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The Measure of the Stature of the Fullness of Christ

Ronald D. Bryant

God has no plans for mankind apart from His Son, Jesus Christ. In times past God had a number of spokesmen, He now speaks to us through His Son (Hebrews 1:1).

In keeping with the eternal purpose of God, Jesus the Son of God has "become for us wisdom from God and righteousness and sanctification and redemption" (1 Corinthians 1:30). As regards redemption, God's plans find their actual fulfillment in Christ: "For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us" (2 Corinthians 1:20).

Speaking to one of His disciples, Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). Jesus is the mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5). Jesus Christ is the center and the circumference of all of God's dealings with mankind. He is the ideal, and is therefore the pattern for life. God's objective is bound up with Him; it is to the end that "we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13).

God made man in His likeness, declaring, "Let us make man in our image after our likeness. So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Genesis 1:26-27). God purposed that man live out that likeness. The entrance of sin into the world was a far greater tragedy than is often recognized. In sinning, man did far more than violate law; he marred his im-

age – his very being. Even then God did not abandon His desire for man to be one with Him. In loving care and with infinite wisdom God provided the very means for man's restoration. At the exact right moment in time, and in keeping with heaven's plan, Jesus came in the likeness of sinful flesh, and in His earthly life demonstrated that which man had failed to be. God was in Christ, fulfilling His eternal purpose, that man should possess life eternal, being fully identified with Christ and in covenant relationship with Him; to the end that the redeemed might know, "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."

God's purpose in Christ was that of "bringing many sons to glory" (Hebrews 2:10). He longed to do far more than rescue man from sin. God desired to mold us into "the image of His Son (i.e. share in His likeness and character) that He might become the first-born of many brethren" (Romans 8:29). Or, as Paul wrote to the Colossians, "the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily" (Colossians 1:26-29).

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Many years ago the venerable Cled E. Wallace wrote the following:

"Much is being said about the right kind of preaching and writing. Charges of 'hard' and 'soft' are being bandied back and forth. With as plain a book as the New Testament in hand, and with its abundant supply of examples of the very best preaching and writing, it ought not to be a difficult thing to determine the kind of both that should be done. A direct appeal to the New Testament, its preachers and its writers, ought to settle any question that arises in such a connection. Men who say the most about 'the right method of approach,' 'constructive articles,' etc., betray the fact that a lot of their ideas come from modern psychology, materialistic philosophy, and sectarian sources rather than from Jesus and the apostles. It is futile to do a lot of talking about the method of approach, when you never approach. It would improve some preachers and writers if they could forget about the method and go ahead and approach. The main idea is getting there anyhow" (Cled E. Wallace, *Bible Banner*, Vol. 1, Num. 11, June 1939).

Examples of Biblical Preaching

As you can see, this article was written in June of 1939, and it is as timely as ever. In fact, quite a few brethren continue to rely upon "modern psychology, materialistic philosophy, and sectarian sources rather than from Jesus and the apostles" when it comes to their method of preaching. They hide behind their false conception of Paul's charge to "speak the truth in

love" while disregarding the divinely recorded sermons he preached. If one desires to know what Paul meant when he told us to speak the truth in love, go to the examples of his sermons and see how he did it. Moreover, go and learn from the sermons preached by the apostles, Stephen, and our Lord Himself.

What Is Biblical Preaching?

In these words of encouragement to Timothy, Paul defines the subject of biblical preaching:

"Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching" (2 Timothy 4:2; NKJV).

- Biblical preaching demands preaching the word – whether it is popular or not.
- Biblical preaching requires preaching doctrine or "teaching" in a way that will "convince, rebuke, and exhort" the hearer.
- Biblical preaching appeals to the spiritual as well as the intellectual nature of man. It requires the whole of God's word being imparted to the whole of man.

Through biblical preaching, we address the intellect, awaken the spirit, and appeal to the will of the listener. We encourage those listening to be "doers of the word and not hearers only" (James 1:22). We expect them to respond faithfully to the message, but we should avoid gauging our success on the basis of their response. We must "preach the word" regardless of

how God's divine truth may be received by our fellow-man. The people must know that their preacher loves them; but they must also know that he loves God *more*.

Biblical preaching is not just a matter of style, taste, or preference. Whether or not one preaches the word of God is a matter of authority. That which distinguishes the message of the gospel preacher from the message of the world is the authority by which the message is spoken. Biblical preaching is a message authorized by God (cf. Titus 2:15). It is the only message authorized by God, as it is the word of God.

We Need Biblical Preachers

Biblical preaching is intended to save man from his sins, but it will not always be pleasing to man. For this very reason, preachers of the gospel and their families must be more concerned with the salvation of souls than job security. Preachers who are more concerned with job security than the salvation of souls need to repent or get out of the way. If a man is ministering only to his personal self-interests and job security, he is doing nothing more than "peddling the word" (2 Corinthians 2:17), "exploiting with deceptive words" (2 Peter 2:3), in order to receive "wages of unrighteousness" (2 Peter 2:13).

A gospel preacher should never be concerned with being the most popular speaker in town or speaking only that with which the majority agrees. Anyone can do that. But, it takes a gospel preacher to preach the word – in season and out of season – and to return our communities, our churches, and our families to God.

The

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The Judgment of God

Ernest Underwood

There are many calls which God makes to mankind. He calls man to obedience, to righteous living, to death, to judgment, and finally to eternity. Two of these – obedience and righteous living – are put in the area of man's free moral agency. This simply means that man is free to heed these calls, or he may disregard them. However, one must realize that he will suffer the consequences for failing to heed either of these two.

The other three calls are not optional. Each of us will answer each of these calls regardless of whether we are prepared to do so or not. In short, we will die, be judged, and then be ushered into eternity.

In this article we will be concerned with God's call to judgment. In Romans 2, four statements are made about the judgment of God. Let us now notice Paul's statements.

Judgment According to His Truth

In verse two of Romans the second chapter, he states, "But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things." Truth shall be the standard used in God's judgment of us. On that great day, our opinions and feelings will have no place. Though both of these still hold sway in the lives and thinking of many today, on that day, truth and only truth, will shine forth.

This truth will be God's holy word. "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth" (John 17:17). In John 12:48 Jesus plainly stated, "He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him; the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day."

Does anyone doubt this? If so, read John's description of the "great white throne" and the judgment day scene: "Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were

judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books" (Revelation 20:11-12).

In this great scene we have God's word, and God's copy of man's deeds. Man may deny his deeds, even sealing his records so that others may not see them, but they are not sealed from God. He may disobey or refuse to obey that word today. He may even prosper in material things, apparently getting away with murder, and he may thumb his nose at God's spiritual and moral laws, but the judgment day is coming, and truth will be the standard used for that judgment.

Judgment According to Our Works

His judgment will be according to our works. "But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to each one according to his deeds" (Romans 2:5-6).

Yes, we are aware that there are those religious groups who teach that man has nothing to do in his salvation, but even then they contradict themselves by telling those who follow that all you have to do is to "Say the sinner's prayer," or to "Just believe."

However, this is not what the Bible teaches. Certainly, one is not saved by works for which he can boast (cf. Ephesians 2:8-9); but when one obeys a command of God, he – that person – has no grounds whatsoever to boast.

When Jesus stated, "Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins" (John 8:24), He stated a work that man must do. He also stated, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent" (John 6:29).

James wrote, "You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only" (James 2:24). There is no contradiction between Paul in Ephesians 2:9 and James in this passage. One passage speaks of works for which man can boast – works of merit – and, the

other passage speaks of works of obedience to the commands of God.

When one teaches that salvation can be obtained without obeying any God-given command to be saved, whether it is having faith, repenting of one's past sins, confessing Christ as Lord, or being baptized in water for the remission of sins, he teaches salvation by the works or creeds of men, and is thus under the condemnation of God (cf. Galatians 1:6-9). When one adds anything to the worship of God, or takes anything away from that worship, whether it is burning candles, praying to so-called saints, counting beads, or using the mechanical instrument of music as a part of praise, he teaches and practices that for which he has no authority. Such worship is vain and sinful. It is vain because it is according to the doctrines of men, and it is sinful because it violates God's prohibition of either adding to, or subtracting from His word (cf. Matthew 15:8-9; Revelation 22:18-19).

When we each stand before the judgment bar of God we shall be judged for our own works; that is, the carrying out of the commands of God. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Judgment without Partiality

In Romans 2:11, we read: "For there is no partiality with God." Peter stated this same thing as he began his teaching to the house of Cornelius: "Of a truth I perceive that God shows no partiality" (Acts 10:34).

In the context of the first chapter of Romans we learn that it is the judgment of God which Paul is discussing. This simply means that on that day it will not matter how many millions or billions of dollars one may have had. It will not matter if he/she has been king, queen, president, movie star, sports celebrity, or in any other such position. It will not matter whether one's skin pigment is dark brown, pinkish white, reddish brown, the shade of old ivory, or whatever other pigments there may be. It will not make any difference if one has been an extremely popular "evangelist," "pastor," "faith healer," or any others who have made merchandise of the gospel and of their hearers.

On that day, the only thing that will matter will be whether one walked with God according to His word.

All the prejudices and hatreds will vanish. Those who are herein described will cry for the rocks to fall on them as they call to mind the words of Jesus when He stated, "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works" (Matthew 16:26-27).

Judgment that Is Certain

Romans 2:3 states: "And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God?"

Paul is simply stating that God's judgment is incapable. As one reads the Old Testament prophets, he becomes aware of the fact that the nations of Israel and Judah were under the delusion that they could live as they so pleased, yet escape the judgment of God. Any casual Bible student knows the outcome of such thinking.

There are multitudes today who express by words and actions their belief that either there will be no judgment, or that they will be able to pull a few strings on that day and escape the punishment which will be meted out to them. Such persons should read and heed Paul's warning, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life" (Galatians 6:7-8).

Each of us must remember the statement of the writer of the book of Hebrews when he stated, "And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment..." (Hebrews 9:27).

A Plea for Your Soul

Are you ready for the judgment of God? Even as I write this article, I have received word that a dear friend has recently died. I know little of his spiritual condition. But this I do know, the spiritual condition in which he died is the spiritual condition in which he will meet God on that day!

Such things ought to cause us all to bring our lives into harmony with the will of God.

Do Miracles Occur?

Robert L. Waggoner

Individuals usually affirm or deny the reality of miracles depending upon whether or not they accept or reject the existence of God and the reliability of the Bible. People who believe only in the typical operations of nature think that miracles could never have existed because they believe such would have been a violation of natural laws. They think that the laws of nature do not change, that miracles are unlikely because nature is thought to act with regularity whereas miraculous activity is irregular, and that miracles could not have existed because they cannot be explained by science. They think that all miraculous events portrayed in the Bible must be explained by natural causation. Such thinking distorts the meaning of the biblical concept of miracles.

The Bible portrays miracles as immediate unnatural events that are caused by the supernatural power of God. Some miracles came directly from God and were independent of human agency, such as the creation of the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1-2; Ps 33:9; Isaiah 42:5; 45:12; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 11:3), feeding the Israelites with manna in the wilderness (Exodus 16:12-23), the resurrection of Jesus (Matthew 28:1-7; Mark 16:1-7; Luke 24:1-7; 1 Corinthians 15:3-20), and Jesus' ascension into heaven (Acts 1:9-11).

Some miracles from God were associated with human agency, such as Moses leading the Israelites across the Red Sea (Exodus 14-15), the walls of Jericho falling down after the Israelites marched around the city in the prescribed way (Joshua 6), healing of lame men by Peter (Acts 3:1-8) and by Paul (Acts 14:8-10), etc.

CLARIFICATION OF THE ISSUE

Is the issue really about whether or not miracles have existed, or is the issue about what standards should be used to judge whether or not miracles have occurred? Inasmuch as serious rejections to the reality of miracles did not exist until seventeen centuries after the birth of Christ, is it not reasonable to suppose that the standards for assessing whether or not miracles have existed have changed?

Until recent centuries, people generally believed in the supernatural and therefore had no reluctance to believe in the existence and reality of miracles. With the type of thinking that came from the Renaissance and the so-called "Enlightenment" eras, people gradually but increasingly began to reject the concept of the supernatural. Societies' rejection of supernatural beliefs has now been replaced with the belief that nature is all there is and that the only acceptable standard for evaluating human thinking is information derived from science. This process automatically requires denial of belief in the existence not only of miracles but also of God.

The issue then is whether or not the current standard is valid for evaluating the possibility that miracles have existed. Some matters need further consideration. Why did people once generally believe in the reality of miracles? On what basis did people previously reject the working of miracles? Is nature all there is? Why have miracles occurred? Do miracles occur now? Will they occur in the future?

WHY DID PEOPLE ONCE GENERALLY BELIEVE IN THE REALITY OF MIRACLES?

Until recent centuries the idea of the supernatural was generally accepted in all societies. Since consideration of what is real was not limited to what is natural, miracles were considered plausible within the realm of the supernatural. Because miracles were not typical events within nature, when miracles happened, people were amazed and marveled at them (Matthew 8:27; 9:6-8, 33; 12:22-23; 15:31; 21:20; Mark 1:26-27; 2:12; 5:20; 6:51; Luke 4:33-36; 9:42-43; 11:14; Acts 2:7, 12; 3:11; 8:13).

Miracles were seen (Matthew 14:26; 15:31; 21:20) and heard (Matthew 17:6; Acts 2:1-8). They were performed in the presence of credible witnesses (Matthew 14:15-21; Mark 8:1-9) and generally recognized as beneficial (Matthew 4:23; 9:35; Luke 6:17-18; 9:6, 11).

Miraculous events produced instantaneous effects (Acts 3:5-11; 9:36-42; 14:7-18) and demonstrated facts (1 Kings 18:36-39; Romans 1:3-4). People there-

fore recognized that miracles were associated with meanings. Thus, during and immediately following biblical times, everyone – whether friend or foe – acknowledged the reality of miracles.

ON WHAT BASIS DID PEOPLE PREVIOUSLY REJECT THE WORKING OF MIRACLES?

During Jesus' lifetime, whenever people opposed the working of miracles they did so only because they were performed on the Sabbath day (Matthew 12:10-12, Mark 3:2, Luke 13:14-16). Although opponents did not reject the reality of miracles, they sometimes rejected the message that accompanied a miracle (Acts 4:1-2), and/or they willfully rejected those who performed miracles (John 11:46-53).

Jewish leaders believed that miracles and those who performed them constituted a challenge to their authority. They therefore resisted them because they did not want to lose their power over the people (John 5:16-18; 11:46-53; Acts 4:13-18; 5:28).

IS NATURE ALL THERE IS?

The proposition that nature is all that exists (i.e., that the supernatural does not exist) is affirmed not by Christianity but by the humanist worldview. Notice the following quotations from significant humanist documents.

"Humanism asserts that the nature of the universe depicted by modern science makes unacceptable any supernatural or cosmic guarantees of human values" (*Humanist Manifesto I, Fifth*).

"Any account of nature should pass the tests of scientific evidence; in our judgment, the dogmas and myths of traditional religions do not do so. Even at this late date in human history, certain elementary facts based upon the critical use of scientific reason have to be restated. We find insufficient evidence for belief in the existence of a supernatural; it is either meaningless or irrelevant to the question of the survival and fulfillment of the human race. As non-theists, we begin with humans not God, nature not deity" (*Humanist Manifesto II, Religion, First*).

"We consider the universe to be a dynamic scene of natural forces that are most effectively understood by scientific inquiry. We are always open to the discovery of new possibilities and phenomena in nature. However, we find that traditional views of the exist-

ence of God either are meaningless, have not yet been demonstrated to be true, or are tyrannically exploitative. Secular humanists may be agnostics, atheists, rationalists, or skeptics, but they find insufficient evidence for the claim that some divine purpose exists for the universe" (*A Secular Humanist Declaration, 6. Religious Skepticism*).

Although Humanists consider science to be the means for determining the nature of things that exist, science cannot determine whether there is existence beyond the realm of nature. Therefore to claim that nature is all that exists is only an assumption not verifiable by scientific experimentation. This assumption disallows the existence of the supernatural and thereby excludes acceptance of ideas about divine revelation, miraculous events, or life after death because these things are not within the natural realm of things.

WHY DID MIRACLES OCCUR?

Compassion obviously moved Jesus to perform many miracles of healing (Matthew 14:14; Mark 1:40-42; 9:17-27). Many miracles performed by Jesus and His apostles related to healing the sick (Luke 7:22; Acts 5:12-16; 19:11-12), casting out demons (Matthew 12:22; Mark 1:39; Luke 4:41; 8:30-39; 9:1-2; 10:17), and raising the dead (Luke 7:11-17; 8:41, 51-56; John 11:43-44; Acts 9:36-42). Even so, Jesus emphasized preaching over healing (Mark 1:35-38).

The primary purpose of miracles was to confirm the truthfulness of God's revealed message and the authenticity of God's messengers, even though miracles were beneficial to individuals and demonstrated God's power. Miracles were given to accompany revelations from God. This can be noted from several incidents. First, before the Law of Moses was given (Exodus 20, Hebrews 12:25-26), Moses thought that the Egyptians would not believe that he had been sent to free the Israelites. God gave him the power to change his rod into a serpent and then back again into a rod so that the Egyptians "may believe that the LORD God of their fathers . . . has appeared to you" (Exodus 4:5). Second, when God's people needed restoration from imminent apostasy, e.g., when fire consumed Elijah's sacrifice (1 Kings 18:31-39), and third, when Christ instituted the new covenant (Hebrews 1:1-2; 2:3-4).

Many miracles of Jesus were performed to prove that He was the Son of God. The man whom Jesus healed of his blindness recognized that Jesus was a

prophet because he was now able to see (John 9:17). When Jesus healed a paralytic, it served as proof to those in the room that Jesus was "the Son of Man" and could forgive sins (Mark 2:4-11). The apostle John wrote about the miracles of Jesus in order "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31).

Many miracles of Jesus demonstrated His power over nature. He calmed the stormy Sea of Galilee (Matthew 8:23-27), walked on the water (Matthew 14:25-26; Mark 6:48-49; John 6:19), and destroyed an unproductive fig tree (Matthew 21:19).

The message of salvation was confirmed by miracles. Peter's message on the Day of Pentecost about salvation in Christ was confirmed by the miracle of the apostles' speaking in foreign languages to convince people that the message was true (Acts 2). The household of Cornelius miraculously spoke in tongues to convince Peter and others that the gospel was for Gentiles as well as for Jews (Acts 10:34-48; 11:15-18).

In summary, apostolic messages of salvation, spoken by the Lord and His apostles, were confirmed to "those who heard Him, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit" (Hebrews 2:3-4). When no need existed to confirm a message from God, sick individuals were sometimes not healed. Thus, Epaphroditus remained sick in Rome (Philippians 2:26-27), Timothy had frequent infirmities (1 Timothy 5:23), and Trophimus was "left in Miletus sick" (2 Timothy 4:20).

DO MIRACLES EXIST NOW?

WILL THEY EXIST IN THE FUTURE?

Although miracles were performed during biblical times, several arguments can be given to prove that biblical miracles no longer exist. First, miracles to confirm the word of God are no longer needed since we now have the written word of God. Paul informed the Corinthians that "when that which is perfect is come" (i.e., the written word) "then that which is in part" (i.e., prophecy, tongue speaking, miracles, etc.) "will be done away" (1 Corinthians 13:10). Second, "all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him" (2 Peter 1:3) have already been revealed through the new covenant. Hence, there is no further need for miracles to confirm any revela-

tions from God. Third, the special gift of miracles from the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:7-10) which was bestowed by the apostles' hands is no longer available because no one is now qualified to perform miracles.

Jesus granted the apostles their abilities to perform miracles (Matthew 10:1; Mark 3:14-15; 6:7; Luke 9:1-2; 24:49; Acts 1:8; 5:14-16; 14:8-10; 28:8-9), and they sometimes granted that ability to others in the church (Acts 6:6, 8; 8:6-7; 1 Corinthians 12:4-10; 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6). However, those persons who were granted these special gifts through the laying on of the apostles' hands had no power from God to pass these miraculous gifts on to others. Phillip had the ability to work miracles, but not being an apostle, he had no ability to give to others the ability to work miracles (Acts 8:6-7, 14-17). Hence, the ability for people to perform miracles ceased when the apostles died.

According to the Bible, a miracle will occur in the future, i.e., at the end of time. This will be when the dead arise (John 5:28-29; 1 Corinthians 15:12-24; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18) to stand in judgment before God (2 Corinthians 5:10; Hebrews 9:27; 2 Thessalonians 1:4-10; Revelation 20:11-15) and be directed toward eternal destiny (Matthew 25:31-46).

CONCLUSION

Miracles were supernatural acts of God. Although miracles often benefited individuals, their primary functions were to confirm divine revelations and to authenticate God's messengers. Although miracles operate within nature, they are not typical natural events.

The existence of miracles can be neither proven nor disproven by scientific experimentation because science does not operate in the supernatural realm. People who do not believe in the existence of miracles do so because they reject the supernatural, whereas people who do believe in the existence of miracles do so because they believe in divine revelation.

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Calling on the Name of the Lord

Owen D. Olbricht

No one should question that we are saved by "calling on the name of the Lord" for the Bible clearly states that we are (Joel 2:32; as quoted in Acts 2:21; Romans 10:13). The question to be asked is, "What does calling on the name of the Lord mean?" Does it mean to call out and say, "Lord, Lord"? Does it mean to pray or to say the "sinner's prayer"? What does it mean?

The Meaning of "Call" in the Old Testament

"Call" (Joel 2:32) is the translation of the Hebrew *qara*. It appears in the OT over 711 times and is used of giving a person a name, preaching, crying to God, and God calling to man. Only the context can determine its meaning in each case. Prayer to God is not an intrinsic meaning of the word.

The Meaning of "Call" in the New Testament

In the NT the Greek word *epikaleo*, used in "call on the name" (Acts 2:21; 22:16; Romans 10:13), is a compound verb *epi*, meaning "on" "upon;" and *kaleo*, "call," and appears 32 times:

- 11 times of a surname, the name by which one is called (Matt. 10:3; Luke 22:3; Acts 1:23; 4:36; 10:5, 18, 32; 11:13; 12:12, 25; 15:22).
- 6 times of Paul's appeal for Caesar to hear his case (Acts 25:11, 12, 21, 25; 26:32; 28:19).
- 6 times to call on the name (Acts 2:21; 9:14, 21; 22:16; Rom. 10:13; 1 Cor. 1:2).
- 6 times call on God, Him, Lord, Father (Acts 5:59; Rom. 10:12, 14; 2 Cor. 1:13; 2 Tim. 2:22; 1 Pet. 1:17).
- 3 times to be called by a name (Acts 15:17; 11:26; James 2:7).

Call on the Name of the Lord

In the NT, when *epikaleo* means "call on," it carries the meaning of "to appeal," and "to invoke." Paul wanted his case to be heard by Caesar, thus he made his appeal to appear before him. He did not pray to Caesar.

An appeal can be made in different ways. A beggar may call for help by holding out his hand, another by

the expression on his face, while another might call on someone for help. We can also appeal for a benefit when we do what another person tells us to do to receive that benefit.

The questions to be asked are how does a person make an appeal in the name of the Lord, when can he make the appeal, is the appeal in the form of a prayer, and is a verbal appeal what is meant?

Is a Verbal Call All that Is Required?

Does "calling on the name of the Lord" include all that is necessary for salvation? Will a person be saved who verbally says, "Lord," who has not heard about Jesus, does not believe in Jesus (Romans 10:13, 14), is unwilling to change his way of living to please Jesus (Acts 3:19), and will not confess Jesus (Matthew 10:32, 33)? If these are also necessary because they are taught in other places in the Bible, then why would baptism not also be included, which is also said to be necessary?

Jesus taught that simply calling on the Lord's name is not enough. He said, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven" (Matthew 7:21). In the day of judgment, Jesus will reply to many who say, "Lord, Lord," by saying, "I never knew you" (Matthew 7:22).

Jesus taught that besides saying, "Lord, Lord," God's will must be obeyed. What is the Father's "will" as revealed by Jesus (John 12:49, 50) and the apostles who were given His word through the Holy Spirit (John 14:26)? Clearly, they taught that baptism is necessary in order to be forgiven and before being saved (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21). Just calling out "Lord, Lord" is not all the Bible teaches as necessary. God's will must be done.

Jesus said, "But why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46) Calling a person "Lord" implies a willingness to accept Him as Lord and to do what he says. A slave might say "Master, Master," but such are empty words if he will not respond to him as his master. Calling Jesus

"Lord" should mean that we will respond to Him as Lord. If this is not true, our statement would betray those that do not accept him as Lord. Those who call Jesus, "Lord" and are unwilling to be baptized to be saved are not respecting Him as Lord, thus they make known that they do not believe in Him as Lord and in their hearts they are not calling Him "Lord."

The Context of Acts 2:21

The context of Acts 2:21 will show that just calling out, "Lord, Lord," or praying is not what is meant by "call." After Peter quoted this passage and convinced many Jews that Jesus is Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36, 37, 41), he answered their question as to what they were to do to be forgiven of the crime of crucifying Jesus who is Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36).

Peter said, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

In response to Peter's statement, 3,000 were baptized in respect to the authority of Jesus' name. He did not tell them to say, "Lord," pray, or simply call out for forgiveness in Jesus' name. Peter did not interpret Joel to mean that calling on Jesus' name meant prayer. Peter knew it meant to respond in His name to Him as Lord.

Calling on the Name of the Lord at Baptism

Like Saul of Tarsus, we are to call on the name of the Lord when we are being baptized (Acts 22:16). Saul/Paul had come to believe in Jesus, had repented, and began to fast and pray after Jesus appeared to him (Acts 9:9, 11). To Paul, calling on the name of the Lord did not include prayer, but obedience by being baptized.

When a person is baptized, an appeal is to be made in Jesus' name (Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5), and based upon His authority (Colossians 3:17; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 12). Paul understood this, for when Ananias told him to be baptized "calling on the name of the Lord," he did not begin to pray or call on Jesus' name for his sins to be washed away; but, he immediately arose and was baptized (Acts 9:18).

Conclusion

Properly understood, calling on the name of the Lord is necessary in order to be saved, which means in

the act of baptism we make our appeal in Jesus' name for our sins to be forgiven. People who correctly call on Jesus as Lord are those who willingly do His will. Those who are unwilling to submit to Him as Lord are hypocritical if they call on His name and refuse to obey Him. By their actions they are denying Him as Lord by not obeying Him as Lord, even though they may be "calling" on His name. Those whose sins will be washed away are those who make their appeal in the name of the Lord when they are baptized.

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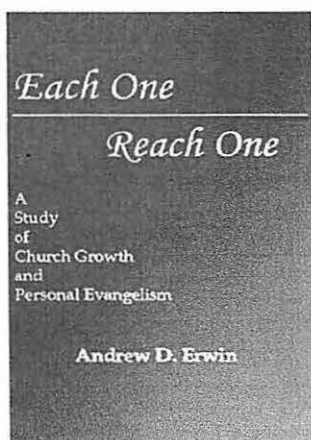
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Continued from Page One: *The Measure of the Stature of the Fullness of Christ* by Ronald D. Bryant

The obedience of Christ was to the glory of the Father. In His obedience, He became the Savior of man. It is in and by Him that we have life, purpose, and hope. Undeniably, His message and example lead the way to life and to oneness with God. Yet, central in the message of Christ is God's intention that the redeemed be conformed to the image of His Son.

Christ-likeness is central in redemption. It is central to genuine discipleship, even as it is central in worship and service. Transformation into His likeness is an imperative, not an option. Heaven's purpose is negated if the redeemed do not become one with Christ, and are not one with Him in character.

In speaking of that transformation, Paul declared: "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Central in our thinking is the obligation we have to be one with Christ, and of being transformed into His likeness. How many of us are ruled by this desire? How many of us actually focus upon Him and His will on a daily basis, and in every aspect of our efforts. Do we even consider that the great essential is that we come to know Him and should be filled with His fullness?

The record is revealing. We tend to struggle with religious minimums, yet we are often careless with that which we owe to God. We tend to be satisfied with shallow devotions, and are forgetful of the upward call of God.

Where is the evidence that we are vitally concerned with knowing the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ?

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Sinner-Friendly Bibles

Gerald Cowan

Have you ever considered how many versions of the Bible are currently available? We say “versions” because there is a difference in a version and a “translation.” “Version” may sometimes be the more appropriate word to use. I am one of those who longs for the day when the Word of God, both Old and New Testaments, will be available in every known human language – that is to say, an accurate and proper *translation* of it, not just a version.

What is the difference? A translation should convey the full and accurate meaning from one language to another, with all nuances, all necessary implications of the words leading to necessary inferences on the part of the reader. A translation can be word-for-word literal, which sometimes makes for awkward reading, due to syntactical differences in the languages. The dynamic equivalent – the so-called thought for thought or meaning for meaning – approach can be employed to facilitate easier reading or speaking. But this is often more interpretation than translation. In any case there should be nothing to hinder the carryover of the meaning and intent of the original to the translation.

A version may be more of a paraphrase or restatement, sometimes an interpretation or commentary and not a strict translation. Some versions of the Bible, especially those produced by one person or by a particular denomination, promote a personal or slanted doctrinal position. Versions can be a way of putting forward one’s own idea or understanding of what the original speaker or writer said. Something even more dangerous is replacing the original message with what one wishes had been said, or what he himself would have said had he been asked for his own thoughts on the matter. The most blatant example of this is the expanded paraphrase called *The Message* – it is a “message” from Eugene H. Petersen, but so much is added and twisted in meaning that it would be blasphemy to call it a message from God.

Versions which do not accurately transfer the meaning of the original, which promote a non-biblical doctrine, or de-emphasize or omit some biblical requirement do not deserve to be called the Bible. But they

are called “Bible” and referred to as scripture by their authors and publishers. Those who read them and quote them often say, “My Bible says...” As long as the markings on the cover proclaim it to be a Bible, or Holy Bible, they feel whatever it contains is authoritative and valid. Now here is an important thought for you to consider: anything that deviates from the word and will of God is sin, by definition – whether by violation in doing what is prohibited or forbidden, or by failing to do what is required and commanded (1 John 1:3, 7; James 4:17), or simply failing to meet the standard set by God (Romans 3:23). Not “doing it God’s way” is sin.

Martin Luther was desperate to find something in the New Testament that would counter and discredit the Roman Catholic doctrine of works of merit, and salvation and indulgence of sin by means of works or monetary contributions. He wanted to find salvation by faith alone, nothing but faith, and nothing of works. He could not find it in scripture. The only reference to “faith only” is found in James 2:24; which much to Luther’s chagrin, says there is no justification by faith only and that faith without works is dead.

No doubt this helped Luther to condemn James as an unworthy epistle – no gold in it, but only straw. He finally found in Paul’s remarks in Galatians something he could use to make his point – not in the words of Paul, but something he could read “between the lines” as it were, and so he inserted in the margin of his copy of the epistle the word “alone” – by faith alone. It is not what Paul said, but what Luther wanted him to say, what he could claim that, according to the context, Paul did say. The faulty concept is aided and abetted by misinterpretation and misapplication of other statements of Paul, notably Ephesians 2:8-10 and Romans 6:14, claiming that grace through faith without works is what saves.

Luther was proclaimed a heretic by the Catholics, but hailed as one of the fathers of the Reformation Movement that supposedly freed the captives of Catholicism from its doctrine of salvation by works. However, he was a heretic in God’s sight too. By con-

tradicting God's conditions of grace and salvation, Luther made his adherents captives to another error just as extreme as Catholicism, only in a different direction.

Many salvation-seekers have bought into Luther's false doctrine, actually defending and promoting it to others and causing them to miss out on both grace and salvation from God because their faith is dead and their hope is voided by the lack of works which God commands. Catholicism is sinner-friendly and their versions of scripture prove it. Lutheranism and the reformation theology which is found in the so-called Protestant churches of the religious world are sinner-friendly, too. The countless versions of scripture which they have produced prove this.

Any supposed version of God's word that leads people to ignore or disobey His commandments is a sinful version – best to call it a perversion (cf. Galatians 1:7-9). It doesn't really matter that it comes from a preacher or theologian, a so-called church (denomination), or a publishing company – even if it should come from or claim to be from an angel from heaven. If it is not true to the original words of God it is a sinful perversion.

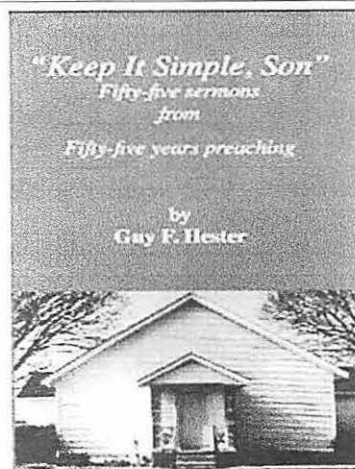
Those who produce it are perverters; and those who accept it and follow it will be perverted. The perverted producers may or may not know they are wrong; they may only intend to be true to their persuasion or to their church's published doctrine – misled, misguided, and mistaught, but not necessarily or intentionally dishonest or liars. (A liar is one who tells something as true that he knows is not true.) The tragedy is that the one who reads and accepts the perversion of truth does not know it is not true and valid. He may feel justified and comfortable in his error, sincerely believing and trusting it as truth. But belief does not validate error or change it into truth. Truth is truth whether or not anyone believes it. Error is error even if everyone believes it (see Romans 4:3).

One who loves, makes, or practices a lie will not be allowed into heaven (Revelation 21:27, 22:15). One may exchange the truth of God for a lie, but that does not change the truth into a lie, or change a lie into the truth (Romans 1:25). Jesus never taught that by sincerely believing something, and being true to what you believe, you will be made free. Only by knowing the

truth and abiding in it will one be made free (John 8:31-32).

There are liberal Bible versions on the market that are nothing more than irreverent and often blasphemous as they undermine the original text and only convey the perverted ideas and concepts of those producing them. This would include the homosexual-friendly New Oxford Annotated Bible produced by and for gays and feminists. But adding notes and altering the text to accommodate sinners so that they can say "my Bible says it is OK" or "my Bible does not condemn it" will not negate their sinfulness.

No matter how popular they are and no matter how much money they make for the publishers, the versions of scripture which are not true and accurate reflections of the message of God cannot really be called "sinner-friendly." They are enemies of the souls of sinners because they allow them to feel comfortable in their sins, lulling them into a false sense of safety, salvation, and security. They are certainly not "God-friendly." If they are perversions of God's word they are truly "Satan-friendly."



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News & Notes

Obituaries

Rock Spring, GA: Grover Cleveland Beard, age 90, passed away November 18, 2014. He served Christ as a faithful gospel preacher and his country as a U.S. Marine.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Opal Beard, parents William Cleveland Beard and Nancy Morton Beard; four sisters and two brothers.

Survivors include his daughters Nancy Pitts, Rock Spring, GA; Melissa Peek, Ft. Payne, AL; son Robby Beard, Ranger, GA.; eight grandchildren; six great-grandchildren; several nieces and nephews.

He was buried at the Glendale church of Christ Cemetery, in Bryant, Alabama.

Corinth, MS: Shirley Hester, age 78, passed away December 15, 2014.

"Mama Shirley" was preceded in death by her husband, Guy F. Hester; parents, Eddie and Rosella Dorrough; sisters, Jewel Davis and Betty Sanford; brother, Ed Dorrough; and great-granddaughter, Allison Rosella Ham.

She is survived by her daughter, Connie Jo Hester Montgomery (Larry); sons, Ferrell Hester (Lynne), Tim Hester (Amy); daughter, Jalema Ann Hester Tidwell (Jay); 10 grandchildren; nine great-grandchildren; and a host of nieces, nephews and friends

Upcoming Lectureships

The **Brown Trail** congregation in Beford, Texas will be hosting the annual Fort Worth Lectures January 11-14.

The **Florida School of Preaching** will be hosting its annual lectureship January 19-22. The hosting congregation is the South Florida Avenue church of Christ in Lakeland, Florida.

The **Northwest Florida School of Biblical Studies** will be hosting its annual lectureship February 15-19. The Milestone congregation in Cantonment, Florida is the hosting congregation.

Woman Preaches; Supported by Lipscomb

Many of you may have already received word of a young lady, Lauren King, preaching for the Fourth Avenue congregation in Franklin, Tennessee. It is no secret that this congregation has been drifting away for many years, and this blatant act of disregard for the teachings of scripture (see 1 Corinthians 14:34-35; 1 Timothy 2:12) is only the most recent example of this fact.

Lipscomb University is fully behind this young lady who is also their student, and the minister of Fourth Avenue who is also a professor in their Bible Department. In fact, he is her mentor in the preaching emphasis program at the university.

I (AE) do not know why brethren continue to support Lipscomb. I suppose some have more loyalty to their alma mater in Nashville than to their Father in heaven. But ignorance can no longer be an excuse. This school has done everything in their power to break their ties with the people who founded it. One would be better served, and so would the church, by finding another cause to support.

Concerning this preacher, Patrick Mead, don't let his Scottish brogue fool you. He was not reared among the lowlands or highlands of Scotland. Neither was his childhood spent running along the sandy coasts of Aberdeen; but among the hills of Southern Ohio and Eastern Kentucky.

He left for Scotland some few years ago to serve as a missionary. He had no brogue while in Scotland, nor did he have it when he returned. Maybe he learned it by watching *Star Trek* reruns.

Thankfully, his father studied his way out of the Christian Church to become a faithful gospel preacher. Yet, it appears Patrick has left the church, bypassed the Christian Church, and is going straight for the Disciples. One wonders if he will don a kilt in the pulpit now that Lauren is wearing the pants.

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We hope that you are not only enjoying the paper, but benefiting spiritually from its contents. Feel free to send news items and reader replies at your convenience. Keep us in your prayers and thank you for your support of this work.

Andy Erwin

Editor, *Gospel Gleaner*

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The GOSPEL CLEANER

Volume 27

February, 2015

Number Two

Our Life Is To Be About Him

Ronald D. Bryant

The Character of the Life of Christ

The mission and ministry of Jesus, what He said and did while in the flesh, was grounded in His being and identity – His oneness with the Father and with man. Additionally, His earthly sojourn was ruled by holy purpose. In and by His words and works, Jesus revealed the Father (John 1:18; 10:30; 14:7ff). It is equally true that in undeniable fashion the Father expressed His presence, His will, and His purpose in Christ. God came into the world in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:18-21).

Character is not theoretical; it is made known in words and deeds and in personal conduct. Jesus lived and served, and there was perfect correspondence between His character and conduct, that was in actuality the result of ethical necessity. He lived on the highest plane, and never faltered. All that He did was ruled by wisdom and truth, by righteousness (right deeds) and holiness (right motive). He knew the Father's will fully, and He fully yielded to it. Righteousness was not a law that He yielded to; it was His life. He perfectly exemplified the Father. He perfectly proclaimed the will of the Father. And in doing so, Christ made the Father manifest. He gave Himself in full obedience to His Father, and in doing so gave to Him the honor He was due.

The Character of the Christian Life

Jesus' purpose was for man to know the Father and the Son, and by that knowledge, come to possess life eternal (John 17:3). Faith in Christ is real and intimate, even intense. It is a passionate regard for and

genuine response to the Father and the Son. Faith is not an end within itself, but is to the end that one turns to God and is transformed into the likeness of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18). Eternal life has everything to do with being in Christ and being like Him.

Life – eternal life – is obtained, not as a technicality, but in a relationship. It is "life in Christ;" it is vital life union with Him. It is Christ-likeness. It is heavenly life begun on earth.

Regarding a relationship with God, every biblical term used depicts a relationship that is spiritual life. The following words: Atonement, Redemption, Reconciliation, Justification, Salvation declare not the theory, but the reality of a relationship with God in Christ.

The heart, soul, and mind of the Christian will yield and is attuned to life in Christ. He is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). Christ leads the way, instructs, corrects, and sustains the thoughts, the intellect, and the emotions of the believer.

It is in choosing to trust Him and yield to Him that one comes to express and engage in the conduct that makes for Christ-like character. It is in this course of action that one's life is opened to and filled with the desire to know and honor God. Spiritual life rests upon and abides in the truth of God, and it is in and by that truth that one is transformed into the likeness of Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18).

Continued on Page 7

It is safe to say that any man who has preached more than a time or two has been criticized by someone. Sometimes the criticisms are frivolous; yet at other times they are quite warranted. May God grant every gospel preacher the wisdom to tell the difference!

If we are to be perfectly honest, very few criticisms are immediately welcomed. And, not every criticism is offered with the appropriate tone or at the appropriate time. May God grant church members the wisdom to know how and when to criticize their preacher!

Don't Lose Heart

Criticisms should never cause a preacher to lose heart, or to give up his ambition to preach the gospel. Men devoted to preaching the gospel should allow valid criticisms to motivate and educate them into becoming better at their preaching.

Thankfully, Tolbert Fanning (1810-1874) did not let criticism get the best of him. When he was a young man, just beginning to preach, an elderly sister told him, "You have made a failure. You are neither called nor qualified to preach. You ought not to try. You will disgrace the cause." After inspecting his homemade suit of clothes and lanky frame, one brother told him, "Brother Fanning, you never can preach, and will always run your legs too far through your breeches. Do go home and go to plowing" (James Wilburn, *The Hazard of the Die*, pp. 22-23).

We might ask, who gave these people the right and the role to judge brother Fanning in that way? And, where would we be today had Tolbert Fanning gone home and gone to plowing?

We would not have the paper he founded – the *Gospel Advocate*. We might not have been influenced by

the men he trained to preach and influenced at the school he founded – Franklin College. These men include: William and David Lipscomb, E.G. Sewell, E.A. Elam, T.B. Larimore, and J.W. Shepherd. Now just think about all of the combined sermons, articles, books, schools founded, classes taught, and souls converted and strengthened to live more faithful lives because of these men. Moreover, Fanning and these men helped to stop the movement to use mechanical instruments of music in worship and the missionary society in evangelism among the congregations in the South.

Thankfully, Tolbert Fanning did not allow these unfair criticisms to stop him from preaching!

Reacting to Criticism

Allow us to offer three rules of wisdom for preachers to apply when they are criticized. In the first place, consider the source of the criticism. Not all opinions are equal. For instance, if a preacher is being criticized by a murmuring, unhappy, unpleasant individual, who complains about everything and everyone, that should be noted. In such cases, the preacher is most likely the most recent brunt of this person's problems.

On the other hand, if the criticism is coming from a faithful and considerate person who truly has the best interest of the church and the preacher at heart, then this too must be considered. It is likely that their advice will serve the preacher very well in his efforts to bring souls to Christ.

Secondly, compare the criticism with the Scriptures. Many times a person will criticize the preacher because of a sinful agenda or simply because they are ignorant about the Bible. I can recall one time being criticized because, "All you do is preach the Bible," as if preaching the

Bible solely and exclusively was a bad thing.

Of course, any criticism that would cause a preacher to compromise the truth should be avoided. However, if the criticism will help the preacher to provide a better understanding and application of the Bible through his preaching, then let him be thankful that he received such correction (cf. Proverbs 13:1; 15:10).

Thirdly, if the criticism is valid and scriptural, then the preacher should make the necessary changes. Fools despise wisdom and instruction (Proverbs 1:7). We should never be too proud to welcome helpful advice. A man should want to do his best at preaching because God deserves his best. Sometimes giving one's best requires honest self-examination and adjustment.

One Opinion Matters Most

Let us conclude by saying that it is God's opinion that matters most. Brethren, if God is well-pleased with your preacher, you should be too.

Is your preacher preaching the truth? Are you studying and learning the Bible? Are you being sufficiently encouraged to obey and follow the Lord? Is he doing the work of an evangelist? Is he living a godly life? These are the questions that matter most.

If we are not careful to think spiritually-minded, as we should, we can become guilty of being more concerned with style than with substance. We should remember that the work of the preacher is not to entertain us with his style, but to teach us and encourage us so that heaven can be our eternal home. After all, having had the pleasure of enjoying the pulpit style of our favorite preacher will be of little comfort to us if we are judged to be lost for all eternity.

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*A Monthly Publication for All Those
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Justification by Faith in the Book of Acts

Raymond Elliott

During the years that I worked with one congregation of the Lord, there was a group of brothers and sisters that sang for a local nursing home once a month. The residents enjoyed singing with us some of the old favorite songs found in the book we used that was published by our brethren. One of the most requested hymns was *Amazing Grace*. One of the stanzas of this song is as follows:

"Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, And grace my fears relieved. How precious did that grace appear The hour I first believed."

However the publishers of this particular song book we were using took the liberty to change the last phrase of that stanza to: "*The hour I first obeyed.*"

Now, I understand perfectly the reason for this change and I do not doubt the motive of these brethren. We have heard so much from our denominational friends that we are saved by "faith only." However, we must not avoid using scriptural terms simply because of misunderstandings regarding the biblical theme of justification by faith. There is a vast difference between the doctrine of "faith only" and the Bible-based doctrine of salvation by faith.

In fact the expression that these brethren wanted to avoid is actually found in Romans 13:11: "And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer *than when we first believed*" (Emphasis mine, RE).

The apostle Paul asked the disciples of John, "Did you receive the Holy Spirit *when you believed*" (Acts 19:2).

Of course, Paul had much to say about being justified by faith in Jesus Christ. In Romans 5:1, 2, we read, "Therefore, *having been justified by faith*, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have *access by faith into this grace* in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God."

Thus, it is scriptural and right to say that we are saved by faith, but we must understand all that is included in that statement.

Now I want us to go to the book of Acts and investigate whether or not the doctrine of justification by faith is found in the writings of Luke (Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1-3).

When speaking of the number of conversions listed in Acts, preachers and teachers are most likely to state that there are nine examples found therein. For most of my preaching experience I have used a chart showing the conversions of the people on Pentecost (Acts 2); the Samaritans (Acts 8:5-12); the nobleman from Ethiopia (Acts 8:26-40); Saul (Acts 9; 22; 26); the household of Cornelius (Acts 10 & 11); Lydia and her household (Acts 16:13-15); the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:25-34); the Corinthians (Acts 18:8); and the twelve men in Ephesus (Acts 19:1-7).

Sometimes the statement has been made that these are the only examples of conversion mentioned in Acts. Also, I have taught that while faith, repentance, and confession of our faith have not always appeared in each case, the fact is that baptism is mentioned in all of them.

As students of the Bible we have emphasized the importance of baptism in the plan of salvation that Jesus Christ has given (Matthew 28:19, 20; Mark 16:15, 16; Acts 2:38). And, this is as it should be because our religious neighbors have taught for so long that baptism has nothing to do with our salvation.

We can rest assured the Holy Spirit had every reason to have Luke record these nine examples in the way that he did, and that should be sufficient for us. I can also understand that the Holy Spirit wanted to make it very clear that we are saved by a faith that obeys all the commands of the Lord Jesus Christ.

However, we must understand that there are other references made to individuals and groups of individuals in Acts being saved from their sins by God's grace and the blood of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 2:8; 1:7). But the phraseology that Luke used was different, in that he often used *a part to represent a whole*. This is a figure of speech that is called a *synecdoche*, which is used to denote that a part of something is being used to refer to the whole thing. By using a syn-

ecdoche, Luke was simply saying that when individuals *believed* they submitted themselves to the Lord's every command in order to be saved.

The author of Acts recorded words by different men who were inspired of the Holy Spirit to show beyond a doubt that sinners are justified by faith.

- It was the apostle Peter at the household of Cornelius who said; "To Him all the prophets' witness, through His name, whoever *believes in Him* will receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:43).
- The apostle Paul declared, "Therefore let it be known to you brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him everyone *who believes is justified* from all things from which you could not be justified by the Law of Moses" (Acts 13:38).
- It was at the council in Jerusalem where we read the words of Peter, "And when there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and said to them: 'Men and brethren, you know that a good while ago God chose among us, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, and made no distinction between us and them, *purifying their hearts by faith*'" (Acts 15:7-9)

These passages clearly teach that when a person believes in Jesus Christ he receives remission of sins, is justified, and his heart is purified by faith.

Let us now observe the following passages that refer to believers mentioned in the book of Acts that we normally do not use and that do not specifically mention baptism.

- Acts 5:14: "And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of men and women..."
- Acts 6:1: "Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying..."
- Acts 6:7: "Then the word of God spread and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith."
- Acts 9:31: "Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied."
- Acts 9:35: "So all who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon saw him and turned to the Lord."
- Acts 9:42: "And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed on the Lord."
- Acts 11:21: "And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord."
- Acts 11:24: "For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord."
- Acts 11:31: "Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied."
- Acts 12:24: "But the word of God grew and multiplied."
- Acts 13:12: "Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had been done, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord."
- Acts 13:48, 49: "Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was being spread throughout the region."
- Acts 14:1: "Now it happened in Iconium that they went together to the synagogue of the Jews, and spoke that a great multitude both of the Jews and of the Greeks believed."
- Acts 14:21: "And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch."
- Acts 16:5: "So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily."
- Acts 17:1-4: "... And some of them were persuaded; and a great multitude of the devout Greeks, and not a few of the leading women, joined Paul and Silas."
- Acts 17:11, 12: "... Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men."
- Acts 17:34: "However, some men joined him and believed..."
- Acts 19:18, 19: "And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds..."

- Acts 18:28: "... And when he (Apollos) arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace."
- Acts 19:18: "And many who had believed came confessing and telling their deeds."

Please note that in these passages, Luke simply says that these individuals believed. Are we not to understand that they were saved just like the approximately three thousand were saved on the Day of Pentecost when they were instructed to "repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remissions of sins..."? If not, why not.

But, let us examine more closely what is involved when various ones believed and were saved from their sins. It was Peter who said in his lesson to the household of Cornelius, "To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins" (Acts 10:43). Yet, in verses 47 and 48 of this same chapter, the apostle asked, "Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord." We must conclude that the faith that saves includes the command to be immersed in the name of the Lord.

In Acts 18:8 we read, "Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized." We understand that many of the Corinthians did just as the Lord had commanded and were saved from their sins. But what of Crispus since it is written that he and his household simply "*believed on the Lord*." Were they saved from their sins like the Corinthians? The apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians spoke of Crispus in chapter 1:14, "I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius." We must come to the inevitable conclusion that when the expression is used that the people "*believed*" it was all inclusive; that is, this active faith embodied all the commands that the Lord required in order to be saved from past sins, namely the commands to repent and be baptized.

The example of the conversion of the Philippian jailer and his household as mentioned in Acts 16 is one of the most abused and misused passages that so many religionists use to show that a sinner is saved by "faith only." But when closely examined, we can readily see that this was not the case.

Beginning in verse 23, we learn that Paul and Silas were beaten and placed in prison with their feet in the stocks. An earthquake caused the doors of the prison to be opened and the chains of all the prisoners were loosed. The jailer, awaking from his sleep, thought the prisoners had escaped and was about to take his life when Paul told him not to harm himself for all were still present. It was then that the jailer called for light and fell down before Paul and Silas and asked them the question, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved" (v. 30)? He was instructed to "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household."

It is at this point that most religious leaders will teach that the only requirement of a sinner to obtain salvation is to believe in Jesus Christ. But verse 31 does not teach that the jailer believed, it simply states what he was to do in order to be saved. There is no evidence that the jailer had any knowledge of Jesus as being the divine Son of God and that He had been crucified for the sins of the world. In order for the jailer to obtain faith in Jesus, he had to be taught of Him. That is why Paul and Silas "spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house." The apostle Paul later wrote in Romans 10:17, "So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

In Acts 16:33, we learn that the jailer and his household were baptized. It was then that Luke recorded how the jailer and his family "rejoiced, having believed in God..." It is in this verse and at this point of time that it is stated that the Jailer and his household believed on the Lord and rejoiced because they were saved from their sins. We must conclude beyond a shadow of doubt that the faith that saves is the faith that obeys all the commands of the Lord.

This characteristic of faith has always been true. Take for example the patriarch Abraham. Paul wrote in Romans 4:3, "For what does the Scripture say? Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." Now what kind of faith did Abraham possess that pleased God?

In Hebrews 11:8-10, we learn, "By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country,

dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

James 2:21-24 also contributes to our understanding of the kind of faith that saves: "Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.' And he was called the friend of God. You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only."

We must not separate acceptable faith from scriptural works. Faith without works ordained of God cannot save; and, works not founded on biblical faith are unacceptable to God.

For many years I used the illustration of a man in a boat with two oars that represented faith and works. When the man used only one oar (whether it was faith or works), the boat simply would go in a circle; but, when he used both oars (faith and works), he would be able to proceed toward his desired destination. But in using this illustration, I was separating scriptural and acceptable faith and works in a manner that did not portray the oneness of the two found in the word of God. It was not until our daughter married a gentleman who enjoyed riding in his kayak that I noticed he used only one paddle in maneuvering his boat. It was then that I learned the illustration best used in revealing scriptural faith and works is found in one paddle and not two oars. Acceptable faith and works should not be separated; as Paul would say in Galatians 5:6, "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but *faith working through love*."

Biblical faith is foundational. All that we do to please God and to experience salvation is based upon and motivated by faith. Otherwise, our actions will profit us nothing. It is this kind of obedient faith that saves us by the grace of God (Rom. 5:1, 2; Eph. 2:8).

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Continued from Page One: *Our Life Is to be About Him* by Ronald D. Bryant

It is essential that one comes to be ruled by life-altering confidence and conviction in the Lord God of heaven. It is likewise essential that the believer should be ruled by an unconquerable desire to know and abide in the truth of God. Jesus repeatedly set forth two terms: "life" and "truth." In doing so, He suggested a vital connection between them. To desire one is inevitably to come to be ruled by the other. The truth of God is essential to spiritual life, and that life not only rests upon but exalts life-giving and life-sustaining truth.

Jesus came to call humanity back to God; to call sinners not only to salvation, but to a life with and for Him. Few of us are able to get ourselves out of the way, and become one with Christ. Fewer still are obsessed with Him, His glory, and His purpose for life. While many are variously religious, most continue to focus upon what they want, desire, prefer, and expect, not upon Christ's word that leads to life.

Divisions that occur in the church are evidence of unworthy and self-seeking agendas, not of our yielding and desiring to know and honor God. Our personality clashes can never be justified before God. The hope of mankind (our hope) rests, not upon obtaining what we want, but upon losing ourselves in intense and passionate love for the Lord God of heaven.

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What the Holy Spirit Will Not Do for You

Travis Quertermous

There is no doubt that the Holy Spirit works powerfully in the life of the faithful Christian. Romans 8:14 says, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God." But, many religious people often claim the Holy Spirit is doing things for them He just will never do, according to the Bible.

Contrary to the false doctrine of Calvinism, **the Holy Spirit will never force salvation upon anyone.** John Calvin and his disciples taught the erroneous idea of irresistible grace, which says the Spirit of God forces salvation upon unwilling sinners. Many teach that this direct operation of the Holy Spirit in salvation is a better-felt-than-told, mystical, religious experience. But Scripture teaches that the Spirit always works through His inspired message to convict and sanctify men.

For example, James 1:18 says, "Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures." Later, James wrote, "Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls" (James 1:21). Sinners and saints alike must willingly receive the Spirit's inspired teachings in and through the gospel in order to be saved.

Here is something else the Holy Spirit won't do to you: **He won't make you act in bizarre, unreasonable, or foolish ways.** There are many kinds of nonsense in the religious world that sadly end up being laid at the doorstep of the Holy Spirit. People bark like dogs, laugh hysterically, babble incoherently (thinking they are speaking in tongues), handle poisonous snakes, and jump and run about mindlessly. Other people collapse (sometimes injuring themselves) under the touch of some false teacher thinking they have been "slain in the Spirit." Countless false doctrines and prophecies have been taught that contradict the Scriptures and yet they are believed because the preacher claimed to be led by the Holy Spirit.

In the New Testament, the Lord's church in Corinth was being divided by brethren abusing their spiritual

gifts. The apostle Paul told them to stop. He wrote, "For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints" (1 Corinthians 14:33). He also taught, "Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Corinthians 14:40). Never at any time in Scripture do we read of the Spirit of God causing anyone to act irrationally or uncontrollably, even when He was performing true miracles as in Bible times.

Friends, the Bible teaches that God will always respect the free will with which He created us. That is why our Creator appeals to us through His word to obey the gospel and thus be saved. Revelation 22:17 says, "And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' And let him who thirsts come. And whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely." Can we help you freely obey the Holy Spirit's invitation to come and be saved?

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BEING HOLY & SINNING "ONE TIME"

Ron Thomas

When was the last time you spoke with a person who identified himself as a Christian and said that he does not commit sin, not even one time? I used to receive a publication that teaches that very thing. Observe:

"False teachers are busy telling unwary souls today that Christians cannot help but sin more or less every day. This is base falsehood and contrary to the Word of God. The truly regenerate soul does not sin, but lives above it by the grace of God. When a soul is born again, the seed of righteousness is planted within the heart, and it makes it impossible for them to sin and retain the regenerated experience. 'Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.' 1 John 3:9. Therefore, whoever sins needs to be born again. (*The Gospel Trumpet*, Jan-Feb 2007, p. 9)

This writer tells us that if one forsakes *all* sin, then the exhortation of Jesus to the woman guilty of adultery "Go and sin no more" (John 8:11), certainly applies to Christians. This is the idea undergirding this article titled "You must be Born Again" wherein the remarks above came.

John 3 and Being "Born Again"

In John 3, the Lord interacted with Nicodemus because of Nicodemus' desire to learn more from Jesus. One of Israel's great teachers was perplexed by what he heard and saw in the activities of Jesus. Thus, he came to Him by night and inquired of Him concerning these matters.

In this context, the Lord said to Nicodemus that one must be born again. It reads: "Jesus answered and said unto him, 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' Nicodemus saith unto him, 'How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?' Jesus answered, 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God'" (John 3:3-5, KJV).

The nature of this "born again" experience, Jesus tells us, is that one must be born of water and spirit. Expositors through the centuries have not had any difficulty understanding *water* to refer to baptism. The word *Spirit* is without the article in the Greek New Testament, but most have interpreted it as the work of the Holy Spirit, and this seems a reasonable interpretation.

With these two points in place, the interpreter of the passage can now understand what Jesus is saying. One must respond to that which is preached (whether during the ministry of John the Baptist, by John the apostle, or by the Lord Jesus) in submission. That is, one must die to self and be changed, resurrected to a new life (cf. 2 Corinthians 5:17), coming up from the watery grave of baptism. The culmination of God's teaching on this will result in one being born again (cf. Acts 8:12; 1 Corinthians 12:13). This is the response of man to the Lord's will, and a work of the Holy Spirit to join one to God (2 Corinthians 1:21-22).

Jesus and Paul

Once this new birth takes place, the Holy Spirit through His written word exhorts the saints to live for God. In Revelation 2, for instance, the Lord spoke to the church at Ephesus about the importance of overcoming the loss of their first love. Evidently, as saints, the church struggled with the sin of losing one's "first love." The Lord expressed His displeasure concerning that. He called upon them to repent (Revelation 2:5).

That which the Lord said to the church at Ephesus corresponds well with Paul's exhortations concerning baptism. In Romans 6, Paul said to the saints, "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein" (Romans 6:1-2)?

For what reason would Paul say this if it was not possible for the saints in Rome to be guilty of sin? "Of course," one might reply, "they were not born again." Really? Read the chapter and see if Paul says anything like that. Moreover, read Paul's introductory words at the beginning of the letter and see if he says

anything like that. Take note of what he does say, "To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ" (1:7). If Paul addressed them as saints, and if he exhorted to "not continue in sin," then Paul clearly understood that it is possible for a Christian to sin.

Power of God over Sin

It is commendable that some want to emphasize the power of God over sin, for that is certainly true. On the other hand, it is a greatly mistaken idea to emphasize the power of God over sin and then espouse a teaching that is expressly and explicitly condemned in Scriptures! "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us" (1 John 1:8-10).

The gospel of Christ transforms a sinner into one who lives righteously (Romans 12:1-2). There is no justification for a saint failing to adhere strictly to the law of Christ, but the Lord has perfect understanding in that He knows man fails to live up to His holy standard. Thus, exhortations like that which Peter wrote are always before the eyes of God's saints. "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance; But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:14-16).



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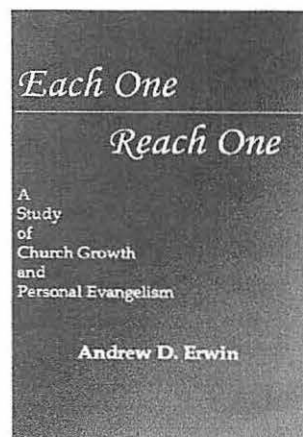
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A Skeptic Believes in "Resurrection"

John T. Polk II

Newsweek magazine went bankrupt in 2010, ending print editions in 2012, after its readership dwindled away. Recent owners, seeking to "resurrect" its liberalism, came forth from the publishing house grave with a front-cover article titled, "The Bible: So Misunderstood It's A Sin."

The January 2, 2015 "double issue" feature article was written by scandal-writer Kurt Eichenwald, whose former "Market Place" column for the *New York Times* began in 1992. His B.A. in political science came from Swarthmore College in 1983. Being an *investigative reporter*, his skills would make it difficult, if not, impossible, to accept the evidence for faith in the Bible. He would be looking for an undercurrent of hypocrisy, deceit, compromise, and cover-up. In this *Newsweek* article, he thinks he has found all of this in Bible-believers, all of whom he seems to think are members of the Republican Party who use Scripture for their political purposes, for he only mentions Michele Bachman, Pat Robertson, Sarah Palin, Rick Perry, and Bobby Jindal. Interestingly, no Democrats came to his mind. It is as Paul wrote: "To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled" (Titus 1:15).

Over one-half of his article claims that the Bible's manuscripts are humanly written and selected, inaccurately translated, and misleading because of the King James Version. Eichenwald writes: "No television preacher has ever read the Bible. Neither has any evangelical politician. Neither has the pope. Neither have I. And neither have you. At best, we've all read a bad translation—a translation of translations of translations of hand-copied copies of copies of copies of copies, and on and on, hundreds of times."

Obviously, he never read: "For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty" (2 Peter 1:16).

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which

we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life – the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us" (1 John 1:1-2).

"Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior" (2 Peter 3:1-2).

It takes someone truly ignorant of Scripture to criticize it by saying: "About 400 years passed between the writing of the first Christian manuscripts and their compilation into the New Testament."

Obviously, he never read Ephesians 3:2-5: "...if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets"

Herein Paul claimed: (1) the words of the text were selected by God; (2) his Holy Spirit-inspired knowledge of what he wrote was accurately conveyed by the words; (3) readers would know everything the Holy Spirit would have told them by inspiration; (4) there is no time limit on the effectiveness of the written Word of God. An accurate text accurately translated is as effective as miraculous inspiration. If not, why not?

Eichenwald claimed: "The Bible is a very human book. It was written, assembled, copied and translated by people. That explains the flaws, the contradictions, and the theological disagreements in its pages."

Why, if the Bible is inaccurately written, gathered, and translated, does this verse matter?

"...no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:20-21).

Eichenwald said: "Nowhere in the Gospels or Acts or Epistles or Apocalypses does the New Testament say it is the inerrant word of God. It couldn't—the people who authored each section had no idea they were composing the Christian Bible, and they were long dead before what they wrote was voted by members of political and theological committees to be the New Testament."

Obviously, he never read: "...and consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures" (2 Peter 3:15-16).

Eichenwald's B.A. in political science didn't prepare him for this, for he claimed: "These manuscripts were originally written in Koiné, or 'common' Greek, and not all of the amateur copyists spoke the language or were even fully literate."

Obviously, he never read where the Apostles were authenticating Scripture: "I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read to all the holy brethren" (1 Thessalonians 5:27); "Now when this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans, and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea" (Colossians 4:16).

Even though he claimed: "The next thing to check here is whether 1 Timothy was based on a forgery. And the answer to that is a resounding 'yes,'" as he thought it accurately condemned homosexuality: "The original Bible verse [1 Timothy 1:10] in Koiné used ἀρσενικοῖται for what has been translated as 'homosexual.'"

20% of Eichenwald's entire article is chafing over whether or not the Bible condemns homosexuality.

Obviously he never read: "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters,

nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

This passage places homosexuality on a par with all other sinful practices that will keep someone out of the kingdom of God. All sin that can be repented of can be forgiven by God.

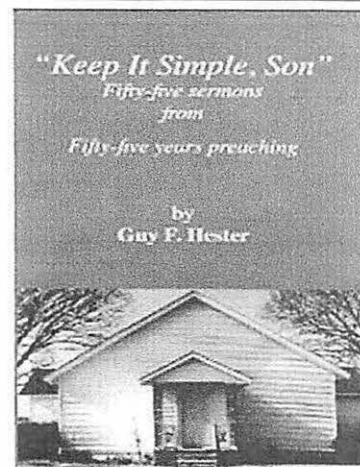
A Proposition for Debate

Since Eichenwald considers himself to be such an authority on the Bible, will he publicly debate the subject?

"Resolved, The Bible has been written, assembled, and copied only by people and without Divine intervention."

Affirm: Kurt Eichenwald

Deny: John T. Polk II



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Love the Brotherhood

David R. Pharr

"Love the brotherhood" (1 Peter 2:17). None can doubt that it is right to love that which Christ loves. Nor should we question the ideal of loving to the same degree. Christ "loved the church, and gave himself for it" (Ephesians 5:25). His love for the church involved a life-giving commitment. To say the least, our love for the church ought to involve a lifelong commitment. Such love is an essential ingredient of faithfulness.

In a remarkable analogy Paul compares the ideal husband-wife bond to the relationship Christ has with the church. Woven into instructions on marriage are beautiful reminders of Christ's love and care for His spiritual body. "He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord, the church" (Ephesians 5:28-29). Then after reminding that in marriage the "two shall be one flesh," he declares, "This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church" (Ephesians 5:31-32). Christ and His church are one. To love Him is to love His church.

It ought to be obvious that as surely as the church is loved by Christ, she is hated by the devil. It must follow that the more love we have for the church, the more Christ-like we are. And the less we love, the more devilish we become. When one's love wanes, it is more than simply a change of focus; he is on the downward slide to apostasy.

Hated by the World

Jesus told His disciples, "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John 15:19). Though there may be times when the church is "having favor with all the people" (Acts 2:47), enmity and persecution are more the norm (2 Timothy 3:12).

The world ridicules our insistence on biblical morality. Worldly churches do not love our stand for New Testament doctrine. Most of society rejects belief in the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Scriptures. The media would lump us with those they call

extremists of the "Christian right." That we denounce homosexuality, that we make no allowance for other religions, that we find no hope for those who are out of Christ—these and any other insistence on strict adherence to Bible teaching are considered uncharitable and un-American. The pervasive hatred of the world can undermine faith. On the other hand, it ought to impress us with the importance of personal love and loyalty to the cause of Christ. "Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good" (Romans 2:9).

Alienation from Within

It does not encourage love for the church when some of our own capable speakers use their talents to disparage the church. Our human foibles are sometimes humorous and we can enjoy a good laugh at our own expense. However, it is disappointing to hear preachers making light of the fundamentals of the faith.

We hear reports and have heard recordings of speeches in youth rallies and youth ministers' conferences which joked and quipped about sacred elements of our faith and practice. Jokes and satire that make light of baptism, scriptural music, the one church, insistence on book, chapter and verse, etc. do not encourage love for the church. We fear that in some cases our youth are being led more to disdain than to affection.

Paul said, "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy" (2 Corinthians 11:2). We ought to feel godly resentment when the church is attacked either from without or within. A loving and faithful husband will not countenance aspersions against his wife. Neither do loving and faithful Christians willingly accept ridicule toward the church; nor will they laugh at denigrating humor aimed at cherished doctrines; nor will they compromise with those who attack the body of Christ.

Struggles Strengthen

Having as a youth been in the Methodist denomination, I have special appreciation for the church of Christ, which showed me a better way, the way of truth. All who once were in error should feel a grateful and indebted passion for the fellowship that has held to and held up the Bible way. The church of Christ is "the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Timothy 3:15).

Our generation owes much to those before us who struggled out of denominationalism and sometimes endured persecution for the sake of Christ. When they found the right way, they embraced it and commended it to others. We cannot doubt the love the pioneers had for the church. They met in brush arbors, in log houses, in borrowed buildings. Many knew nothing of comfortable facilities. Instead they knew the scorn of their neighbors and the contempt of denominations. But they loved the church, and as today we enjoy the fruits of their efforts, let us no less love the brotherhood for which they were willing to give so much.

Lovely Features

To love the church is to love those features which make her distinctive. Though mocked by modernists, we love her for standing for the Bible. Denominations ridicule the necessity of biblical baptism, but we love the church of Christ for insisting on it. While many, including some digressives among us, see no authority in the New Testament pattern, we love her emphasis on restoration. It may seem incongruous in a pluralistic society, but we love her conviction that there is one true church. We love the simplicity of worshiping "in spirit and truth." We love singing without instruments because we know it is according to Scripture. We love the name "Christian" and that we can call Bible things by Bible names. We love the preaching of sound doctrine. In spite of occasional dismay over uncharitable controversy, we love the fact that the church is ready to challenge every questionable idea or practice. Timothy Dwight instilled these sentiments:

I love thy kingdom, Lord,
The house of Thine abode;
The church our blest Redeemer saved,
With His own precious blood.
I prize her heavenly ways,
Her sweet communion, solemn vows,
Her hymns of love and praise.

ONE THING LACKING

Mark 10:17-22

1. Jesus was neither a recluse nor a philosopher. If either, we would be missing the history of His life.
 2. Our Lord had several interviews. This one has always been of great interest. Here is a soul in search of eternal life. Jesus loved him.
 3. If it were to be said to you, "There is one thing you are lacking," what would you fill in that blank?
- I. The One Thing That Ought To Matter.**
- A. "Eternal Life" – What is it? What is spiritual death? Eph. 2:1. What is eternal death? Rev. 20:14; 21:8. It is the opposite of these. It certainly is not a universal blessing. Jn. 3:16, 17
 - B. "Eternal Life" – When do we receive it? Jesus equated it with "Treasure in heaven." Matt. 6:19-21; Tit. 3:7; Matt. 7:14; to be received after the judgment. Matt. 25:46.
 - C. "Eternal Life" – How do we receive it? It is an inheritance I Pet. 1:4; Rom. 8:14-17; for God's children Gal. 3:26, 27
- II. Some Things That Don't Matter.**
- A. This man possessed what so many emphasize: youth, position, and wealth. Probably about the same age of Jesus. The Lord was poor. II Cor. 8:9; Lk. 9:58
 - B. None of which bring salvation. I Cor. 1:26; I Pet. 1:18, 19. Look at men like Gamaliel, Felix, Agrippa, and the Athenians.
 - C. These things don't stop the rich, the young, or the rulers from dying. See Absalom; Jonathan.
- III. Some Things That Do Matter.**
- A. Jesus recited from the "second table" of the law. Man's moral conduct matters. Rom. 7:7. Gal. 5:19-21; Rev. 21:8
 - B. Morality alone will not save. Not this man. Not Cornelius. Acts 10:1-4.
 - C. God's eternal word is the standard. Jesus referred this man to God's law. Lk. 16: 29
- IV. The One Thing That Matters Most of All.**
- A. "Come follow me." Jn. 8:31; I Pet. 2:21
 - B. Discipleship requires self-denial. Lk. 9:23; Tit. 2:12; Gal. 5:24; Phil. 3:7
 - C. Self-denial calls for sacrifice, not to sell and still have the cash price! And, not to sell and be a poor steward! Get rid of what stands in the way of true discipleship.
1. How the story ended in the Bible.
 2. How did the story of his life finally end? We do not know.
 3. Rejection could lead to "hardness of heart." Rom. 2:5

-Mike Kiser



Remembering Grover Beard

In last month's issue, we ran an obituary for Grover Beard. Here is a note of appreciation concerning brother Beard from a longtime friend, Jerry Noblin:

A faithful gospel preacher has passed. Grover Cleveland Beard passed from this life on November 18, 2014. He had been in the Alvin C. York Community Living area in Murfreesboro, TN since 2009.

He was born in April of 1924 and began preaching in 1961. He became a student at Freed-Hardeman College in 1963.

He invited me over for breakfast one morning (as he did through the years with many young gospel preachers), and thus was begun a wonderful, lifelong friendship. He took me to my first preaching appointment.

He was indeed a unique individual. In his early life, before obeying the gospel, he was, according to his words, "rough" and would tell people gladly to have their sins washed away in the blood of Jesus because of how wonderful it was. He was very courageous and was not afraid to tell the truth. One preacher said of him that he was, "frightfully honest," and still another told him, "I wish I had your courage." He was dedicated to the cause of Christ and many will populate heaven because of him. His preaching was done mainly in Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina. What better could be said of a man at his passing than, "He was a faithful gospel preacher."

Birthday Wishes

Henderson, TN: E. Claude Gardner recently celebrated his 90th birthday on January 16. A birthday celebration took place in the Gardner Center on the campus of Freed-Hardeman University the following Friday, January 23.

Undoubtedly, many will remember brother Gardner for his years of service to FHU – first as a teacher, then dean, then president.

Others will remember brother Gardner for his fine preaching ability. He not only served the Lord's church as a fulltime minister in various places, he has also conducted over 360 gospel meetings. His sermon "The Scarlet Cord in the Window" will long be remembered.

His family will cherish him as a loving husband, father, grandfather, brother, and uncle.

I (AE) will remember brother Gardner as a cherished friend. He baptized me into Christ the same night he baptized my father. Years earlier he baptized my mother. He has also conducted just about every funeral we have had on my mother's side on the family. Many times my family has stood weeping beside the open grave, only to hear a comforting word spoken at exactly the right time by brother Gardner. He has been a friend, confidant, and counselor.

We are thankful that God has blessed brother Gardner with these 90 years. We pray for continued health and comfort to sustain our dear brother.

Churches Needing Preachers

The Smyrna church of Christ in **Culleoka, TN** is looking for a gospel preacher. A preacher's house is available. For more information, call Everett Campbell (931) 359-3792.

The Second Creek congregation in **Savannah, TN** is looking for a gospel preacher. This is a fulltime work. A three bedroom house is provided along with salary. For more information, contact Marion Holt (731) 925-9540.

Send us your news items!

andyerwin@gospelgleaner.com

Reader Replies

"I am excited to know that the *Gospel Gleaner* is back in print. We have lost some of our very best papers and journals in recent years – *The World Evangelist*, *The Sword and Staff* – to name a couple Looking forward with eagerness for the next issue."

Charles R. Rose
Lincoln, MO

"I certainly enjoy the *Gospel Gleaner*. Congratulations on such a great publication."

Norma Turock
Vienna, IL

"I appreciated your statement about the Franklin church and Mead. In recent years I wrote him about a liberal statement he made for Fourth Avenue, but I did not get a reply. Division is inevitable."

E. Claude Gardner
Henderson, TN

The **GOSPEL GLEANER**

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The GOSPEL CLEANER

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The Factious – The Divisive

Ronald D. Bryant

Disputes do great harm. Disputes often serve to disqualify some who claim to serve Christ, for in the midst of a dispute some forsake the very principles He taught. It is the case that the human desire to prevail, to obtain a personal victory, too often becomes more important than the will of God. A minor dispute often portends a major disaster.

Writing to Timothy, Paul warned of men who, “consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness” (1 Timothy 6:3). He then proceeded to describe such a person. “He is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain.” He then directed, “From such withdraw yourself” (1 Timothy 6:4-5).

Paul’s words provide a description of the factious – the divisive: First, “He is proud.” He sees himself as possessing superior knowledge and is lifted up in his own mind. The original expression meant “to smoke, to fume,” then “to be inflated, to be conceited.” This is descriptive of one who has no real knowledge, yet thinks he possesses superior knowledge, and sees himself as superior. The factious are not hesitant to tell you what they think. In fact, they are quite ready and willing to tell you what *you* think!

Yet, Paul described such a person as “Knowing nothing.” The original: “He is a fool.” A fool is one

that is devoid of any real understanding, yet he pretends great understanding.

The factious person – (lit: the divisive person) – is not teachable. He “is obsessed with arguments about words.” He is interested in, and desires to proclaim, argue, and debate matters beyond his knowledge. The original word signifies “to be sick; then to languish, to pine after.” He has a diseased appetite (no love for the truth). He has a consuming appetite for winning controversies.

Reasonable people use words in order to communicate. The divisive use words as weapons. They seize upon words, define them as they choose, and produce an indictment. The Jews of Paul’s day excelled at this. They were always armed with suspicions and insinuations. They asked questions, not to obtain answers, but to stir up strife. They misrepresented those that they opposed. Consider the lengths to which they went in their determination to destroy Jesus.

Paul addressed the result of the actions of such men. He wrote, “from which comes envy.” Envy is “uneasiness, pain, mortification, or discontent, excited by another’s prosperity, knowledge, honors, or possessions.”

The divisive are envious of those who are accepted, respected, and trusted. Envy blinded the Jews to the truth about Jesus, and moved them to murder Him.

Continued on Page 7

We must never lose sight of that great plea which calls for men and women to abandon every creed and church not found in the Scriptures and to return to the ancient faith which was once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3).

According to the New Testament, all Christians were members of the same body (1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 4:4). Christians enjoyed fellowship as members of the local congregation, and as members of the body of Christ at large. Never did any church body or "denomination" exist that was larger than the local congregation, but smaller than the universal body of Christ.

I would like to cite F.D. Srygley on this matter, as he wrote:

"When Christians organize or belong to denominational churches, they do something Christians in New Testament times did not do. There were no denominations in New Testament times, and there could be none now if nobody preached or practiced anything that was not preached or practiced in New Testament times" (*New Testament Church*, p.42).

If God did not plan for these denominations, who did? If the New Testament does not authorize sectarianism, who does? Only one answer is true – these practices originated with men, uninspired, fallible men.

Why not go back to the inspired men who wrote the New Testament and learn about the church as they told of it? You will find men and women believing and obeying the gospel of Christ. You will find

God alone adding these people to His church, just as He alone will add them to heaven someday. No one "prayed through" or was "voted in." No children were added in infancy only to be "confirmed" later. Every person who was a Christian was a member of the same church, and they knew it. In recognition of this we plead:

- For every professing Christian to come out of any church not found in the Bible and become united as one people in Christ.
- For every person to return to the Bible, and the Bible alone for doctrine and practice.
- For the Bible alone to serve as our only creed.
- For every soul to lay aside any doctrine or practice unauthorized by the New Testament and originating with men.
- For every man to stand united on the principles of God's grace and salvation as extended by Christ and His inspired apostles.
- For persons to exercise their right to study and be approved unto God (2 Timothy 2:15).

A Plea to Brethren

How can we ask the world to embrace a plea we no longer believe or teach? I fear that some of us are spending too much time worrying over the Dead Sea Scrolls, and pluperfect participles, and not devoting enough time to understanding the basic principles of New Testament Christianity. How can we ask the world to accept a message we are not convicted to preach? It seems like many of our

sermons are being devoted to other things, rather than the basics of Christ, His church, and His plan of salvation. I believe this lack of fundamental teaching and preaching is one reason some of us are getting involved in non-biblical practices, and holding forth opinions rather than the word of life.

It could be that our lack of conviction for this most noble plea is the reason some of us lack the necessary evangelistic fervor required for the church to grow. After all, if we are content to be a sect among the sects, why should we bother helping anyone to come out of them? If we are content to be "just another denomination" what is the point? One manmade church is as good as another. However, if we are truly determined to be Christians and Christians only, and to teach and practice the religion of Christ and Christ alone, then we have a message worth sharing.

All Men One in Christ

God has always desired unity. Jesus not only prayed for the unity of believers (John 17:21), He also died for this unity (Ephesians 2:14-16). Indeed, "how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1)

It would truly be wonderful if there were no denominations and every God-fearing soul was simply a Christian, and not a "hyphenated" Christian. We mustn't lose sight of this great hope that all men can be one in Christ.

While it is true that we aren't going to convince everyone, if we will remain focused on the task at hand, we will convince some (1 Corinthians 9:22).

The

GOSPEL



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Who Love the Lord, His Word, and
His Church*

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The "Sinner's Prayer"

Ron Thomas

At a second-hand store the other day, I picked up a number of small booklets pertaining to the subject of religion. I check this particular store on a regular basis. Sometimes I come across some really good finds that are of great value to me. Most often, however, I come across books that have little value, so I pick them up with the intention of reading and writing a word or two about it.

Today, I am writing about such a booklet. The book is: *Living in Christ & Gospel of John*, published by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (2014). The intent of the book is encouragement in one's daily walk as a Christian. Within the pages, early on, is a page dedicated to "how to receive Christ."

On page 4 of the book, in the introductory section, one learns "how to receive Christ." In answering the question, there are steps one must follow. I have numbered them at five (though the booklet has them numbered at four). They are: (1) recognize God's plan (John 3:16); (2) realize one's separation because of sin (Romans 3:23; 6:23); (3) respond to God's remedy (Romans 5:8); (4) receive Christ (John 1:12).

What is of particular note in these four steps is the inclusion of Scripture to buttress a particular point (or step). But, with regard to the fifth step, they offer nothing in the way of scriptural support. What I have numbered as the fifth step reads: "Through prayer, invite Jesus to come in and control your life through the Holy Spirit (receive Christ as Lord and Savior)." This is followed by a "prayer of commitment."

This "prayer of commitment" is a prayer the reader is invited to repeat. This is known as the "sinner's prayer." This sinner's prayer is a worded prayer given to the reader as an answer to the question "how to receive Christ." There is *no Scripture* to support the giving of it, just an answer to "pray this prayer." Don't miss this. In the earlier remarks on the page there is scriptural support for the answers, but none for this one. Might there be a reason for that?

There is, very much, a reason for this. In taking note that no Scripture is used to buttress the point,

there is something that comes from this that teaches us much. The sinner's prayer, a standard teaching in the Protestant denominational world, is a teaching that has been conjured up by man and, thus, is not of God. If it was of God, then one can be sure the author(s) of this booklet would have included the scriptural reference alongside the remark. As it is, there is not.

The Prayer

In their "last step of the way" (if you will) in "how to receive Christ" the reader is invited to recite a prayer. The prayer reads this way:

"Dear Lord Jesus, I know I am a sinner, and I ask your forgiveness. I believe you died for my sins and rose from the dead. I turn from running my own life, and now I ask you to run it. I invite you to come into my heart and life [sic]. I trust and follow You as my Lord and Savior. In Jesus' name, amen" (page 4).

The sinner's prayer is misguided at best and flat out biblically wrong at worst! This is a teaching of man, and not of God (Matthew 15:8-9, 13-14). It is a serious matter and not one to be lightly dismissed. The biblical answer to "how to receive Christ" is not so difficult that one needs to *make up* an answer that is not in the Bible!

"How to receive Christ" is similar to the question that was asked of Peter in Acts 2 on the day of Pentecost. After hearing Peter preach, citing Scripture to support his points, and laying at the feet of the Jewish community the killing of the Lord's Anointed, they inquired of Peter what they must do.

"Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ. Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' Then Peter said to them, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit'" (Acts 2:36-38, NKJV).

Another Gate

Thus, those who desired to become Christians by the sinners' prayer have tried to enter through another gate (or door). There is no other gate, however. The gate they tried to enter, they thought, was Christ. In fact, the gate they thought they entered through was not of Christ, but a gate that belongs to another (cf. 2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

Now, what do people do if they feel they became a "Christian" by the sinner's prayer? To begin, since the sinner's prayer is not a teaching of the Bible, it is biblically impossible for one to become a Christian in that sort of way. Whatever purity of motive might exist on the part of the one who prayed for Christ to "come into the heart" is not a sufficient biblical answer to becoming a Christian. Second, it is important to understand there are two equally important components to serving God; Paul identifies these as "sincerity and truth" (1 Corinthians 5:8). With regard to the sinner's prayer, only sincerity is satisfied. The other component needs to be satisfied too – the truth.

This is a hard matter for a great many people. It is hard because for a period of time they have lived with the strong conviction that Christ has been on their side, that their prayers have been heard, and they have come to believe that all of the good blessings they experienced are directly from God. As you can well imagine, it is a hard thing to be told you are wrong when you have lived with a conviction for so long.

It is, moreover, a potentially fruitless matter to speak to their strong convictions as to whether or not their prayers were heard, and to the blessings they are convinced came from God. It is not a fruitless matter, however, to speak to what the Scripture says. With the former it is an entirely subjective matter, but with the latter it is a matter of what God said, it is a matter of biblical evidence. How does one then begin to convince them?

What Does the Bible Teach?

It is interesting to note that on the following page of the booklet (page 5, *Living in Christ & Gospel of John*) there are three questions, all related to how one knows. How does one know he (she) is saved? How does one know he (she) is a child of God? How does one know he (she) has eternal life? The answer to

these questions is settled with a simple reply. God said it in the Bible. This is not true, of course, with the sinner's prayer.

Since the sinner's prayer is found nowhere in the New Testament, exactly what does the Bible say about "how to receive Christ"?

Earlier, mention was made of Peter's words to those in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2). It was there that Peter made plain to his hearers their guilt in killing the Lord's Anointed (Acts 2:23). Responding to the weight of their guilt, the crowd asked Peter what they must do to remove their guilt of killing the Lord's Messiah. Peter replied, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

This is a biblical answer to the question "how to receive Christ?" It is not a made up answer, but one that is straight from the words of the apostle.

Here is another biblical answer to "how to receive Christ?" "But when they believed Philip as he preached the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, both men and women were baptized" (Acts 8:12).

In these two biblical passages we learn the following things the Holy Spirit said one needs to do to "receive Christ." They are: (1) believe the good news, (2) repent, and (3) be baptized.

That is the Bible's answer, and one that is easily supported by the Bible. Why didn't the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association give this Bible answer? It appears they desire to teach entry into Jesus by some other means than that by which Jesus said one must enter (cf. John 3:3-5).

My friends don't try to enter by some other way than Jesus' way.

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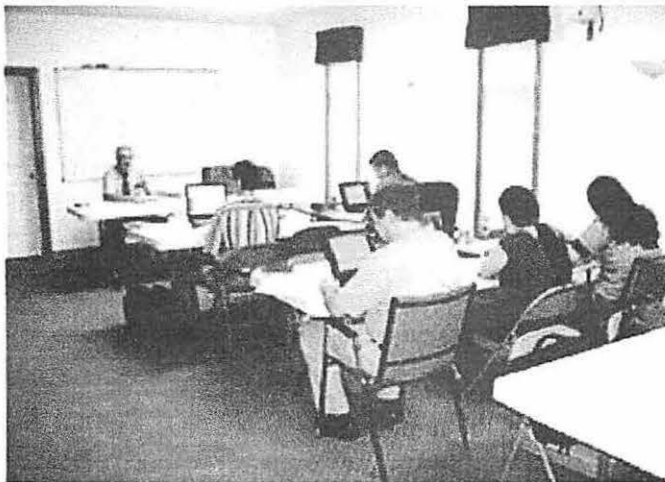
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SPECIAL FEATURE: The Tri-Cities School of Preaching and Christian Development

The Tri-Cities School of Preaching and Christian Development is located in the beautiful Appalachian Mountains of northeast Tennessee and operates under the oversight of the eldership of the Stoney Creek church of Christ. Wesley Simons is the Director and Eddy Craft is Co-Director

The curriculum has been carefully designed to make men of the Book; men who are able and qualified to help congregations through local work by offering instruction with an emphasis on Christian apologetics, balance in the work of the Lord, and one full year of Greek instruction.

The school's faculty is comprised mainly of men who are products of sound preacher training schools. Several of the instructors have gone on to earn degrees in Bible-related fields. All of the instructors are experienced gospel preachers with a combined experience equaling over 200 years. Years of experience in evangelism are brought into the classroom with a view toward training men who will be qualified to deal with the demands of local work.



TCSOP offers three full years of instruction. A two year program is mandatory for graduation. The two year program is a concentration of studies in the biblical text itself. First year students are instructed in English, while second year students complete a year of

Greek. The school also hopes to add a course in Spanish to help qualify men for the mission field.

The third year program, which is recommended for all students, is geared toward apologetics and allows the student to choose his course of study from the electives offered. Students agreeing to complete the third year of instruction may enter classes at the beginning of any quarter during the year.

Students also have the opportunity to be trained in radio and television work.

The school is also designed to allow residents in the Tri-Cities area to audit any class they choose. Women may attend the school and receive all of the training offered to men, except those classes geared toward gender-specific roles in the church. Women attending the school's full program will be assigned research projects while male students are attending gender-specific classes.

All courses are free. However, students are expected to purchase all required textbooks.

Program of Training

The two year program is equivalent to that in a regular four year college program. The third year program is equivalent to completing a graduate program. All instruction is conducted on the college level.

A graduation service is conducted for both the second and third year students. Graduates receive a certificate of graduation and achievement for successfully completing the work. Graduates of this school are respected and used universally.

Admission Process

In order to apply for admission to the Tri-Cities School of Preaching and Christian Development, one needs to do the following:

1. Complete an application and send it with a letter of intent to the Dean of Admission.

2. Provide information about your immediate family. If you or your spouse has been divorced, please explain how your previous marriage(s) ended.
3. Provide the names, addresses, and phone numbers of three personal references. One reference should be your local preacher or elders. Please provide letters of references when you submit your application.
4. When your application, letter of intent, and references are processed, you will be notified in writing about your acceptance or denial.



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Continued from Page One: *The Factious – The Divisive* by Ronald D. Bryant

Moved by envy, the divisive exploit others. They exploit some in order to build a following. They delight in upsetting those that are not prepared for their attack. They spread word of their victory, yet of course with feigned concern for those poor deluded souls they oppose. Their concern is covered with the contamination of the strife they have produced.

The divisive engage in "revilings" (NKJV). They hurl criticism and censure, use unkind and abusive language towards those whom they oppose. They revile them. To "revile" means to ridicule. Ridicule is one of the major weapons of the divisive.

Paul said the divisive are ruled by "evil suspicions" (NKJV). Love of truth and evil suspicions are mutually exclusive. Armed with their suspicions and their interpretation of words and events, the divisive do not hesitate to judge motives. They know full-well that evil suspicions guarantee the perpetuation of strife.

The divisive engage in "useless wrangling" (NKJV). This expression appears only here in the New Testament. It means "mis-employment; then, idle occupation." The verb form means "to rub in pieces, to wear away," i.e., idle activities that merely wear away time. "Wrangling" is a means of perpetuating strife!

Paul declared that the divisive are "men of corrupt minds." They are cunning in the ways of the world. They delight not only in disturbing, but in corrupting the minds of others. They delight in stirring others to anger and unwise actions. Inconsistent themselves, they take perverse delight in pointing out the inconsistencies of others.

Paul said that the divisive are "destitute of the truth." Truth no longer matters to them. They only pretend to have regard for it. If it is to their advantage they will quote certain truths, but they possess no real love for or commitment to truth.

Paul stated the motive of the divisive. They proceed "supposing that gain is godliness." They work to come to possess some advantage, some prestige, some power, some pleasure, some position, or some victory. They judge every point or principle by its ability to bring them to the "gain" they desire. They want that

which will promote their interest, and are willing to sacrifice any principle to gain their objective.

The divisive of every stripe pursue the same things – some “gain.” Yet, they stand under this indictment set forth by Paul (see also Titus 3:10-11).

Paul not only indicted the divisive, but gave this directive to those who would honor God, “from such turn away.”

CHARGE!

Michael Underwood

Jesus charges us to go into all the world and preach the gospel. He encourages us and emboldens us saying that He will be with us always. Jesus knew the church would be successful, but this is more than that. He is actually commanding the church to go and be successful.

I am reminded of the situation in the wilderness when Israel, recently rescued and redeemed from Egypt, was told to go and take the land. After sending spies into the land, however, the people demonstrated a lack of trust in God. It was not the first such demonstration, but it was the one that “broke the camel’s back.” When they disregarded God’s charge and listened to the evil report of the ten spies rather than the good report of the two, God disinherited them and allowed their children to enter instead (40 years later).

What did God expect them to do when they saw the giants that made them look like grasshoppers in their own sight? What did God expect them to do when they heard of the great walled (fortified) cities? He expected them to trust Him! He told them He would be with them. And, He had previously shown them that He would be with them.

Still, with all the evidence before them, when God told them to go take the land, they accused Him of bringing them in the desert to die. These people were not fit for the kingdom of God! Paul said they died in the wilderness because they did not believe; they did not trust.

3,500 years later, where are we? We have the charge to “go.” We have the promise of divine pres-

ence and blessing. May I encourage the church of God today to trust God! Accept His charge.

Success in our effort depends upon: (1) God’s power; (2) Our trusting and using God’s power; (3) The receptive heart of the souls who are lost. Jesus knows that there will be times when we are not successful. It is not because Jesus is not with us. It is not because God (His gospel) has no power. It is because not all hearts are receptive and God does not force anyone to be in His kingdom. If we go with God and in His power, however, there will be success! It may not come in the way we thought it might, it may not come according to our timing or schedule, but there will be success! I know this because He said that His word does not return to Him empty (see Isaiah 55:11).

So what will you do, called out one? Will you be disinherited in the desert because you did not believe? Will you gather and mumble and grumble about how bad things are and how we can’t win? Or will you allow Him in His wisdom and power to use you to show the world that there is only one God and He is the source of life for all who will come?

From the Gospel Gleaner Bookstore

<u>Andy Erwin</u> – “You’ve Been a Good Brother, Willie”	
<i>The Life & Sermons of W.A. Bradfield</i>	\$14.95
<u>Erwin</u> – <i>Each One Reach One</i>	\$12.00
<u>Erwin</u> – <i>Lectures on the New Testament Church</i>	\$6.00
<u>Guv Hester</u> – “Keep It Simple Son” Fifty-Five Sermons from Fifty-Five Years of Preaching	
	\$10.00
<u>B. B. Baxter</u> – <i>The Heart of the Yale Lectures</i>	\$12.00
<u>Gus Nichols</u> – <i>Sermon Outlines</i>	\$10.00

Gospel Gleaner Bookstore

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Include \$3.00 for Postage

GLEANINGS FROM MISSION REPORTS

[Editor's Note: We hope you like this new feature. Ideally we would like to feature a different work exclusively each month. However, some months (like this one) will cover a variety of mission efforts ongoing around the world. There is so much good being done! Let us continue to keep these brethren in our prayers.

If you have a particular missionary or mission work you would like to have spotlighted in this column, email the information to andyverwin@gospelgleaner.com; or write to Andy Erwin, 3778 CR 33, Killen, AL 35645]

New Zealand

Chris and Michele Herd have recently moved to New Plymouth, New Zealand to work with the Lord's church there. Here is a little of what Chris sent us:

"It is with excitement that we look towards the hopeful beginning of a new work on the North Island of New Zealand. There is a lot of work involved but the congregations are willing to be involved and do what is needed, including follow up once we establish a worship service in the proposed starting point for this church planting project."

Chris also said that John Grubb will be there from March 11-April 7 for an evangelistic campaign.

To find out more about this work, contact:

Elkmont church of Christ
C/O Lester Smith (Elder)
P.O. Box 151
Elkmont, AL, USA, 35620

Email: lsmith18332@gmail.com

Malaysia, Uganda, and Kenya

Ronald Gilbert is soon to be in Malaysia for five weeks to conduct a series of five gospel meetings.

Brother Gilbert is also planning a trip to Africa to occur in a few months. He writes:

"We are hoping this year to send several Bibles and New Testaments, print and ship 200,000 Gospel tracts, print and ship several Bible Correspondence Course lessons, pur-

chase and ship several text and library books to the preacher schools, purchase several bikes for preachers, purchase around 300 Bibles in different African languages, give funds to operate the preacher school at Siamafumba for one year.....

It is our plan this year to visit Zambia for three weeks working with two preacher schools there and conducting three Gospel meetings.

After the three weeks Carolyn & I plan to travel to Uganda and work with East Africa School of Biblical Studies in Busia, Uganda. I Plan to teach some there at the school and if possible conduct a Gospel meeting on the weekend. We hope also to visit with the brethren at Uganda School of Preaching.

Then we plan to travel to Ndhiwa, Kenya and work with the Kalamindi School of Preaching. There I plan to teach some at the school and conduct a Gospel meeting on the weekend. While we are there they will have their graduation at the school.

Then we plan to stop at Kisumu and visit with the brethren at the Kenya School of Preaching. If things go as we plan we will be able to visit and work with six of the preacher schools we are working with. This year we will be sending books, Bibles, tracts, BCC lessons, and other teaching materials to ten different schools in Africa.

Each year they try to provide bikes for the preachers who graduate from these preacher training schools. This year over 40 men are graduating from these six schools! They will need more bikes this year than in the past. These bikes cost \$100.00 each."

If you would like to purchase a bike for one of the preachers who will graduate from a preacher training school, send a check to:

Ronald D. Gilbert Mission Fund
C/O Rock Valley church of Christ
P.O. Box 49494
Cookeville, TN, 38506

Be sure to write "bike" on the check. Brother Gilbert is also requesting help for his trip to Africa.



PREACHING THAT DOES NOT OFFEND

Stephen R. Bradd

Our culture has made "tolerance" a most noble virtue. Almost everything must be tolerated it seems. Sexual immorality, profanity, situation ethics, etc., can all be displayed with pride, but Christian principles must be kept in silence, never proclaimed or defended. If a Christian stands up for his faith against sin, he is labeled "intolerant," no matter how peaceful his words or demeanor. Those doing the labeling rarely realize their hypocrisy in not tolerating a Christian to respectfully articulate his opposition to a certain practice.

I read an article recently in which a preacher was asked why he didn't just preach the gospel and leave others with different convictions alone. I thought his response was quite good. He went through a list of nearly twenty Bible topics and noted that no matter what topic was addressed, someone would be displeased! For example, to preach that God created all things bothers the evolutionist. To preach that Jesus is the Son of God and Savior upsets those of other religions. To preach that one must be immersed in water for the forgiveness of sins angers many in the denominational world who do not believe baptism is necessary for salvation. We could supply more examples, but you get the idea.

Ultimately, no matter what is taught there will be someone somewhere who disagrees and takes offense. So, what's a preacher to do? The answer: Exactly what God tells him to do! As Paul told the young evangelist, Timothy:

"I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: 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. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the

work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry" (2 Timothy 4:1-5).

Although preachers are not to be mean-spirited or belligerent with their words, neither are they to be paralyzed in the pulpit, afraid of who might be offended by their declarations of truth. A preacher can and must convince, rebuke, and exhort with patience and grace in his speech (cf. Colossians 4:6). He cannot avoid certain subjects that he knows are likely to offend. He has a duty to proclaim sound doctrine, and not to restrict himself only to that which he knows will please his listeners.

The apostle Paul was innocent of the blood of all men, for he did not avoid declaring "the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). He preached it all – even the parts some would rather he didn't. If he failed to do this, he would bear some responsibility for their destruction (cf. Ezekiel 3:17-21). Paul was a watchman, and so are preachers today.

Gospel preachers must preach God's word in love (cf. Ephesians 4:15), whether men like it or not. They must preach it whether men will receive it or not. They must preach it even if it makes some mad. Faithful men really have no other choice in the matter. God will judge them for their words. Woe unto any preacher who is afraid – due to his listeners – to speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth! Such a one should not preach at all (cf. James 3:1).

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Bundles of 100 - \$40.00 per month

www.gospelgleaner.com

The Library Page

THIS MONTH

Books on the Church



Here is a list of books that should help anyone in their study of the New Testament church.

- *Why I am a Member of the Church of Christ* by Leroy Brownlow

Brother Brownlow's book has been around a long time for a reason. It is just as helpful as ever and is suitable for class studies. At a time when fundamental teaching is sorely needed, it would do us well to re-study this classic.

- *The Church of the Bible* by J. Ridley Stroop

This classic from the 1960s has recently been reprinted by the Gospel Advocate Company in a durable paperback. It contains thirteen lessons, which make it suitable for a quarter session in the Bible school program.

- *What is "The Church"? and God's Design for "The Church"* by Eddie Cloer

This two-volume set totals twenty-six lessons in all. If you are seeking to teach back-to-back classes on the church, like Brownlow's book, these would be hard to beat.

- *The New Testament Church* by F.B. Srygley

This is a collection of articles written by F.D. Srygley from 1889-1900 for the *Gospel Advocate*. They first appeared during the heat of debate on the issue of sectarianism. You will find this book to be invaluable in helping you to answer others about the simplicity of one New Testament church. It has also been reprinted in a durable paperback.

- *The Church of Christ* by Edward C. Wharton

Wharton's book has recently been revised and reprinted by the Gospel Advocate. The revision also includes outlines by Homer Hailey.

Imperatives for Soul Winning

Revelation 22:17

1. How many can truthfully sing, "I want to be a soul winner for Jesus every day?"
 2. Christ's last words in the Bible remind us of His last words while on earth. Matt. 28:18-20.
 3. An analysis of Revelation 22:17. (see: Isa. 55:1; Rom. 3:24)
 4. It is a fitting subject because: our mission is ever before us, iniquity is abounding, and love is waxing cold. Matt. 24:12
 5. What are some imperatives for soul winning?
- I. **A CONVICTION That Souls Without Christ Are Lost.**
 - A. "Lost" as Jesus and Paul used the word. Lk. 15:4, 6, 9, 24, 32; 2 Cor. 4:3, 4. (Lost is a deep and painful word to consider.)
 - B. Those who leave this world lost are lost before they leave and will forever remain lost! Jn. 3:18, 36; 2 Thes. 1:7-10
 - C. If we do not believe in eternal retribution then we do not believe Jesus or the gospel. Mk. 9:38; Lk. 16:19-31.
 1. The Gospel is the saving power. Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 15:3.
 2. From what does the Gospel save? Rom. 6:23
 3. Gallup polls do not change facts. There IS a hell..
 - II. **A COMPASSION For Souls That Are Lost.**
 - A. True compassion can only come from genuine concern. Psal. 142:4. (Hymn: "You Never Mentioned Him To Me".)
 - B. We listen to others who had great concern over the lost: Jeremiah- Jer. 9:1; Paul- Rom. 9:1-3; 2 Cor. 5:10, 11; 1 Cor. 9:16; Acts 20:31; Our Lord- Matt. 9:36; Lk. 19:41.
 - C. May God grant us to be so concerned over the lost to the extent it is an emotional feeling with us. Psal. 126:5, 6
 - III. **A COMMITMENT of Our Lives to the Savior of Men.**
 - A. What is the chief hindrance to having a soul winning program?
 1. We want to blame everybody from a preacher to the Devil; from Jehovah Witnesses to Lawyers.
 2. Men have always tried to extricate themselves and blame others for their failures and omissions.
 3. The answer to this question is our own decayed behavior.
 - B. Who is the only person the Lord can use in His service? Rom. 12:1, 2
 - C. Look at the compelling motives of the first century church:
 1. They appreciated the price heaven paid to save them.
 2. Their experience with the Lord was undeniable.
 3. Their loyalty gave the Lord first place.
 4. They made their will submissive to His will.
 5. They had a godly fear of displeasing Him.
 6. They had a feeling of indebtedness to Him.
 7. They had a burning desire to be with Him in heaven. (Jn. 3:16; Acts 4:13; II Tim. 3:3, 4; Gal. 2:20; 1 Cor. 9:27; Rom. 1:14, 15; Phil. 3:11.)
1. Here are three imperatives. I urge you to think on these things.
 2. What is one soul, any soul, worth? Matt. 16:26
 3. On what ground would you plead for a second chance?

-Mike Kiser

Honoring R.C. White

Raymond Elliott

Volumes could be written about the men and women who taught at the Montgomery Bible School / Alabama Christian College in Montgomery, Alabama during the 1940s and 1950s.



Mr. and Mrs. R. C. White

I knew most of them personally. Their dedication and commitment to Christian education excelled in comparison to

some who were in the field of education. They were not awarded monetarily according to their labors of love; because funds were either meager or unavailable, more than is realized by the later generations of students and faculty members. There is one person who stands out because of his rich background and familiarity with giants in Christian education and scholarly men who advanced the cause of Christ in our country during the past two centuries. His name is Richard Campbell (R.C.) White.

I was a student in some of his Bible classes. Brother White would often say that he sat at the feet of brother David Lipscomb. He was the link between the notable David Lipscomb and his students at Montgomery Bible School. Brother White was advanced in years when he came to the school as a teacher. He was legally blind. The lenses of his glasses were very thick and he also had to use a magnifying glass to read while teaching his class. Students were used in reading to brother White after the school day ended. Also, some of us would drive him to his preaching appointments on Sundays. I remember driving his Ford coupe to various congregations. One thing that did not diminish with age was his appetite. I witnessed his love for good food and the amount he ate.

Brother Clyde E. Fulmer wrote in the *Gospel Advocate*, as found in the September 28, 1961, issue con-

cerning the life of brother White following his death in that year. I will use portions of his remarks about this man who had committed his life in the service of Jesus Christ.

"Brother White was born September 17, 1872, near Unionville, Bedford County, Tennessee, the son of W.G. and Mary Tabitha White. Brother White was baptized by E.A. Elam on August 21, 1886. He entered the Nashville Bible School October 15, 1892, the second term of the school, which is now David Lipscomb College. On May 26, 1896, he received his diploma on which David Lipscomb inscribed: 'Brother White has attended my Bible class three sessions, has been a diligent student of the Bible, and is above the average in his knowledge of the Bible.' The other members of that first graduating class were J.N. Armstrong, John E. Dunn, L.K. Harding and G.W. McQuiddy. On November 16, 1892, he preached his first sermon at 'Perry's Hall,' now Jo Johnston Avenue, Nashville, on the subject of 'Christian Warfare.'

In 1906 he entered George Peabody College, Nashville, and graduated in June, 1909, receiving the Dudley Medal for the highest scholarship, the greatest leadership, and the best moral character; he was president of his graduating class.

He preached for congregations in Tennessee and for the Walnut Street church in Greenville, Alabama, from 1948 to 1950, when he moved to Montgomery, Alabama, to teach at the Alabama Christian College.

Brother White preached about 15,000 sermons and baptized about 2,000 people during the almost sixty-nine years of his work for the Lord. His last sermon was at the Hunter Station church on June 11, 1961. On June 14, he taught a class at the Panama Street church in Montgomery.

Brother White married Virginia Johnson of Peytonsville, Tennessee, on December 19, 1894, and she died on January 23, 1935. And on September 21, 1937, he was married to Mrs. Katherine Lawson of Nashville, who survives him.

Funeral services were conducted at the Capitol Heights church on Monday, August 14, 1961, by A.C. Moore, Rex Turner, and the writer. Burial was in Greenwood Cemetery, Montgomery."

THE QUESTION BOX

Gerald Cowan

QUESTION: If a divorced person becomes a Christian, does it matter how and why that person became divorced?

ANSWER: If God's marriage law only pertains to Christians, why only that law, and not the rest of God's law? If God's law only applies to Christians, does 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 mean the sins listed by Paul only count as sins if they are committed by Christians? Paul says elsewhere that "there is no sin where there is no law" (Romans 4:15 and 5:13). If non-Christians are not under God's law they cannot be sinners, and would not need to be saved. Why then do we teach them and try to convert them to Christ?

We try to convert them to Christ because otherwise they will die in their sins against God and be excluded from the kingdom of God and from His heaven. But after listing a number of things that will keep one out of the kingdom of God, Paul says, "And such were some of you" (1 Corinthians 6:11). To paraphrase it: "Some of you who are now Christians were guilty of such sins before you became Christians."

In Romans 1:19-31, Paul speaks to those who are not Christians, who refuse to accept or follow God, and who are therefore given up by God to suffer the consequences of their sins and be consigned to the death and destruction that their lifestyle deserves. Notice that he mentions adulterers as separate from fornicators (in 1 Corinthians 6:9). That is because *porneia* (fornication) covers all kinds of sexual sin, including adultery, homosexuality, sodomy and more. Those sins are a sub-set or kind of fornication applying only to those who do those particular things; whereas *moicheia* (adultery) applies only to married persons. It is the sexual sins of any kind committed by a married person. And, Paul says some of the Christians he was writing to had been guilty of adultery in their marriage, *before they became Christians*. They were judged by God's law, not by the laws and standards of their pagan society and religion (which he calls idolatry since it was not of the One True God).

If God's law of marriage applied to non-Christians, all of it applied, since all of it was "from the beginning" (Matthew 19:1-6). That is, not from the beginning of the Jewish religion or the Christian faith, but from the be-

ginning of humanity, from Adam and Eve. With that in mind, it becomes apparent that *how and why* one was divorced before becoming Christian is just as important as *if or when* it happens to one who is a Christian, whether he or she was the divorcer or the divorcee.

When Paul says "you were washed, sanctified, justified" by Christ and the Spirit of God when you became Christians (1 Corinthians 6:11), he means the guilt of past sins is gone. But, he does not imply that the sinner can keep on sinning in those ways as a Christian. "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid!" (Romans 6:1)

Can one continue in idolatry? Homosexuality? Unrighteousness of any kind? What about adultery? "No" to every sin of every kind! Restitution implies that one returns, repairs, and restores, to the extent that it is possible for him, what he has taken, abused, or destroyed — in relationships, and not just in physical property.

One last thought: if people believe God's marriage law only applies to Christians, why do we not suggest that the marriages of non-Christians are not marriages at all, and that the improper relationship is dissolved automatically when one becomes a Christian, and then require those people who become Christians and want to continue living with each other as sex partners and parents to their children to become married to each other in the Lord and in compliance with His law?

Too many keep asking questions until they find someone who tells them what they want to hear, and then they stop searching. Too many, who claim to believe the Bible, find the answers they want, about the whole subject of marriage, from somebody who grants freedom to marry, divorce, remarry, etc. endlessly for almost any reason and claims to find that freedom in the scripture. But they find the freedom they want by misunderstanding, twisting, perverting, or ignoring the words of Christ and the apostles who were inspired and authorized to speak for Him and for God, in scripture. People who want to be right with God should find their justification in the scripture, not in someone who perverts scripture (Galatians 1:6-9).

News & Notes

Remembering Warren Kenney



Warren Franklin Kenney, 70, of Martinsburg, West Virginia went to be with the Lord on Thursday, January 8, 2015 at his residence surrounded by his family.

Warren was born July 11, 1944 at Sardis, Ohio. He was the son of the late George Wittenbrook and

Hazel Marie Henthorn Kenney.

Brother Kenney was the minister of Central church of Christ in Martinsburg since 1989 and preached the gospel for over 45 years.

He is survived by his wife, whom he married May 26, 1965, Kay Eileen Stonebraker Kenney; one son, David Raymond Kenney and wife, Annette Marie Kenney, of Bedford, Ohio; two daughters, Sherry Lynne Kenney of Martinsburg and Hazel Marie Martin of Centralia, Illinois; four grandchildren, Alec Gregory Kenney, Jacob Thomas Martin, James William Kenney, and Deborah Anne Kenney; and one brother, Robert Eugene Kenney.

He was preceded in death by two brothers, Stanley Ray Kenney and Kenneth Emerson Kenney.

Remembering Charles H. Carter, Sr.



Charlie Henderson Carter, Sr., 73, preacher for the church of Christ at Newtown, in Spring Hill, Tennessee, passed Sunday, February 1, 2015. He was the second child of eleven children, seven of whom preceded him in death. In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his

first wife, Mattie Carter and his oldest son, Charlie Carter, Jr.

Brother Charlie Carter's memory will be treasured by his devoted wife, Mary A. Lee Carter, whom he married April 1, 2000.

He had four children: Sylvia (Robert) Pipkins, Michael Carter and Armond (Ytoka) Carter of Columbia, TN, Janiece (Jewell) Gaither of Lansing, MI.

He had two step-children: Kordelle McKissack of Cape Coral, FL, Katondra McKissack Fleming of Spring Hill, TN.

Two young preachers, who also called him "Pops": Ralph (Machelle) Thompson of Franklin, TN and Webster (Janice) Sparkman of Petersburg, TN.

Brother Carter's siblings are Lee Arthur (Ruby) Carter of Duarte, CA, Rosie (James) Black of Monrovia, CA and Carl Hall of Atlanta, GA. He has seven Sisters-in-law, and Brother-in-law, Timothy Hawkins of Huntsville, AL; fifteen grandchildren, and nine great grandchildren, along with cousins, nieces, nephews and many friends.

Remembering John Murphree



John Murphree, age 87, passed from this life on January 7, 2015. He was born May 10, 1927 in Elgin, Illinois.

He was preceded in death by his wife of 59 years, Cornelia Sprott Murphree. He is survived by daughters, Elizabeth East (James), Martha

Murphree, Rachel Pyle (Martin); six grandchildren, Robbie Spivey, Martha Stefanowicz, Ruth Scobey, Rebekah Gray, John Pyle, David Pyle; six great-grandchildren, Elsie Spivey, Lucas Gray, Luella Gray, Walter Scobey, Owen Gray, and Isla Stefanowicz; brother, Steve Murphree.

John graduated in 1945 from Dickson County High School, and 1949 from Lipscomb University. He married Cornelia Sprott and they worked with the church for 59 years in MS, KY, TN, 5 years in Brussels, Belgium, and 5 years in Papua New Guinea. Short terms of mission work were also done in Ivory Coast, Haiti, and Romania.

John was baptized in 1945 at Walnut Street Church of Christ in Dickson, TN. John also taught French for 6 years at Dickson county High School.



Fundamental Truths Seminar

Bowling Green, KY: The **Lehman Avenue church of Christ** will be conducting their annual Fundamental Truths Seminar

on Saturday, March 28, from 9:00 am – 3:00 pm. This year's theme is "Being in the World, But Not of It: Maintaining Our Christian Identity." Speakers include Tom Holland, Michael D. Greene, and Lance Cordle. Ashley Hudson will also be teaching classes for ladies. For more information call (270) 843- 8435.

Western Kentucky Leadership Workshop

Benton, KY: The **Briensburg church of Christ** will be hosting their annual leadership workshop on March 28 from 8:00 am – 2:20 pm. Speakers include Dennis Loyd, Mark Ray, Earl Edwards, Doug Burleson, Don Loftis, Steve Higginbotham, and Kristi Burleson will be teaching classes for ladies. The theme is "Questions Confronting Church Leadership." For more information call (270) 527-8691.

Memphis School of Preaching Lectures

Memphis, TN: The 49th annual lectureship of the **Memphis School of Preaching** will be conducted March 29 – April 2. The theme is "Restoration: History in the Making." For more information call (901) 731-2242.

New Documentary on Alexander Campbell

David R. Kenney, the minister for the Wadsworth, Ohio congregation has produced a new documentary on Alexander Campbell. It is titled, "AC – A Historical Account of Alexander Campbell." It will air on the Gospel Broadcasting Network on March 10, at 8pm EST. The program can also be viewed via their website at www.gbntv.org.

41st Annual Lectureship

Knoxville, TN: The **Southeast Institute of Biblical Studies** will host their annual lectureship April 26-29. The theme for this year is "Faith: Responding to Jesus from Sinner to Saint." For more information call (865) 691-7444.

Wallace Alexander Honored

Henderson, TN: Longtime editor of the *Gospel Light* and owner of Gospel Light Publishing Company in Delight, Arkansas, Wallace Alexander, was recently honored at the Friends of the Restoration Movement luncheon which took place during this year's Freed-Hardeman lectures.

It was interesting to learn of the history of the *Gospel Light*, dating back to 1929. Brother Alexander has followed his grandfather, Grady Alexander, and his father, Flanoy Alexander, as editors of this paper.

Brother Wallace Alexander has recently published a collection of his articles which have appeared in the *Gospel Light*. The book is titled *Rays of Light*.

We were also saddened to learn of the recent death of his brother, Harold Wallace. Our prayers are with the Wallace family during their time of grief.

Gospel Meeting Announcements

Oneida, TN: The **Oneida church of Christ** will host a Gospel Meeting, April 19-22, 2015. Mike Kiser will be preaching, and services will be as follows: Sunday: 10, 11 am and 6 pm. Monday–Wednesday: 7 pm. The church meets on 100 Cross St., Oneida, TN. For more information, call: (423) 539-2022.



Hazel, KY: The **Green Plain church of Christ** will be hosting their annual spring Gospel Meeting. Eddy Craft will be preaching. Times for services are Sunday:

10, 10:45 am and 6 pm. Monday through Wednesday: 7 pm. Call: (270) 492-8206.

Spring Series

Killen, AL: The **Pleasant Valley church of Christ** will be hosting their annual Spring Series on Wednesday evenings for the months of March-May. Several *Gospel Gleaner* writers will be on this program. Services begin at 7 pm. For more information, call: (256) 627-3215.



Reader Replies

"Andy, I'm way tardy in getting this out, but I wanted to tell you what a good job I thought you did on this article. I felt you were thorough and balanced. Thanks for the good job! That study is a keeper!"

Denny Petrillo
Denver, CO

"I appreciate very much the good work you and your excellent staff are doing with *The Gospel Gleaner*. The articles are appropriate and on the "cutting edge".

Glann Lee
Lawrenceburg, TN

"I enjoy your paper so much. I have a nephew that preaches...please send him the February issue along with future issues."

Fred Robertson
Montgomery, AL

"Dear Brethren, You are doing a great job of presenting the truth through the *Gospel Gleaner*. I enjoy the articles therein. Please send a subscription to the following individual (name withheld)."

G.W. Bush
Lebanon, TN

"We appreciate the good work you are doing."

Ronald Gilbert
Cookeville, TN

The GOSPEL GLEANER

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The GOSPEL CLEANER

Volume 27

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Number Four

Biblical Conviction and Obedience

Ronald D. Bryant

What serves to determine one's reaction to information or requirements? While there are many factors, all being equal, one's inner convictions determine his habitual actions, and moral conduct. What one believes is the guiding principle. Faith, personal faith, compels and creates personal decisions and actions. The gospel of Christ takes up this principle and uses it for the highest end.

The Gospel of Christ

The gospel of Christ honors man's right to choose. It was given that man might believe; yet, each person is free to accept or reject the will of God. Believing is the beginning; works of obedience are the continuation. Belief is the inner dynamic; works of obedience the outer process. Belief is the motive; works of obedience are the result. Belief is the cause; works of obedience are the effect. Spiritual life is a choice and a work; it is the appropriate response to the One who is the way, the truth and the life. It is faith in Him, and faith which compels commitment to Him and life for Him.

The gospel of Christ is the instrument of transformation. It exists to change hearts and minds. Spiritual life is not possible apart from the gospel of Christ. Convictions can rest upon any number of things, but conviction about Christ finally rests upon the Scriptures inspired of God. The strongest evidence and the most credible testimony is that the Scriptures invite and even demand the most thorough examination.

In the course of life, contact with the gospel of Christ is essential to the development of the conviction

and the faith which God requires. Apart from that faith there can be no true spiritual transformation, nor life in Christ. Apart from convictions based on the gospel, one may do many things, may even be content with himself and his actions, yet he cannot have life. To be devoid of biblical faith is to be dead spiritually.

Faith and Obedience

God wills that man believe (Hebrews 11:6). God wills that man believe on His Son (John 1:11f; 3:16). Faith is fundamental. It is the supreme moral choice of every person. Christ demands faith, that men come to possess and be possessed by faith in Him and loyalty to Him. This is the great essential and the great moral principle. This is the work that God requires.

What about "keeping the commandments"? First, faith includes obedience. The original word is defined as "trust that culminates in obedience, if obedience is required."

It is not possible to obey a fact. It is not possible to obey a promise. Obedience to a command is faith manifested. Disobedience is a manifestation of unbelief.

How can weak and sin-prone humans "keep the commandments"? Many answer correctly, "We must do what is right; what is required! God demands obedience to His will." Yet, not all who accept this to be true consistently do what is right. Honesty forces us to admit that even our best efforts are seldom all we want them to be. Our faith, our love, and our works are not perfect!

Continued on Page 5

Last month's editorial urged our readers not to "lose sight of that great plea which calls for men and women to abandon every creed and church not found in the Scriptures and to return to the ancient faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3).

In so doing, we observed a number of causes for concern which could have us spending more of our time dealing with subjects of lesser importance than the fundamentals of the faith.

In this month's issue we would like to continue our encouragement for Christians to keep their focus on the fundamentals of the faith and the restoration plea.

Lack of Focus in Training Preachers

The education of a minister must stress the fundamentals of the faith and ministry. However, much of the minister's education is given to obscure academic topics rather than practical, and essential lessons. Just try to find a use for Akkadian grammar in local ministry. Now, ask yourselves, how important is a minister's devotion to fundamental truth?

The lack of focus in some of their training is evident in the preachers coming out of these programs of study. Perhaps this is because professional academia has been training them, rather than faithful preachers.

But even more dangerous than this, men who have never been truly converted are sitting in the professor's chair. How can we expect a man who despises the church to inspire a love for the church in the hearts of his students?

How can we expect a man who does not actively seek to save souls to encourage his students to be soul winners? How can we expect someone who lacks respect for the authority of the Bible to train his students to respect a "thus says the Lord" when they see one?

Sadly, these things have been said for decades now; but no one seems to be listening. While our schools started out with gospel preachers filling out their Bible faculties that is not the case today, and it has been that way for some time. And it is a verifiable fact that every time a school that was founded for religious purposes has strayed from its original intent, the result has always been for the worse and never for the better. The principles and doctrines the school was founded upon is always set aside in the name of "progress."

More needs to be said on this issue, however, at another time.

Lack of Focus and Conflict

A lack of focus is also closely connected with brotherhood conflicts. In such cases, it is hard to state definitively the cause and the effect. Yet, it is clear that a lack of focus exists.

To illustrate this matter, let us take two preachers who see eye-to-eye and walk hand-in-hand on the fundamentals of the faith, and yet have no fellowship with each other. If the conflict is not due to matters of the faith, it must be due to matters of opinion, or at least the lesser matters of the law.

Christians are always going to have such disagreements, and if these perpetual matters are allowed to cause division, how can we ever have unity? Unity would appear to be a wasted commandment and an

unattainable goal; that is, if we allow our opinions on the lesser matters of the law to fracture our fellowship.

In some cases the division is caused over a certain work or pet project, and whether or not to support it. These pet projects are always surfacing, and there is usually some disagreement as to how to go about the work.

Instead of doing as Paul and Barnabas, who decided to go out separately but remained in fellowship with each other, the issue expands to include many other preachers, and lines of fellowship are eventually drawn. The sad thing is, these brethren would be in fellowship and could go to heaven without ever having been involved in the pet project to begin with. Peace is abandoned, not for principle, but for power and influence. When these pet projects are forced upon us, and participation and support are made to be tests of fellowship, division is inevitable.

Sometimes similar conflicts develop within the local congregation. We can find ourselves hurting the cause over things which are purely incidental to the cause - e.g. the building and grounds, special events, etc. Unity exists among us when our emphasis is placed upon the fundamentals. Conflict exists in matters of personal opinion. If each one would refocus on Christ, His kingdom, and His mission, perhaps these issues would cease to cause conflict.

Lack of Focus in Youth Ministry

It is also true that many of the issues we are facing in the church today have come to us through youth ministry. For example, observe the activities of such gatherings as Winterfest, and wherever their cohorts assemble.

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The

GOSPEL



GLEANER

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*A Monthly Publication for All Those
Who Love the Lord, His Word, and
His Church*

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"Open" or "Closed" Communion

Raymond Elliott

When visitors attend our periods of worship on the Lord's Day, they quickly observe that we partake of the Lord's Supper as a part of our worship to God. Some ask, "How often do you partake of the Lord's Supper?" The answer is that we partake of it on the first day of every week (Acts 20:7). Another question is, "Do you practice open or closed communion?" That is an interesting question. The fact is the Bible does not use such terms. It becomes necessary therefore to inquire from the word of God who may and who may not participate in the Lord's Supper.

The apostle Paul, in addressing this particular subject in his first epistle to the church in Corinth wrote, "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup" (1 Corinthians 11:28). Thus, the participation in the communion of the Lord is a very personal matter.

In the churches of Christ, there are no brethren standing by to inform people who may or who may not eat the bread and drink the fruit of the vine. That responsibility is not in the realm of decision making by the church leaders. It is an individual matter. In this sense, the church of the Lord does not practice "open or closed communion." Each person must decide for himself.

However, we must not construe this answer to mean that all commune with the Lord when they partake of the bread and of the fruit of the vine. To eat of the supper and commune with the Lord can and may be two different matters.

Merely because an individual goes through the physical act of eating and drinking the elements does not necessarily mean he has actually communed with the Lord. The apostle Paul stated that the man who does not discern the Lord's body "eats and drinks judgment to himself" (11:29). He also said, "Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord" (11:27).

For example, one may be a hypocrite during the week, eat the Lord's Supper on Sunday, and never

commune with his Lord. An individual may harbor hatred in his heart or have his mind centered on carnal matters while eating the supper, and never commune with the Lord. Instead, this individual brings guilt and judgment upon his very soul.

Furthermore, a person who has never been "born of water and the Spirit" (John 3:5) cannot truly commune with the Lord in the supper though he may eat the bread and drink of the cup.

When Jesus instituted the supper, He mentioned that He would "not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom" (Matthew 26:29). The "church of God" that was in Corinth was instructed as to *how* they should partake of the supper in an acceptable manner (1 Corinthians 11:23-29). Therefore, he that is not in the kingdom/church cannot possibly commune with the Lord even though he may eat the bread and drink of the cup.

This avenue of worship is a spiritual one. This wonderful privilege is for the Christian, the child of God, the member of the body of Christ, a citizen of the kingdom of God. It must be understood that the person who is not in the proper and right spiritual relationship with God cannot truly commune with the Lord even though he may physically partake of the supper.

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Continued from Page One: *Biblical Conviction and Obedience* by Ronald D. Bryant

The Lord God knows our inability to be perfect, far better than do we. He knows that we are frail, sin-prone, and cannot be perfect in our efforts to keep the commandments. He knows that which we too readily ignore; namely, that we must aim at something more, something higher; we must aim for and earnestly desire and determine to become the kind of person whom God requires, holds our hearts, and takes us captive.

A Necessary Transformation

Permit an illustration: An apple tree naturally bears apples because of its very nature. We are bearing the fruit of our very being! The point: We must grasp the fact that it is our hearts that must first be turned to God, even restored to Him. The desire for God and for His will must rule our hearts. This is central in the message of Christ.

The basic flaw of the scribes and Pharisees was their focus upon the letter – the requirements of the Law, as interpreted by *them*. They held to an exacting program regarding the requirements and the rituals of the Law. Yet, their hearts were far from God. They were nothing like the God they claimed to honor. They longed to be religious, and to appear to be so (Luke 15:15), yet they were only actors – “hypocrites.” Their words and actions betrayed them (Matthew 12:34). Their influence was destructive (Luke 12:1). While being careful to regard the outside of the cup, they allowed self-righteousness, pride, and even cruelty to corrupt the inside of the cup (Matthew 13:52). To examine their conduct is to come to see their true convictions.

It is the inner man—the heart and mind that must be transformed. Faith and love have everything to do with the transformation of the inner man. Righteousness is to flow from the inner man through a character that is truly yielded to God. Righteousness adored and honored is spiritual transformation.

Central to spiritual life and progress is the simple, yet profound and essential requirement expressed by Jesus: “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (Matt. 11:28-30).

Real and earnest convictions about God and Christ, based upon the Scriptures are essential. Coming to Christ, learning from Him, being one with Him, results in spiritual transformation. He is the standard, He is our only hope, and we are to be like Him.

Continued from Page Two: *Don't Lose Sight (2)* by Andy Erwin

When social activities become more important than doctrinal purity we are going to have problems with any age group. We are going to have a generation that detests sound doctrine and values “self” more than souls.

Sadly, many of the youth ministers who do not appreciate sound doctrine today are becoming the pulpit preachers of tomorrow. If a person does not believe it is important to restore New Testament Christianity as a youth minister *today*, why should we expect him to consider it important when he becomes a pulpit minister *tomorrow*?

I can see this in my generation and in the generations which preceded mine. The resentment of doctrine and of the restoration plea is not an issue that has arisen with the millennial generation. They are not to blame. The blame rests solely upon the shoulders of their teachers and leaders. Someone somewhere has lost sight of the fundamentals of the faith, the value of this work to restore, and has attempted to indoctrinate forthcoming generations with their exalted opinions instead of the inspired word of God. These opinions and hobby horses have replaced the important work of returning to the primitive faith of the New Testament. The souls of men are therefore left to suffer.

As works such as Challenge Youth Conference (CYC) and Lads to Leaders continue to grow, we must be mindful to encourage their directors to emphasize sound doctrine and the restoration plea to the young people who come to learn. Let us return to the basics and help our children fix their eyes upon one Lord, one faith, and one baptism (Ephesians 4:5). We must help them to compare the superiority of the Bible to any doctrine and commandment of men.

Insist on this from every youth director, every Bible class teacher, every elder, and every preacher also. Never be afraid. And, don't lose sight!

GLEANINGS FROM MISSION REPORTS

Kisumu, Kenya

From David Pharr:

The **Kenya School of Preaching** was opened in 2012 in the city of Kisumu in western Kenya. Of the original seventeen students enrolled, thirteen completed the two-year program and graduated in 2014. All are now active evangelists. Twenty more men are currently enrolled.

KSOP is sponsored by the Charlotte Avenue congregation in Rock Hill, SC, in cooperation with Bear Valley Bible Institute in Colorado. The Director (Charles Ogutu) and Dean of Students (Elias Omolo) are graduates of the Andrew Connelly School of Preaching in Tanzania. Adjunct instructors include Kenyan preachers, as well as American brethren who can travel to Kenya for short courses.

Charlotte Avenue's involvement began with the conversion of a young Kenyan, Franco Wakhisi, who was a student at Winthrop University in Rock Hill. His faithful devotion and concern for his native country encouraged others in the congregation to go with him for evangelistic work in his home land. From the first, these mission efforts were successful. People were won to the gospel and congregations were established. It was evident, however, that there was a great need for a training program that would prepare Kenyan men that they might teach others also (2 Timothy 2:2). As Charlotte Avenue was searching for a way to accomplish this objective they became aware of like interest on the part of brethren associated with Bear Valley.

Though not a large congregation (attendance around 200), Charlotte Avenue has a strong commitment to mission work, and especially for preacher training, financially contributing to schools in the Carolinas and east Tennessee and in the countries of Haiti and India. They are especially thankful for the opportunity for being the primary sponsor of the KSOP in the West African nation of Kenya.

Chip Pugh, a coach at Winthrop at the time and member at Charlotte Avenue, was holding Bible classes in

his office at the university, which led to Franko's obedience to the gospel. That effort on Chip's part has led to the conversion of many more through the Kenyan connection. Chip is now living in Cookeville, TN.

GUYANA

From Raymond Elliott:

"**Teach Guyana Ministries**," supported by the Prattville church of Christ in Alabama, uses video conferencing to teach churches throughout the South American nation.

Workers with the ministry connect twenty times per week to preach, to teach, conduct children's and Lads to Leaders classes, and to host special seminars. The ministry recently launched preacher-training classes.

"Video conferencing has helped us to continue our work in Guyana and to do it for a lot less money than it takes if we were living there," said Jerry Cantrell, elder of the Prattville church and ministry coordinator.

Chia, Colombia

Owen Olbricht was recently in Chia, Colombia on an evangelistic campaign. During six days the brethren visited and studied the Bible with contacts (families, ladies and couples) they had previously worked with. Brother Olbricht also taught the basic principles on public speaking with the purpose of preparing men for the pulpit.

Two were also baptized during a trip to Neiva, Colombia.

Send Us Your Reports!

If you have a particular missionary or mission work you would like to have spotlighted in this column, email the information to andyervin@gospelgleaner.com; or write to Andy Erwin, 3778 CR 33, Killen, AL 35645

Are We Missing Out?

Bill Brandstatter

I walked in the assisted living facility ready to teach my weekly class. After class, a lady showed me a picture of her son and nephews who are preachers. She was so proud of them. She comes to every one of our Bible classes, and even apologizes when she is late.

After every class I give the residents a couple of the *Gospel Minutes*. I select which ones to give very carefully so I don't get any that might be geared primarily toward church members. This lady told me how much she likes that paper. Another lady, who is 95 years old and a Catholic, says she saves them all and goes back and rereads them.

The seed of the gospel is being sown just through my class and that little paper. There are several groups that can be taught in an assisted living or nursing home setting.

The Residents

Some preachers may not go to the assisted living facilities. Some might rationalize their actions by thinking, "They won't know what is going on," and "They have their own religion." Let us remember what Paul wrote, "I have become all things to all men, that I by all means might win some" (1 Corinthians 9:22 NKJV). The message often has to be adapted in this setting. I do a lot of general lessons about God. I occasionally mention the church or baptism. On one occasion, one of the members of an assisted living facility visited our Sunday morning worship. Remember, some of these folks also have cars. Some of the facilities will transport their residents.

The Workers

What about the individuals who work at nursing homes and assisted living facilities? I know they are listening. On one occasion, many years ago, one young lady even commented. We had just got done and a CNA came to me and thanked me for coming and stated that she needed the lesson. The apostle Paul never missed the opportunity to teach anyone. He even mentioned about a door being opened. Have we gotten any open doors that we need to access?

The Staff

At one assisted living facility, we were discussing the importance of names and how names matter to God. I mentioned how the name of the church was significant. We began to discuss some names of famous people. One person we mentioned was Doris Day. After I mentioned her name, the director of the facility, who was listening, gave me a piece of paper identifying Doris Day's real name. All that I said about the significant of names was heard by all.

The Family

Often family members will visit residents. This often occurs when a Bible study is being conducted. Recently at a lesson I was teaching at an assisted living facility, two residents had family members present. This enabled me to teach to a couple of people I might not have contacted otherwise.

The Members of the Church

Let us remember we are to visit the fatherless and the widows (James 1:27). Often widows are in assisted living or nursing homes. They long for the fellowship of the saints. They long to be encouraged. The church can sing, teach, or just visit. Let us encourage the saints wherever and whenever we can.

If we don't go to nursing home and assisted living facilities we may be missing out on a great opportunity to teach others. Consider the following: (1) There is a captive audience, (2) Some will be hearing a message from the Bible that they wouldn't attend worship to hear, and (3) When papers are handed out afterward, the teaching will continue. We plant, water, and let God do His part.

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the PROGRAM

Throughout its four-decade history, the Southwest School of Bible Studies (SWSBS) has assisted men and women in preparing for full-time service to the Lord's church. A carefully crafted balance of both academic and practical training, coupled with an intimate and mentoring environment with a low student-teacher ratio, provides an ideal setting for professional as well as personal spiritual growth. By combining a strong emphasis on the Bible text with advanced training in homiletics and proclamation, Southwest graduates possess the knowledge and skills to serve the church effectively in the twenty-first century.

Southwest

SOUTHWEST

visiting SCHOLARS and PREACHERS

To enhance the student experience, SWSBS affords opportunities for engagement and discussion with noted preachers and Bible scholars by means of our Special Studies Seminars. These seminars, held three times yearly, have brought to campus such figures as Tom Holland (homiletics), Phil Sanders (postmodernism & culture), David Shannon (Song of Solomon), Steve Springer (biblical counseling), and Rob Whitacre (local ministry).



comprehensive CURRICULUM

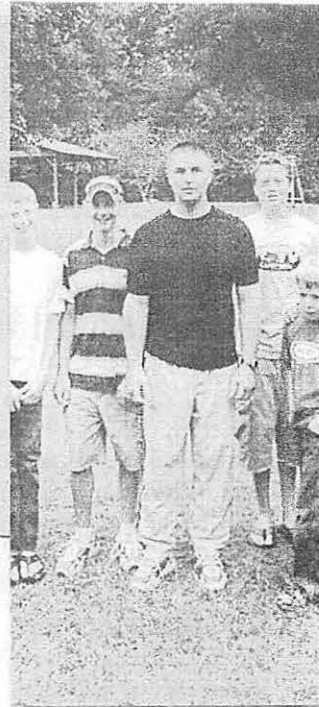
The strength of the Southwest education lies in the breadth of training. Academic work centers on detailed and systematic examination of both Old and New Testaments. This is complemented by the study of such disciplines as Bible and church history, biblical languages, and Bible geography and archaeology. In short, Southwest students are empowered to be excellent expositors of God's Word. To help the individual make the transition from learner to teacher, our curriculum provides extensive instruction in preaching communications, in Bible class management and material development, and in research and writing skills. Through association with several local brotherhood works, students can become acquainted with multimedia communication technologies.

financial ASSISTANCE

Thanks to the generous support of the Southwest congregation, SWSBS does not charge tuition. The only financial costs for attendance are for textbooks, supplies, and living expenses. Because students are not permitted to maintain outside employment, the needed funds are provided through contributions from brethren. Once accepted, incoming students raise support through correspondence with churches and fellow Christians. Southwest aids students in this process, and timely efforts have resulted in 100% of students securing the needed support. In addition, the Veterans Administration has approved SWSBS for use of military education benefits.

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SCHOOL OF BIBLE STUDIES



alumni and SERVICE

Because of the comprehensive nature of the Southwest education, our graduates have broad opportunities for service. Alumni have gone on to preach and minister full-time in the context of the local congregation, to share the Gospel in foreign countries, and to labor in support services involving multimedia productions and book publishing. Others direct campus ministry at colleges and universities or direct schools of preaching both at home and abroad. Currently Southwest alumni are sharing the Gospel from Alaska to Florida, California to New England. They are laboring on six continents in such countries as New Zealand, Costa Rica, Cambodia, Paraguay, Liberia, and Ireland.

The Southwest program also offers practical training in ministry activities. Students will have opportunities to work with local congregations in Gospel campaigns, to attend select lectureships and ministry workshops, and to participate in summer youth camps. While refining their homiletical skills, students are able to engage in preaching by appointment for area congregations and to participate in student lectureships. Students can take part also in summer internships with churches both in the U.S. and abroad.

AUSTIN

The Southwest School of Bible Studies operates as a work of the Southwest Church of Christ in Austin, Texas. Home to several universities and world-class fine arts attractions, Austin also resides on the edge of the Texas hill country. With a number of sister congregations in the area, students will enjoy studying in a setting with natural beauty, cosmopolitan diversity, and spiritual encouragement.

The Library Page

THIS MONTH

Baptism Debate Books



Here is a list of published debates on the subject of baptism that should help us to be ready to give an answer (1 Peter 3:15).

The Warren-Ballard Debate

This debate was conducted in July of 1952. I have it first on my list because I have benefited more from this debate than from all others. L.S. Ballard did his best to answer Thomas B. Warren's arguments. He also provided a good summary of Baptist arguments. However, Thomas Warren was masterful in answering every objection. He also provided an argument that "Baptism Stands Between" which makes for a good sermon on the subject.

The Hardeman-Bogard Debate

Ben Bogard was the most prolific and recognizable Baptist debater of the last century. Brother Hardeman was at his finest. Many of the most common objections to Bible baptism are found in this book and answered soundly by Hardeman.

The Harding-Moody Debate

Conducted from May 27 – June 13, 1889, the "Nashville Debate" between James A. Harding and J.B. Moody (Baptist) is a rare classic. Harding followed this debate with a tent meeting on Foster Street in which at least 114 were baptized. (Another source says 117 baptisms.)

The Campbell-McCalla

On October 15-21, 1823, Alexander Campbell debated the Presbyterian W.L. McCalla. This debate was held in Washington, Kentucky and the subject and mode of baptism were discussed. It was in this debate that Campbell introduced for the first time the scriptures which teach baptism for the remission of sins. This debate on infant baptism is very one-sided, but can prove to be helpful.

The Lost the Joy of Salvation

Psalms 51:12, 13

1. These are the words of a man who had broken at least four of the Ten Commandments. (II Samuel 11:3, 4, 26, 27)
2. There is joy that comes with salvation. Acts 8:39; 16:33, 34; Phil. 4:4; I Thes. 5:16; Gal. 5:22, 23.
3. Many like David have lost this joy. They want it restored.
4. Let us consider three things about the loss of this joy:

I. The Condition of Those Who Lose This Joy.

- A. They are unfruitful branches. Matt. 7:20; John 15:2
- B. They are unprepared fools. Matt. 25:1-3; 12, 13.
- C. Their heart is not right with God. Acts 8:21
- D. They are in a perishing condition. Acts 8:20
- E. They have erred from the truth. James 5:19, 20.
- F. They are sickening to the Lord. Rev. 3:15, 16
- G. Their condition is not promising. II Pet. 2:20-22

II. The Cause for Losing This Joy.

- A. Life polluted by un-confessed sin. I Jn. 1:8-10; Heb. 3:12 (Heads don't turn gray, or hearts harden overnight!)
- B. No moral or spiritual stability. Lk. 8:13; Gal. 1:6; Eph. 4:14. (Little boy said he fell out of bed because he stayed too close to where he got in. Exactly why some members "fall away".)
- C. Overly concerned with the cares of this life. Lk. 8:14; 12:13-21. Col. 3:5. (Idols are in our driveways, pockets, dens, etc.)
- D. Pleasures leaving us spiritually barren. Lk. 8:14; Heb. 11:24-26; II Tim. 3:4. (If absence makes the heart grow fonder, how many must love the church!)
- E. Failure to receive the truth. Jas. 1:21; Jn. 8:32; 17:17; Matt. 13:14, 15. (Some like it until it gets too close to home.)
- F. Contributing to strife and discord in the church. Rom. 16:17; I Cor. 1:10-12. (False doctrine and preacher worship abound.)
- G. Indifference toward the work of the Lord. I Cor. 15:58; Rev. 3:14-19; Jn. 9:4; 4:31-39; Acts 2:42-47. (Lady said everybody cried at the response but me! I wasn't a member there!)

III. The Cure for Those Who Have Lost This Joy.

- A. God has made provision for your restoration: (1) Warnings- I Thes. 5:14; (2) Those to pray for you- Jas. 5:17; and (3) those to restore you. Gal. 6:1
 - B. God has given a plan for your restoration. Repent- Acts 8:22; Rev. 2:5; Confess- Lk. 15:21; I Jn. 1:9; Pray- Acts 8:22; Jas. 5:16, 17
 - C. God has made promises about your restoration. His anger will not fall upon the penitent- Jer. 3:22; the lost will be found- Lk. 15:24; and forgiveness will be enjoyed. I Jn. 1:9
1. What happens when the joy is found again! Soul winning for Jesus takes place. Psa. 51:10-13.
 2. Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658) Lord Protector of England, saw his government run out of silver for coinage. The Cathedrals produced silver statues of the saints. He said, "We will melt the saints down and put them back into circulation." Do our hearts need to be melted down and put back into circulation?

-Mike Kiser

Honoring Barney Crafton Price

Ferrell Hester

It is certainly an honor and privilege for me to write just a few words concerning my great uncle Barney Price. Probably only a few people know of my uncle Barney. Although he was not known as a "world wide" gospel preacher (whatever that means), I sincerely believe he was one of the great preachers of his day and time. He was my grandmother's brother, Clara Price Hester. That would make him my daddy's uncle and my great uncle. Although he was my great uncle I still have some very fond memories of Barney Crafton Price. As a matter of fact I am now preaching at Caledonia, Mississippi where my uncle Barney had his last full time preaching work.

Family Man

On June 28, 2001, Barney Price, a gospel preacher for almost half a century, slipped quietly into the chilling waters of the misty Jordan and crossed over to the other side to his eternal home of the soul. Barney Crafton Price was born in Lamar County, Alabama near the town of Vernon, April 23, 1925. He was next to the youngest of ten children (eight boys and two girls) born to James R. and Ada Price. With the death of my grandmother, Clara (Price) Hester in 2005 at the age of 96 and my great uncle Ernest Price in 2014 at the age of 92, all of the ten children are now deceased.

Barney served in the U.S. Army during World War II in New Guinea and the Philippines. After returning from the war, he married Annie Grace Brown and to this union were born two sons, Carlos and Crafton. Doctor Carlos Glenn Price is Superintendent of Education in Hope, Arkansas and Crafton Lynn Price is Manager of Information Systems Services for Americana Ships in Tampa, Florida and also volunteers as the Youth Minister for the Bell Shoals Church of Christ in Brandon, Florida. Annie Grace (uncle Barney's wife) left this earthly sojourn and entered into eternity in 2014.

Barney and Anne have four grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. The grandchildren are Jimmy Lynn, Christopher Lee, and Jason Crafton, the sons of Crafton. Amanda Joy is the daughter of Carlos.

Jimmy works for the Time Warner Special Projects as a Computer Specialist. Christopher works for Watkins Trucking as a computer programmer and also goes to college at night. Jason attends Florida State University on full scholarship. Amanda Joy is a teacher at Fordyce,

Arkansas High School (hometown of the legendary Paul "Bear" Bryant). The two great grandchildren are Haley Alexandria and Marcus James, the children of Jimmy and his wife Tina (Hodges) Price.

Soldier of Christ

Barney was baptized by the late brother G.R. Dobbs in August 1949. He began preaching in May, 1954. He preached his first sermon on Mother's Day at his home congregation of Mt. Olive, where his mother was in the audience. "Mama Price" was so happy and overjoyed that her boy had started preaching that she could hardly speak at all, but just kept laughing. Different people show their joy in different ways. Mama Price always laughed when she was happy!

From that Mother's Day in 1954, Barney stayed busy preaching. I remember hearing my daddy (Guy F. Hester) talk about the time he heard uncle Barney, shortly after he began preaching, preach at the Crossroads church of Christ in Jasper, Alabama. His subject was, "The Dying Words Of Jesus on the Cross." Daddy told me that was one of the very best and touching sermons that he had ever heard. Barney attended Mississippi State and studied under brother Gus Nichols in his "preacher training" classes. He told me often over the years that my grandfather, S.F. Hester, was one of the best sources of encouragement in preaching. I know that grandfather "Pa" was just as proud of him as he was of his own four preaching sons and multiple grandsons.

Barney served rural congregations in Lamar, Marion, Fayette, and Walker Counties in Alabama from 1954-57. In 1957 he and his family moved to Warrior, Alabama working with the church there 1957-60. He preached in Eunice, Louisiana 1960-63; Vidor, Texas 1963-65; Princeton, Indiana 1965-71; Caledonia, Mississippi 1971-78. Because of problems he was having with his eyes while at Caledonia he "retired" and moved back to Vernon where he and Anne purchased a cafe.

Of course no preacher ever retires. While in the cafe business, he preached at Kingville, near Kennedy, in Lamar County 1979-83. Then he "filled in" at Houston, Mississippi for about ten months in 1984. Then 1986-2001 he preached for the Antioch church of Christ just out of Vernon, preaching his last sermon at Antioch on Sunday before he died on Thursday. The title of his last sermon

was, "Who Are The Faithful?" During his years of preaching, he preached at every congregation in Lamar County except one, that being Kingsville near the Lamar and Marion County line.

Barney had a great sense of humor and you could not be around him very long until he would have you laughing. Years ago he took the Dale Carnegie Public Speaking course and his instructors tried to get him to consider show business as a comedian. But his interest then, as it was for the rest of his life, was preaching the gospel.

Funeral Services

On Sunday, July 1, 2001 at 2:00 p.m. my daddy and his brother Benny Hester conducted the funeral service in the Chandler Funeral Chapel in Vernon, Alabama, where hundreds came to pay their respects. Daddy told me that neither he nor uncle Benny had prepared a funeral sermon. Daddy said they did not need one and, "We just spoke from our hearts."

His body was laid to rest in the Furnace Hill Cemetery to await the resurrection. Barney will be missed for years to come. I know I miss him. Daddy's and Uncle Barney's relationship was more of a brother/brother relationship than a nephew/uncle relationship. Daddy would exchange Gospel Meetings with him, and shared sermon outlines with him. They would often sit up all night and talk.

As I close out these few thoughts concerning a great gospel preacher I am reminded of the words in Hebrews 11:4, "...he being dead yet speaketh."

Islam: Political, Religious, and Military

Andy Robison

Since 9/11 brought America an intense interest in Islamic studies, two choruses have been redundant: (1) Islam is merely a peaceful religion, and (2) Jihad is not a holy war, but just an inner struggle of the individual. As oft as those choruses have been repeated, others have stridently rebuked these ideas as false. It is enlightening to see what Muslim authors thought and wrote before such a controversy was brewing.

In 1968, Wilson B. Bishai, a Harvard Professor of Arabic, with no controversy guiding him, informatively wrote,

The holy war, *jihad*, is a mandatory universal duty upon Muslims... *Jihad* is the duty upon the household of Islam to fight unbelievers whenever the Muslim caliph an-

nounce a holy war. Those who die in such a war are guaranteed heaven without precondition..." (p. 83)

That sounds like jihad is not an inner struggle and like Islam has times where violence is encouraged.

After a discussion of Islamic societies' needs for a leader politically, military, and religiously, Bishai concludes, "Islam, therefore, may be considered in a broad sense a political, religious, and military movement" (p. 63). Those who study Muhammad's life know this characterization is correct.

Ergun and Emir Caner, former Muslims, after 9/11, wrote about Islam's early history (6th-7th centuries A.D.) of conquering entire peoples. They commented that for the last three centuries, Islam went on the defensive, just trying to survive (p. 77). With firsthand knowledge, they instruct, "War is not a sidebar of history for Islam; it is the main vehicle of religious expansion. It is the Muslim duty to bring world peace via the sword" (p. 78). Then, they ominously note:

While modern people are familiar only with the defensive Islam of the last three hundred years, the religion has never forgotten the previous one thousand years of conquest in the name of Allah. It is **this traditional conquering Islam that has reemerged** (p. 78, emphasis added).

Islam, it might be said, considers itself to be in some sort of a restoration movement. This would explain, would it not, the "radicals" persecuting Christians, Jews, and anyone who does not agree with them. Read a history of early Islam and see how this modern behavior compares. To be sure, not all Muslims live by this mold. But, "conquering" is an accurate characterization of Islam's early faith.

Christ came as the opposite of a military conqueror. He said that His kingdom was not of this world and that His followers would not be called to fight for His honor (John 18:36). His apostle Paul admonished that "the weapons of our warfare are not carnal" (2 Corinthians 10:4). His people fight not against men, but against ideas (cf. Ephesians 6:12; 2 Corinthians 10:5).

While God grants government the power of the sword and vengeance (Romans 13:1-4), He distinctly admonishes Christians to aim to be a people of peace (Romans 12:18; Hebrews 12:14), patiently suffering—and not dealing out—persecution (1 Peter 3:13-17; 4:12-16). Christ's way is more peaceful, more palatable, and more pleasing. Above all that, though, Christ's way is absolute truth (John 14:6).

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If the Trumpet Makes an Uncertain Sound

Ernest Underwood

By its very design, the trumpet is a clear and distinctive sounding instrument. Many times during our son's early high school years we were awakened late at night by its sound as he was learning to play it. In the Bible, trumpets were used to call an assembly, as a signal to break camp and move on, as a call to arms, and as a warning of approaching danger. The seven trumpets in the book of Revelation announced the plagues and judgments of God.

Ezekiel was God's prophet to the captives of Judah who were in Babylon by the River Chebar. God specifically made this prophet a watchman unto the house of Israel. (See Ezekiel 3:17). In this same book we find the following words:

"Son of man, speak to the children of your people, and say to them: 'When I bring the sword upon a land, and the people of the land take a man from their territory and make him their watchman, when he sees the sword coming upon the land, if he blows the trumpet and warns the people, then whoever hears the sound of the trumpet and does not take warning, if the sword comes and takes him away, his blood shall be on his own head. He heard the sound of the trumpet, but did not take warning; his blood shall be upon himself. But he who takes warning will save his life. But if the watchman sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, and the people are not warned, and the sword comes and takes any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at the watchman's hand'" (Ezekiel 33:2-6).

In this passage two things stand out with such clarity that they cannot be missed. First, there is the responsibility of the watchman to blow the trumpet as a warning to the people. Second, there is the responsibility of the people to listen to the blowing of the trumpet and take appropriate action.

But what if the trumpeter blows an uncertain sound on the instrument? If he does, the people will not be able to know if danger threatens: if they are to break camp, or if it is a call to an assembly or a feast.

The apostle Paul used just such an illustration to the church at Corinth. He stated, "Even things without life, whether flute or harp, when they make a sound, unless they make a distinction in the sounds, how will it be known what is piped or played? For if the trumpet makes an uncertain sound, who will prepare himself for battle?" (1 Corinthians 14:7-8). The answer of course is obvious. How can they prepare for battle if they can't discern the sound given?

There is certainly a lesson in all of this for us today. Whereas at one time there were the clear and distinct words of God being forcefully proclaimed from the pulpits of our churches and from the classrooms of most of the colleges operated by our brethren, today there is such a garbled and indistinct sound, indeed if there is any sound at all, that the hearer is left in a state of confusion.

Watchmen who once warned the lost of their need to obey the gospel, now speak in "holy" tones of the "pious un-immersed." Some of these "watchmen" who went to battle against the introduction of the instrument of music into the worship, now give a hearty slap on the back, and the warm right hand of fellowship to those who use it.

Has the God of heaven changed His "signal?" When He commanded, "Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching" (2 Timothy 4:2), did He really mean that we should "be positive" and say nothing which is offensive to anyone, even those who openly rebel against His word? Who can believe it? When Jesus said concerning divorce, "except it be for fornication," did He really mean that one could divorce and remarry as often as suited his fancy or satisfied his sensual desires?

Brethren, these are not hypothetical questions — they are real happenings among churches of Christ today! And to make matters worse, if that is possible, there are those who, though teaching no false doctrine themselves, are strongly contending for peace with these ungodly false teachers.

With such uncertain sounds coming from some of the watchmen (preachers, teachers, elders) it is no wonder that the people are confused and are being "tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting" (Ephesians 4:14). Such conditions actually constitute the blind leading the blind in which, and according to the Lord, both shall fall into the ditch.

When I was a missionary in Singapore, our daily paper carried the news of a man who was brutally murdered. His body was then cut into small pieces, cooked with rice and curry, then disposed of in small bags. It is a horrible and terrible thing to have people so vicious that they will commit such an atrocious act! No punishment is too severe for such criminals.

However, a false teacher, one who gives the uncertain sound, does far more harm to his victim. He causes the

person to lose his or her soul. Will our God be any less severe in His punishment of such an ungodly person? Such actions on the part of the false teacher will cause us to understand the words of the Lord more perfectly when He warned, "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves" (Matthew 7:15).

As preachers and teachers we must be sure that we give a clear and distinct sound as we present the word of God. As hearers we must fulfill our responsibility to "search the Scriptures" to see if the sound given is certain or uncertain. A failure on the part of either party will cause the soul to be in danger of hell.



News & Notes

Remembering E. Ray Jenkins



Nashville, TN: E. Ray Jenkins died on February 28th, 2015 at the age of 90.

He was born on November 6, 1924 in Tampa, FL, and left home at 17 to attend Dasher Bible School and then David Lipscomb College.

Brother Jenkins preached at churches of Christ in Mayfield, KY, Paris, TN, Lawrenceburg, TN, and in Nashville, TN at Trinity Lane, Waverly-Belmont, Grace Ave, and Joywood.

He helped found the Nashville School of Preaching and served on the board of directors of Georgia Christian School, formerly known as Dasher.

Brother Jenkins was also a Marriage and Family Therapist, with his own counseling practice.

His wife of 65 years, Geraldine, preceded him in death. He leaves behind two sons, Drs. Gerald (Susie) and Gary (Karen) Jenkins, seven grandchildren (Brian, Nathan, Brittney, Chris, Stephen, Jonathan, and Michael), and eight great-grandchildren.

New Book from Raymond Elliott Now Ready

Dear friends,

I have edited and published a new book entitled, *Ann Street Memories: The Early Years*.

It contains a speech by E.R. Brannan on the 50th anniversary of **Montgomery Bible School**; biographies of brethren Joe Greer, Leonard Johnson and Rex A Turner, Sr.; and memories written by former students who attended MBS/MBC/ACC from 1943 through the 1950s. There are several pictures placed between the memories of the 1940s and the 1950s. I truly believe you will enjoy reading the facts and memories contained in this book.

The proceeds from the sale of this book purchased on Amazon will go to the Amerindian Mission in Guyana. Jerry Davidson of the Summerdale church has headed this good work for several years. This mission work is under the oversight of the elders of the Summerdale, Alabama congregation.

You will also find another book of mine, *Daybreak with the Master*, also listed on Amazon. It is a compilation of religious articles I have written over the years. The proceeds from the sale of this book go to the Bible Department of Anridge University in Montgomery. Or, you can call this number at Anridge, 1.334.387.7560 and the book will be sent to you. This way, the university will profit more from the sale of the book.

Your servant in Christ Jesus,

Raymond Elliott

41st Annual Lectureship

Knoxville, TN: The Southeast Institute of Biblical Studies will host their annual lectureship April 26-29. The theme for this year is: "Faith: Responding to Jesus from Sinner to Saint." For more information call (865) 691-7444.

Review of FSOP Lectureship

The Florida School of Preaching in Lakeland held their 40th Annual Lectureship on January 19-22, 2015. The theme was "Do You Understand Jesus' Sermon on the Mount?"

The Monday through Thursday lectureship consisted of seven lessons each day with a question and answer period following the afternoon lessons. The full schedule along with archived lessons and information on hard and digital copies of the lessons may be found on the school's website (www.fsop.net).

The lectureship was well attended, and the lessons were relevant, well prepared and presented masterfully. The school appreciates all those who spoke on and/or attended. Their humble desire to learn God's word and how to apply it was evident. An excellent attitude was displayed throughout the lectureship. It is not often when that sized gathering can Biblically discuss potentially controversial issues such as marriage, divorce, and remarriage and race relations and remain level headed, yet that is exactly what happened in Lakeland during the week.

In addition to the textual lessons on blocks of Scripture from Matthew 5-7, there were great afternoon forums with very challenging questions. Thursday's forum, "Doing unto Others," was especially enlightening as the speakers and those participating in the forum questions and answers spoke openly and honestly about their experiences and backgrounds relating to race relations and how the church can (and should) show the world how people of all skin colors should be treated with respect and Christ-likeness! This world is truly a better place by the "salt" and "light" of those who do what Jesus said!

The Florida School of Preaching lectureship always starts the third Monday in January, which also happens to be Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. Central Florida is a great place to be in January, studying the Bible and enjoying fellowship with faithful brethren! Come and study at the 41st annual Florida School of Preaching Lectureship, January 18-21, 2016.

Brian R. Kenyon, Director (brian@fsop.net)

Review of Northwest Florida Lectures

The 23rd annual "Labourers Together With God" lectureship, hosted by the Northwest Florida School of Biblical Studies in Pensacola (Cantonment), Florida is now history. Twenty eight men developed lessons on the book of James, centered around the theme of "Practical Christian Living Involves...." Three ladies conducted ladies' sessions as well.

The speakers did an exceptional job of preparation and delivery of the lessons. The attendance at the lectureship has increased each year, up about 10% this year over last year. More people are finding out about the lectureship, as well as the quality of the lectureship. Although a bit prejudiced, I believe it is one of the best. And what better way to spend a week in February than at a lectureship in Pensacola, Florida?

The book of James was covered in its entirety, beginning with an introduction of the book on Sunday morning and continuing throughout the book as the week progressed, ending on Thursday evening with lessons on "Christianity: A Life That Makes A Difference" and "Life: A Journey."

Those who attended stated that it was the best one here so far. We will definitely try to keep that up next year. Those who would like an outline book with each of the lessons may order them by email: orders@oldpathspublishing.com or the online bookstore at: www.oldpathspublishing.com. The lessons will soon be archived on our website: nwfsbs.com.

Next year's theme will be "Remember, And Forget Not" and will be February 21-25. Why not make plans to attend and see what you have been missing?

Sidney White, Director

Southwest Lectures

Austin, TX: The Southwest church of Christ is pleased to announce the 34th Annual Southwest Lectureship, April 11-14, 2015. The theme for this year is "God's Help with Life's Struggles." We have invited twenty-six speakers to come and lecture to a large number of brethren who will gather in Austin from across the nation to attend the lectureship series this year.

RV and camper spaces (with water and electrical hookups) are available at the Southwest building. For additional information, you may contact: Sam Willcut, Lectureship Director, (512) 282-2486 or office@swcofc.org.

Rendezvous Illinois

Carlinville, IL: Gospel Gleaner staff writer Stephen Bradd is working to organize a gathering for Christians in the Midwest who home educate. The dates will be May 4-8. For more information, you can visit their website: www.rendezvousil.com. Or call, (217) 935-5058.

Churches Looking for Gospel Preachers

Decatur, IL: The Sunnyside Road church of Christ in Decatur, Illinois is looking for a fulltime preacher. Call (217) 423-6218 or 422-4476. Visit their website at www.sunnysideroadchurch.com to learn more about the position and congregation. Please send resume, references, and 2 sermon CDs to Sunnyside Church of Christ, Search Committee, 821 N Sunnyside Rd, Decatur, IL 62522-9701

Ripley, MS: The Ripley church of Christ in Ripley, Mississippi is looking for a fulltime preacher. A house with utilities, insurance, and vacation time is provided. Call (662) 837-9011. You may mail a resume and pertinent information to: Elders, Ripley Church of Christ, 1300 Hall Drive, Ripley, Mississippi 38663 OR e-mail your information to: ripleyreminder@gmail.com

Reader Replies

From the founding editor of the *Gospel Gleaner*:

Dear Andy,

Never has the *Gospel Gleaner* looked so good nor read so well! You are doing an outstanding job as editor and the group of staff writers will insure each issue of the paper to be of substance. Keep pressing on. I am enclosing a small contribution to help. You have my backing and support.

Faithfully,
Bill Dillon
Mountain Home, AR

Hi Andy,

Just want you to know that I still appreciate the *Gospel Gleaner* so much. I read it regularly and use many of the articles as supplemental discussion material for the ladies class at Marion. The topics are relevant, scriptural, and timely and the writers are quite good. I also appreciate your thoughtful editorials. Thank you and them for your sincere dedication to spreading the gospel. May God bless and keep you as you do His good work.

Betty McDowell
Creal Springs, IL

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The

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Editorial

THE CROSS OF CHRIST

The cross is a subject about which no man can be indifferent. Man's hope rests upon his belief and acceptance of the cross. What happened that day, those many years ago, happened for you and for me.

We can never truthfully and fully know Jesus until and unless we know Him as the crucified Savior of the world. Moreover, we will never reach our full potential toward God and man without understanding the cross.

Congregations and preachers alike will find that the more we teach and preach the cross, the better we will be, and the better we will grow spiritually and numerically. As we lift up Christ, He will draw all men unto Him.

THE LOVE OF GOD

When we preach and teach the cross, we are helping souls to understand the love of God and the hope we have as His children.

What could God have given that would sufficiently express the depths of His love and compassion for the world? His dominion is limitless. He could have chosen anything or anyone. But what was the object dearest to God? What was the rarest jewel to Him? Who was it that was lying nearest to His bosom? Indeed, God selected His Son, His only begotten Son, and sent Him to take away the sins of the world.

The sacrifice of God's own Son is the greatest expression of His love for man that He could possibly render. If we will only look to the cross, we will find proof of God's love for every soul.

However despised or rejected a person may be, that person is the object of God's love. When one is without a friend, a home, or even a penny to his name, that person is still the object of God's love. No matter how lowly the individual, God loves him. No matter how perilous his life and living may be in this world, God loves him. No matter how wretched a sinner and outcast of society that person may be, God loves him.

No other religion is certain of the love of God, as is the Christian religion. In fact, the idea of God's love is at the heart of our faith. This is

because of the cross. No other religion has a cross in it. To accept the cross is to accept the love of God and that God is love.

THE HIGH COST OF SIN

Not only does the cross prove to us the love of God, it also proves to us the high cost of sin. Sin has been described as "leprosy to the inner man." Sin is a debt which every accountable person incurs, but which no person can pay. Sin is that most ugly stain upon the conscience of man that no man can erase.

When we speak of the high cost of sin, we speak correctly, and from experience. It is a disgrace to which every man can relate. No man is immune to its disease. It is vile and wretched and plagues us all. "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Romans 7:24-25)

To say that sin is costly is to say too little. It is *most* costly. Sin will cost you more than you can ever imagine. Sin is that unrighteousness which wrecks and ruins our fellowship with God, who loves us so dearly. Sin separates us from Him (Isaiah 59:1-2). Sin causes Him to turn His face from us (1 Peter 3:12).

Sin occupies and comes to control the willing but often unsuspecting person. At first, a person welcomes sin into his life believing some benefit will come. But for sin to occupy the mind and the soul, it must have dominion. "Know ye not that ye are servants to whom ye obey?" (Romans 6:16) Light and darkness cannot coexist.

To accept the enormity and severity of sin is to appreciate the cross of Christ even more. Not only is the cross the greatest expression God could give to testify of His love for man, but it is also the greatest expression God could give to prove the costliness of sin. "Christ died for our sins" (1 Corinthians 15:3).

THE VALUE OF THE SOUL

Jesus viewed the soul of man to be more valuable than anything on earth (Mark 8:36-37). It has always been this way. The soul has always been worth more than the whole world. The soul has been the most valuable thing in the world since its beginning. The world was created for man, not man for the world. While stocks, bonds, currency, land, possessions rise and fall in their value, the soul of man has always remained the same.

God has chosen to destroy the world, once with water and a second time to be with fire, as though it means nothing to Him. Yet, He chooses to redeem man by the precious blood of His Son.

Jesus did not die for the forests, mountains, and rivers, as beautiful and valuable as they are. He died for you and me. What does that say about us and the value of our immortal souls?

IN CONCLUSION

As we said at the beginning, the cross is not a subject to which man can be indifferent. It proves to us the love of God, the high cost of sin, and the value of the soul. If only man would accept these facts, turn to the cross, and live for Jesus, how different their lives and this world would be.

Who Is "Killing Jesus?"

John T. Polk, II

"Killing Jesus," a book by Bill O'Reilly, now a movie, is supposed to tell the history of Jesus by separating fact from fiction.

What "fiction" did he find in Matthew, Mark, Luke, or John? Without proof, he simply strips out of the life of Christ everything that would prove Jesus' deity.

Does O'Reilly know more than the apostle Peter who said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we

have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 6:68-69)?

Does O'Reilly know more than the people who saw Jesus? "Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name when they saw the signs which He did" (John 2:23).

Both the book and the movie are the "fiction." Still an interesting question can be raised, "Who is killing Jesus?"

Keepers of Moses' Law

Saul was told "Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord." (Acts 22:16), "and he arose and was baptized" (Acts 9:18).

He would later write, "I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain" (Galatians 2:21).

John said, "For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17).

People who claim to be saved by keeping the Law of Moses, including the Ten Commandments, are in effect ignoring Jesus' death. His death removed the Law of Moses so that He could teach: "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:16).

Saved Without the Church

Paul told the Ephesian elders "to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28). That purchase makes Christians "a chosen generation, a royal

priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people" (1 Peter 2:9).

People who obey the command to "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38, 41), know that "the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47).

People who claim they are saved and live a Christian life, but have nothing whatever to do with the churches of Christ, have killed our Lord's purpose in dying on the cross! Since His death purchased the church, and the Lord adds the saved to the church, no saved person is outside His church.

Dethroning Jesus

After quoting from David's prophecy in Psalm 16:8-11, Peter said:

Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in

Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses (Acts 2:30-32).

Beginning on that Pentecost in the first century, Jesus Christ was already on the throne of David in Heaven. Jesus was raised "to sit on his throne." All who teach and believe that Jesus is not yet on that throne are denying His resurrection from the dead! Makes for an empty "Easter Service" doesn't it?

Hypocrites

"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an

open shame" (Hebrews 6:4-6).

The Christians who decide to leave behind their salvation and Jesus Christ are "killing Jesus" in their lives.

Some are pretenders who are "ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jude 4).

These must be the "hypocrites" in the church that people talk about, because all other Christians are sincerely following in His footsteps.

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The Model for Elders

Ron Thomas

The New Testament sets forth the leadership of the local church in men who serve as the elders. They are leaders, but they are also servants.

Sometimes the elders are called “bishops,” or “pastors.” In Acts 14:23, the apostle Paul set men in position of leadership men to serve as elders. He did this by the authority of the Holy Spirit.

Yet, what example could he have used to help the men serve effectively? For that matter, what is an elder in the New Testament modeled after?

There are two points I want to give some attention to in this article. First, there is an example *not* to follow. Secondly, we want to consider what the New Testament says about an elder.

Before we give some attention to this, let us understand briefly that the word “elder” conveys one who has gained wisdom by virtue of age and devotion to God. An elder is one who is good standing

with the local church and the community. Elders, however, are men; and men can make poor decisions.

The Judgment of Elders

Because elders are men, it is wise to consider the Lord’s perspective on leadership when He spoke against the shepherds of Israel in Jeremiah 23. It is there that we read, “Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture!” says the Lord (Jeremiah 23:1).

The Lord was very “put off” by the pitiful leadership that was exercised by these men over God’s people. In fact, looking at the first four verses, we learn what the shepherds of Israel did.

First, they drove the people away. Second, they did not see to the needs of those to whom they were given responsibility. Third, they did not feed the flock of God. Fourth, the flock of God experienced fear and dismay toward those leading them. Each one of

these reasons is interlocked together. In other words, the people were driven away because of the lack of leadership, and the lack of leadership resulted because the leadership refused to be led by the word of God. This allowed fear and dismay to reside in a confused people.

Are the "shepherds" of Jeremiah 23 referring to elders in a New Testament context? No, the "shepherds" of Jeremiah refer to the kings over the nation (3:15; 25:36). We learn, however, that the God-ordained "shepherds" in an Old Testament context do give us principles of application in a New Testament context.

Moreover, the ones identified in the chapter include more than just an Israelite or Judean king. In the context of Jeremiah 23, those identified are "shepherds," "prophets," and "priests."

While it is true that the word "shepherds" is applied to the kings of the nations, it would be a mistake to think that spiritual leadership in the form of prophets and priests would not also be included. The king leads the nation, but who are the spiritual teachers?

Thus, we learn what leadership failings existed in Jeremiah's time, and why the nation went into physical captivity. Though not directly connected to those of us in our day, the principles of righteous leadership shout out loudly to those who pay attention to what is said by the Holy Spirit.

The Work of an Elder

In a New Testament context, we also have shepherds who have responsibilities. In Peter's letter to the saints scattered abroad, he exhorts the men who serve as elders (*presbuteros*, presbyters) to be mindful of their charge (1 Peter 5:1-4).

First, they are to shepherd (*poimen*, pastor) the flock. This means they are to feed, protect, and rule the congregation. How shall they go about this? Think about feeding a flock. A livestock owner can have his animals fed by another person who has no ultimate responsibility for that livestock, or he can tend to their needs himself. When he does so, he then becomes involved in the lives of those for whom he is responsible. If he desires the livestock to pro-

duce that for which they were created by God, then this is part and parcel of his work.

In the same way, elders of the church are to take an active part in teaching the flock. The phrase "apt to teach" (1 Timothy 3:2) is important in this regard. An elder needs to be one able to teach. This implies knowledge of the subject (the Scriptures).

"Sunday Schools" are a relatively recent invention of man since the time of the first century. Thus, the phrase "apt to teach" does not have direct application to that environment, but there is no reason to think that it is not a fitting location where much teaching can be done by those in the eldership.

Second, the elders of the congregation are to protect the flock. This is done in two ways. Not only is there correct teaching (1 Timothy 3:16-17) whereby God's shield is set up around the congregation; but there is also the necessary resistance to the words of man that are contrary to the Holy Spirit's teaching (Titus 1:9). It is important to note that what is taught to the congregation of the Lord's

people is not the opinions of men, but only that which is directly revealed in God's word. Paul said that he dare not speak of anything but that which Christ had accomplished through him, and this includes teaching (Romans 15:18).

Third, the elders are to rule the congregation. For some, this is a frightful word. It conveys a dictatorial idea to them. If the elders are led by the example of Jesus, then this couldn't be further from the truth!

An elder is to be a leader like Jesus, in so far as he can (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:1). To be an overseer implies leadership, and leadership implies authority, and those in a position of authority have a ruling capacity to exercise.

Thus, elders (presbyters) are men who are in a position of authority, called upon by God to oversee (rule) the affairs of the local congregation.

Guy N. Woods once wrote, "elders are obligated to superintend and direct the affairs of the congregation committed to their care" (Commentary on Peter, p. 124).

Among the Saints

All of this can be done very well if they are among the saints. That is, to borrow the words of another, if they "smell like sheep." Elders are not "directors," but workers. They don't serve at a distance, but they serve in the midst of those they work alongside.

A fitting quote by Jack Bates is appropriate.

...the bishops are so dedicated that, in the true spirit of leadership, they are concerned not so much with governing as an administrative board as with the challenge of leading and nurturing the flock into greater areas of spiritual growth and service. This means that they are taking the lead in securing not just statistics on a board on the wall, but they are deeply concerned with developing the qualities of Christ-likeness ("Solving the Preacher Shortage," *The Minister's Monthly*, January 1961, p. 214).

The Character of an Elder

In Peter's exhortation, he gives a number of positive characteristics for the man who serves as an

elder. He serves willingly, eagerly, and as an example. There are also some negative qualities to be avoided. He must not feel compelled to serve, and neither should he do so for dishonest gain. Moreover, there is only one Lord over the congregation, and that is the Chief Shepherd.

An elder is also to be an example to those he leads. When the leaders lead, the people follow — an adage that if not true absolutely, is not far from it. They lead best by living and demonstrating the life of Christ in their own lives.

A man who serves willingly understands that he is in a position to help those in desperate need. This willing spirit radiates a spirit that others can't help but see.

He might receive a call during the evening hours to help some poor sister who is struggling to maintain her spiritual survival, and this is the only time she has her wits to call. An elder, by the nature of his position, is in a work that results in being inconvenienced on occasion. This godly work, inconvenienced or not, is a work he willingly accepts.

Conclusion

There is a model given by the Lord to man wherein he can model himself, and that model is the Lord Jesus. He is our Chief Shepherd.

From Jeremiah 23 we learn that shepherds over God's people have a tremendous obligation. Failing to exercise godly/spiritual leadership is disastrous for the men who serve and for those led. As Jesus led, elders of the Lord's church are to lead and serve.

In conclusion, we can say the work of the elders is to feed the saints with the pure word of God, not mixed with the teachings of men. Furthermore, they are directly involved in the teaching. Without knowing the congregation and the needs of the saints, their effectiveness at teaching and leading will be limited.

Let us, as men who serve as elders, be sure we look to our Chief Shepherd.

Are All Christians Members of the Church of Christ?

Raymond Elliott

Your answer to this question will be determined by how you perceive the church of our Lord.

Was the 'Church of Christ' begun in the early part of the 19th century by the leadership of men like Alexander Campbell, Barton W. Stone, and others?

If so, then your answer would have to be 'no' because the 'Church of Christ' would simply be an addition to the already scores of other denominations that have existed for years both in this

country and in other parts of the world.

Thus, to claim to be the 'only church' would be the height of religious arrogance and bigotry. Only narrow-minded people would make such a claim because the 'Church of Christ' would only be a part of the whole body of Christ.

Some would even propose that a person could be a Christian without ever 'joining' a denomina-

tion, including the 'Church of Christ.'

Many of our most influential brethren who claim that the 'Church of Christ' is simply a part of the whole, that is, a denomination among others, teach that there are "devout and knowledgeable Christians" in all denominations and based upon the assumption that the 'Church of Christ' is merely a product of the Restoration Movement they are absolutely correct.

What right do we have to assert that the 'Church of Christ' is better than other religious groups if the church is merely a man-made organization? It must be understood that 'my tribe' is just one among 'many tribes' and that we are all on the 'same ship' heading for glory land.

Based upon the premise that the church is simply a denomination, each believer has the right to choose his favorite religious organization to join.

Now let us go back to the question, "Are all Christians members of the church of Christ?" and make every effort to answer it according

to the teachings of the New Testament of Jesus Christ.

We might even ask, "Are all saved persons members of the church of Christ?"

Our Lord promised in Matthew 16:13-19 that He would build (establish) His church. And this He did on the day of Pentecost following His ascension (Acts 2).

The apostles preached the gospel of Christ for the first time. When many of the hearers believed in what was being preached regarding Jesus of Nazareth who had been crucified, they cried out, "What shall we do?"

They were instructed by Peter to "repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

In verse 41 we read that about 3,000 souls were baptized on that day and were added to the number of believers.

Then we read in verse 47 that "the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved."

It must be understood, therefore, that when an individual, as a penitent believer, is immersed into Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, he is added to the church of our Lord.

Now, if the Lord adds the saved to His church that means all the unsaved remain outside of His spiritual body which is the church of Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22, 23).

Furthermore the apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:4 that there is only "one body."

Denominationalism, as we understand it today, did not exist when Jesus established His church. It is true that the spirit of sectarianism existed in the church in the city of Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:10-17), but Paul condemned such and he corrected the unscriptural practice of Christians calling themselves after different men.

A major thrust of the Restoration Movement that began in this country in the first part of the 19th century was to lead believers to be Christians only and to be one in the teaching and practice of the word of God. The intent of the leaders of this movement was not

to begin another denomination but simply to be the church of our Lord.

Also, we should understand that this was not the only effort to restore New Testament Christianity, because many efforts had been made over the intervening centuries to be followers of the Lord and His teachings.

In fact there were congregations existing in this country before the influence of Thomas and Alexander was ever felt in the religious community. For example, the Rocky Springs congregation near Bridgeport, Alabama was begun in 1803. Thomas Campbell did not come to America until 1807. There were also congregations existing in the state of Tennessee before the Campbell family came to America.

The truth is, one can be a Christian without ever joining a denomination. Whenever brethren declare that there are "devout, knowledgeable Christians" in the denominations they have a misconception of the teaching of the New Testament regarding the un-denominational nature of the church of Jesus Christ.

The fact is, when a person who believes in Jesus Christ as being the Son of God, repents of his sins and confesses that Jesus is the Son of God and is immersed into Jesus Christ for the remissions of sins, that individual is saved by the blood of the Lamb and is added to the body (church) of Jesus Christ.

It is the Lord who saves and does the adding of that person to the church. The individual doing the baptizing or the place where the baptism takes place is of no significance. The emphasis is on the one being immersed.

The real problem exists when the person who has been immersed joins a religious organization not authorized by the New Testament. He should associate with others who have obeyed the commands of the gospel, worship and work with them, and not become a member of a denomination.

For example when the jailer and his household and Lydia and her household were baptized in Philippi, they constituted the church of Jesus Christ in that city (Acts 16:13-16, 30-35).

Today when missionaries travel into remote areas and teach

people about Jesus Christ and immerse the believers in His name for the remission of their sins, the Lord adds them to His church. There is no reason whatsoever for these believers to seek out a denomination to join, because they comprise the church of Jesus Christ in their village.

In my humble opinion, one of the hardest lessons to be understood in our world and in our time is the undenominational nature of the church of Jesus Christ. This problem exists because a person is born today into a world of religious division with thousands of denominations existing, even in our own country.

No wonder a 'truth seeker' becomes confused when considering a 'church' to join.' How wonderful it would be if all believers in Jesus Christ would stand as one and go forth with the gospel of Christ into the entire world. This is the desire of our Lord as He prayed for such in John 17:20, 21.

How sad that some of our own brethren are adding to the confusion when they teach that the church of Jesus Christ is simply a denomination!

It should be the sincere desire of every Christian that men and women from every region of this world would come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved (1 Timothy 2:4).

Let us make every effort to lead people to Jesus Christ so that they may be saved by His precious blood and the grace of our Heavenly Father (Ephesians 1:7: Revelation 1:5).

Let us not grow weary and become discouraged in our efforts (Galatians 6:9), even though the church is being divided by some brethren who are teaching error.

May God's richest blessings be upon all the elders, preachers, teachers, and all Christians who are endeavoring to be nothing more or less than a New Testament Christian and the church of our Lord Jesus Christ!

Reasoning from the Scriptures

Mel Futrell

One doesn't have to travel very widely or visit many congregations of the Lord's people to realize that many of them have gotten totally away from Bible preaching. They have, in all honesty, very little concern with and connection to speaking what Peter called "the oracles of God" (1 Peter 4:11).

You won't hear much "book, chapter, and verse" being sounded from the pulpits of these brethren. And if you attend expecting to be

"reasoned with...out of the scriptures" — then you better get set for disappointment.

The truth is, growing numbers of our beloved brethren are just not preaching the word (2 Timothy 4:2). Much of what passes for preaching these days is nothing more than psycho-babble, feel-good messages, or anecdotal reminiscences. In the remainder of this article, let us briefly examine the biblical concept of reasoning from the Scriptures.

Luke, the author of the book of Acts, records this historical and revealing account in Acts 17:1-3:

"Now when they had passed through Amphipolis and Apolonia, they came to Thessalonica, where was a synagogue of the Jews. And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them and three Sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures. Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus whom I preach unto you, is Christ."

Several things are immediately and obviously apparent from this little section of scripture:

- (1) Paul was traveling with others.
- (2) There was a Jewish synagogue in Thessalonica.
- (3) Paul's custom was to visit the synagogues in order to preach.
- (4) Paul's preaching involved reasoning "out of the scriptures."
- (5) In reasoning from the Scriptures, Paul alleged that Jesus is the Christ.

So, what about this statement from Luke that Paul "reasoned with them out of the scriptures"?

The word translated "reasoned" is from the Greek term *dialegomai*. According to Trenchard, it occurs a

total of thirteen times in the Greek New Testament and means "I discuss, speak, preach."¹ One standard Greek-English dictionary says of the word that it means to "discuss, debate; address, speak."² Certainly the context in which a translator encounters *dialegomai* will determine what English word he chooses and uses as a translation. I like what Reese had to say about our expression as it appears in Acts 17:2:

"This is the first time we have had the word translated 'reasoned' (*dialegomai*) in the book of Acts... 'From the Scriptures' suggests that Paul was drawing his proofs from the Scriptures, or perhaps used the Scripture lessons for the day as his starting point. He was attempting to convince the worshippers that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah by comparing the life of the Nazarene with the Old Testament predictions concerning Messiah."³

Some of the other Bible passages where *dialegomai* is found are: Acts 17:17; 18:4,19; 19:8,9; 20:7,9; 24:12,25, etc. In the above verses the King James Version uses such words as *reasoned*, *disputed*, *disputing*, and *preached* to translate the same Greek word. It

might be worth noting that Marshall, in the *Interlinear Greek-English New Testament* put out by Bagster, seems to prefer the words "lecturing" and "discoursing" as translations of *dialegomai*.

At Troas (Acts 20:7ff) we find the brethren gathered together on the first day of the week, partaking of the Lord's Supper and listening as "Paul preached unto them." And as already indicated, the word "preached" could have been translated *reasoned*, *lectured*, or another of several words that are legitimate translations of *dialegomai*.

Mind you, Paul wasn't putting on a skit. He wasn't promoting the "prosperity gospel." He wasn't running through a comedy club routine. He wasn't offering a seminar on the theology of Rudolf Bultmann. He was, however, preaching the gospel.

Also, it is interesting that in the aforementioned passages, we find Paul reasoning, preaching in a variety of places, and before different groups (e.g. the synagogue, the school of Tyrannus,

the assembly of the saints, before the Governor, etc.). It is clear that Paul was willing, ready, able, and unafraid to reason from the Scriptures at just about any place and before any audience.

Why is it then that so many preachers are reluctant, or flat out refuse to reason from the Scriptures? Are they unprepared to do so? Are they scared of losing their jobs? Are they under pressure from certain brethren to appeal to the politically correct masses? Are they fearful of offending someone? Are they not convinced personally of the necessity of reasoning "out of the scriptures"? Are they agnostic toward the Bible as the word of God? Maybe we'll never truly know why. But I know this, the power to save is in the gospel (Romans 1:16), the Holy Scriptures, and out of these we must reason.

ENDNOTES

¹ Trenchard, Warren C., *Complete Vocabulary Guide To The Greek New Testament*, Zondervan, 1998, p. 145.

² Newman, Barclay, *A Concise Greek-English Dictionary of the New Testament*, United Bible Societies, p. 45.

³ Reese, Gareth L., *New Testament History Acts*, College Press, 1997, p. 612

THE FACTS OF THE GOSPEL

1 Corinthians 15:1-4

INTRODUCTION

1. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation. (Rom. 1:16). It is the only thing we are authorized to preach (Mark 16:15; Gal. 1:8).
2. Our text sets before us three of the most meaningful events in all of history. They embrace facts that must be believed if we are going to be saved.
3. Without further comment, we now examine these facts.

DISCUSSION

I. Christ Died For Our Sins.

- A. Did Jesus really die on a Roman cross? The Jews clamored for His death (Matt. 27:22). The Roman's made sure that He was dead (Deut. 21:23; John 19:31-33).
- B. "For" (Gk. *Huper- for the sake of*) our sins. He died in our place, fulfilling prophecy (Isa. 53: 4-6; 2 Cor. 5:21).
- C. The cross is enough to tell us how awful sin really is; and that sin can cause our souls to be lost eternally (John 8:21, 24).

II. Christ Was Buried.

- A. We will always remember with gratitude the care Joseph and Nicodemus gave to the body of our Lord (Matt. 27: 58-60; John 19:40-42.)
 - B. His prophecy of His own resurrection caused great precautions to be taken (Matt. 27:62-66).
 - C. The tombs of other great men can be located; and they are visited with regularity. But NOT so with the tomb of our Lord. Tour guides only guess to satisfy curiosity.
-

III. Christ Was Raised On The Third Day.

- A. The great discovery on that Sunday morning. The women came; Mary Magdalene; Peter and John.
- B. How else can we explain the boldness of the apostles and the conversion of Saul of Tarsus? They were witnesses!
- C. The resurrection of Christ is of great importance.
 - 1. If it did not take place: our preaching is worthless; our faith is empty; the apostles were false teachers; we are all in our sins; of all men, we are most miserable; and Satan has won! (See: 1 Cor. 15:14-26).
 - 2. The Son-ship and Lordship of Jesus rests on this great fact (John 20:30, 31; Rom. 1:4; John 20:28; Acts 2:32-36; Matt. 28:18; Eph. 1:22, 23).
 - 3. The resurrection of Christ has great meaning for the church, our day of gathering, and our worship (Rev. 1:10; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:23-29; 16:1, 2).
 - 4. The resurrection of Christ has great meaning as to how we enter the church and live the Christian life (Rom. 6:3, 4; Col. 2: 12; Col. 3:1).
 - 5. The resurrection of Christ assures us of our own resurrection and hope of heaven (John 11:25; 1 Cor. 15:20; 1 Pet. 1:3, 4).

CONCLUSION

- 1. As these are "facts" to be believed; the gospel also has commands to be obeyed. Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38.
- 2. Have you followed that "form of doctrine" (Rom. 6:1-6)? It must be done to become "a servant of righteousness."

-Mike Kiser

Three Difficulties

Andy Robison

Truth is a precious commodity. It is unfathomable how much of the world runs on lies.

In ancient times, many Greco-Roman cities had their own gods, with each having their own temples. The economies focused around the activities at those temples. People's lives were practically subservient to the idolatry-based economies, and they were all based on lies.

The ancient prophet bemoaned the ignorance of the man who made an idol of wood and was too misled to say, "Is there not a lie in my right hand?" (Isaiah 44:20).

When such a lie is challenged with the truth, there might be an uproar, such as the one Paul witnessed in Ephesus. He tried to preach an unseen God, but the silversmiths of the region protested that they would not be able to make money off of an unseen God (Acts 19:21-41).

Lies were responsible for running the world and for making policy. Modern (or postmodern)

man has not advanced much farther.

From pre-schools to universities, evolution is the crux of academia, rakes in millions in media coverage, and is the basis for many business and political decisions. Truth is absent in the sphere of those who have professed themselves to be wise (cf. Romans 1:22).

Regarding truth, it seems that contemporary man is faced with three difficulties: Finding it, standing for it, and standing for it in love.

Finding Truth

Finding truth might not be as easy as it sounds. America used to be a nation flooded with Bibles and people who had at least some sense of respect for the Scriptures. They may not have been New Testament Christians, but there was a social more, if you will, of the Bible being the word of God.

Today we live in quite the contrasting world. The dogma of the day is that nobody is right in any-

thing they say. There are no moral absolutes. The only thing wrong is saying that some practice might be wrong; each person can choose his own way and each way is just as right as someone else's.

This doctrine is referred to as postmodernism on a philosophical level, but finds its way into every arena of life. Its tenets flood the talk shows as every sort of life-style is heralded as good.

The only evil, in this way of thinking, is saying that there is actually an evil. Many adherents of this system seem to be rather unwitting adherents. They've just been taught for so long that everybody is right in whatever they want to believe that they've never really thought through such consequences.

The Bible is maligned, of course, because it DOES set up a standard of right and wrong that is absolute! It hardly ever occurs to people that there might be such a thing as truth. It is the farthest thing from their minds. But, when some might have the inkling that there might be such a thing, they find themselves against over-

whelming odds to be able to find it!

Finding truth in a sea of doubt, uncertainty, and outright lies can be difficult indeed. It can be done, though, as Jesus promised (John 8:31-32; cf. Proverbs 23:23).

Standing for the Truth

Next, standing for the truth can be very difficult. Once one becomes a New Testament Christian, he is under obligation to be able to stand for those things that are true and then to expose falsehoods (1 Peter 3:15; Ephesians 5:11).

Preachers are to preach the "whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27) and be ready when people like it and when they don't (2 Timothy 4:2-5). This kind of stand is increasingly difficult.

George Orwell is credited with the quote, "The further a society drifts from the truth the more it will hate those who speak it."

Indeed, the apostle Paul questioned the belligerent Galatians, "Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?" (Galatians 4:16). Truth makes enemies. THE TRUTH (John 14:6) was crucified. Why

should anyone expect that standing for the truth would be easy?

Standing for the Truth in Love

A further difficulty is standing for the truth in love. Once one finds truth and becomes convinced of it, it becomes quite disturbing to see so many people practicing error. There will even be those claiming Christ who stubbornly hold to false beliefs or act in ungodly manners. With such folks, it is hard for the defender of truth to be patient, but he must. Quarreling is not becoming of the Christian (2 Timothy 2:24-26). Meekness and gentleness in correcting error is God's law (Galatians 6:1-2).

The truth simply must be spoken in love (Ephesians 4:15). Of course, there may be a time for a stern warning (Jude 22-23). Jesus quite pointedly rebuked some hypocritical leaders (Matthew 23). Anger can be righteous (Mark 3:5). But, love must be ever present. Love may not be the feel-good idea the world thinks it is, but love must be the attitude in every defense of the truth.

Christ never said following Him would be easy. It may be

difficult to know the truth, stand for the truth, and do it in love, but it must be done.

...

A Note from the Editor

Dear Readers,

I hope that you are benefiting spiritually from the *Gospel Gleaner*. As you can tell, we have changed the format of the paper. It is more cost effective to print on smaller paper. Funds spent in postage are especially saved. Perhaps someday soon we will be able to return to having a paper that is freely given.

Since we have decided to use this smaller size, we have added more pages to compensate. Perhaps we can continue to add pages as funds permit.

Also, with this smaller size, I am very concerned to know if the type size is large enough. Can you read it? Is it too small? We have tried to space the lines to make it easier to read the smaller type. But if this doesn't work, let me know.

In Him,

Andy Erwin

News & Notes

Obituaries

Moundville, WV: In a recent issue of *Publishing Peace*, the journal published by the West Virginia School of Preaching and edited by Andy Robison, we learned of four deaths suffered by the Hillview Terrace congregation.

Included in this number was a long-time and faithful gospel – **Denver Cooper**. Brother Cooper preached for over 70 years in Ohio, Virginia, and West Virginia. He was also the director of the school for nine years. He was 91.

We also learned of the passing of Gene West's wife, Shirley. **Shirley West** is remembered as a faithful laborer in the kingdom and a great helpmeet to her husband. Gene is the preacher for the Hillview Terrace congregation. Mrs. Shirley had been sick for the past five years. She was 79.

We were also saddened to learn of the passing of Andy Robison's mother, **Elizabeth Robison**. She was a retired school teacher and also helped to organize the great library

the school now possesses. She was 77.

Another named mentioned was **Tom Berisford**. Tom was said to be one of those indispensable behind-the-scenes men so essential to a congregation. He was 82.

Let's remember this congregation in our prayers and thank God for the good they do and all they mean to the brotherhood.

Upcoming Events

Pulaski, TN: The East Hill congregation will be hosting their 25th Annual Truth in Love Lectureship from May 13-17. For more information call (931) 363-2777.

Adamsville, AL: The Adamsville congregation will be hosting their 4th Annual Southeastern Soul Saving Seminar from June 19-21. For more information call (205) 674-5659.

New Director at SIBS

Knoxville, TN: The Karns elders have hired a new director for the Southeast Institute of Biblical Studies. Will Hanstein, who is currently the Dean of Graduate Studies at the Bear Valley Bible Institute in Denver, Colorado, will become the school's new Director in June.

Will is the great-grandson of Roy Lanier, Sr. He is a fourth generation gospel preacher.

Two Outstanding Issues!

McMinnville, TN: The March issue of *Seek the Old Paths* dealt with the timely issue of racial prejudice. The paper identified the issue, provided what the Bible teaches on the subject, and offered biblical help to overcome it.

Seek the Old Paths is a free publication and is published monthly by Garland Robinson.

Austin, TX: The March issue of the *Christian Worker* was also outstanding. This particular issue addressed the subject of alcohol use. It is an issue that will prove to be very helpful to those dealing with the matter of "social" drinking.

The *Christian Worker* is published monthly and is available free of charge from the website of the Southwest church of Christ in Austin, Texas.

New Book Published

Florence, AL: Artie Collins has recently published his memoirs, chronicling over fifty years of gospel preaching and ministerial labors. Family information is also provided from a man who has been a faithful

Christian husband and father to faithful Christian children.

You can order your copy of the book by calling or writing to Artie Collins. The book is \$20.00 plus \$5.00 for postage. Phone: (256) 740-9001. Address: 864 Mars Hill Rd. Florence, AL 35630

MTSP Graduation

College Grove, TN: The Middle Tennessee School of Preaching and Biblical Studies recently enjoyed its thirteenth graduating class. A total of six students graduated this year.

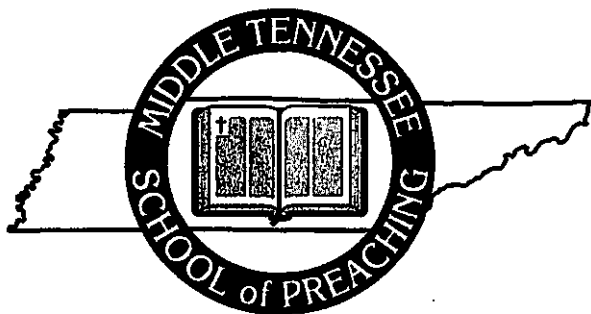
It was also announced that longtime faculty member of the school and minister for the Lynnville, TN congregation, Milton Stephens, has been selected as the new director of the school.

Preacher Needed

Murfreesboro, TN: The Bellwood church of Christ is seeking a mission-minded gospel preacher to reach out into the community. They have about 75 attending and three elders. Send resumes to Windel Burton, 1207 SE Broad St., Murfreesboro, TN 37130. You can also call brother Burton at (615) 347-4535.

The church's website is: www.bellwoodcofc.com

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For the Love of the Lord, His Word, and His Church

The

GOSPEL



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Who Love the Lord, His Word, and His Church*

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Editorial

GATHERING AT THE CROSS

Once again I ask that you ascend to Calvary's summit with me. Let us stand even at the foot of the cross, this time to survey the groups which are gathered around it.

The place of our Lord's crucifixion is known by two names in the New Testament. The name which the Hebrew gives it is rendered "Golgotha" in English. The name which the Latin gives it is rendered "Calvary" in English.

Golgotha means "the place of the skull." Most likely, the name comes from the fact that this was the gruesome site of public executions.

Scripture tells us that Calvary was outside of the city gates of Jerusalem (Hebrews 13:12), yet near to the city (John 19:20). A road passed along its base, making the scene one of public spectacle (Matthew 27:39).

Archaeology tells us that no dwellings were near it. Moreover, this place was once a quarry for *meleke* (royal) stone. The pit of the quarry was filled and turned into a

garden by the time of Christ. The remains of the quarry were the stone walls which lined the outer edges of the garden and were used as tombs. The tomb belonging to Joseph of Arimathea was one of these tombs "nigh at hand" (John 19:42).

Now stand with me at the base of the cross and let us see these surroundings as Jesus saw them. We are outside of the city, isolated from all the warmth of human residential activity. We are among the tombs, and our Savior is being made a gazing stock and reproach by the passers-by on the road below.

A small army of at least one hundred Roman soldiers¹ has made a perimeter, barricading Calvary. Those who love Jesus most can do nothing but watch from a distance. Those who hate Him most are making their jeers heard. Those who are indifferent pass the time with games such as gambling for His clothes, the only possessions He has on earth.

Thus we see three groups gathered around the cross – the apathetic, the antipathetic, and the sympathetic.

¹ We know this because a centurion was present that day (cf. Matthew 27:54).

The Apathetic

Those who are indifferent to Christ include Simon from Cyrene. He is a Jew who has come from his home in what is modern-day Libya, presumably with his two sons – Alexander and Rufus. Being a devout Jew, he has come to keep the Passover in Jerusalem. He was simply a bystander when he was forced to carry the cross of Jesus. Perhaps he stumbled upon the happenings of this day. It could be that he was merely caught in the crowd which gathered as Pilate presented the option of releasing the murderer Barabbas or the guiltless Son of God.

It must have been quite a scene. The whole city was captivated. I wonder how Simon felt as he saw our Lord being scourged. Perhaps his apathy was turned to sympathy as he saw Jesus fall beneath the load of His cross.

Also included in this number are the Roman soldiers who are merely doing their job, albeit in a most cruel and sadistic manner. They view Jesus as just another criminal. Neither His guilt nor innocence matters to them. They have been cold and ruthless in following their orders to scourge Him. They seem to relish the opportunity to mock Him. They neither know nor care that they have

had a hand in fulfilling the prophecies concerning the Messiah.

As our Savior droops lifelessly between the twilight of two worlds, one of these apathetic souls reaches for a spear and shoves it into His side, from which blood and water does overflow. As our Father in heaven makes His presence known by darkening the skies and shaking the earth, another one of these soldiers comes to the conclusion that "Truly this was the Son of God."

The Antipathetic

Next, we turn our attention to those who hate Christ. Truly they "hated Him without a cause." They are heartless and most cruel to Jesus. This number includes the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders standing by, adding insult to injury by mocking Jesus (Matthew 27:41-43). They are the religious leaders of the day.

As the people pass by on the street below, they follow the lead of their leaders saying, "You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross" (Matthew 27:39).

One of the criminals even takes this opportunity to blaspheme Jesus saying, "If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us" (Luke 23:39).

We cannot help but wonder why they have such intense hatred for Jesus. Why would a true and sincere leader of God's people reject and crucify God's only begotten Son? Could it be that they are not "true and sincere" leaders of God's people? Could it be that they are guilty of all the hypocrisy for which our Lord has rebuked them? As they wag their heads and insult Christ, the Savior prays, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

The Sympathetic

Now we must turn our gaze toward the sad sight of those who love Jesus more than anyone else in the world. This gathering includes "all His acquaintances, and the women who followed Him from Galilee" (Luke 23:49).

We see Mary Magdalene, Mary (the Lord's mother), Mary the wife of Clopas, Salome, and John. Our hearts break as we hear their cries and behold their tears. Yet, there is nothing we can do for them. The righteous always seem to be outnumbered by the wicked.

Jesus speaks a word of compassion to this group as He says to Mary and to John, "Behold your son. Behold your mother."

We also hear the pleading voice of the other thief as he addresses our Lord, humbly asking for Jesus to remember Him in His kingdom. What faith! What wisdom! As he is dying he takes the opportunity to ask and receive a blessing from the Savior. Our Lord responds graciously, "Today you shall be with Me in paradise."

Application and Conclusion

Now that we have viewed these three groups, let us collect what lessons we can from what we have observed. Concerning the apathetic, you will observe that one cannot remain indifferent forever. The time will come when the apathetic soul must come face-to-face with Jesus.

For the centurion, it was as he viewed the darkened skies at mid-day and possibly beheld the dead come from their tombs to walk the streets of Jerusalem. God will again make His presence known at the return of our Savior. The skies will split open and every eye shall behold the Son of God coming in glory with His mighty angles. All indifference will disappear that day!

For Simon, it was when he was called to carry the cross of our Savior. The surest way to overcome apathy in this life is to come in contact with the cross. Take hold of it.

Consider it carefully. Recognize what happened that day happened for you.

You will also observe that the one who pierced the Savior's side with his spear was of this number. Every moment we spend abiding in apathy and indifference to the cross of Christ we spend piercing our own spears into His side! Our apathy does nothing more than to crucify Him afresh and put Him to an open shame (Hebrews 6:6).

A number of lessons can also be learned from the antipathetic. "Weep for them you daughters of Jerusalem!" They hated Christ, and they hated Him without a cause. But who had the last word?

It may seem strange to us that someone would hate our Savior. How could one ever be found in such a gathering? The world hated Christ because He was not of the world. And, the world will hate us for the same reason (John 15:18-19).

People become haters of God when they allow their hearts to be filled with unrighteousness (cf. Romans 1:30). And, as Christians, we can come to hate Jesus if we hate our brethren. One cannot say he loves God while hating his brother. If he attempts to say such, he is a liar (1 John 4:20). Like the apathet-

ic, the only hope for this number is for them to repent of their hatred, love the Lord, and keep His commandments. We see such penitence in the example of Saul of Tarsus, who of course became the apostle Paul.

We should also recognize a number of lessons should be gleaned from those sympathetic souls gathered beneath the shadow of the cross. We see included in this number the rich and the poor, people from Judea, Galilee, and wherever Jesus had been, sinners and saints, Pharisees and fishermen. They were sympathetic to Christ because they knew Him *truly*.

You will also see that these sympathetic souls were the ones God would use to bring the message of Christ to the world. God took the weak from that day and made them strong.

To make that kind of difference for Christ's sake in this world, one must first come to have sympathy for the cross. To have sympathy for the cross, you must come to love Jesus *truly*.

You would not want to see a dearly beloved friend or relative treated that way. You would have great sympathy for that person.

Your heart would break knowing that had happened to them.

When we come to love Jesus like that, when He becomes dearly beloved to us, our heart will break within us too because of the cross. When we couple that kind of sympathy with an understanding of why His crucifixion had to happen, we will have the message which the world needs to hear and a heart compelled to share it.

Let us conclude by asking: in which gathering are you to be

found? Even now we are all gathered around the cross. It will be this way until our Lord comes again for His great and terrible judgment day. Even now all humanity is gathered around the cross. Some are indifferent. Some hate the thought of it. And some are broken hearted and determined to live righteously because of it.

In which gathering are you to be found?

Andy Erwin

Joining the Church

Rod Rutherford

Denominational evangelists commonly tell those who respond to their preaching to "pray the sinner's prayer" and then "join the church of your choice."

According to such preachers, one is saved by faith alone. He must ask Jesus to come into his heart and forgive him of his sins (the so-called "sinner's prayer"). The one who does this is saved.

The church has nothing to do with it. Whether or not such a one is baptized has nothing to do with his salvation. One should be

baptized and become a member of a church, but he is saved before and without either, according to these preachers.

The Bible Has a Different Plan

The Bible is God's Word. In it, He has told us what we must do to be saved. What then does the Bible teach about salvation? Must one be baptized? Is it necessary in order to be saved? What about joining a church? Does it have anything to do with our salvation?

The second chapter of the book of Acts tells of the first preaching of

the gospel (Christ's death for our sins, His burial, and His resurrection on the third Day (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

The apostles had waited in Jerusalem as the Lord had said (Acts 1:4-8). They were baptized in the Holy Spirit as evidenced by their speaking in languages they had never learned. When the multitude heard them speaking, they were amazed and asked what it meant. Peter addressed them and pointed out that this baptism of the Spirit had been prophesied by Joel.

He then preached that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ. God confirmed this by the miracles Jesus worked. The Jews had crucified and slain Jesus, but God had raised Him from the dead the third day. The apostles were witnesses.

When the multitude heard Peter, the Bible says "they were cut to the heart." Obviously, they believed the gospel they had just heard. They were deeply convicted of their sins, particularly of crucifying the Son of God.

The Bible Has a Different Answer

They cried out to the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" They wanted to know what to do to be saved. Peter did not have

them pray "the sinner's prayer." No record of such a prayer is found anywhere in the Bible! It is purely a "doctrine and commandment of men."

They had heard and believed the gospel so Peter told them simply: "Repent, and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38).

Neither did Peter tell sinners to "Join the church of your choice." But the Bible does say, "Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them" (Acts 2:41). The chapter goes on to speak of the continued preaching of the gospel and ends with the statement, "And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47).

The Bible Way

When sinners hear the gospel and believe it, are convicted of their sins and repent of them, and are then baptized for the remission of their sins, they are added by the Lord to the church. No joining is necessary. The Lord does the adding. He adds them to His church, not a denomination founded by men.

Knowing the Truth

Travis L. Quertermous

In John 8:31, 32, we read, "Then Jesus said to those who believed Him, 'If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.'" There are many wonderful and powerful lessons to be learned from these well-known words of our Lord.

Objective, Absolute Truth

First, there is such a thing as objective, absolute truth. Notice that Jesus spoke of "the truth" and not "a truth" or "my truth" or "your truth." That is the language of our politically correct world. We are told that truth is relative to the person and the situation so that everyone determines what is true for them. But that doesn't mean it is true for everyone else. This philosophy is called situational ethics or moral relativity. Many so-called scholars and philosophers deny that truth is absolute and objective and applicable to all people in all times in all circumstances.

Now, it does not take the wisdom of Solomon to see the absurdity of such a belief. If truth and morality are just matters of opinion, and one opinion is no better than another,

then how would we ever be able to prosecute a criminal? How could we devise any laws that apply to the whole society? Anarchy would be the result!

Furthermore, situational ethics is a self-contradictory philosophy. One person could say, "I believe stealing is good," while another person could say, "I believe stealing is evil." Both would be right according to this false theory, even though the two statements are mutually exclusive.

So, the next time you hear someone say, "There is no such thing as absolute truth," just ask them, "Are you absolutely sure about that?" Jesus taught there was such a thing as "the truth."

Truth Is Knowable

Second, we learn that truth is knowable. Again, there are many who reject such a concept as arrogant. But Christ said, "And you shall know the truth..." Provided one does not assume a haughty attitude, there is nothing arrogant about saying that one knows the truth on a given subject; Jesus said it was possible. We certainly do not tell the mathematician he is arrogant for insisting that two plus two always

equals four and every other answer is wrong.

Truth Is the Word of Christ

Third, we see that truth is the same thing as the word of Christ. Notice that Jesus used the phrases "My word" and "the truth" interchangeably. Truth, then, is to be found in the gospel of Christ. That is the standard of truth and error, and of right and wrong. Whatever is found in the pages of scripture then is true and anything that conflicts with it is false.

Truth Can Set Free

Finally, we learn that truth has the power to free us from the slavery of sin and its consequence of eternal punishment in hell (John 8:33-36).

It can free us from the domination of the devil and from the awful guilt of sin. Living in harmony therewith makes one a true disciple of Jesus Christ, free from sin and hell, and on the strait and narrow path to glory. Little wonder then that Solomon said, "Buy the truth, and do not sell it, also wisdom and instruction and understanding" (Proverbs 23:23).

Let us resolve that we will learn all of the truth we can, always live in harmony therewith, and never depart therefrom.

Fathers Are Responsible for Training Children

Robert L. Waggoner

In our culture, little girls play with dolls and little boys play with cars and trucks. Little girls grow up thinking about home and family, while little boys grow up thinking about potential careers.

Little girls grow up to become women, marry, bear children, and keep house. Little boys grow up to become men, become fathers, and often leave responsibilities for training children to their wives.

But God places responsibility on husbands to be heads of their families (Ephesians 5:23). Fathers are required not only to be bread winners for the family (1 Timothy 5:8), but also to be teachers of their children (Ephesians 6:4).

Whenever fathers leave their responsibilities of training children to their wives, then their children may no longer respect their fatherhood. In such cases, for all practical purposes, fathers demonstrate that they are not heads of their families. Such families tend to become matriarchal.

The Mission of the Church

Gerald Cowan

Until we know what our mission is we cannot determine how or when or whether to do it. We must avoid the tendency either to oversimplify or over-complicate the mission.

The most common definition of our mission is threefold: evangelism, edification, and benevolence. Many who use that definition cannot explain or apply it adequately. At the risk of making it sound more complex and complicated than it really is, we are presenting here **The Tenfold Mission of the Church**. Hopefully it will be a meaningful application of a familiar doctrine.

The **SPIRITUAL** Mission of the Church

Spiritual means “of or pertaining to the spirit” – in particular, the Spirit of God. We can understand *spiritual* as meaning *from, as taught by, or as directed by the Holy Spirit*. Paul uses the word that way in 1 Corinthians 2:9-16. We may also speak of our Spirit-given mission as directed to the non-physical spirit of man, the eternal aspect of man’s being, the part of man that can and will exist independently apart from the living body (Ecclesiastes 12:7).

Since only the spirit is eternal, that is the part we must try to save. All aspects of man’s being have some impact on the spirit or provide a way to reach the spirit. All genuine needs are to be addressed, even if they cannot be met fully, but we must put the spirit first, above everything else.

What we usually call “evangelism” is an effort to save the spirit/soul of a person. Preaching the gospel is an effort to get the hearer to respond actively and appropriately so that he will be “saved” from sin and guilt (Mark 16:15-16, Acts 2:38). Every New Testament writer makes reference to this somehow. For example, see 1 Peter 2:22-25, 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14.

Our task is not to convince all people to be religious and to join the church or religion of their choice, but to preach the God of the Bible as the only true God and Jesus Christ as the only way to reach God and secure acceptance and approval – salvation – from Him. Our message must be that Spirit-given message of God and His Christ found only in the Bible. Failure to deliver this message will only add to the spiritu-

al chaos that exists in the world. We will be part of the cause and little or no part of the cure.

The NON-SPIRITUAL Mission of the Church

PHYSICAL. This is part of what is usually but inappropriately called *benevolence*. The word means literally *good will*. It should show in everything we do. Giving food, clothing, shelter and other needful things is important (Matthew 25:31-46, James 2:15-16). So are visiting and ministering to the sick, persecuted, imprisoned and otherwise afflicted. All these things should be done according to one's ability and opportunity. But do not assume these things are more important or will compensate for failure to teach the gospel.

MENTAL/EMOTIONAL. This is part of what might be called *counseling*. Talk is cheap. Good advice and valid counsel are difficult to find. Even good counsel coming from one who does not apply it to himself is likely to be counter-productive. Notice Job's response to the poor counsel he received (Job 16:1-4). However, scripture makes it clear that we should be counselors and comforters, that we should share in the emotional situations of others.

"Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep" (Romans 12:15). When we have come through some trouble or trial with the help of God, we are able to comfort and console, encourage and strengthen others suffering from similar situations (2 Corinthians 1:3-5).

SOCIAL – teaching people how to get along with each other, both in the church and in the world. *Racial and ethnic considerations* are currently of great social importance and impact. Exploitation and slavery have taken away human rights which civilization is slow to restore. *Economic, educational, and other "status" considerations* are a constant problem.

The rich sometimes despise the poor and feel no obligation or desire to help them. The educated sometimes despise the uneducated and ignorant and feel no obligation to teach them. The poor may despise the rich too, and try to take away their riches.

Moral and humane considerations are critical. The helpless, weak, sick, old and unborn – especially the unborn – are victimized by the strong and the ruthless. Inhuman treatment of others and demand for special privileges and im-

punishment for one's misdeeds are common hallmarks of society.

The Mission of the Church TO THE CHURCH

The church has a mission and obligation to its own members and their families. This is usually called *edification*. It includes everything we have already said about the spiritual and non-spiritual mission to the world. Christians have the same needs as all others in that regard. But in this matter of edification or "building up" of Christians there are several important points of focus, as well as content.

We are to build them up in *the faith*. Jude 20-21, Ephesians 4:15-16, 2 Corinthians 13:5, and other references, teach that *the faith* is of prime importance. There must be a continuing intensive and in-depth study of scripture. (2 Timothy 2:2, 1 Corinthians 2:14-3:2). Shallow preaching and teaching will inevitably result in shallow and superficial faith, producing shallow and superficial Christians.

Edifying teaching and preaching should be directed to parents who can then "bring their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4). The church is to teach parents about the mean-

ing of *parenting* and supply them with information and proper tools and support for the intellectual, emotional, moral, and spiritual aspects of their task.

Edification – building up faith and faithfulness – should be directed to children too. Children need to be taught how to relate to parents, to the church, to other children, and to God (Ephesians 6:1-4). The church reinforces proper parental teaching and nurture, and tries to correct or alleviate in children the effects of improper parental nurture, neglect, and abuse.

The Mission of the Church TO THE RELIGIOUSLY WRONG

Evangelism – We have an obligation to prove that undivided and undenominational Christianity is possible and desirable, actually essential – demanded by God with no indication that anything less is acceptable to Him (1 Corinthians 1:10-13). How will they ever know they are wrong unless they are taught what is right.

One cannot be taught wrong and expected to do right. It is unlikely that many religiously wrong and therefore unsaved persons will attend our assemblies and listen to us teach about the invalidity of their

religion. We need to go to them, seek them out, and deliver the message of God.

We may have lost sight of the fact that we can improve the physical, mental and emotional, and social aspects of all mankind, and should try to do so even for those who do not obey the gospel for salvation (Matthew 7:12).

The Mission of the Church TO THE WHOLE WORLD

You can find both Christians and non-Christians everywhere. The most obvious and perhaps easiest part of our mission is in our own family, and then to our community – the people near to us; but you can also find people in the broader community too, extending to and including all people in our nation.

God says, “Blessed is that nation whose God is the Lord” (Psalm 33:12). Consider also that, “Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people” (Proverbs 14:34). We have a long and difficult way to go as a nation before we can say the Lord is *our* God, that we are clean in His sight, or that we have a right to pray, “God bless America; God bless our *nation*.”

Our mission extends to the whole world – to that part of it which we

are able to reach and influence at any given time. There is no limit to the extent of our mission, no boundaries placed by God upon our efforts. “Go into *all the world* and preach the gospel to *every creature*...Make disciples in *every nation*...teaching them to observe *everything* I have commanded you” (Mark 16:15-16, Matthew 28:18-20). As one of our hymns says, we should “Ring out (the word) ... until the sinful *world* is won for Jehovah’s mighty Son.”

The Duration of the Mission of the Church

It is a lifetime work, a never-ending mission. Every Christian should make a lifetime commitment to the mission of the church, just as we have a lifetime commitment to the church itself. This is because we are expected to have a lifetime commitment to God and to His Christ, and to the faith (Revelation 2:10).

As the people of God we are pledged to serve Him in the way He directs. We can subdivide our lifetime mission into two parts.

We can make **SHORT TERM** efforts, now and then, here and there. Gospel Meetings are short term mission efforts in which some-

one is brought in to preach on special topics which will evangelize the community and edify the church. Campaigns are short term group efforts, to unchurched or unevangelized areas, or to churches needing help in their own evangelistic works.

More difficult and demanding are **LONG TERM** mission efforts, going to a mission area with the intention of staying a long time, perhaps for a lifetime. The needs and works of long term missionaries bring opportunities for many others to participate in short term missions.

We rightly honor and applaud both short term and long term missionaries for their self-sacrificing commitment to others, as part of their personal commitment to Christ. It is a privilege to support such persons and their works with money, time, energy, and prayer.

Hopefully our projected spotlight on missions in future issues of the *Gospel Gleaner* will give a proper review of many mission efforts, both long term and short term, and will encourage us to give to these missionaries something of our own fellowship and support.

If you have been keeping score, you may have noticed that we have

only listed nine parts of the tenfold mission. The last one is individual, not collective.

The Mission and Responsibility TO AND FOR ONE'S OWN SELF

Each one is commanded to "save yourself" (Acts 2:40, Philippians 2:12-13). "Make your own calling and election sure" (2 Peter 1:10). "Be faithful unto death" (Revelation 2:10).

When you have done that you too can expect the crown of life from the Lord, the righteous judge (2 Timothy 4:7-8).



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HOW TO IMPROVE OUR SINGING

Bill Brandstatter

I love to sing. Many others do too. Let us keep in mind that when we sing in our church services, we are singing as a group not as individuals.

We are to make melody in our hearts. The blending of voices is significant in the sight of God. As one lady put it, "it sounds so angelic." Here are a few general suggestions on how to improve congregational singing.

First, there must be a song leader. We have a song leader to keep everything in order (1 Corinthians 14:40).

The song selection should take into consideration songs best suited to the group being led. It doesn't make sense to lead four part harmony if those present are unable to do so. Our song leaders should also pick songs in advance that fit with the sermon being preached.

A song leader's job is to lead singing. We should let him do it. Too often we try to sing a song the way we think it ought to be sung. We should also be watching and following him as he leads.

Second, there must be people who are singing. Some don't sing for a variety of reasons. Perhaps there are throat problems or sinus problems.

There may be times a person is unable to sing. I am not referring to those situations. I am referring to the individuals that are busy doing something else instead of singing. Singing is to teach and admonish.

We should keep in mind that singing may help a person who has a spiritual need. I have often seen individuals laugh or talk while the invitation song is being sung. This is an important time in our worship. We are not just singing to entertain. We are singing for a divinely ordained purpose.

Teaching and admonishing each other is a significant part of our Christian experience. The "one another" of Colossians 3:16 and Ephesians 5:19 is a reciprocal action. If we all sat closer together so our voices blended together, that would improve our singing. Let us always make sure we put the most into it so we can get the most out of it.

Third, the songs must come from prepared hearts. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Colossians 3:16)

Notice the word of Christ should be in us, and we should sing with gracious hearts. If the word of Christ is not in our hearts, the songs we sing won't mean as much. A person can be singing with us in our worship, but it won't mean the same to everyone if the heart is not prepared.

In the third chapter of Colossians, Paul mentions we should seek things that are above, and then we should set our hearts on things above. Following that, he indicates we should put off the old man and put on the new. Then the bond of perfection, which is love, is mentioned. He writes about all this before he even gets to singing.

When we are right with God and our attitude is what it should be, our singing will be a response to our love for Him. That is really how congregational singing can be improved.

The Library Column

THIS MONTH

Doctrinal Studies

In this month's edition of the "Library Column," I would like to recommend some books that can help us better understand basic Bible teachings.

Doctrinal Discourses by R.L. Whiteside is a book that probably helped me more than any other when I began preaching. The reader will be introduced to basic Bible doctrines and their defense from a very logical, straightforward approach. Ample scripture references are also supplied.

Sound Doctrine (vols. 1-5) by C.R. Nichol and R.L. Whiteside is a classic series that should be studied today. Again, basic Bible teachings are studied with ample scripture references. This set would be great for teenage classes as well. The Gospel Advocate has recently reprinted this series in a paperback.

Systematic Theology by Rex Turner, Sr., categorizes doctrines in alphabetical order. Don't let the title scare you away. It is a book which can be understood. My teenage son is now studying the revision of this book, *Biblical Theology*, which was recently revised by Don Shackelford.

AE

The Genealogies of Christ

Stephen R. Bradd

Have you ever wondered why the New Testament begins the way it does? It doesn't open with an exciting narrative or an extraordinarily interesting theme – at least not for the first seventeen verses.

Matthew begins with a genealogy traced through “Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called Christ” (1:16). Some might view these verses as wasted space and rather boring. However, these verses are very important to the accomplishing of Matthew's purpose; namely, convincing the Jews that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God.

The Jews in that era were very attentive to their ancestral records. If Jesus was truly the Messiah, He would have to have the proper genealogy.

In Matthew 1:1, Jesus is said to be the “Son of [i.e., a descendant of] David, the Son of Abraham.” This is important because of prophecies foretelling such (cf. Genesis 22:18; 2 Samuel 7:12, 13), and the Jews understood this. They knew the Messiah would be a descendant of David (Matthew 22:42), and thus, a rightful heir to the throne. Mat-

thew's purpose is to show a genealogical relationship between Jesus, David, and Abraham.

One could spend much time tracing the genealogical records of Christ from generation to generation, learning as much as possible about each one mentioned therein. Such will not be our purpose at this time. Rather, we will endeavor to make a few observations that we hope will be of interest and value from Matthew 1:1-17 and also Luke 3:23-38.

Abraham to Christ

First, it should be noted that Matthew, as he traces the record from Abraham to Christ, mentions only four women: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and Bathsheba (though she is only mentioned indirectly). Is there a specific purpose in naming only these women and neglecting many others who could have easily been mentioned (e.g., Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, etc.)? I believe the answer is “yes.”

Matthew's purpose is not to defame these women, but rather to place emphasis upon them in order to demonstrate the fact that all people, regardless of background, are of

concern to God. Tamar committed incest; Rahab was a prostitute; Ruth was a Moabite; and Bathsheba committed adultery. Yet, the true King of Israel had these women in His ancestry. God can (and does) use sinful people to accomplish His will. The inclusion of these women on this list also serves as a reminder that Jesus was the only sinless person who ever lived and He came for the benefit of **all** mankind.

Christ through Joseph

Second, it should be observed that Matthew traces Jesus' genealogy through Joseph, who was the legal father of Jesus. Although such seems strange to us, since Jesus was not begotten from Joseph, the Jews emphasized the father's lineage. Luke, on the other hand, traces Jesus' lineage backwards.

He states that it "was supposed" that Jesus was the son of Joseph (Luke 3:23) – though Luke had already proved this false in a technical sense (1:26-35). Joseph is said to be "the son of Heli" (3:23). This does not contradict Matthew 1:16 where he is said to be the son of Jacob. Luke is writing to the Greeks who would care nothing about Joseph's ancestry since he wasn't the literal father of Jesus. It appears that Joseph was counted as "the son of He-

li" in the sense that he married Heli's daughter, Mary. Therefore, Luke is showing Jesus' ancestry through Mary.

Thus, Matthew's genealogy, through Joseph, does not prove Jesus to be of the blood of David, because Jesus was not related to Joseph through blood. However, Joseph was Jesus' legal father, and thus, Matthew's record does show Jesus as a possible heir to the throne of David. Luke's genealogy, through Mary, does not prove Jesus to be an heir of David's throne, but it does show Jesus to be of the blood of David.

Conclusion

In summary, these genealogies in Matthew and Luke: (1) provide absolute certification of Jesus' ancestry, (2) emphasize the humanity of Jesus, (3) proclaim the faithfulness of God in fulfilling His promise to the patriarchs, (4) hint at the sinfulness of man, (5) show God's purposes in His dealings with Israel, (6) support and complement the virgin birth narrative, and (7) complement each other in an interesting way. God's word is so rich in every passage – even the genealogies!



Are There Few That Be Saved?

Luke 13:23-30

1. The inquirer probably had no doubt that he would be one of the saved.
2. Many like questions are speculative with no bearing on conduct.
3. One might ask this question: haughtily, good naturedly, or anxiously.
4. Our Lord was concerned not with numbers, but with hearts.
5. Some clear lessons about the matter of salvation:

I. All Can Be Saved.

- A. God finds no pleasure in folks being lost. Ezekiel. 18:23, 32
- B. God provided Calvary for everyone. Isaiah. 53:6; I John 2:2
- C. God wants all to be saved. I Timothy 2:3, 4; II Peter 3:9

II. Many Will Not Be Saved.

- A. Universalism says "everybody." Cf. Matthew 7:13, 14
- B. Three years later our Lord's language is stronger! Lk. 13:3, 5, 24-28.
- C. Heaven and Hell are real and eternal. Matthew 25:41, 46.

III. Some Will Not Be Saved Who Expected To Be Saved.

- A. They ignored personal holiness. Sinful habits; self-righteousness.
- B. They were "seekers"—Not "strivers." Difficulties come:
 1. From within our own heart: ignorance, unbelief, depravity...
 2. From the very nature of religion; mortification and self-denial.
 3. From opposition of those who are Christ's enemies.
- C. They sought salvation too late! The door of mercy was shut.

IV. Some Will Be Saved Whom We Did Not Expect To Be Saved.

- A. The sinful woman. Luke 7:36-60
- B. The tax collector. Luke 19:1-10
- C. The persecutor. I Timothy 1:12-17; Acts 9:13, 14
- D. The Roman centurion Gentile. Acts 11:1-4; 15:5-11

V. No One Will Be Saved Except In God's Way. (God's plan requires:)

- A. Hearing the gospel. Acts 18:8
- B. Believing in Jesus Christ. Acts 16:30, 31
- C. Repentance of past sins. Acts 2:38
- D. Confession of faith in Jesus Christ. Romans 10:9, 10
- E. Water baptism (immersion) for the remission of sins. I Peter 3:21
- F. Growth in grace and knowledge. II Peter 1:5-7; 3:18
- G. Walking in the light. I John 1:7-9

Little girl once greeted a friend bearing bad news with "daddy." Mother explained, "She has been waiting for him all day. He was so close to home, but he will never be coming home!" This is how it is with some and heaven? Maybe even some of you. Quit seeking and start striving.

—Mike Kiser

Remembering Melvin Campbell

Almon Watson

Melvin Campbell was a well-known gospel preacher in North Alabama and Southern Tennessee. He was born near Hohenwald, Tennessee on October 5, 1912 to John and Tabitha Webb Campbell. In 1926 his father moved his family to Lauderdale County, Alabama. He first lived in Anderson, but soon moved to the Pleasant Valley community. Here, Melvin met and married Arlene Yancey on October 13, 1934. In their 56 years together, they had four children: Jim, Mary Frances, Johnny, and David.

Since brother Campbell's father was also a gospel preacher, he was exposed early in life to the scriptures. In the course of his 90 years he studied and meditated on the scriptures and was widely known for his knowledge of the Bible. He especially loved the book of James. By his desire to share his hope with others, and encouragement from his wife, he was prompted to preach.

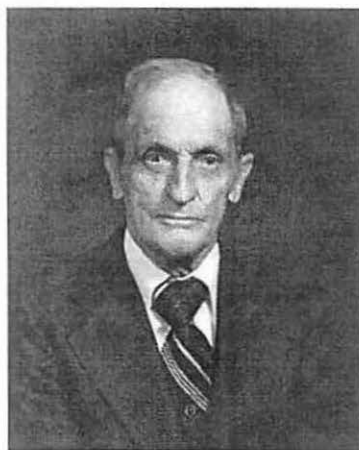
Melvin preached his first sermon at North Carolina church of Christ near Killen, Alabama, on November 19, 1934. From that time until he became disabled 56 years later, he preached the gospel.

Including his preaching regularly for congregations and his preaching

in gospel meetings, he preached in 118 congregations. He served as fulltime minister at the churches of Christ at Atlas, Shiloh, Stutts Road, Lone Cedar, Oakland, Center Hill (where he also served as an elder), and Elgin – all near Florence,

Alabama. Almost without exception, the churches where he preached grew both spiritually and numerically.

In addition to his work in the pulpit, Melvin was willing to discuss the Bible with anyone, at any time, on a one on one basis. He was widely known as "The Little Preacher Man." It would have been of great interest if an accurate record



had been kept of the many people he baptized and the many funerals and weddings he conducted. It would be a fair estimate to say that he conducted more funerals and weddings than any other preacher in the area where he lived.

Brother Campbell started his preaching in the middle of the Great Depression, so getting to and from his appointments was a problem. It was several years later before he owned a car, so he would walk the 3.5 miles from his home to the highway to catch the bus to go to preach. He was often paid 50 cents, or less. To make ends meet, he also farmed. He practiced his sermons and quoted scriptures while following a pair of mules.

Melvin's accomplishments would have been more difficult had it not been for his faithful wife who supported him every step of the way. In the summer while he was away in gospel meetings, sister Campbell stayed behind and worked the farm. She cared for the four children, the crops, animals, garden, etc. In later years she went with him wherever he went. She preceded him in death on March 23, 1990. Melvin never fully recovered from her death and his health declined. In December 1995 he entered the Lauderdale

Christian Nursing Home near Killen, Alabama, where he died July 2, 2002.

Melvin's grandson, Derek Hancock, assisted James Bridges in conducting his funeral. Among the many interesting memories of his granddaddy, Derek mentioned the following:

"It is no small task to try to eulogize someone who has meant so much to me. And not just to me but to thousands of others.

As I thought of the memories I have of him, I kept coming back to one word that seemed to sum it all up. Character! That is one word that has different meanings depending upon the context in which you use it.

You can say that an individual was possessed of a great deal of character, or you can say that the individual was a character. Both meanings applied very well to my Granddaddy."

To all those who knew Melvin Campbell, that seems to summarize his illustrious life.



GLEANINGS FROM MISSION REPORTS

Nepal Relief Effort

From Michael Brooks: A devastating earthquake struck Nepal on Saturday, April 25. News from Christian families in most of the country is to this point encouraging. Churches of Christ in Katmandu valley, east Nepal, and the southern plains have to date reported no deaths, few injuries, and moderate damage to homes and church buildings. However the Gatlang church in Rasuwa district (along the Tibet border) reports that four members were killed..

The Highland Park church of Christ (Muscle Shoals, AL) has been involved with ministry in Nepal for almost 25 years. Any who wish to send donations through Highland Park may make out checks to "Highland Park Church of Christ," marked "For Earthquake Relief" and mail to: Highland Park Church of Christ, P O Box 2216, Muscle Shoals, AL 35662.

Please call or email if you have further questions.

Mobile: 256-335-7247

Email: mikeebrooks@yahoo.com

World Evangelism Missions

From Wayne Barrier: In March a team visited New Delhi and Bangalore. These meeting resulted in 44 baptisms.

Also in March a team visited Burma and teaching was done at the Myanmar Bible College. About forty students attended. Work was also done among congregations in Borneo and Sri Lanka.

For more information as to how to help in this work, contact Wayne Barrier at 256-766-2807 or by email at wbarrier@hiwaay.net.

Preacher in Ethiopia Needs Help

From Perry Taylor: Belay Kebede has planted a congregation in Dire Dawa, Ethiopia, which is the second largest city and part of the Islamic section of this country.

He has lost his secular job and needs additional support. The congregation now has twenty members and often five to ten children and visitors. For more information as to how you can help, contact: Perry Taylor at 256-856-2797. Perry is the gospel preacher for the Stutts Road congregation in Florence, AL.

News & Notes

Adamsville, AL: The Adamsville congregation will be hosting their 4th Annual Southeastern Soul Saving Seminar from June 19-21. For more information call (205) 674-5659.

Cantonment, FL: The Northwest Florida School of Biblical Studies will be hosting "Sharpening Our Skills," a preacher's workshop, July 27-30. Speakers include Paul Sain, Tom Holland, and Sid White.

The school will also be hosting their "Laborers and Leaders Camp" from July 6-10. The camp is for ages 13-18. The theme for this year is the Sermon on the Mount. For more information call (850) 474-9257 or visit the school's website at nwfsbs.com.

Sullivan, IL: The Highway church of Christ has a planned "Super Saturday" VBS on July 11. The Savannah church of Christ is working alongside them in this effort.

Also, the Illinois State Fair work, a cooperative effort of sister churches in the state is right around the corner. If there is a reason for you to

be in Springfield, IL on the dates of August 14-23, come by the fairgrounds and visit. For more information visit exhibitevangelism.com.

Pulaski, TN: The Diana Singing is scheduled for June 12-13. Visit their website at dianasinging.com for more information.

Moundsville, WV: The 20th Graduation of the West Virginia School of Preaching is scheduled for June 12th at 6 pm (EST). The students who will be graduating are Marcus Stevenson, Luke Taylor, and Shawn Traster. A catered dinner will be provided. David Kenney will be the keynote speaker for the evening.

The school will also be hosting a "Future Preacher Training Camp" June 19-21 for ages 14-18. Call (304) 845-8001 or visit wvsop.com for more information.

Rendezvous Review

From Stephen Bradd: We had 50 in attendance for the first Rendezvous in Carlinville, Illinois in early May.

Families of the Lord's church who home educate their children gathered for 4 days of fellowship, worship, recreation, & encouragement.

It was a wonderful time & next year's event has already been scheduled. For details, please visit RendezvousIL.com.

A Note from Ivie Powell

Dear Brother Andy:

You and your staff are doing a great work for the Lord. In a day when liberalism and extremism is raging, the *Gospel Gleaner* is a shining light for the body of Christ.

After right at 49 years of local work, we will be moving back to our home in West Plains, Missouri, at the end of June.

The Lord willing, I will be conducting gospel meetings as opportunities arise. Another area of outreach includes a series on "Strengthening Your Marriage."

I can be reached at our present mailing address: P.O. Box 2091, Rowlett, TX 75030-2091.

After July 1, our address will be 1915 Hoglen Dr., West Plains, MO 65775.

Your prayers are requested as we refocus our work for the Lord.

Brotherely,

Ivie Powell

REVIEW OF THE 2015 ANNUAL SOUTHWEST LECTURES

From Sam Willcut:

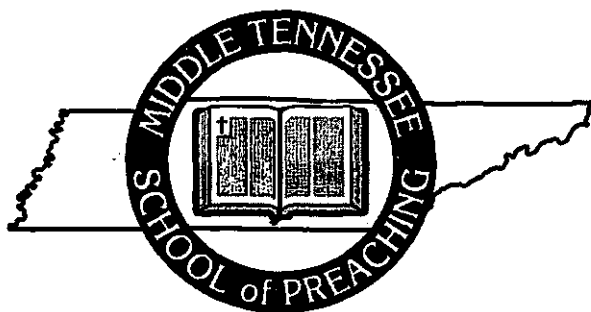
On April 11-14, 2015, the Southwest congregation in Austin, Texas, looked at the theme, "God's Help with Life's Struggles." Along with written manuscripts attractively put and preserved in a format conducive for personal study or classroom curriculum were the declared discourses that were archived in both audio and video format (one may order these from Tullstar.org). Although the books sold out Monday evening of the lectureship, one may still order them online from Amazon.

Through the recorded lectures and the printed book, we have dealt with a subject that was both necessary and relevant. To such measures, I would have to say that as lectureship director, I am well pleased with the great efforts of so very many. With the help of so many, it is truly amazing to see what God can do through us for His glory! This was the task at hand—to provide a platform by which we, as the church at Southwest, may honor Jesus Christ, and through all of our efforts, may God receive the glory in His church (Matt. 5:16; Eph. 3:21)! I pray that such was produced.

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For the Love of the Lord, His Word, and His Church

The

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GLENER

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Editorial

WHERE ARE THE PARENTS?

Recently we have witnessed children rioting in the streets of Baltimore. We have heard the tragic news of a 21 year-old so filled with hate that he walked into a Bible study and murdered nine innocent victims. News is broadcast on a daily basis throughout this country of young people making horrific decisions.

Our own families, communities, and churches can attest to personal experiences of young people acting out of rage, hatred, and stupidity. For each of these cases I cannot help but ask, "Where are the parents?" We all know it doesn't have to be this way. Parents, we need to accept our God-given responsibility to our children.

Children Are What Parents Allow Them to Be.

Children are what parents allow them to be. One case which verifies this statement is found in First Samuel, and it is the case of Eli and his two sons, Phinehas and Hophni. Eli

was rebuked by God for not restraining his sons as they executed their priestly duties in a sinful way.

We know that Eli talked to his sons about their wickedness, but he did not stop them from continuing in their wickedness. Eli stopped at words. In so doing, he allowed his sons to continue sinning against God (see 1 Samuel 2:29 ff.).

It is good to talk with our children, but sometimes action is required.

Children Are What Parents Expect Them to Be.

Children are what you expect them to be. Have high expectations for your children! Expect them to be faithful Christians. Expect them to be outstanding citizens. Expect them to excel in the classroom and/or workplace. Let them know that these things are expected. It is troubling to see many Christian parents settle for "good kids" (as the world deems goodness) who have very loose morals. If you expect nothing of a child, you will get nothing from a child.

Children Are What You Train Them to Be.

Children are what you train them to be. It is not enough to have great expectations for our children; we

must also take an active part in their training. As parents, we must provide them with the tools, opportunities, and training to be successful in life.

Parents must also be active in the lives of their children. Know where your children are and share their lives with them. Prepare your children for the world, rather than simply turning them loose on the world!

"Train up a child in the way he should go." And, "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." This kind of parenting involves both nurturing and correcting.

Many parents are sold on the idea of nurturing their children, while they give very little credence to the principle of correcting them. The Bible tells us that if you do not correct your children, essentially, you hate them. "He who spares his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him promptly" (Proverbs 13:24). "Chasten your son while there is hope (Proverbs 19:18); for "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction will drive it far from him" (Proverbs 22:15).

On the other hand, let us not overlook the vital importance of nurturing our children in the Lord. Children must learn the importance of sound instruction, wisdom, mercy, forgiveness, kindness, righteousness, work ethic, love for family, love for the Lord, and love for mankind. As a child observes these qualities in his parents and learns these truths from childhood, he is nurtured in the Lord.

Final Thoughts

I believe you can tell whether or not a child is being raised according to the word of God. "You shall know them by their fruits." The greatest legacy any one of us will ever leave is our children; and, the greatest thing you will ever do for a child is to bring them to Christ.

Perhaps the greatest hope we have for the children in this country is for Christian parents to raise their children in such a way as not to be affected by evil environments, but to affect their environments for good, for Christ, and His gospel! Train them to meet the devil on the Lord's terms and help them to build a faith that will lead them to victory!

Andy Erwin

Forgiving an Offense

Ronald D. Bryant

To forgive or not to forgive, that is the question. But there is nothing poetic about the necessity of learning to forgive and being willing to do so.

The question of forgiveness looms large as a major problem in the minds of many. The difficulty resides in the fact that forgiving another is not only a decision but also a demanding process that is locked into our emotions.

There is nothing automatic or incidental about forgiveness. It is an act of personal will; a decision that is made in the face of difficult circumstances and against the demands of emotions which cry out for revenge.

The victim of an offense faces the temptation to assume "victim status." The problems associated with this are many and varied. It is tempting, even easy, to hold to an offense.

In contrast, those who choose to forgive make a conscious decision to abandon resentment and revenge. They choose to release their grievance, and allow the offender to go free.

Forgiveness enables one to find release from anger, resentment, hostility, and all the other destructive emotions that take root in one's heart when they hold to a grievance. Forgiving is the means whereby one rids himself of the stifling and limiting burden of emotional pain that an offense can bring. Forgiveness is quite literally a direct path to inner peace.

Many hold to false concepts about forgiveness. False views regarding forgiveness can lead to wrong attitudes and actions.

Therefore, it is important to consider what forgiveness is not.

Forgiveness Is Not Based on One's Feelings.

Emotions are significant, but must not be allowed to rule. Anger and feelings of outrage may or may not be justified. If not justified, they are to be rejected. If justified, they must be controlled, and dealt with in a way that does not do harm.

Emotions do not justify hurtful actions (Ephesians 4:26). Some contend that emotional wounds heal over time, but there is nothing

magical about the passing of time. Face it, emotional wounds demand surgery, and the only surgery that works is forgiveness!

Forgiveness Is Not Based on Finding Some Redeeming Quality in the Offender.

True forgiveness cannot be based upon a person's "good behavior" or "good qualities." These do not compensate for destructive behavior. One who sins against another does not automatically deserve forgiveness.

Forgiveness takes place in the heart of the one offended, not in the merits of the offender, and it is not healthy or wise to hold to an offense. It is far better to forgive and to live in the flow of emotional freedom and good-will than to carry around a load of resentment. It is foolish to perpetuate the consequences of an offense by failing to forgive.

Forgiveness Does Not Mean Minimizing the Accountability of the Offender.

Some mistakenly think they forgive an offense by saying "it does not matter" or "it is not significant" or "the wrong done was small." In forgiving one says, "I choose not to hold to this grievance, but to extend

forgiveness to the person who did wrong toward me."

Forgiveness Does Not Mean Letting a Guilty person Avoid Legal Demands.

For instance, if the act was criminal, one who forgives can still require a person to appear in court and face legal penalties for the crime. If the matter is civil and a determination is made in court, the fine or judgment meted out must be paid. In such matters the guilt and the penalty is decided by legal authority not by the person offended.

Additionally, it is essential that all matters be dealt with honestly before God, trusting Him to deal with the transgressor, the transgressions, and the harm done.

Trusting God to heal the hurt is central in the process of forgiving an offense. God's justice will be far better than any action an offended person might manufacture.

Forgiveness Is Not Forgetting.

Forgiveness is not "holy amnesia." It is not forgetting. It is a promise! It is a promise that the matter will not be brought up again, or allowed to be a barrier. Like a debt that has been cancelled, the offense is no longer on the books.

With a benevolent spirit, one might be able to brush off a minor hurt, or a superficial wound; but forgiveness and the healing of deep emotional wounds is always a process. It takes both time and purposeful effort to forgive. Love and respect are positive communications in the process.

***Forgiveness Is an Act of Strength,
Not Weakness.***

Forgiveness requires great strength of character and will. No strength of character is involved in harboring a grudge, or being resentful. It takes strength and courage to lay anger aside and to choose to walk in peace.

***Forgiveness Opens the Door to
Faith, Hope, and Love.***

Forgiveness allows one to express and to learn to love. It leads one to trust. It leads one to hope. This much is undeniable, it is virtually impossible to love, or trust, or to be hopeful toward a person against whom you hold a grievance. It seems apparent that love does not come first, nor does trust, or hope – forgiveness does!

Those generous souls who laugh easily, who refuse to dwell on unpleasant events, and refuse to hold on to offenses are the happiest and healthiest. They choose a

course that keeps them from being burdened emotionally or damaged spiritually. True forgiveness alone can stem the destructive power of anger and resentment.

***Forgiveness Is a Promise Made
before God.***

It is a promise made to God, and a promise made to the offender before God. What is promised?

The following words are but suggestive: "In love for God – I release all claims to punish or resent this person because of this offense. I choose not to hold to this grievance, lest it become a barrier to a right relationship with God or with others. I choose to let the offense and the offender go free. I will not bring it up again."

Why Should One Forgive?

Good for evil is the God-honoring choice. We long to live and to serve to the glory of God, no matter the cost. We cherish the fact that the love of God falls on those who deserve it not, and can be ruled by the fact that we are to be like Him in our love for others. It would be far better to suffer harm at the hands of a multitude of evil men than another person should be harmed because of any hatred or hostility that is in me! I choose to live to the glory of God; therefore I choose to forgive.

What Do You Know About the Church?

Ivie Powell

The church of the New Testament is often misunderstood. Such confusion exists because of many factors. Let it clearly be pointed out that any and all confusion is NOT because the Bible cannot be understood. Jesus said, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). To the Ephesians Paul wrote, "Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ" (Ephesians 3:4).

In order to understand the church, one must first understand the definition of the word *church*. The word *church* appears in the Bible eighty-one times and *churches* thirty-seven times.

The word "church" in our English translations is the rendering of the Greek work *ecclesia* (pronounced ek'la sia), from ek, signifying "out of" and *kaleo*, "to call" thus, literally "to call out." It is used in the New Testament to designate the body of people which, in full and free response to the preaching of Jesus as Lord believed His word and obeyed His will. The steps particularly taken in this response to Him are faith (John 8:24), re-

pentance (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38), confession (Romans 10:9; Acts 8:37); and baptism in water for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). Those who thus did were (a) saved (Mark 16: 15-16); (b) added to the church (Acts 2:47). Thenceforth those united in this fashion enjoyed a warm and intimate association in the family of God, having become partakers of the divine nature. (2 Peter 1:4). (Guy N. Woods, "What is the church?" *The Spiritual Sword*, Vol. 1, No. 4, p.1, July 1970)

The term "denomination" when applied to religious institutions, has reference to division. Thus we have the concept of "choosing the church of one's choice." Such a concept is against the prayer of our Lord when He prayed for the unity of believers in John 17:20-21.

Observe, please, that the apostle Paul condemned religious division when he wrote:

Now I beseech you brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same


mind and in the same judgment (1 Corinthians 1:10).

My friends, a legitimate question would be: Of which denomination was the apostle Paul a member? Was he a member of the Baptist church? Was Paul a Methodist or an Episcopalian? Was he a member of the Catholic Church?

The answer of course is that Paul was NOT a member of any denomination, but simply a Christian, a member of the body of Christ, the church one can read about in the

New Testament – the church of Christ!

Another question for careful consideration: Can one be a Christian and not a member of any denomination? The answer is yes! If one will do what Paul and other people did they will become what they became – a Christian, a member of the body of Christ; to whom the Lord adds the saved (Acts 2:47). Friend, are YOU a Christian?



Women Are Not to Speak Between the Prayers

Ron Thomas

Every now and again one comes across a teaching of Scripture that has the appearance of a contradiction. The case I have in view is that which Paul wrote to the Corinthians. Just before he addresses an issue relative to their participation in the Lord's Supper, Paul addressed a problem in relation to something cultural, and also which pertains to God-ordained roles.

But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head.

But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved (1 Corinthians 11:3-5, NKJV).

This passage has been interpreted by some to be in contradiction to that which Paul wrote just a little further on, in chapter 14. It is there that Paul said:

Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says. And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own hus-

bands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in church (14:34-35).

With regard to the thoughts expressed in chapter 11, some actually interpret this to refer to Paul authorizing the females in the public assembly to teach. Paul does speak to the female praying or prophesying, but he does not identify the context in which this takes place. Admittedly, the easy read of the context (11:2-16) is a public assembly. Paul, however, does not say that. Some understand his words in verses 17-18, where Paul does speak of the church "coming together," to have a "backward" application in the context of 11:3-5, just as it does in the context following. Perhaps this is the case.

Add to the difficulty in interpretation, there are additional words of Paul (authored by the Holy Spirit) relative to the females in the public assembly in Paul's instructions to Timothy. "Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence" (1 Timothy 2:11-12, NKJV).

Thus, what we have is a public assembly identified by Paul when he addressed his epistle to Timothy

(2:8-14; 3:14-15), and in his address to the Corinthians there is a public assembly mentioned at least once, perhaps twice (if 11:17-18 is understood to apply).

Is There A Contradiction?

To begin, for those who accept the Scripture as the verbally inspired Word of God, there is a default position with regard to what Paul said, and it is this: what the Holy Spirit authorized Paul to say in one location (1 Corinthians 11 and 14) can in no way be interpreted in violation to that which he also said in another location (1 Timothy 2). To approach it otherwise is to imply that either God did not author the Scriptures, or if He did, He was rather confused in revealing to man His will. Neither option is acceptable.

Interpreting 1 Corinthians 11:3-5

One's understanding of 1 Corinthians 11:3-5 contributes significantly to whether or not Paul contradicted himself. These verses do not say that a public assembly is in view. Gareth Reese, on the other hand, is of the opinion that "the context *is* public worship."¹ If this is so, then there are some options to consider and from which to choose.

¹ Gareth Reese, *New Testament Epistles: 1 Corinthians*, Scripture Exposition Books, Moberly, MO, 2004, p. 374 (italics added, RT).

First, we have Paul contradicting himself not much further into his exhortation (in chapter 14); second, that which is in view in this context (chapter 11) is different from that which is in view in chapter 14; third, we are to understand the words of Paul in chapter 14 and 1 Timothy 2 are the norm putting parameters on our understanding of 1 Corinthians 11.

Reese offers a number of interpretations, but three lead the way: a) if a woman had a prophetic gift she could speak (chapter 11), but if she did not, then she was to be silent (chapter 14), b) there is no public assembly under consideration in 11:4-5, c) the Greek word for woman is *gunē*, and this word is better understood with the varying contexts to mean *wife*, not woman.

For this article I maintain that "b" is correct, but will only presume so in order to move to a proper application of 1 Corinthians 14:34.

Understanding "Silent" in 14:34

1 Corinthians 14 is properly understood in relation to the previous two chapters. In these three chapters (chapters 12 through 14), Paul addressed the purpose of the Holy Spirit's gifts to the saints, and he also addressed the misuse of those gifts in some applications. In the

center of this discussion, Paul spoke of the importance of God's ideal motivation (love) being implemented in the heart of the saints for perpetuity, while the gifts were only temporary.

By the Lord's authority, godly women were not to speak in a public assembly over a man. This applied to both those who had miraculous capabilities and those who did not.

These temporary gifts made for some difficult dynamics in the Corinthian assembly. In chapter 14, Paul made it very plain to the saints that the women were not permitted to speak (14:34). This is important to understand. In chapter 11, some godly females had miraculous capabilities and in chapter 14, presumably, some sister saints had the same. When the public assembly gathered, the Holy Spirit put a limitation on the females.

In what context, however, were they not permitted to speak? The best way to understand what Paul had in mind is to understand how he used the English word "speak" (Greek *laleō*). The word is used 34 times in the epistle, 24 in this chapter alone. As one traces this word in this chapter it becomes clear that what he meant (and means) by the use of this word pertains to *teach-*

ing. It means that women are not to *teach*. It speaks nothing at all to women *talking*, as one would talk to another in conversation.

Thus, in 1 Corinthians 14:34, the word “speak” means to “teach.” Why didn’t Paul just use the word “teach” if that is what he meant? It is a fair question, but one that overlooks the context.

Consider how Paul used the word in 1 Corinthians 2:6 in relation to himself. “However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing.” How was Paul using the word “speak” in this context? He was using it as one who “teaches.”

It is the context that gives us the sense of how words are properly understood. The Greek term does actually mean *to speak, to express oneself*. In any context, one can speak or express a thought, idea, and even teach. It is this latter idea that we have in this chapter.

Conclusion

The passage in 1 Corinthians 14:34 has been misused by some saints to assert something the passage does not teach. When properly understood, however, in the larger context of his words to the Corinthi-

ans, clarity results. When Paul gave his exhortation for women to keep silent in the churches, he was speaking in regard to teaching in a public assembly with men present – exactly that which he said in 1 Timothy 2:11-12.

If some, then, use this passage to teach women can’t talk “between the prayers” (opening and closing of the worship service), then the passage is misused. Of course, one must understand, from the context, disruption in the public worship is contrary to God’s will of doing all things decently and in order (14:40).

Men and women, children and adults, are to conduct themselves in such a way that edification can result, in addition to praise and exhortation. The saints are participating in that which is sacred; thus, all attention should be on the Lord, not on the temporal, which in this context is disruptive.

In an effort to make sure things are done decently and in order one does not need to insert an opinion relative to women talking, but in no way teaching, as the word in this context demands it to be understood.



TRUST IN GOD

Isaiah 26:3, 4

1. It is God's will that we should sing songs that glorify Him, and tell of His wonderful works for man; and that we should teach and admonish one another in the faith.
 2. Our text (Isaiah 26:3, 4) contains the words of an ancient Hebrew hymn that does just that. Just as we would analyze a modern hymn; we shall study the words of this hymn line by line.
- I. **"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace."**
 - A. The Promise. "Perfect peace." Peace, peace, complete peace.
 - B. The Power. "Thou wilt," this is a divine provision. Psalm 121:4
 - C. The Protection. "keep him," guard, shelter. 2 Timothy 1:12
 - II. **"Whose mind is stayed on Thee."**
 - A. This requires a heavenly heart. Colossians 3:1-3
 - B. This requires a holy heart. 1 Peter 3:15; Romans 8:6
 - C. This requires a holding heart. Psalm 112:7; 57:7
 - III. **"Because he trusteth in Thee."**
 - A. The condition is "faith." Trust. Hebrews 11:1, 6
 - B. The confidence is full "in Thee," in Thee alone. Acts 4:12
 - C. The conclusion is forceful. The trust cannot be in other things. (Power, possessions, paternity, pleasures, or our plans!) John 6:68
 - IV. **"Trust ye in the Lord forever."**
 - A. Never give up. This is perseverance. 1 Corinthians 15:58
 - B. Always look up. This is prayerfulness. 1 Thessalonians 5:16
 - C. Expect to go up. This is purification. 1 John 3:2, 3
 - V. **"For The LORD Jehovah is everlasting strength."**
 - A. He is the "Rock of Ages" in the past. Hebrews 11:5. All the great characters of faith have stood on this Rock. Hebrews 11:5-27; 2 Timothy 4:6-8. On this Rock we have been standing, and all is well with the soul.
 - B. He is the "Rock of Ages" in the present. He is the solid foundation for life (Matthew 7:24-27); the family (Ephesians 5:23- 6:1); and religion (Matthew 16:18).
 - C. He is the "Rock of Ages" for the future (Romans 8:35-39). No matter what beats upon us: persecution; sickness, pain, disappointment, or the crossing of old Jordan (Psalms 23).

Thus we have a fine Old Testament hymn that is worthy of our committing to memory because of the comfort and blessing it brings to our lives even today.

- Mike Kiser

The Remarkable Austin McGary

Andy Erwin

Austin McGary was born February 6, 1846 in Huntsville, Texas in Walker County. His father, Isaac McGary, fought with Sam Houston in the war for Texas independence from Mexico. After the decisive battle of San Jacinto, Isaac McGary was one of the soldiers who kept watch on the captured Mexican President, General Santa Anna. Austin McGary's mother died when he was only eight or nine years old.

A Civil War Veteran

During the Civil War, he enlisted as part of the "Huntsville Grays." This group was disbanded, however, and McGary was added to J.B. Head's Brigade, where he served as a coast guard in Texas and Louisiana until the end of the war.

Upon his return from the war, McGary found that his father's horses had been commandeered by a Union Cavalry command garrisoned in Navasota. On a trip with his father to Tennessee he crossed paths with two Union soldiers riding on his father's horses. McGary and his friend grabbed their rifles and ordered the soldiers to dismount. They then took the horses with them to Tennessee.

Life in Law Enforcement

After the war, McGary entered law-enforcement and served two terms as sheriff of Madison County, Texas. He once disarmed and arrested John Wesley Hardin, who claimed to have killed 42 men.

McGary also served as a conveying agent for the Texas state penitentiary. His job was to transport prisoners across the state to the prison. In two years on the job, he never lost the first prisoner, although he transported as many as eight at a time.

Family Life

Austin McGary was married three times. He first married Narcissus Jenkins when he was twenty. She died in 1872. They had two children – a boy and a girl. The girl died at age eleven.

In 1875, McGary married Lucie Kitrell. They had nine children; six lived to adulthood. She died on June 1, 1897. Her dying request was that Austin would devote his life to preaching the gospel. A year later, McGary married Lillian Otey. He would precede her in death.

McGary Becomes a Christian

During the summer of 1881, a gospel preacher by the name of Harry Hamilton came to Madisonville, Texas to hold a gospel meeting. McGary's sister was converted and convinced him to hear Hamilton preach. After that, and along with a critical study of the Cambell-Owen debate, McGary decided to obey the gospel on December 24, 1881.

McGary as a Gospel Preacher

Earl West said about McGary, "What David Lipscomb was to the church of Christ in Tennessee Austin McGary was to the church in Texas."

J.D. Tant said, "A. McGary did more to stem the tide of innovations the Christian Church was making in Texas than any other man."

McGary was known and respected for his fearlessness as a gospel preacher. He was determined to stand with Christ against all comers.

At times, his experience as a law man was evident in his ministry. On one such occasion, McGary was preaching in Willis, Texas, when the Ku Klux Klan threatened to kill him if he did not get out of town. McGary was a fierce enemy of the Klan. McGary had an old black

man go to every street corner in that town and advertise that on a certain Sunday he would preach on the Ku Klux Klan. When the time came, McGary made his case against the Klan and its evils. It is said that his language was "bitter and extreme." He then told his capacity audience that his door was unlocked at all times. He said that they could come if they chose to, but that they had better bring a wheelbarrow to haul off their boys. He said, "I have a gun and some of you know that I am handy with it." The cowardly Klan did not bother McGary again.

The Firm Foundation

Perhaps McGary is best remembered as the editor of the *Firm Foundation* which he founded in 1884. McGary was against a practice he called "shaking in" the Baptists. He believed that one must understand that baptism is for the remission of sins in order to be baptized correctly. David Lipscomb and the *Gospel Advocate* disagreed, believing that one simply had to be baptized in order to obey God. For a number of years the two papers carried a series of articles stating their respective reasons.

Austin McGary died June 28, 1928 at his home in Houston. He was 82.

Books and Sermon Helps for the Preacher

David Pharr

Obviously much of a preacher's study and reading has in view the preparation of sermons or some other teaching responsibility. Nothing demands more diligent and careful attention.

Consider, for example, that if an audience of two hundred people listens to a thirty-minute lesson the preacher has consumed a hundred hours of other people's time. It is neither practical nor ethical to fail to make such an expenditure of time worthwhile. More important than this, of course, is the obligation of handling aright the word of truth.

Before You Preach

All of our preaching should be the exposition of scripture. We are not miraculously inspired; therefore, we are totally dependent on the written word for spiritual truth. To teach the truth to others, we must first understand it.

The process of preaching ought to begin with letting the text teach us. Its meaning and application must first be absorbed into our own hearts. Only then can we presume to share it with others. Rather than the Bible being used to justify the preacher's ideas, the obligation of

the preacher is to provide that the truth of the Bible is conveyed through him.

Expository Sermons

Lessons that develop a particular subject using passages from various parts of the Bible are a legitimate method and are sometimes the most effective way to teach and admonish. On the other hand, there is much in favor of expository sermons.

This method centers the sermon on one portion of scripture and, though other texts may be brought to bear, all of the key points come from this single section. This should not be a mere running commentary on a few verses (which can be quite boring and may seem impractical to the audience).

Instead the message of the text is outlined in such a way as not only to explain it, but also to show how its truths apply to our lives. The presentation may involve illustrations, legitimate paraphrasing, and certainly exhortations.

Study from a Variety of Sources

Study involves all of the various tools one has at his disposal – con-

cordances, lexicons, word studies, commentaries, etc. There is no passage that others have not analyzed, and usually we can find a variety of interpretations and applications of any given text.

Works written by faithful brethren have the advantage that their interpretations are not likely to conflict with other fundamental Bible truths. But even reading commentaries by those who hold doctrinal errors can be advantageous for the mature student. Paul found gems of truth even among heathen writers (cf. Acts 17:28).

One can hardly broaden his perspective if he restricts his reading to those works with which he already agrees. But whatever resources are used, the point to be remembered is that one must not proceed with plans to preach any text until he has ascertained its meaning; and let us always remember that the Bible never means anything except what it meant when it was written. It is wrong to apply it contrary to its original message.

From Understanding to Teaching the Text

Understanding the text and preaching the text, however, are two different things. We have all known others who were quite knowledgea-

ble, but who had difficulty getting their points across. This may be a more common fault among preachers than we preachers want to admit.

In my youth I was given good advice by a seasoned preacher to write out the points of my outlines in full-length sentences. If one cannot state his thoughts clearly on paper, why would he assume he could do so before an audience? This helps to assure that the point can be expressed correctly and effectively, as well as in proper grammatical form. It has long been my practice to prepare rather detailed outlines, giving attention not only to the ideas, but also to how they are worded.

The Use of Sermon Books, Etc.

Help in developing the presentation of a text comes from reading sermons by others as well as commentaries, journal articles, and specialized works.

Years ago the late Franklin Camp pointed me to Matthew Henry as a source of practical points on many texts. I sometimes find useful material in the works of Spurgeon, Maclaren, Joseph Parker, Barclay, Clovis Chappell and Warren Wiersbe, as well as other denominational preachers. One must guard against

their error, but their writings touch on so much of the Bible that we are likely to find insights that might have been otherwise overlooked.

Sermon books by brethren are especially useful. I value the volumes by past masters such as N. B. Hardeman, Leslie G. Thomas, Melvin Wise, and J. W. McGarvey, as well as current authors. Rarely will even the main points in someone else's sermon fit my style, but considering their development of texts stimulates the thought process.

Books on doctrinal and controversial issues are an important part of our reading diet. In addition to their use in understanding the theology, these also may be helpful in sermon preparation. For example, while preparing a lesson on Luke 12:41-48, I found much value in Robert Shank's *Life in the Son*.

Reading restoration history and biographies provides rich sources for illustrations.

Keeping Good Records

Over the years I have kept files of articles and other items and catalogued them either by subject or by text. Brotherhood journals and other publications provide a gold mine of helpful insights, but trying to

save everything is impractical. I keep only the items that would seem to be useful either now or in the future. Having kept and filed material for years, I am able to retrieve information I had long since forgotten I had.

Wayne Jackson quotes the late T. W. Brents: "If you show me a man who reads nothing but the Bible, we will show you one who reads and understands very little of it."

Another has observed that the length of a preacher's stay with a congregation is frequently determined by the size of his library.

Books are our tools and friends. One who reads extensively should be able to preach more effectively.

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GLEANINGS FROM MISSION REPORTS

Nepal Relief Effort Continues

From Jerry Golphenec (Bear Valley Bible Institute, Nepal Extension):

You have seen more pictures from the earthquake than I have seen. You have watched more news coverage than I have. You realize the extent of the damage and the far-reaching effects that are the new reality for Nepal. There is one big difference. You can change the channel, go outside or do a number of things and find yourself in your normal reality. That is not possible here, nor will it be for many years....

The death count, injuries, buildings destroyed, homeless, and every other unwanted casualty will continue to grow for a long time. My Nepali colleagues and I have attended two meetings at the Kathmandu United Nations complex, visited the Humanitarian Staging Area at the airport cargo terminal and met with a Joint Secretary of the Nepal Ministry of Home Affairs....

The bottom line is that all rescue aid goes from a formal donor agency licensed by one government to

a formal recipient agency registered in the receiving country. Nepal interprets this as a government-to-government transaction. The Nepal government has claimed every bag of rice, every jacket, every tent, and a large portion of the money that is coming into the country. Large sums deposited into any bank account opened after April 25 are immediately placed into a government account under the sole authority of the Prime Minister. This one-door policy for relief aid has allegedly and officially, but dishonestly, been put into effect to protect the aid for the good of the people....

Every government has its own "trickle down system." Such would include outstretched hands to fill many personal pockets before the goods and services reach their intended destinations. In Nepal the government is not accountable to the civil society. Nepal is one of the poorest and most corrupt countries in the world....

Fortunately there are ways around these discouraging obstacles. We have contacts with established businesses that import goods. We can place orders in Nepal, China, and

India, pay lower prices than USA, and receive these "hard goods" without government interference. We can rent a truck and deliver the goods to the place of our choosing. The most efficient way to help is to use cash within the country and to order locally and from neighboring nations....

How do we get money into Nepal and into our hands? We will have two main contacts in the United States. Information relative to these contacts is listed below. Both allow every donation to be tax deductible. For both of these entities we have bank accounts in Nepal that have been in existence for some time. The government will not watch these accounts as closely. We can utilize these accounts by transferring small sums of money over a safe period of time.

**SHOULD YOU CARE TO HELP
US MEET OUR GOALS
PLEASE SEND A DONATION TO
EITHER OF THE FOLLOWING:**

Children of Kathmandu
3801 Spruce Meadow Drive
Bozeman, MT 59718
Memo: "Earthquake Relief"

Lakewood Church of Christ
6011 Coldbrook Ave.
Lakewood, CA 90713-1025
Memo: "Earthquake Relief"

Upcoming Trip to Africa

From Ronald Gilbert: We have purchased our tickets for the trip to Africa in August and are getting things ready for the trip. Each man going will try to bring about 10 or 12 good used suits for the preachers at the schools.

This year Carolyn and I plan to stay in Zambia for three weeks, then go on to Uganda and Kenya for another three weeks. We plan to visit with six of the ten preacher schools we are working with. Some of these schools will have their graduation while we are visiting with them. I am trying to get an exact number of the men who will be graduating.

I believe there will be around 60 men graduating. I hope we can raise enough funds to purchase a bike for each one of these men who is graduating. This is a good work and a much needed item for these preachers. These bikes cost \$100.00 each. The two new schools we are working with are doing fine and several students are growing and learning more of God's Word.

Recently the New Hope Road congregation sent out letters seeking to continue the salary for Linda Hill who works with us in our BCC pro-

gram and internet and so many other things at IBTM.

Linda is a very important part of our work and we need to be able to keep her. If you can send funds for her salary we would greatly appreciate it. You may send funds to New Hope Road church of Christ, Attn: Elders, PO Box 1334, Dacula, GA. 30019.

This is the congregation where her husband Jimmie served as an elder

and they are helping to raise these needed funds for Linda.

Editor's Note: We are always encouraged to hear of the good work this ministry is doing. If you would like to help Ronald Gilbert with this upcoming trip to Africa, contact:

Rock Valley church of Christ
PO BOX 49494
Cookeville, TN 38506

Praying for Our Friends

Owen Olbright

A father told his daughter. "Honey, sit down."

She replied, "I don't want to sit down."

In a sterner tone he commanded, "Sit down."

Defiantly she said, "I do not want to sit down!"

He grabbed her and forced her to sit, and said, "I said 'sit down,' and I meant it."

Looking up at her father, she declared, "I may be sitting down, but I am standing up inside!"

People cannot be forced to make a decision to follow Jesus. They have a God-given free will that we

cannot change simply because we want them to change.

Jesus said, "If anyone wills to do His will, he can know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority" (John 7:17). All people must will to do God's will and decide on their own to accept God's word.

God has the power to change hearts, but He has chosen to use that power through the gospel (Romans 1:16), which must be preached, believed, and obeyed (Mark 16:15, 16; Romans 1:17; 1 Thessalonians 1:8).

Paul's Request

In his letter to the Colossians, Paul requested, "pray for us, that God would open to us a door for the word...that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak" (Colossians 4:3b, 4).

Paul wanted them to pray for an open door for him, because Jews at times had closed the door to prevent his preaching to the Gentiles (1 Thessalonians 2:16). He did not ask them to pray for God to open the hearts of people so they would listen. If he had, he would have been asking them to pray that God would override the free will of the hearers.

Jesus had commissioned Paul to go to the Gentiles to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God (Acts 26:17, 18). His responsibility was to speak (Acts 18:9), and in a way that would be easily understood. It was up to those who heard to listen and be converted by the word. Paul's work, not God's work, was through preaching to open the eyes of the Gentiles.

James admonished his readers to "receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls" (James 1:21). The "implanted word" is the word God planted in

the world through the help of the Holy Spirit speaking through men (2 Peter 1:21).

God has revealed it, and mankind is to receive it with meekness. God will not force anyone to accept it contrary to their will.

Our Prayers

Jesus did not force the people of Jerusalem to follow Him. He wanted to gather them to Him, as a hen does her chicks, but they refused (Matthew 23:37). Jesus had the power, but He would not force them contrary to their free will.

In like manner, God has the power to change our hearts, but will not violate the free will He has given us. We should not ask God to act on people's hearts in order to motivate them to accept the word. Rather, we should pray for correct and clear preaching of the word, that through it people will accept God's offer of salvation as revealed in the gospel.

Those who responded correctly to the preaching of the word, as recorded in the Bible, received it because they had a ready mind, evidently like the noble people of Berea (Acts 2:41; 8:14; 11:1; 17:11; 1 Thessalonians 1:6; 2:13).

Conclusion

We may pray for God to change the hearts of those we love, but we are not assured that God will violate their free will and cause them to have a different mind. We may desperately desire their acceptance of the gospel, but it is up to them to listen and obey. Our prayers should be like Paul's for an open door so we can preach the word, and that what

we say may be clear and according to the truth.

We should be as loving and accurate as we can, but should not ask God to do to others what they must do for themselves – that is, to open their hearts, receive the word, and obey (Mark 16:15, 16).



The Joy of Christianity

Ernest Underwood

Reference to joy is frequently made in the Scriptures. David speaks of the fullness of joy. He said, "You will show me the path of life; In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore" (Psalm. 16:11).

In the parable of the hidden treasure Jesus stated that a man had found that treasure, "and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field" (Matthew 13:44).

Fourteen times in the book of Philippians Paul makes reference to joy or rejoicing. The life of a Christian is a life of joy.

In Galatians 5:22 we are told that "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness."

The Christian has joy and rejoicing because he knows he has been made alive spiritually by the blood of the precious Christ. The new disciples of Acts 2 had gladness of heart. The eunuch of Acts 8 went on his way rejoicing. The jailor of Acts 16 "rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household." There is cause for rejoicing when one realizes that through his obedience to the gospel, the burden of sin is lifted.

The joy of Christianity comes from within. For this reason one's outward circumstances do not hinder that joy. Consider our Lord. He came to do the will of the Father. The knowledge that He was doing this caused such joy that even the cross could not erase it. Concerning this event, the Hebrew writer stated, "Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2).

In Matthew 5:11-12, Jesus taught His disciples to "rejoice and be exceedingly glad" when they were persecuted falsely for His name's sake. This they did, as is found in the example of Acts 5:41.

To the child of God, Christian worship and daily service is a joy. For this reason no faithful child of God will want to miss any opportunity to gather with fellow-saints at every service possible where God is being worshiped and His word is studied. Neither will he spurn the opportunity to serve.

Is your life one of joy?

News & Notes

Gospel Preacher Passes

Prescott, AZ: Mike Scott, preacher for the Mt. Vernon church in Prescott, AZ, died the last hour of the last day of May. He underwent extensive surgery for a brain tumor the end of August 2014.

He had worked with the Mt. Vernon congregation for more than eighteen years, and was the speaker on the Television program *What Do the Scriptures Say?*

He is survived by his wife of 42 years, Kathleen Scott; his children, Jeremy Scott and Jessica Scott; his brother Shawn Scott of Colorado; his brother Bill Stewart of Missouri; and sister Tish Schmidt of Utah.

Upcoming Homecoming and Gospel Meeting

Killen, AL: The Pleasant Valley congregation is planning their homecoming to take place August 2-5. David Lipe will be preaching.

Pleasant Valley church of Christ
3700 CR 33
Killen, AL
(256) 757-5550



Response to the New Format of the Gospel Gleaner

Dear Andy & Staff,

I have just finished reading the new format for the *Gleaner* and I'm very impressed with it. The print is easy to read and spacing of articles outstanding.

The variety of scriptural topics is impressive and the authors of these topics are very sound in doctrine and capable men. We need more people in the church today to take a stand for The Truth.

May God continue to bless your efforts with this publication and as you walk in His paths.

Emma Walker
Eddyville, KY

I like the new format of the *Gospel Gleaner*. Thanks for sending it to me for quite a while now...Keep up the good work.

John Shelton
Anna, IL

I truly like the new format of the *Gospel Gleaner*. I appreciate the work you have done and are doing

to make the publication more attractive in appearance. Of course, the articles are informative, edifying, and scriptural.

Thanks for all the work you do to enhance the quality of the *Gospel Gleaner*.

Your friend and brother in Jesus Christ,

Raymond Elliott
Prattville, AL

Thanks for the recent copy of the *Gospel Gleaner*, which is very well done, easy to hold, and will be a book size for yearly volumes.

Great thinking!

Owen Olbright
Sherwood, AR

The new size is most handy and appealing to hold. The width of the two columns is ideal for reading. And, the space between the lines makes the content more readable.

This new format has great reader appeal!

James R. McGill
Nashville, TN

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For the Love of the Lord, His Word, and His Church

The

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Editorial

They Are Not Wise

"For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise" (2 Corinthians 10:12, NKJV).

A Malicious Sort

The church of Christ in the city of Corinth had encountered a vindictive sort of person during the early-stages of their congregational history. These men made no secrets of their personal attacks against Paul, claiming that he was not an apostle (1 Corinthians 9:1 ff.), and that he was strong in letter and weak in presence (2 Corinthians 10:10) – meaning that he would not be as bold in his doctrine face to face.

While attacking Paul, they were sure to "commend themselves." You might say they knew how to pat themselves on the back. Moreover, they measured themselves by themselves, and compared themselves among themselves. In so doing, Paul simply said they were "not wise."

Much can be learned from this sinful practice and much should be applied by Christians today. We have no need to commend ourselves if we are commended by God; and, we have no need to compare ourselves by ourselves. What does it matter if you are more faithful than me, if you are not right in the sight of God? You must measure and compare yourself – not by me – but by the living word of God.

An Unwise Preacher

It seems to be a common practice among some preachers to commend themselves. Sometimes, when introducing a preacher you just want to say, "We will forego any introduction because he will tell you all about himself during his lesson." They have yet to lay their accomplishments at the foot of the cross and give the glory to God.

Some preachers also love to compare themselves by themselves. One might find a preacher who is quick to call other preachers "apostates" for their sinful practices, while he is himself a twofold child of hell. I can personally tell you of many preachers who stand against some error while teaching even more serious error. We must teach the world to obey all the words of Christ, rather than sticking with

those things with which the "mainstream" agrees. If I fool myself into believing I am a "sound" gospel preacher, because in my mind I am "sounder" than you, I am not wise. The truly sound gospel preacher will take heed unto himself and unto the doctrine and continue therein, so that he might save himself and those that hear him (1 Timothy 4:16).

An Unwise Congregation

A congregation may think, "We are more faithful than them" when speaking of a sister congregation down the road. Again, this does not matter in the slightest way. Every congregation should be asking: "Are we faithful to God." Nothing else matters. If we fool ourselves into thinking "our" sins are not as bad as "their" sins, we are not wise.

An Unwise School

Christian schools will commend themselves, believing that as long as they are not as liberal as their rival school they are doing well. They are not wise.

Rather than worrying about how your school compares with other schools, concern yourselves with how you compare to the word of God. If all Christian schools would do so, they could lead the charge against apostasy, instead of being overcome by it.

An Unwise Paper

Let us not ignore our present effort in Christian journalism. Let the eye of scrutiny scroll even more tediously over this work. If our goal is to the best of all our brotherhood papers solely in the eyes of others, I pray that the *Gospel Gleaner* will forever perish from the earth. However, if our *only* goal is to be faithful to the Lord and His word, then may God forever shine upon us! And, we will only deceive ourselves if we commend ourselves while *not* being completely faithful to God's word.

How Do I Compare?

When we compare and measure ourselves by ourselves we are setting the bar too low. Every Christian should ask: "How do I compare with the word of God?" We will be judged by the word of God, not by our brother's successes or failures.

On that great and terrible Judgment Day, our Lord is not going to place us alongside another and say, "Well, you did better than he did." He is going to judge us according to the life we have lived and whether or not we honored Him by faithfully keeping His commandments. Truly, this is the only standard that matters.

Andy Erwin

“OUR MARRIAGE WILL NOT AFFECT OTHERS”

Raymond Elliott

This was said by a ‘gay’ person who planned on marrying his ‘partner’ after the Supreme Court Justices (I shall call them ‘little gods’ since they redefined the definition of what marriage has been understood for centuries, that is, the joining together of a man and woman in matrimony) legalized same sex marriages on June 26, 2015.

The man probably was correct in his assumption that his particular marriage ceremony would not affect others; however, the legalization of homosexual marriages will have some of the greatest impact on the citizens of the United States of America like it has never experienced before in the history of our nation.

A Loss of Rights

First of all, let me say that the liberal estimate of the number of ‘gays’ living in our nation is only 2-4%. Whenever any negative statements are made, or articles written about the homosexual style of living, the words ‘homophobic’ and ‘bigot’ are used toward the heterosexual population. Now that the ‘lit-

tle gods’ have legalized ‘gay marriages’, we are going to discover just how intolerant a group of people can be when individuals and businesses will not cater to their demands.

The courts throughout the land will be filled with lawsuits of ‘gays’ demanding their ‘rights’, whatever they might be. F. LaGard Smith wrote the following in his book, ‘Sodom’s Second Coming’, page 8:

“Hardly anyone stops to notice that gay rights means heterosexuals having to give up rights – like the right to consider character when renting one’s house or when hiring the church secretary; or the right of parents to keep their children from being taught that homosexual couples are just as acceptable as mommie and daddy.”

Incidentally, his book was published in 1993.

There are individuals who are not ‘church going’ people who understand that men marrying men and women marrying women is contrary to nature; and, whose consciences will prevent them from encouraging

and accepting this kind of lifestyle. They will also be challenged when 'gays' demand of them services that will be contrary to their convictions.

Here is a partial list of individuals, churches, religious organizations, and businesses that will certainly be tried and tested because of the legalization of 'gay marriages'.

- Christian adopting agencies
- Preachers who, based on the teaching of the Bible, will neither condone such a style of living nor perform a wedding for homosexuals
- Churches that will not allow 'gay marriages' to be conducted in their buildings
- Businesses and companies that choose not to hire 'gays'; or, be unwilling to pay for the insurance, retirement, etc. of a married 'gay couple'
- Religious universities and schools that choose not to hire teachers who are homosexuals
- Professional photographers
- Florists
- Rental property owners
- Bed and Breakfast owners
- Christian teachers in universities and schools who will refuse to teach a curriculum that advocates that the 'gay life style' and

'gay marriages' should be accepted as being normal

- Probate Judges and Justices of the Peace who refuse to perform a 'gay marriage'
- Religious companies that publish books and literature
- Preachers who publicly preach and/or write articles stating that the homosexual style of living is sinful

What to Expect?

We can now expect that television commercials will be using 'gay married couples' in their advertising of different products, companies, and businesses. The 'soap operas' have been encouraging the 'gay lifestyle'. You can be sure that more will be forthcoming.

Christian parents will have to be more aware of what is taught to their children in the public schools system. More time will need to be spent teaching children what the Word of God has to say on the subject of homosexuality. Conviction on such matters can be held and taught without hatred for anyone.

"And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. And do not

be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled" (1 Peter 3:13, 14).

A Suggested Prayer

Dear God,

Help me never to forget Your goodness to me and Your everlasting love and grant that, no matter how

dark the night, I will never turn from You. And graciously grant that our nation will turn to You and never forget You. Thank You for hearing and answering my prayer. Gratefully, in Jesus' name, Amen.

They Came Tempting Him

William Boyd

When the Pharisees came to Jesus asking him, "Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?" they came "tempting him" (Matthew 19:3).

Temptation to Modify

It is not a new thing for preachers to be tempted to modify God's teachings on marriage, fornication, divorce, remarriage, and adultery.

Prior to the Pharisees coming to tempt Jesus with their question, John the Baptist had said of Herod concerning his wife, "It is not lawful for thee to have her" (Matthew 14:4). John was not just saying that it was not lawful for Herod to take her; he was teaching that it was not lawful for Herod to keep her. This upset Herod's unlawful wife so much that she had John put to death.

Many preachers have compromised much more for fear of losing much less.

In the face of this potential death threat, Jesus gave a clear scriptural answer to the Pharisees' question and concluded: "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matthew 19:6). "Not" means "no;" it is not lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause.

One Cause

The one justifiable "cause" our Lord gave for a man to put away his wife is fornication; "except it be for fornication" (Matthew 19:9). The last Old Testament prophet told us that God hates divorce (Malachi 2:16), but evidently He hates fornication more than divorce

because for fornication He will allow that which He hates.

Adultery

Furthermore, our Lord said that in order to marry again, without this exception, one commits adultery. As in the case with Herod and his unlawful wife, it is not just sin to enter into an adulterous marriage; it is a sin to remain in an adulterous marriage. God's law of marriage is *one* man and *one* woman joined together by *one* God to be *one* flesh for *one* life with *one* exception. All attempts to wrest this passage into teaching something else fail.

The disciples of Jesus realized the force of His teaching: "If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry" (Matthew 19:10). Jesus did not contradict their conclusion but said, "All men cannot receive this saying... He that is able to receive it let him receive it" (Matthew 19:11-12). If you are not ready to stay married, stay single.

Conclusion

Individual situations are difficult to rectify. The temptation to compromise this teaching is great; families are at stake; children are at stake; emotions are at stake; finances are at stake; and sometimes

lives are at stake; but compromising this teaching makes all these situations worse and puts eternity at stake.

Failure to teach what our Lord taught about marriage, fornication, divorce, remarriage, and adultery puts the young and unmarried at risk, because without this teaching they may unknowingly enter into an unlawful marriage or divorce without lawful cause.

If there was ever an area where prevention is the best cure, this is it. The caring, loving, compassionate thing to do is teach it just as Christ said, help those out of sin to stay out of sin, and help those in sin to leave their sin. God knows best; trust God; yield not to temptation; preach it.

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Who Is My Neighbor?

Luke 10:29

1. Two questions resulted in a great parable: The Good Samaritan.
2. The lawyer knew the answer. Theory vs. Practice! MOTIVE?
3. Jesus reversed the last question: To whom am I a neighbor?

I. The Places and People in This Story:

- A. Jerusalem – the holy city sat on a mountain. Jericho was to the north about 20 miles away; downhill and a dangerous road.
- B. The Characters:
 1. The Robbers: infested the way. They practiced the **IRON RULE**, “What is thine is mine, and I will take it.”
 2. Priest. He was important to the practice of Judaism. **SILVER RULE**, “What is mine is mine, and I will keep it.”
 2. Levite. He also was a man of God and a teacher of the law. Deuteronomy 33:10; 2 Chronicles 17:8, 9. What did that law require? Deuteronomy 22:1-4. A **SILVER RULE** man too!
 3. Samaritani. Looked down on by the Jews as a half-breed. A **GOLDEN RULE** man. Matthew 7:12

II. WWJD- What Would Jesus Do? What Did He Do?

- A. When men were hungry, He fed them. Matthew 14:15-21.
- B. When they were in sorrow and trouble, He comforted them. Matthew 8:23-27; Luke 7:11-16
- C. When they were sick and suffering, He healed them. Matthew 4:23, 24; 15:30; 20:30-39.
- D. When they were misguided, He taught them. Matthew 22:29
- E. When they were in spiritual danger, He warned them. Matthew 11:20-24; 12:41, 42.
- F. When they had gone wrong, He prayed for them. Luke 23:34

III. The Golden Rule Comes Into Play. Matthew 7:12; Luke 10:37

- A. Assist those who are in need. James 2:15, 16; 1 John 3:17; Galatians 6:10; Romans 12:20
- B. Comfort the broken-hearted. Romans 12:15; 1 Thessalonians 5:14.
- C. Minister to the afflicted. James 1:27
- D. Warn the unruly. 1 Thessalonians 5:14
- E. Pray for all sinners. Matthew 5:44-47; 1 Timothy 2:1-3.
- F. Teach those who are lost in sin. Matthew 28:18-20.
- G. Restore the fallen. Galatians 6:1; James 5:19, 20.

1. Does the world see Jesus in you?
2. Will this matter at the judgment? Matthew 25:31-46

- Mike Kiser

The Truth about Shame

John T. Polk, II

Is There No Shame?

Josh Duggar's 2006 police record was released about his teenage sins in 2002. His family at the time dealt with his problems with counseling and forgiveness. He was the oldest of the children on "19 Kids and Counting." His shame for his sins made him seek God as never before.

The Learning Channel (TLC) has dropped the series, as has its sponsors, and HULU won't even replay the program!

"The Bachelorette," 30-year-old Kaitlyn Bristowe, had sex with a suitor and said, "...intimacy, to me, is part of a relationship. I don't know why everyone is so shocked by it."

Isn't it sad to watch headline hypocrisy at work? Kaitlyn is shameless, Josh is ashamed.

"A prudent *man* covers shame" (Proverbs 12:16, NKJV), and "the unjust knows no shame (Zephaniah 3:5). "Let the proud be ashamed" (Psalm 119:78).

Living a Lie

Bruce Jenner had a sex change operation 63 years after the first such operation, and he supposedly Tweeted: "I'm so happy after such a long struggle to be living my true self."

Really? Why does it take so much surgery and so many hormones to become one's "true self?" Jesus Christ said, "He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female' (Matthew 19:4). We are born with our sexual identify. It is a violation of our nature ("perversity") to become something else.

"Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves" (Romans 1:24). "For the perverse *person* is an abomination to the LORD" (Proverbs 3:32).

Everyone who treats this as normal, exciting, courageous, or desirable partakes of his evil deed (Romans 1:32).

A Shameless Existence

There is no reason to be ashamed, if we obey God. David said, "You have commanded *us* To keep Your precepts diligently. Oh, that my ways were directed To keep Your statutes! Then I would not be ashamed, When I look into all Your commandments" (Psalm 119:4-6).

"Let my heart be blameless regarding Your statutes, That I may not be ashamed" (Psalm 119:80).

The sinners who condemn Christians and Bible-believers are

the ones who should be ashamed! David also said, "Let the proud be ashamed, For they treated me wrongfully with falsehood" (Psalm 119:78).

"Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" (Isaiah 5:20).

No one is wrong who serves God.



A BOYCOTT THAT BACKFIRED

Gerald Cowan

Remember all the fuss, flap, and furor back in 2012 when Chick-Fil-A Chief Operations Officer Dan Cathy defended the biblical definition of marriage as one man and one woman, thereby implying an objection to so-called "gay" marriage?

[What a crass misuse and abuse of the word gay – they should have stayed with homosexual rather than misappropriate a perfectly good word that has happy and wholesome

connotations. There is a five-letter pejorative that means strange, odd, unnatural, and abnormal. It can mean deviant, departing from truth, logic, and reason. I think I it would generally be appropriate though none of the gay crowd would approve it].

Some cities – most notably and not surprisingly Boston, Chicago, and San Francisco – made it clear Chick-Fil-A was not welcome and

would not be allowed to do business there unless it changed policy and endorsed the anti-biblical LGBT agenda. Several colleges and universities had Chick-Fil-A franchises removed from their campuses or blocked the opening of stores on campus. An all-out boycott was recommended by those who insisted that “straights” and “others” deserved the same respect and acceptance by everybody.

Chick-Fil-A Responded

Did all this cause Chick-Fil-A to buckle, fold, and capitulate? Corporate changes did take place to underscore the company's long-held position that all customers and other persons were welcome and were treated with the same respect, regardless of sexual orientation or other differences (such as gender, race, or ethnicity). They did stop making contributions to organizations that promote and are guilty of overt anti-gay oppression and discrimination, with one exception, (The Fellowship of Christian Athletes). But their upholding and defending the biblical definition of marriage did not and will not change.

Any implications or inferences drawn from that position remain unchanged too. “We are very much supportive of the family — the bib-

lical definition of the family unit. We are a family-owned business, a family-led business, and we are married to our first wives. We give God thanks for that. ...We want to do anything we possibly can to strengthen families. We are very much committed to that,” Cathy said.

He also emphasized, “We intend to stay the course.” He said, “We know that it might not be popular with everyone, but thank the Lord, we live in a country where we can share our values and operate on biblical principles.”

The Results

So, how successfully has the recommended and implied boycott hurt the business? It has been a tremendous help. The number of franchise stores has grown and sales receipts have blossomed too. With only 1,775 stores compared to Kentucky Fried Chicken's 4,491 in 2013 Chick-Fil-A (with no stores open on Sunday) took in more than \$5 billion, compared to KFC's \$4.22 billion.

KFC lost the chicken crown (the self-proclaimed “leader in the chicken segment” of quick service restaurants in the United States). KFC dropped the statement from its

most recent annual report – a tacit concession to the new King of Fast-food Chicken, Chick-Fil-A.

A survey by USA Today, shortly after the June 1012 storm, asked its readers if they were for or against Chick-Fil-A. Some 53% said they would join a boycott while 43% said they would keep eating at Chick-Fil-A, while 5% were undecided or unwilling to declare themselves.

In August of 2012, The Rasmussen Reports published the results of a survey of likely voters in which 61% said they viewed Chick-Fil-A favorably, and 13% were still inclined to boycott.

I am not qualified to interpret poll reports and market figures, but my uneducated (and I like to think unbiased) opinion is that the devil and his followers do not have the strength they think they have, and there is some slight indication that righteousness still prevails.

It is only those who depart from righteousness and join the devil's crowd that add to the perception that goodness, God, and the Bible are on the way out and cannot prevail in today's "enlightened" world. Maybe now the righteous will be encouraged to boycott the other side.

Redefining Marriage?

Mel Futrell

Friday, June 26, 2015 joins January 22, 1973 as "A date which will live in infamy" for New Testament Christians and Bible believers.

The earlier date is already well identified as the day on which the Supreme Court of the United States, in a 7-2 decision, affirmed a woman's "legal right" to have an abortion. And from that day to the present no fewer than 55 million babies have been murdered in their mother's wombs.

The latter date will now go down as the day on which the Supreme Court of the United States, in a 5-4 decision, granted homosexuals the "legal right" to marry. As one political pundit declared, "The ramifications of this decision are seismic."

I do not hesitate for one moment to say that SCOTUS got it wrong. And, the fallout from this court decision that advances immorality (1 Corinthians 6:9-10) may not be fully known for generations. Infamy indeed!

No doubt millions of people, sympathetic to the homosexual cause, really believe that marriage has truly been redefined. But I

know better! No five judges, or five thousand judges for that matter, can decide Divine law; and a day of final reckoning will come (John 12:48).

On the other hand, those of us who believe the Bible and the biblical truth on marriage (Matthew 19:3-9) recognize that marriage is a Divine institution. And, as such, though men may tamper with it, God's law on marriage cannot truly be redefined. It is no accident that Jesus drew on God's original marriage law when saying, "He which made them at the beginning made them male and female...What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matthew 19:4, 6).

Obviously, we are strongly and completely opposed to any human attempt to redefine God's marriage arrangement. And this is not a "lone wolf" position. The reality is that for 6,000 years almost every culture and every religion rightly defined marriage as the union of one man and one woman.

The word of God either directly or indirectly has had that kind of influence and impact on the people of the world. Now, certainly there have been pockets of people here and there through history who have

violated God's sexual standard. The Bible records examples of homosexual practice in both Testaments (Genesis 19; 1 Corinthians 6). But when the Bible writers mention such they do so disapprovingly, while condemning the practice of homosexuality as sin.

However, it is only in recent times that sinful man has made the effort to "legalize" the gross absurdity of "homosexual marriage." And I remind you that homosexual practice is both unbiblical and unnatural (Genesis 18:22; Romans 1:26-27).

Many years ago John Adams said, "Our constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other." With present day justices drawing immoral marriage interpretations from the constitution, we recognize that the "inadequate" consequence Adams spoke of is here.

So where do we go from here? As Christians we cannot biblically, morally, or in good conscience support the practice of "homosexual marriage." Therefore, we must refuse to submit to or in any way support a moral wrong, because it will always be the case that we must obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29).

Man Is Saved By...

Stephen R. Bradd

What is man saved by? Let us look briefly at the topic of salvation from the widest possible view. There are many passages in the New Testament that address various components involved in man's salvation. I have selected nearly twenty passages that are fairly distinct in the thoughts they contain.

- ♦ Man is saved by hope. Romans 8:24 - "...we were **saved** in this hope..."
- ♦ Man is saved by grace. Ephesians 2:5,8 - "...by grace you have been **saved**..."
- ♦ Man is saved by faith. Acts 16:31 - "...believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be **saved**..."
- ♦ Man is saved by mercy. Titus 3:5 - "...according to His mercy He **saved** us..."
- ♦ Man is saved by works. James 2:24 - "...a man is **justified** by works, and not by faith only."
- ♦ Man is saved by baptism. 1 Peter 3:21 - "There is also an antitype which now **saves** us--baptism..."
- ♦ Man is saved by the word. James 1:21 - "...receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to **save** your souls."
- ♦ Man is saved by knowledge of the truth. John 8:32 - "...you shall know the truth, and the truth shall **make you free**" (cf. 1 Timothy 2:4).
- ♦ Man is saved by loving the truth. 2 Thessalonians 2:10 - "...they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be **saved**."
- ♦ Man is saved by obedience. Hebrews 5:9 - "...He became the author of eternal **salvation** to all who obey Him."
- ♦ Man is saved by the gospel. Romans 1:16 - "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to **salvation**..." (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:1,2).
- ♦ Man is saved by confession of faith. Romans 10:9 - "...if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him

from the dead, you will be saved."

- ♦ Man is saved by calling on the name of the Lord. Romans 10:13 - "For whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved."
- ♦ Man is saved by enduring to the end. Matthew 10:22 - "...he who endures to the end will be saved."
- ♦ Man is saved by the name of Jesus. Acts 4:12 - "Nor is there **salvation** in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."
- ♦ Man is saved by the blood of Jesus. Romans 5:9 - "...having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him" (cf. Revelation 1:5).
- ♦ Man is saved by coming to God through Jesus. Hebrews 7:25 - "...He [i.e., Jesus] is also able to **save** to the uttermost those who come to God through Him..."
- ♦ Man is saved by godly sorrow and repentance. 2 Corinthians 7:10 - "For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to **salvation**..."

- ♦ Man is saved by the longsuffering of the Lord. 2 Peter 3:15 - "...the longsuffering of our Lord is **salvation**..."

Who would have guessed that there are so many things involved in one's salvation? May we always be careful not to be guilty of believing what one passage says about salvation, while ignoring the others! All Scripture must harmonize!

Some people affirm that man can be saved by faith alone. They come to this conclusion because of the numerous passages in the New Testament that teach that one cannot be saved without faith (e.g., John 8:24). However, to say that one must have faith to be saved is a far cry from saying that **faith alone** saves! The Bible does not teach this (see James 2:24).

Of course, let me hasten to state that no one can be saved by baptism **alone** either. No one can be saved by any single item on this list. Each and every component is essential to man's salvation; we know this because the Bible declares such!

May we all have open minds to see and embrace the marvelous plan of salvation that the Lord has revealed (cf. Luke 2:30).

EXPERIENCE AND TESTIMONY

Bill Brandstatter

In studying with individuals over the years, I have noticed there are two items that are prominent. Those two are experience and testimony.

This past year, I had a Bible study with a man who visited our Sunday morning worship service. Later, we met in my office and he informed me he was going to tell me how I could get the Holy Ghost. He proceeded to tell me about his experience. After I went to the word of God and studied with him, we ended the study a while after that. He called the next day to tell me he was not interested anymore.

I also had a man give me his testimony. It consisted of an account about his floating up in the air and coming back to earth. When I pointed him to the word of God, the study ended shortly thereafter.

Are there any experiences that we have in our Christian lives that we can tell others about? Is there a testimony that is important? Let us always remember to call Bible things by Bible names and to do Bible things in Bible ways. That will be the emphasis in this article.

Testimonies

The word "testimony" is a Bible word. Enoch "had this testimony, that he pleased God" (Hebrews 11:5). Notice here the testimony involved is the life of Enoch and that he was pleasing to God. Also, God testified of Abel's gifts (Hebrews 11:4).

Most so-called "testimony" today centers around what God has done for a person. God does a lot for us, and we need to tell others. God's testimony, however, centers on what we have done for Him.

Experiences

The Christian experiences a lot in life that can help lead others to Christ. These experiences should make us better and more mature. The experiences of the Christian are not "Holy Ghost" related as the man related to me. They are, however, beneficial to those around the Christian.

James writes, "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have *its* per-

fect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing" (James 1:2-4 NKJV).

So, when we experience trials in our life, we can become better if we handle it correctly. Others may be watching us. Peter helps us by noting, "having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by *your* good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation"(1 Peter 2:12).

Our actions and experiences can produce positive results in the lives of others. We do have a religious experience. Peter states we need to tell others about the hope that is within us (1 Peter 3:15).

Our experience in life can make us stronger. James writes that various trials can produce patience and make us more complete as Christians (James 1:2-4). However, James also adds, "Receive with meekness the implanted word which is able to save your souls (James 1:21).

Many have experienced a lot in their walk with Christ. Paul experienced a great deal and gives details in 2 Corinthians 11:24-28. Has your experience helped you in following Christ?

Faith, Experience, Testimony

Our experience must be coupled with a faith that is produced from the word of God. That faith is an obedient faith that leads us to higher ground. Paul didn't let his experience get the best of him. He was not circumstance or situation-oriented. Despite some mighty bad experiences he stated, he could to all things through Christ who strengthened him (Philippians 4:13).

When people today talk about experience and testimony, they often do so to the neglect of the word of God. Their testimony and experience seems to be more important than the doctrine of Christ. James tells Christians of the first century to be "doers of the word and not hearers only" (James 1:22). The early church continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42).

The thinking of some may be that if the experience is right, the salvation must be right. But the New Testament teaches that if the doctrine is right and obeyed, the salvation is right, and experience will result.

No one was ever saved in New Testament times based on experience and testimony. Neither did either one of these prove a person

was saved. What matters then and what matters now is obedience to the gospel (Romans 10:16; 2 Thesalonians 1:8).

Obedience is not stressed enough today. Accepting and believing are highlighted. Experience and testimony are mentioned. What about

obedience? Obeying the gospel of Christ will produce Christians who will have a good testimony among others and will have the ultimate experience of having heaven as their home.

A Medley of Matters on the Kingdom

Andy Erwin

Are the Church and the Kingdom the Same?

From time to time old truths are challenged and we must give a defense for what we believe and teach. May we ever be "set for the defense of the gospel" (Philippians 1:17).

Over the last year, I have twice encountered a teaching that would have us to believe the kingdom on earth and the church are not one and the same.

The answer is simple enough if we turn to the Scriptures. "But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, Therefore since we are

receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear (Hebrews 12:22-23, 28).

According to the writer of Hebrews the church and the kingdom are one and the same.

A series of questions will also help one to see that these two terms refer to the same institution. Observe:

- 1.) How does one come into the kingdom (John 3:3-5)? How does one come into the church (Acts 2:38)?
 - 2.) Who is in the kingdom on earth that is not in the church?
 - 3.) When did the kingdom begin (Mark 9:1; Acts 1:8; Acts 2:1-
-

- 4)? When did the church begin (Acts 2:38-47)?
- 4.) Is any saved person outside of the kingdom (Colossians 1:13)? Is any saved person outside of the church (Acts 2:47)?
- 5.) Who is head over the church (body) (Ephesians 1:22-23)? Who is king over the kingdom (Hebrews 1:8)?
- 6.) What law governs the church (1 Corinthians 9:21)? What law governs the kingdom (Hebrews 12:22-24)?

Such questions teach us that one enters the kingdom the same way he enters the church. The same people who are in the kingdom are in the church. The kingdom began on the same day the church began. All saved people are in the kingdom. All saved people are in the church. Jesus is Head over the church and King over the kingdom. The same law governs both the kingdom and the church. Moreover, the kingdom and the church will be raised at the last day (1 Corinthians 15:24; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

From such questions we can see that the Bible is not speaking of two separate groups of people, but one and the same. Things equal to the same thing are the same thing.

“Church” and “Kingdom” Are Not Synonyms

It has also been advanced by some that because the words “kingdom” and “church” are not synonymous that they cannot refer to the same thing.

Let me give an example of how words with different meanings can apply to the same thing. I am a husband, a father, a brother, a brother-in-law, a nephew, a grandson, a son, a son-in-law, a preacher, and an editor. Each of these words has a very different meaning and yet they each refer to the same person.

Let's do the same with Jesus. He is King, Son, Savior, Head, Brother, Word, God, Mediator, Prophet, Physician, Priest, Author, Corner Stone, Star, Bridegroom, etc. Each one of these words has a very different meaning, but they each refer to the same Person.

Now let us look at the church. It is called kingdom, body, family, house, household, nation, priesthood, temple, people, assembly, etc. Each of these words has a very different meaning, but every one of them refers to the same group of people. Words do not have to be synonyms to refer to the same thing.

When Did the Kingdom Begin?

Jesus said to the twelve, "Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present (come, KJV) with power" (Mark 9:1).

Concerning this power, Jesus told His apostles, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

When the apostles received the Holy Spirit, the kingdom came with this power. Observe: "When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they (the apostles, AE) were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:1-4).

On that day, Peter stood with a message to proclaim that Jesus had ascended to His throne after His resurrection and is now "Lord and

Christ" (Acts 2:30-36). Thus, the kingdom came with the power of the Holy Spirit, in the city of Jerusalem, on the day of Pentecost, in the days foretold by Daniel the prophet (Daniel 2:44).

From that time on, the apostles preached the kingdom and souls who were converted from the kingdom of darkness were added to the kingdom of God's dear Son (Colossians 1:13). Upon His return, Jesus will resurrect the dead and deliver the kingdom to His Father (1 Corinthians 15:24).

"Kingdom" in the Gospels

I have debate books in which the infamous Missionary Baptist debater Ben M. Bogard argued against N.B. Hardeman, E.M. Borden, and W. Curtis Porter that the kingdom/church began during the days of John the Baptist. Indeed there are a number of passages which seem to indicate that the kingdom was then present. However, if this is in fact the case, and the kingdom began with John, why was John not in the kingdom (see Matthew 11:11)?

If the kingdom was established during the days of John the Baptist, the apostles did not know it. They asked Jesus before His ascension "Lord, will You at this time restore

the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6) If the kingdom already existed, they were clueless.

Moreover, if it already existed, Jesus would have told them so. I imagine He would have answered something like, "Beloved, don't you remember how the kingdom was already established back in the days of John." Such was never said.

If the kingdom began during the days of John, Jesus did not know it. He refused to partake of the supper with the twelve "until the kingdom of God shall come" (Luke 22:18).

Furthermore, John the Baptist had already been killed when Jesus said "upon this rock I will build My church" and that Peter would receive the keys to the kingdom (Matthew 16:18-19).

Luke 16:16

The passage states: "The law and the prophets were until John. Since that time the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is pressing into it."

This was a favorite passage for Bogard, as it is now for a few brethren. But, what says too much says too little. Jesus did not say, "Since that time the kingdom of God has existed." He said it has been

preached. How so? Both John and Jesus preached, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." They did not say it was "already." That clarion voice crying in the wilderness said it was "at hand." Jesus even said it was "nigh at hand" (Luke 21:31).

Luke 17:20-21

"Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, 'The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you.'"

How was the kingdom within the apostles if it had not yet been established? The kingdom is a spiritual kingdom. It would not come with observation, but the reign would be inward and spiritual in the people of God.

Why did the Lord speak in the present tense? God has always been able to call that which is not as though it already existed (Romans 4:17). Christ could certainly look down the corridor of time and speak of some future event as though it had already happened. He did so on numerous occasions. He spoke of the blood of the new testament

which "is shed for you" before His crucifixion (Luke 22:20). He spoke of His ascension into heaven when He said "I am no longer in the world" (John 17:9), when obviously He was. And so Jesus' statement in Luke 17:21 is not something to be considered unusual; it could simply be a mark of His Deity.

In years gone by, when brethren dealt with the use of the term "kingdom" as it appears in the present tense in the gospels, they were quick to point out how the kingdom was being preached, planned, and disciples were being prepared for it to come. Brother Foy E. Wallace, Jr. used to speak of the Sermon on the Mount as a sermon full of "Pentecost Pointers." We agree with his assessment.

Preaching the Kingdom

Not only did John and Jesus preach about the kingdom of heaven, but such preaching has always been a significant aspect of gospel preaching since the beginning of the church (Acts 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23; 28:31).

Seeing that this tremendous responsibility is now given to us, let us be faithful and continue to preach the truth about God's kingdom – the church of Christ.

What Are Your Values?

Robert L. Waggoner

Some people advise youth to take life by the horns and throw it with all their might. "Act like you know what you are talking about," they say, and "others will believe you," but Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit ..." (Matthew 5:3).

Some people advise youth not to be sorrowful when they see evil. "Don't cry," they say, but Jesus said, "Blessed are those who mourn ..." (Matthew 5:4).

Some people think that you have to be tough to survive in this world. "It's a dog eat dog world," they say, "You've got to look out for number one." But Jesus said, "Blessed are the gentle..." and "Blessed are the merciful..." (Matthew 5:5, 7).

Some people think that their greatest quest in life should be to acquire wealth, but Jesus said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness..." (Matthew 5:6).

Some people think it wise to defend themselves by telling lies, but Jesus said, "Blessed are the pure in heart..." (Matthew 5:8).

Do you get the picture? The values Jesus taught are not the same as those taught by the world.

News & Notes

God Uses Gospel Meeting to Energize Congregation

Florence, AL: Andy Erwin recently held a gospel meeting for the Mt. Zion congregation in Florence, Alabama. On Sunday evening (July 12) all but about twenty people of approximately ninety in attendance responded for prayer, including the three elders of the congregation. The number which was restored and who rededicated themselves to Christ may have been as high as seventy. Rodney Rice is the gospel preacher for Mt. Zion.

The sermon that was preached is titled "Worldliness in the Church." This sermon has been preached in various places and yielded prayer requests of as many as 10, 35, 50, and possibly as many as 70 this last time.

Andy will be conducting two more gospel meetings this year. He will be preaching for the Liberty church of Christ in Dresden, Tennessee from October 4-8. He will also be preaching for the North Carolina congregation in Killen, Alabama October 18-21.

35th St. Louis Area Lectureship

The 35th Annual St. Louis Area-Wide Lectureship will take place September 17-19.

The Collinsville congregation will be hosting the event this year. The theme is: The Cross of Christ.

Collinsville church of Christ
1400 Troy Rd.
Collinsville, IL 62234
(618) 667-6708
collinsvillecoc.org

Bear Valley Lectures

The Bear Valley Bible Institute in Denver, Colorado will be conducting their annual lectureship from September 17-20. This year's theme is "Majoring in the Minor Prophets – Part Two."

Bear Valley church of Christ
2707 South Lamar St.
Denver, CO 80227
(303) 986-5800

wetrainpreachers.com

40th Annual Spiritual Sword Lectureship

The Getwell church of Christ in Memphis, Tennessee will be hosting their annual Spiritual Sword Lectureship for the fortieth year. This

year's theme is "Great Bible Portraits of the New Testament." The lectures are planned for October 18-21.

Getwell church of Christ
1511 Getwell Rd.
Memphis, TN 38111
(901) 743-0464

getwellchurchofchrist.org

WVSOP: Victory Lectureship

On October 25-29 the West Virginia School of Preaching will host their annual Victory Lectureship.

The theme for 2015 will be: "When I Study the Psalms..." Each sermon will be focused on a specific topic found in the Book of Psalms.

Gospel Gleaner staff writer Andy Robison directs this school.

West Virginia School of Preaching
P.O. Box 785
Moundsville, WV. 26041

(888) 418-4573
wvsop.com

Churches in Need of Preachers

Cassville, MO: The Mill Street church of Christ is seeking outgoing family man, well grounded in scripture. They offer a competitive salary and a church-owned

three bedroom house. Attendance: 150; 6 elders, 7 deacons; Contact: Tim Hudson (417) 847-4722 or 1timhdsn@gmail.com

Prescott, AZ: The church in Prescott is seeking a full-time pulpit preacher/minister. They write:

"We are a scripturally stable and conservative congregation in a predominately retirement community. This church has been in Prescott since 1936. We have three elders ranging in age from 74 to 79 years who are sound in biblical doctrine, teaching, and who serve together in a close unified relationship.

We are looking for a full-time experienced pulpit preacher with perhaps at least eight years of experience (this is negotiable) in this field who can relate to families both young and elderly and who has a love for the church and for lost souls."

Mount Vernon Church of Christ
120 N. Mt. Vernon Ave
Prescott Arizona 86301
(928) 445-5190

mtvernonchurch@cableone.net
mountvernonchurch.org



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For the Love of the Lord, His Word, and His Church

The

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Editorial

God's Love in Four Dimensions

How important is it that we understand the love of God? Consider Paul's prayer for the saints as you contemplate your answer.

"For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height – to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:14-18).

From this reading you will see that Paul speaks of God's love in four dimensions – width, length, depth, and height. But, how can one begin to quantify the love of God? It is immeasurable. Was Paul simply speaking figuratively, or is there a

greater lesson to be gleaned from his prayer?

I am not sure that this is what Paul had in mind when he spoke of God's love, but it is fascinating to compare this passage with John 3:16. Herein we find the width of God's love – *the world*. We also find the length of God's love in that He *gave His Son*. We will also find the depth of God's love in providing *salvation to the perishing*. And lastly, we find the height of God's love – *everlasting life*.

The Width of God's Love – God so loved the world

God's love is all-encompassing. God loves every man, woman, boy, and girl. Whoever you are and wherever you may be, you are a beneficiary of the love of God. God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should repent (2 Peter 3:9). By the grace of God, our Lord Jesus tasted (experienced) death for every man (Hebrews 2:9). Jesus is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2).

The Bible teaches us that God loves every person and desires for "all men to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:4). Jesus gave Himself as a "ransom for all" (1 Timothy 2:6). "God is no respecter of persons: But in

every nation he that fears Him, and works righteousness, is accepted with Him" (Acts 10:34-35). Therefore, we must preach the gospel to "all nations" and "every creature" so that the lost far and wide might learn of the love God has for them.

**The Length of God's Love -
*That He gave His only begotten Son***

To what length would God go to demonstrate His love for us? What could God possibly give to demonstrate His love for mankind? The answer: His only begotten Son.

Deity took on the form of man and was clothed in flesh for the purpose of revealing the love of God for man. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory of the only begotten, full of grace and truth."

God demonstrated His love for us in the giving of His son, His only Son - Jesus. While it is true that our acceptance of Jesus will spare us from the wrath of God, it is also true that by accepting Jesus we are accepting the love of God. In fact, the primary attribute of God revealed in the Scriptures is not His wrath, but His love. God did not send Jesus into this world to demonstrate His wrath, "but that the world through Him might be saved." And thus, "while we were yet sinners" God

demonstrated His matchless love for us that we might be saved through the sacrificial death of His only begotten Son.

**The Depth of God's Love -
*That whosoever believes in Him
should not perish***

The love of God reaches down into the depths of sin and human depravity to rescue a soul from death. Those who are well do not need the treatment and care of the Great Physician, but those who are sick - sin sick. He did not come to call "the righteous, but sinners to repentance." He came "to seek and to save the lost."

Some of us were at rock bottom when our Savior found us. Truly, "such were some of you." "But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

**The Height of God's Love -
*But have everlasting life***

The height of God's love for us is yet to come; but truly it fills our hearts with hope and anticipation. Realizing that God's love is sure and steadfast and stretches all the way to heaven and throughout eternity; may we never "cast off" His love as though we do not need it! May we never cast off His love be-

cause we do not deserve it! Deserving has nothing to do with it. Salvation has been brought down, not because man deserved to be saved, but because "*God so loved.*"

May we never cast off this great love because we desire the things of the world greater than the things of God! "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him" (1 Corinthians 2:9).

CONCLUSION

How can such knowledge and comprehension of the love of God bring us into "the fullness of God" as Paul has prayed?

In the first place, every experience of the Christian life must begin at the cross. The cross must be fixed within our hearts in order for us to live by the love of God and to appreciate its dimensions.

What does the cross mean to you? Are you willing to live for Jesus because of the cross? Or, are you willing to let Him die in vain? None can truthfully say that they love the Lord while letting Him die in vain.

In the second place, our comprehension of the love of God must cause us to project the Father to the

world, not the world to the Father. Philip asked Jesus, "Show us the Father..." The world is asking that same thing of us - "Show us the Father." We can show the Father to the world by showing His love and His truth as the Christ has revealed.

Lastly, the love of God can bring us into the fullness of God through a "peace that passes understanding." Knowing the fullness of God's love brings security to the heart of the believer. He will not leave us or forsake us. God is with us. He is our Father who loves us and cares for us. God is not our enemy, but our friend. Let us also determine to live as a friend of God.

Andy Erwin

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Remembering H. A. Dixon

James R. McGill

H. A. Dixon (1904-1969) was a faithful Christian, husband, father, teacher, song leader, writer, preacher of the gospel and, for the last twenty years of his life (1950-1969), he was the president of Freed-Hardeman College in Henderson, Tennessee.

He was born in Delrose, Tennessee, a community in the south-central part of the state near the Alabama border. During a series of gospel meetings there in 1918, in which J. W. Brents was the evangelist, Dixon made the confession of his faith in Jesus as the Son of God and was baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of sins. He was 13.

In those days it was normal for these soul-saving efforts to continue for as long as fifteen days, extending over three Sundays. There were meetings each night and usually also during the weekday mornings from Monday through Friday.

Sometimes congregations did not have regular preaching through the

year, and for them these daily and nightly meetings were an intensive learning experience. The meetings were remarkable efforts to save the lost, to restore those who had fallen away, and to teach and encourage even the most faithful Christians.

A Successful Meeting?

H. A. Dixon was happy in his new life as a Christian. But something hurtful happened to him on the closing night of that gospel meeting. After the closing prayer, as the congregation went out onto the front lawn, visiting with one another and enjoying the fellowship, he overheard some of the men talking:

"This gospel meeting was a failure."
"Only one addition to the church."
"And that was just a boy!"
"We won't use that preacher again."

Dixon said, "I thought the gospel meeting was a success. My soul was saved!"

In later years Dixon taught and coached near his home community. In 1929 he married Louise Cowan.



He began preaching in Memphis in 1935 and gained much experience at the Union Avenue church, leading the singing and working with G. C. Brewer. Through the years he was the regular preacher for a number of churches. He preached in numerous evangelistic efforts in America and abroad.

In addition to his earned academic degrees, he was awarded honorary doctorates from Harding and Pepperdine. Yet, I do not remember his ever being addressed as Dr. Dixon.

College President

He became president of Freed-Hardeman College during the crisis of 1950. N. B. Hardeman had been with the college since it began in 1908 (except for the two years 1923-1925). He had been president for a quarter century when the board terminated his presidency in 1950. Most of the students had left during that spring quarter, but when Dixon became president, the college recovered quickly.

Very soon after my wife and I moved to Henderson, Tennessee in the summer of 1959, where Nedra was to set up an art department for the college, we were surprised and honored by a visit from the Dixons. During their visit he said, "When we

moved to Henderson in 1950 we received the coldest reception we ever received anywhere." The Dixons were doing their part to be certain that we and others didn't have the same bad experience.

Third-Year Program

Freed-Hardeman was then a two-year college. President Dixon set up a third year program for Bible majors that meant much to him. When the accrediting association tried to tell him he couldn't have that third year program, he refused to give it up. An agreement was reached as to where and how that program would be listed in the college catalog.

President Dixon felt the stress of his job. I was saddened when he told me once that he had gone three days and nights without being able to go to sleep even for a minute. Raising the money to finance the building of a new science center seemed to be especially difficult.

One afternoon when the school was having a picnic at nearby Chickasaw State Park, the students sang, "I know the Lord will make a way for me...." I was surprised when he told me, "I like that song!" I had expected his musical tastes to be more classical, but he appreciated

that song's simple statement of trust in the caring providence of God.

"Old October"

Every October, in the college chapel assembly, Dixon recited the poem "Old October" about his favorite month—except for the last October of his life. He suffered a heart attack during the first week of November, 1969. He was taken to the hospital in nearby Jackson, Tennessee, where he died Saturday morning, November 8. He was 65.

President Dixon maintained what was called his "open door policy." His office door was literally always open. This meant he was approachable on any matter at any time. But it also meant that he was not to be approached by a petition or in any other way. Following his heart attack, as I walked down the hall by his office, it was such a strange experience to me to see his door closed for the first time.

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-Six Miles from Jesus-

Jerry Bates

We have all read and thought much about the visit of the wise men to Jesus as recorded in Matthew 2. We do not know very much about these wise men. We do not know who they were, where they came from, how they had received information about the birth of the king, or how they knew the significance of the star. Nevertheless, we do know from scripture that they came to worship Jesus (Matthew 2:2).

The King of the Jews

They came to Jerusalem inquiring about the king of the Jews. Herod heard about their questioning and was troubled. He was not a godly man and apparently did not know about this prophecy of the birth of a king; however, he knew where to find the information.

He consulted the chief priests and scribes regarding the location of the birth of Jesus, and they correctly answered, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you shall come a Ruler who will shepherd My people Israel'" (Matthew 2:6).

It is not surprising that upon learning this information, Herod was troubled and wanted to kill Jesus.

So Close, Yet So Far!

What should be surprising to us is the reaction of the chief priests and scribes, or more accurately, the lack of any reaction. They knew a king was to be born; they knew that they were living in the approximate time he was to be born; they knew where he was to be born; yet, upon hearing a rumor that the king of the Jews had been born, they did nothing.

Bethlehem was only about six miles from Jerusalem, an easy two-to-three hour walk. Bethlehem was a very small town; thus, it would have been easy to determine the truthfulness of the rumor. However, they did nothing.

The contrast of the two groups could not be more distinct. The wise men knew little about the coming king; nevertheless, they sought and worshiped Him as all wise men should. Conversely, the Jewish religious leaders knew a great deal about the coming king, yet did nothing. No one offered to help guide these foreigners to find the king. They were only six miles from their king, but they did not know it. So

close, yet so far! The wise men traveled hundreds of miles to see Jesus, but the Jewish leaders could not travel six miles. So close, yet so far!

The Difference

What was the difference between Herod, the scribes, and the wise men? The difference was not knowledge, because all had the same basic information. It was not opportunity or ability, because all had the same opportunity to worship Jesus. It was a matter of the heart.

The heart is always the issue, because ultimately, our heart determines how we respond. It matters not about the obstacles that might be in our way, because if our heart is right we will respond to Jesus.

In John 3, we find that a Pharisee and ruler of the Jews named Nicodemus came to Jesus by night. Likely, he was not completely sure about whom Jesus was at this point, but he wanted to know more. He was willing to travel by night to see Jesus, but these scribes could not even walk six miles during the day to investigate whether their king had been born.

Not Far from the Kingdom

The scribes we have been discussing were not far from the king-

dom of God. Jesus told another scribe in Mark 12:34, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." This scribe knew well the Scriptures. He agreed with Jesus as to the two greatest commands in the Bible; however, he lacked a total commitment to Jesus. Whether he ever made the commitment or not, we do not know.

Nevertheless, I submit that there are many today in a similar position.

They are not far from kingdom of God, symbolically only "six miles."

Yet, regardless of how far we may be, our position is the same. We are lost! Only those who obey from the heart shall enter the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 7:21). Don't let "six miles" prevent you from entering heaven!

Washed, Sanctified, & Justified

David Pharr

"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

When we compare Paul's words to the permissiveness of the world,

the text is remarkable in its frank condemnation of sin. Here is a catalog of transgressions, any of which would prevent participation in the blessings of God's kingdom. Criminals, false religionists, libertines, sexual perverts, greedy people, hateful people, etc. have no inheritance.

The Power of the Gospel

But the text is also remarkable in the way it shows the power of the gospel to change such characters and to make them fit for the kingdom. "And such were some of you." Among the Corinthian Christians, there were brothers and sisters

who had once lived in the ways of the world and had practiced the heinous crimes the apostle had described. During Paul's ministry at Corinth he had spent a year and a half teaching the word of God (Acts 18:11). "And many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized (Acts 18:8). This exactly parallels the great commission (Mark 16:15-16).

We make a serious mistake when we think the gospel lacks sufficient power to change any man's life--no matter how low and depraved his character may be. No, not everyone will accept the gospel. Some are too hardened in sin to let it touch them. This is true as regards many who live in the gutters of moral filth. But it is equally true of many who appear to have the highest of moral standards. Everyone will not accept the gospel. Sometimes, however, as demonstrated at Corinth, the gospel can change characters that are vile and loathsome into persons that are pure and acceptable to God.

A Complete Change

Three terms are used by Paul to show the completeness of their change from their old character to their new character; from their former lost condition to their present place among the saved. "...but ye

are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified . . ."

These terms do not indicate three unrelated actions. Neither do they show successive stages over a period of time. Instead, the apostle points to a specific point in their history when a great transformation occurred.

In verse 9, he had declared the "unrighteous" as unfit for the kingdom. To be "unrighteous" is to be "unjust"--both terms coming from the same root word. Those who had been "unjust" had been made "justified." Simply stated, justification means being in an approved relationship with God.

The use of the word "sanctified" is also especially fitting in the context. It means separation. They had formerly been a part of a sinful, lost world; but now they had been separated from the world and placed in a holy relationship with God. (The word "holy," though not found in this text, is from the same root word as "sanctified.")

Their having previously been unfit for the kingdom and their now having been sanctified is parallel to what was said to the Colossians: "Who [God] hath delivered us from the power of darkness and translated

us into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Colossians 1:13).

Washed through Baptism

The expression, "ye are washed," deserves particular attention. At first glance one might assume that there is reference to being washed, cleansed, by the blood of Christ. Certainly the blood washes from sin (Revelation 1:5; 7:14); but the use of the term here applies to baptism, as it does in several comparable passages. (See Acts 22:16; Ephesians 5:26; Titus 3:5; Hebrews 10:22.)

Especially significant is the fact that all three verbs--washed, sanctified, and justified--are in the Greek aorist tense, which is used to indicate a specific point in the past when these things simultaneously took place. All was accomplished in a single act. While, however, these verbs are all in the aorist tense, they are not in the same Greek voice. This distinction is remarkable in that it demonstrates both the human and the divine involvement in conversion.

G. R. Beasley-Murray, citing other scholars, shows that the verb for "washed," in the middle voice, implies voluntary action, and that literally the clause should be rendered: "But you had yourselves

washed . . ." He calls attention to the coincidence of languages in Acts 22:16, where Saul is told to "Get baptized and wash away your sins..." Being "washed" was something the Corinthians themselves had done. That is, they had submitted to baptism.

Their voluntary submission to washing implies that they were being obedient to a command. It is always helpful to remember that the only baptism commanded is water baptism. Holy Spirit baptism was a promise (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:4-5, 8), administered by the Lord, not men (Acts 2:33). Any time, therefore, that we find baptism commanded (Acts 2:38; et al); or administered by men (Acts 8:38; et al); or submitted to voluntarily (Acts 8:12, 16; 22:16, et al): the reference is to water baptism. Such is the case in 1 Corinthians 6:11.

Sanctified and Justified

Their being "sanctified" and "justified," however, is expressed in the Greek passive voice, indicating something that had been done for them--the divine action in conversion. The point made, therefore, is that when they had (by faith) voluntarily had themselves washed (baptized), they had at that point been sanctified and justified by the power

of God. Emphasis on the divine involvement in baptism as the rite of sanctification and justification is seen in the way being washed, sanctified, and justified are all three said to be "in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." This is the same emphasis found in Colossians 2:12. "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God..."

The case for the washing of 1 Corinthians 6:11 being water baptism is further strengthened by a comparison of Ephesians 5:25-26. The "church of God" at Corinth was composed of "them that are sanctified" (1 Corinthians 1:2). Those that were sanctified were those that had gotten themselves washed. Ac-

cording to the same writer, the church is sanctified and cleansed "with the washing of water by the word" (Ephesians 5:26).

It should also be remembered that the only washing identified in scripture as "in the name of the Lord Jesus" is water baptism. This is beyond debate in Acts 10:47-48, and is further confirmed by Acts 2:38; 8:16; 19:5.

[Note: The work cited above is G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1976, pp. 162ff. The author is himself a Baptist, but shows himself to be more devoted to scholarship than to denominational prejudices--in many ways a valuable work.]

Joy vs. Happiness

Travis Quertermous

One might well ask oneself, "Aren't joy and happiness the same thing?" Certainly one who is joyful is also happy, but it is possible to rejoice even when times are tough. So there are some important differences between joy and happiness. What are they?

The Example of Habakkuk

Let's consider the prophet Habakkuk as an example. Habakkuk lived in the 7th century B.C. in Judah. It was a time when idolatry, sinfulness, and disobedience to the Law of Moses were rampant. So the prophet asked God just how long He

intended to put up with this sorry state of affairs before doing something about it (Habakkuk 1:1-4).

Jehovah answered Habakkuk that his homeland of Judah was about to be conquered by Babylon as punishment for their sins and their failure to repent (1:5-11). Despite the devastation this would bring upon his people, Habakkuk nonetheless wrote:

"Though the fig tree may not blossom, Nor fruit be on the vines; Though the labor of the olive may fail, And the fields yield no food; Though the flock may be cut off from the fold, And there be no herd in the stalls—Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The LORD God is my strength; He will make my feet like deer's feet, And He will make me walk on my high hills" (3:17-19).

Joyful but Not Happy

Notice that though Habakkuk mourned for his people, he also rejoiced in the blessings that God bestows on the faithful, especially the gift of salvation! Joy then is an internal source of contentment that comes from knowing one is right with His Maker. It is more a state of mind than an emotion one feels. It

enables one to rejoice in the Lord even when troubles abound.

Happiness, on the other hand, is a temporary emotion that arises as a reaction to external sources. Something good happens to us and it makes us happy. But when that circumstance ends, so does our emotional high. That's not necessarily a bad thing, but happiness is fleeting, while joy is on-going. Happiness is primarily an emotion, while joy is an attitude. Happiness comes from without, while joy comes from within.

True Joy

Sadly, too many people are seeking joy and satisfaction from material things and circumstances. But the happiness they bring is fleeting because such things are, at best, temporary.

True joy and happiness comes only from knowing the Lord and obeying His word. That's what enables Christians to maintain such a positive outlook on life even when times are bad. We're headed to heaven! What greater source of joy can there be than this knowledge? As the old saying goes, "I don't know what tomorrow holds, but I know Who holds tomorrow!"

Preaching the Gospel to a Politician

Ferrell Hester

"And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee" (Acts 24:25).

In Acts 24 Felix is depicted as a man who listened with interest to Paul's defense but failed to make any decision with regard to the case or with regard to the personal implications of Paul's message. Rather, he hoped Paul would pay him a bribe (Acts 24:26-27). Contemporary historians Tacitus and Josephus paint Felix as a brutal, incompetent politician who was finally replaced.

Prior Events

Let us now look at some of the events in the life of Paul leading up to his appearance before Felix.

Although the apostle Paul had been a persecutor of Christ and His church before his conversion to Christianity, most of his adult life was spent in preaching the gospel. He wrote, "Woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel" (1 Corinthians 9:16).

He had traveled throughout most of the Mediterranean countries. He had been beaten, shipwrecked, stoned and left for dead, imprisoned and threatened with death in nearly every place; but through it all he continued to preach Christ.

When he came to Jerusalem for what was probably his last time, the Jews charged him with violating the law and mobbed him. He was then taken into custody by the Romans. For his own safety, because of the plot of the Jews to kill him, Paul was transferred to Caesarea. The governor there was a man named Felix.

As noted already, the Scriptures reveal that Felix was a very corrupt politician. He called for Paul to appear before him, not to learn the truth about those charges that had been made against Paul, but because he hoped to be able to get some bribe money out of him (Acts 24:26).

Secular history indicates that Felix was dishonest, self-indulgent and completely worldly in his manner of living. Later, he was arrested

and taken to Rome where he stood trial before Caesar, was convicted, and sentenced to exile.

Even though Paul was a prisoner, he refused to use the occasion of his appearing before Felix to plead his own case. Instead, he did exactly what he had been doing for thirty years – he preached the gospel of Christ.

For Paul, this might have been his only opportunity to preach to this man. What would be his message? "He reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come" (Acts 24:25). That was just what such a man as Felix needed to hear.

The Righteousness of God

While man's righteousness is nothing but "filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6), all of God's commandments are His righteousness. "My tongue shall speak of thy word: For all of thy commandments are righteousness" (Psalms 119:172). The apostle Paul wrote of the gospel in Romans 1:17, "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed."

When anyone lives for this world, ignoring the kind of life God designed for him, he must be reminded of the righteousness of God. As the wise man said in Proverbs

14:34, "Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is reproach to any people." That is also true of individuals: righteousness exalts a person, sin is a reproach.

We need to recognize that we cannot, by our own wisdom, chart our path in this life. "The way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps" (Jeremiah 10:23). If we would know the righteousness of God, how we should live, we must look to His word.

Temperance (Self-Control)

If one lives for God, it is because he has made a conscious decision to do so. It doesn't happen accidentally. God expects us to take control of our lives by deciding to turn ourselves over to Him and His will.

Jesus prayed to the Father, "Not my will, but thine be done" (Luke 22:42). Jesus demonstrated that kind of self-control throughout his life here on earth. Peter wrote of Him, "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" (1 Peter 2:22-23).

Jesus never let events control what He did, but He controlled

Himself and thereby controlled the events. Each of us can, and should, do the same.

Temptations, trials, difficulties, betrayal by friends and false brethren, will come to all of us just as they did with Jesus. How we handle such things will depend on our self-control. We learn from Matthew chapter four that Jesus overcame temptation by depending on God and His word, and so should we.

We should be able to say with the Psalmist: "Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee" (Psalms 119:11). It is easy to give in to the pressures that are all around us, unless we are fortified with determination to do what is right -- that is self-control. "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). This kind of life is easy with self-control, but absolutely impossible without it.

The Judgment to Come

Some people do not believe that there is coming a day of judgment that will determine their eternal state; but it is plainly taught in the word of God (Hebrews 9:27; Ecclesiastes 12:14).

Politicians like Felix, as well as some of our politicians today (in-

cluding the President of the United States), evidently do not think of that day; but Paul had to preach it as part of the gospel of Christ. We need to be reminded that what we do in this life has consequences, not only in this life but for eternity.

Judgment is not going to be on the basis of what race we may be, the color of our skin, parents, ethnic background, politics, nationality, or any other such thing.

"So then every one of us shall give an account of himself to God" (Romans 14:12). "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10).

Who Felix knew, or the political influence he may have had, will avail nothing when he has to stand before Christ to be judged. Our President, governors, lawmakers and all other politicians need to hear that; as do all of us.

Notice the reaction of Felix in Acts 24:25, "Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; and when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee." Felix "trembled." The American Standard Version says, "Felix was terrified."

Why was Felix terrified? Jesus described hell as "where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched" (Mark. 9:48).

Jesus will tell the wicked, "Depart from me ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41).

In that "furnace of fire, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 13:42). It is also called "the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever"

(Revelation 20:10). Yes, there was reason for Felix to be terrified.

When I read Acts 24:25, I never cease to be amazed at Felix: "Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee."

How could he, terrified as he was, put off making the decision he knew was right? The only sensible response to Paul's sermon was to become a Christian through obedience to the gospel: faith, repentance, confession, and baptism. And that is still the only sensible response.

God, Can You Hear Me?

Andy Robison

One Bible verse of utmost pathos is Psalm 42:3: "My tears have been my food day and night, While they continually say to me, 'Where is your God?'"

Feeling Far from God

The godliest individuals can sometimes feel very, very far from God, even with God's assurances of answered prayer (cf. Luke 18:1-8).

Consider Psalm 6:6-7: "I am weary with my groaning; All night I make my bed swim; I drench my

couch with tears. My eye wastes away because of grief; It grows old because of my enemies."

Enemies in the forms of illness and/or persecution can often cause people of faith to doubt their position with God. "God, Can You Hear Me?"

Jesus Knows and Cares

Christians are not left alone without an Advocate to understand their perceived distance. Jesus, "in the days of His flesh," "offered up

prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears..." (Hebrews 5:7). It may be that the famed prayer, "Let this cup pass from Me...", was offered in a loud, impassioned wailing!

The same verse reminds us that Jesus "was heard because of His godly fear" and that the listener, God the Father, was "able to save Him from death." God listened while Jesus felt alone, but God chose to answer differently than Jesus wanted, and to permit the progression of the Passion.

Through that very experience from which Jesus sought reprieve, the pathway to God for us was paved. Jesus entered behind the veil for us (Hebrews 6:19-20), that is, He entered spiritually into God's presence (the imagery of the Old Testament veil to the Holy of Holies is here employed). Therefore, we have "boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is His flesh..." (Hebrews 10:19-20).

Our Privilege of Prayer

From earth's shadowy vale of tears Christians can climb the mountain (compare Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, the church—Hebrews 12:22-24) of God's

presence and be assured that their pleas will be heard. As with Christ, then, if the Divine answer is different from our desire, one can be assured the purpose is much greater.

We have the privilege of praying in Jesus' name (John 15:16) and aiming to ask for those things in accordance with His will (1 John 5:14-15). When our wills seem to be at odds, we can then, and must then, aim to conform our wills to His as a part of being molded in His image (Romans 8:29). Then we learn to ask for the right sorts of things. Many who offer prayer are disappointed because they "ask amiss, that (they) may spend it on (their) pleasures" (James 4:3).

Limiting ourselves to requests inclusive of God's revealed will (such as for wisdom—James 1:5) then brings the greatest freedom. No matter the circumstances on earth, whether politicians in palaces or prisoners in cells, access is afforded to the very throne of Almighty God, through the One who offered His flesh and blood to make Himself qualified to be an intercessor (Hebrews 7:25; 1 Timothy 2:5).

God Hears and Cares

Yes, God can hear me. Further, in His time and in His way, He will

heal and hold me. Like Elijah after His Mt. Carmel victory and his subsequent deep depression, God will push us on to greater service (1 Kings 18-19).

David worked through His perceived separation anxiety: "Why

are you cast down, O my soul? And why are you disquieted within me? Hope in God; For I shall yet praise Him, The help of my countenance and my God" (Psalm 42:11).

Shadows of Realities

Robert L. Waggoner

While a shadow may be designated as a reality in itself, it is more precisely an inexact image, indication, or type of a reality more fundamental than itself. We may see a shadow and pay little or no attention to it or we may not consider the nature of the reality that it produces.

A shadow may be present but not recognized. Shadows can provide information and enable us to act more wisely.

For example, when children are playing "hide and go-seek," a child's shadow may indicate where he is. Or, if the sun is shining and you are seeking a place to park your car at a shopping center, you may spot a parking space by noting where no car shadow exists.

Just as shadows may sometimes indicate realities, so also many reali-

ties about salvation may be said metaphorically to have been foreshadowed during Old Testament times, but not always understood. Some were later revealed by biblical writers. Some examples of New Testament realities which were foreshadowed by Old Testament personalities, events, and entities may be helpful in understanding some facets of salvation.

Moses and Christ

First, to teach that salvation requires belief and obedience, Jesus said, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life (John 3:14-15). This statement indicates Jesus' recognition that he would die on the cross for our sins (1 Corinthians 15:3).

That reality was foreshadowed by an experience of the Israelites as they journeyed from Egypt to Canaan. On one occasion, when they murmured and complained, God sent fiery serpents to bite them. The Israelites then realized that they had been wrong by complaining. They wanted relief from the snake bites. God told Moses to erect a bronze serpent and put it on a pole. Those who made the effort to look toward the pole would be healed while those who refused would die from snake bite (Numbers 21:4-9). The cure was not medicinal. It required belief and obedience.

Old Law and the Gospel

Second, salvation from the consequences of sin could not be acquired by the Law of Moses for, although it revealed the oracles of God (Romans 3:2) and a knowledge of sin (Romans 3:20), its ordinances, tabernacle, priesthood, sacrifices, and festivals constituted only an imperfect shadow of a New Covenant (Hebrews 7:19).

“For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect” (Hebrews 10:1).

The new covenant is the means by which sins are removed (Jeremiah 31:34, Hebrews 8:12). The Tabernacle erected under Moses’ leadership was from a pattern (Hebrews 8:5). The Old Testament priesthood was inadequate because, under Moses, priests offered gifts and sacrifices as a “copy and shadow of the heavenly things” (Hebrews 8:5). Various requirements under the Law of Moses were but “a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ” (Colossians 2:16-17).

The new covenant has a high priest, who ministers in the “true” tabernacle which the Lord has erected (Hebrews 8:5). Jesus, as high priest, is the reality foreshadowed by Melchizedek (Genesis 14:18-20; Psalm 110:4; Zechariah 6:12-13; Hebrews 5:5-10; 6:20; 7:17, 21). As high priest, Jesus “is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:25).

Egypt and Sin

Third, an analogy of sin and salvation may be described as follows: People in bondage to sin may be compared to bondage of the Israelites in Egypt (Deuteronomy 7:8). As God freed the Israelites from Egyptian bondage (Exodus 5:2;

Deuteronomy 5:6) through the work of Moses (Exodus 3:7-10; Micah 6:4), so also people now in bondage to sin (Romans 6:17-20; Galatians 4:3) may be freed by Christ (Galatians 5:1).

As the Israelites were freed from Egyptian bondage by being baptized into Moses at the crossing the Red Sea (1 Corinthians 10:1-4), so also people are freed from sin by being baptized in the name of Christ (Matthew 28:18-20; 1 Peter 3:21).

As freed Israelites continued their journey toward Canaan, the land of promise, so also those whose faith in Christ has redeemed them from past sin continue their pilgrimage toward heaven (1 Peter 2:11).

And, as most who left Egypt did not enter the promised land of Canaan because of their unbelief and disobedience (Hebrews 3:9-11, 18-19; 4:3), so also many Christians who depart from sin will become disobedient and not enter the everlasting kingdom of heaven (Matthew 7:22-23, Luke 13:27-28).

As the Israelites were not totally saved until they crossed the Jordan River into the land of Canaan (Joshua 4:22-23), so also people now are not totally saved until this earthly life is over (Matthew 25:21, 23, 31, 34; Hebrews 9:28; 1 Peter 1:5, 9).

Jesus taught that to receive the crown of life, one had to be faithful unto death (Revelation 2:10). As only two Israelites (age 20 or above) from Egypt who crossed the Red Sea actually reached the Promised Land (Numbers 32:11-12), so also only a few will actually reach the heavenly shore (Matthew 7:14, 21).

This is but a sampling of the many types of antitypes that are presented in the Bible. However, they are sufficient to indicate that God intended to disclose His revelation about Himself and salvation in a gradual but purposeful manner.

As shadows of realities in the physical world are not seen until the sun is shining, so also types of antitypes in the spiritual realm were not made known until God chose to reveal them by His word.

As physical benefits are derived from reacting to the physical realities indicated by natural shadows, so also are physical and spiritual benefits derived from noticing and responding to types and antitypes indicated by God.

"Whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" (Romans 15:4).

The Man Who Overcomes

Revelation 2:17

Introduction

1. Three things catch our attention immediately: the hidden manna; the new name; and the white stone.
2. The "hidden manna" is that which shall spiritually sustain us throughout eternity. John 6:51; Revelation 2:7.
3. The "new name" reminds us of Jacob's name being change to Israel after the great wrestling match! Isaiah 62:2; Acts 11:26; Isaiah 56:5.
4. The white stone bears three interpretations: acquittal; hospitality; and victory. The last is the usage I understand.
5. There are three great victories that enable us to "overcome."

Discussion

I. The Battle with Doubt.

- A. Not all drift into the kingdom like a ship at high tide. (1) Abraham- Genesis 13:8; (2) John the Baptist- Matthew 11:3; (3) Peter- Matthew 14:31; (4) Martha- John 11:29; (5) Thomas- John 20:25.
- B. We agonize over many questions: Is there really a God? Is Jesus really the Son of God? Is the Bible really the word of God? Is the church really necessary? Is baptism really essential?
- C. In the end, we will know victory. I John 5:4; Psalms 1:1, 2.

II. The Battle with Sin.

- A. Sin is a problem for every life. Romans 3:23. Some always seem to walk in sunshine; and others always pass through some moral storm! We know that Satan wants to be our Master. John 13:2; 2 Corinthians 4:4; I Peter. 5:4.
- B. Why does this battle continue to rage in our hearts after being saved? (1) Old habits- Romans 7:18, 19; (2) Uneducated conscience- Acts 24:16; (3) Lack of knowledge of things being wrong- Ephesians 4:22-24; I Peter 2:11; (4) Influence of old associations- John 18:18, 25; I Corinthians 15:33.
- C. The Psalms of David are not the fruit of David's sins; but of his struggle against sin. We too can win this battle. I Corinthians 10:13

III. The Battle with Afflictions.

- A. Every Christian will attend this school sometime. II Timothy 3:12
- B. Many are the rooms of suffering: (1) Physical- II Corinthians 12:7; (2) Emotional- II Samuel 18:38; 19:4; (3) Financial- I Timothy 6:9
- C. Nothing can separate us from the love of God. Romans 8:35-37

Conclusion

1. Are you overcoming or being overcome? Rom. 12:21; Rev. 12:11
2. After the battles are over, we can say: II Timothy 4:6-8; Revelation 21:7

- Mike Kiser

News & Notes

Mack Lyon Passes

Edmond, OK: Mack Lyon departed this life August 5, 2015 at the age of 93 while at home.

Brother Lyon was preceded in death by his wife of fifty-three years Golda Eaton Lyon who passed away in 1996. He is survived by his wife Lois Duncan Lyon, daughter Jo Ann Lyon of Oklahoma City, son Chris Lyon and daughter-in-law Glenna Lyon of Van Buren, AR, son-in-law and step daughter Butch and Jill Wallace of Tallahassee, FL, stepson and daughter-in-law Tim and Kayla Duncan of Orlando, FL. Brother Lyon has numerous grandchildren and great grandchildren as well as nieces and nephews.

Brother Lyon began his preaching in Coalgate, OK November 12, 1939 at the age of 17. He and his family spent almost three years as missionaries in Perth, Western Australia in the 1960s.

After returning home he continued local ministry and in 1980 he began "In Search of the Lord's Way" a television/media ministry now over-

seen by the Edmond church of Christ.

Mission Report from Colombia

Owen Olbricht made a trip to Colombia in August. He reported on the work in Chia that began in 2008 and now has an attendance around 40. A man of 79 was baptized. They studied with seven non-Christians and four rather delinquent Christians in the day time. These did attend the night services In Neiva one we studied with was baptized, an 18 year old boy. His mother and another teen they studied with wanted more study before being baptized. The church in Neiva has gone through some problems and they were not meeting faithfully. We believe they are back on track now because of our studies with them.

Owen is planning a trip for February of next year.

Come and Hear the Writers of the Gospel Gleaner

Andy Erwin – Dresden, TN (Liberty) October 4-8; Killen, AL (North Carolina) October 18-21

Travis Quertermous – Lubbock, TX (Lubbock Christian Lectureship) October 5-7; Vienna, IL (Vienna church of Christ) October 25-28

Andy Robison – Barrackville, WV
August 30-September 3; Chester,
WV September 27-October 1

WVSOP: Victory Lectureship

On October 25-29 the West Virginia School of Preaching will host their annual Victory Lectureship.

The theme for 2015 will be: "When I Study the Psalms..." Each sermon will be focused on a specific topic found in the Book of Psalms.

Gospel Gleaner staff writer Andy Robison directs this school.

West Virginia School of Preaching
P.O. Box 785
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(888) 418-4573
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Fall Gospel Meeting Marion, Illinois

October 4-6

Good News for the World

Sunday Morning: 9:30 and 10:30
Adell Anderson, Carbondale, IL
Sunday Evening: 6:00
Darrell Simon, Harrisburg, IL
Monday Evening: 7:00
Ben Wiles, Vienna, IL
Tuesday Evening: 7:00
Bill Hensley, Brookport, IL

Report from Recent Meetings

From Milton Stephens: I was with the Catalpa congregation July 26-29. Catalpa is located just out of Petersburg, Tennessee in Marshall county. Several preachers were present during the meeting. Area congregations supported the meeting well. Attendance and interest was good through the week.

I was with the Rock Hill congregation August 2-5. Rock Hill is located in Readyville, Tennessee, out of Murfreesboro in Rutherford County. Attendance was good and a lot of interest shown by those who attend the congregation.

They continue to look for a preacher to work with them regularly.

Milton Stephens is the Director of the Middle Tennessee School of Preaching and Biblical Studies.

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For the Love of the Lord, His Word, and His Church

The

GOSPEL



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Volume 27 / Number Ten

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*A Monthly Publication for All Those
Who Love the Lord, His Word, and His Church*

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Editorial

Norman Geisler to Lecture at FHU

The Freed-Hardeman University Graduate School of Theology has made the decision to hire Norman Geisler to speak on October 9. Geisler will teach on the subjects of: "Truth: Absolute or Relative?" at the 9:00 am session; "Can We Trust the Bible?" at 10:30 am; and "Morals: Absolute or Relative?" at 1:30 pm.

Who Is Norman Geisler?

From his personal website we read the answer to this question:

"Dr. Norman Geisler, PhD, is a prolific author, veteran professor, speaker, lecturer, traveler, philosopher, apologist, evangelist, and theologian. To those who ask, 'Who is Norm Geisler?' some have suggested, 'Well, imagine a cross between Thomas Aquinas and Billy Graham and you're not too far off.'"

Concerning Norman Geisler, FHU is very thorough in their press release to tell us how many books he has written, etc. and to tell of his teaching experience including that

he is currently the Distinguished Professor of Apologetics at Veritas Evangelical Seminary in Murrieta, California.

But, make no mistake Norman Geisler is no friend to the churches of Christ. In his book, *Correcting the Cults* he takes issue with any group who believes that Mark 16:16 teaches baptism is necessary for salvation. Geisler writes, "Cults and aberrant groups cite this [Mark 16:16] in support of their belief that baptism is necessary for salvation" (p.141).

To be "aberrant" is to be "wandering, straying from the right way, or deviating from the truth." Accordingly, we are either a cult or a deviation from biblical truth.

Here is a man who has been hired by FHU to speak on the subject "Can We Trust the Bible?" and yet, he does not trust the Bible when it comes to the plan of salvation.

Norman Geisler may well remind us of the scribe who came to Jesus who was "not far from the kingdom" (Mark 12:28-34). This scribe, like Geisler, knew much about the Bible. However, he was never given the charge to teach the disciples or any of the apostles. Jesus did not believe the scribe to be qualified seeing that he himself was not a dis-

ciple of our Lord. Unlike Jesus, FHU has decided to allow such a scribe to teach His disciples.

Who Is a Disciple?

A disciple is a "learned follower." While Mr. Geisler is "learned" he is not a follower of Christ. So that you may know that we are not simply making an assertion, we will direct your attention once again to his personal website. On this site, Mr. Geisler teaches what he believes one must do to be saved. Observe his "sinner's prayer":

"I hereby repent of my sins and trust Christ alone for my salvation. Thank you for your great gift of salvation. Teach me from your word, guide me in your work, and help me to walk in your way. Thank you in Jesus' name. Amen."

Both of these scribes understand the truth, up to a point, but both also deviate from the truth when truth conflicts with their traditions. Who is being "aberrant" truly?

In their question and answer session, perhaps they will ask him to explain his position on baptism for the remission of sins. In their Q&A why not ask him about this "sinner's prayer." Why not direct his attention to the way in which the apostle Paul "called on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). Someone

should also ask Geisler, "Which one are we: a cult or an aberrant group?"

Perhaps a better question would be directed to FHU. Namely: "Why is this man teaching on your campus in the first place?" Why have you hired him to teach the Bible "in your house"? Sadly, FHU has decided to receive one into their house who does not bring the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9-11).

Who Is Qualified to Teach the Saints?

Throughout the Scriptures, God has consistently established that only qualified individuals should offer sacrifices and spiritual service. You will recall how King Saul had to learn this lesson the hard way (1 Samuel 13:8-14).

Like Samuel in the days of old, we ask FHU, "What have you done?" As Samuel said to Saul, "You have done foolishly. You have not kept the commandment of the LORD your God, which He commanded you," so say we.

Paul has instructed us that only those who take heed unto the doctrine are qualified to save those who hear (1 Timothy 4:16). There is no salvation in the doctrine taught by Norman Geisler. He, like the scribe, will teach the commandments of Christ up to a point; but, when

Christ's commandments conflict with his manmade traditions, he like the scribe has chosen to depart rather than to follow the Lord.

For an example of this look no further than Geisler and Rhodes' book *Conviction Without Compromise*. The gist of this book is that many of the doctrines we hold true are of no importance to one's salvation.

Final Thoughts

Our purpose is not to cast a sinful judgment upon the FHU Graduate School of Theology, but a righteous one (John 7:24). Perhaps the judgment most disconcerting in all of this is the judgement which has been made by FHU.

They have judged that we do not have a brother in Christ who is qualified to teach on these subjects. They have judged that they would rather sit at the feet of a false teacher than a faithful gospel preacher.

Rather than choosing a faithful brother, they have chosen to "suffer fools gladly" (2 Corinthians 11:19). And for this reason, we are jealous over FHU with a godly jealousy (2 Corinthians 11:2); for they have chosen to receive one who preaches a different Jesus, has a different spirit, and speaks from a different gospel (2 Corinthians 11:4).

Years ago, Freed-Hardeman College would have invited such a man onto their campus only for the purpose of debating his error and defending the truth. Now, Freed-Hardeman University praises such a one and even asks for his autograph!

History has proven that anytime a school begins to care more about their standing with the world than their standing with God and their brethren, they are already gone. Is this true of FHU?

FHU will tell us that "other universities" do this too. Moses tells us not to follow a multitude to do evil (Exodus 23:2).

FHU has acted foolishly because they have disregarded the teaching of the apostle Paul. Paul wrote, "For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise" (2 Corinthians 10:12).

In conclusion, we ask FHU if the risk is worth the reward. Is it worth risking your reputation among brethren in order to be rewarded with the worldly recognition you so desire?

Andy Erwin

Big Orange Crush

John T. Polk, II

"This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness" (Ephesians 4:17-19 NKJV).

He, She, or Ze?

In Knoxville, Tennessee, The University of Tennessee's Pride Center Director, Donna Braquet requested on their website "that [a] teacher, rather than calling roll, will instead ask each student to provide the name and pronoun he or she—or 'ze'—wishes to be referred by. She says it relieves a burden for people expressing different genders or identities." (*The [Nashville] Tennessean*, "Tennessee students asked to use gender-neutral pronouns," August 30, 2015).

Why would anyone send their children to be educated by people

who don't even recognize basic pronouns?

In English, a noun is "the name of a person, place, or thing," and a pronoun takes the place of a noun. What noun are these manufactured pronouns replacing?

Try paying U.T. with checks signed by "ze!" "Answer a fool according to his folly, Lest he be wise in his own eyes" (Proverbs 26:5).

The Basics

Let's begin with the basics. In the Beginning, "God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them" (Genesis 1:27). Jesus Christ endorsed this by saying: "from the beginning of the creation, God 'made them male and female'" (Mark 10:6).

Simply put, since the Creation and from conception, all humans are either "male or female." Gender-wise, all who try to be what they are not are violating God's design.

In English, gender pronouns are "he, she, or it." Anyone who is not a "he" or a "she" is an "it." The University of Tennessee at Knox-

ville is confused by requesting so-called "neutral" pronouns. U. T.'s Volunteer football will be hard to follow if all jerseys have "ze" instead of their names!

What's Next?

The University of Tennessee's Pride Center Director has requested a gender-neutral pronoun, "ze," be used instead of student names. What's next: neutral answers in Mathematics and Biology?

God created the gender distinction of "male and female" (Genesis 1:27). He condemned confusion of clothes: "A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman's garment, for all who do so are an abomination to the LORD your God" (Deuteronomy 22:5).

God condemns confusion of sexual practice: "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived...Neither... homosexuals, nor sodomites...will inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

For U.T. to use pronouns that blur the distinction means they have sided with the ungodly and unrighteous. According to the Bible, "those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the

same but also approve of those who practice them" (Romans 1:32 NKJV). Has the University of Tennessee become an ivory tower of Babel?

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Go Set a Watchman

Mel Futrell

Go Set a Watchman is the title of a recent novel by now elderly Harper Lee [born 1926 in Monroeville, AL]. Lee's novel was originally written in the mid-1950s, but just published last month.

Much conversation and speculation preceded its publication; and since its release there has been a fair amount of disappointment registered about the author's character development of Atticus Finch. But it is the title of her novel that is of special interest to us in this article.

Although unknown to many, regular Bible readers of the Old Testament Scriptures were already quite familiar with the wording, "Go set a watchman". That phrase in fact is located in Isaiah 21:6 and reads like this from the New King James Version: "For thus has the Lord said to me: 'Go, set a watchman, Let him declare what he sees.'"

Obviously, the expression under consideration lies within a larger Biblical context -- it doesn't just stand alone; and we want to give some thought, however brief, to the context in which it appears before

branching off from there.

A Watchman in Context

Isaiah 21:1-10, in which our verse and phrase appear, is a section of Scripture dealing with the coming collapse of the nation of Babylon. In other words, this is a prophecy that "God would destroy pagan Babylon" [*The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Vol. 6, p.133].

Now it is helpful to remind ourselves that this enemy of Israel, Babylon, would take the Southern Kingdom of Judah into captivity in stages beginning in 606 B.C., and that Jerusalem itself would be destroyed in 586 B.C. Yet, the vision of Isaiah in chapter twenty-one is also clear that Babylon would eventually fall, and that fall we know from history would take place at the hands of the Medo-Persians led by Cyrus in 539 B.C.

As this section reveals, Isaiah hears a word from the Lord, "Go, set a watchman" (vs. 6). That watchman is duly appointed, does his job, and finally is able to accurately report, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen!" (Isaiah 21:9).

The word of the Lord is indeed always right and the need for a watchman then and now should be apparent to all, but such is not always the case. There is usually a small element in the church which doesn't see the necessity for the ready watchman among us. However, we would invite any among us so tragically in denial to consider the following passages of Holy Scripture that emphasize the need for watchfulness on the part of the individual and the local church.

The Need to be Watchmen Today

1. Matthew 26:41 - "Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation..."
2. Acts 20:31 - "Therefore watch, and remember..."

3. 1 Corinthians 16:13 - "Watch, stand fast in the faith..."

4. 2 Timothy 4:5 - "But you be watchful in all things..."

5. Hebrews 13:17 - "For they watch out for your souls..."

6. Revelation 3:2 - "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain..."

The simplicity and straightforwardness of Scripture is a marvel to the mind. Whether a preacher, an eldership, or a congregation, let us heed the call of the Lord in His word and "Go, set a watchman." Having done this with warnings or rewards, may we accurately declare what we see!

Being Comfortable with Error

Ronald Bryant

The Danger of Error

Error, though it may be only embryonic; though it may be marked out by a few unrefined tenets, if taught, is heretical and destructive.

Error may be set forth in the flow of conversation, and offered as merely opinion, but its influence becomes stronger as its direction

and strength stands against the truth of the word of God.

Error, no matter its origin, has seductive power and produces sentiments which develop a stronghold on the convictions of those deceived by it.

Some who teach and practice error have been foolish enough to

claim that God led them to that error which they now believe and practice. They reject the will of God, do that which He has never authorized, and then boldly say, "God led me to this."

Paul's Warning to Colossae

The errors in the church at Colossae arose within that church, being the product of a combination of influences. The character and the mental tendencies of both the philosophers of the Gentiles and of the Jews worked to the detriment of the church in Colossae.

Paul identifies these influences in specific terms. He warned them not to be deceived by persuasive words (2:4), and then to "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ" (2:8).

Again, he warned them, "Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God" (2:18,19).

Their departure from God was not in denying, but in dethroning Christ. They did not deny the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection; they devalued Him and His work in redemption.

They claimed spiritual status by means of ceremonial distinctions and ritual requirements. That which they embraced was wrapped up in false distinctions, and mystical concepts, which set aside the gospel of Christ. They altered the discipline and devotion of the gospel of Christ by their emphasis upon the mystical and magical.

Paul identified their error as empty philosophy, vain superstition, the adoration of angels instead of God, and the distorted application of parts of the Law of Moses.

The teachers of error at Colossae did not insist upon circumcision as required by the Law of Moses, but as a means of securing spiritual benefits. The distinctions of meats, the observance of feasts and holy days, were to the same end.

He addressed their false practice, that was in fact, "The show of wisdom and false humility in will worship, in the neglecting of the body;" all being regarded as an effective means to spiritual elevation; and

was accepted as a way superior to the gospel.

The Pharisees and the Essenes

A segment at Colossae sought spiritual elevation and security; they longed to come to know the unseen and to climb to spiritual heights via paying homage to philosophy, and to mystical and metaphysical concepts.

As the Pharisees that became Christians tended to become "Judaizers;" the Gentiles (especially those steeped in the philosophies of the Essenes tended to become mystics). The Pharisees, by long practice, had been rigid rule keepers; the Essenes tended to be mystics and theorists. One group sought to restore and bind certain parts of the Law; the other group sought to ascend into the unknown, even into the experiencing of the Divine.

The Pharisees were exacting in their efforts to systematize certain rituals and ceremonial days; the Essenes worked to obtain spiritual experience through such efforts as mediation and rigorous disciplines of self-denial. These Paul labeled: "philosophy and vain deceit."

It is very intriguing to consider how these two disparate groups merged in Colossae. The error in

the church at Colossae was slow in developing. Yet, it is a matter of record that it paved the way for Gnosticism and for other errors.

Conclusion

With this background, consider the following question: What will evil men turn to and embrace to show their contempt for God? What will they embrace in rejecting the Son of God?

Answers may prove to be illusive, but the following is to be readily embraced: God will not be mocked! He will act in accord with His eternal purpose and His revealed will.

No one can afford to show contempt for God, by embracing or in minimizing the danger of rejecting or perverting the word of God. The directives of the will of God are to be honored by all who would be one with God. (cf. Galatians 1:6 ff; 2 John 9-11).

Complimentary Issue

We are sending this month's issue to many of our former subscribers to let you know that the *Gleaner* is back in print and thriving on a monthly basis! Subscribe today!

Single subscriptions are \$12.00.

Remembering Foy E. Wallace, Sr.

Andy Erwin

Foy E. Wallace, Sr., was born June 2, 1871, at Decatur, Texas. He was a great gospel preacher and defender of the ancient gospel. He was known by many as the "Dean of Texas Ministers" when he died in 1949 (*Gospel Guardian*, December 1, 1949).

Early Preaching



Brother Wallace began preaching at the age of twenty-one in the rural communities of East Texas. He also did

mission work in the Indian Territory in the early 1890s. Of this period, Gussie Lambert wrote:

"While there, near what became Mansville, Oklahoma, he made friends with the miners by greeting them as they entered and returned from the mines. In those early days, religious prejudices were rife and tempers short. Freedom of speech was an ideal not understood or practiced. The strange doctrine of a pure gospel was a new thing not understood or respected. So, some of the men of the community resolved to

'stop that preacher.' The news leaked out that they intended to ride the preacher out of town on a rail. The miners got together and stood watch at the windows. When the men arose from the audience, with "throw the preacher out," the miners replied, 'sit down and let the man speak,' and they backed up their authority with drawn pistols. Such was the temperament of the place and times" (Gussie Lambert, *In Memoriam*, pg. 282 ff.).

Debating

His daughter, Willie, said that brother Wallace never issued a challenge for a debate, but never refused to defend the truth when challenged. She told of one such debate which occurred in 1910, while brother Wallace lived in Sherman, Texas. He went to Oklahoma to meet a Baptist minister named Cagle in debate. When the debate was over, he sent a telegram home informing the family that he would remain for another week to hold a meeting.

Later, during the week, he heard someone remark that Cagle was bragging about how he whipped him in the debate. Wallace remarked, "I

baptized his moderator, his son-in-law, two of his elders, and many of his members, 19 in all. If he calls that victory, I am glad to concede it." (Willie Wallace Speck, "I Remember My Dad." *Gospel Advocate*, March 23, 1978).

Family

On February 2, 1890, he married Martha Ann Higgins. To this union, nine children were born. Five boys: Cled, Foy Jr., Durward, Reba "R.E." and Willie; four girls: Tempal, Ellafrank, Mattie Lee, and Guille. On September 13, 1913, Martha Ann "Mattie" died after a prolonged illness.

On October 8, 1914, he married Jewell Jacobs. Two sons, Paul and Tom, were born to this union. "Mother Jewell" as she was known was very much beloved by the entire family. Both Martha Ann and Jewell were laid to rest beside the grave of brother Wallace.

Four of his sons became gospel preachers: Cled, Foy E., Jr., Paul, and Tom.

Later Years

When Tom was the last child at home in the late 30s and early 40s, he believed that brother Wallace did some of his most successful work as

a preacher. Brother Wallace was between 65 and 75 during these years. Tom credited this to

his determination, and a backlog of experience and knowledge many men lay aside at that age.

On a Sunday night, November 21, 1949, when word spread that Foy E. Wallace, Sr. was dying in a Tyler, Texas hospital, eleven sons and daughters rushed from various directions to be with him. Some did not make it, but Guille, who did, arrived just before he lapsed into unconsciousness. He looked at her and said, "Honey, I'm all right."

Wallace died November 21, 1949, at Tyler. He is buried in the cemetery in Georgetown, Texas.



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Where Are You Living?

Genesis 3:9

1. We start with the story of Adam's transgression. Genesis 3:1-7.
2. The first question is two-fold: physical and spiritual.
3. Man, after all, is a two-fold being. 2 Corinthians 4:16.
4. Your physical address is one thing; but your spiritual address is quite another. Where are you living spiritually?

I. Some Are Living In Pleasure.

- A. Consider the worldly widow. 1 Timothy 5:6. They call it "living" but really they are "dead." The hand of God has erased the word "living" and replaced it with "dead"! Revelation 3:1.
- B. The description of some rich folks. James 5:5; Luke 16:19-31.
- C. Pleasures that must be avoided: Doubtful- Romans 14:23; those that lead others to sin- Romans 14:15; 1 Corinthians 8:9; those that have the appearance of evil. 1 Thessalonians 5:22.

II. Some Are Living In Malice and Envy.

- A. Folks vicious in character, and displeased at others' good fortune.
- B. Look at the company Paul puts these folks in. Titus 3:3
- C. Consider what it leads to: Cain killed Abel- Genesis 4:4-8; Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery- Acts 17:9; Saul persecuted David- 1 Samuel 18:8, 9; Herodias had John the Baptist beheaded- Mark 6:19-29

III. Some Are Abiding In Darkness.

- A. Those without Christ. John 3:19, 20; 12:35, 46; Colossians 1:13
- B. Spring break in Florida is a good example. Galatians 5:19-21. (Out playing in the sun in the kingdom of darkness! Know no shame. And how great is that darkness!!! Matthew 6:23)
- C. Darkness leads to blindness. 1 John 2:11; 2 Corinthians 4:4, 5.

IV. Some Are Abiding In Love.

- A. Love for God. 1 John 4:19; Matthew 22:36-40; 1 John 5:3
 - B. Love for enemies. Matthew 5:44; Romans 12:17-21
 - C. Love for brethren, which: Shows a preference for each other- Romans 12:10; Galatians 6:10; Manifest kindness- Ephesians 4:32; Forgiveness- Matthew 6:12-15; Handles offenses- Matthew 18:15; and Tries not to offend- James 3:2; Proverbs 18:19
1. Are you "in" or "out" of God's family. 1 Peter 4:17, 18?
 2. Are you "at home" or in the "far country?" Luke 15:13
 3. The "now" determines the "hereafter"! John 5:28, 29

-Mike Kiser

QUALIFICATIONS OF ELDERS AND DEACONS

Ivie Powell

2 Timothy 1:5 informs us why Paul left Timothy in Crete, "...that thou mayest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee."

It is the design of God that every congregation should have elders. No congregation is complete or "set in order" without elders and deacons.

Honor God's Qualifications

Unfortunately, in their desire to have elders, many congregations have ignored the qualifications as set forth in scripture in order for men to serve as elders. So many times men have been selected because of "outward externals" such as being well educated, financially successful, a long established member, well liked, etc., and not because they meet the qualifications as set forth in the Bible. In such cases, God does not accept them, although they have been "selected" and "appointed."

There is no question that as goes the eldership, so goes the church. Whether or not a congregation re-

mains faithful too the Lord depends to a great degree on the eldership.

I know of no area that has a greater impact on the church now and in the future than the selection of elders and deacons.

The principle of sowing and reaping (Galatians 6:7-8) certainly has application in the realm of leadership. If the wrong men are placed in leadership, the consequences will be devastating for the cause of Christ!

This is why it is such a crucial matter, and if not handled according to the Scriptures, strife and division will occur. As guardians of the flock, "overseers" (Acts 20:28) have the awesome responsibility of:

- Instructing the church (Acts 20:28, 1 Timothy 3:2)
- Defending the faith (Titus 1:9, Jude 3)
- Ruling the church (1 Timothy 5:17), but not as "lords over God's heritage" (1 Peter 5:3)
- Admonishing brethren (1 Thessalonians 5:12)
- Watching (1 Timothy 3:2)

- Setting the proper example (1 Timothy 5:3)

Not just anyone can serve as an elder. God has given the qualifications for those desiring the work of an elder (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-11).

As one studies the qualifications, he must immediately notice the emphatic "must" in 1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:7. Therefore, it is essential that one "must" meet every qualification, not just a few, if he is to serve as an elder.

"The Constituent Element Argument"

Many have tried "The Constituent Element Argument" which basically states that all of the parts make up the whole. Thus, the argument is that no one man possesses all of the qualifications, but all those desiring the office of an elder make up the total qualifications. This simply is not true!

It is true that one man may be stronger in some areas than others. Nevertheless, he "must" meet each qualification if he is to serve the Lord as one of the shepherds of the flock!

It must be pointed out that being an elder is not a title to be worn, but a work to be performed. If one does

not understand this, he has no business being appointed an elder. Men who have a Diotrophes attitude, ("the church boss" 3 John 8-10), should never be appointed as elders.

The Work of Deacons

Deacons play a valuable role in the Lord's work as well. They are special servants assigned duties, thus relieving the elders so that they (the elders) can be about the work of tending the flock.

Deacons are not "Jr. Elders." Neither do they possess authority as elders. Many have been erroneously taught that elders are over the spiritual and deacons are over the physical, but this is simply not true. As "overseers", elders are over all of the work. Deacons can assist elders in whatever capacity the elders deem necessary e.g. physical plant, finances, restoring members, teaching, etc.

Those desiring the work of a deacon "must" also meet every qualification set forth in the Bible (1 Timothy 3:8-13).

Without question, deacons help the church function as God intended. Of their work Paul says, "For they that have used the office of a deacon well purchase to themselves a good degree and great boldness in

the faith which is Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 3:13).

Like elders, deacons must understand that being a deacon is not a title to be worn, but a work to be performed.

In Conclusion

Whether or not the church of Christ remains true to the Lord will be largely determined by the elders.

There is not a more grave responsibility than that of serving as an el-

der. This is why if one does not have the intent of carrying out the responsibilities God assigned to elders they should not accept the position. Bear in mind, there will be a special accounting elders must give at the Day of Judgment (Hebrews 13:17). Fortunate, indeed, are congregations who have scripturally qualified elders!



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COMMUNION ON FRIDAY?

Raymond Elliott

The following announcement was taken from the website of the Landmark church of Christ in Montgomery, Alabama:

"40 Days of Prayer and Fasting"

"Beginning on August 24th, our Landmark family will commit to 40 days of prayer and fasting. We are specifically praying and fasting concerning our attitudes as a church toward prayer and submission, our missionary families we support as a body and their work all over the world, and our local ministries. We are called to be a people who are devoted to seeking his face. We believe that by participating in these spiritual disciplines as a church family, we will see the Lord move in mighty ways for the glory of his name.

We will be fasting each Friday during the 40 day period, which ends on October 2nd. Each Friday at 5:30, we will gather at Landmark to break our fast by taking communion together. Please join us!"

♦ ♦ ♦

There is much to be commended in this announcement, provided that

the truth is spoken in its purity. Individual fasting is regulated by Jesus as recorded in Matthew 6:16-18. And we read in Acts 13:1-3 that members of the church in Antioch fasted, so we find no fault in this practice. It is in this sentence found in the announcement that is both disturbing and troubling: "Each Friday at 5:30, we will gather at Landmark to break our fast by **taking communion together**" (Emphasis, RE).

The practice of partaking of the Lord's Supper on any given day and on various occasions is more prevalent than most members of the church realize. There are preachers who have been teaching that this practice is scriptural and have been influencing brethren over the years to accept this false doctrine.

It is not surprising that the elders of the Landmark condone this practice since they have allowed the instrument to be used in various assemblies during the week days. But it is so sad and disappointing.

What also is disturbing is the fact that their campus minister encour-

ages college students at Faulkner University and perhaps other universities in the Montgomery area to attend the assemblies at Landmark during their stay while in school. Parents who live in the state of Alabama and other states who send their sons and daughters to Faulkner may not know what is being taught and practiced at the Landmark Church.

It is not the purpose of this article to prove from the Scriptures that communion is to be partaken only on the first day of the week, but to inform brethren of this practice that is being done at the Landmark Church.

-Editor's Note-

We love and appreciate brother Elliott for informing us of this sad digression, and we share in his concern. Brother Raymond has also told us of a fine article written by Wayne Jackson which addresses this issue. It is to be found on the *Christian Courier* website and is titled: "Did the Early Church Observe the Lord's Supper on a Daily Basis?"

For our readers who may find themselves confronted by this practice, let us share with you some scriptural references to help.

While under the direction of inspired men the Lord's church came together (assembled) into one place as a church or congregation of God's people (1 Corinthians 11:17, 18, 20).

When they were thus assembled, one of the things they were supposed to do was to partake of the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:20).

The church was not to forsake this assembly, but was to encourage each other as the day (of the assembly) was approaching (Hebrews 10:25). The day of this assembly was known as the Lord's day (Revelation 1:10).

The day of this assembly was the first day of the week (Sunday), the day of our Lord's resurrection (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2). You will observe that Paul was in Troas for several days prior to Sunday, but the church did not come together for the Lord's Supper until Sunday.

If we wish to follow the teaching of the New Testament, we will assemble on the first day of the week, and we will partake of the Lord's Supper during this assembly. Churches that partake of the Lord's Supper at any other time do so without New Testament authority.

News & Notes

News from Ivie Powell

September 14-16: Along with Rick Brumbach and Don Hatch, I was at the Broadway church of Christ in Tyler, Texas to appear on their Searching the Scriptures forum. This was my third time to be on this forum. We had outstanding crowds and the forum created a great deal of interest. Brother Jim Laws is the local minister.

September 20-23: I was at the Prairie Grove church of Christ in Caulfield, Missouri where Doyle Garner has preached a great number of years. We had excellent attendance during the meeting.

September 27: I filled in for Keith Cozort at the Mountain Grove church of Christ in Mountain Grove, Missouri.

October 4-7: I will be with the Lord's church in Clark Ridge, AR.

As stated in a previous correspondence, I have retired from local work and am conducting Gospel Meetings as opportunities arise. I can be reached at PO Box 92, West Plains, MO 65775.

The brethren at Curry Street continue to be strengthened by the outstanding preaching of Larry Yarber, the local evangelist, as well as the outstanding articles in the *Gospel Gleaner*.

News from Ronald Bryant

Prescott, AZ: Ronald Bryant has been hired to follow Mike Scott at the Mt. Vernon congregation in Prescott, Arizona.

Brother Scott recently died from brain cancer. Please keep the Scott family in your prayers, as well as this good congregation, and Ronald and Susan Bryant.

News from Jeff Archey

Cleveland, AL: The East Side church of Christ in Cleveland, TN had a successful meeting with bro. Alan Highers September 20 -23, 2015. The theme was "Edify, Evangelize, and Analyze."

On Sunday, brother Highers addressed lessons to edify the local congregation as the lessons delivered were *A Survey of Church History*, *A Portrait of Christ from the Scriptures* and *The Church of Christ Is Different*.

Monday and Tuesday evening, the emphasis was on evangelism considering *The Hardest Command* in

the Bible and Obedience to the Gospel. The final evening was a lesson to analyze the challenges before us as we considered *Dangers Facing the Church.*

We were greatly encouraged with brethren from all around the Cleveland and Chattanooga area as far away as Ellijay, GA and Maryville, TN that made the trip. It was estimated 15-20 congregations were represented during the week expressing the unity within the area. Evening attendance far exceeded our average. Brother Highers commended the church for its work and the attendance each evening.

If you are visiting in the Chattanooga area, traveling on I-75, please consider visiting the East Side congregation. Specific directions are at www.eastsidecoc.org, (423) 472-0901.

News from Cuba

Clinton, MS: Robert Shelton writes in the Fall 2015 issue of the *Magnolia Messenger* that "the church of Christ is currently the fastest growing religious institution in Cuba!"

To find out more about this work contact the Clinton church of Christ. 115 Brookside Circle; Clinton, MS 39056

Mission Report from Africa

Ronald and Carolyn Gilbert, Charlie Hannah, Rusty and Laura Stark, and Clinton Douglas recently returned from a very successful campaign in Zambia, Uganda, and Kenya. Here are a few of the things the Lord did through them:

- We sent 200,000 Gospel tracts in different languages.
- We sent 3,000 song books in Luo language.
- Several boxes of books for preacher schools
- Purchased 62 bikes for preachers
- Purchased 518 Bibles in different languages
- Purchased 21.37 tons of maize for those in need
- Gave away two lap tops
- Left funds at 6 preacher schools to help the work
- We had 15 ICOTB students to graduate.
- 27 men graduated from preacher schools
- 69 baptisms
- 103 restorations

For information as to how you can support this good work write to:

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WHAT BRETHREN ARE SAYING ABOUT NORMAN GEISLER AND FHU

Thank you for taking a stand. Thank you for letting us know what is taking place at Freed. Your editorial for the *Gleaner* is well written and fair. More and more I am coming to the conclusion that we simply can't trust our Christian universities. They appear to have more respect for the world of scholarship than for conformity to the simple truth of Scripture. I have long recommended Freed-Hardeman as the best and soundest of our Christian colleges. I will not do this any longer.

Rod Rutherford
Powell, TN

It occurred to me this evening: Wouldn't it be a shame if FHU let secular newspaper editorials persuade them to cancel Bill Cosby's controversial speaking engagement on campus, but the school refuses to hear editors from faithful brotherhood journals who would persuade them to cancel Norman Geisler's controversial speaking engagement on campus? Who has the greater influence on who gets to be an honored speaker at Freed-Hardeman: a

gospel paper or a Memphis newspaper? Who is the school really concerned to please?

Steve Gibson
Nashville, TN

Men like Thomas Warren, William Woodson, J. D. Bales, and many others who climbed high on the ladder of scholarship, never left their students in doubt regarding false teaching and false teachers. I can recall some who were very bright stars in my graduating class at FH"C" who rose high on the ladder of scholarship that I doubt would be invited back to FH "U" to give these same three lectures, and they have mastered them better than Geisler.

There is NOT one subject that Geisler has written on that he is exceptional...NOT ONE. I have read him for years! We have brethren who can lecture rings around him on the subjects he is supposed to talk to the young scholars about.

FHU is being misled to waste money and influence on a fellow who ridicules the church of Christ, and teaches the same old pathetic

weak kneed Calvinistic Baptist assumptions our brethren answered years ago in debate.

If this business is not "checked" it is only going to become worse. Who is next on the list? Wayne Gruden? Rick Warren? John MacArthur? Erwin Lutzer? R. Kent Hughes?

I guess Hardeman cheated his class by not having Bogard come and lecture! G.K. Wallace should have had Dixon bring in Hunt and Barber. Tom Holland ought to have brought in John R.W. Stott; and maybe some of us could have had a little better exposure to academic learning if Clyde Woods had brought in Charles Pfeiffer!!! Enough! Enough!

Mike Kiser
Sylacauga, AL

Dear brother Andy: I am surprised by what you report in your message. I think you are right to be alarmed by this development. You have hit the nail on the head when you observed the insinuation that "we do not have a brother in Christ who is qualified to teach on these subjects." We DO have such brethren. I am saddened by your mes-

sage. I mention you frequently in my prayers. You are a great encouragement, and I wish you well in your good work.

Tom McLemore
Selma, AL

Open Letter from Gerald Cowan

I am aware of FHU's plan to present Dr. Norman Geisler in special lectures to the Graduate School of Theology and I am not happy about it. I agree that Dr. Geisler is a major voice in apologetics, but he is a theologian too and he should be true to the words and intents of the Bible rather than promoting a sectarian point of view -- above all in doctrine that bears upon salvation.

His books are useful and can be used as reference materials, but edited and corrected where wrong so that students are not misled. Academics ought to be aware of truth and error wherever it is found. Academics concerned for the souls of those placed under their tutelage should be scrupulous and zealous to prevent absorption of error by their students. The use of written materials and publications does not present the same danger as a teacher's presence and personal address to the

students. The perception of the students and any others who know of it will be that the teacher is accepted, trusted, and should be heard without censorship. Whether he is engaged for a series of lectures, as an adjunct professor, or as a permanent employee, he has implicit approval of the employer. You are aware that some will still say (the number is smaller than it has been in the past), "If FHU accepts him, he must be trustworthy, so I will accept him too."

It may be that having a man of Dr. Geisler's academic stature agree to appear even for a brief time on campus may be supposed to enhance the university's status in the academic community. It is not necessarily the case that God will approve us just because others, among whom we desire to appear as peers, accept and approve us. If status is the goal I'd rather it be with God than with the most prestigious of institutions that God would not approve.

I think perhaps the scramble for accolades, awards, and academic degrees from pseudo-Christian entities has clouded the minds of those who are no longer content to be called faithful by the church and no longer able or willing to certify that

they are leading in the true way of the Lord those who come to them for instruction.

When I first heard of this present error -- engaging Dr. Geisler to speak to the future preachers of our congregations and future instructors in our schools -- I wrote this response:

"Disturbing, distressing, disappointing and more. False teachers raise their own poled-serpents and poled-sycophants view them with hope that they will lead to God's approval and salvation. FHU should repent their use of "names" from sports, entertainment, politics -- and now false religion -- in hope of raising funds, and finding acceptance among 'peers' in academia. Maybe a graduate school of theology is not really the same as a school of Bibliology. The Bible is words from God. Theology is somebody else's words about God. I miss the 'old school,' the school I attended five decades ago and have loved and promoted for much of the time since -- the school that has been slowly and surreptitiously eroding and disappearing for about twenty years -- the FHC that *was* but is no more."

When I am asked what schools I attended I mention Both Freed-Hardeman College and Harding

Graduate School of Religion, but I take care to mention that neither of those schools exists any more -- the institutions that have succeeded and replaced them are not the same reliable trustworthy true-to-scripture schools they once were. I do not want anyone to think I stand where those schools and several others of *our* schools now stand.

I am an old man with no prestige and no money, so my feelings and remarks will probably carry no weight or influence. But I pray that those who are steering the course for FHU will rethink the mission and re-chart the course.

In service to Christ,

Gerald Cowan
Marion, IL

The Freed-Hardeman University Graduate School of Theology erred in hiring Norman Geisler -- a man who thinks of the church of Christ as a cult, who substitutes the "Sinners' Prayer" for the plan of salvation, and who cannot even understand Jesus' words "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" in Mark 16:16.

This graduate school is, after all, still a part of Freed-Hardeman, and they did not have the right to make such a reckless decision without the approval of the university leadership. What they have done in inviting this evangelical, denominational teacher has crossed the line. It tarnishes the university's reputation for Biblical soundness.

We have always wanted to be able to recommend Freed-Hardeman whenever we have been asked if we could recommend a Christian university for prospective students.

James R. McGill
Nashville, TN

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James W. Berry
Montgomery, Alabama

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Editorial

Why Be a Member of the Church of Christ

In this article we shall discuss four reasons why one should be a member of the church of Christ (cf. Matthew 16:18).

The Study of Scripture

When we speak of the church of Christ, we speak of the church of the Bible. We speak of the church as it appears in the New Testament.

One can study the Bible, and the Bible alone, and learn all that he needs to know about the Lord's church and how to become a member of it. The Bible teaches us when, where, and how the church began (Acts 2). The Bible teaches us how to become a member of the church (Acts 2:38-41, 47).

From Acts 2 – Revelation 22, every person who became a Christian became a member of the same church and became a member in the same way – by obeying the same gospel. Nothing has changed. It is this way today. The Lord has never altered His word or His will on this matter.

The Bible teaches us about the organization and leadership of the church (Acts 14:23; 1 Tim 2-3).

The Bible teaches us how the church worshipped. One can read about the singing, communion, giving, preaching, and praying of the church from the Bible.

The Bible teaches us of no other church (Ephesians 1:22-23; 4:4-5; 1 Corinthians 12:13), with no other name (Acts 4:12). From Acts 2 – Revelation 22, only one church is ever found in the Bible. No denominations existed. No manmade creeds existed. We find one church being governed by one rule of faith and practice – the New Testament; and this is all we find.

The church which began on Pentecost began with Heaven's approval, guidance, and blessing. It was taught by inspired men. It was taught everything God intended to teach them (John 16:13), and these teachings were recorded for us in the New Testament (2 Peter 1:3).

The Study of Church History

One might wonder how, when, and where denominations began. Seeing that we do not find any of the denominations described or ever mentioned in the Scriptures, we must look outside of the Scriptures.

Church history teaches us the origin of denominationalism and its many doctrines. The first division occurred over the practice of presiding bishops – a practice never taught in the Bible.

Immersion of believers was replaced with sprinkling and pouring of children, and then replaced altogether by the sinner's prayer and faith only doctrines.

Human traditions became the rule in worship services with additions of choirs and instrumental music. Changes were also made to prayer, giving, and the communion.

Preachers became priests and then pastors. Women became preachers as well.

With each new movement a new name was added and a new creed was written in order to distinguish that group from other groups.

The Desire to be Saved and to Save Others

Having reached the conclusion that the Bible teaches us of only one church, and that church history teaches us about all other churches, one must determine either to follow the Bible or the doctrines of men. Many denominational preachers and participants reached this conclusion in the 1800s here in America. They began to cast off their manmade

creeds and names and return to the New Testament as their sole rule of faith and practice. Such a return is possible today.

The desire to be saved caused them to follow the truth. They understood that one must obey the Bible to be saved (Hebrews 5:8-9; John 12:48; 1 Thessalonians 1:7-9; 1 Peter 1:22-25; James 1:21).

One cannot obey the doctrines and commandments of men and be pleasing to God (Matthew 15:6-9; Mark 7:5-13). If we obey the Bible, we will be added to the church of the Bible. If we obey the doctrines of men, we will be added by men to a church originating with men. We must decide whom we shall obey (Acts 5:29).

The desire to be saved and to save others will lead us to the truth as well. One must obey the Bible if he is going to help others to be saved (1 Timothy 4:16; Philippians 4:9). Otherwise, he would be just another case of the blind leading the blind (Matthew 15:14; Matthew 23).

Conclusion

Why are you a member of the church to which you belong? Is it because you are doing what the Bible has taught you to do?

Andy Erwin

“I’ll Speak What the Lord Says”

Ernest Underwood

1 Kings 22 records an interesting account from which we can learn some valuable lessons. Let us notice this incident.

The Biblical Narrative

Ahab is the wicked king of Israel. He has the desire to attack the Syrians who are occupying the territory of Ramoth in Gilead. Jehoshaphat, the rather good, but naive king of Judah, is pressured by Ahab to ally himself with Israel in attacking the Syrians. Jehoshaphat, in a small spurt of wisdom, tells Ahab that he will go, but first they must “seek the counsel of the Lord” to see if He will be with them.

Verse six of this chapter records: “So the king of Israel brought together the prophets--about four hundred men--and asked them, “Shall I go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall I refrain?” “Go up,” they answered, “for the Lord will give it into the king’s hand.”

Wicked Ahab had already shown on other occasions that he cared nothing at all for what the Lord had to say about anything. He knew that his hand-picked prophets were false

and that they would pander to his every wish.

Jehoshaphat, on the other hand, is not satisfied. He, too, knows that Ahab’s prophets are not true prophets of God. He therefore asks, “Is there not still a prophet of the LORD here, that we may inquire of Him?” (v.7)

Reluctantly, Ahab admits that there is “still one man” by whom they may inquire of the Lord—the man Micaiah! However, Ahab informs Jehoshaphat that he has no use for Micaiah because “...he does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil” (v.8).

Nevertheless, he sent for God’s prophet. The messenger who was sent to bring Micaiah encouraged him to say those words to Ahab that the king wanted to hear. He advised him: “Now listen, the words of the prophets with one accord encourage the king. Please, let your word be like the word of one of them, and speak encouragement” (v.13).

This brave prophet of God was quick and decisive with his reply, stating in no uncertain terms, “As

the LORD lives, whatever the LORD says to me, that I will speak" (v.14).

The account continues and ends with Micaiah telling Ahab that God would not be with him in his desire; with Ahab being upset with Micaiah and having him sent back into custody; and Micaiah telling Ahab that he would not return from the battle alive. It also tells us that in spite of the word of the true prophet of God, Jehoshaphat decided to go ahead and enter the conflict. The Syrians won the battle. Ahab was killed in battle.

The Christian's Application

There are some lessons to be learned from this incident:

- (1) Evil men will try to entice good men to join them in their doings.
- (2) A good man refused to believe the voice of false prophets.
- (3) True servants of God are many times hated because they tell what God says, rather than what some may want to hear.
- (4) People of God must speak exactly what God says in His word, regardless of the consequences.
- (5) When one does not listen to the voice of God, he will suffer the

consequences of which God warns.

There is still one more lesson that should be learned by those who are clamoring for change according to the world, but not for what God says. Namely, leaders in the Lord's church should spend their time learning what God commands, and not what men may say.

May every faithful child of God determine in his heart to emulate the example of Micaiah by speaking and practicing truth. "You shall know the truth, and the truth will make you free" (John 8:32).

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Objective Truth

David Pharr

Without reservation and without embarrassment or awkwardness, I declare my trust and confidence that God has provided for man an absolute and complete body of truth and that His truth is made known to us through the verbal revelation of Holy Scripture.

Our confidence is with Peter that "his divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3). This means that God has given us indisputable facts, authoritative instructions, and unbreakable promises.

Facts Are Facts, Truth Is Truth

Human philosophy is never an exact science. It revels in raising questions, but concludes without conclusions. The only thing it is sure about is that it ultimately it is unsure. Its facts are always relative and therefore not relative facts.

"Great thinkers" may be admired for their ability to write long treatises with high sounding terminology and vague concepts but absent objective conclusions. A friend of mine who was working on an advanced degree was cautioned by a

less educated brother: "You better be careful or you're liable to get 'over-learned' and confused." The point is that in everyday living and especially in things spiritual we need facts, we need truth.

Theoretical mathematics may invent new terms and calculate from a different base, but in practical terms it will always be an absolute fact that "two plus two equals four."

In science numerous hypotheses are advanced and may be accepted or rejected, but the actual facts of nature are always the same and always unchangeable, whether accepted or not.

Likewise, historical facts are absolute. We may be ignorant of things that happened in the past. We may have different interpretations of what can be known. People might refuse to believe historical facts. Nonetheless what occurred is what occurred.

Jesus of Nazareth either rose from the dead or he did not. The evidence proves that he did. It is a fact of history, whether people believe it or not.

God Is

This brings us to the question of absolute truth in respect to religion and morals. The first fact is that God is. Many do not believe this. Unbelievers may find considerable comfort in the assumption that there is no God, that life can be lived unfettered by divinely imposed restraints or by fear of judgment. But does declaring oneself not to believe in God make God go away?

If God is, He still is, regardless of unbelief. "If we believe not, yet he abideth faithful: he cannot deny himself" (2 Timothy 2:13). Neither man's belief nor his unbelief has any bearing on the fact of God's existence.

It is only because of God being who He is that humanity can possibly have any moral direction at all. Consider the simple terms: *should* and *ought*. They may be used causally in regard to circumstances or expectations, but in regard to moral integrity they are absolute.

Without God, however, there can be no perfect standard of right and wrong. Only humans, created in the image of God, have a sense of "oughtness". A dog may have affection, may be trained for certain commands, and may react to various

conditions, but only humans act from conscience. The point is not that one's conscience is always right, but rather simply that there is such a thing as conscience, a sense that there is a difference between right and wrong.

Atheists struggle to define a basis for morality. Christians know that right is right because God is the God of truth, love, and justice.

The existence of an objective body of truth comes from the fact of God and from what kind of God He is. He is "a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he" (Deuteronomy 32:4).

The moral and spiritual principles He sets before us are not arbitrary and subjective to divine whims. It was not that at some point the Lord said, "I think I will make up a list of commandments." Rather, it is His own nature, the divine character, that determines every issue. "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandment: and his commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:3).

With good intentions we sometimes argue for the practical advantages of moral conduct. "Honesty is the best policy." "You would probably be found out." "Think

about your reputation." Such may serve well as reinforcements, but more than anything else men and women, boys and girls, need a conscience filled with the reality that God is and the kind of God He is.

God Hath Spoken

To believe in God is not to believe in a god, but the God, the God of the Bible. He is not the god of non-Christian religions, nor the god of pagan morality. He is not a god of subjective imagination.

It is popular to make allowances for whatever kind of god one chooses. It also seems popular to claim faith in the God of the Bible, while not having faith in everything God says in the Bible. This is widely demonstrated in controversies over both doctrine and morality, in which people subjectively approve of ideas which suit their agendas and with equal subjectivity refuse what they don't like.

King Cyrus apparently took a broad-minded approach regarding the various religions of his empire, but Jehovah insisted He alone is God and that what He says is right.

"For thus saith the LORD that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it

not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited: I am the LORD ; and there is none else. I have not spoken in secret, in a dark place of the earth: I said not unto the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain: I the LORD speak righteousness, I declare things that are right" (Isaiah 45:18f).

The context gives a remarkably detailed prophecy which was clearly fulfilled in history. It is such a thing that demonstrates the rightness of what God has spoken.

The immutable rightness of God's word is expressed beautifully and without reservation in Psalm 19:7-9. "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether."

The Bible is Right

The God of the Bible cannot lie (Titus 1:2). To know this is precious when our hope is based on His promises.

The author of Hebrews noted that God's promise to Abraham had been confirmed by the immutable

divine oath but that whatever God says is equally immutable because it is "impossible for God to lie" (Hebrews 6:12ff). How hopeless indeed would be man's hope if the Bible's promises were false!

We do not trust the Bible because it is the Bible, but because God is God. It is His unchangeableness that assures His word to be unchangeable.

"God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" (Numbers 23:19).

He is "a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he" (Psa. 31:5). If God can be found wrong on any point, doubt must be raised on every point. If the Bible is right it is always right.

It is obvious that the Bible writers were convinced that they were writing absolute truth. Literally thousands of times the Bible affirms it is what "the Lord said." The Bible is "scripture of truth," "the word of the Lord," "the scripture cannot be broken," "all scripture . . . by inspiration of God," "oracles of God," "thy word is truth," etc. The Bible claims to reveal the truth of

God. Either the claim is true, else it is false. It is not made true by whether we accept it. It is not falsified because we don't like it.

Absolute truth is exclusive truth. The Spirit of Truth guided the apostles into "all truth" (John 16:13). Divine inspiration guided the apostles and prophets (2 Peter 1:20f; 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 3:2).

What they spoke was "not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth; combining spiritual things with spiritual (words)" makes their writings inerrant and exclusive in all matters of "life and godliness" (1 Corinthians 2:13 ASV; 2 Peter 1:3).

The possibility of any error or lack of essential truth would be an indictment against "the Spirit of Truth," against the mind of God Himself (see 1 Corinthians 2:10ff).

Further, "all truth" leaves no room for "other" truth. This is obvious not only because it is so declared, but also in the abysmal failure of every other ethical and spiritual system ever devised by man.

Worldly-minded people may think Christians are naive when we regard what the Bible says to be sufficient and final. Various opinions on current moral issues are

bantered about in the media and in personal conversation. The world thinks it's fair enough that educators, counselors, and politicians have their ways of defending what they believe and the agendas they promote. But when a man of God simply says, "This is what the Bible says," it's apt to fall on unconcerned, even disdainful ears.

The Lord said regarding Israel, "I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing" (Hosea 8:12). Ephraim's idolatry was not because of lack of revelation. "Great things," or "ten thousand, myriads," points to the sufficiency and value of instructions given. There is neither lack of guidance nor absence of value. The law could not be dismissed as though it was no longer applicable.

What Jehovah had written in the law, was still His law. The Bible is perpetually "alive and powerful" (Hebrews 4:12; cf. 1 Peter 1:24). But all was "strange" (foreign) to them.

So it is today. There may have been a time in much of America when "the Scriptures say" might have alerted careful attention. Too rarely now!

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A Powerful Mind

Ron Thomas

The power of the mind is significant. If one thinks on a particular thing for a while, then it is possible that particular thought might turn into a conviction. It does not matter that the thought turned conviction is based on something less than reality. All that matters, to some, is the desired thought now residing in "conviction mode."

The Story of Micah

One reads about such an approach in Judges 17. Micah was a man, like other men in Israel at that time, who lived with two ideas.

First, he lived with the idea that he could do as he desired (17:6). Since there was no king in Israel this, in effect, meant there was no ruling authority, including God.

Second, his belief that he could do as he desired allowed him to think that the Lord was on his side. This is illustrated in Micah's life with his hiring of a Levite priest to serve his household.

It is almost as if Micah thought of his new priest as a "household charm." "Then Micah said, 'Now I know that the LORD will be good to

me, since I have a Levite as priest!'" (Judges 17:13, NKJV).

Three Points to Consider

There are three points to consider from this verse that can be of help to us today. They are 1) Now I know, 2) The Lord will be good to me, and 3) I have a Levite priest.

Micah was of the opinion and conviction that, with his knowledge, his house would be protected by the Lord. This is similar to those who express an opinion relative to guardian angels.

We have heard it a number of times that a sincere person will actually believe that they are in the Lord's good way because their particular "guardian angel" protected them from something or other. If you ask about this guardian angel, "How do you know that is what prevented you from suffering harm?" the one who answers you will say something like "I just know." In other words, it is not based upon a substantive knowledge given by God, or some other source that might be credible. It was (and is) an "I want to believe" type situa-

tion, and “don’t confuse me with anything to the contrary!”

A second point to consider is that with Micah’s “knowledge” he knew the Lord was going to be good to him. How did he know this? He took what he felt to be his knowledge of the situation, and built upon it another layer of conviction.

One might call this a “super-structure” conviction. It did not matter, from the Lord’s vantage point. There was not even a substantive knowledge for Micah to begin with wherein he could build a protective barrier, much less a “super-structure”! What mattered was that Micah thought there was.

A key point to this perspective of Micah’s was in how he defined the word “good.” Just how was the Lord going to be “good” to Micah? Consider his previous experience. First, he “found” a large sum of money; this large sum of money had a curse on it. Second, Micah was not adversely affected by it (presumably). Third, the returned money was given, a portion at least (17:3), back to Micah who was “blessed by the Lord” (as his mother expressed it), and Micah then built a religious object. Fourth, it was certainly the “providence” of the Lord that Micah saw a Levite priest. With all this,

how could one possibly think the Lord was not on Micah’s side!

A third point to consider relative to Micah’s conviction was the Levite priest. The Levitical priesthood was a God-ordained position of religious service and authority. Micah saw a young man wandering about, looking for a place to reside and serve the people. Surely Micah thought he was at the right time at this particular location, the right place, with of the right opinion about what was occurring in his life. The Lord blessed him!

Micah took his experiences and formed a creed in his mind that was surely a directive for his life. Add to this the Lord’s directive of a young Levite priest, and it is easy to see why the mind became so powerful in belief. Micah became arrogant in his attitude, believing he was self-sufficient, for he proclaimed ‘now I know.

Application

First, one’s knowledge is very important, but the source of that knowledge is crucial. We can gain much from secular sources in this life, but for the life that is beyond this physical realm there is only one source of knowledge that is substantive and factual. It is the knowledge

of one already there. Jesus said to his disciple, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

Secondly, one can know that the Lord will be good to him or her when there is loving obedience to His word (cf. 1 John 5:1-3). To operate in a way that is different from this is to have a knowledge that is only superficial.

Paul gave some profound advice to the young preacher Timothy when he said, "O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge" (1 Timothy 6:20).

Third, the inclusion of some religious component (such as the Levite priest), does not necessarily make for something to be pleasing to God. To make use of that which the Lord ordained is to make use of that which the Lord ordained in *all* matters.

Noah was commended because he obeyed God in *all* respects (Genesis 6:22), and the same was said with regard to Moses (Deuteronomy 34:10-12). For those who live under the authority of the New Testament

(all of humanity), the apostle John wrote, "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome" (1 John 5:2-3).

Conclusion

Micah later learned that his earlier perspective, which turned into a conviction, was empty. He was sure the Lord would protect him, but when he lost his Levite priest and all those religious objects he fashioned, he realized for the first time that the power of the mind was (and is) inadequate as the standard utilized to be pleasing to the Lord (cf. Judges 18:22-26).

Is it the case that our minds are so powerful that we are not hearing the Lord? My brethren, let us not be as Micah was!

Complimentary Issue

We are sending this month's issue to many of our former subscribers to let you know that the *Gleaner* is back in print and thriving on a monthly basis! Subscribe today!

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Wearing the Name "Christian"

I Peter 4:16

1. Name found three times: Acts 11:26; 26:28; I Peter 4:16
2. The denominational world wears the name but contrary to the prayer of our Lord. (John 17:20, 21); the plea of Paul (I Corinthians 1:10) and the plan of Paul (Ephesians 4:4-6).
3. This lesson directed to undenominational Christians. All of us wear it, but some not well. A Christian is more than a baptized church member who worships weekly.

I. What Wearing the Name Christian Means.

- A. The honor of wearing the name Christian. Isaiah 56:5; 62:2; I Peter 4:16; Acts 5:41; Galatians 6:14.
- B. The reward of wearing the name Christian. Matthew 6:33; Ephesians 1:3; John 14:3.
- C. The responsibility of wearing the name Christian. Ecclesiastes 12:13; Luke 17:10

II. The Difference between Being a Christian and Merely Wearing the Name.

- A. The Bible speaks of different kinds of Christians. Romans 15:1; I Corinthians 3:1; Revelation 3:15, 16; Ephesians 4:14-16; Matthew 26:58. (Between these extremes are various degrees and shades.)
- B. Truths regarding these different Christians: well-ill; glory-reproach; converted-half converted; heaven-hell.
- C. How can I determine if I am a Christian or merely wearing the name?
 1. Did I become a Christian from conviction or convenience?
 2. Am I separated from the world in my recreation, language, literature, etc.?
 3. Am I really devoted to the church? Matthew 6:33; John 13:34
 4. Do I appreciate strong preaching? Galatians 4:16; John 6:66
 5. Am I growing in Christian graces? II Peter 1:5-7; 3:18
 6. Am I trying to save the lost according to my ability?

III. Three Facts Regarding Wearing the Name Christian.

- A. We wear in voluntarily and gladly? II Corinthians 12:15
 - B. We wear it incessantly. Luke 9:23; Matthew 24:44
 - C. We wear it intelligently. Matthew 5:13-16; II Corinthians 5:10.
1. Are we Christians or merely wearing the name?
 2. Not all who wear the name will go to heaven, but only those who try to live up to the name.
 3. Let us ask ourselves, "Wherein may I be a better Christian?"

Adapted from: Eugene W. Clevenger, Sermons for Saints and Sinners (1961)

AMBASSADORS FOR CHRIST

Stephen R. Bradd

I recently finished reading an excellent book by Gregory Koukl, entitled: *Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions*. The book was highly recommended to me by a fellow preacher I trust, and the book is great from cover to cover!

Although I do not know a lot about Mr. Koukl, this book is a wonderful work and one that every Christian (not just preachers) would benefit from digesting. The book gives sound, practical advice on how to share your convictions with confidence and grace in a world filled with anti-Christian rhetoric.

There is much more I could say about the book, but I'll encourage you to read it for yourself. I do, however, want to share some thoughts from the last two pages of his final chapter where he writes about being good ambassadors for Christ (don't worry, this won't spoil the book for you!).

The term "ambassador" is only used twice in the New Testament. Here are the passages:

"Now then, we are **ambassadors** for Christ, as though God were pleading

through us; we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God" (2 Corinthians 5:20).

"And for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an **ambassador** in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak" (Ephesians 6:19,20).

Ambassadors

The apostle Paul penned these verses to fellow Christians. It is true that the apostles of Christ were ambassadors in a unique sense, but all Christians today could rightly be described as "unofficial representatives or messengers" of Jesus (cf. Matthew 28:19, 20). We certainly do not wield the authority that Paul did, for example, but we do have a duty and responsibility nevertheless as Christians.

So, how well are you representing Christ in your life? If Paul, an evangelist eclipsed by none, felt it necessary to request prayers on his behalf that he would not be timid in his declarations of God's truth, **how much more** do we need to pray for courage and strength to say what

needs to be said in our daily dealings with humanity?

There are opportunities everywhere to influence others for good, but we will miss many (or even most) of them if we are not careful. We must "sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear" (1 Peter 3:15).

And friends, we don't have to wait to be asked either! We can and should share our faith as often as possible--and why wouldn't we, if we really believe Jesus has the words of life that the lost desperately need (cf. John 6:68, 69)?

How can I be an effective ambassador for Jesus? Koukl lists ten points in his book (pp. 199, 200) which I have included below. His list is good, and I have tried to improve it by adding Scriptures that come to mind that underscore the truthfulness of his points.

An ambassador is...

Ready

An ambassador is alert for chances to represent Christ and will not back away from a challenge or an opportunity. "Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with

all longsuffering and teaching" (2 Timothy 4:2).

We must be alert to doors of opportunity the Lord opens for us, and then we must step through them--even when it is intimidating or inconvenient.

Patient

An ambassador won't quarrel but will listen in order to understand, then with gentleness will seek to engage respectfully those who disagree. "And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient" (2 Timothy 2:24).

If you lack patience, your efforts to influence others in a positive way will be hindered.

Reasonable

An ambassador has informed convictions (not just feelings), gives reasons, asks questions, aggressively seeks answers, and will not be stumped by the same challenge twice. Paul commanded Christians in 1 Thessalonians 5:21 "Test all things; hold fast what is good." Our reasoning skills are given by God and He expects us to use them properly (cf. Isaiah 1:18).

Tactical

An ambassador adapts to each unique person and situation, maneu-

vering with wisdom to challenge bad thinking, presenting the truth in an understandable and compelling way. Colossians 4:5 comes to mind here: "Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time." Paul provides a marvelous example of this wisdom with his life (see 1 Corinthians 9:19-23).

Clear

An ambassador is careful with language and will not rely on Christian lingo nor gain unfair advantage by resorting to empty rhetoric. Peter instructed Christians in 1 Peter 4:11: "If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen." We must speak accurately and clearly.

Fair

An ambassador is sympathetic and understanding toward others and will acknowledge the merits of contrary views. Philippians 2:3, 4 instructs us: "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only

for his own interests, but also for the interests of others."

It's possible you might be wrong and need to adjust your views! Having an open mind is important and it's only fair that you should possess that which you also desire in those with whom you speak (cf. Matthew 7:12).

Honest

An ambassador is careful with the facts and will not misrepresent another's view, overstate his own case, or understate the demands of the gospel. Ephesians 4:15 states: "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ."

Often this verse is used to emphasize the importance of speaking the truth in love. Such is appropriate, but let us not forget that the words we speak lovingly must be true! We must be honest in all things.

Humble

An ambassador is provisional in his claims, knowing that his understanding of truth is fallible. He will not press a point beyond what his evidence allows. "In humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to

their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will" (2 Timothy 2:25,26).

Humility is vitally important when reaching out to a wandering brother in Christ or an unbeliever. We want them to come to their senses and change! An ambassador with a proud and boastful spirit will have less success achieving this goal.

Attractive

An ambassador will act with grace, kindness, and good manners. He will not dishonor Christ in his conduct. Paul commands in Colossians 4:6: "Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one."

Although we cannot control certain aspects of our physical looks, we have full control over our attitudes and speech. Remember that Jesus died for every soul--not just yours!

Dependent

An ambassador knows that effectiveness requires joining his best efforts with God's power. Ephesians 3:20,21 affirms: "Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, ac-

cording to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen."

Jesus does amazing things today through His body, the church. He will work through our lives for good--if we will let Him!

Conclusion

Dear followers of Christ, may you look into your life and evaluate your effectiveness as an ambassador of Christ, making changes where appropriate.

Let us close with 1 Corinthians 3:5-7: "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase."



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FORGIVE 490 TIMES

William Boyd

490 is a lot of times to forgive someone, but if you are counting you are doing it wrong.

Some of the rabbis in Peter's day thought three times were enough. It is suggested that they may have gotten this from Amos who would roar out in his preaching, "For three transgressions... and for four..." (Amos said this seven times: Amos 1:6; 1:9; 1:11; 1:13; 2:1; 2:4; 2:6.)

Peter more than doubled the count in this popular teaching when he suggested that we forgive each other seven times (Matthew 18:22). Was Peter adding the three and four together?

Seven is a number that often symbolized completeness, but if Peter was talking about forgiving someone seven times by a literal count (and it appears that he was), then he did not understand forgiveness at all. Imagine saying to someone, "All right, I will forgive you again, but this is the fifth time and that means you only have two more to go!" Anyone that would say or think such a thing does not know the meaning of "forgive and forget."

Jesus said to Peter, "I say not unto thee, Until seven times, but until seventy times seven" (Matthew 18:22); that is four-hundred-ninety times!

Some of the newer translations are adding rather than multiplying and they have Jesus telling Peter to forgive only seventy-seven times, but still, if you are counting you are missing the point.

490 is a lot of times but I suspect a lot of married couples passed that mark a long time ago, along with parents with rebellious and wayward children. If we knew the actual count I am sure we would all be ashamed at how many times the Lord has had to forgive us, and we would be thankful that he did not stop after transgression 490.

Jesus told Peter about the servant who was forgiven of a debt of "ten thousand talents." Commentators differ on how much ten thousand talents would be in our currency, but they all agree that it was a number so absurdly large that it would have been impossible for the servant to pay.

After receiving forgiveness the forgiven servant refused to forgive a fellow servant a debt of "*a hundred pence.*" Again the current value is not clear, but the commentators agree that this was a reasonable debt that in all likelihood could have been repaid.

When the king found out what happened he was wroth; he called the unforgiving servant a "wicked servant," and delivered him to the tormentors until the debt was paid. And, since the debt was too large to be paid, the king sent the wicked servant to the tormentors forever.

Then Jesus made the application, "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not everyone his brother their trespasses" (Matthew 18:35).

Jesus said to forgive "from your hearts." Jesus taught us to pray, "...forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" (Matthew 6:12). Be careful how you pray. If you are holding a grudge in your heart against someone for an infraction, then you are in effect asking God to withhold forgiveness from you!

Jesus explained, "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive

you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:14-15). Jesus further taught us through the Spirit in Ephesians 4:32, "...be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

A kind, tenderhearted, forgiving God makes us a kind, tenderhearted, forgiving people. However if you are keeping score and counting transgressions, then you are not forgiving "from the heart" (Matthew 18:35).

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News & Notes

Spiritual Sword Lectureship

The 40th Annual Spiritual Sword Lectureship was conducted October 18-21, 2015, at the building of the Getwell church of Christ, 1511 Getwell Rd., Memphis, TN.

The attendance was excellent for every service. Visitors, in addition to those from the Memphis area, were present from 16 states. The theme this year was "Great Bible Portraits of the New Testament" which makes a companion book to the theme last year, "Great Bible Portraits of the Old Testament."

Our 28 speakers wrote great manuscripts for the lectureship book, and spoke these "Portraits" in a very powerful way. We rejoice in the glory God has received from this work.

If you were not able to attend this year, we hope you can be present for the 41st Lectureship, the third week in October, 2016, when the theme will be "Eternal Security." - Gary Colley, director

Church Growth in Holladay, TN

The Lord's church in Holladay, Tennessee has been blessed with wonderful growth recently. Seven have been baptized in recent months. Attendance has increased from the 50s to the 70s during this time.

Jonathan Wheeler is the evangelist for the Holladay congregation. He moved to Holladay in June of this year.

Muslim Converted

During a recent mission trip by John Otis and Owen Olbricht, and sponsored by the North Pulaski church of Christ in Sherwood, Arkansas, a Muslim was baptized. His wife had been baptized during a previous trip around 10 years earlier.

The city where this occurred was Miass, Russia, which is close to Chelyabinsk where the Sylvan Hills church of Christ began a work in 1994, and another one, two years later in Miass.

The religious climate has become less favorable in this section of Russia, and is reported to be the same in other parts. In the 90s, crowds of people responded to ads

in newspapers to receive Bibles and hear Bible lessons.

Even though this is true, the moral attitude of Russia in some cases is superior to that of the USA. Their high court, the Duma, voted 436 to 0 to oppose homosexuality. One of the members of the court was not present for the vote.

The next mission trip to Russia is planned for April of 2016.

-Submitted by Owen D. Olbricht for the North Pulaski church.

Missionary Murdered in Haiti

Port-au-Prince, Haiti: Roberta Edwards, 55, was a missionary and director of the Son-Light Children's Home in Haiti. She was shot and killed in her car on October 10th. One of three children who were with her was kidnapped. We do not believe the child has been recovered. Hattian police are still investigating.

The Estes church of Christ in Henderson, TN, has oversight of the work in Port-au-Prince. The elders have sent a team which includes a mental health professional to help the children deal with the tragedy.

Sister Edwards is survived by her parents, Bob and Laura Edwards. They can be reached at PO Box 1568, Burgaw, NC, 28425.

Still Going Strong!

Killen, AL: Artie Collins continues to "go strong." Artie has been preaching and teaching recently for the Pleasant Valley congregation while Andy Erwin has been away in gospel meetings. Brother Artie continues to be a master of the flannel-graph sermons.

Brother Collins is now 88. Pleasant Valley is blessed to have brother Artie!

Ripley, TN: Robert R. Taylor, Jr. continues conducting gospel meetings. Brother Taylor recently held two gospel meetings. He was with the West Concord congregation in Hueytown, AL and the congregation in Sharon, TN during the month of October.

Brother Taylor turned 84 on October 30th. He continues to be a blessing to brethren everywhere he goes.

Dallas, TX: Hardeman Nichols continues to teach a Sunday morning Bible class and preaches part-time for the Pleasant Grove congregation. He remains one of the elders for this congregation.

Charles Page works with brother Nichols in the preaching work. Albert Serna, another one of the elders, preaches for a large group of Span-

ish speaking members at Pleasant Grove.

Brother and sister Nichols are both 87. Also, brother Flavil Nichols will soon be 97. He is in a nursing facility in Huntsville, AL.

Preacher Swap!

Sam Willcut is now with the Carriage Oaks congregation in Bossier City, LA.

Southwest in Austin, TX, where Sam was preaching, hired Cody Westbrook from Carriage Oaks. Cody is also a graduate of the

Southwest School of Biblical Studies.

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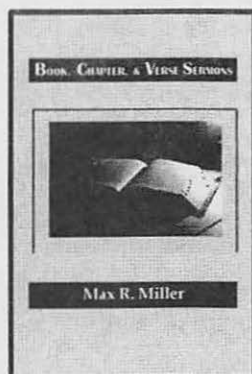
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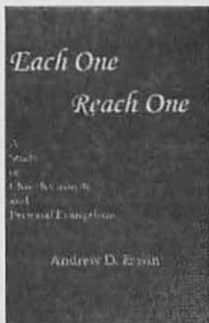
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"I would like to suggest to all elders and soul winners to order the book, "Each One Reach One" by A.D. Erwin. Have a special class using this book. Give one per family who attends the class."

"The fields are white unto harvest, but the laborers are few" (John 4:35).

James W. Berry
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Editorial

Jehoiakim's Penknife

"And it came to pass in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, that this word came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Take thee a roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I spake unto thee, from the days of Josiah, even unto this day. It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them; that they may return every man from his evil way; that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin." (Jeremiah 36:1-3).

You will observe that God recorded His word in writing so that these people – people like you and me – might learn His way and turn from their sins.

God's Word Accepted

An audience was gathered from Jerusalem and all the cities of Judah. The stage was set on a national day of fasting. "Then read Baruch in the book the words of Jeremiah in the house of the LORD, in the chamber

of Gemariah the son of Shaphan the scribe, in the higher court, at the entry of the new gate of the LORD'S house, in the ears of all the people" (Jeremiah 36:10).

All the princes were sitting in the scribe's chamber and they commanded Baruch to sit down and read the scroll to them. The result was fear (v.16); and they determined to tell the king.

God's Word Rejected

Gathered in the king's winter house, with a warm and glowing fire to comfort them, the words of Jehovah were read before the king. With only three or four pages being read, the king took a penknife, cut the scroll and cast it into the fire.

In the midst of his fury the king ignored the pleadings of Elnathan, Delaiah, Gemariah, not to burn the scroll (v.25).

The king then ordered Jerahmeel, Seraiah, and Shelemiah "to take Baruch the scribe and Jeremiah the prophet: but the LORD hid them" (v.26). He wanted to punish them for the message they preached.

God's Word Endured

The Lord reacted to the king's rebellion by commanding Jeremiah to "Take thee again another roll, and write in it all the former words that

were in the first roll, which Jehoiakim the king of Judah hath burned" (v.28).

He further commanded Jeremiah to preach unto Jehoiakim king of Judah the following message of reckoning:

(1) "He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David; and (2) his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost. (3) I will punish him and his seed and his servants for their iniquity; and (4) I will bring upon them, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and upon the men of Judah, all the evil that I have pronounced against them; but they hearkened not" (vv.29-31).

Jehoiakim had his say, but the Lord would have the final say.

The Spirit of Jehoiakim Lives Still

People continue to take penknives to the Bible. Marshall Keeble once studied with a lady in Wartrace, Tennessee who had taken a penknife to her Bible and removed every passage that mentioned baptism! (Willie Cato, *His Hand and His Heart*, p. 64)

Few would be as brazen as she. However, in a much more subtle way, many choose to take a penknife to the portions of scripture with which they disagree.

It seems quite often that we encounter someone who has taken a penknife to Matthew 19, and other passages, in order to remove the Lord's teaching on marriage, divorce, and remarriage.

Moreover, it has become a common practice in congregations to take a penknife to 1 Corinthians 5, and other passages, in order to remove the Lord's teaching on church discipline.

Anytime the teachings of God are removed from the conscience of man, the spirit of Jehoiakim and his penknife lives on. But, just as with Jehoiakim, God will have the final word.

Men may reject it, refuse it, and even cause others to disbelieve it; but the word of God lives and abides forever (1 Peter 1:23).

God's word will read the same on the Day of Judgment as it does today (John 12:48), and it makes absolutely no difference whether we believe it or not. Those who choose to take penknives to their Bibles reject the Savior's words that man shall live by *every* word which proceeds from the mouth of God (Matthew 4:4). Every word of God on every subject is important and should be respected and obeyed.

"Behold, I come quickly; blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the

prophecy of this book" (Revelation 22:7).

True Obedience

Would any of us claim that Jehoiakim was an obedient man? While I suppose he did do certain things which were written in the law up to a point, we can see that when God's law was not agreeable with him, he rejected it. Such is not true obedience.

Jehoiakim was a man who did what he wanted to do — always. Sometimes, his desires happened to coincide with the law. When the law rebuked his desires, he took a penknife to it.

Brethren, let us be mindful, lest we be guilty of doing the same. Let us obey God on every point, not just the ones with which we agree.

Andy Erwin



According to the Pattern

Rod Rutherford

God has always given a pattern when He wanted something built. When He was planning to destroy the wicked of the earth in the Great Flood, a righteous man, Noah, "found grace in His eyes" (Genesis 6:8). In order to save Noah and his family, God told him to "Make yourself an ark of gopher wood." He then gave a specific pattern by which the ark was to be built (Genesis 6:14-16). "Noah did according to all that God commanded him, so he did" (Genesis 6:22).

When the children of Israel were in the wilderness, God called Moses to meet Him at Mt. Sinai. He instructed Moses to build a tabernacle and gave him the pattern. He cautioned Moses: "According to all that

I show you, that is, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make it" (Exodus 25:9, 40).

David wanted to build a temple for the Lord in Jerusalem, but the Lord told him his son, Solomon, would do it. David stockpiled materials that Solomon used. "All this, said David, the Lord made me understand in writing, by His hand upon me, all the works of these plans" (1 Chronicles 28:19). The temple was built according to a God given pattern.

The church of Christ was also built according to God's pattern which is revealed in the New Testament. Paul admonished: "Hold

fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 1:13). Regarding salvation, Paul wrote: "But God be thanked though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered" (Romans 6:16).

The Greek word for pattern is "tupos." It is the word for "a form or mold such as a mold used for making bricks." Each brick is exactly the same for it bears the image of the mold. So it is with the New Testament church. Every congregation worships the same as every other congregation and is organized as every other congregation for they are all following the pattern of God's Word. Every sinner is saved in the same way for he follows the same pattern of doctrine (teaching) to be saved from his sins.

Some today are not satisfied with God's pattern for the church. They add instruments of music to worship though such are not authorized (Colossians 3:16, 17). They offer the Lord's Supper on days other than on the Lord's day (Acts 20:7). Others disrespect God's roles for men and women in His church and place women in the eldership or in the pulpit (1 Timothy 2). Some are now tampering with God's plan of salvation and accepting those who have

not been baptized according to the Scriptures (Acts 2:38, Rom. 6:4).

Just as Noah, Moses, and David were cautioned to build according to the pattern, so must we today (Romans 15:4). A wicked and rebellious generation wants to do things their own way, but God must be obeyed if we expect to receive His blessings!



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A Wonderful Possibility

A.T. Pate

Nearly a century ago, about the year 1916, Albert Orsborn sat down with pen in hand and wrote some of the most meaningful and memorable words. Later these words were set to music and became a song – a sweet spiritual song that really is a prayer:

“Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me,

All His wonderful passion and purity,

May His Spirit divine all my being refine,

Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me.”

The Beauty of Jesus in Us

A wonderful possibility open to every Christian is that he may so live as to reflect “the beauty of Jesus” in his life. Observers of Peter and John took note of them “that they had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13). And it was Paul who declared: “Christ liveth in me” (Galatians 2:20).

The Holy Spirit teaches us to exhibit in our lives the spirit of Christ (Romans 8:9). “Let this mind, be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 2:5).

Jesus was kind and compassionate, loving and forgiving, intent on serving rather than being served. He was a man of prayer, set on doing the will of

God. When you and I demonstrate these attributes in our lives, we make it possible for others to see the “beauty of Jesus” in us.

Adorning the Doctrine of God

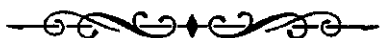
In Paul’s letter to Titus, the apostle exhorted certain ones to conduct themselves “that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior (Titus 2:10).

It is within our power to add beauty to the already beautiful gospel and to make attractive the already attractive gospel of Christ. This is an awesome thought! “The best illustrated Bible,” someone has said, “is the conduct of the people who profess to take it for their guide and law.”

If we are to let the beauty of Jesus be seen in us, we must continually live near Him, be in constant touch of His Hand, and in communion with His Spirit.

Christ must first beautify us, if we would beautify Him. If we are to adorn His teaching, His teaching must adorn us.

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Remembering Frank W. Gould

Mel Futrell

My grandfather, Frank William Gould, was born November 8, 1907, in Vienna, Illinois. He was one of ten children born to William and Flora Gould.

Frank was baptized by brother Ira A. Douthitt on September 1, 1929. On July 13, 1932, he married my "nanny," Anna Corzine, of Dongola, Illinois. Frank and Anna would live together as husband and wife for sixty-two years until his death of July 28, 1994. To this union would be born three daughters, the oldest of whom is my mother, Frances Ann Futrell.

A Life of Ministry

My "Pa Gould" began his local work in Christopher, Illinois in 1934. He preached the gospel for 62 years. During this time he worked with eight different congregations in Arkansas, Illinois, Kentucky, Michigan and Tennessee, helping to establish congregations at Cypress and Anna, Illinois.

It would be his pleasure as a Christian preacher to baptize his father, mother, and several others of his family into Christ. As well as being my grandfather, he was our preacher at the Pyburn Street church of Christ in Pocahontas, Arkansas

on two different occasions in my lifetime.

It is his preaching that I remember most about growing up. I still have notes from his sermons tucked away in a couple of Bibles in my study. Add to that the seven hundred gospel meetings he conducted in sixteen states, and the fact that he preached during his lifetime over 28 different radio stations and you have just a glimpse of how busy he was.

I remind you that the gospel meetings held in his days were not the little 3 or 4 day affairs we have now. I find it amazing that at one point in his life he held 50 gospel meetings without a break. When asked by a young gospel preacher how he did this he responded, "I don't go out and pitch hay with the brethren or sit on the creek fishing all day." He was a man who took his study and preaching seriously, and rightfully so.

As a preacher F.W. Gould was prepared, precise, and prompt. His personal religious library totaled about 800 volumes, with which he was intimately familiar. Countless hours of Bible study and reading manifested itself to one who heard him preach or sat in one of his clas-

ses. He could quote from memory much of the New Testament and he never went to the pulpit with notes.

It was my Pa, more than any other single person, who encouraged me in my memory work and discouraged me on the use of notes in preaching, although I still use a note or two every now and again. These were not matters he bound on others, but did feel strongly about himself.

Expertise in the Book of Hebrews

Not only was he a preacher and teacher, but also a writer and debater. He had a special interest in the book of Hebrews and studied the book exhaustively. The late brother Franklin Camp wrote of Frank Gould:

"I was in a meeting in Pocahontas, Arkansas. Brother Frank Gould was the (local) preacher. He taught the adult class on Sunday morning. His lesson was on Hebrews. He gave an outline to the class. It was truly a rich study in Hebrews. Later he came to Shades Mountain and taught in Hebrews in a Vacation Bible School. He quoted the entire book while teaching classes. During the meeting, he showed me some other material he had. It was so rich I suggested he put it in print. He was not interested, so I asked him if he would allow me to include some

of it in *The Word of Life*. He agreed for me to use it. One section of this book is this material. It includes the entire outline of Hebrews. This section is worth the price of the book." (*The Word of Life*, Volume 1)

Defending the Faith

Frank Gould wrote two fine tracts, one titled "*Nuts for Mormons to Crack*," and another refuting the doctrine of the Jehovah's Witnesses.

He had one public debate with a Baptist named James Ivy in the fall of 1950 in Pocahontas, Arkansas. The debate was held on the fairgrounds in the livestock building and centered around the question, "Is baptism essential to salvation?" My great uncle, Joe Ballenger, taped the proceedings on an old reel to reel recorder but no one has knowledge of the recordings whereabouts. Unfortunately, like many oral debates of the past there is no written record of the event.

Frank Gould was also one of the privileged few to have attended what is probably known as the debate of the century, the April, 1938 Hardeman-Bogard Debate, held at the building of the Fourth and State Streets church of Christ in Little Rock, Arkansas. I have in my possession an original photograph of him and some 145 other preachers

present for the debate. In the picture with him are men such as Joe S. Warlick, J.D. Tant, Joe Blue (Frank Gould conducted brother Blue's funeral), N. B. Hardeman, E.R. Harper, and many more.

Let Us Be Thankful

F.W. Gould and his generation of preachers, as well as the generations before him, certainly did not preach for the money. Brethren, it was not there. The truth is, I make more a week for preaching the gospel than he made in several months of preaching under what were difficult circumstances at times.

Gone are the days, at least in America, when preachers received chickens, pigs, and garden produce as payment for their spiritual services. Gospel preachers today in the United States should be mighty thankful for the great sacrifices past preachers made to see that their generations heard the gospel. It seems to me that we can do no less as we warm ourselves over the fires they built.

The most important day of my life was a cold night in February of 1974, when F. W. Gould baptized me into Christ. He encouraged me as a student and preacher of the word and will forever be in my memories. I feel fortunate to have had such a rich preaching heritage

on both sides of my family. My debt of gratitude runs deep to both James Daniel Futrell and F.W. Gould with whom I share the necessity of preaching the gospel (1 Corinthians 9:16).



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Keys to Church Progress

Ephesians 4:11-16

1. What pleases you might not please the children. (Vacation spot.)
2. What pleases us might not be pleasing to the Lord!
3. We know that a few years later Jesus was not pleased with Ephesus. (See Revelation 2:1-5). "But, Paul wrote us such a nice letter!"
4. Their later situation could have been avoided if they had kept in mind what Paul had written them. (These essentials are in the text.)

I. We Must Be Growing Spiritually. (vs. 12)

- A. The "perfect man" is full grown, complete for his age. 2 Peter 3:18.
- B. Church babies can't take solid food; have a divisive spirit; and don't care for doctrine. Hebrews 5:13, 14; 1 Corinthians 3:1-3;
- C. Christ is our model. Colossians 3:10; 1 Peter 2:21; Romans 8:29

II. We Must Combat False Doctrine. (vs. 14)

- A. Doctrine is important. Galatians 1:6-8; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4.
- B. False teachers abound. 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Timothy 1:14, 15; 4:3, 4.
- C. Error is not to be tolerated. Romans 16:17; 1 John 4:1; 2 John 10.

III. We Must Speak The Truth In Love. (vs. 15)

- A. We must be "for" something. Mark 16:15; 1 Corinthians 2:2.
- B. Only truth brings spiritual freedom. John 8:32; Romans 6:16-18.
- C. Our compassion for souls must equal our passion for truth.

IV. We Must Honor The Headship of Christ. (vs. 15)

- A. He is the head over all things to the church. Ephesians 1:21-23
- B. The question still: "From heaven or from men"? Matthew 21:24, 25
- C. We must receive HIS word. Isaiah 8:20; James 1:21; 2 John 9.

V. We Must Willingly Share Responsibility. (vs. 16)

- A. Paul's use of analogy. Ephesians 1:22, 23; 2:16; 4:4; 4:16.
- B. Every member has a function, not just a faithful "core". Hebrews 10:24, 25; 1 Corinthians 12:21; 15:58; 16:1, 2.
- C. Love is the motivation behind our edification of each other.

VI. We Must Walk In Newness of Life. (vs. 17)

- A. A consequence of conversion. Ephesians 4:22-24; Romans 6:3, 4.
 - B. The walk of the unsaved to be avoided. Ephesians 4:17-19. They are blind, confused, and calloused, and have no sense of it.
 - C. Our aim is righteousness and holiness. Ephesians 4:24;
1. Satan cannot stop a church which has these characteristics.
 2. God will give the increase. 1 Corinthians 3:7; Isaiah 55:11

Was Foy E. Wallace, Jr. a Prophet?

Andy Erwin

Foy E. Wallace, Jr. (1896-1979) had an uncanny way of predicting the state of affairs which now exists in many congregations and among many of "our" schools.

July, 1938: Doctrinal Softness

Brother Wallace warned us in the first issue of the *Bible Banner*:

"Back of much of this doctrinal softness is the influence of some of the colleges among us. They have harbored teachers of error; they have promoted a spirit of worldliness; they have manifested an air of superiority; they have conducted campaigns among the churches to affiliate church and school which will eventually, if continued, result in college domination and control in the church. The college domination danger is not imaginary..."

If Wallace thought the schools were promoting doctrinal softness, harboring false teachers, and promoting a spirit of worldliness in 1938, what would he say today? These schools are doing much worse today, and do not want to be questioned on it. If you question them, their moles will seek to sabotage your work in the church. Thus you have college domination in the church.

Wallace observed this trend as well. He continued:

"When the ban of boycott is placed on the gospel preachers who do not 'co-operate' with the college, or who criticize anything the college does and who oppose the church-budget scheme of linking the church and the college together--that is college domination with vengeance.

"When the president of the college can sit in his office and dictate letters to young people in various churches who belong to 'The Ex-Student's Association' and through them influence the policies of a congregation on certain issues, even to the point of who shall or shall not preach in certain places--that is college domination.

"When these young people in the church, whether preachers or not, feel that they are obligated to the institution that graduated them, and they become virtually an auxiliary of that college in the church where they are--that is college domination.

In other words, when it comes to pass that 'Our Alma Mater which art in Abilene' can command the loyalty and devotion from an alumni equal to the homage due 'Our Father which art in heaven'--that is college domination plus.

"There are those who measure a man's loyalty to Jesus Christ by his loyalty to the college. This attitude is tested by the fact that he may criticize the church and bring no censure from college devotees, but if he criticizes the college, let him be anathema! These are some of the dangers in this form of institutionalism growing up among us, the gravity of which cannot be denied."

Church Support of Colleges

The topic of the college being financially subsidized by the church needs to be revisited by churches of Christ today. Why do we continue to support colleges that are ashamed of the church? Why must congregations continue to bid Godspeed to these evildoers when so many good works desperately need their support?

History has clearly shown that once a college has a sufficient endowment its care for the concerns of brethren diminishes. Many college presidents will not even listen to you if you are concerned about a particular policy or practice of that school. Their policy is "Ignore them and maybe they will go away." Our policy should be to "go away" and take our financial contributions with us.

June, 1968: Modernists

In June of 1968, Wallace held a meeting for the Donelson church of Christ in Nashville. He made four statements that have proved to be true.

First, he stated that modernism had its foot in the door of our colleges and churches. He believed that some of the "intellectuals" were forming a clique and were attempting to reform the churches and the Bible Departments of certain colleges into the pattern of the theological seminaries where they obtained their doctorates.

No one can deny that this has happened. In fact, such a procedure has become the norm and is not the exception among our Bible Departments, which is why we are seeing denominational professors lecture on these campuses.

At this meeting in Donelson, Wallace also called out a local preacher and professor for some liberal comments made in the *Nashville Tennessean*. The Donelson preacher (Harold Baker) said Wallace had it all wrong. But, years have proven that Wallace had it right. The preacher/professor (John McRay) soon left for a Baptist college, the congregation where he preached is now one of the most liberal in Nashville (Otter Creek), and the school where he taught is a constant source of error and agitation to the church (Lipscomb).

Thirdly, Wallace made the statement that there was a time in which a modernist could not be found among our churches and schools with a fine-toothed comb. "But," he continued, "...if the trend continues, within ten years we will not be able to take a hay

rake and bale them all up." Obviously, this is also true.

A fourth observation made by Wallace rings true. A division existed then and continues to exist among those holding doctorates and those who do not. One group claims to be "scholars" while the other group believes them to be liberals. One group claims to be faithful while the other group believes them to be unlearned.

How wonderful it would be if we each determined to be faithful *and* learned in the Scriptures! It is possible to possess a doctoral degree and remain faithful to the Lord. And, it is possible to be a true scholar of the Book without possessing a doctoral degree. However, when we value a degree over fidelity, we are doomed for destruction.

Why Did We Not Listen?

Why didn't we listen to men like brother Wallace? One reason is because brethren chose to criticize men like him rather than listen to them. "Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? (Acts 7:52)"

Quite frankly, brethren were satisfied with the product and so there was no reason to change. You will recall how Jeremiah could not lead a reform in Judah because "my people love to have it so (Jeremiah 5:31)."

Moreover, the schools had the money and the manpower to speak

longer and louder in their defense than did their critics.

Perhaps brethren depended too much upon these schools and simply did not want to believe the situation was as bad as Wallace and others claimed.

In Conclusion

Are we enemies of the schools for saying these things (Galatians 4:16)? Are we anti-Christian education? To the contrary, we may be the best friends these schools have for saying these things!

Closed eyes and ears have allowed colleges like Pepperdine, Rochester, Abilene, and Lipscomb to go out from us. We can also see the next wave of schools being carried away from us into a sea of digression. Shall we watch them drift away without offering so much as a whisper of protest? No! A thousand times NO!



Defeat does not necessarily mean you are beaten. Defeat is what happens when you stop fighting. One who stops fighting the good fight of faith has defeated himself.

-Gerald Cowan

Heritage Christian University and the Charles Coil Colloquium

Andy Erwin

In a recent editorial, we reported Freed-Hardeman University's use of Norman Geisler as a guest lecturer for their Graduate School of Theology. Hiring denominational professors for these one-day events has become a common practice among these schools, and we could easily make a regular "hobby horse" out of these events in the *Gospel Gleaner*. We fear, however, that such a course would not contribute much to your edification.

Nevertheless, since I do not see any other brotherhood journal discussing this matter, and since the practice is not slowing down but gaining traction, we feel compelled to take the fight to these institutions on behalf of the faithful men who founded them and the Christians who support them.

Charles Coil Colloquium

The next such event that we know about will take place at Heritage Christian University in Florence, Alabama (formerly known as International Bible College). For several years this school has named this series of lectures after a past president of that university, Charles Coil. The irony is that Charles Coil,

the former president of the school, stood against denominationalism in his preaching and also in his articles which appeared in the *World Evangelist*. Moreover, HCU claims the event is being hosted by the "Friends of the Overton Memorial Library" thus dragging the name of brother and sister Basil Overton into the fray.

What Is the Purpose?

From the university's website we read the mission and purpose of the "Charles Coil Lectures." From the school's website we read:

"The Charles Coil Lecture is an annual one-day event hosted by Friends of the Overton Memorial Library, designed to enrich the intellectual climate of Heritage Christian University, its constituency, and the great academic community. Leaders of the various academic disciplines related to HCU's graduate and undergraduate curricula will be invited to share their expertise."

The school also provides the "Criteria of the Charles Coil Lecture." Here is what they are looking for in their speakers:

(1) Leader in their respective fields;

(2) Diversity which enhances the educational experience at HCU;

(3) Broad base of fields mainly in the humanities—Biblical scholarship (textual and practical), History, Literature, Psychology, Counseling, Social Work, Archaeology

Did you notice that not one word was mentioned about the church, or being a faithful gospel preacher in this set of criteria?

Featured Speakers

The leaders of diversity sought and obtained by the school include Frederick Danker (2010); Richard Bauckham (2011); M. Patrick Graham (2012); Thomas Long (2013); Ralph Klein (2014); John Fea (2015); and Ralph Klein (2016).

Let us offer a brief biographical sketch of each lecturer. **Fredrick Danker** posthumously remains a renowned scholar of the New Testament Greek. Yet, he died a Lutheran.

On his website, **Richard Bauckham** modestly claims "I am a biblical scholar and theologian." He is not only a member of the Church of England, but has served as a member of the Doctrine Commission of the Church of England.

M. Patrick Graham is the only "member" of the Lord's church in this list of speakers. He is a trustee

of the Northlake church of Christ outside of Atlanta, Georgia. On this congregation's website, you can learn that baptism is the "splish-splash of God's salvation."

You will also find that they have resolved the following concerning the woman's role in the public worship of the church:

"...we affirm that both men and women who have the desire to serve should be permitted to fully participate in our assemblies, including activities such as reading Scripture, serving communion, teaching or offering prayers. Further, both men and women have served Northlake in the past as ministry leaders, and we re-affirm this practice."

Thomas Long is a Presbyterian who came to lecture on preaching. They brought him in from another state, while Artie Collins lives no more three miles from the campus! The school could have used a faithful gospel preacher who has conducted over 350 gospel meetings, but instead chose to use Long.

Ralph Klein is a Lutheran who has also served on the Advisory Committee on Doctrine and Conciliation for the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (1974-1975). Ralph Klein is scheduled to return to HCU in April 2016 to lecture on the book of Daniel.

John Fea is Associate Professor of American History and Chair of the History Department at Messiah College (Mechanicsburg, PA). He is a conservative author engaged in politics, but he is not a member of the Lord's church.

Questions for HCU

Let us ask of our brethren at HCU the following questions:

- 1.) Where is the money coming from that pays for these denominational speakers?
- 2.) Are you using money donated by churches and/or individual Christians to fund this program?
- 3.) Are you using facilities bought with the money donated by churches or individual Christians to host the program?
- 4.) If so, have you informed the brethren and/or churches that you are using the money they donated to hire denominational speakers?
- 5.) Do you intend on using any faithful gospel preachers on your program? If so, when?
- 6.) Do you intend on ceasing the use of denominational professors and use only faithful brothers in Christ to honor Charles Coil, the Overton family, and the purpose of HCU? If so, when?
- 7.) Have you asked permission of the Coil and Overton families to use their names in association with the hiring of denominational speakers?
- 8.) Do you plan on using denominational professors on a fulltime or adjunct basis in the future?
- 9.) Theoretically, is there a difference in employing a denominational professor for a one-time event and employing a denominational professor for a regular purpose? If he is qualified to speak for one day, what about one week, or one semester?
- 10.) If you believe these denominational professors "enrich the intellectual climate of Heritage Christian University" what guarantee do we have that you will not use them more regularly?
- 11.) Do you believe that these denominational leaders honor the mission and founding purpose of HCU?
- 12.) Do you have a purpose different from the founding purpose of the school?

Propaganda

On a bookmark advertisement a few of the items listed as "promises" made by HCU to the churches of Christ include:

- (1) A promise that HCU is "Holding firm to our roots"
- (2) That HCU is "Standing strong for the truth"

- (3) That HCU will "faithfully teach the Lord's plan of salvation" (Do any of these men that you have hired for the CCL faithfully teach the plan of salvation?)
- (4) That HCU will "remain faithful stewards of the trust that you have placed in us."

The words of HCU remind us of the words of Harold Hazelip and Steve Flatt as Lipscomb University drifted into apostasy. Whenever they were asked about some questionable hire or activity, the standard answer was, "We stand where we have always stood."

We ask HCU: by hiring these denominational speakers, do you believe you stand where you have always stood?

It is said by HCU officials that the Charles Coil lectureship committee welcomes suggestions. If you would like to see HCU cease this practice, you may call or write them at:

Heritage Christian University

c/o Dennis Jones

2285 CR 30

Florence, AL 35634

(256) 766-6610

Jesus Prayed Frequently

Robert L. Waggoner

Jesus was not only human but also deity. Even so, He prayed to His Father on many occasions.

Jesus prayed at his baptism (Luke 3:21).

He prayed before starting on a preaching trip (Mark 1:35).

He prayed before selecting the twelve apostles (Luke 6:12-13).

He prayed before feeding the five thousand (Matthew 14:19-21; Mark 6:41; Luke 9:16) and also afterward (Mark 6:46).

He prayed before feeding the four thousand (Matthew 15:36-38; Mark 8:7-9).

He prayed for little children (Mark 10:13-16).

He took three of His disciples up onto a mountain top to pray (Luke 9:28-29).

He frequently separated Himself from others to pray (Luke 5:16).

He prayed as He instituted the Lord's Supper (Matthew 26:26-27; Mark 14:22-23; Luke 22:17-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-25).

Most notable among His prayers was one which He spoke after eating the last supper with His disciples. This prayer was for His disciples (John 17:1-26) and for all "who will believe in Me through their word" (John 17:20). *Continued on p. 21*



HEZEKIAH'S RESTORATION MOVEMENT

E. Claude Gardner

Is restoration of New Testament Christianity possible in this modern century? A former teacher employed at Freed-Hardeman University was a brilliant and capable professor who came to reject the restoration concept. He hooted at the idea of restoration of the Lord's church. But, restoration has been successful, and it has been demonstrated often.

The Restoration Plea

What is the idea? The Bible *only* must be the final and only authority in religion and life. Whatever The Lord's church taught and practiced in the New Testament which God approved must be followed in the church today.

The New Testament reveals the work and worship of the church of Christ and we must restore the same. This *can* be done and it *has* been done in multiple nations.

A summation of this plea has been popular for generations: "We speak where the Bible speaks and remain silent where the Bible is silent. We call Bible things by Bible names and we do Bible things in the Bible way."

Restoration leads back to the New Testament for original Christianity.

Hezekiah's Effort

The principle of restoration has been taught in more than one Bible example. One of the most vivid restoration movements, however, was carried out by Hezekiah, the 25-year-old good king of Judah (2 Chronicles 29:1-2).

It is expected that a new leader, administrator, or president will present his agenda soon after taking office. He will have goals that he believes should bring progress. Hezekiah is no exception.

I. Restore the Temple

At the young age of 25, the first work he accomplished was to repair and cleanse the Holy Temple that was dilapidated by idolatrous worship. The conditions were so terrible that it took sixteen days to cleanse it (2 Chronicles 29:17).

II. Restore the Priesthood

In order to restore the worship, he asked that Levites "sanctify" themselves before cleansing the Holy Place. When he gathered the priests and Levites, he commanded them to get rid of false worship. He said,

"Hear me, Levites! Now sanctify yourselves, sanctify the house of the Lord God of your fathers, and carry out the rubbish from

the holy place. For our fathers have trespassed and done evil in the eyes of the Lord our God; they have forsaken Him, have turned their faces away from the dwelling place of the Lord, and turned their backs on Him. They have also shut up the doors of the vestibule, put out the lamps, and have not burned incense or offered burnt offerings in the holy place to the God of Israel.

Therefore the wrath of the Lord fell upon Judah and Jerusalem, and He has given them up to trouble, to desolation, and to jeering, as you see with your eyes. For indeed, because of this our fathers have fallen by the sword; and our sons, our daughters, and our wives are in captivity. Now it is in my heart to make a covenant with the Lord God of Israel, that His fierce wrath may turn away from us. My sons, do not be negligent now, for the Lord has chosen you to stand before Him, to serve Him, and that you should minister to Him and burn incense" (2 Chronicles 29:5-11).

III. Restore the Sacrifices

Hezekiah also restored the offering of different sacrifices required under the Law.

"Now that you have consecrated yourselves to the Lord, come near,

and bring sacrifices and thank offerings, and as many as were of a willing heart brought burnt offerings. And the number of the burnt offerings which the assembly brought was seventy bulls, one hundred rams, and two hundred lambs; all these were for a burnt offering to the Lord. The consecrated things were six hundred bulls and three thousand sheep" (2 Chronicles 29:31-33).

Afterward the divine historian recorded, "So the service of the house of the Lord was set in order" (29:35). That was *restoration*! Then he and the people "rejoiced."

IV. Restore the Passover

Yet, Hezekiah was not finished with the restoration. When he realized the children of Israel had not kept the Passover, he now had it reinstated.

This massive Passover is fully described in two chapters – 2 Chronicles 30 and 31. When he finished his reign as a leader and a restorer, he had the approbation of God. His restoration movement succeeded and demonstrates that the "restoration principle" is possible and workable.

His obituary is glowing and salutary. "Thus Hezekiah did throughout all Judah, and he did what was good and right and true before the Lord his God. And in every work that he began in the service of the house of

God, in the law and in the commandment, to seek his God, he did with all his heart. So he prospered" (2 Chronicles 31:20-21).

We Can Restore Today

The restoration plea is scriptural, safe, and sensible. It is not founding a new religion, but it is the right way to practice New Testament Christianity.

Here are the basics in the New Testament that can be restored today:

1. Authority of Christ, Mt. 28:18
2. Inspiration of the Scriptures, 2 Tim. 3:16-17
3. One body, the church, Eph. 4:4
4. The name "Christian", Acts 11:26
5. The Lord's Supper every first day of the week (Sunday), Acts 20:7; Heb. 10:25
6. Giving each Lord's Day, 1 Cor. 16:2
7. Possibility of falling from grace, Gal. 5:4; 1 Cor. 10:12
8. Faithful Christian living, Titus 2:12
9. Simplicity in the organization of the church, Phil. 1:1
10. Respect for God's plan for marriage, Mt. 19:3-9
11. Evangelistic spirit, Mark 16:15
12. The doctrine of "last things", 1 Cor. 15
13. True worship, John 4:24; Acts 2:42; Eph. 5:19

14. Love. 1 Cor. 13

15. Fellowship. 1 John 1:7

Those who do not follow the goal of restoration are in a fluid state of whatever religious men believe to be acceptable. This reminds us of the dark day of Judges when it is said, "... everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25b).



(Continued from pg. 18)

Jesus Prayed Frequently

Shortly thereafter He took three of His disciples with Him into the Garden of Gethsemane where He again prayed to His Father, this time regarding His upcoming crucifixion (Matthew 26:39, 42, 44; Mark 14:35-36, 39; Luke 22:41-42, 44).

Jesus prayed while on the cross (Luke 23:34), after His resurrection with two of His disciples (Luke 24:30), and before His ascension into heaven (Luke 24:50-51).

Jesus taught His disciples how to pray (Matthew 5:44; 6:5-7; 21:22; Luke 6:28; 10:2; 11:1-4; 18:1, 10-11; 21:36).

If the Son of God needed to pray for spiritual strength from heaven during His ministry, do we not also need to do the same?

MAKING A COVENANT WITH YOUR EYES

Stephen R. Bradd

"I have made a covenant with my eyes; why then should I look upon a young woman? For what is the allotment of God from above, and the inheritance of the Almighty from on high? Is it not destruction for the wicked, and disaster for the workers of iniquity? Does He not see my ways, and count all my steps?" (Job 31:1-4)

Job's Mental Purity

At this point in the book, Job was in the final stages of the dialogue with his friends concerning the tragedies that had befallen him. They believed that he had committed some terrible sin and was being punished consequently. Job maintained his integrity; he affirmed his mental purity.

He had made a covenant or agreement with his eyes that he would not lust after young women. He knew that to lust was sinful and that the Lord would punish such. Job realized that God knows and sees all things--even into our minds!

Job tried to be upright in everything, including his thoughts. Although other humans would not necessarily know if Job was lusting after a woman, God would be aware of the illicit thoughts!

Job was certainly wise beyond his time in his efforts to abstain from lustful thinking. He took it upon himself to adopt a high standard of morality. God expects all of his children to live by this standard today, as Jesus communicated in Matthew 5:28 -- "Whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

Make a Covenant with Your Eyes

Let me strongly encourage you to make a covenant with your eyes as Job did. Promise yourself that you will set nothing wicked before your eyes (cf. Psalm 101:3). Decide that you will be selective about what you allow your eyes to rest upon.

I have no doubt that it is much harder to keep faithfully a covenant with one's eyes today than it would have been in Job's day. Job may have had to deal with women dressed immodestly, but that was probably about the extent of it.

He did not have to deal with the temptations that those living in the twenty-first century are assaulted with repeatedly--commercials that use sex appeal to sell a product, television programs with immodestly dressed actors and actresses, movies

that show partial or full nudity, not to mention pornographic magazines, video, websites, etc.

The Need for Self-Control

Making a covenant with one's eyes should start with the understanding that we are in control of our actions, which includes what we gaze upon. If an illicit picture or immodestly dressed person comes into our line of sight, no matter where we are, we can (and should) choose to turn away and think about something else.

To the best of our ability, we should avoid situations where keeping the covenant with our eyes would be difficult. Turn off movies or TV shows that are inappropriate. Delete e-mail invitations to visit pornographic sites. You are in control of your behavior. Don't allow the lust of the eyes to control (and ruin) your life (cf. 1 John 2:16, 17).

The notion of making a covenant with one's eyes may seem trivial to some. Perhaps they believe that what they ingest through their eyes won't hurt them. Those who think this way are deceived. As Jesus declared – "The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness..." (Matthew 6:22, 23).

Our eyes are input devices. If we input that which is pure, the output (which is manifested via our words and deeds) will likewise be pure. If we input that which is illicit, the output will likewise be illicit.

In Conclusion

Have you made a covenant with your eyes? Are you doing your best not to place anything improper or immoral in front of them? Do you turn away when you do see that which is illicit, and resolve to avoid seeing such again?

Since God made your eyes, certainly He can dictate what you should and shouldn't use them for. He wants you to use your eyesight for good, not evil purposes; He wants you to intake images that are pure.

It is not possible to keep lustful eyes a secret from everyone. God sees all the things that you choose to see. He's watching you, so be mindful of what you allow your eyes to rest upon.



For Devotional Thoughts

Visit us on Facebook

LOST CHILD FOUND IN HAITI

Henderson, TN: Last month we reported on the tragic death of Roberta Edwards. We are happy to announce that the little boy who was with her has been found. The murderers of sister Edwards kidnapped JoJo believing he was American and intending to hold him for a ransom.

The Estes church of Christ reports:

"We are very excited to announce that JoJo, a foster child kidnapped during the murder of our missionary Roberta Edwards, has been located and is alive and well. Haitian authorities report that at least two suspects have been taken into custody. Please continue to pray for Roberta's family and the ongoing work in Haiti."

Edwards, 55, was the founder and director of SonLight Children's Home, where she was an adoptive mother for 20 children. She was returning from a trip for gasoline with three of the children when a vehicle pulled in front of her and forced her to stop. Two teenage passengers fled the vehicle after Edwards told them to run for their lives.

Edwards was shot multiple times at the wheel of her vehicle, and the gunmen then grabbed 4-year-old

Jonathan "JoJo" Paul and fled in a vehicle with tinted windows, according to fellow missionaries.

News from the West Virginia School of Preaching

Moundsville, WV: The West Virginia School of Preaching hosted its annual Victory Lectures October 25-29. Attendance was excellent. Key-note speakers included Cecil May, Steve Higginbotham, and David Lipe.

This lectureship was the first in a planned series of five, to occur every other year, which will cover completely the book of Psalms. This year, thirty Psalms were covered, tied together with the theme, "Enlarging My Faith--Eliminating My Fears." Copies of the Lectureship Book are available by e-mailing the director, Andy Robison, at dir-wvsop@aol.com. We ask a \$15 donation.

The school building facilities had to have some major work done this past year. With the foundation slipping and the walls cracking, an engineering company was brought in to dig down 72 feet to bedrock and secure (and raise what had slipped) the foundation with piers every five

feet along three walls. The total cost of that and some other necessary repairs was about \$232,000.

Originally, the school had planned on borrowing \$300,000, and we had announced this earlier. The loan took five months to go through, and a review of finances, along with discussions with the bank, caused us to borrow only \$150,000, in order to keep the cash flow necessary for such an operation as the school.

We are appealing to brethren to help us pay this off as quickly as possible, so as to not spend a lot on interest and be strapped in what we can do. At the date of this writing, we have raised \$30,000 for this effort.

To help us, please make out a check to WVSOP (West Virginia School of Preaching), mark the memo "building fund" and mail to us at P.O. Box 785, Moundsville, WV 26041.

We are glad to field any questions: 304-845-8001.

(Sent to us from: Andy Robison, Director of the WVSOP)

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The Nashville School of Preaching Reunion

Nashville, TN: The Nashville School of Preaching has planned a program to honor 50 years of service. The event is scheduled for January 30, 2016 from 10am-3pm. A catered lunch will be served.

The school is under the oversight of the Crieve Hall church of Christ.

Mike Kiser to Travel to Ghana and India

Sylacauga, AL: *Gospel Gleaner* staff writer Mike Kiser has planned a month-long mission trip to Ghana, West Africa, and India. He will be lecturing on the woman's role in the church, mechanical instruments of music, marriage, divorce, and remarriage, the covenants, and miracles, tongues, and healings. Unfortunately, some liberals have exported their views into these countries.

If you would like to support brother Kiser with this effort send your contributions to: Sylacauga church of Christ, PO BOX 126, Sylacauga, AL 35150.

Please note that it is for the Church of Christ Mission Fund.

Rubel Shelly Back in Nashville as a Lipscomb Professor

Nashville, TN: Rubel Shelly has moved back to Nashville where he was once the leader of the Woodmont Hills "Family of God."

If any of our readers needed any further evidence of the digressive direction of Lipscomb University, they have appointed Shelly as a freshman Bible teacher.

The notorious false teacher has been given the title of Distinguished Professor of Philosophy and Religion.

Florida School of Preaching to Host Annual Lectureship

Lakeland, FL: The Florida School of Preaching is set to host their annual lectureship January 18-21, 2016.

The theme for this year's study will be "Do You Understand Sin?" It is the school's 41st annual lectureship. Brian Kenyon is the school's director.

For more information call (800) 320-9780.

Paul Hosse Remembered

Nashville, TN: Paul Hosse was a gospel preacher and missionary to Eastern Europe. He also taught classes for several years at the Nashville School of Preaching and Biblical Studies. He died October 1.

Brother Hosse is survived by his wife of 61 years, Doris; a son, Paul; two daughters, Rebekah Clark and Rachel Goehring; and two grandsons. He was preceded in death by a son, John David. Brother Hosse was 87.

CHURCHES IN NEED OF PREACHERS

Cherokee, AL: The Maude church of Christ is seeking someone to live and work in their community.

Contact Person: Sammy Johnson
Address: 2775 Maud Road Cherokee, AL 35616 Phone: 256-398-3217

Chester, WV: The Chester church of Christ is seeking a preacher. Jim Hadley is one of the elders (330) 385-4869.

Harrisonburg, VA: The Central church of Christ is looking for a full-time minister.

Contact: Central Church of Christ, 822 Country Club Road, Harrisonburg, VA 22802

Email centralcocva@hotmail.com.

New Palestine, IN: The New Palestine church of Christ is looking for a minister to work with them.

Contact: Dewey Williams at (317) 441-0912

Email: deweyddw@hotmail.com

Duncan, SC: The Duncan church of Christ is looking for a minister.

Contact: David Vermillion at (864) 221-2581

Email: vermilliond46@att.net

Terry Knighton at (864) 590-1641

Email: terryk47@hotmail.com

high percentage of Sunday morning attenders returning for various classes.

Ilir and Vera Kura, our indigenous preacher and his wife, are active and effective in many church-related works, with emphasis on in-home studies. Their two grown sons, Igli and Mandi, are a great help. Both are fluent in four languages. Mandi is my faithful professional-level translator, not only for preaching but for written study materials I send them.

We baptized three during this visit. We need additional support for this work. Anyone interested in supporting it, with either a one-time or sustaining contribution, can write to me at geraldcowan1931@aol.com.

Gerald Cowan
1110 S. Vicksburg Street
Marion, IL 62959

Mission Report from Gerald Cowan

I have just returned from a three weeks mission to Albania. The church in Elbasan is strong and thriving. Attendance figures at all assemblies are consistent, with a

Northern Illinois Preachers' Meeting

From Ron Thomas: A couple of years ago, Peter Bumpass and I talked about our interest in starting a preacher's meeting where the brethren in the Chicago area could meet with some brethren in the Central Illinois area. We started this in Sept.

2014, meeting every other month, and today (11.19.2015) we completed another.

I had the agenda today, which was "Legalism." Our next meeting will be conducted by Richard Hill in January; Richard is one of the elders at the Eureka Church of Christ (east of Peoria). Our meeting is small, but the brethren will travel upwards of 150 miles to attend. We are all encouraged by it nonetheless.

Couple to Take Mission Trip

David Paden and his wife Kelly are planning an evangelistic/medical mission trip to Telica, Nicaragua in June of 2016.

David preaches for the church in LaFayette, Georgia. During 2015 this congregation had 13 baptisms and more than 20 restored.

For more information, call: (706) 638-1890.



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