is it not lawful for me to do what I wish with my own things?”** (Matt. 20:15). Jesus probably used this to illustrate that when the gospel later

came to the Gentiles, the Jews had no right to resent their acceptance. God, like the employer, in essence says to the Jews about the Gentiles, **“I wish to give to this last man the same as to you”** (Matt. 20:14). Indirectly, it may, like the parable of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15:11-32, warn against resentment of those converted late in life on the part of those faithful to the Lord throughout life. What is clear is unlike a standard employee-employer relationship the *wage* of eternal life (as illustrated in this parable) is not given in proportion to the amount of work, the standing or seniority of the worker, or the time spent doing the assigned task.

A second difference concerns the very basis on which this *wage* is paid. In our country labor laws make employers legally obligated to pay employees a fair wage for an agreed amount of work. This is a binding contractual arrangement. An employer does not pay an employee out of the goodness of his heart—he has to pay or face criminal consequences. Eternal life, while figured in Jesus’ parable as the *wages* paid for the work done in the vineyard of life, is usually not described this way. Paul would say, **“the wages of sin is death”** (that is, what we properly deserve is eternal punishment) **“but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord”** (Rom. 6:23). Salvation from sin is ultimately a gift given by God in spite of what we deserve as a result of our sins. It does not come because of the quality of the work, the value of the worker, or profit our work brings to the one who pays it—it comes as a gift.

More often our relationship to God in Christ is not pictured as an employee-employer relationship but a slave-master relationship. Jesus taught, **“whoever commits sin is a slave of sin”** (John 8:34). Obedience to the gospel ends this bondage. Paul taught, **“the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death”** (Rom. 8:2). But, this liberation is not without limitation. Paul taught, **“having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness”** (Rom. 6:18). Later he puts it, **“having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life”** (Rom. 6:22). Liberation from sin comes only if we are **“slaves of God.”** God owns us and is our

Master. Slaves do not work for wages. Slaves who have **“done all those things you are commanded”** have only **“done what was our duty to do”** (Luke 17:10). **“Holiness”** (which is behavior set apart unto God) is the **“fruit”** which grows out of being a slave of God. **“The end”** (or outcome) of this servitude is **“everlasting life,”** but it comes as a gift from the Master not the wages owed to us by obligation from an employer.



Olsen Park church of Christ

The Perfect Religion

By Kyle Pope

Recipe for the Perfect Religion

1. Don't require anything too strict.

People want freedom to behave however they wish. The perfect religion should allow its members freedom to act as they choose.

2. Keep it non-controversial.

Anything that requires personal study and conviction will lead to conflict and division. Avoid controversy and reject any absolute standards of right and wrong.

3. Keep it flexible.

A religion that is too rigid will clash with other belief systems resulting in persecution or peer-pressure. The perfect religion should easily blend elements of other faiths into its own without difficulty.

4. Don't make it too demanding.

The perfect religion shouldn't put demands on its members' time, lifestyles, income, or personal commitments. Limit what is necessary to become a member and the responsibilities expected after one is a member.

You probably will never see anything like this posted or circulated by religious groups seeking to grow. Would anyone ever really feel that the ingredients listed above truly comprise the *best* criteria for religious faith? Probably not, if it was stated so directly as it is in this list. However, we don't have to look far to see that similar thinking is exactly what leads many people to the choices they

make in religion. “That church is just too strict for me,” someone might say. Or, “I don't want anybody telling me how I should live my life!” So, we look for somewhere that people have a religious mind-set that matches our own wishes and only requires what we are willing to offer (however much or little that may be). We then decide, “that's the place for me!” — the *perfect* religion.

Sound faith in Christ is not solely determined by the rigidity of one's belief and practice. However, we should recognize that the *recipe* described above bears little resemblance to the faith revealed in the pages of Scripture. While faith in Christ is referred to as **“the perfect law of liberty”** (Jas. 1:25), it is in part very strict! Jesus said, **“If anyone desires to come after Me let him deny**