



GOSPEL GLEANER

Volume 16

No. 1

HOW NARROW MINDED SHOULD WE BE?

Carroll Sites

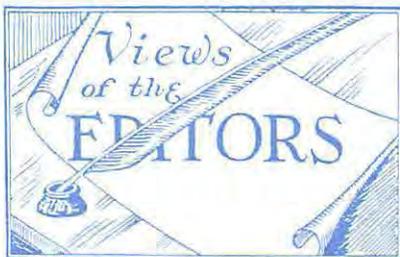
Some folks feel that we in the church are too narrow-minded. As a preacher I have sometimes been accused of being narrow-minded because of insisting upon the Christian forsaking all to follow Christ. But, isn't all of life narrow? Isn't success to be found only by passing through the narrow gate and down the straight way? Consider:

- There is no room for broad-mindedness in the chemical laboratory. Water is composed of two parts hydrogen and one part oxygen. The slightest deviation from that formula is forbidden.
- There is no room for broad-mindedness in music. There can be but eight steps in an octave. The skilled director will not permit his first violin to play so much as one-half a step off the written note, chord, and key.
- There is no room for broad-mindedness in the mathematics classroom. Neither geometry, calculus, nor trigonometry allows any variation from exact accuracy, even for old-time's sake. The solution of the problem is either right or it is wrong—no tolerance.
- There is no room for broad-mindedness in

biology. One varying result out of a thousand experiments will invalidate an entire theory.

- There is no room for broadmindedness on the athletic field. The game is played according to the rules with no favors shown for charity's sake.
- There is no room for broadmindedness in the garage. The mechanic there says that the piston rings must fit the cylinder walls within one-thousandth part of an inch. Even between friends there cannot be variation, if the motor is to run smoothly.

Now, why is it that we expect broad-mindedness to rule in the realm of religion and morals? Jesus said, "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). He prayed, "Sanctify them by your truth. Your word is truth" (John 17:17). He plainly stated, "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it" (Matthew 7:13-14). Where do you fit? Which do you choose?—PO Box 501, Higden, AR 72067



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The *GOSPEL GLEANER* is also supported financially by interested sister churches and individuals and is mailed free of charge to its subscribers.

The *GOSPEL GLEANER* is dedicated to restoring New Testament Christianity. We welcome your comments and questions regarding any article found herein.

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Editorial

FIFTEEN YEARS OF THE *GOSPEL GLEANER*

Bill Dillon

The *Gospel Gleaner* periodical is one of the success stories of the brotherhood of Christ. Eight years ago Ronnie Whittemore wrote a brief history of the journal, saying:

“In 1985, the *Gospel Gleaner*’s first year began with a circulation of about 2,000. The funding and oversight was taken by the Heath church and her good elders. The first two issues were for the most part paid for through the sale of some office equipment .”



The money from that exchange paid for the first issue of the *Gospel Gleaner*. Brother Ronnie pointed out, “Looking for opportunities rather than waiting for opportunities may sometimes pay big dividends for the Lord’s cause.”

Today the circulation of the publication has expanded to over 6,000 and the magazine has moved from being under the oversight of the Heath Church of Christ in Paducah, Kentucky to the Mabelvale Church of Christ, outside of Little Rock, Arkansas. The growth of the paper is due to a staff of writers who freely give their efforts for the joy and pleasure of being able to express the truth of “the old Jerusalem gospel” in a bold and balanced way. It’s not enough to speak the truth, it must be done in love; not for love of fame or fortune, but in love of the souls of men.

Additionally, over the years, many brethren have worked and labored tirelessly and sacrificially to label and mail out our gospel publication.

Literally hundreds of letters of commendation have been received in which the paper is praised for the manner in which it has stood for the truth and for the good attitude in which it has expounded the beautiful truths of the gospel. Critics have been few. Helping hearts are always more appreciated than disparaging tongues, and while most of our detractors have been “reality challenged,” yet a number of rebukes have been taken to heart. We are not perfect and we humbly submit to needful correction when directed by reasonable brethren.

Since 1995, the *Gleaner* has been co-edited by Bill Dillon and Dennis Gulledge, and the elders and preachers of the Mabelvale and Mountain Home churches of Christ have tried to guide the journal along a continuing path of effectiveness.

(Continued on page 13)

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH ON RACE RELATIONS?

John T. Polk, II (1996)

"Where does the Bible teach that black people are inferior to white people"

It never does! NOR does black skin represent slaves and white skin slave-owners. There is no one skin color that represents a curse OR blessing. "Racism" is a



prideful look at oneself and haughty disdain for others based upon the shallowest method of evaluation ever invented: the "outward man" (Cf., Proverbs 16:18; Luke 18:9-14; James 2:8-9). The "inward man" is the concern of Scripture (2 Corinthians 4:16; 1 Samuel 16:7), and God seeks "true worshipers" (John 4:23), and doers of righteousness (1 John 3:4, 7, 10; Isaiah 57:15), but never is there a description of a physique necessary to salvation. The only distinction God draws is between the obedient and the disobedient (Matthew 7:13-27; Acts 10:34-35). Those who preach racial hatred, division, supremacy, or separatism (e.g. W.E.B. Dubois, Nietzsche, Adolph Hitler, the Ku Klux Klan, Jesse Jackson, Malcolm X, Louis Farrakhan, *ad nauseum*), or set out on a course of racial extermination (e.g. Pharaoh, Exodus 1:15-17; Haman, Esther 3:6; Adolph Hitler, *ad nauseum*), are "boasters, proud, blasphemers...unloving, slanderers...despisers of good...haughty" and God warns "from such people

turn away" (2 Timothy 3:1-5). When humans seek to settle old scores, then ungodly attitudes and actions occur. The gospel of Jesus Christ settles old scores by forgiveness, and enemies become the object of love not hate (cf., 1 Peter 2:19-25; Luke 23:34; Ephesians 4:31-32; Titus 3:3-11).

If one believes the Bible, everyone comes from the same womb, for Eve is the "mother of all living" (Genesis 3:20), and all were saved by God in the family of Noah in the ark (Genesis 6:8-9; 1 Peter 3:20). Thus the Book of Genesis teaches the human race was made and saved alike. The apostle Paul showed that this doctrine remained unchanged in the New Testament when he said, "God, who made the world and everything in it since He is Lord of heaven and earth...since He gives to all life, breath, and all things. And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their preappointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts 17:24-28, NKJV). Every human on the face of the earth has the same: Creator; Class; Constitution; Conversion; Convenience.

God made a distinction in language (Genesis 11:1-9) in order that mankind would spread over the earth, but this is an internal difference, not of outward appearance. The boundaries thus drawn are for language differences, not skin, but God used the different languages to preach the same gospel to all (cf., Acts 2:1-47). Therefore, Christians must not draw distinctions that God does not draw, nor be influenced to feel hatred towards others for any cause (Matthew 5:38-48; Colossians 3:1-15).

Jesus Christ came to bring "peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:13-14). He established His Kingdom of "righteousness, peace and joy" (Romans 14:17), and we who obey the Gospel must "let the peace of God rule in your hearts" (Colossians 3:15). The "spiritually minded" find "life and peace" (Romans 8:6).—125 The Trace, Dover, TN 37058

“HOLY AND REVEREND IS HIS NAME”

Dennis Gullledge (1995)



The title of “Reverend” is typically used by well meaning people as a designation of honor and dignity for a minister, or preacher. The custom has grown until it is considered by many a lack of respect not to so address him, and many ministers love to have

it so. In the urgency of people to append a title of honor to those of a sacerdotal caste in the denominational world they have gone far beyond the Bible in so doing. Often times gospel preachers are called “Reverend” by those who do not know any better, and sometimes by those who should know better.

It is generally known that we in churches of Christ do not refer to our preachers as “Reverend.” In giving their reason for not employing the term “Reverend” when referring to preachers, brethren often say that the word is used only once in the Bible and it is applied to the name of God and not man, and that it amounts to the highest degree of blasphemy to apply it to man. The sole passage where the word “reverend” is found is in Psalm 111:9, which reads, “He sent redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his covenant for ever: holy and reverend is his name.” The only problem with the above argument is that it is not true, and error cannot be convincingly refuted by erroneous reasoning. The truth (God's word) is sharper than any two-edged sword (Hebrews 4:12) and we do not need to defend the truth with the dull sword of faulty reasoning.

THE ORIGIN OF CLERICAL TITLES

It is well to ask, “What is the origin of the titles of honor such as *Reverend*, which are so

popular in religious circles?” The answer to that question takes us back to the early days of the apostasy predicted in the New Testament (2 Thessalonians 2:1-4; 1 Timothy 4:1-4). Prior to that all Christians were on an equal plane as priests in the household of God (1 Peter 2:5), and are still. Christians were simply called “brethren,” as those who professed the same faith and religion (Acts 6:3). By the close of the second century, however, came the concept of a “clergy” class, which exalts some preaching brethren over and above others (the “laity”). It was thought that the ministry shared the characteristic of the priesthood, Judaistic. Make no mistake; this notion surfaced several centuries after the New Testament was completed and bears no relation to any apostolic practice or Biblical teaching. In the first century there were no “Reverend Peters” and “Pastor Pauls.” There was no “Saint John,” except in the sense that all Christians are saints (Philippians 1:1).

In the early 1800's when men were actively pursuing a return to pure New Testament Christianity (the American Restoration Movement), they began to recognize the sinfulness of the “clergy and laity” dogma. When the framers of the *Last Will And Testament Of The Springfield Presbytery* withdrew from the Synod of Kentucky in 1804, and drew up this document to express their total abandonment of all authoritative creeds except the Bible, they wrote, “*Item: We will that our name of distinction, with its Reverend title, be forgotten, that there be but one Lord over God's heritage, and his name One.*” In showing that the New Testament church has no honorary titles to confer upon any of her members, Alexander Campbell called the title of “Reverend,” “the positive of spiritual pride” (*Millennial Harbinger*, August, 1853, p. 473). In 1865 the *Millennial Harbinger* carried a quip showing that at least one denominational preacher of note had rejected the

title of 'Reverend' for himself: "(C.H.) Spurgeon has renounced the title of *Reverend*, and refused any title but his own name." How interesting! Where are the denominational preachers of today who will do as Spurgeon did many years ago? Do they unite with him in this?

THE WORD "REVEREND" IN THE BIBLE

It is true that the word "reverend" refers only to God in Psalm 111:9. It is also true that the word occurs only one time in the King James Version. It is not true, however, that it occurs only once in the Hebrew text from which the English word "reverend" is translated. And it is not true that the Hebrew word for "reverend" is applied only to God in the Bible. Reverence is to be extended to men (Ephesians 5:33; Hebrews 12:9). And, may we not overlook the fact that the word "holy" stands in exactly the same relation to the name of God as does the word "reverend" in Psalm 111:9. It is not wrong to speak of men as "holy," or else we cannot explain 1 Peter 1:15-16 and Hebrews 3:1. Of course, the word "holy" is often abused as a title of religious significance, such as, "Holy Father," or, "Holy See." It is clearly wrong to use "holy" as a title of honor, as any term would become wrong if so employed.

Our word "reverend" comes from the Hebrew word *yare* (yaw-ray). This word occurs 373 times in the Old Testament instances which I shall now list. It is translated in the King James Version by: "be afraid" (76 times); "dread" (1 time); "fear" (242 times); "reverence" (2 times); "afraid" (3 times); "be feared" (4 times); "be had in reverence" (1 time); "dreadful" (5 times); "fearful" (2 times); "fearfully" (1 time); "reverend" (1 time); "terrible" (24 times); "terrible acts" (1 time); "terribleness" (1 time); "terrible things" (4 times); "affright" (1 time); "make afraid" (2 times), and "put in fear" (2 times).

According to *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance Of The Bible*, the Hebrew word *yare*, means, "to fear...to revere...to frighten...reverence." If we add the 143 times the corresponding Greek term is used in the New Testament to the 373 times the Hebrew word (in

its various forms) is used in the Old Testament, we have the root word for "reverend" appearing 516 times in the Bible.

The reason it is wrong to use the word "Reverend" as a religious title for preachers is not because it is used only once in the Bible and applies only to God. We have seen that neither of those statements is true when you consider the original Hebrew term. In fact, neither "holy" nor "reverend" is used as a title for God, but is simply descriptive of his character. For example, a form of the Hebrew word *yare* is also used in Isaiah 18:2 to describe the Ethiopians as "terrible." David employed a form of the term *yare* in Psalm 139:14 to say, "I am *fearfully* and wonderfully made." Many other passages could be cited showing the different forms of *yare* variously translated.

The reason it is wrong to use the word "Reverend" as a religious title for preachers is because there is no Scriptural basis for the distinction between the so-called "clergy and laity" classes. The very system which sanctions such distinctions is a grand departure from speaking where the Bible speaks (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 1 Peter 4:11). It is also wrong because Jesus clearly condemned the use of special titles of religious honor for his people (Matthew 23:8-10). Such titles of distinction are totally foreign to the spirit of Christ; they are foreign to anything taught in the Bible and ought to be foreign to all people who would speak where the Bible speaks and remain silent where the Bible is silent.—10822 Mabelvale West Road, Mabelvale, AR 72103

FIFTEEN YEAR ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

With this issue of Gospel Gleaner we are beginning sixteen years of service to the brotherhood. Many of the articles in this issue have been selected from past issues and are dated as to when they first appeared. Also, this issue is larger, twenty-four pages in length. A new look has also been added. Bill Dillon and I wish to say thank you to our readership and to all who have supported us through the years. Dennis Gullledge, editor.

PEN POINTS

(1986-1994)

THE PATTERN OF SOUND WORDS

Ben F. Vick, Jr. (1989)

The apostle Paul commanded Timothy, "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 1:13). The American Standard, of 1901, says, "Hold the pattern of sound words..." This verse demands that we know the meaning of words and that we use healthy words in our speech and writing.

The Bible speaks of different kinds of words. The preacher sought out "acceptable words" (Ecclesiastes 12:10). We are not to be deceived by "vain words" (Ephesians 5:6). Those who cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine, Paul said, use "good words" and fair speeches to deceive the hearts of the simple (Romans 16:17-18). Paul commanded Timothy not to strive about "words to no profit" (2 Timothy 2:14).

Many people in the world and some in the church use words which do not measure up to the pattern of sound, or healthy words. Words are the wheels upon which the vehicle of thought travels. If our words connote a wrong meaning other than what the scriptures teach, then our words do not conform to the pattern set forth in the New Testament. It then behooves us to change our vocabulary to harmonize with the New Testament.

Some words do not measure up to the pattern found in Holy Writ because neither the word nor the thought conveyed is found there. Other words are scriptural words but are not used by some today as the writers of the Bible used them. In order to know the meaning of a word, we must understand what the author meant when he

used the word. The context will bear out the meaning.

Some Words Or Expressions Not Found In Scriptures Which Connote Error

1. **"Get Religion."** Religion is not something one gets—like a sickness or a disease. It is something one practices. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27).

2. **"Join The Church."** According to the Bible, one does not join the church. In Acts 2, when the church was established, we read that the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved (2:47). When one complies with the commandments of the gospel, the Lord adds him to the church. When an individual has repented of his sins, confessed his faith in Christ and been baptized for the remission of his/her sins, the Lord adds that one to the church. No one votes as to whether an individual is worthy to be a member of the Lord's church. The Lord decides if that person has complied and then does the adding.

3. **"Pray The Sinner's Prayer."** Nowhere in the scriptures does one ever read of an inspired man demanding that one "pray the sinner's prayer." In John 9:31, we are told, "Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshiper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth." Though these words were spoken by the blind man, the Jews recognized that what he said was true. They did not refute him. Even in the Old Testament these words are found: "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination" (Proverbs 28:9).

4. **"Share Christ" or "Share My Faith."** One cannot divide Christ into pieces as one would divide a pie and share with others. Paul did not share Christ but preached him. "And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:1-2). Neither can one

“share his faith.” Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (Romans 10:17). Paul said, “For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake” (2 Corinthians 4:5).

Some Words Found In Scriptures, Yet Misapplied

1. **“Witnesses.”** Some speak of witnessing for Jesus. Yet the word *witness* is used in reference to an eyewitness. The apostles were eyewitnesses of the Lord (Acts 1:8; Hebrews 2:3-4). We are not witnesses of the Lord, but we are to believe the testimony presented by the witnesses of the Lord.

2. **“Sanctuary.”** Many in the religious world want to apply the word *sanctuary* to the auditorium where worship takes place as if the auditorium *per se* were a holy place. The word *sanctuary* means a place set apart. Thayer says the word in the original means “of things which on account of some connection with God possess a certain distinction and claim to reverence, as places sacred to God which are not to be profaned.” The word is used in reference to the ground where Moses stood before the burning bush, the tabernacle, the holy of holies, and the temple. In the New Testament, the word is used in reference to either the above or heaven itself (Hebrews 8:1-2; 9:1-2). But nowhere does the New Testament refer to the place where the saints meet as being holy ground, or the “sanctuary.”

This does not mean our worship, wherever it may be, is not to be reverent, for “God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him.” (Psalm 89:7). Neither does that mean the place in which we worship should be misused or abused.

If the auditorium is the sanctuary, or a holy place, *per se*, then any use of it other than for God’s intended purpose would be wrong, which means that we had better not be discussing any matter of temporal affairs there. Thus, no mention of the weather, health, gardens, ball games, cars, houses, etc., can be made in “the sanctuary.” We had better discuss such temporal matters either

before or after entering “the holy place.” But, then, why should we stop with just the auditorium? Was not all the church property bought with the Lord’s money? Brethren, what proves too much proves nothing.

The tabernacle and temple were types of the church. They were holy. Today, the priesthood is holy, not the building in which it meets (1 Peter 2:5, 9).

3. **“Pastors.”** This word in the New Testament is found but one time in the King James Version (Ephesians 4:11). It is never used in reference to the church in the singular, i.e., *pastor*, but in the plural, *pastors*. It means shepherds. It refers to the overseers, or elders, of the local congregation. Never is it used of the local preacher.

The failure to use scriptural terms in their proper setting demonstrates either a failure to understand them or a lack of interest to hold fast the form of sound words as Paul commanded Timothy. Unscriptural words are the children of unscriptural ideas. It may be that many unsound words are being used today because too many (including preachers) are getting their ideas from denominational dogma rather than from New Testament teaching! Brethren, let us get back to a study of God’s word in the main and hold the pattern of sound words!—4915 Shelbyville Rd, Indianapolis, IN 46237

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Sunday Evening Worship	6:00
Wednesday Evening Bible Study	7:00

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Bill Dillon, Evangelist

LESSONS FROM THE EUNUCH

Acts 8:26-39

Guy F. Hester (1987)



Of the thousands of cases of conversion in the book of Acts perhaps more has been written about the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch than any other. Much has been said about Philip's part in the conversion of the eunuch. Philip was a great

evangelist who had gone forth from the church at Jerusalem because of the persecutions which came upon the church there. He "went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them...when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women" (Acts 8:5, 12). In this chapter we also have the account of the conversion of Simon the sorcerer, his fall and what he was told to do to be restored from his fallen state (Acts 8:9-24). Then in verses 26-39 we have the account of Philip being instructed to "Arise and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert," his coming in contact with the Ethiopian eunuch, the queen's treasurer, his preaching Christ unto him, his confession and baptism. Truly Philip was a great man of God, a powerful preacher of the gospel of Christ and one eminently worthy of all the commendations that have been paid him. But we now want to change our focus from Philip to the eunuch. Even before his conversion there are some outstanding

characteristics in this man that are worthy of notation and imitation.

He Was Sincere (Verse 27)

One of the obvious characteristics of this man was his sincerity. He traveled a distance of approximately 1000 miles from Ethiopia to Jerusalem to worship God (verse 27). There were no automobiles nor airplanes in his day but he was so devoted to the old Jewish religion [he was evidently a Jewish proselyte] that he traveled this great distance in a chariot rather than miss worship. Many today who live only minutes from the church building that is warm in winter and cool in summer, that has padded pews on which to sit, find excuses not to get into their air conditioned automobiles and drive the short distance to worship God. People do not miss worship because they live too far from the church building, but because they live too far from God. The Hebrew writer said to Christians "Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together" (Hebrews 10:25). In 1 Corinthians 14:23, Paul talks about the whole church being come together in one place. In most places the church is never together in one place because of members forsaking the assembly. Christians need the sincerity of the eunuch when it comes to worship.

He Was Reading the Scriptures (Verse 28)

He had time on his hands and he was using it wisely. We have time on our hands, how wisely do we use it? Paul said, "Redeeming the time, because the days are evil" (Ephesians 5:16). What better way do we have of "redeeming the time" than by reading and studying the scripture (2 Timothy 2:15; John 5:39).

He Desired Guidance

The place of his reading was Isaiah 53:7-8; a prophecy concerning the crucifixion of Christ. When Philip asked, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" The eunuch replied, "How can I except some man should guide me?" Although he

was an important man and no doubt very learned in many things he realized that there were some things he didn't know and that he needed the assistance of others in learning of these matters. He was not ashamed to ask questions concerning that which he did not understand. None of us know so much but that we can learn from others. Apollos was an eloquent man who was mighty in the scriptures but was taught by Aquila and Priscilla "the way of God more perfectly" (Acts 18:24-26).

He Loved the Truth

Not understanding what he was reading he asked, "Of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?" (verse 34). He loved truth! He was not interested in an opinion, but truth. One must love the truth in order to be saved. Paul wrote of some in 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12, "With all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they might all be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness."

He Obeyed the Gospel (Verses 36-39)

He heard Christ preached; he believed; he repented of his religious error; he confessed Christ and was baptized. These are exactly the same conditions that one today must meet in order to be saved (Mark 16:15-16; Luke 13:3; Matthew 10:32-33; Acts 2:38).

All of those who do not obey the gospel will be punished with everlasting destruction (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

He Rejoiced (Verse 39)

"And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing." And what reason he had to rejoice! He had been born again of water and the

Spirit (John 3:3, 5). His sins were remitted (Acts 2:38). He was a new creature in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). He was a Christian (Acts 11:26). All Christians should rejoice. Paul said, "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice" (Philippians 4:4).

Each of us should strive to possess in our own lives those same outstanding qualities that characterized the eunuch.—1925 County Highway 59, Haleyville, AL 35565

THE ED GLOVER FUND

Ed Glover, faithful gospel preacher and former missionary to Australia, is in need of our prayers and financial support. Last fall, Ed was diagnosed as having a severe liver ailment which would eventually require a liver transplant. His condition worsened and he was hospitalized in November. A suitable liver was found and transplanted on December 25, 1999.

Ed's recovery has been very slow and has been complicated by pneumonia and other ailments. At the present time, he is in Bowld-UT Hospital in Memphis where he has been since November. He has not been able to work for several months. His wife Janice, has been by his side and also has not been able to work during this critical time.

The Glovers have insurance, but it will not cover all the many expenses involved in Ed's extended hospital stay, the liver transplant, and a possible period of nursing home care. In order to assist them, the elders of the Lord's church in Trenton, Tennessee would like to assist this worthy couple in their time of need.

Contributions can be sent to the Glover Fund at the following address: The Elders, Trenton Church of Christ, PO Box 475, Trenton, TN 38382.

If you would like further information, please contact the Trenton church or feel free to write or phone me: Rod Rutherford, PO Box 5048, Duluth, Georgia 30096-0065, Phone: (770) 622-1525; fax: (770) 622-0881; Email: tftworld@aol.com.

WOMEN OF THE WORD (1985-1992)

THE UNIQUE EVE

Dennis Gullledge (1986)



Our study for this quarter involves one who precedes all others as a woman among women; the culmination of God's creative activity in Genesis 2. Of course, I speak of "Eve...the mother of all living" (Genesis 3:20), she who's name means "life." All godly women since her day are known as "daughters of Eve."

When Eve is mentioned, it is usually to tell of her sin, and the blight which was brought upon the world as a result. Eve made her mistake and is rightly charged with the consequences of her actions. However, that is not the only act of her life. One should not leave the impression that she is all bad. She deserves much more praise than she often gets. It is unbecoming of one to be unnecessarily critical in speaking of his mother. To be sure, she bore her sins and sorrows, the due reward of her deeds, but she also gave us Seth through whom the Redeemer came.

Of the character of Eve we know but little. There is only a small amount of information (Biblical or secular) on her so as to bring out the details of her life. Most studies hold her up as representative of womanhood in general, which is indeed the case, but here we shall attempt to be a little more specific.

As the first woman Eve is unique, with many "firsts" to her credit. Let us examine some of these:

EVE WAS THE FIRST WOMAN (Genesis 2:18-23)

This would seem obvious, but let it be said that the creation of the first woman was special, even above that of man. As Cecil Wright observed, "while man was made from the dust of the ground (Genesis 2:7) and was dust refined, woman was made from man and was dust doubly refined."¹

What is woman? Scripture answers, "She shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man" (Genesis 2:23). In reply to the above question, Alexander Campbell said, "She is but one-half of man—only the one-half of humanity I say, we think that she is decidedly the better half."² Isaac Errett added "Adam is not man without Eve. In discussing man's rights and woman's rights it should never be forgotten that each is half of the other."³

Woman was God's answer to the needs of man. It was not good for man to be alone (Genesis 2:18). Man is a social being. God provided Adam with the opportunity to see his need (Genesis 2:19-20). God provided the only answer to that need and that is woman (Genesis 2:21-22). She was not taken from the dust, nor formed of another animal. Every stage of her creation and presentation to man was designed to make her special to man. The teaching of the Scriptures relative to the divinely intended relationship between man and woman, led Matthew Henry to say that woman was "not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be loved."⁴

The New Testament shows us that woman is the "glory of man," being made for him (1 Corinthians 11:7). Woman is in a position subordinate to, but not inferior to man (1 Corinthians 11:8-9). Woman is the "weaker vessel" (1 Peter 3:7).

EVE WAS THE FIRST WIFE (Genesis 2:24)

As wife, Eve was "an help meet" for her husband Adam (Genesis 2:18). That is, she was a companion to love him, to share his life, his joys and his sorrows, to be his best friend, and to be a

home builder.

Eve provides the basis for the New Testament comparison between the wives of the two Adams. The first Adam's wife was taken from his side. The church, the bride of the second Adam, Jesus Christ, was purchased by the blood from his head, his hands, his feet and his side (Acts 20:28). The New Testament also teaches that the husband must love his wife as Christ loved the church (Ephesians 5:22-25).

EVE WAS THE FIRST TO BE ASSAILED BY SATAN

In Edenic paradise man was given a law to be obeyed (Genesis 2:17). Satan's main objective was to weaken Eve's faith in the word of God in general, and the merits of that law in particular (Genesis 3:1-5). Eve traveled down the three well known avenues of temptation in Genesis 3:6 (Cf., 1 John 2:16).

The penalty for her sin is well known (Genesis 3:16). The consequences were far reaching indeed, even to that of affecting the teaching program of the New Testament church (1 Timothy 2:14). Thus, in the church the woman must take a subordinate role to man. Any practice which places a woman in a position of authority over man is wrong.

EVE WAS THE FIRST TO FACE THE TRIALS OF LIFE AND DEATH

Think of the wonder and amazement that must have flooded Eve's heart as she beheld her first child (Genesis 4:1). She was the first to know the depth of anguish which attends the death of one's own offspring (Genesis 4:25). After the birth of Seth, Eve drops from the Biblical scene, to be referred to no more in the Old Testament. Again, Eve was the first to know the sorrow which sin brings, and was the first to experience Solomon's proverb ere before it was written (Proverbs 13:15b).

EVE WAS THE FIRST TO RECEIVE THE PROMISE OF REDEMPTION

She overheard Jehovah's warning to Satan that by the seed of woman a Redeemer would come (Genesis 3:15). Here is the primal prophecy of the coming Christ. Foy E. Wallace, Jr. pinpoints the greatness of this prophecy by showing that, "The natural seed inheres on the male side, such as the seed of Abraham and the seed of David—but in Genesis 3:15 it is **her seed** which would be the object of Satan's enmity."⁵

The creation, fall and redemption of man is the story of the Bible. By one man (and woman) sin entered the world (Romans 5:12). The "tree of life" which was lost in Eden may be regained in heaven (Revelation 2:7), but, we must obey the will of God (Revelation 22:14).

Thus, we have seen the unique Eve with many firsts to her credit. She was the first woman, the first wife, the first sinner, the first mourner and the first recipient of the promised redemption in Christ. In the truest sense every woman is unique who is a woman of the word.—10822 Mabelvale West Road, Mabelvale, AR 72103

ENDNOTES

¹Cecil Wright, ed., "The Origin Of Man," Lesson II—September 13, 1981, *Teacher's Annual Lesson Commentary On Bible School Lessons*. (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1981-82) p. 17

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³Isaac Errett, *Evenings with the Bible, Vol I*, (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Company, 1884), p. 48

⁴Wright, *ibid*

⁵Foy E. Wallace, Jr., *A Review of the New Versions*. (Fort Worth: Foy E. Wallace Jr., Publications, 1973), p. 101

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MAKE TODAY COUNT

Allen Webster



A plaque marking Abraham Lincoln's birthplace near Hodgenville, Kentucky, records this scrap of conversation: "Any news down t' the village, Ezry?" "Well, Squire McLain's gone t' Washington t' see Madison swore in, and ol'

Spellman tells me this Bonaparte fella has captured most o' Spain. What's new out here, neighbor?" "Nuthin', nuthin' a'tall, 'cept fer a new baby born t' Tom Lincoln's. Nothin' ever happens out here." Life's great moments rarely receive a glance from the world. Positive things go unnoticed by the masses while negative events make the news. If you want to make the most of life, try this:

AIM HIGH. George Bernard Shaw once said, "Some men see things as they are and ask why. I dream things that never were and say, why not?" Paul strived to preach the Gospel where Christ was not named (Romans 15:20)—and he did! Caleb heard them talk about giants and walls, but thought of God and winning. When he finally got them to stop whining long enough for him to speak, he said, "Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it" (Numbers 13:30). Oscar Wilde's last words were, "I am dying as I've lived, beyond my means." When God is in a thing, we can do more than we thought possible—Gideon's three hundred should have never defeated the 135,000, but they did (Judges 7). Lord Chesterfield (1694-1773) said, "Aim at perfection in everything, though in most things it is unattainable; however, they who aim at it, and persevere, will come much nearer to it than those whose laziness and despondency make them give it up as unattainable." In the long run men hit only what they aim at. Therefore, though they should fail immediately, they had better aim at something high (Henry David Thoreau). Paul said it this way, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high

calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:14). Another said, "If you can't win, make the fellow ahead of you break the record." Your enthusiasm for Christ may start a fire in another's heart.

FIND SOMETHING TO BE GOOD AT—EVEN IF IT IS NO GREAT THING.

Don't despise little things; a lantern can do what the sun can never do—shine at night. Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929-1968) said, "If a man is called to be a streetsweeper, he should sweep streets even as Michelangelo painted, or Beethoven composed music, or Shakespeare wrote poetry. He should sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will pause to say: 'Here lived a great streetsweeper who did his job well.'" John Garner, former U.S. Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare said, "An excellent plumber is infinitely more valuable than an incompetent philosopher. The society which scorns excellence in plumbing because it is a humble activity and tolerates shoddiness in philosophy because it is an exalted activity will have neither good plumbing nor good philosophy; neither its pipes nor its theories will hold water." If I cannot do great things, I can do small things in a great way (James F. Clarke). Or as Cicero put it, "Let him sing to the flute, who cannot sing to the harp." Use what talents you possess. The woods would be silent if no birds sang there except the nightingales. Theodore Roosevelt said, "Do what you can, with what you have, where you are." Solomon said, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might..." (Ecclesiastes 9:10; cf. Colossians 3:23). Remember "a dewdrop does God's will as much as a thunderstorm."

DON'T SPREAD YOURSELF TOO THIN. Generally, those who attain excellence spend life in some one single pursuit, for excellence is not often gained on easier terms. Paul said, "This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are before...I press toward the mark..." (Philippians 3:13-14). A Latin proverb goes like this, "To do two things at once is to do

neither.” Samuel Johnson (1709-1784) said, “He who begins many things, finishes but few.” David said, “One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple” (Psalm 27:4). Martha was told “one thing is needful” (Luke 10:42). A person who will be good at what he does will have to say “no” to some good works.

PAY ATTENTION TO DETAIL. “The genius is in the detail” is a remarkably profound thought. Or, as John Chrysostom (c. 347-407), put it, “Faithfulness in little things is a big thing.” Little details separate the good from the great, the faithful from the wayward, the saved from the lost. Henry Ford, Sr., summed his business philosophy in these words: “Paying attention to simple little things that most men neglect make a few men rich.” The Lord said, “He that is faithful in that which is least (*elachistos*, “very little, smallest”) is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much” (Luke 16:10). Small deeds done are better than great deeds planned. A Turkish Proverb says, “Measure a thousand times and cut once.” Robert Service said, “It isn’t the mountain ahead that wears you out—it’s the grain of sand in your shoe.” Jesus condemned the Pharisees for omitting the “weightier matters of the law,” but He did not condemn them for paying attention to the smaller matters (“these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone,” Matthew 23:23). “Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:19). George Morrison said, “Great services reveal our possibilities; small services our consecration.” Jesus complimented the faithful servant by saying, “thou has been faithful over a few things” (Matthew 25:21). In a similar parable (the pounds), Jesus says, “Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities” (Luke 19:17).

KEEP GOING...AND GOING...AND GOING. Thomas Edison arguably the greatest American inventor, said, “I start where the last

man left off.” Max DePree commented, “A friend of mine described a colleague as great at running the “ninety-five yard dash.” That is a distinction we can do without. Lacking the last five yards makes the first ninety-five pointless. We rate ability in men by what they finish, not by what they attempt. Paul said, “I have finished my course...” (2 Timothy 4:7; cf. Job 17:9; Galatians 6:9; Hebrews 12:1). David encouraged Solomon his son, “Be strong and of good courage, and do it: fear not nor be dismayed: for the Lord God, even my God, will be with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou has finished all the work for the service of the house of the Lord” (1 Chronicles 28:20).

As Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) said, “Make the most of yourself for that is all there is to you.” Think about it.—P.O. Box 520, Jacksonville, AL 36265

FIFTEEN YEARS OF *GOSPEL GLEANER*

Continued from page 2

As the *Gospel Gleaner* moves into its sixteenth year of publication, it is observed that the average life span of a religious publication in the Church of Christ is approximately two to three years. The quality of the *Gospel Gleaner* has assured the journal’s longevity.

The growth of the *Gospel Gleaner* has been slow but steady; hardly to be described as a brilliant meteor blazing across the sky; but with the road to success being uphill, we did not expect to set any speed records.

We expected only to be faithful in proclaiming “the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27) and this we have done! This we will continue to do!!—612 E. Fourth Street, Mountain Home, AR 72653

GOSSIP

And all who told it added something new,
And all who heard it made enlargements too.

—Alexander Pope

SO YOU WANT TO KNOW THE TRUTH

Ivie Powell (1998)



Invariably, when asked, “Do you want to know the truth?” the majority will answer in the affirmative. Yet, when told, will often reject it. Why? It could be they mean, “Yes, as long as it agrees with my views.” Or, after hearing, they simply do not understand or believe the truth.

Far too many view Christianity as nothing more than a social club, with things functioning around entertaining and being entertained. The crucial question of: “Are we really following the Bible?” has long been laid aside with many. As long as folks are happy, honest, sincere and doing good works; this is the criteria for acceptance with many.

My friend, I challenge you to take your Bible and search the inspired scriptures, for therein is found the life everlasting. As you begin this study, do so with an open mind and an open Bible. Two questions are submitted for your prayerful and careful consideration: (1) Do you really want to know the truth? and (2) After finding the truth will you obey it? Remember Jesus said: “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32), and Peter informs us that obedience to truth purifies the soul: “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth...” (1 Peter 1:22).

By searching the Bible one can learn the following information regarding truth:

- * Truth can divide households (Matthew 10:34-38).
- * Truth can make enemies (Romans 11:28).
- * Truth can test one's convictions (James 1:12).
- * Truth can make one sorrowful (Matthew

19:16-22).

- * Truth only makes one free (John 8:32).
- * Truth must be obeyed to purify the soul (1 Peter 1:22).
- * Following truth can result in being persecuted (2 Corinthians 11:21-28).
- * God rejoices when His children walk in truth (3 John 3-4).
- * Truth can cause many to leave (John 6:47-66).
- * Christ is “the truth” (John 14:6).
- * Christians must speak “the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15).
- * Christians must worship “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24).
- * Those who have not “the love of the truth” will be lost (2 Thessalonians 2:10).
- * The Holy Spirit guided the apostles “into all truth” (John 16:13).
- * Truth came through Christ (John 1:17).
- * Truth must be rightly divided (2 Timothy 2:15).

Now you can see how important truth is according to the Bible. May our attitude be that of the servant of old: “Buy the truth, and sell it not” (Proverbs 23:23)! Let us never allow anyone or anything to keep us from diligently searching for and obeying the truth for it alone will make us free (John 8:32)!—111 South Curry Street, West Plains, MO 65775



Christian Character
"Ye Are The Salt Of The Earth" Matthew 5:13

QUALIFICATIONS FOR SOUL WINNERS

Ronnie Whittemore (1991)



Someone has wisely said, "We have been saved, to save others." The apostle Paul wrote, "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy

2:2). "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Timothy 4:16). These statements are not intended just for preachers, nor for the young preacher Timothy only, but they are also intended for all Christians for all time. Solomon wrote, "...he that winneth souls is wise" (Proverbs 11:30).

Many Christians are hesitant about teaching the gospel to others. Understandably, they are concerned about saying the right things. There is a degree of wisdom that must be used when teaching others if we want to be effective. Jesus said, "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" (Matthew 10:16). Likewise, teachers bear a great responsibility in teaching others. James wrote, "My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation" (James 3:1). However, it is not understandable why brethren lack the desire to teach the gospel to the lost. The only hope for the sinner is the gospel. "But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost" (2 Corinthians 4:3). What are some

qualifications of a soul winner? If we learn what is expected of us, then perhaps, we will be more willing to teach the gospel to the lost and dying.

BE A GENUINE CHRISTIAN

How can Christians teach others about the advantage of becoming a Christian and living the Christian life, if he does not appreciate being a Christian? Genuine Christians are those who: (1) love God, the Savior, and the Bible (1 John 5:3); (2) love the truth and hate sin (Psalm 119:11; 119:128); (3) live the Christian life because they know that it is the best life (Romans 12:1-2; Philippians 1:21). Real Christians possess a love for the spiritual and heavenly. Their affections are centered in heaven, not on earth (Colossians 3:1-2).

HAVE A GOOD UNDERSTANDING OF SPIRITUAL THINGS

It is absolutely essential that soul winners have a good understanding of spiritual things. Christians must have: (1) a deep appreciation for the sacrifice, suffering and death of Jesus upon the cross (Hebrews 2:9); (2) a good comprehension of the power of the gospel (John 1:12; Romans 1:16-17); (3) an abiding faith in the promises and providence of God (Titus 1:2; Hebrews 6:18; 13:5-6); (4) confidence in God's manner and way of salvation (1 Corinthians 1:18-23). Men may invent their own "ways" of salvation, but true salvation rests with God and His divine plan.

HAVE COMPASSION FOR THE LOST

Men and women who do not possess a complete compassion for the lost will do very little to teach them the truth. They may go through the motions (give their money, talk about the condition of the lost, acknowledge the necessity of their hearing the gospel), but will they actually do the teaching? If Christians have a deep passion for the lost, then they will: (1) study the Bible for the right knowledge in teaching the lost (Hebrews 5:12-14); (2) pray for wisdom that the right things may be

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PERVERTED PASSAGES (1987-1993)

JOHN 3:16

Dennis Gulledge (1987)



In this issue of the *Gospel Gleaner*, we are proud to introduce a new column entitled, "Perverted Passages," dealing with denominational errors as well as some brotherhood hobbies. This column will appear interchangeably with our other column, "Women of the Word." We hope that you will find this new column to be profitable to you in your study of God's word, and will look for "Women of the Word" in the next issue.

One of our most essential tasks is to handle God's word aright (2 Timothy 2:15, ASV). However, the sad truth is that there are some who "corrupt the word of God" (2 Corinthians 2:17), handle "the word of God deceitfully" (2 Corinthians 4:2), and "wrest" the scriptures "unto their own destruction" (2 Peter 3:16). Experience teaches us that it is possible for people to have a broad range of Bible knowledge, and yet have it so confused as to misrepresent (intentionally or unintentionally) its real meaning. We should remember Paul's warning to the churches of Galatia, that there are "some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ" (Galatians 1:7).

The passage which carries the distinction of being the most memorized verse of the New Testament is also one of the most widely perverted passage spanning both testaments. In John 3:16 we find Jesus saying, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but

have everlasting life." This passage has had many thrilling tributes laid at its feet. It is known to all as, "The Golden Text of the Bible." The great Foy E. Wallace, Jr., called John 3:16, "The most wonderful sentence ever written. The sum total of the whole plan of salvation. The little Bible—the 'Gospel in a Nutshell.'"¹ Matthew Henry said, "Here is the gospel indeed, good news, the best that ever came from heaven to earth. Here is much, here is all in a little, the word of reconciliation in miniature."² Many people have a high regard for this passage and have sung its praises in tongue and pen, but in the wake of lofty human appraisals come some very serious abuses.

The first abuse of John 3:16 that we shall mention is that some have used it as a proof text for the idea that eternal life is a present possession for the Christian, and that he cannot lose it. Those who thus believe argue that eternal life is from the moment of belief, and can never be forfeited or lost.³ Brother Guy N. Woods wrote, "When debates were common such views were seldom entertained by members of the churches of Christ since in those encounters the truth regarding eternal life was clearly taught and emphasized. When such passages as 1 John 5:11, 13, John 3:16, and other verses were cited in an attempt to show that eternal life is a blessing available to, and actually possessed by children of God today, it was pointed out that truth is always consistent with itself..."⁴ Woods went on to say that there are two classes of scriptures touching the matter of eternal life, one asserting that it is a *promise* (Titus 1:2; 1 John 2:25), and the other that it is *possessed* (1 John 5:11, 13). These passages are easily harmonized when it is understood that eternal life is in prospect to be realized at the end of time (Titus 3:7; Matthew 25:46).

Many have tried to find in John 3:16 support for the teaching of salvation by "faith only." For example, the famous Baptist debater Dr. L. S. Ballard in his 1953 discussion with brother Thomas B. Warren on the plan of salvation, alluded to John 3:16 while affirming that, "The believer in Christ receives spiritual life at faith in Christ."⁵ The little expression "at faith" suggests that one is saved at the point of belief,

and before his faith leads him to any act of obedience at all.⁶ In other words, the claim is made that, Jesus offers salvation merely and solely on the basis of mental acceptance (belief, trust).

Some are convinced that there is merit in the argument because the passage fails to mention baptism in connection with salvation. Yet, the reader will observe, that neither does the passage mention repentance (which is “unto salvation” 2 Corinthians 7:10), nor does it mention confession (which is also “unto salvation” Romans 10:10). As Guy N. Woods has written, “If because John 3:16 does not mention water baptism it is to be rejected as a condition of pardon, by the same token we must reject repentance as well because there is as much said about baptism in it as there is of repentance. If to this the objection is offered that repentance is elsewhere made essential to salvation, as indeed it is (Acts 17:30), so also is baptism in water (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 22:16; Romans 6:3-4; 1 Peter 3:20-21).”⁷

Another abuse of this precious passage which we are studying is the popular idea that it is about all the Bible that some people need. This falls into the same category of those who believe that all they need to do religiously is keep the Ten Commandments and stay out of jail, or that the Sermon on the Mount contains all the instruction necessary to insure divine approval upon the head of the faithful observer. Such an approach is ridiculous because John 3:16 was never intended to be viewed as a comprehensive package of saving instructions to the exclusion of the rest of God’s word, even though this seems to be its most common application.

The truth is: we need all the Divine Revelation from start to finish. We need all 66 books, 1,189 chapters and 31,102 verses from Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21. The Bible itself is our textbook on salvation—not just John 3:16!

Some people carry their abuse of the Golden Text so far as to seek in it heavenly sanction for any and every religious practice motivated by human sincerity. The truth is, however, that there is not another verse in the entire Bible which refutes more error than John 3:16. It is a refutation of atheism, agnosticism and

humanism (it reveals God), of Calvinism (it extends God’s provisions to all the world, and not to a selected few), of Modernism (it asserts the virgin birth in Christ as the “only begotten Son”), of Oneness Pentecostalism (it demonstrates God and Christ to be separate and distinct persons) and of Universalism (it reveals that men will perish who do not believe and obey Christ). Therefore, instead of John 3:16, being an umbrella to shelter every way that seemeth right unto a man in the way of religion, it is actually a militant refutation of the many false ideas it is thought to support.—10822 Mabelvale West Road, Mabelvale, AR 72103

ENDNOTES

¹Foy E. Wallace, Jr., *The One Book: Analyzed And Outlined* (Murfreesboro, Tennessee: DeHoff Publications, 1987), p. 101

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⁴Guy N. Woods, *Questions and Answers, Volume II*, (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1986), p. 170

⁵Ballard. Op. cit.

⁶Warren. Op. cit., p. 23

⁷Guy N. Woods, *A Commentary on the Gospel According to John*, (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Company, 1981), p. 67

QUALIFICATIONS FOR SOUL WINNERS

Continued from page 15

said (James 1:5); (3) and teach others that they may gain more experience, wisdom and prudence to “speak the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15).

Although there are many other qualifications for soul winners (courage, humility, zeal, etc.), these should get us started. Let us purpose to teach the gospel to the lost!—1001 E. Albany Street, Indianapolis, IN 46203

SAVED BY MERCY

(Titus 3:5)

M. W. Kiser



We are saved by grace (undeserved favor); but we are also saved by His mercy (kindness). It is one thing to say that God is gracious; it is another to speak of His great desire to save. God delights in mercy (Micah 7:18). Of

all of His attributes, this one is singled out as His favorite, the last to be manifested!

I. THE PROOF THAT GOD IS A MERCIFUL GOD.

A. The world full of sinners is proof that God is merciful.

1. Why didn't God eradicate the human family at the first sin? (Genesis 3).
2. Why didn't God eradicate us right off? (2 Peter 3:9; Romans 2:5).

B. The fact that we have examples of God sparing the penitent.

1. Examples: *Israel*—Exodus 32; Deuteronomy 7:9; *Ninevah*—Jonah 3; Psalm 103:8-11.
2. The promise is yet ours! (Proverbs 28:13; Matthew 11:28-30; Isaiah 55:6-7).

C. The character and conduct of those who are saved.

1. Some of us have come from the very dunghills of sin and the gate

of hell (Luke 15:13-16; 18:9-14).

2. Even yet, God suffers long with our imperfections, ingratitude, and transgressions (1 John 1:7-9; Hebrews 4:14-16; John 6:37).

D. At what expense we are saved.

1. God so loved mercy that He gave His son (John 3:16; Romans 8:32).

II. THE PROBLEMS THAT SOME HAVE WITH THIS DOCTRINE.

A. "Why then will some people be lost in hell?"

1. It would not be mercy to the general population to turn all of the criminals loose! Mercy requires justice (Psalm 136:1-26, 15-17, 24).
2. We can only blame ourselves if we defy the laws of preservation!

B. "God is not always merciful to sinners."

1. Sodom and Gomorrah; Korah, Dathan and Abiram; etc.
2. If unpunished, others would have revolted after their evil example.

C. "Why is there such a thing as an unpardonable sin?"

1. Only one called such; not a catalog! (Mark 3:28-29; Galatians 5:19-21).
2. It is unpardonable because the person who commits it has so seared his conscience that he never repents and desires mercy!

D. "I don't feel like God could have mercy on me."

1. One text of scripture is better than a million doubts! (1 Timothy 2:4).
2. You are not so far gone that the Saviour cannot reach you! (Luke 19:10)

III. THE PERIL OF MISUSING GOD'S MERCY.

- A. Thinking that sin is a trifle in God's estimation.
 - 1. Calvary tells us that sin is not a thing to be mocked at (Matthew 27:46).
 - 2. Continue in sin and you cannot pay the debt! (Romans 6:23; John 8:21-24).
- B. Thinking you can take care of matters at the last hour of life.
 - 1. How do you know you will have that time and disposition (Hebrews 3:13).
 - 2. It is not a sign the heart is right with God to feel remorse when nearing death!
- C. Thinking there is an alternative plan of salvation.
 - 1. There is only one way (John 10:9; 14:6; Acts 4:12).
 - 2. God makes no exceptions to His plan (John 3:18; Mark 16:16; Titus 3:5)
- D. Thinking that this is solely a doctrinal and not a practical matter.
 - 1. We need to be merciful to the suffering and the sinful.
 - 2. A failure here seals our own condemnation (Matthew 6:14-15).

There is not a hard word in all of the Bible for that precious soul that desires to be at peace with God.—P.O. Box 2597, Sylacauga, AL 35150

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MY JOY IN LIFE

*It is my joy in life to fine
At every turning of the road,
The strong arm of a comrade kind
To help me onward with my load.
And since I have no gold to give,
And love alone must make amends
My only prayer is, while I live
God, make me worthy of my friends.*

-Anonymous

MIND SPARKS

"He who would be great must be fervent in his prayers, fearless in his principles, firm in his purposes, and faithful in his promises."

EVANGELISTIC ETCETERA

SOWING THE SEED

Mark Nichols Posey (1991)

John Chapman was born in Massachusetts in 1774. The pioneers loved him and rightfully so. For forty years he gathered apple seeds from cider mills in Pennsylvania and planted them all over Ohio, Illinois and Indiana. He gave deerskin bags of seeds to families moving westward. He set up nurseries in various places and went from one to the other tending them.

Pioneer children in the middle west had apples to eat because of John's labors. Adults and children loved him and always welcomed his visits. Indians, who were often hostile to other white men, were very protective of John because they thought his mind was different from other white men. The settlers along the way fed him, gave him shelter and told him many stories about his good deeds.

Here was a man with only one mission—to carry the apple seeds of the East to the newly cleared West, so the pioneers might have the juicy fruit to eat. He lived to see thousands of acres of orchards that came from the seeds and plants in his nursery. John died at Fort Wayne, Indiana in 1845. We know John Chapman as Johnny Appleseed.

We need more men and women like Johnny Appleseed today. Men and women that want to sow the seed to the world. Not apple seeds, but the seed of the Word of God. Jesus says in Luke 8:11 that the seed is the Word of God. Are you sowing that seed?

Jesus commands, not asks, begs, nor pleads, but commands in Matthew 28:19-20 to sow the seed to the entire world. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy

Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

The message is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. His death, burial and resurrection as we see in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4. I do not know of anything other than the gospel of Jesus Christ that can convert the soul of man. Note that James says, "receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls" (James 1:21). Paul tells us that the scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation (2 Timothy 3:15). The message of Jesus Christ is the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16). With no message, there is no power.

The method is simply to "Go and preach or teach and baptize." We can go by plane, car, bus, foot or some other convenient method. The command is to go, not how to go. Such is the same with the tools we use. Some may choose to use filmstrips, VHS video series, correspondence courses, home Bible studies, preaching or some other effective method. There are so many good tools available to use in sowing the seed. But a tool is only as good as the craftsman. When we mold and shape a life with the gospel of Jesus Christ, that method is the best method of all.

The motivation seems to be the biggest problem. Most have no problem with the message. The method is just a matter of choice. But the motivation is the drawing line between going and staying. Getting Christians to take the Gospel in hand, heart and mind to a lost and dying world is growing harder each day.

If a person is not self-motivated what can be done? I believe in the power of example. If someone is a lazy soul winner, give them a motivating example to follow. Jesus left humanity an example to follow. Christians follow that good example to the best of their ability. Probably the best way to motivate an individual to evangelize is to show them an evangelistic spirit in yourself. The desire to save souls is better caught than taught. The message and method are useless without motivation.

Are you a Johnny Appleseed for Christ? If
(Continued on page 22)



Restoration Reachbacks

"Ask For The Old Paths"

Jeremiah 6:16

DOERS OF THE WORD

David Lipscomb (1988)

"Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (James 1:22). A man who imagines he is benefited by hearing the word when he does not do it deceives himself. A knowledge of the word of God adds guilt to the failure to do it. He that knows his Master's will and refuses to do it will be punished with many stripes. Believing in Christ without obeying him adds nothing to salvation. Obedience to Christ is faith put into practice. Faith is never regarded as fixed and helpful until it leads to obedience, until it controls the whole man. This obedience involves not only baptism and the Lord's supper, or obedience to the positive ordinances of the Lord, but it embraces obedience to the moral and spiritual precepts of the Scriptures.

One must love God with all the mind and soul and body. He must subdue and hold in proper restraint his own fleshly lusts, desires, and ambitions. He must be truthful, upright, honest, and at all times ready to do good to all the children of men. He must help the poor and needy, the widow and the orphan. He must seek to save the lost and to reproduce in his own life the life of Jesus, who gave his life as the example we should follow. The apostle follows up this admonition with the warning that the forgetful hearer is not blessed in the hearing, but that man is blessed only in doing the things required in the word. "He that looketh into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and so continueth, being not a hearer that forgetteth but a doer that worketh, this man shall be blessed in his doing." The law of God is "the law of liberty," because it frees him who continues in it from the bondage of sin and the service of the evil one. The blessing it bestows is found in his doing

the will of God. He then insists that true religion, or the obedience to the law of God, requires persons to control the tongue; that it violates no law of God; and that the practice of religion, pure and undefiled, is to so refrain from the sins and corruptions of this world as not to be spotted or tarnished by them, and to actively engage in helping the widow and orphan in their need. This shows the words to be done, the laws to be kept, whence the active discharge of the duties we owe both to God and our fellow men. Only in doing his word can his blessing be found.—*Gospel Advocate*, August 15, 1907

THE MIND OF CHRIST

Elijah Goodwin (1988)

Now, while the soldiers of the cross are contending, "Not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against the spiritual wickedness in high places," the apostle commands them, saying, "Arm yourselves likewise with the same mind" that was in Christ. Have that condescending, humble, long-suffering, sympathizing disposition which characterized our Lord and Savior. Oh, have that deep-settled purpose to honor God, and do his will in all things, which Christ possessed; and under all circumstances be disposed to say, "Not my will, but thine, be done."

Come, my Christian readers, let us examine ourselves on each of these points in the fear of God. Have we the mind of Christ? Do we possess, in a good degree, that anxious desire for the glory of God and the salvation of sinners that dwelt in the bosom of our blessed Lord? Can we suffer long and be kind, in imitation of Christ, our pattern? Remember that if we would wear the crown, we must conquer; and if we would conquer, we must have the mind of Christ. Let no Christian say that he cannot obtain that mind. We are commanded to have it; and as no impossibilities are required of God's people, we can arm ourselves with that mind.

(Continued on page 22)

EDITORS, STAFF WRITERS & COLUMNS PAST AND PRESENT

Dennis Gulledge

Along with this special fifteen-year anniversary issue of *Gospel Gleaner* we wanted to list all of those who have been and are currently involved with the paper, either as editor or staff writer and columns for which they wrote from the beginning of the paper until now.

Editors

Bill Dillon (1985-date)
Dennis Gulledge (1995-date)
Ronnie Whittemore (1985-1994)

Staff Writers

Nat Evans (1993-1994)
Dennis Gulledge (1985-1994)
Guy F. Hester (1985-date)
M.W. Kiser (1985-date)
John T. Polk, II (1995-date)
Ivie Powell (1998-date)
Allen Webster (1995-date)
Ronnie Whittemore (1995-date)

Columns

“Christian Character”—Ronnie Whittemore (1985-date)
“Evangelistic Etcetera”—Various Writers (1985-date)
“Faith Fundamentals”—Guy F. Hester (1985-date)
“Interesting Inquires”—John T. Polk, II (1995-date)
“Pen Points”—Various Writers (1986-1994)
“Perverted Passages”—Dennis Gulledge (1987-1993)
“Precious Precepts”—Nat Evans (1993)
“Restoration Reachbacks”—Various Writers (1985-date)
“Sermon Sketches”—M.W. Kiser (1985-date)
“Women Of The Word”—Dennis Gulledge (1985-1992)

SOWING THE SEED

Continued from page 20

not, start sowing the seed today. Jesus said, “behold, I say unto you, lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest” (John 4:35). You will be rewarded for your labors.—PO Box 376, Arab, AL 35016

THE MIND OF CHRIST

Continued from page 21

But in order to do this, an effort must be made. We never can obtain that disposition by sitting down and whiningly saying: “I CAN’T do it.” To obey any command requires an effort; but we are commanded to have the mind of Christ, then we must strive to obtain it.—*Gospel Advocate*, January 18, 1940

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Dennis Gulledge, Evangelist

FOURTH ANNUAL GOSPEL GLEANER LECTURESHIP

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April 14, 15 & 16, 2000

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FRIDAY, APRIL 14

7:00 p.m. – Auditorium

"Husbands At The Helm"

John T. Polk II

7:00 p.m. – Building B

"Wives At the Side Of The Helmsman"

(women only) Jane Maynard

7:30-8:00 p.m. – Auditorium

"Families At The Judgment"

Ted Clarke

8:00-8:30 p.m. – Auditorium

"Essentials Of An Ideal Home"

Charles Rose

SATURDAY, APRIL 15

6:30 - 7:30 a.m.

Gospel Gleaner Breakfast – Building B

8:00 - 9:00

"The Church And The Home"

Ivie Powell

9:00 - 10:00

"What Have They Seen In Thy House?"

Dennis Gullledge

10:00 - 11:00

"What It Takes To Be A Good Father"

Bob Bauer

11:00 - 12:00

"Challenges To The Home"

Stephen Rook

LUNCH

12:00 - 1:00

1:00 - 2:00

"What Our Homes Need Most"

Guy Hester

2:00 - 3:00

"Guidelines For A Christian Marriage"

Johnie Scaggs

3:00 - 4:00

"Wanted: Christian Parents"

Tim Wilkes

SUNDAY, APRIL 16

9:30 A.M.

"The Child In The Home"

Allen Webster

10:30 A.M.

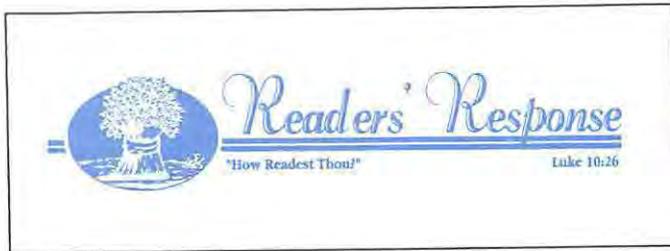
"How To Have A Happy Home"

M. W. Kiser

6:00 P.M.

"Hugs In A 'Bare' Den"

John T. Polk II



READING OUR WEBSITE

I am a member of Buckingham Road Church of Christ. I would like to get the *Gospel Gleaner* in the mail. I have been reading your website. It is very good and I believe everything the same. It is very encouraging to read another's views that are the same nowadays. A brother in Christ. Thank you very much. Leon McManus, Garland, TX.

BIBLICAL AND TO THE POINT

I enjoy the *Gospel Gleaner* very much. Every article is Biblical and to the point of interest, leaving no doubt as to what a person must do to be saved. I wish for you and your staff a great future in His service. Bill Crossno, Huntingdon, TN.

CLEAR AND PLAIN

I have read a copy of the *Gospel Gleaner*. I sure appreciate your stand for the truth which is clear and plain, spoken in kindness. Please add my name to your mailing list. I am a preacher with churches of Christ and a Christian. I found in a copy some valuable help in teaching Bible classes to those who speak English. Thank you very much. Edwin M. Tusekelege, Mbeya, Tanzania, E. Africa.

A SUGGESTION

The *Gospel Gleaner* is a great work and all who are involved with it are to be commended. May I suggest you put your web page address on your masthead. Dave Dugan, Lawton, OK.

GG RECOMMENDED

I would like to receive your publication. I was

at a preacher's meeting Tuesday in Corinth, Mississippi and several of the brethren highly recommended your work. Thank you for including me! Dwight Fuqua, Middleton, TN.

VERY INTERESTING AND INSPIRING

My aunt recently gave me a copy of the *Gospel Gleaner* and I found it very interesting and inspiring. I was hoping you would please add me to your mailing list. Thank you. Randy Sue Cowser, Arcadia, MO.

LIKES WHAT HE SAW

I saw a copy of *Gospel Gleaner* at my Father-in-law's. I liked what I saw. Can I be put on your mailing list? Also if you have any back issues I'd like them. The church at Mabelvale helped pay for the building of classrooms on our building when Norma and I worked with the church at Miles City, Montana. Paul Kidwell was preaching at Mabelvale at the time. That was about 1974. It was a great church then. I met some of the elders. Good men. Thank you. Bill Altaffer, Gallup, NM

LOOKING FORWARD TO RECEIVING GG

I picked up a copy of your publication while visiting my son and family in Paducah, KY. After reading it, I decided I liked it and would like to receive it on a regular basis. Would you please put me on your mailing list. I will be looking forward to receive my first copy. George L. Teel, Vienna, WV.

NOTE CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Please note our change of address. We enjoy reading the sound messages *Gospel Gleaner* contains and hope to continue receiving it in the mail. Mr. & Mrs. Russell Poteet, Lubbock, TX.

COULD PROFIT FROM GG

A young Christian man showed me a copy of your paper today. In looking through it, I feel that I could profit from it. Please add me to your mailing list. He said it was free. If not, let me know! Bea Stelmach, St. Clairsville, OH.

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GOSPEL GLEANER

Volume 16

No. 2

HOW TO IDENTIFY FALSE TEACHERS

John T. Polk II



Jesus put His flock of people on guard in the Sermon on the Mount when He said, "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits" (Matthew 7:15-16). The word "ravenous" indicates their capacity for violence as the same word may be also translated "extortion" and defined as "to obtain by force or violence" (1 Corinthians 5:10; 6:10). Those who otherwise seem to be "sound or faithful" gospel preachers turn against what appears to be "their own kind" when in actuality they are "ravenous wolves."

That such "Christians" use the threat of, or actually resort to, destroying another Christian's name and reputation in order to appear righteous themselves is exactly what Jesus said the Pharisee did in his prayer (Luke 18:9-14). Paul preached the truth of the Gospel of Christ in Antioch of Pisidia and unbelieving Jews were "filled with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul" (Acts 13:45). Even though they could stir up "the devout and prominent women and the chief men of the city," they "raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region"

(Acts 13:50). Unbelieving Jews in Iconium "stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brethren" (Acts 14:2), and divided the loyalties of the whole city. In Thessalonica, the unpersuaded Jews, "becoming envious, took some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar and attacked the house of Jason" (Acts 17:5).

This pattern of opposition is to be expected from unbelievers, but Jesus warned that it could come from those who pretend to be of the flock. Since Jesus said: "A servant is not greater than his master," then it followed that "If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you...But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me" (John 15:20-21). By His own mouth, then, anyone within the flock of Christ who resorts to unbelievers' tactics to oppose the preaching of the Gospel has shown with whom his loyalties lie. While claiming to be "sound in the faith" anyone who attacks the flock with the same vengeance, ferocity and tactics as unbelievers, is not sound; is not of the flock; and should not be in any pulpit of the churches of Christ! The devil is "the accuser of our brethren" (Revelation 12:10) and those who do his bidding are of the devil, not God! It's too bad that preacher training does not seem to include decency as well as doctrine.

(Continued on page 22)



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The *GOSPEL GLEANER* is a quarterly publication of the Mabelvale Church of Christ in Mabelvale, Arkansas and the Mountain Home Church of Christ in Mountain Home, Arkansas.

The *GOSPEL GLEANER* is also supported financially by interested sister churches and individuals and is mailed free of charge to its subscribers.

The *GOSPEL GLEANER* is dedicated to restoring New Testament Christianity. We welcome your comments and questions regarding any article found herein.

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Editorial

ANOTHER OUTSTANDING LECTURESHIP

Bill Dillon

The *Gospel Gleaner* Lectures of 2000 excelled in content and timeliness. In a day of shattering and crumbling families, the Lectureship extolled the glories and virtues of "The Christian Home."

Friday evening, April 14, brother Max R. Miller inaugurated the series of lessons by expounding on the topic "Husbands At The Helm." About 140 men came together for that session. Sister Jane Maynard addressed over 160 ladies on "Wives By The Side Of The Helmsman."

The Saturday sessions began with breakfast at 6:30, and at 8 o'clock, Ivie Powell brought the first message. Crowds averaged around 200 throughout each lecture.

Sunday services were a strong finish to the effort with Allen Webster, M. W. Kiser and John T. Polk II speaking on "Children In the Home," "How To Have A Happy Home" and "Hugs In A 'Bare' Den," respectively. Attendance was 675 for the morning hour and 525 for the evening services. Visitors were from as far away as Georgia and Florida.

God willing, the *Gospel Gleaner* Lectureship will press on to even more outstanding success in April 2001.

All of our readers are encouraged to come and participate in our annual "spiritual feast." Cassette recordings of the lectures are available for the nominal cost of the tapes. Please contact the College and North Church of Christ office.— 704 Arkansas Avenue, Mountain Home, AR 72653



ONE NATION UNDER GOD?????

Michael Tucker

On May second I sat down to access on the internet the current religious news of the past week. It reminded me again of the desperate situation our country is actually in. Let me share with you some recent news.

On April 25th the Vermont House of Representatives passed the same-sex union bill and their governor signed it on April 26th. Vermont becomes the first state in America to grant "marriage benefits" to homosexuals. The U.S. Constitution says that states must recognize the laws of other states. But when Hawaii appeared likely to legalize gay marriage in 1996, more than thirty states (including Kentucky) and the U.S. Congress passed Defense of Marriage Acts, defining marriage as between a man and a woman.

On April 25th, the U.S. Supreme Court heard arguments about whether or not the Boy Scouts have a constitutional right to exclude gay members. The issue came about when an Eagle Scout assistant, James Dale, was expelled ten years ago after the Boy Scouts discovered he was a homosexual activist. Mr. Dale sued under the New Jersey anti-discrimination law because it includes protection for sexual orientation. Last year the New Jersey Supreme Court ruled that the Boy Scouts are a place of public accommodation and therefore they must allow for gay members. This ruling totally disregarded the First Amendment guarantee of freedom of association which should protect the rights of the Boy Scouts.

The Supreme Court justices are still weighing the ramifications. Here are some of the issues the justices brought up:

If the Boy Scouts cannot exclude gays, can they still exclude girls?

Would a Jewish social group be forced to accept non-Jewish members.

In the past, the courts rejected the public accommodation claim for all-male organizations such as the Jaycees and the Rotary Club. Now the Supreme Court must determine whether or not the

public accommodation law should apply to private organizations such as the Boy Scouts. The decision for this case will not be decided until early summer.

"With God all things are possible" has been Ohio's state motto since 1959. However, a federal appeals court ruled that the statement violates the U.S. Constitution. The court sided with the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) who believes the motto is a government endorsement of Christianity. The motto has appeared on Ohio's secretary of state's stationary, and on some state reports. In 1998 a federal judge permitted the motto as long as the Bible was not cited as its origin. The ACLU asked an appeals court to reverse this decision.

In the name of tolerance, the state of Massachusetts is using public schools as training ground for teaching children about homosexual sex. Each year, their governor budgets \$1.5 million for his "Governor's Commission for Gay and Lesbian Youth" which works through the Massachusetts Department of Education. Attending teachers and administrators receive "professional development credits." They also received instruction on "how to expand homosexual teaching into lower grades." It included a workshop entitled "The Religious Wrong: Dealing Effectively with Opposition in Your Community."

The Psalmist said, "Righteousness exalts a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people" (Proverbs 14:34). God's authority is no longer the strong influence in our nation, as it has been in the past. The influence of godless Humanism is apparent throughout our society. It has infiltrated our government, courts, our schools, the work place, even our homes and our "churches." We are a nation that has sunk to new lows, far below God's standards of righteousness. This is certainly a twisted concept of being One Nation Under God.—PO Box 313, Mayfield, KY 42066

THE SIN OF BACKBITING

Dennis Gulledge



A backbiter is a person with back trouble—not his own, but someone else's. He is a pain in another person's back. How is your neighbor's back today?

The word "backbite," according to Webster, means "to say mean or spiteful things about (one absent): slander." The word in the Hebrew from which *backbite* comes suggests the idea of "to play the spy." That is, the backbiter attempts to spy out the faults and defects of another person's life or to circulate reports unfavorable to others by low and petty remarks as well as those which may be malicious and slanderous. It is conveyed in the New Testament by the word "evil speaking" (James 4:11; 1 Peter 3:16).

The sins of the tongue are many and they are serious. The tongue is not steel, but it cuts and it wounds. Its wounds are not always to the face, but more often to the back. The scorpion harms only the one it stings, the snake only the one it bites, and poison only the one who ingests it, but the backbiter hurts, wounds and slays both near and far, at home and abroad, and spares neither the living nor the dead.

There is an amazing scarcity of material on problems such as this one. It is little wonder that there is so much wrangling, bitterness and backbiting in the church today. Granted, we have many doctrinal problems, but we also have many personal problems (Galatians 5:15). In writing this article, I simply went to the four passages in the Bible where the word "backbite" in its various forms is used and formulated my thoughts. What does God, in His word, say of the backbiter?

Backbiters Keep Bad Company

(Romans 1:29-31)

No fewer than twenty-three sorts of sins and sinners are mentioned by Paul in these verses. These are things "unbecoming," i.e., inconsistent with our duty to God and others. Of all the misdeeds herein mentioned five are sins of the tongue. *Debate*—strife, and the disposition to be contentious and quarrelsome. *Deceit*—fraud, falsehood and lying. *Malignity*—misinterpreting the words and actions of others, or putting the worst construction on their conduct. *Whisperers*—those who secretly, by hints and innuendoes, detract from others or excite suspicion of them. They secretly filet another for his faults, while pretending great innocence themselves. They talk about others as if it pains them to do so, when actually they are enjoying every second of it. *Backbiters*—those who speak ill of others when they are not present to speak for themselves. Backbiters never tell "secrets," but only those things which are notoriously "true." They never speak to the person involved, only about the person.

Backbiters Are A Prime Source Of Church Trouble (2 Corinthians 12:20)

A major source of trouble in our congregations is the malicious speech of brethren. An example of such, in the New Testament, is Diotrephes (3 John 9-11). John said it was a work which Diotrephes continued to practice, "prating against us [slandering] with malicious words" (verse 10). B. C. Goodpasture fittingly characterized Diotrephes as playing the role of a "church boss, a short-horn deacon, a presiding elder" and "a church regulator" (*Gospel Advocate*, April 24, 1975). How common is the Diotrephes personality type in the church today?

An old but humorous line by A. T.

Robertson may retain an appropriate modern application. "Some forty years ago I wrote an article on Diotrephes for a denominational paper. The editor told me that twenty-five deacons stopped the paper to show their resentment against being personally attacked in the paper" (*Word Pictures in the New Testament, Volume 6*, p. 263). Every congregation should enjoy peace and tranquillity in the truth (Ephesians 4:3). It is wrong when one creates contention with his words (Proverbs 6:18-19). For this reason many warnings are given in the New Testament regarding the wrongful use of the tongue (Ephesians 4:29; James 3:2).

Backbiters Cannot Dwell With God (Psalm 15:1-3)

In this passage we have two serious and weighty questions: "Who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?" That is, what kind of people does the Lord own? Who is prepared for heaven? It concerns us all to put this question to ourselves (Luke 18:18).

In this passage we also find a plain and particular answer given: Walk uprightly, work righteousness, speak the truth in your heart—no backbiting! It is essential to godliness that we do not defame others (Psalm 101:5). This is a crime of infinite evils and multiplied mischiefs. It saps the foundation of friendship (Proverbs 17:9). It hurts the one talked about, while rending in pieces the vitals of charity (James 3:8-10). It hurts the teller, for who dares trust a backbiter? (Proverbs 26:25). It hurts the hearer, filling his heart with evil suspicions, which are almost always uncalled for (Matthew 7:1-5).

Why should backbiting ever be known among us? To begin with, if what we say about another is false (as in our not knowing all the facts in a given situation), then we are guilty of lying. On the other hand, if what we say about others is true (as the slanderer will characteristically assure you that it is, or he wouldn't be saying it), then we are void of love, because some things even though they are true are better left unsaid (cf. Proverbs 10:12; 1 Corinthians 13:1, 4-7).

Backbiters Must Be Discouraged (Proverbs 25:23)

This passage from Solomon speaks of the way we should react to the talebearer when he starts to fill our ears full of garbage about another person. We should react to it with anger and displeasure. Matthew Henry said, "Slanders would not be so readily spoken as they are if they were not readily heard, but good manners would silence the slanderer if he saw that his tales displeased the company."

Someone else has said, "Great minds talk of ideas, average minds of things and small minds of people." How true of the backbiter! Backbiting is wrong. May we never participate in it or be party to it without seeking to put a stop to it. Value your friends, neighbors and especially your brethren in Christ. Let us defend one another against the "slings and arrows" of the cowardly backbiter.—10822 Mabelvale West Road, Mabelvale, AR 72103

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Dennis Gullledge, Evangelist



"WE'RE MARCHING TO ZION" II

Guy F. Hester



This is the second of a two part series on the above subject. In the last article we looked at the meaning of the word "Zion." In this article we shall examine a few of the very meaningful phrases of the song.

"Come, we that love the Lord"

Only those who love the Lord are "marching upward to Zion, the beautiful city of God." "Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matthew 22:35-37). In our everyday dealing with our fellow men we find it easy to love those who love us, and certainly for this reason we should love God supremely who loved us so much, and has done so much for us. He gave us our very being in this world and has supplied our every need in a temporal way. Then in addition to all of this He gave His Son to die for us on the cross to redeem us from sin, that we might be saved eternally in the world to come. No wonder John said, "We love him, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

The test of one's love for the Lord is his obedience to His will. John said, "For this is the

love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome" (1 John 5:3, NJKV). Hence, God has not required anything that is burdensome or unreasonable of His children. When we do everything that God has required of us it is only our "reasonable service." Paul said, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1). If we love the Lord as we should, we get our greatest enjoyment from doing His will. If we fail to obey Him that is proof beyond doubt that we do not really love Him as we should.

Christ demands that we love Him more than we love our parents, wives, husbands, children, and even one's self. He said, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" (Matthew 10:37). "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26). We know that the Bible does not teach us to hate our families in the ugly sense of the word for the same Bible tells us that we are to love our families (Ephesians 5:25). Since the Bible does not contradict itself we must conclude that this means that we must love Him more than we love anyone or anything else in the world and that He must always come first in every thing. If a choice must be made between the Lord and a member of our own family we must always choose Jesus.

Jesus said, "If you love me keep my commandments" (John 14:15). Keeping part of His commandments is not proof that we love Him. Neither is keeping all of His commandments part of the time proof that we love Him. Faithful and constant obedience to His will at all times in our everyday lives, as well as our worship is proof that we love Him, and nothing else is.

To love the Lord is to love His church. Jesus loved the church and gave Himself for it (Ephesians 5:25). Certainly we should love the church enough to give our lives in humble service to it. If we love the church we will not have to be

begged to live faithful lives that will not bring reproach on the church. Love for the church will not allow little hindrances to keep its members from attending the services (Hebrews 10:25).

To love the Lord is to love the truth. People are lost who "receive not the love of the truth" (2 Thessalonians 2:10). If we love the truth we will search for it (John 5:39). Paul said of the Bereans: "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11).

If we love the truth we will contend earnestly for it (Jude 3), stop the mouths of false teachers (Titus 1:9-11), patiently teach it (2 Timothy 4:1-4), have no fellowship with the enemies of it (Ephesians 5:11; John 7:7; Acts 19:8).

To love the Lord is to love the brethren (1 John 3:14). "Let brotherly love continue" (Hebrews 13:1). "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently" (1 Peter 1:22). Brethren sometimes have faults that we do not approve of. We are not to approve their faults but we are to love them in spite of their faults. We must love the brethren in spite of what they may say about us or do to us. When Jesus was dying on the cross he prayed for those who were crucifying Him, and Paul says, "If any man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of his."

To love the Lord is to love the lost. God loved the lost and gave His Son. Christ loved the lost and gave His life. Now finish this statement: "I loved the lost and gave my _____." If we really love the Lord we will give our time, talent, and money for the salvation of lost souls.

"And let our joys be known"

The happiest people in all the world are those who are genuine Christians. My father used to say, "The problem with many church members is that they have just enough religion to make them miserable and not enough to make them happy." A little girl, looking at a mule said, "Grandma, is

that mule a Christian?" The grandmother replied, "Why no, what makes you ask that?" "Well he sure has a long face about something," the little girl said.

The first thing that is said about the Eunuch after he obeyed the gospel is that he "went on his way rejoicing" (Acts 8:39). "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord" (Philippians 3:1). "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice" (Philippians 4:4).

"Join in a song with sweet accord"

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Psalms 133:1). The unity of believers is one of the things that weighed heavily upon the heart of the Lord just before he went to the cross. He said in His prayer: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one" (John 17:20-22).

"We're marching thro' Immanuel's ground to fairer worlds on high"

There is another song that we sometimes sing: "This world is not my home, I'm just a passing through; My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue." Heaven, what a beautiful word! What a beautiful thought! Heaven is the long promised home of every soul that is saved. We like to sing about it, we like to preach about it. But the question that many people keep asking is, "What is heaven really like?" If I die as a Christian what can I really expect when I get to heaven? Heaven is so wonderful that it is difficult to describe. In fact I do not believe that it is possible for human language to adequately describe the glory of that eternal home of the righteous. But the Bible gives us enough information that we may understand some of the glories
(Continued on page 8)

DID YOU KNOW??

Carroll Sites

Have you ever noticed how many things are accepted in religion without any investigation? So many things in religion are simply traditionalized. Many will accept what some preacher or teacher says without any investigation. For instance, **DID YOU KNOW...**

- ◆ That the Bible nowhere says, “Accept Jesus as Your Personal Savior”?
- ◆ That not one modern denomination can be found in the New Testament
- ◆ That no one was ever told to “Ask Jesus into your heart” in answer to the question, “What must I do to be saved?”
- ◆ That “The Rapture” is not once mentioned in the Bible (neither by name nor by concept)?
- ◆ That “faith only” is mentioned only one time in the Bible, and that in a condemnatory fashion? (Read: James 2:24)
- ◆ That every verse in the New Testament in which baptism and salvation appear together always places baptism prior to salvation? (Notice: Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; Romans 6:4; 1 Peter 3:21)
- ◆ That the New Testament authorizes only vocal music in worship to God? (Read: Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16)
- ◆ That you must obey the will of God to be saved eternally? (Hebrews 5:8-9; Romans 6:16-18; Matthew 7:21-23)

DID YOU KNOW—that Jesus Christ has been given all authority in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18)...that we will be judged by Jesus Christ (Acts 17:30-31)...that this judgment will be by His Word (John 12:48)?

Are **YOU** following men or God...the Bible or tradition...command or opinion...faith or feelings?

IT DOES MAKE A DIFFERENCE!!—P.O. Box 501, Higden, AR 72067

“WE’RE MARCHING TO ZION” II

Continued from page 7

and wonders of that beautiful home of the soul.

Heaven, that beautiful home of the soul in “fairer worlds on high” will be a most marvelous home. Listen carefully to the words of Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:1, “For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” Then consider these words of Jesus in John 14:1-6, “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” The “fairer worlds on High” is a place without any sorrows or problems. There will be no tears, nor will there be any pain. I don’t know how God will do this but He has promised and I accept it by faith. Let us look at a couple of passages from the book of Revelation. “They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes” (Revelation 7:16-17). How many innocent children went to bed hungry last night! At this very moment there are little children in this world who are dying of starvation, but in heaven they will never be hungry again. “And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Revelation 21:4).—1925 County Highway 59, Haleyville, AL 35565

THE GREATEST SHIPWRECK

Jane Maynard



Who knows for sure when or where it really began? That first loose board or piece of metal somewhere deep on the bottom of the great ship. Or perhaps it was just the first rivet or screw that worked itself loose. Or maybe, not even that, maybe

it was just a weak seam somewhere that allowed moisture to seep into some hidden place, and set up the insidious process of decay. Who knows? But it happened, slowly, subtly and unnoticed until just the right amount of pressure from within and without ripped away a very small piece, very small, but very critical. Then one after the other pieces began to fall away bringing her down. Down, filled with devastation, destruction, death and disaster for all of those depending on her.

Why? Why did someone, anyone, not see or know? Why didn't someone keep check on such a great and important vessel on a regular basis to prevent such tragedy and devastation? How long could it take to just check it out? What is a little upkeep, and a little time for something so important? So little could have spared so much for so many. Was it carelessness, a lack of concern, neglect, thoughtlessness or just a shifting of responsibility to someone else? What?

Great marriages are like great ships. Designed by the Great Builder to be strong and sea worthy. They can carry their load while sailing the smoothest or the most storm ravaged seas. Marriages need checking out too though and that on a regular basis. Marriages are in trouble in our world. They are coming apart. Where does it begin? Who knows? Most likely, in fact very likely it is the little things. Just those small unnoticed improperly maintained things, which allow decay making elements to seep in and begin their insidious work.

Great ships, which come apart, never make port. Great marriages, which come apart, never

make port on Elysian shores. They just leave in the wake of their wreckage a lot of debris, broken dreams, lives and souls. Just floating there, sinking, drowning, men, women and children. It's time. No, it's past time to restore the great vessel of marriage to her original state; to make her sea worthy again for the voyage of life. Great marriages like great ships can reach their destinations. But how do we keep great ships great? How do we do that? Someone is going to have to keep an eye on the small things. The small things, that's what it is, that's the things that hold her together and make her strong. Maybe, just maybe someone needs to be in charge of maintenance. Just daily, careful and well thought out maintenance to keep the marriage vessel intact and secure. Of course, that will require a full time maintenance crew. And not just any crew, but a fiercely determined and committed crew. But who, who is qualified to make up such an important crew? Just two; "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24).—179 Stan Lewis Road, Clarkridge, AR 72623 (Women's Counselor—College & North Church of Christ)

MOUNTAIN HOME CHURCH OF CHRIST
COLLEGE & NORTH STREETS
P. O. BOX 880
MOUNTAIN HOME, AR 72654-0880

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

Sunday Morning Bible Class	9:30
Sunday Morning Worship	10:30
Sunday Evening Worship	6:00
Wednesday Evening Bible Study	7:00

Telephone (870) 425-4330
Office Fax (870) 425-8118
E-Mail: church@centurytel.net

Bill Dillon, Evangelist

BLOCKING HEAVEN'S GATE

(Matthew 23:13)

M. W. Kiser



Is there anyone you would like to see in Hell. We would probably answer in the negative; but have we ever contributed to a person dying lost? Ungodly people often wish this upon others. Jesus brought this serious

indictment against the Pharisees of His day. Let us consider how we could be guilty of doing the same.

I. BY DENYING WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES ABOUT HELL.

- A. They deny it's existence. Most who believe in God, don't believe in Hell. Most who believe in Hell don't believe there is the possibility that they will go there! The Godhead taught it (2 Peter 2:4; Matthew 5:22); Redemption implies it; Heaven suggests it; and Judgment demands it!
- B. Some would deny the Biblical explanation of:
 1. Where it is. Say it is the grave. (Hebrews 10:27-29).
 2. What will be found there. Torment. (Luke 16:28).
 3. How long it will last. Eternity. (Mark 9:47-48).
- C. Some would deny it's extent. They

claim it just for the devil and His angels (Matthew 13:42, 50; 25:41; 23:15, 23; Revelation 21:8; 20:15).

II. BY BEING INDIFFERENT TOWARD SOUL WINNING.

- A. Some are indifferent toward alien sinners; failing to believe that those who die in their sins will be lost (John 8:21-24; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).
- B. Some are indifferent toward erring brethren. They can fall from grace, and unless converted, will be lost (2 Peter 2:20-22; James 5:19-20).
- C. Some are indifferent toward their own soul. They fail to acknowledge responsibility in this matter (Romans 10:13-17; Ezekiel 3:17-21).

III. BY BEING A HYPOCRITICAL CHURCH MEMBER.

- A. The Nominal Christian. Morally good, but their personal interest comes first (Revelation 3:1; Matthew 6:33).
- B. The Worldly Christian. They look starched and ironed; but they need to be washed (1 Peter 4:14-16; 1 John 2:15-17).
- C. The Compromising Christian. He will not stand up for what he believes; High doctrine and low practice do not go together.

IV. BY FAILING TO OBEY THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST.

- A. Some don't obey because they are stubborn.
 1. You are telling others that it is just not important (Romans 14:7).
 2. You are saying to one and all, "I don't love Jesus" (John 14:15).
- B. Some don't obey because they have a hardened heart.
 1. They are comforted about friends being in hell (Revelation 21:8).
 2. We leave this world with a

different thought (Luke 16:27-28).

C. Some are just waiting on a better time to do it.

1. Instead of "today," they say "someday" (2 Corinthians 6:2; Acts 24:25).

2. Many will die with good intentions; but take others with them!

V. BY ROBBING PEOPLE OF NEEDED ENCOURAGEMENT.

A. Some are just not sure that the Lord wants them (Matthew 11:28-30).

B. Some are convinced they are just too sinful (1 Timothy 1:15).

C. Some are almost persuaded. It is with them, not a matter of knowing, but of obeying. They need to know that "now" is the time (Acts 2:37-40).

I hope that none of us have been guilty of blocking the gate of heaven to someone who wants to go; for if we have, then we are guilty of helping someone be lost in hell! By turning every point around, we can help folks go to heaven.—P.O. Box 2597, Sylacauga, AL 35150

Don't Let Yourself...

WORRY—when you are doing your best.

HURRY—when success depends on your accuracy.

THINK EVIL—of a friend until you have the facts.

BELIEVE—a thing impossible without trying.

TRUST—an elastic conscience.

WASTE—time on peevish and peevish matters.

IMAGINE—that good intentions are a satisfying excuse.

HARBOR—bitterness in your heart toward God or man.

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Ruth Plylar Kissimmee, FL.....	50.00
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VIEWS OF THE 2000 GOSPEL GLEANER LECTURESHIP

THEME: "THE CHRISTIAN HOME"

Hosted by the College & North Streets Church of Christ in Mountain Home, AR
April 14-16, 2000



Allen Webster speaking on "Children In The Home." Brother Allen emphasized the "Children's Bill of Rights" with the first and foremost right being "The right to be loved." Child abuse is the No. 1 killer of children under five years of age.



John T. Polk, II forging a chain of Bible truths and observations to demonstrate the power of physical touch between human beings. God designed the body to be touched and Jesus was a "hands-on Savior."



Lectureship speakers: (L-R) Ivie Powell, Johnie Scaggs, John T. Polk, II, Dennis Gullledge, Jane Maynard, Charles Rose, Bill Dillon (director), Allen Webster, Bob Bauer, Tim Wilkes, M.W. Kiser, Guy Hester, Stephen Rook. (Max R. Miller, not pictured).



The Gospel Gleaner Breakfast furnished by the College and North Church of Christ. Several members worked extremely hard (and early) to accomodate the eager eaters.

VIEWS OF THE 2000 GOSPEL GLEANER LECTURESHIP



Bill Dillon introduces each speaker



Joe Hillis came from Chattanooga, Tennessee to display books for sale. Good reading helps to make good families.



Max R. Miller drawing from the Bible the principles that husbands should use in steering "a spiritual course" in family relationships. The husband may be the head of the house but the wife is the heart of the house. Brother Max pleaded, "Let every husband keep his eye on the Word of God, our chart, and compass!"



M. W. Kiser speaks on "How To Have A Happy Home." The ingredients for the right kind of family life are: Holiness, Affection, Peace, Perseverance, You.

LET US ARISE AND RESCUE THE PERISHING!

Ivie Powell



The *Gospel Gleaner* spreads the glorious gospel of Christ throughout the world. If a survey were taken, by the 6000 plus subscribers, regarding the number of members of the Lord's church who have fallen by the wayside, the results would be extremely alarming! While there are certainly doctrinal issues that must be faced, there is no issue more pressing in importance than rescuing the perishing! We absolutely must restore the spirit of evangelism among churches of Christ or we will continue to see congregations decline to the point of extinction! Without question, one of the major contributing factors as to why evangelism has come to a complete stop is in-fighting! Remember the words of brother Paul, "But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another" (Galatians 5:15).

Jude in his one chapter epistle wrote: "And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire..." (Jude 23). The American Standard 1901 translation of the Bible renders verse 23 as follows: "And on some have mercy, who are in doubt; and some save, snatching them out of the fire..." In commenting on this verse Burton Coffman said: "Snatch them from the fire..." is metaphorical, meaning "rescue them, as you would someone from a burning building" (*Commentary on Jude*, p. 547). Therefore when a brother or sister in Christ goes back into the world they are headed toward eternal damnation! Does this alarm you?

The question is why. Why do members of the church go back into the world? There is no one reason why this has and does happen. Of course, we understand, that it is because of sin, but as to

the exact reason or excuse given they would vary:

- * Because of hard sayings (John 6:60-66).
- * Because they did not count the cost of being a disciple of Christ (Luke 14:25-27).
- * Because of worldliness (1 John 2:15-17).
- * Because of evil associates (1 Corinthians 15:33).
- * Because they weren't encouraged (Romans 15:1-2).
- * Because of their family (Matthew 10:37-38).
- * Because of false teachers (1 John 4:1).
- * Because of following men and not Christ (1 Corinthians 1:12-13).
- * Because of division (Proverbs 6:16-19).
- * Because of hard and hurt feelings (Matthew 18:15-17).
- * Because of disbelief (Hebrews 12:1-2).
- * Because of hypocrites (Romans 2:17-24).
- * Because of not being converted (John 6:44-45).
- * Because they don't love the truth (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12).
- * Because they don't want to submit to the elders (Hebrews 13:7, 17).
- * Because they don't like the preacher for whatever reason.
- * Because of unscriptural marriage (Matthew 19:9).

No doubt, many other things could be added to this list. Nevertheless, the fact of the matter according to the scriptures is, they need to be "snatched out of the fire!" A careful study of Galatians 6:1-2 and James 5:19-20 clearly sets forth:

- * We, the household of faith, must believe they (the erring) are in sin!
- * We must prepare ourselves to go to them!
- * We must be gentle in our approach!
- * We must look at our own lives!

(Continued on page 19)



REBUKING ERROR

James R. Wilburn

Few are the hearts which do not beat faster as Old Glory, bathed in the stout rhythm of "The Star-Spangled Banner," passes in the annual 4th of July parade. These patriotic colors fade and grow dull, however, when compared to the blood stained banner of Prince Immanuel. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Christ my Lord." The artist must plead for divine assistance to produce a picture rivaling that painted by Paul in Ephesians 6:13-20. Lives there a Christian soul which thrills not to overflowing each time he gazes upon the wonderful word-picture of the Christian soldier, armed for battle and ready to plunder the camp of Satan?

Across this soul-stirring silhouette are engraved the divine commands: "Watch ye! Stand fast in the faith! Quit you like men! Be strong!" Or again, "Contend earnestly!" And yet another call to arms, "Reprove, rebuke...with all long-suffering and teaching!" Error has cast its smothering shroud over many a heart until its faith becomes but a smoking flax. It cannot endure sound doctrine. Against such, the two edged sword is ever drawn and poised for the thrust.

The heroism of our forefathers leads us on as we stand for America's life-giving freedoms. But we are not without heroes in rebuking religious error. Few have delivered such scathing rebukes as that of Jeremiah when Judah had wandered from the Ancient of Days. He wrote, "They shall die grievous deaths: they shall not be lamented, neither shall they be buried; they shall be as dung upon the face of the ground; and they shall be consumed by the sword, and by famine; and their dead bodies shall be food for the birds of

the heavens, and for the beasts of the earth" (Jeremiah 16:4). Jeremiah lacked no courage. Undaunted by his own lack of popularity, he stood fearless in the face of false prophets.

However, it was not a pleasant task. It was not a game with Jeremiah, nor should it be so in the lives of men of God today. Jeremiah's heart was heavy with anxiety because he was called upon to rebuke error. He did not enjoy it! In his dismay he cried out, "Oh that I could comfort myself against sorrow! my heart is faint within me...For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt; I mourn; dismay hath taken hold on me!" (Jeremiah 8:18-22).

In rebuking error, Jeremiah was a giant of might...yet remembered today as the weeping prophet of Judah. His was a duty which punctured pride and humbled the soul.

God give us men who will fight for the right they adore! As never before, we need 20th century (21st century, DG) Jeremiahs! It is appalling, however, to see the results of the way in which some rebuke error. The trail of bruised souls and broken hope left in the wake of some who proclaim the gospel has no counterpart in the life of him whose steps we follow. One gospel preacher takes delight in challenging every false teacher he meets to a public debate. Another is heard to chuckle as he tells friends about how he "clipped the wings" of a denominational preacher and forced him to "tuck his tail" and run. Could it be possible, brethren, that this has become a childish sport with some of us? (Listen, as in the distance, one who went out from us re-echoes, "A spiritless religion!"). Those who seem to receive a certain thrill and unspeakable joy while rebuking error, have little of the spirit of the Master.

Contend earnestly for the faith. Preach the word in season and out. Pray for the courage which lifted the Son of God as he pronounced the seven woes to the faces of the Pharisees and scribes. As Paul, let us beg the prayers of the brethren on our behalf, "that...I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak" (Ephesians 6:20). But let us also pray for an all consuming love for precious souls, which will plant the heartbreak of the

(Continued on page 23)

BABYLON, THE FIRST WORLD EMPIRE

Max R. Miller



Historians present the history of Babylon in two distinct periods. To study the subject one becomes familiar with its designated names: In Genesis they knew it as *Shina* and in the latter Scriptures they called it *Chalaza*. Mesopotamia

(between the rivers), is a term sometimes used for this area between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. The first historical period extended from the second millennium to the early first millennium B.C. Abraham of the Chaldees, in his westward migration to Canaan, appears in this age. The second historical period and the one most familiar to Bible students, was in the seventh and sixth centuries. In this period Babylon reached its greatest heights of splendor as a world ruling kingdom.

The history of nations is that one rises to power and glory, in time degenerates, and falls into the dust of the past. On its ruins arises another kingdom in its splendor and power. After an age it too faces the sunset of its glory, passes into death and is no more. Another nation arises to repeat the process. So, the rise and fall of nations. In this study we pass over the times of old Babylon and come to Neo-Babylon, the new Babylon.

Assyria, first of the great nation of the ancient East, has her day and decline. Revolt in the court, and in the army, follows the death of King Ashurbanipal in 627 B.C. Nabopolassar King of Babylon (reigned 625-605 B.C.), founder of the Chaldean dynasty; allied with the Medes, struggled to break the control of Assyria, captured and destroyed the capitol city of Nineveh (612 B.C.). Egypt's Pharaoh Necho II came to Carchemish as confederate to Assyria and to challenge the rights of the Babylonians and Medes

to inherit Assyria's shattered empire. King Nabopolassar was unable to take the field himself against Pharaoh Necho II. Nebuchadnezzar, his son, went forth at the head of a large army to meet Pharaoh. The battle of Carchemish (606 B.C.) followed. Jeremiah chronicles the battle and pronounces doom to Egypt: "Against Egypt, against the army of Pharaoh Necho king of Egypt, which was by the river Euphrates in Carchemish, which Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, smote in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah" (Jeremiah 46:2-12). From this time Nebuchadnezzar was soon able to reclaim Babylon's earlier frontiers (cf. 2 Kings 24:7 with Jeremiah 34:1-12). Nebuchadnezzar returning to Babylon from coastal wars along the Mediterranean, was acknowledging King of Babylon in 604 B.C. The great nation of Assyria had fallen. A new Babylon had arisen on its ashes.

Nebuchadnezzar's conquest of Israel is of particular interest to Bible scholars. "In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah [606] came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon unto Jerusalem, and besieged it. And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the house of God: which he carried into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into the treasure house of his god" (Daniel 1:1-2). This was the beginning of Judah's seventy years of Babylonian captivity (Jeremiah 25:11-12). Again, in December of 598 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar marched on Jerusalem. King Jehoiakim died that month, and his son Jehoiachin surrendered the city to the Babylonians on March 16, 597 B.C. King Nebuchadnezzar then appointed Zedekiah as king of Judah. Zedekiah revolted in 589 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar came, besieged and destroyed the city of Jerusalem (587-586). For the third time they carried Jews into exile to Babylon. Jeremiah had

recommended that Judah surrender to the rule of Babylon and called Nebuchadnezzar, Babylon's emperor and Judah's most hated enemy, the "servant of the Lord." Babylon was the servant of God in that God used her as His rod to chastise His people.

One of God's people played an important role in the history of Babylon: Daniel, of the royal seed of the nation of Israel, a prophet and interpreter of dreams. It was in Babylon, Chaldea of old, that God used Daniel, the interpreter of dreams and vision of kings. He was the only wise man in the kingdom who could interpret Nebuchadnezzar's dreams. In a dream he had seen an image of an amazing creature. Its head was of gold, breast and arms of silver, belly and thighs of brass, and feet of iron and clay. Daniel's interpretation was a preview of the history of great nations for the next five centuries. The head of the image was Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon (gold). The silver breast and arms was the coming kingdom of Persia. Its belly and thighs of brass represented Greece, and the feet of iron mingled with clay was to be Rome. Daniel introduced another kingdom in his interpretation: the everlasting kingdom established "in the days of these kings" (Daniel 2:44). That kingdom was to be the kingdom of Jesus Christ, the kingdom of God. The kingdoms of Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome, all came to the dust of history. They are no more. The eternal kingdom came on Pentecost Day as recorded in the Book of Acts.

Nebuchadnezzar was a typical monarch of a despotic age: dominant, often cruel, and lifted up with pride. Pridefully proud! Babylon's greatness lay only in the hand of its great king! He boasted, "Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" (Daniel 4:30). "Before destruction the heart of man is haughty, and before honour is humility" (Proverbs 18:12). By God's decree he "was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws" (Daniel 4:33).

After "seven times" had passed, his pride

was quenched. He bows with humility before Daniel and Daniel's God and speaks of the sincere prayer he offered that only God heard. "And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth forever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; and my counselors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me. Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase" (Daniel 4:34-37).

Amazingly, considering the greatness of the kingdom of Babylon, its history of glory covered a brief period. From Carchemish (606 B.C.) to the fall of Belshazzar and Babylon to the Medes-Persians (539 B.C.) was only seventy-six years.

Nebuchadnezzar was the great king of the Babylonian Empire. His successors were insignificant by comparison. The magnificent king died in 561 B.C., having reigned forty-three years. His son Evil-Merodach succeeded him and reigned only two years (561-560 B.C.), murdered by his brother-in-law, Neriglissar. Neriglissar after four years, died, leaving the crown to his son Laborosoarched. They quickly assassinated this prince, a mere lad. Nabonidus, a conspirator, succeeded him. He was the last of the kings of Neo-Babylon 565-539 B.C.).

Nabonidus set the stage for the fall of Babylon. He conspired with Croesus the last king of Lydia. He provoked Cyrus by the alliance and soon realized his error. He knew, in time, Cyrus would move against him with avenging armies.

(Continued on page 21)

DID YOU THINK TO PRAY?

Allen Webster



SCENARIO: The church I attend is losing members instead of gaining them. We are not meeting the budget. We have too few children in Bible class and far too few members to return Sunday night. Instead of adding new programs and activities for

the New Year, we are cutting back on what we did last year.

REACTION: We worry, but do we petition? We wring our hands, but do we bend our knees? We pinch our nickels, but do we bow our heads? We fret, but do we pray? We criticize and blame, but do we commune and beseech? We call emergency business meetings, but do we retreat to entreat? We see the problem, but are we blind to the “Solution?”

DISCUSSION: In good times and bad, the greatest thing any member can do for his congregation is pray. The greatest favor any listener can do for her preacher is pray. The greatest thing all followers can do for their elders is pray. A bedfast Christian fervently praying with an open church bulletin in his/her lap does more for the church without ever leaving home than many able-bodied Christians do all week. Paul complimented the Corinthians for “helping” [*sunupourgeo*, “to be a co-auxiliary, assist.” It comes from a root, *ergon*, that means “to work; toil as an effort or occupation, labor.” These Christians had been “working” for Paul but had not lifted a hand (only in prayer)] when all they had done was pray (2 Corinthians 1:11)! Somebody might say, “But I want to do more than pray.” We should do more than pray, but no one can do more than pray until first he has prayed.

It’s time for us to take prayer seriously. Before Jesus went home, He gave His disciples (us) direct access into the very control room of the Universe. “At that day ye shall ask in my name:

and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God” (John 16:27). What a privilege is prayer! It is not just an emergency ripcord for when we fall; it is the parachute. It is not leather seats and power steering; it is the steering wheel and the drive train. It is not plush carpet and chandeliers; it is the foundation and the roof. The God who cannot lie (Hebrews 6:18) has obligated Himself to heed our desires expressed in prayer (1 Peter 3:12). He stands so ready to bless our prayers that He told Isaiah to write, “And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear” (65:24; cf. Psalm 34:15).

It’s time for us to take church building seriously. Our churches need to grow. It is not enough for us to sit still, maintain the status quo, and baptize enough of our children to make up for those we bury. The church of the New Testament was a living body that grew rapidly (e.g., Acts 2:41; 4:4). Why do we need to grow? We need more voices to praise God; He deserves better praise than we give Him—“...let the whole earth be filled with his glory” (Psalm 72:19). We need more workers to visit the fatherless and widows—they need more attention and teaching than we provide (James 1:27). We need more encouragers to edify the body—too many are giving up (Hebrews 2:1). We need more money to take the Gospel to foreign lands—missionaries are wasting time raising money when they could be saving souls (Mark 16:15). We need more workers to take the Gospel across the street and across town—people are dying lost just down the road from us (Proverbs 11:30).

We all admit that the church is not growing in our generation as it could. Some churches have more empty pews than filled ones. In a generation when we have more Bibles and study tools in one house than were in a whole city at the close of the First Century, some congregations have trouble

finding enough teachers to complete a Bible school faculty. Now that there are more children than ever in the world's history, some churches have so few in Bible class that they group the preschoolers with the sixth graders. Some assemblies have had the same "faithful few" since Reagan's first term. Others had fewer last Sunday than they have had in the lifetime of their oldest member. Denominational churches in some towns mock (or, worse, ignore) God's true church when they grow by leaps and bounds and we stagnate and cut back.

In a day when the church has more money than Solomon, more education than Moses, and more resources than David, some churches have fewer responses than Noah (he did save his family). We have the best transportation since Elijah's chariot of fire, the best communication technology since Pentecost, the best visuals since those seen at Belshazzar's feast (Daniel 5), but in some places are having less success at church building than Sardis and Laodicea (Revelation 3).

To be a part of a growing church—seeing lost people saved—means more to a genuine Christian than a Lexus in his garage or a million in his bank. It means more than a college education for his children, or a getaway vacation for his family. It means more than a job promotion or an early retirement. It means more than a trophy buck on his wall or his team in the Super Bowl. It means more than a "big church wedding" for her daughter or a ring on her every finger.

What would Jesus think of our "growth strategies" and church activities nowadays? With many congregations, He would be as happy as with any since Philadelphia and Smyrna (Revelation 2:8; 3:7), but others might remind Him more of Ephesus (Revelation 2:1-7) and Corinth (1 Corinthians 1-16). We've tried many things to get the church to grow. Buses, Fancier buildings. Smoother-talking, better-looking preachers. Willow Creek strategies. Shorter services and sermonettes. Membership drives, campaigns, and a full slate of programs. Family Life Centers. "Don't Ask/Don't Tell" on Divorce. Mass mail, websights, and phone surveys. Compromise Doctrines on Repentance, Baptism,

and Worship. Giveaways and Getaways. Sheep-stealing from the church across town. Drama and choirs. Aerobics on Tuesdays, the Lord's Supper on Thursdays, and softball on Saturdays. Area-wide meetings and "special" Sundays. Seminars, Workshops, Retreats, and "Felt needs" emphasis. Purpose-driven Ministries. Small groups and big days. Marriage films and parenting videos. Events for seniors, women, youth, parents, singles, couples, divorcees, retirees, and any other special interest group someone could recognize and put together.

A few of these are good ideas. Others were simply the wisdom of men. Some are nothing more than the devil's devices (2 Corinthians 2:11; 11:14). The questions to ponder in this study do not have to do with practical growth strategies but with our primary Resource. Have we remembered to save God a seat in our planning sessions? Have we charted our attendance without logging our prayer journals? Have we planted and watered while shading out God's life-giving sun (1 Corinthians 3:6-9)? Have we had members to purpose their giving without encouraging them to practice their praying? Have we emphasized a day in the park more than a night in prayer (cf. Luke 6:12)? Have we spent more time in our fellowship halls than in our prayer closets? Have we rolled up our sleeves without removing our shoes? —P.O. Box 520, Jacksonville, AL 36265

LET US ARISE AND RESCUE THE PERISHING

Continued from page 14

- * We must earnestly and fervently pray for them!
- * We must consider this a matter of utmost urgency!

Fannie J. Crosby beautifully and eloquently set forth in the song, "Rescue The Perishing" what I have been trying to say. Brethren, please read and re-read the song, and then determine in your heart, to do all you can to rescue the perishing!—111 South Curry Street, West Plains, MO 65775

NO MAN SPAKE OPENLY OF HIM

Patrick Morrison



During the days of Christ's personal ministry, the religious leaders, common Jews, strangers, etc., expressed differing views as to whom this Jesus of Nazareth really was. They would often gather together in their various groups to discuss the possibilities. As Jesus became

more and more popular among the common people, he aroused the anger of the religious leaders. Time and time again, we find statements in the Scriptures which tell of their attempts to kill Jesus. Their hatred of Jesus led the people of his day to discuss the words and actions of the Messiah in secret, fearing the wrath of the religious leaders should their opinions about this one they called Jesus be made known. It is sad to read in the Scriptures, "No man spake openly of him for fear of the Jews" (John 7:13). Even sadder than this is the fact that many today refuse to speak openly concerning the Christ for fear of what others think, say, or do.

We live in a society where many intelligent, God-fearing individuals refuse to acknowledge their belief in God and in His Son, the Christ, because they fear the scorn and ridicule of those who refuse these beliefs. The ignorant and unlearned (based upon societal standards, not Biblical ones) in our society are made to believe that all intellectuals are atheists or agnostics. Society would have us believe that only a fool would manifest a faith in something or someone that can neither be seen nor heard. The Bible contradicts this popular train of thought (Psalm 14:1). In man's attempts to feel more intelligent, in an attempt to escape the stigma society attaches to those who believe in God and His Son Jesus Christ, many have abandoned those things they know to be true, and have instead chosen to embrace the ideals of the "intellectual elite."

Many in our land refuse to speak openly of

Jesus Christ for fear of violating government mandates. With every passing day, the government places more restrictions upon those who are trying to pattern their lives after God's word. Many refrain from mentioning the name of God or Jesus in public, knowing that the government or the ACLU is lurking in the shadows. When government regulations interfere with our duty to God, then we must "obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). Our duty to God demands that we preach and teach the Gospel to the entire world, by whatever lawful (according to God's law) means are at our disposal, facing whatever consequences may come our way.

Many in the Lord's church are unwilling to speak openly of Jesus Christ for fear of upsetting their friends and family members who are entangled in the deceitful and devilish doctrines of denominationalism. Many teachers, preachers, elders, deacons, and members of the Lord's army have laid down their armor to embrace the forces of Satan. Many congregations of the Lord's church are hesitant to speak the truth about Jesus Christ and his church. They refuse to wear the biblical name church of Christ (Romans 16:16). Instead, they desire to separate themselves from the Lord's church by adopting denominational nomenclature, such as "Community Church," or "Family of God." Lest they sever all ties with the church of our Lord, they seek a compromise by placing the term "a (emphasis mine, SPM) church of Christ" upon their marquees. Many in the Lord's church refuse to speak openly of the truth regarding baptism. No longer do many congregations of the Lord's church teach that baptism is for the remission of sins, that one has not entered into salvation until he/she has entered the watery grave (preceded of course by faith, repentance, and confession of Jesus as the Son of God), that upon being baptized one is added by the Lord to the church, the one and only church of Christ. Instead, many now teach that baptism is necessary (for

what they will not elaborate), and any reason for one's being baptized is to be considered compliance with the will of God. Many in the church of Christ have buttoned their lips, refusing to teach the truth about Jesus lest they should upset those who hold conflicting views.

May we as God's children resolve today to speak openly of Jesus wherever we go. May we have the courage of Peter and John to speak boldly concerning Christ and his church (Acts 4:13). Rather than fearing the ridicule of man, or even physical harm at the hands of those who seek to destroy the faith, we should fear the wrath of God if we refuse to speak openly about Jesus. May we boldly declare, "The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me" (Hebrews 13:6). —9 Southern Hills Circle, Apt. #6, Little Rock, AR 72209

BABYLON, THE SECOND WORLD EMPIRE

Continued from page 17

avenging armies. That did Cyrus, assaulting Nabonidus in 539 B.C. Nabonidus led his army to defeat at Borsippa. Cyrus continued his advance toward Babylon. Belshazzar lightly considered the danger of the marching Armies of Medo-Persia, was drunkenly banqueting, desecrating sacred vessels take from the temple in Jerusalem. And then—the familiar story—the handwriting on the wall. "And this is the writing that was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians" (Daniel 5:25-28).

The much sobered Belshazzar now reckons Daniel as a prophet of God. He rewards Daniel by clothing him with scarlet robes, a chain of gold about his neck, and that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.

Destructive critics of the Bible have

scorned the mere mentioning of the name Belshazzar. None of the classical authors mention his name. They accept that Nabonidus was the last king of Babylon before the soldiers of Darius and Cyrus captured the city. Puzzle: Where, who, how, Belshazzar? Many inscriptions have turned up which mention *Belsharusar* (variation of *Belahazzar*) as the firstborn son of Nabunaid (Nabonidus). Therefore, Belshazzar was the logical heir to the throne. Moreover a number of inscriptions mention the fact that oaths were taken in his name. Oaths were taken only in the name of a person who had the power and rank of some kings. Evidence shows that Belshazzar was the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar through a daughter who was the wife of Nabunaid (Nabonidus). According to oriental custom they could call a grandson a son, so they could call Belshazzar the son of Nebuchadnezzar. In ancient time associating their sons with them on the throne was customary for kings. They would also call them king and have the rank and power of a king. The fact that they made Daniel the third ruler in the kingdom, shows that Nabunaid was the first, Belshazzar was the second, and so, Daniel the third.

Daniel's prophecy and interpretation came true. "In that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans slain. And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old" (Daniel 5:30-31). Babylon the great had fallen. Such was the prophecy of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 50, 51) and Isaiah (Isaiah 13:19-22).

Babylon lies in the dust of ancient ages. Its history closed. Time awaited the fulfillment of Daniel's interpretation of the great statue of gold, silver, brass and iron mingled with clay.—10726 Hwy. 59 W., Burlison, TN 38015

SOMEONE TO FORGIVE US

Not long before she died in 1988, in a moment of surprising candour on television, Marghanita Laski, one of our best-known secular humanists and novelists, said: "What I envy most about you Christians is your forgiveness; I have nobody to forgive me."

"For mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me" (Psalm 38:4)

HOW TO IDENTIFY FALSE TEACHERS

Continued from page 1

Ravenous Wolves Are Those Who Use The Following Works Against Their Opponents Rather Than Discussing The Scriptures:

1. "Maliciousness" which is "ill will, and the desire to injure someone else (Romans 1:29; Ephesians 4:31; Colossians 3:8; Titus 3:3). This is the vicious and mean spirited person who regards not the consequence or degree of damage to the victim. Either by words, bullets, missiles, bombs, or whatever means is used for its expression, they all have one purpose: destruction of the targeted person. Politically, they are called "terrorists," societally they are "nihilists," in the media they are "sensationalists" or "yellow journalists," and in the church they are "brotherhood watchdogs" or just plain "yellow." None of them love God for they do not love their brethren whom they can see (1 John 4:20-21).
2. "Murder" or literally "slaughter" has as its goal the taking of another's life. The victim is robbed either of physical life (Romans 1:29; Luke 23:19, 25; Acts 8:1-4; 9:1) or verbally robbed of "life" by hatred (1 John 3:14-15). Personal retaliation has never been allowed by God's laws (Genesis 4:8-15; 9:6; Exodus 20:13; Matthew 5:43-48; Romans 12:17-13:10). Murderers do not "love" their victims, for "love does no harm to his neighbor" (Romans 13:10).
3. "Evil-mindedness" refers to "the custom of evil, bad character, depravity of heart and life" (Romans 1:29). It is used of one who is continually seeking to harm another's welfare, putting the worst possible interpretation on their every action. Paul said this is done by the "defiled and unbelieving" who see no purity in the person they wish to harm (Titus 1:15-16).
4. "Whisperers" are those guilty of "secret slander, detraction" (Romans 1:29). These are the gutless, spineless, cowardly people who have much to say to others behind one's back, but when faced will have little or nothing to say. Adam Clarke said it refers to "those who, under pretended secrecy, carry about accusations against their neighbors, whether true or false, blasting their reputation by clandestine tittle-tattle."
5. "Backbiters" (Romans 1:30) are "defamers, evil-speakers." A defamer uses slander or libel to sully a person's reputation. This action may be the practice of "Gentiles" but should not characterize those who follow Christ (1 Peter 2:11-12), for those who practice it become judges not only of brethren but of God's Law, "and are not a doer of the law but a judge" (James 4:11). If personal offenses have been committed, then it is sin to "spread them around" to others than the ones involved (Matthew 18:15-17). "He who goes about as a talebearer reveals secrets; Therefore do not associate with one who flatters with his lips" (Proverbs 20:19; 11:13). God has nothing to do with such people, for they have become ungodly and He gives them over to their "debased mind" (Romans 1:28-32). In other words, it doesn't get much worse than this.
6. "Unmerciful" means "having no mercy; or bringing no help to the wretched" (Romans 1:31). Christians are those who have been saved by "His abundant mercy" (1 Peter 1:3-5). Mercy is the attitude one has toward another's plight, pity, or the beginning of compassion. It is unthinkable, therefore, to claim to be a Christian who has been saved by the mercy of God who cannot be merciful to fellow Christians! Jesus has said, "Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy" (Matthew 5:7). Those who show no mercy toward their fellow-Christians cannot expect to receive anymore from God, "For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy" (James 2:13). Even under Moses' Law it was argued, "Does our law judge a man before it hears him and knows what he is doing?" (John 7:51). Yet it seems that is exactly what is happening in churches today: judging without a fair hearing. But there is also talk of "dossiers," "files," "investigations" of individuals who may never be given the

opportunity to affirm or deny the conclusions drawn therefrom. Since love “thinks no evil, does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth” (1 Corinthians 13:5-6), then clearly, there is no love in those using clandestine information. Besides, what makes them think they are the only ones gathering files? Since they have left Christ and wandered into the realm of the ungodly by their tactics, how can they keep someone as ungodly as they are from gathering records of past weaknesses on them or their families? “Who can say, ‘I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin’” (Proverbs 20:9)? Wisdom said, “Whoever digs a pit will fall into it, And he who rolls a stone will have it roll back on him” (Proverbs 26:27). Jesus taught the same principle by saying, “all who take the sword will perish by the sword” (Matthew 26:52).

When “ravenous wolves” are exposed to the light of day, then by their works they are seen as “ungodly” (Proverbs 16:27), full of hatred (Proverbs 10:12), and hypocrites (Proverbs 11:9). They certainly are not “sound gospel preachers” and cannot qualify as Christian, for they are “wolves” not sheep! I pray and teach for all who are “Hell-bound” to repent (Acts 17:30-31).—125 The Trace, Dover, TN 37058

REBUKING ERROR

Continued from page 15

weeping prophet of Judah in our own sermons of rebuke. “Who is weak and I am not weak? Who is caused to stumble and I burn not?” (2 Corinthians 11:29).

Follow the steps of the Master as he courageously drove the money-changes from the temple, or delivered the seven woes. But follow those same steps further. Find them as they stop...overlooking the former city of God, Jerusalem. See the footprints dampened by the teardrops of him who has been just commanded by duty to give one of the strongest rebukes of his ministry. Hear the words of a broken heart, as

drowned in tears they cry, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her! How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chicks under her wings, and ye would not!” (Matthew 23:37).

The furrows of sorrow and regret upon his mature brow in this terrible moment, are a far cry from the joking conversation of some whose chests heave high at the opportunity to rebuke error. The real soldier is deeply grieved when the clarion call to attack rends the silent veil of night.

Defend the truth. Declare it from the house-tops. Keep it pure and preach it tirelessly. But handle each soul...not like a toy for childish amusement, but as if it were precious enough to require the precious blood of Christ for its cleansing (1 Peter 1:18f).—*Firm Foundation*, February 22, 1955

EXAGGERATION

Bill Dillon

There is an ancient fable about an ant and an elephant crossing a bridge. The bridge shook under the weight of the elephant, and when the two reached the other side, the ant boastfully exclaimed: “Boy, we sure shook that bridge, didn’t we!”

There is often a strong temptation to claim credit for things that are accomplished with little or no effort on our part.

To exaggerate means to exceed the bounds of truth by overstatement. One of the problems we have as persons is not to think too much of ourselves, nor, too little—but to see ourselves accurately or in an honest light. The apostle Paul said that a man should not “think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly...” (Romans 12:3).

It is the way of wisdom to play our part in life, however big or small, and be assured in the eyes of God it is an important role.

(This is a sample of the *One Gospel Minute* radio program presented by the College & North congregation in Mountain Home, Arkansas.)



CONTINUE THIS WORK!

I picked up a copy of the *Gospel Gleaner* at the Freed-Hardeman Lectures this year. I was very impressed with it so I wrote my name down for a free subscription. I really enjoy the articles, especially articles by brothers Polk, Hester and Webster that I have heard speak many times. I pray that you will continue this work and this great brotherhood publication. I also pray that you will stay focused on the truth found in the Word of God. I appreciate the fact that you don't spend time bashing brethren and harping on the "problems in the brotherhood." I would like to compliment you on your commitment to teach the gospel in a way that all can understand it. I am recommending your publication to the congregation that I am preaching for and will include articles from it in our weekly bulletin. God bless you and may your work flourish. Preach the Word!!! Ray Reynolds, Florence, AL

YOU HAVE A GREAT PAPER

Please add me to your mailing list. You have one great paper. May God bless all your efforts for good! Tom D. Butterfield, Vienna, WV.

A SPECIAL "THANK YOU"

I thank you for sending the *Gospel Gleaner* to the congregation at White Oak, and a very special "Thank You" to Ronnie Whittemore for the kind words about my husband, Charles Sewell, in the April-June 1999 issue. Thank you again for a very good publication. Bell Sewell, Lafayette, TN.

GOSPEL GLEANER
P. O. BOX 345
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STANDING FOR NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTIANITY

I am very happy to inform you that I have been receiving some journals from the states including yours. The package comes from a beloved man of God but sometimes yours will not be included. However, I have been convinced from previous publications that you stand for New Testament Christianity and defending its teaching. I will be grateful if you will add my name to your mailing list. May God wish you godspeed in your outreach work to defend the gospel of truth. Myarko Thomas, Agona Nsaba, Ghana

IN MEMORY OF KATHY SUE ZIMMERLEE

Thank you very much for sending us your most welcome publication. Hopefully we won't miss an issue. Consequently we are sending you our Post office Box number for your mailing list. Please accept the enclosed check in memory of our deceased daughter, Little Kathy Sue Zimmerlee, who entered her new life due to cancer. Our prayers are with you and we ask the same for us. Delsie & Bob Zimmerlee, Kingman, AZ

TRYING TO GET THE TRUTH OUT

I would like to say thank you to all those who are trying to get the gospel truth out to all those that need it. I am a new Christian and appreciate all those out there that are trying to help teach all Christians and bring more new Christians in. Thank you and God bless. Donna Hines, Killeen, TX.

CLEAR AND PLAIN

I have read a copy of the GG. I sure appreciate your stand for the truth which is clear and plain, spoken in kindness. Please add my name to your mailing list. I am a preacher with church of Christ and a Christian. I found in a copy same valuable help in teaching Bible classes to those who speak English. Thank you very much. Edwin M Tusekelege, Tanzania, E. Africa.

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