

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

- BELIEVE – ACTS 16:31
- REPENT – ACTS 17:30; LUKE 13:3
- CONFESS – ROMANS 10:10; I TIMOTHY 6:12
- BE BAPTIZED – ACTS 2:38; MARK 16:16
- BE FAITHFUL – REVELATION 2:10

PRAYER LIST:

North Ridgeville church of Christ
 36364 Chestnut Ridge Road
 North Ridgeville, OH 44039

www.nrcoc.net

Times for Meeting

Lord's Day

9:30 AM Bible Study (all ages)
 10:30 AM Worship

Wednesday

7:00 PM Bible Study (all ages)

Elders

Bruce Dean
 Mark Ullman

Evangelist

Steven Wallace

THE NORTH RIDGEVILLE CHURCH OF CHRIST

“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only,
 deceiving your own selves.” James 1:22

January 08, 2023

“Setbacks”

Steven J. Wallace

Many churches go through setbacks from time to time. It is factual that churches of Christ can dwindle if they cannot endure setbacks. In order to endure setbacks, the Lord's people must have an attitude of desiring the word of God more than they have in the past.

Setbacks are nothing new to the Lord's people. Israel was set back when they wanted to worship God through a golden calf (Ex. 32). Three thousand men of Israel fell by the sword as a result of this rebellion. Israel was set back when Miriam and Aaron strove against Moses over preeminence (Num. 12). The Scripture states, “So Miriam was shut out of the camp seven days, and the people did not journey till Miriam was brought in again” (Num. 12:15).¹ Israel's progress was on hold. Israel was set back when ten of the twelve spies defected and gave a faithless report of the promised land (Num. 13-14). Upon hearing this report, Israel refused to go into their inheritance. Consequently, God pronounced, “they certainly shall not see the land of which I swore to their fathers, nor shall any of those who rejected Me see it” (Num. 14:23). This particular generation of people did not enter the promised land because of infidelity (v. 33). Consequently, this set Israel back for forty years (v. 34). During the period of the Judges, Israel was set back to nearly being destroyed because they did what was right in their own eyes

and did not know or obey the voice of God (Judg. 2:10; 21:25). In the judgment, people will be set back permanently to burn in the fires of hell for this same reason. The apostle Paul wrote, "in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ." These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power" (II Thess. 1:8-9). In the days of Samuel, Israel was set back again because they wanted a king "like all the nations" rather than one who had a likeness of their God (I Sam. 8:20). Israel was rejecting God as their king. God said, "Heed the voice of the people in all that they say to you; for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them" (I Sam. 8:7). The nations whom Israel wanted to be so much like, nearly destroyed them under King Saul's rule. Though Saul started well in ruling over God's kingdom, he ended up as a slave in Satan's domain. He was not a king after God's own heart, and unfortunately, he represented many of the hearts of Israel. Throughout Israelite history there were setbacks, but through the mercy of God and the strength of some devout men and women, Israel moved on.

Here are three foreseeable ways in which the church is set back from its potential growth. First, the church today is being set back by worldliness. Perhaps this is the root of most setbacks in the church today. When one preaches against worldliness, one is preaching against people's ungodly beliefs, actions, and lifestyles. Sermons that confront worldliness deal with sin. People with unrepentant hearts may have their "feelings" hurt and even have despise for the messenger of the word. In reality, however, the messenger is doing them a favor because God's law is forever settled that, "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth" (I Jn. 1:6). Why does it seem like these "barn-burner" sermons are heard less and less in our pulpits?

Second, the church today is being set back with an attitude of accentuating "positive" preaching while aborting all forms of "negativity". Perhaps this stems from the above problem of worldliness. I ask myself, "Where do we get the authority to judge a sermon as negative or positive?" Should we not rather ask, "Is it

scriptural or profitable or accurate?" One man said, "If a preacher tells me how to avoid hell, that is pretty positive to me!" With that goes a big AMEN. The Jews were set back in New Testament days because they could not endure pointed, forceful, self-examining sermons (see Acts 7). Let's not be taken in by the modern complaint against Bible preaching as being *too negative* and non-compassionate, especially when it is scripturally based. If the Scripture doesn't edify and is considered negative to people, then their hearts are not right with God.

Finally, the church is set back by denominationalism. We want to be "like the denominations around us". We want our worship to be "like the denominations around us." We want preachers to preach "like the denominations around us." With this motivation, our future will be as bleak as Israel's during the reign of King Saul. Brethren, remember the admonition of the apostle, "Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables" (II Tim. 4:2-4). Perhaps when Paul penned this letter to the young evangelist he remembered when he and the other Pharisees were once accused by Stephen of being stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears (see Acts 7:51).

Brethren, let us remember the one whom we live for and seek to please. Paul asserted, "...do I seek to please men? For if I still please men, I would not be a servant of Christ" (Gal. 1:10). We are, in essence, set back when we quit concerning ourselves about pleasing God and begin seeking how to please men.

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