

IS IT NOTHING TO YOU, ALL YE THAT PASS BY?

Gary McDade

Jeremiah lamented the sin of Jerusalem in departing from God's way. The problem of indifference received attention in Lamentations 1:12 as stated above. The question bears repeating today in view of Steve Flatt being invited to speak at the Growing by Sharing in April. He was a perennial presenter on the now discontinued Nashville Jubilee with well known errorists such as Joe Beam, Jeff Walling, and Rubel Shelly. The significance here is that many of his teachings mirror Shelly's. For example, "It is not accurate to say the church and the kingdom are one in the same," and the so-called "discovery" of an increase of the miraculous spiritual gifts of I Corinthians 12:8-10 from the nine mentioned in the text to sixteen allegedly mentioned elsewhere thereby endeavoring to blur the line between the miraculous and non-miraculous.¹ Also, many of the professors at Lipscomb University where Flatt is the president worship at Woodmont Hills where Shelly is the preacher. Among them is John Mark Hicks, co-founder of the Cordova Community Church.²

One reason why the annual Growing by Sharing has dwindled from a week long training series for congregations in the Mid-South to basically a single evening shared by only about three or four congregations is because of the questionable reputation at best of the speakers. Most Memphis congregations cannot fully and freely associate with known trouble makers in the church today. Shelly's advancement of the false view of Christians-in-all-the-denominations is not a matter of recent development. Middle Tennesseans will remember the two newspaper articles where Shelly responded to Waylon Jennings' autobiography and compromised the truth.

In the first article, religious writer Brad Schmitt wrote, "In case you haven't had your fill of religion controversies lately, I offer you this, from an advance copy of Waylon Jennings' autobiography: 'Of all the religions I've run into, the Church of Christ has probably got it wronger than anybody,' Waylon writes. His parents both belonged to a Church of Christ congregation.

"They're self-righteous, narrow-minded, and truly believe they're the only ones going to Heaven. If you don't believe the way we do they say, you're going to go straight to hellfire and damnation. With a side order of brimstone.' "Jennings was

asked if he thought he would make a lot of fundamentalists angry. ““Well, I probably will. But I don’t care.””³

[It is doubtful from his lifestyle that Jennings has “run into many religions.” It is shameful that the admonitions of reform from loving Christian parents are styled by their famous son as “self-righteous” and “narrow-minded.”]

In the second article which appeared the next day where Shelly gave his disappointing reply, Schmitt wrote, “From the *Brad About You* mailbag: lots of comments on Waylon Jennings’ calling the Church of Christ ‘self-righteous’ and ‘wrong’ in his autobiography. Rubel Shelly, minister at the Woodmont Hills Church of Christ, provided the most thoughtful and sensitive. He acknowledges the church in days past might have fit such a description. Shelly says he hopes, though, the church has grown beyond the views that only Church of Christ parishioners are true Christians.

““Thanks for the quote,’ Shelly writes.

““It will serve me well in trying to teach against what I inherited and have had to come to terms with.””⁴

Do those bringing Flatt, whose mentor is Shelly, to Memphis believe there are “true Christians” outside the church of Christ? Since, number one, the Lord adds the saved to the church (Acts 2:47). And, number two, the church is the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23). And, number three, Jesus Christ is the Savior of the body (Eph. 5:23). And, number four, there is one body (Eph. 4:4). Then, no one can be saved, i.e., be a “true Christian,” outside of the body of Christ which is the church of Christ. How can someone “grow beyond” these truths without departing from God’s way. “Is it nothing to you?”

Several Christian Colleges, such as Harding (undergraduate), Freed-Hardeman, and Faulkner, recently have published their positions on certain fundamental teachings of the New Testament including affirming belief in the one body of Christ being the church of Christ and the essentiality of membership in the one body. Lipscomb is missing from that list. Will Lipscomb’s president follow suit and risk being at loggerheads with his mentor? Will Lipscomb’s president follow suit and risk offending many of his professors who attend his mentor’s congregation?

In the *Tennessean* articles Shelly made it clear that he is “trying to teach against” the exclusive nature of the church. Does the two thousand plus weekly attendance

figure and the forty thousand plus weekly contribution figure at Woodmont Hills have something to do with bringing Shelly's student to Memphis? Has "truth fallen in the street"? (Isa. 59:14). "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?"

ENDNOTES

1Steve Flatt, audio cassette tape from the Madison Church of Christ in Nashville, Tennessee.

2*LoveLines*, the weekly newsletter of the Family of God at Woodmont Hills, (January 17, 2001), 27:3, p. 3.

3"Waylon, don't sugarcoat it," *Nashville Tennessean* (June 27, 1996).

4"Preacher responds to Waylon," *Nashville Tennessean* (June 28, 1996).