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- Audio Sermons
- Bible-based Articles
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## Please Join us for Bible Study and Worship

Sundays

9:30am - Bible Study

10:20am & 5pm - Worship

Wednesdays

7pm - Bible Study

## Jones Road Church of Christ

17312 Jones Road Athens, AL 35613 (256) 233-3160

**"Finally, brethren, 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."**

Philippians 4:8



# The Friendly Visitor

August 2017

*"For a man to have friends, he must show himself friendly." Proverbs 18:24*

## Are We Willing to Listen?

By John R. Gibson

"He who answers a matter before he hears it, It is folly and shame to him....

The first one to plead his cause seems right, Until his neighbor comes and examines him." Proverbs 18:13, 17

"It's simply ridiculous that anyone would want to remove the statues of Robert E. Lee son from our public change history by monument." I know feel that way, but if ment, have you ever who advocate their really sought to un- statues bother some people and why they think they need to come down?



and Stonewall Jack-parks! You can't tearing down a a lot of people who that is your senti-listened to those removal? I mean, derstand why these

Perhaps you are on the other side and struggle to understand the devotion to men who led the South in a disastrous war fought with the chief aim of keeping people enslaved. You may think anyone who argues in favor of keeping these monuments has be a racist or at least have a sense of white superiority within him, but have you listened, really listened, to the ones defending the statues?

I'm not suggesting this is an occasion where one answer is equal to the other, for the monuments cannot both remain and be removed, but I am saying emphatically that far too many form opinions and speak out on issues like these without giving the opposing viewpoint a full hear-

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ing. Because you and I will likely have little say in whether these monuments remain or are removed, this is not primarily about Civil War statues, but the importance of giving people a fair hearing. Solomon calls it foolish and shameful to answer a matter without hearing all the facts, and in issues relating to race and social justice it is often difficult for us to grasp the perspective from which someone of a different race or from a different background sees an issue; however, the command to love my neighbor as myself obligates me to try.

It doesn't take long for those who are married to learn that men and women come at things from very different viewpoints, but those who are successful and happy in their marriages will listen and seek to understand why this or that issue is so important to their spouse. A man doesn't have to become a woman nor the wife become a man, but to maintain compatibility and love we understand how essential it is that we listen and seek to understand the things which are important to them. Similarly, while a white person will never fully understand what it is like to be black, he can listen and strive for a better grasp of that man's perspective. Once a person comes to realize his viewpoint is inherently different, he sees the need to stop and think about the other side and how this or that issue might be perceived by one of a different background. And on the other side, a black man who has felt discriminated against may find it difficult to feel sympathy for the complaints of the white man who feels he has been unfairly labeled as a racist, but will he listen? Will the white man be allowed to "plead his cause?"

You and I can't make the racial strife in this country go away, but if our lights shine brightly enough in seeking to better understand others, and we genuinely care about their perspective (Matthew 5:14-16; Philippians 2:15-16), at least a few lives will be made better. And if our greatest concern for our neighbor is what it ought to be, then the spirit of understanding we are talking about will better equip us to bring people to unity with one another through a shared fellowship with the One who died for all.

*"For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some."* 1 Corinthians 9:19-22

*"For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has bro-*

*ken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity."* Ephesians 2:14-16

## Don't Turn to the Right or the Left Hand

*By John R. Gibson*

Have you ever noticed the contrasts presented in Colossians 2:20—3:7? At the end of chapter 2 a warning is sounded against those who would go beyond God's word in imposing restrictive rules on the saints, but then chapter 3 reminds us there are moral standards to be observed and calls on all to put to death their earthly desires as it condemns sexual immorality, uncleanness, etc.

How do we respond to these two very different teachings? Some become so concerned about violations of God's moral standards that they move in the direction of demanding that others "Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle" (2:21), while others who pick up on the fact that some have become "stricter" than God overreact and begin to loosen the standards God has laid down.

May God help us to see that both of these are wrong. Let's not go beyond the biblical demands of holiness to impose our own regulations on the lives of others. At same time, let's not allow the surrounding culture or our own earthly desires to lead us away from God's standards. As Joshua said about the Law, let's not "turn aside from it to the right hand or to the left." Josh.ua23:6

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**"Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' 'You shall not covet,' and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law."**

Romans 13:8-10