

I'M LOOKING FOR A "FRIENDLY CHURCH"

Why is it that some people say they just cannot seem to find a "friendly" church? Did you ever hear someone say: "I'm looking for a friendly church"? They hop from one congregation to another, looking for that illusive "friendly church." Why is it that some folks can visit a congregation, and go away praising it: "Those are the *friendliest* people," while others can visit the same group, and complain that just the opposite is true.

Why do you suppose this diversity exists? Let me suggest some thoughts for reflection.

To some degree, "friendliness," like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder. A church may seem friendly to you because *you* are a friendly person, and friendliness attracts the same deportment in others. A kindly disposition is "magnetic," and, in many instances, it brings out the best in those you meet. Try being congenial to others and see what wonders it works.

In my early morning walks, I have developed the habit of speaking to people—those walking by, those waiting for buses, etc. At first, most of them will scarcely look at you—and almost never initiate a greeting (this is the "California cool"). But I have determined that I will give them a friendly, "Good morning." I have seen this produce phenomenal effects. Some people I see almost regularly, and they frequently speak to me first, or even wave from across the street. It has been a delightful experience.

We should try very hard to see to it that visitors at our church services get a special, wonderfully gracious greeting.

Some people don't give their brothers and sisters an opportunity to show them a cheerful countenance. They come at the last minute (so as to avoid visiting with others), and they beat a hot trail out of the building, to their automobile, cutting a wide path around anyone they feel might want to "assault" them with cordial conversation. This is a sad spectacle. But the problem for some is not that they find the members unfriendly; rather, they find the teaching and preaching "unfriendly." They desire a church of *convenience* rather than one of *conviction*. They are looking for a "churchy" environment wherein they may feel comfortable, without having their spiritual problems addressed. The old-timers used to describe it as having "just enough religion to make them miserable."

Any preacher who deals with error in the religious community, or who addresses problems within the church, may be assured that, eventually, he will be accused of being "unfriendly." And then, before long, the indictment will be leveled against the church at large. Many folks just will not take responsibility for their own problems. Of Course, it is possible for a minister to address volatile subjects in a rather "unfriendly" manner; that cannot be discounted.

While we must try our very best to be cordial and warm to others, we must also realistically concede that some people just don't take to friendship. As "Sheriff Andy Taylor" of Mayberry used to say: "Some folks won't have to be buried when they die. They'll just 'nasty' away."

Wayne Jackson

PRESIDENTIAL WISDOM

"There are men and women who make the world better just by being the kind of people they are. They have the gift of kindness or courage or loyalty or integrity. It really matters very little whether they are behind the wheel of a truck or running a business or bringing up a family. They teach the truth by living it" (*James A. Garfield*).

"...then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumb line in the midst of my people Israel..." (Amos 7:8)

THE PLEASANT VIEW PLUMB LINE

**WHOSOEVER SHALL CALL UPON THE
NAME OF THE LORD SHALL BE SAVED**

Text: _____

- I. The _____ of Calling upon the Lord's Name
 - A. Is it _____ related?
 - B. Is it _____ related?
- II. The _____ of Calling upon the Lord's Name
 - A. Call upon His name, _____?
 - B. Call upon His name, _____?
 - C. Call upon His name, _____?
- III. The _____ of Calling upon the Lord's Name
 - A. Brings _____
 - B. Brings _____
 - C. Brings _____

GETTING WHAT YOU ASK FOR

Text: _____

- I. The _____
 - A. Israel's _____ to Samuel
 - B. Samuel's and God's _____
- II. The _____
 - A. God's _____ to Samuel
 - B. Samuel's _____ to Israel
 - C. Israel's _____
- III. The _____
 - A. _____ Part
 - B. _____ Part
 - C. _____ Part

SUNSHINE AND DUST

A young girl after sweeping the room, went to the window shade and hastily drew it down, saying, "It makes the room so dusty to have the sunshine coming in." She foolishly imagined that it was the sunshine which made the dust whereas it only revealed it.

**HOW AN OLD-TIME PREACHER
HANDLED MISCHIEF**

One of the best known preachers of the first half of the twentieth century was J.D. Tant (1861-1941). My Dad knew brother Tant and heard him preach. A few months before Dad died, he was telling me about some of the preachers he had known and some of the things that had transpired in former days. Among those events was the following story of brother Tant that Dad said took place about 1912.

Brother Tant was preaching in a gospel meeting somewhere in south Texas and was baptizing a goodly number of people as they heard the message of truth so powerfully taught. Some of the ruffians decided to disrupt the meeting, and offered the "town clown" a side of ham and a bushel of corn if he would go forward at the meeting to be baptized, and come up from the water cursing. The brethren "got wind" of what was going to take place and anxiously warned brother Tant. He assured them that he would take care of it if it did occur and for them not to worry.

Sure enough, the suborned man came forward amidst several other respondents. Closing the service under the old "brush arbor," by lantern-light all made their way to the creek for the baptizings. Brother Tant baptized all the genuine folks first in a very meaningful way, saying something similar to what all Gospel preachers say when baptizing. After all the legitimate baptisms, he then said, "One more man has come to-night and if he'll now join me here in the creek we will take care of the matter." The man then waded out into chest-deep water to brother Tant with the ruffians mingled in the crowd looking one, all ready to laugh brother Tant to scorn when the man came up from the water cussing. But brother Tant, holding the man firmly in his strong arms, said with a loud voice, "For a side of ham and a bushel of corn, I now dunk one of the most worthless characters that was ever born." Whereupon brother Tant pushed him under the water and held him there for a bit, and when he finally did lift the man up above water level, the fellow was spewing and gasping for breath! Instead of cursing, he realized he was no match for brother Tant and hurriedly and meekly left the scene.

While the story is humorous, it gives us insight into what tough environs the "pioneer preachers" took the Gospel, and how they handled the situations which arose. Remember, the Bible says, "Answer a fool according to his folly, let he be wise in his own conceits" (Proverbs 26:5). Dad said the meeting continued for several more nights with numerous other responses. And the church of our Lord was established in another Texas town. Thank God for men like J.D. Tant.

THE BOOK OF THE PROPHET

The books of I and II Samuel are a continuation of the historical section of the Old Testament which began back in Joshua. It originally was included together as one manuscript rather than two separate books as English translations have rendered them and so therefore it could be said that these two comprise one book written by Samuel the judge and prophet. They record a significant time within the nation of the kingdom of Israel because Judges had concluded with the words, *“In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes”* (Judges 21:25). Not only does that verse indicate that there was no physical king appointed as of yet in Israel, but it defines the spiritual character of Israel as at that time they did not even submit to God as their King, therefore stating that there was absolutely no king recognized either of a human or divine nature in Israel. However, the most significant events of I and II Samuel put a change to that fact, though not really to the benefit of the nation.

Before the change in authority among the Israelite nation, though, another significant event occurred as recorded in I Samuel 1-3. A woman named Hannah gave birth to a child given to her by God because she had vowed that if He would bless her with a child that she would then dedicate that child to God’s service. It then was the case that she gave birth to Samuel and after weaning him, she took him to Eli, the high priest. Growing up in the service of the high priest, Samuel was closely associated with the daily tasks required of God’s servants and it was in I Samuel 3 that God, in the night, calls unto Samuel confirming him to then become His prophet, which he did.

It was many years later, a time in which Samuel had become an old man (I Samuel 8:1), that Israel grew cold toward the coming death of Samuel and the lack of ability his sons had to rule. They then came to Samuel demanding, *“...now make us a king to judge us like all the nations”* (I Samuel 8:5). How soon they had forgotten that God was their king, and His intention among them was never to promote a monarchy, but a theocracy (government of a state by the immediate direction of God). This demand was a displeasure both to Samuel and to God, but in order to teach them a lesson God directed Samuel to *“Now therefore hearken unto their voice: howbeit yet protest solemnly unto them, and shew them the manner of the king that shall reign over them”* (I Samuel 8:9). Therefore with that command Samuel was given direction by God to appoint a man named Saul to be the king over this united kingdom, which while united had only two more kings, David and Solomon.

Though impossible to give any detailed information about the events of these books, I and II Samuel record some of the highest and lowest times through which Israel would ever go. They gained great power and prestige through the reigns of Saul and David, yet, at the same time their continued rejection of God at times made life difficult to bear. II Samuel, in fact, closes with David still king over Israel, yet in a time of crisis from which they escaped only because of the quick repentance of offering of sacrifice by David on their behalf.

These two books cover a period of about 140 years (1146-1015 B.C.), including Samuel’s life, some of which paralleled with Saul’s 40 year reign, and then David’s 40 year reign. It is both possible and probable that Samuel wrote the events of I Samuel, by inspiration, as he was alive and around to witness the events; but there is some question as to who might have written the entirety of II Samuel seeing as Samuel was dead. There are really no certainties, but I Chronicles 29:29 points out something interesting. *“Now the acts of David the king, first and last, behold, they are written in the book of Samuel the seer, and in the book of Nathan the prophet, and in the book of Gad the seer.”* Wherein it is obvious that Samuel wrote at least I Samuel, it is possible that the books referred to as of Nathan and Gad would be the record of II Samuel. Nathan and Gad were both pupils from Samuel’s school of the prophets, and therefore would have been familiar with everything that was written anyway. However, as stated, there are no certainties other than the Holy Spirit of God is the original author anyway.

An interesting note likewise is the way Christ is pictured in I and II Samuel. In both instances Christ is pictured as being the antitype of persons from the record. Christ is first of all the antitype of Samuel, who is a type of Christ in that he was a prophet, priest, and judge; and Christ is the Prophet and High Priest today, and one day will be our Judge. Christ, secondly, is the antitype of David, through whom He came. Christ was *“the seed of David according to the flesh”* (Romans 1:3), therefore seen through the very life that David lived and the rule that one day would be His.

The books of Samuel, though historical, contain so much valuable information. Without them, certainly a complete knowledge of the Bible and its meanings would not be ours to enjoy.

-Andy Brewer