



ISSUE

24.36

September 4, 2022

Faithful Sayings

BULLETIN OF
THE OL-
SEN PARK
CHURCH OF
CHRIST

Services

Sunday: 9:00 AM

9:30 AM

10:30 AM

Wednesday: 7:00 PM

Elders:

Patrick Ledbetter

Brady McAlister

Jeff Nunn

Deacons:

Ben Hight

Blake McAlister

Walker McAnear

Sam Nunn

Lance Purcell

Justin Smiley

Trevor Yontz

Evangelist:

Kyle Pope

How Do I Speak about the Church?

By Kyle Pope

A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned (Matt. 12:35-37, NKJV).

As Christians, every day we interact with other people. Maybe it's our family, our coworkers, friends at school, or on social media—have you ever thought about what the things you say about your faith communicates to those people?

Perhaps you've had some disappointments with the church. Perhaps there are times that you wish things were different in your interaction with God's people. There can be value in constructively discussing those things with other Christians, especially if our goal is to improve, correct, or change things. But what if we choose to air our frustrations in front of non-believers?

Many unbelievers are very quick to talk bad about faith. To them, everything about the Lord's church, the gospel, and being a Christian is horrible. If I choose to vent my frustrations about faith or with my brothers and sisters in Christ in the presence of un-

believers that may just reinforce their thinking that faith in Christ is something to be avoided.

Some Christians imagine that it is an act of devotion to God to let everybody know how bad other Christians, congregations, elderships, or preachers are. Again, it's one thing if we are trying to help, but I fear sometimes we "shoot our own soldiers." We make it seem as if everybody except us has poor motives, acts in the wrong way, and is just not as sincere in service to God as we are. When other Christians hear our disappointments with God's people or with them personally it is discouraging. When non-Christians hear our com-

plaints about something we claim to be a part of, they conclude that believers are just hypocrites and pretenders. They feel justified in their commitment not even to try and follow God rather than become what they hear us criticize.

As Christians we are to let our light shine (Matt. 5:16). We must have the courage to expose sin and rebuke error (Eph. 5:11). Whether it's other Christians or alien sinners, we must never ignore sin or rationalize away the misdeeds or ourselves or others. But if we could weigh on balanced scales the things we say about the church with all the bad things on one side and praise, encouragement, and appreciation on the other, which way would the scale tip?

Have you ever noticed how easily younger children can be influenced by what they hear older children say? Maybe it's a video game the younger child once loved—if the older child thinks it's "lame" suddenly the younger child doesn't like it anymore. Perhaps it's a fashion trend. If the older child says it's now out of style, the younger child will never wear it again!

This isn't only true of children. Our family hears from us how foolish we think something is at church. Will they be encouraged to make faith a priority? Our friends hear us criticize the personality, style, clothing, or hairstyle of a teacher. Will that encourage them to find the class interesting, edifying, and valuable? I am not saying that we can't have preferences or

A photograph of a sunset over a field with trees. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm orange glow across the sky. The silhouettes of trees are visible against the bright background.

Olsen Park Church of Christ

that we should ignore things that are wrong, but do we extend to others the grace we hope they extend to us?

What if, instead, we tried deliberately to look for the good things in other Christians? What if we sought out those things about our congregation that are exceptional? What if in our conversations with others we chose to emphasize those things? Would that have a different impact on those who hear us? Could that be an influence for good?

Think about choices you make in life. Do you pursue the things you hear praised and spoken well of or the things you hear others disparage? If I told you, "I ate at that restaurant, but the food was too salty, the service was bad, the air conditioning was out, and there were flies everywhere!" is that somewhere you will rush to try? But what if you hear, "I love that restaurant, they have the best burgers, they're always busy, but the staff is so kind—it's like a picnic at the park!" you might want to try that.

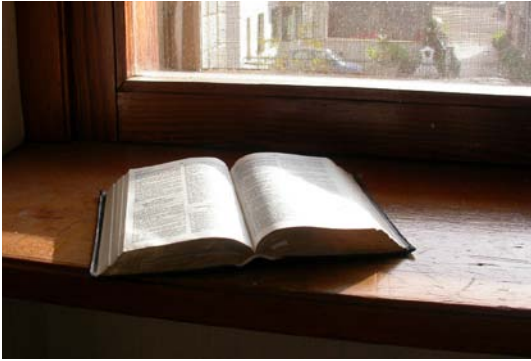
When people and things are not as they should be, it is amazing how sometimes encouragement in the areas that are good can help people grow, develop, and often even improve the areas in which they are deficient. Have you ever seen a child who once struggled in a particular subject in school begin to flourish when he or she has that exceptional teacher who made it all come together? A little positive reinforcement can do amazing things. Paul taught:

. . . whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate

on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you (Phil. 4:8-9).

The Bible teaches that those who have obeyed the gospel are members of Christ's body (Eph. 5:30). They were purchased with the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28) and part of the family of God (Eph. 3:14-15; Heb. 2:11). Are they flawless? No. Our sin is what demanded Christ's blood in the first place. Are they trying to serve God sincerely? Yes. If not, that too is a sin for which Christ died and they too need to grow, learn, and repent. In spite of these flaws, they are a special people (Titus 2:14; 1 Pet. 2:9) because God has set them apart (Acts 20:32; 1 Cor. 6:11; Heb. 10:14; Jude 1).

This assembly of God's people, the church, is a special institution (Heb. 12:22-23). We should appreciate it, respect its work, leadership,



and identity. We should honor it in the things we say (Eph. 3:8-12; Heb. 13:7, 17). To dishonor it is to dishonor God (Jas. 4:11). It belongs to Him. He established it (Matt. 16:18). Christ purchased it with His blood (1 Pet. 1:17-19). How do we feel when someone talks bad about things that belong to us? How must God feel when we talk bad about His family, His body, and

His people whom He purchased with His own blood?

May each of us think about this the next time we have the opportunity to talk about the people and relationship we as Christians enjoy in Christ. Are there flaws and shortcomings we could focus on in the frail fellow servants that are our brothers and sisters in Christ? Sure. Are there ways in which that congregation of believers could grow and do better? Sure, but may we value and appreciate the special treasure that brings souls together in Christ. May we “tip the scale” in praise, encouragement, and recognition of the glorious body of Christ and let all who hear us know the honor in which he esteem it.



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We are so glad that you joined us today.
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