

# The GOSPEL CLEANER

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Number One

## THE PRESENT TRUTH . . .

Ronald D. Bryant

### DEVOUT OR DECEIVED?

In Romans chapter one, Paul addressed the fact of humanly devised religions and the end-result of religious deception. He categorically stated the process whereby men “exchanged” the glory of the true God for the “speculations of foolish hearts... darkened by sin” (Romans 1:21-23).

The Gentiles, a people left to their own devices – deceived and deceiving, could not get it right, and did not find the way to God. Paul spoke of that which they created, even as he pinpointed the problems they created for themselves.

The Gentiles illustrate what happens when men reject knowledge of God. They soon see themselves as the center of the universe; they are in charge, and answerable to no one.

Intriguingly, this mindset is illustrated in the conduct of a small child. An infant believes the world revolves around him. It may take a number of months, even years, to move a child away from that point of view, but the need to do so is quite obvious. Now, what happens when a mature person, who thinks that he is the center of the universe, begins to give thought to religion? Driven by self-interest and determined to be self-sufficient, such a person will see himself as capable of creating his own righteousness. Being self-centered in religion, as in all of life, he wants what he wants, when he wants it.

Therefore, he is moved to look for, or create a religion which serves to meet his expectations, that honors his wishes, and above all else allows him to be in control. If he becomes religious, the least of his concerns is the necessity of knowing and honoring God, or doing His will. He is religious, but it is his religion. He exalts and honors his own will and purpose. He is in charge – yet, when it is convenient, or necessary, he is perfectly willing to use God!

Then there is the secularly minded person – one who seeks to lift himself to a position of control through the denial of God. The secularly minded person holds that each person is to engage in a strong affirmation of his or her own worth and power.

The secularly minded dismiss God, while the religiously deceived admit Him. Yet, in an intriguing way, the two are alike in that they actually endeavor to create religious systems which allow them to be in charge. How many are religious, yet their religion is all about them; their interests, their taste, and their agenda, but not about God?

At a large religious conference, filled with performance and applause, one of the speakers disturbed the proceedings when he said, “Too often, we are so busy talking, we cannot hear or see what God is saying.” Another created a stir, when he lamented: “It is readily apparent, upon even a casual examination that many

‘Christian’ religions are committed to exploiting the name and the cross of Christ, but are not interested, even in the least, in truly bearing it.”

Those statements received only a few moments of consideration. But, before any of us offer a critique, we would do well to consider this question: Are we (am I) sobered, even for a few seconds, by such observations? We may be reluctant to admit it, or even to consider the possibility, but the temptation to exploit the things of God is powerful, and is too often a very real part of our religious practices.

In religion, especially in religion, the temptation to make a name for oneself or for one’s organization; the yearning to be a powerful influence, to be well-known, even to build a personal following is ever present. However, both the secular and the religious powerbrokers are destined to fail. In this regard, it is more than a little amazing to consider those that are neither fearful, nor hesitant to redefine the Scriptures, or to use or misrepresent the cross of Christ.

How many are there who reject the gospel of Christ, who live lives that misrepresent Christ, yet continue to be followed, respected as devout, and regarded as holy? It is more than interesting to watch such deceivers, as they pretend to “win” people to Christ, when they personally abandoned Him long ago! Question: Are we devout, or deceived?

The January 2013 issue of the *Gospel Gleaner* begins the paper's twenty-fifth year. In June of 2012, I was asked to become the next editor of the *Gleaner* by its founding editor, Bill Dillon. What Bill accomplished with the *Gleaner* is nothing short of amazing. The paper soared to reach one of the largest circulations among brotherhood quarterlies. With that being said, I realize the big shoes I have to fill and the tremendous honor bestowed.

To ensure the financial stability of the paper, we have established ourselves as Gospel Gleaner Publications. The *Gleaner* will no longer be a work of any particular congregation, and a modest subscription will be charged.

As editor, I would like to share with you my vision for Christian journalism – a vision that will direct the course for the *Gospel Gleaner*.

It is my conviction that a paper, or any religious work for that matter, must not exist to exalt men, but God. Such is true of the words we speak, and such must be true of the words we write.

Realizing that our brotherhood consists of a wide variety of souls, each at different stages of life and Christian growth, we accept the fact that there will be differing opinions from time to time. A paper such as this must not close its pages to brotherly dialogue, but appeal to such.

Moreover, we realize that the Lord's church consists of good men who are preaching the word all over the world. We will not exclude an author simply because we do not know him, or have never met him. It is more important that an author know Christ than the editor of a religious paper. If the author's knowledge of Christ is evident in the printed work, we shall be happy to consider it for publication.

We also realize that religious periodicals must not center around one group from one area or school. Seeing that certain tendencies are more evident in one area than in another, we wish to avoid abetting those tendencies which

have proven to be more factitious than factual.

A periodical must be careful not to stray from the principles and practices which made it successful. Concerning our paper, we must continue printing articles which are thoroughly scriptural. The more scriptural applications we have, the better our paper will be.

A religious journal must challenge its readers to "think on these things." Articles must vary in depth, subject matter, and style. Each writer must be encouraged to write with a style that is uniquely his own.

We also realize a little humor, maybe even sarcasm, is needed from time-to-time in order to increase the force of an argument or point being made. If an author chooses to use humor, sarcasm, or another valid figure of speech, we shall let it stand.

On the other hand, if an author feels the need to be a little more delicate in making his point carefully, we shall also let it stand. Sometimes a tack hammer should be chosen over a jackhammer.

Concerning issues that occasionally appear in our brotherhood, a paper's editor and her staff must know the difference in a scriptural matter, and a personal one. It is not our desire to address personal matters, differences, and disputes.

Moreover, some scriptural matters are more relevant than others. Wisdom must be exercised with the limited space we have in choosing which matters deserve the most attention.

Many spiritual matters must be addressed regardless of fear, backlash, or loss of popularity. We shall not be deterred from our efforts to help brethren "grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord" through this outlet simply because someone somewhere may not like what we have to say. The most important principle we shall have in directing our course is to print the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Be sure, if we do decide to sink our teeth into a matter of controversy,

we will not let up until the error is thoroughly exposed, rebuked, and corrected.

Religious papers must not cater to the mainstream. Neither should they seek the backing of "big name preachers." We shall not "follow the multitude to do evil" and we shall not "measure ourselves by ourselves."

We are aware that many agendas – both sinful and good – have been propagated by popular brethren. We have heard it often expressed, "This can't be wrong because brother so-and-so endorses it." In the course of time, we may find ourselves at odds with a few "so-and-so's." Again, the search and defense of truth will be our main objective.

Obviously, we do not want to offer a paper just like another paper, or every other paper. If that was our goal, why would we bother? We would simply subscribe to the other paper. We believe we can offer the reader a paper unlike any other. The *Gospel Gleaner* is going to have the look, feel, and appeal of an "old time" religious paper. We will offer news and notes, biographical sketches of preachers, key historical perspectives on the Restoration Movement, timely articles, varying styles of writers, and open pages to religious discussions.

Truly we hope to produce a paper for all those who love the Lord, His word, and His church. We hope to edify and encourage brethren who read our paper. We hope to offer hope and strengthen one's conviction in the truth. We believe it is a wonderful blessing to be a Christian, to read about your religion in the pages of God's word, and to share that faith with others. We believe the Lord's church can grow; the gospel is His power unto salvation; and that the church will only grow as the gospel is preached.

Lord willing, in the coming months and years, you will look forward to the arrival of this paper near the beginning of every month.

Andrew D. Erwin  
Editor, *Gospel Gleaner*

The

**GOSPEL**



**GLEANER**

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

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## DENOMINATIONAL DOGMAS

Ernest S. Underwood

### THE NEED TO STUDY FALSE DOCTRINES

I am honored to have been asked by the editor to have a regular column in this journal which will deal with such subjects as the errors of denominationalism, and a refutation of all such errors using the Holy Scriptures as our only source of authority in this endeavor.

In this present article we will notice three factors concerning religious error. First, there is the importance of studying it. Second, we shall notice various attitudes that are expressed about such a study. Third, will be the importance of one analyzing those errors so that he might expose them for what they are and then give a biblical refutation of them.

#### The Importance of Studying Religious Error

It has been written by some who have taken the time to do the research that there is something like forty thousand (40,000) different religious beliefs in our world today. Some of these are pagan and idolatrous, some claim to hold some sort of faith in God, but not in His Son. Others claim a faith in Jesus Christ but deny His authority as given in His word.

Jesus dealt with religious error in His day. He warned the disciples of those who would come in sheep's clothing but inwardly they would be ravenous wolves (Matthew 7:15). His scathing rebuke to the scribes and Pharisees as recorded in Matthew 23 was a pronouncement of their error and subsequent desolation. He used the parable of the two builders to show that only those who heard and obeyed His words would stand in His favor in the Day of Judgment. (Matthew 7:24-27). He authoritatively stated that worship offered to God through and by the teachings and doctrines of men was vain worship. (Matthew 15:8-9).

Writers of the New Testament, inspired of the Holy Spirit, warned of religious error. The apostle Paul stated that "savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves" (Acts 20:29-30). He also spoke of those who pervert the gospel (Galatians 1:6-9), and ministers of Satan who were transforming themselves into ministers of light. (2 Corinthians 11:10-15).

The apostle Peter also gave stern warning of the existence of false teachers, and their efforts to deceive, who "will secretly bring in destructive heresies," and "will exploit you with deceptive words..." (2 Peter 2:1, 3).

John exhorted the brethren, "do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; be-

cause many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1).

Today, it takes only a casual glance at the religious climate in one's community to realize the existence of the many denominations which, in truth, have little or no respect for the Christ whom they claim to love and honor. Jesus said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments." (John 14:15).

Which one of the denominations is actually keeping these commandments? Can such be proved by comparing that denomination's teaching with the Bible? We answer that question with a positive and resounding "NO!"

#### Various Attitudes Toward Religious Error

The militant attitude of the "Community Church" type movement in the present day is one of the popular attitudes prevalent in today's religious mentality. This attitude portrays that doctrine doesn't matter; there is no right or wrong position.

Others believe that all discussion about religious error should be avoided and ignored. Some still cling to the position that it is wrong to argue [reason] about the Bible.

There was a time when in relation to religious error that many would say, "Preach the Bible and let all others alone." However, one doesn't hear this position stated much any longer for the simple reason that many no longer want the gospel of

Christ to be preached at any time or at any place. To our sorrow, there are members of the Lord's church who display this attitude.

Much like those in Isaiah's day, they are just as this prophet accused his readers, "That this is a rebellious people, Lying children, Children who will not hear the law of the LORD; Who say to the seers, 'Do not see,' And to the prophets, 'Do not prophesy to us right things; Speak to us smooth things, prophesy deceits.'" (Isaiah 30:9-10).

### **The Importance of Exposing and Refuting Religious Error**

Perhaps there are many things that could be written about the truth, and about the sectarians' opposition to it. In some recent re-reading of a rather old book, the following statements were found concisely stating the difference between those who love the truth and those who love their creeds.

From these words we should be impressed with the importance of our task of exposing and refuting error.

"Though some men have fought this cause [the cause of truth-EU] through main vigor of a lifetime, many died in the heat of war against it, and hosts of new champions have appeared, willing to distinguish themselves in doing battle against it, while it not only stands, but makes its regular onward march, regardless of all opposition; still the virulence of sectarian strife and party

leaders appear no nearer abating than they did twenty years ago. Nor do we expect sectarian partisans ever to be conciliated to it, or a haughty clergy ever to look with complacency upon it. Such a thing is a natural impossibility. It ignores all clerical assumptions, haughty and pompous titles, and acknowledges no man master. It looks upon all that distinguished class of men called the 'clergy,' as mere *men*---nothing but *men*---two-legged mortals, as other men, and sets at naught all their authority to teach and enforce anything save the pure and holy doctrine of the Lord Jesus, as unfolded upon the pages of Scripture---the only Gospel of the grace of God. It also ignores all human names as religious designations, human creeds, human authorities of every description, as rivals to the divinely authorized designations of the people of God, with the only unerring and infallible law for the government of the Church and comfort of saints---the Divine Scriptures. It openly impeaches the neglect and perversions of the most solemn ordinances, with all their departures from the simplicity of the ancient faith, and uncompromisingly maintains that nothing will please God, or gain the approbation of the great Head of the Church, short of a full and unreserved return to the faith and practice of the primitive Church."

(Benjamin Franklin, *Biographical Sketch and Writings of Elder Benjamin Franklin*, written by John F. Rowe and G. W. Rice, pp. 69; 70.)

Our attitude is thus stated as we embark upon this writing adventure, and if there be any glory in it, may it be to Him who died that we might live.

## **Expositions of the Sacred Scriptures**

Ron Thomas

### **The Church at Ephesus (Revelation 2:1 – 7)**

When one reads the book of Revelation for the first time it is not long until he is introduced to the problem of interpreting the book properly. Our problem becomes all the worse when we are introduced to a form of interpretation known as Premillennialism.

Premillennialism is an ideology that interprets the events in Revelation as yet being fulfilled. Premillennialists believe, "Everything in the book of Revelation looks forward to, and clusters around, that marvelous time when Christ shall come with clouds, revealed visibly to every human being on earth. Practically every book in the Bible refers to the second coming of Christ, but the book of Revelation centers altogether around that marvelous event." (John R. Rice, *Bible Lessons on the Book of Revelation*, p.1)

Part of the problem with this approach is that it has obscured a proper understanding of our Lord's words to the seven churches of Revelation, and if one seeks to understand the book with a premillennial understanding, confusion prevails.

According to premillennialism, the Lord's address to the seven churches refers to specific time frames in human history. With regard to Ephesus, for instance, His specific words are applied to the time period of A.D. 33 – 100. Whatever is to be said of any specific application each church was to make, "It is fitting that this message, representing Christianity as it was in a great church of apostolic times, is the first one given." (Rice, p.5)

Such an interpretation brings confusion, because the Lord said nothing about a time frame in human history! To insert (or assert) a time frame brings confusion. On the other hand, if we understand the Lord's words as the Ephesian church received these exhortations, then an application will become obvious. Let us, then, consider the words of our Lord to the church located in Ephesus.

Historically and culturally, Ephesus was the most significant of the seven communities addressed in chapters 2 and 3 (each of these cities belonged to Rome). In fact, it was the fourth most important city in the Roman Empire. Ephesus was the center of trade in that part of the world and the home of the Temple of Artemis (Diana). It was a cultured city and very prosperous.

Ephesus is also significant in Bible history for the following reasons: first, Paul took the gospel there and established a New Testament church (Acts 19:1-22); second, we have Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus; and third, we also have Paul's exhortations to Timothy as he was left in Ephesus to instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines (cf. 1 Timothy 1:3-8).

Jesus has a firm grasp on all His churches, just as He had a firm grasp on His church in Ephesus (2:1). He understood all the problems faced, and all the responses of the heart in addressing those problems. Our Lord identified Himself as walking in the midst of all His churches, for nothing was hidden from His sight. He was disappointed with the church at Ephesus, and sought to help them understand their problem and His solution.

First, the church in Ephesus was commended for their work and diligence (2:2-3, 6). They had a patient quality about themselves as they labored (or worked very hard) at doing the Lord's bidding. You might say they were willing to bear the Lord's cross as they lumbered through the various streets of the city living among people. When one carries a heavy load, fatigue sets in quickly. The church, however, willingly carried this load and did not give up.

They were not only willing to speak on the Lord's behalf, but they were also willing to test any who spoke in the name of the Lord (cf. 1 John 4:1). Those who were faithful to the Lord shared together in the Lord's burden, but those who spoke a contrary doctrine were opposed with much vigor. Those committed to the Lord will do as those in Ephesus did in this regard.

The church in Ephesus was also warned (2:4-5). As faithful as they were in particular works, they had lost sight of their first love.

What is (or was) their first love? When the Lord was asked what the great commandment in the law was He replied that one is to love God with all of one's being (Matthew 22:34-40).

Our love for God provides a foundation for all other matters in life.

When one leaves his first love, he has moved away from Him who first loved. Some seem to think it is a particular action (or work) the Lord has in view, but this does not seem to be the problem, for the Lord commends their works. No, this seems to be an action of the heart's response toward the Lord, not merely a failure at some particular work.

Though the Lord does not appear to be concerned with the actions, he was quite concerned with what motivated their actions. Thus, he called upon them to take action in a different direction.

Jesus admonished them to remember and repent or He will remove. They were to remember what motivated them to respond to the Lord's call, and as they reflected on that it would help them to change their thinking to what it once was. On the other hand, if they failed to do this, the Lord would remove His candlestick. The light that flickers on the top of the candlestick, the Lord warned was about to go out. If it went out, what purpose would the candlestick serve?

The Lord would not (and will not) remove His candlestick if the individual members of the local congregation take it upon themselves to remember their first love. He who died for each of us desires and demands that we give Him our all. This motivating love will call upon us to demand purity of teaching (doctrine) in our life and in the life of the church. Those who are faithful to the Lord can do nothing less!

# Word Studies

Gerald Cowan

## “Gospel”

For this first essay in the column called “Word Studies,” the logical choice is the word “gospel.” We will not use this column to discuss many words in their original Greek or Hebrew spelling, and we will spend little if any time on nuances of original grammar and syntax – that is frankly far beyond me, and I suspect it would be beyond the interest and expertise of most readers of this journal.

The *Gospel Gleaner* is not intended for scholars and language experts, but rather for the average Christian who is concerned about proper usage and application of common words and phrases heard in ordinary communication in the church, so original words will be given an Anglicized spelling.

The studies will be centered on some transliterated expressions such as *ecclesiastical*, *baptism*, *presbyter*, and *evangelist*. Some common expressions such as *faith*, *grace*, *church*, *hope*, *communion*, *saint*, and *election* will be addressed too. All these words are easily and commonly misunderstood or misapplied, and they are not all understood or used in the same way in different religious traditions.

We will not be particularly concerned with traditional concepts, even with the way we have generally used them, but will focus on truly biblical concepts. The etymology of English words will often be a necessary consideration because of the continuing plethora of translations and updates that vary so widely.

Many are confused by the translations. Some think any deviation from the wording of a favored translation, would amount to a departure from the inspired word of God. I will leave to others the judgment and evaluation of translations of Scripture.

Now, since we are to be concerned about gleaning God’s truth from God’s gospel, it seems the proper definition and application of that word “gospel” is the right place to start. There is much confusion about the gospel, and those who preach it.

*Gospel* and *gospel of Christ* stand high on the list of words used frequently in the church but often misunderstood and misapplied. The power of God for salvation is in the gospel, and we should not be ashamed to preach it to everyone in the world (Romans 1:15-16, Mark 16:15, 1 Peter 1:25). But what is it?

Reference to the writings of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John as “the four gospels” has led some to think that the gospel is “the life and ministry of Jesus Christ.” But these titles were given by men, not by inspiration of God. Because of Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 15:1-4, some equate gospel with “the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.” But how can one “obey” that gospel (1 Peter 4:17, 2 Thessalonians 1:8)?

The gospel cannot be reduced to “the plan of salvation,” in which one outlines and explains the commands one obeys or the steps one takes to become a Christian and be added into the kingdom of God in Christ (Romans 6:17-18, Acts 2:40-41, 47).

In view of Romans 1:15-17 and 2:16, we should certainly be aware that the gospel includes and requires a response to all the revealed will and commands of

God and to the standard of judgment imposed by Jesus Christ.

We do not give full credit to the gospel and its power unless we take all of this into account. Since we are to preach the gospel to all the people everywhere in the world (Mark 16:15-16, Matthew 28:18-20), we should take care to know it and repeat it accurately. Paul preached the gospel everywhere (Colossians 1:23). We must follow his example – we must preach what he preached (2 Timothy 2:2), which is much more than a few basic principles.

### THE “GOSPEL” IS “GOD’S MESSAGE.”

The Greek word translated “gospel” is EUANGELION. It was Latinized to EVANGEL (with numerous cognates such as evangelism and evangelist derived from it). It is not a religious word as such. EU means “good.” ANGELION means “message,” and ANGELOS (ANGEL) means “messenger.” So, EU-ANGELION is “good message; good news.” EUANGELISTES (evangelist) is “a messenger, a bearer of good news.”

The common definition of gospel is “good news.” Now you know why. But there is more to the full meaning and application of the word.

Our English word “gospel,” is often but not consistently used to translate EUANGELION. The word is from Anglo-Saxon GOTTSPIEL, Old English GODSPIEL or GODSPELL. A “spiel” is a message or story. A Gottspiel, Godspiel, Godspel, or gospel is a story or message from or about God.

Any message from God would be presumed true. We sometimes use the word “gospel” as a synonym for “truth” – that’s the gospel; that’s the truth (compare Galatians 2:14). Any message about God, or which claims to be from God

must be certifiably true (Galatians 1:11, compare also 1:6-8).

One must not distort God's message, nor give false information in the name of God. A message of truth from or about God would certainly be "good news." The relationship of "good" to "God" in English may be significant.

The word EUANGELION, translated "gospel," is used in many ways in the New Testament. It is singular, a unit. Note: (1) the gospel (Romans 1:15, 15:20); (2) there is only one gospel (Galatians 1:6-8); (3) the gospel of God (Romans 1:1, 1 Timothy 1:11); (4) the gospel of the kingdom of God (Mark 1:14); (5) the gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24); (6) the gospel of God concerning His Son, Jesus Christ (Romans 1:1-3, 9); (7) the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God (Mark 1:1). In these passages we find the focus of the gospel is the source (God), the content (the kingdom), the purpose (grace), and the prime subject is Christ himself.

#### THE GOSPEL OF GOD IS GOOD NEWS.

The gospel is good news because it tells about God's activity in behalf of mankind, the whole story from creation to eternity, from Genesis through Revelation. The gospel also tells mankind how to establish and maintain a right relationship with God, how to achieve the "righteousness" which is from God (Romans 1:17; compare Romans 10:4).

The gospel is preached to us, and it was also preached to people under the old covenant (Hebrews 4:2). The gospel is not just the news about the Christ, whether coming, come, or coming again, but the whole story, the whole message of God's will for His people, at any time and under any covenant.

The message concerning the Messiah/Christ is certainly a part of the gospel of God, but it is not the whole of God's message. It is the center and focus, the heart of the message. But the whole message must be heard and accepted for the gospel to be mixed with faith in those who heard or hear it (Hebrews 4:2b).

The preparation of a people through whom to bring the Christ, the life and ministry and present activity of the living Christ, and the eternal activity of Christ with His redeemed people are all part of the story of and from God – the evangel, the Godspiel, the gospel.

Our present focus on the gospel of God should be about what God has done, is doing now, and will do in the future through Jesus Christ. Consider:

- (1) His BIRTH. Christ was proved to be divine by virgin birth (the incarnation of the eternal God in the human flesh of His Son – begotten in the womb of a virgin by the Holy Spirit (Romans 1:3, Matthew 1:21-23 and John 1:1-4, 14).
- (2) His DEATH. Christ died as a sacrifice to remove human sin and guilt (Romans 3:25, 1 Corinthians 15:1-4).
- (3) His RESURRECTION and ASCENSION TO HEAVEN (1 Corinthians 15:3-4, Romans 1:4, Acts 1:9-11).
- (4) His RETURN (Acts 1:9-11, Philippians 3:20-21).
- (5) HEAVEN with Him (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17, 1 Peter 1:5, 9).

#### WHAT MUST BE OUR RELATIONSHIP TO THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST?

- (1) FAITH, knowledge and acceptance of it (1 Timothy 2:4, Romans 10:17, Romans 1:16-17).
- (2) REPENTANCE, commitment to the truth (Luke 24:47).

- (3) BAPTISM, identification with Him who is the truth (Romans 6:3-4, Galatians 3:26-27, John 14:6).
- (4) DISCIPLESHIP, living the truth. (Philippians 1:27, Colossians 1:10 and 23, Ephesians 4:1).

It is not possible to understand and apply the identity of Jesus Christ and one's obedient and faithful relationship to Him unless one knows the rest of the story, the whole gospel of God.

#### This Month in Restoration History

January 4, 1830 – Alexander Campbell begins publishing the *Millennial Harbinger*, replacing the *Christian Baptist*.

January 1, 1845 – Tolbert Fanning opens Franklin College (on a site that is now the Nashville airport).

January 1, 1871 – T.B. Larimore opens Mars Hill Academy in Florence, AL.

January 15, 1872 – David Lipscomb conducts his first religious debate with G.W. Griffin, a Baptist, in Gallatin, TN.

January 3 – June 7, 1894 – T.B. Larimore conducts his longest meeting (five months and four days) at Sherman, TX. He preaches 333 sermons and 254 persons were added to the church.

January 1903 – E.A. Elam holds a meeting for the church in Henderson, TN. The non-instrumental group soon begins meeting in the court house with A.G. Freed and N.B. Hardeman.

January 21-28, 1945 – Foy E. Wallace Jr., preaches at the Houston Music Hall on the subject of pre-millennialism.

January 1946 – Foy E. Wallace holds a second meeting at the Houston Music Hall. This time the subject is Protestant and Catholic dogmas.

January 3-6, 1956 – The Porter-Woods debate is conducted in Memphis, TN.

## Remembering S. F. Hester

Guy F. Hester



On May 29, 1908, Sherlie F. Hester (my father) was born on a farm in Lamar County, Alabama, to Drury Wilson Hester and Eliza "Lizzy" (Brown) Hester. At birth he was named, John Foster Sherlie Hester, but was called Sherlie by all who knew him.

However, when the time came that it was mandatory to have a first name and middle initial in almost anything of a legal or business matter, he shortened and rearranged the order of his name (strictly for signature purposes) and began signing as "Sherlie F. Hester."

His parents were devout members of the Freewill Baptist Church. The name "John" was given to him for his maternal grandfather, John A. Brown, who was a confederate veteran and a Freewill Baptist preacher. It was "Grand-pap" Brown who instilled in Sherlie the desire to preach.

While he was a student at the Blooming Grove School in Lamar County, he became interested in a girl, Clora Lee Price, who was also attending the Blooming Grove School. Clora was the daughter of James Riley Price and Ada (Smith) Price who were also members of the same Freewill Baptist church.

Very early in life Sherlie Hester joined the Freewill Baptist Church. He joined the church of his parents, "Mr. Wilson & Mrs. Lizzy." The congregation was also one of those where his grandfather, J. A. Brown, had preached regularly. Clora's parents, "Mr. Jimmie & Mrs. Ada," were also members of that church.

In fact, Papa and Mama Hester and Papa Price had been baptized in the Baptist Church by Grand-pap Brown. It is uncertain whether or not Mama Price ever joined the "Free-wills."

It was learned that she and one of her oldest sons, Vanderfer "Vannah" Price, had attended a gospel meeting when uncle Vannah was about eleven or twelve years of age, and both of them had obeyed the gospel.

Seeing that no church of Christ was meeting in the Blooming Grove or Crossville area at that time, she attended the Freewill Baptist church with the rest of her family, and of course, the Free-wills claimed her.

The courtship of Sherlie and Clora consists mostly of church meetings, box suppers, and the big annual community-wide picnic. Sherlie and Clora were united in marriage on December 16, 1928.

Six children were born to this union, consisting of five boys and one girl. The first child was a boy who died at birth on April 16, 1930. Next to be born was the only girl, "Dot." She was born on January 30, 1932. Guy Ferrell Hester was born February 15, 1936. Benny Wayne Hester was born January 30, 1940. Giles Wade Hester was born October 2, 1945. And lastly, Johnny Price Hester was born October 9, 1948.

His four sons were all gospel preachers, one is now deceased. Five grandsons are gospel preachers and three

granddaughters married gospel preachers. He now has one great-grandson preaching the gospel.



Pictured with V.P. Black are the preaching sons and grandsons of S.F. and Clora Hester.

Sherlie and Clora were both good singers, having attended "singing schools" every year from early youth. Sherlie became a much sought after song leader and singing school teacher. It was not long until he also became a "preaching deacon" in the Freewill Baptist Church. He was appointed to the "ordination board" of the convention, examining men to determine if they were worthy of being ordained to preach in that denomination.

Clora had objected to some of the teaching and practices of the Freewill Baptist's for a long time and would engage Sherlie in long discussions about her questions. The conversations the couple had shared came to a head while they were practicing for a Christmas play to be put on by the church. Sherlie was very much involved, but Clora refused to participate or even attend with him. She argued that there was no scriptural basis for the church to be involved in such activities. So convincing was she that Sherlie had to concede that she was right and this led to his beginning to question other practices of the Freewill Baptists.

As he would argue with his Freewill brethren, he stood on the ground that there must be Bible authority for things taught and practiced in religion. Thus,



they began to refer to him as a "Campbellite" i.e. Campbell.

The more he studied the Bible, the more convinced he

became that Christ established only one church, and that the New Testament was the sole authority for the worship and practice of that church.

About that time a "Church of Christ" preacher by the name of Gus Nichols, was holding a meeting a few miles from where he lived. Since the crops had been laid by until gathering time, he would walk to the place of the meeting.

He would arrive in time for the day service and stay until after the night service. Sherlie carefully took notes on the lengthy, scripture packed sermons brother Nichols preached, and then would later study these scriptures privately.

Sherlie determined that every word spoken was according to the teaching of the Scriptures. He continued his study along with Clara until he was thoroughly convinced. One thing that continued to bother him was something called, "a second working of grace."

After months of sincere Bible study, Sherlie Hester decided that there was no hope of going to heaven until he was baptized for the remission of sins. With a change of clothes under his arm, he walked to Vernon, Alabama, to see brother W. A. Holley.

He asked brother Holley to baptize him. Brother Holley said that he would be happy to do so, but that he was in a

gospel meeting at another church in the county and told him to go with him to the meeting and he would do the baptizing as soon as the service was over.

As they traveled to the meeting place, Sherlie brought up the subject of "the second working of grace," and asked for brother Holley's thoughts. After the afternoon service they went out and sat on a log as brother Holley satisfied Sherlie's mind by using the Bible.

The same afternoon, the two men went to the Mill Pond on Yellow Creek near Vernon, and there Sherlie confessed faith in Christ as the Son of God and was buried in water for the remission of sins.

Brother Hester was baptized into Christ in 1939, and from that time until the time of his death in 1982, he preached the pure gospel of Christ. It is believed that he baptized some 5,000 between 1939 and 1982.

Clara, being heavy with child, was not baptized at that time. However, after the birth of Benny Wayne on January 30, 1940, brother W. A. Holley baptized her in the Mill Pond.

Even though I was quite young at the time, I will take to my grave the memory of my mother being led out in the water by brother Holley who could only use one arm (his left arm was withered) and mother trying to keep the tail of her dress from floating up in the water, and then he with that one arm baptizing her. "Precious memories, how they linger, how they ever flood my soul!"

Shortly after daddy obeyed the gospel, members of the Freewill Baptist Church, where he was formerly a member, began asking why he left the Baptists and had gone to the "Campbellites." One of his sisters wrote him a letter and said that she would rather see him in his

coffin than in the "Campbellite" church. Daddy later baptized her.

Daddy asked his father, who was a deacon in that Baptist church, if he would announce on Sunday morning that he would be preaching at his house that afternoon at 2:00. Papa Hester agreed to do so.

In preparation for it they gathered all the chairs in the house and placed them in the front room, expecting perhaps a dozen to show up. Much to his surprise, almost the entire Baptist church arrived. Daddy stood on the porch with the audience in the front yard and preached on the subject, "Why I Am a Member of the Church of Christ."

Some of those present said that they would like to learn more and arrangements were made for a tent meeting in the area. A widow lady named Mrs. Jones, mother of the late gospel preacher J. O. Jones, lived in Crossville and had a big level field next to her home. She agreed for the tent meeting to be held at that location. The tent was filled at every service.

Enough people were baptized and restored during that tent meeting to re-establish the old Mount Olive church in Vernon, Alabama. Even though the church had gone out of existence, the old frame building was still standing and was put back in use.

On October 22, 1982, S.F. Hester slipped quietly into eternity and was buried in the Christian Chapel Cemetery in Lamar County, Alabama, not far from the place of his birth.

"Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them."

-Revelation 14:13

## THE TEACHER'S TOOLBOX

Brandon Renfro

### The Conversion of Saul

According to multiple studies, it takes 10,000 hours to become an “expert” in any field—whether in athletics, chess, music, or a wide range of other activities. Most of these professionals spend several hours each day, honing their skills. In fact, to reach such levels of proficiency is believed to require some five hours of focused practice every day.

How this shames most of us who profess to be Bible students! Many church members neglect the scriptures altogether, or else do a little “light reading” before bedtime. How unlike the psalmist, who meditated upon the word of God “during the night watches” (Psalm 63:6).

Before we can reach others with the saving message of the gospel, we must know its contents ourselves. There are various modes of study and review that have proven successful over the years; we will highlight one. It is a simple method, to be certain, but one that serious students have found beneficial. By the effective use of notecards, a lengthy or complex subject can often be reduced to its key components. This facilitates memorization, as well as providing for conciseness and clarity in our responses. As N.B. Hardeman was fond of saying, “If I couldn’t write on a postal card enough to make my position clear on a subject, I’d quit.”

The first card we will add to our toolbox is one that deals with a very basic Bible subject: conversion—and specifically, that of Saul of Tarsus. Much confusion abounds in the denominational community concerning the salvation of this former persecutor of the

church of God. It is commonly believed, for example, that Saul was saved immediately on the Damascus road. The popular song, “I Saw the Light” reinforces this misconception.

A careful study of two of the instances wherein Saul’s conversion is detailed—Acts 9 and 22—will demonstrate more than “faith alone” was involved, and specifically, that baptism was positively enjoined.

#### The Conversion of Saul

**Acts 9:6**—Go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do

**Acts 9:9**—He was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink

**Acts 9:11**—Inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth.

**Acts 22:16**—Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins

#### Acts 9:6

Observe that the resurrected Lord appeared to Saul. When the persecutor inquired, “What wilt thou have me to do?” the Savior informed him that he was to go into the city, where he would be told what he must do. Note that the instructions given to the Pharisee were not to be optional—it would be a divine imperative.

#### Acts 9:9

We are not left to wonder what Saul’s course of action was. He was “not disobedient to the heavenly vision” (Acts 26:19), complying explicitly with the Lord’s initial command. In the meantime, for three days the now-blind Saul fasted. He certainly was in a sober, reflective, and contrite mood.

#### Acts 9:11

Critical to our study is Acts 9:11. Ananias, the gospel preacher, was informed where he would find Saul. Further, he was even told what Saul was doing: “Behold, he prayeth.” If ever there was a candidate for salvation through the so-called “sinner’s prayer,” surely it was Saul! For three days he abstained from food, giving himself completely over to prayer.

#### Acts 22:16

In Acts 9, we read of Saul’s conversion from Luke’s pen, as it occurred in “real time.” In Acts 22 and 26, Saul—now Paul, the apostle—recounts it from his own perspective. From the words of Ananias, the preacher, it is obvious that Saul’s prayers had not saved him. “Arise, and be baptized,” he was told, “and wash away thy sins” (Acts 22:16). This refutes the notion that Saul was saved on the road to Damascus. As Marshall Keeble explained, “A man is not saved and then baptized. A woman doesn’t wash clothes because they’re already clean...she washes the clothes because they’re dirty. Man is baptized because he’s dirty and needs to be cleaned.”

And remember: Jesus informed Saul that he would be told what he “must” do (Acts 9:6). But Saul was told to be baptized. Thus, baptism is not an expedient that might be neglected with impunity—it is absolutely essential for sinful man’s salvation.

By committing these four simple references to memory, one can more effectively instruct gospel prospects. In teaching those with “honest and good hearts” (Luke 8:15) the “way of the Lord more accurately” (Acts 18:26), a harvest of souls will follow.

## POWERFUL RELIGION

Denny Petrillo

What exactly happened to the ancient Canaanite god "El"? Archaeologists are able to confirm the fact that El was the supreme god of the Canaanites.

Yet, when we look to the Biblical texts we see a great deal being spoken about a different Canaanite god, Baal (Jack Finegan, *Light From the Ancient Past*, 1:172ff). Perhaps a brief discussion on these gods might shed some light on a biblical truth that will be of benefit to us all.

El was visualized in the Canaanite theology as the one who sat on his throne high above and far removed from the people. Baal, his son, was considered to be the god that controlled the rains, storms, and the vegetation. Therefore, Baal was ultimately the one who determined whether the crops would grow and whether the people would have a meal on their table.

It was probably for this reason that El has no prominence in the biblical texts but Baal is clearly shown as being the main god of the Canaanites (with over 70 Old Testament references).

The Canaanite worshippers clearly saw value in exalting Baal. He was a god that was personally involved in their lives. He brought good things and punished them with bad things when they were unfaithful. Certainly it was the personal nature of their relationship with Baal that promoted Baal worship.

It is easy to see the application of this historical event to our modern day religion. If we have no closer relationship with Jehovah than the Canaanites had with El, our faithfulness and commitment to Him will diminish. Indeed, it will eventually prove to be non-existent.

One does not have to do a great deal of searching to see that God desires a personal relationship with us, His children. Consider the following:

"But now, thus says the Lord, who created you, O Jacob, and He who formed you, O Israel, 'Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you are Mine. ...Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honored, and I have loved you; Therefore I will give men for you, And people for your life. Fear not, for I am with you.'" (Isaiah 43:1,4,5; NKJV)

Texts like these, and many others (cf. Psalms 118:5-9; 54:4; Deuteronomy 31:6; Psalms 23; Isaiah 41:10) underscore the fact that it is God's earnest desire that we have a close relationship with Him.

However, knowing that God *desires* a personal relationship does not mean this relationship will materialize. Two parties are obviously involved, and the second party must do their part to develop these close ties.

Interestingly enough, we have ample examples in the New Testament to see how a personal relationship with Deity is formed. Consider the following:

Early in the ministry of Jesus, when He was selecting those who would be His disciples, He instructed Peter to let down his nets to catch some fish. This seemed like a useless act to Peter since they labored all night and caught nothing.

However, because Jesus so instructed, Peter was willing to accommodate. What happened after that is worthy of our consideration:

"And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish; and their net was breaking. So they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came, and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!'" (Luke 5:6-9).

Most people would have been so preoccupied with the great catch of fish (and the money that would be made from its sell) that they would not have responded like Peter did. However, Peter

recognized that there was something far more important going on than a significant catch of fish. It was the fact that he was in the presence of someone far greater than himself.

**Lesson #1: Powerful religion comes when we are able to see the greatness of God.**

In Mark 9 a father was perplexed because the disciples of Jesus were unable to cast out a demon from his son. He said to Jesus "If you can do anything, take pity on us and help us!" Jesus said to him, "If you can! All things are possible to him who believes." Immediately the boy's father cried out and began saying "I do believe; help me in my unbelief."

The father in this account mistakenly thought he could simply make a request (regardless of how badly he desired its fulfillment). He failed to realize that there was a personal nature that was a part of his request: his faith.

**Lesson #2: Powerful religion comes when we work on developing a real and genuine faith.**

In John 20 Thomas is refusing to believe that Jesus has risen from the dead until he can see the evidence for himself. When Jesus shows Himself to Thomas, and Thomas is able to see the nail prints in Jesus' hands and feet and the spear wound in Jesus' side, he says, after touching them both, "My Lord and My God!" For Thomas there had to be some personal participation before he would claim the faith in the risen Jesus as his own.

**Lesson #3: Powerful religion comes when we make Jesus our personal Lord and Savior.**

What, therefore, is the point of all these illustrations? Perhaps J.W. McGarvey sums it up best: "Religion is only powerful as it becomes personal." (*The Fourfold Gospel*, p. 164f). When we try to maintain our religious conviction it becomes rather hollow without a personal relationship with the

God that we claim to serve.

How can this personal relationship be established? Certainly love is a strong emotion, and it demonstrates a personal feeling toward another person.

Jesus said: "If you love me, you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15). 2 John 6 reminds us that "this is love: that we walk according to His commandments." Do we have a personal relationship with our Father in heaven? If we keep His commandments we do (1 John 2:1-6).

Certainly many factors will tell whether our religion is powerful or not. How often do we pray to the God we serve? How many hours do we spend studying His word? Do we let others know about our *personal relationship* and show them the fruits of this relationship in our behavior?

Jesus discussed the power of faith when He said to His disciples: "for truly I say to you, if you have faith as a mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it shall move; and nothing shall be impossible to you" (Matthew 17:20).

Your faith in God, your personal relationship with Him, is the foundation of your religion. It is that relationship which makes your religion powerful. It enables you to live the life of a Christian. It enables you to meet every challenge of life saying: "The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What shall man do to me?" (Hebrews 13:6; cf. Romans 8:31-19).

Faith should also be the foundation of a preacher's life and ministry. If a preacher doesn't preach out of love for God and His word, then he's just giving a talk. If he doesn't study God's word to preach it passionately and accurately, then he is just a hireling.

We need preachers who have powerful religion. Their relationship with God is real, and it is *personal*.

They know the God they preach. They speak frequently to the God they serve. They rejoice in the privilege to

work in His kingdom. Their religion is powerful...because it is *personal*.

## Passing the Torch

Robert R. Taylor, Jr.

The words of this title have been used with frequency by older preachers when being succeeded by younger men. It can be done gracefully or bitterly. The latter is not a compliment either to the older preacher or the younger one.

From 1939-1951 the late and lamented B.C. Goodpasture preached for the Hillsboro congregation in Nashville along with his duties as editor of the *Gospel Advocate*. In 1951 he resigned as local preacher to spend more time as the *GA* editor and to do more in way of gospel meetings. He would remain there for the next 26 years as a member and elder until his death in February of 1977. Batsell Barrett Baxter, a younger man, succeeded him.

The generous Goodpasture let the younger Baxter know that he (BCG) would be one of the best supporters the new preacher would have. Were brother Baxter still alive today, I am confident he would say that BCG lived up to that promise in fine fashion.

In Acts 13 we have Barnabas and Saul in that order in Acts 13:1ff. Before that chapter ends, Luke speaks of Paul and Barnabas in that order. Barnabas knew how to take second place gracefully.

John the Baptist had been so prominent in his early ministry. When Jesus came into the picture the limelight turned from John and lighted upon the new Galilean Prophet - Jesus Christ. In John 3 we read of how upset some of John's disciples were about this matter. They were jealous for John's sake but there was no twinge of jealousy on John's part. He stated in John 3:30, "He must increase, but I must decrease." John also knew how to take second place gratefully and gracefully.

I began to preach in 1949 and did appointment preaching while a student at Freed-Hardeman and David Lipscomb. In 1954 I began to do local work on a regular basis and continued until 2010.

From 1954 till 1961 I did local work for Center Chapel (near Mt. Juliet) and then for the congregation in Mount Juliet, Tennessee. From 1961-1968, I did local work at Sharon, Tennessee. From 1968 to 1974, I worked with the Ripley, Mississippi congregation. From 1974 to 2010, I worked for 36 years as preacher for the Ripley, Tennessee congregation—by far my longest tenure.

I seldom missed a Sunday preaching, except when we would have gospel meetings. This I did for 56 years.

As I neared by 80<sup>th</sup> birthday it was time for me to retire from the heavy demands of local work along with gospel meetings, lectureships, and much in the way of writing. We did not want to leave Ripley for we loved this congregation so very much. The elders are allowing us to live in the home they own the rest of our lives. The elders and the entire congregation plus the new preacher have made us feel right at home. I have been allowed to keep my office at the building and did not have to move a single book! They give us a retirement check weekly, obviously much reduced, but still very helpful. We enjoy a splendid relationship with elders, deacons, the entire membership, and the new preacher and his lovely family.

During 2010 the elders searched for a man and invited Justin Paschall of Demopolis, Alabama to become the new preacher. He is a native of West Tennessee. I remember his great grandparents and his grandparents as I was growing up in West Tennessee.

He comes from good stock morally and spiritually. He is married to the lovely Micah, also a native of West Tennessee. They are blessed with a beautiful daughter, Reagan, who has captured the hearts of all of us at Ripley.

His choice to be Ripley's new preacher had my full approval and still does.

I determined from his first sermon onward that he would have no better or more loyal supporter than I. I enjoy so much his sermons and Bible classes. He is an excellent student of the Bible and I marvel at his grasp of truth at his youthful age. He loves the Godhead, the Bible, the church, this congregation, and the souls of men and women, of boys and girls. The church has enjoyed good growth his first year here. At this writing he has been here 13 months. He has baptized a good many people and many have placed membership. He mixes and mingles well with young, old, and all in between.

I have my study at the north end of our building and he has his at the south end. We chat almost every day but I do not monopolize his time and he does not mine. We both are busy when we are at the building. We have an excellent working relationship. There is no age gap between us though I am fifty years his senior.

Gracefully, he received the torch from me not allowing it to touch ground.

This allows me to preach more and more in gospel meetings and lectureships. In 2011 I preached in 11 different states and in 2012 I preached in 12 states for meetings and lectureships. Also, much to my liking, I am free to do more writing.

In this transition I wanted to be like brother Goodpasture was to brother Baxter, and be able to take second place gracefully as did John the Baptist and Barnabas. Transitions, like this, can occur gracefully and peacefully when the two preachers love each other and there are elders, deacons and members who make the transition work smoothly.

It has worked wonderfully well here at Ripley. Irene and I are happy here and I believe Justin and Micah are also. Justin is now preaching for one of the finest congregations in the whole brotherhood.

It is a Philippian congregation to both of us. (Philippians 1:3).

Justin is MY preacher and I love and respect him deeply. At almost every service the three of them and the two of us are last to vacate the building. We enjoy the company of each other and have so much in common.

## Dead People Walking

Roger Shepherd

I remember watching the movie, *The Green Mile*, which is a story about "Dead Men Walking." The movie begins with one officer yelling, "Move back! Dead man walking! Dead man walking!"

Jesus stated a reality to the Pharisees, who reminded Him of tombs which are not seen (Luke 11:44). The Pharisees had produced a dead religion with legalism and radicalism in search of spiritual morality in right relationship with God.

Jesus saw dead people walking in sin! What do you see in the world around you? Dead men walking remind us of the need for personal teaching or evangelism.

This raises a very significant question, "Why are people spiritually dead today?" The Bible teaches the following things cause people to die in sin:

First, sin is a **spiritual death**. Paul wrote: "For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23). The word "wages" signifies pay, service, or hire. One normally never stops to think that Satan has hired him or her to commit sin. What does he pay for this service? Death! Sin is a "death-stroke" (W.E. Vine, *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary Of Old and New Testament Words*, p. 149). "Death is the opposite of life; it never denotes nonexistence. As spiritual life is conscious existence in communion with God, so spiritual death is conscious existence in separation from God" (Ibid). Sin separates

the sinner from God in this life (Isaiah 58:1; 59:1-2). The tragedy is that people who die in sin are eternally lost (John 8:24). How many people do you know in this condition spiritually?

Second, **false teaching** is a separation from fellowship with God, therefore, a cause of spiritual death. John wrote: "Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds (2 John 9-11).

Evil deeds are the result of false teaching. Many false teachers are in the world teaching the opposite of the true gospel (1 John 4:1-6). Peter proclaimed that many "false prophets, even as false teachers will bring in destructive heresies, denying the Lord who bought them" (2 Peter 2:1). What is their penalty of death? Destruction! False doctrine is spiritual death. How many people can you teach who are in this condition?

Third, **indifference**, such as a lack of concern or interest in spiritual things is a cause of spiritual death even to saints. The church at Laodicea was not concerned with being hot or cold for the Lord (Revelation 3:14-18). Therefore, God spit them out of His fellowship. They were so caught up in the riches of the world that they lost all interest in spiritual things.

Jesus teaches that one can allow the word he or she hears to become like "thorns, who are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity" (Luke 8:14). Are cares of the world, riches, or pleasures of life keeping you from the work of the Lord such as evangelism? Indifference can keep a people who have the resources to evangelize the world from the mission of God! Remember, Demas who forsook the mission of God, "having loved this present world" (2 Timothy 4:10).

Fourth, **unfaithfulness** to the Lord is another tragic reason for spiritual death. "Unfaithful" by definition is the opposite of faithful, to fail in one's duty, obligation, promises, and stray from God such as Hymenaeus and Philetus (2 Timothy 2:17-18).

The New Testament charge is to be faithful in service to God (Matthew 24:45; 25:21). Saints are "found to be faithful to the Lord" (Acts 16:15). Stewards are required to be faithful (1 Corinthians 4:2). We must be found "faithful until death" (Revelation 2:10).

Evangelism is only one way to serve God faithfully. However, the church could be two or three times its size if the unfaithful were restored. How many unfaithful Christians do you know that

are walking around dead in this sin! They are everywhere!

Therefore, why do we need evangelism? Evangelism is needed because "Dead people are walking." People in sin, false teaching, indifference, and unfaithfulness are dead eternally (John 8:21).

In application of this principle, we see dead people walking lost in sin every day. In the church we see dead people walking in apathy, indifference, legalism, and liberalism. We can rescue them by converting them to Christ. The result will be "times of refreshing in the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19).

Brethren, like Jesus, we must seek and save the lost! The church is remind-

ed of the people of Israel who knew the Jewish religion in the first century had lost its flavor. This is why they flocked to the teaching of John the Baptist and Jesus. They saw change from a dead organized religion to a spiritual life with God through Christ.

Institutional religion in North America will collapse with an upsurge of a personal search for God. "Church-anity" will convert to true spiritual Christianity with a return to the life of Jesus. The 21<sup>st</sup> century postmodern soul is searching for Christ, not institutional religion! Will we teach them?

## Biographical Sketches of Gospel Preachers

[EDITOR'S NOTE: In this month's installment we shall feature the staff writers of the *Gospel Gleaner*.]

**Ronald D. Bryant** is a native Wellington, AL. He is presently in his fourth year with the Central congregation in Gadsden, AL.

He has previously worked with congregation in Illinois, Missouri, and Arizona.

He and his wife Suzan have two children and four grandchildren.

**Gerald Cowan** is married to Waneta (Little). They have children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

He is a US Navy Veteran of the Korean War.

Preaching since 1958, he has now preached the past seven years for the church of Christ in Dongola, IL.

Brother Cowan has been involved in several short-term missions in Great Britain since 1976, with one four year tour as resident missionary/minister in London. He now works in frequent mis-

sions to Albania, at least once each year, since 1999.

He has conducted gospel meetings, lectureship appearances, etc., in 19 States and 6 foreign nations.

**Andrew D. Erwin** is the gospel preacher for the Pleasant Valley church of Christ in Killen, AL. He is married to the former Melanie Conner and they have four children: Jackson, Camille, Hannah, and Emma.

Brother Erwin served as a staff writer for the *Gospel Gleaner* for eight years prior to being asked to become the Editor of the paper.

**Guy F. Hester** is the senior-most staff writer for the *Gospel Gleaner*, serving since its beginning.

He has been preaching the gospel since 1950. Preaching extensively in local and meeting work in the United States, brother Hester has logged more than 4,000 hours in the pulpit.

Guy Hester is also one of men trained at the feet of brother Gus Nichol's in Jasper, AL. Yet, Guy's father, the lament-

ed S.F. Hester, is credited with having the greatest influence upon him as a preacher and a man.

Guy and Shirley, his wife of 60 years, have two sons – Ferrell and Tim who are gospel preachers, and his two daughters Connie and Jalema who are married to gospel preachers.

**Sam E. Hester** is the owner and operator of Hester Publications located in Henderson, TN. He is a Professor of Bible at Freed-Hardeman University and is also the Director of the Christian Training Series (CTS) held at Freed-Hardeman each July.

Sam owns and operates Hester Publications. He not only keeps several religious books in print, but also publishes religious works for others.

**Wayne Kilpatrick** is instrumental to missions in Torreón and Yucatán, Mexico, and is a contributing editor to the *Alabama Restoration Journal*.

Each year he guides students from Heritage Christian University and the

Southeast Institute of Biblical Studies in a tour of Restoration History sites.

Brother Kilpatrick is also a former missionary in England. He currently serves on the faculty of Heritage Christian University, Florence, AL.

**M.W. Kiser** is the gospel preacher for the church of Christ in Sylacauga, AL, where he also serves as one of the elders. Mike has been with this congregation for a total of 25 years.

Brother Kiser has preached in 17 states in gospel meeting work. He has spent many years in television and radio ministries as well.

Mike Kiser has also served in the mission field in Ghana, West Africa.

He has authored seven books, and has been a staff writer for the *Gleaner* since its beginning.

He and Dolly, his wife of 47 years, have three children and three grandchildren.

**James R. Lewis** married Freda Roth of Hohenwald, TN, December 22, 1962. They have two sons and one daughter.

He has preached in such places as Andrews, NC (1970-74); Green's Lake Road church of Christ in Chattanooga, TN (1974-88; 1997-2012); and Pennville church of Christ in Summerville, GA (1988-97).

Brother Lewis served as an elder at Pennville and is also now serving as an elder at Green's Lake Road.

Jim Lewis also serves as the Director of the Chattanooga School of Preaching and Biblical Studies, a work of the Green's Lake Road church of Christ.

He and Freda made twelve trips to Ukraine working with the Kiev Preacher Training School (no longer in operation). Several very capable graduates from this school are now preaching the gospel in Ukraine.

Brother Lewis also continues to teach classes for the Middle Tennessee School of Preaching and Biblical Studies where he has taught since 2002.

**James R. McGill** is married to Mora. He has two married children, a daughter, Ann, and a son, James, and two grandchildren.

He and his late wife Nedra served as missionaries to Germany in the 1960s.

Brother McGill has chaired the English Department and taught Bible and German at Freed-Hardeman. He has served as Dean of the Graduate School at Tennessee Bible College. As Director of the Nashville School of Preaching, the school's enrollment grew from 29 students to approximately 220 students.

Jim McGill has also been instrumental in the foundation of the Middle Tennessee School of Preaching. Since its inception (2002), approximately 200 students have attended classes.

He is presently teaching and serving as Registrar in the Middle Tennessee School of Preaching.

Most importantly, he has been a faithful gospel preacher for more than six decades and continues to preach the gospel for the growing New Hope church of Christ in Nashville, TN.

**Grady Miller** is a native of the Volunteer State but is now happy to call Colorado home.

He has enjoyed a fruitful and satisfying work with the Pikes Peak congregation in Colorado Springs since 2001.

The Lord has blessed him with a preaching ministry of 40+ years (Tennessee, North Carolina, Mississippi, Missouri, Florida and Colorado).

**Owen D. Olbricht** was born in Thayer, Missouri.

Brother Olbricht has spent a lifetime in ministry. He has worked in local ministry for churches in Arkansas, Missouri, and New Jersey.

In 1964, he began working with Campaigns Northeast/Southeast in the US. These efforts have resulted in more than three hundred campaigns and three thousand baptisms. All told, he has led evan-

gelistic efforts in England, Ukraine, Russia, Canada, Mexico, Haiti, Jamaica, Venezuela, and in thirty states in the US.

**John T. Polk, II**, is the preacher and an elder for the Dover church of Christ, in Dover, TN.

He has preached throughout the United States and has made ten missionary trips to Ghana, West Africa.

He has been a gospel preacher for almost 50 years.

Brother Polk has participated in 8 public debates, 2 written debates, and 2 radio debates.

**Brandon Renfroe** preaches for the Ashville church of Christ in Ashville, AL. He also teaches high school science in Jefferson County, AL.

Brandon is the author of two books: *Common Sense Religion* and *The Lost Outlines of J.W. McGarvey*.

**Rod Rutherford** has been a Christian for 56 years and a preacher of the gospel for the past 52 years.

Brother Rutherford has served churches of Christ as evangelist, elder, educator, and editor.

He was a missionary in Zambia for seven years and in Australia for seven and one half years.

Rod Rutherford is the minister of the church of Christ in Gatlinburg, TN and teaches part-time in the Southeast Institute of Biblical Studies in Knoxville.

Brother Rutherford has been married to the former Brenda Luttrell for the past 49 years. They have three children and eight grandchildren. The children and their mates are faithful Christians and both sons are preachers of the gospel.

**Roger Shepherd** has been married to Sharon Mitchell Shepherd for 37 years. They have two children, Jason and Lori. They have two grandchildren, Jacob and Jesse Harp.

He presently serves as Dean of the College of General Studies and Professor of

evangelism and missions at Amridge University, Montgomery, AL.

He has been involved in evangelism and mission work in several states in the United States, as well as Germany, New Zealand, Barbados, the Ukraine, Ghana, West Africa, and Tanzania, East Africa.

Brother Shepherd also conducts several Ivan Stewart Personal Teaching Improvement Courses each year to train the local church in personal evangelism.

**Ron Thomas** is the preacher for the Highway church of Christ in Sullivan, IL. He also serves as one of the elders. He is married to the former Anne Lyon (August 1983) and they have two daughters – Jennifer (Daniel) Falkenheim, Nicole (Thomas) and one grandson (Landon).

Ron has served two churches since his graduation from the East Tennessee School of Preaching: Jerome, Idaho (1995-1998) and Sullivan, Illinois (1998 – present).

He has contributed articles to various brotherhood publications such as the *Carolina Messenger*, *Gospel Advocate*, *Gospel Journal*, *Gospel Gleaner*, and *World Evangelist*. He has been a regular contributor to the online “Fellowship Room.”

**Ernest S. Underwood** began preaching in 1959. He is the gospel preacher for the College Avenue church of Christ in DeFuniak Springs, FL.

Brother Underwood has preached in many states in local and gospel meeting work. He has also done campaign work in Bermuda, West Indies, and Ghana, West Africa.

Serving as a missionary, Ernest Underwood has lived in the Republic of Singapore, Pechora, Russia, and Klin, Russia.

In addition to serving as editor for religious publication, Ernest Underwood has authored numerous studies.

He now serves on the Editorial Staff of the *Gospel Gleaner* and will be writing a

regular column on denominational doctrines.

Ernest is happily married to Shirley, his wife of 55 years. Their son, Michael, is also a gospel preacher. Their daughter, Jennifer Roach is a Christian homemaker and career worker.

## Questions & Answers

James R. Lewis

### Q: Does the Bible Permit Hand Clapping in the Worship Service?

It has become the practice in some congregations for the members to applaud (clap their hands) at various times during the worship service. Usually it is when approval is given to the speaker or in recognition of certain accomplishments by an individual or by the congregation. Sometimes it is done when one is baptized.

The word *applaud* means “to show approval or enjoyment (of) by clapping the hands or by cheering, stamping the feet, etc.; to praise, approve, commend” (Webster’s New World Collegiate Dictionary).

No one can successfully question that it has been divisive and a cause of discord. Does God approve applause or hand clapping in the worship service?

If applause is for God, it is not because He has asked for it or because He has authorized it. If one should affirm that God has authorized applause, then the evidence (Bible authority) for such authorization must be presented. If the evidence is not there, then this practice must stop and those who have participated in it must repent and return to worshiping God in spirit and in truth. A reading of the New Testament will reveal that applause or hand clapping was never a part of the worship services.

Some have argued that it is just another way of saying *amen*, which is authorized. “Another way” is clear admis-

sion that it is not the same thing as “Amen.” Therefore, it is not authorized under this cloak.

One could just as easily claim that cheering or foot stomping in the assembly is the same as saying “Amen.” Shall our worship of God become a hand clapping, cheering, and foot stomping event? Absurdity, thou art sometimes a good teacher.

The word translated *amen* fifty-one times in the New Testament is also translated *verily* ninety-nine times. Thayer tells us that the word came to be used as an adverb by which something is asserted or affirmed. Used at the beginning of a discourse it means *surely, of a truth, truly*. At the close of a sentence, the meaning is: *so it is, so be it, may it be fulfilled*. Some twenty-five times in the gospel of John, our Lord used the compound, *verily, verily*, hereby giving the force of the superlative, *most assuredly* (Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Zondervan Publishing House, 1977).

The seriousness of a thoughtfully expressed “amen” or “verily” stands in stark contrast to an outbreak of cheering and/or hand clapping.

Some have argued that hand clapping is optional. This means that it is not necessary, but is allowed if desired. If it is, where is Bible authority which makes it optional? If it is optional, and without Bible authority, then we are making something part of our worship which came not from God, but from man.

If we can add one “something” to our worship which does not have God as its source, then why could we not add other options into the worship? This could include the mechanical instrument of music, the dance, burning incense, etc., which, by the way, might go well with cheering and foot stomping.

Consistency demands that he who affirms hand clapping in worship is optional also affirm that other additions to our worship, even mechanical instruments of music, are optional. The truth

is that there is nothing optional about our worship. We must worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). There is no truth which authorizes hand clapping in worship, and the spirit which interjects it into worship is evil.

What ever happened to the days when Christians stood in confidence of the Scriptures to affirm only what God authorizes in worship? Matters were put to open discussion. The Bible was (and still is) the only authority. If it was not from Bible authority, then it was rejected. Love for God, love for truth, and love for fellow man prevailed and the gospel of Christ was effectively proclaimed to a lost and dying world – and all of this without hand clapping in worship services.

Let us applaud the accomplishments of one another in the right and proper environment. However, when it comes to worshipping God by scripturally praising, praying and preaching, let us leave off that which our Lord has left off. Let the church say, "Amen."

*"You've been a Good Brother, Willie."*

The Life & Sermons of  
W.A. Bradfield



Andrew D. Erwin  
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## NEWS & NOTES

James R. McGill

### FROM THE SCHOOLS

The **Chattanooga School of Preaching and Biblical Studies** completed its thirteenth year of classes in November of 2012.

The **East Tennessee School of Preaching** has undergone a name change. The school's new name is **Southeast Institute of Biblical Studies**.

The **Memphis School of Preaching** has announced that B.J. Clarke will become their new Director, effective January 2013.

The **West Virginia School of Preaching** has announced that interim director and instructor Andrew Robinson will become the school's next Director.

WVSOP began in 1994 with Emanuel Daugherty serving as its first Director until 2003. Denver Cooper succeeded Daugherty until his retirement in 2010. Andrew Robinson then served in an interim capacity.

The **Middle Tennessee School of Preaching and Biblical Studies**, begun in 2002 in College Grove, now offers classes in six locations. In addition to College Grove, there are classes in Murfreesboro, McMinnville, Lebanon, Goodlettsville, and Nashville. A seventh location may be added soon. Michael A. Stewart has been the school director since its beginning. Next term starts January 7.

### AUDIO EVANGELISM

Audio Evangelism is a work of the church of Christ in Clinton, Illinois.

Audioevangelism.com was launched in January 2005 as a daily Bible study website and remains focused on that purpose today. There are approximately 1500 lessons in the archives presently. The lessons are primarily both topical and textual. Typically at least 700 visitors visit to the site each day and often over 1000.

Most of the lessons on this site have been developed and presented by the outstanding minister for the Clinton congregation, Stephen R. Bradd.

### BIBLE STUDY WORKSHOP ONLINE

**John C. Sewell** who was my (JRM) roommate at Freed-Hardeman during my second year ('49-'50), has done a tremendous amount of excellent work in building a very helpful and successful website: [biblestudyworkshop.org](http://biblestudyworkshop.org). – with links to other sites of interest.

### UPCOMING EVENTS

The **Fort Worth Lectures**, hosted by the Brown Trail church of Christ in Bedford, TX, will occur January 6-9.

The **Southeast Institute of Biblical Studies** has moved its 39th annual lectureship up one week to Feb. 24-27, 2013. The theme is "Lord, Make Me a Servant."

**Tennessee Bible College** will be hosting their annual Spiritual Renewal Lectureship February 22-24.

### RECENT DEATHS

**Jay Smith**, 82, of Nashville. Preached 55 years for Nashville area churches: Grandview, Goodlettsville, Shackle Island, University, Harpeth Hills, and Forest Hills. (Grandview is now a Hispanic congregation, and University merged with Waverly-Belmont to form the Ashwood church.) He owned the Jay Smith World Travel Service and Christian Family Book Club. He was editor of *20th Century Christian* for 15 years.

**Neil Lightfoot**, 82, is perhaps best known as the author of *How We Got the Bible*. I remember him as having been very studious when he resided just across the hall from us in Paul Gray Hall at Freed-Hardeman during the '49-'50 school year. When Heinz Müller of Augsburg, and later of Berlin, began publishing books in the German language, his first selection was Lightfoot's book. Müller removed the chapters that dealt exclusively with the English Bible and inserted his history of the German Bible.

**Jimmie Hill**, co-worker with Ronald Gilbert in the International Gospel Teaching Ministries, and very active in foreign evangelism, not only in Africa but also in the Pacific. Jimmie received his B.A. and M.A. from Tennessee Bible College.

**Gene Hibbett**, 80, elder in the Estes church, near Henderson, Tenn., and retired Freed-Hardeman chemistry professor.

**Daphene Kennedy**, 88, worked with congregations in France and was instructor in French and chairman of the Freed-Hardeman modern language department.

**Malcolm L. Hill**, 78, a gospel preacher for more than 60 years, was the founding President of what is now Heritage Christian University. He then founded Tennessee Bible College in Cookeville in 1975. He was Chancellor at the time of his death on June 26. A son, David Hill, became President in 2010.

**Glenn Olbricht**, 80, preached in Syracuse, New York, for the last forty-four years of his life. Before that he preached in Nuremberg for ten years, and before that five years in Ironton, Ohio. He received his B.A. & M.A. from Harding.

#### OTHER NEWS

**James W. Boyd** was the 60th anniversary speaker at the East Main church in Tupelo on November 11. Jim is a former East Main preacher.

**Dorice E. Mitchell** recently retired and moved to Nashville after many years of work with the church in Pascagoula, MS. He lived 46 years in the same house provided by the congregation for the preacher! Dorice enrolled in Freed-Hardeman in 1945. At barely 17, he was the second youngest student. Only Harold Hazelip, at 16, was younger.

**Jim Green** and his wife Virginia, of Columbia, TN, have for many years been traveling to lectureships, debates, etc., and recording the presentations. He has a vast library of DVD's. Contact him at:

jpgreencoc-video-ministry.com  
Phone: 931 486-1364.

**Frank Johnson** has preached since 1995 for the 7th Avenue church, in the north Nashville inner city at the intersection of 7th Ave. N. & Buchanan St. His father preached for this congregation for a number of years before that. They have had fifteen baptisms recently and the church continues to grow. They are active in helping the homeless and feeding the hungry. The congregation is interracial but majority black. Frank is white.

**Rodney Nulph**, a 2006 graduate of WVSOP, and preacher for the Medina, Ohio church, held a Gospel Meeting (Nov.11-14) in Pennsboro, WV, where Terry Jones (a WVSOP Faculty Member) is the preacher. We rejoice that there was one baptism and there were four restorations.

#### Truth for Today Commentaries

Resource Publications has recently released the newest volume of the Truth for Today Commentary Set. The most recent edition is a commentary on the Minor Prophets. It is the first of three commentaries on the Minor Prophets scheduled for release this year. These commentaries are written by Coy Roper.

Eddie Cloer also hopes that his next commentary on Psalms (90-118) will be available this year.

#### MISSION REPORTS

**M.W. Kiser, Bill Dillon, and Trent Alexander** (of Mountain Home, AR) recently took a mission trip to Ghana, West Africa. The trip lasted two weeks and included teaching in the West Coast School of Biblical Studies, and preaching for various local congregations. They also preached for the Wembley congregation in London, UK. Several baptisms and restorations occurred, but the main focus of the trip was to train preachers.

The West Coast School of Biblical Studies had sixteen students from five different nations at these sessions.

From **Rod Rutherford**:

In August I accompanied a group of workers to the African nation of Zambia. My

family and I lived and worked in Zambia for seven years returning home in late 1972. We have made more than a dozen mission trips back since that time. In Zambia our group divided into two teams. David Amos and I remained in Livingstone, taught at the Zambia School of Biblical Studies and preached in a gospel meeting with the Highland church which meets near the campus. Ron Gilbert and his wife, Carolyn and Rusty Stark and his wife, Laura, held two meetings in remote villages. The men preached in the meetings and the ladies conducted special studies for the women. Attendance was excellent at all the meetings with a high attendance of nearly 1,000 during one of the village meetings. There were 67 who put on Christ in baptism and 255 who responded in repentance and/or to ask for the prayers of the church.

The Zambia School of Biblical Studies is doing an excellent work training gospel preachers. Its curriculum is patterned after that of the Memphis School of Preaching.

Zambia is still very receptive, especially in the rural areas. However, in recent years, some areas of the country have been troubled by liberalism and other areas by those of the one cup, anti-Bible class persuasion.

From **Gerald Cowan**:

I participated in three mission trips in 2012. The first, in April, was to share preaching and teaching along with Dino Roussos of Greece and Mladen Jovanovich of Croatia in the All-Albania lectures for three days in Durres, Albania, then ten days more with our mission congregation in Elbasan, Albania.

The second trip, in July, was to preach and teach for two weeks in a small congregation in Barbados.

The third trip, in October, was to conduct a day long Men's Day program, training and encouraging Christian men in Albania, followed by another twelve days working with our mission church in Elbasan. I have been doing short term missions of 2-4 weeks nearly every year since 1976, and for the past twelve years in Albania.

**Reader Replies**

"The Gospel Gleaner has, for several decades, been a God-glorifying, Bible-centered, bold voice within churches of Christ. It was guided by the sound, steady hand of its Editor, Bill Dillon. When the print version ended a few years ago, there were many requests for even the back issues wherever I preached in a Gospel Meeting. Having written a column in it for a number of years, it is with great delight that I see it once again in print with Andy Erwin as Editor. He brings not only his devotion to the Bible, and thorough scholarship, but also an appreciation for soldiers of the cross regardless of their era. He will coordinate writers from across the Brotherhood into a paper like the coat Jesus wore, "without seam" (John 19:23). Moses' invitation is appropriate for *The Gospel Gleaner*: 'Come with us, and we will treat you well' (Numbers 10:29)." - **John T. Polk II, Dover, TN**

"I have enjoyed the *Gospel Gleaner* in the past and have many issues in my library. Good men, good news of more good articles." - **Dave Dugan, Lawton, OK**

"This looks good because the names of the participants are reliable trusted men. I pray for its success in winning souls." - **Alvin Jennings**

"Good to hear of the return of the *Gospel Gleaner*. Received it for years and will look into getting on the mailing list, per paying for subscription. The more truth is printed, the better for truth!" - **Frank R. Williams**

**Review of W.A. Bradfield Biography**

W.A. Bradfield literally "wore himself out" in God's service. He was an extraordinary evangelist, serving simultaneously as a highly successful educator. While he was an effective administrator of Freed-Hardeman College (now university) he became a popular and leading gospel preacher in the brotherhood. At FHC he built the enrollment with an increase each year as long as he served. He evangelized

in several states which resulted in over 10,000 responses to the gospel.

In the interesting biography written by Andy Erwin about W.A. Bradfield entitled, "*You've Been a Good Brother, Willie*" it portrays his life and work beginning with his childhood and it records his many contributions of service until his death. His visibility and mighty power was in his last twenty years. He believed strongly in the motto: "FHC has a glorious past and an optimistic future."

He had unusual passion for the church and the college. Reading about his life, one is amazed with his heavy load and the spectacular results he produced with the help of God, his family, and faithful friends.

The book includes several sermon outlines that Bradfield preached in hundreds of places. These sermons show why multitudes obeyed the gospel. He preached Bible sermons - the kind needed today.

For my dear friend and colleague, I am pleased to recommend this volume. He was my best friend in FHC and he always supported and encouraged me without reservation. One will be motivated and also thankful for the untiring work and the simplicity of the gospel he effectively preached. It would be a fine gift for any occasion and it will bring a blessing. The Gospel Light Publishing Company published a beautiful volume written by Andy Erwin, a talented preacher, writer, and author. - **E. Claude Gardner, Henderson, TN**

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# The GOSPELL CLEANER

Volume 25

February, 2013

Number Two

THE PRESENT TRUTH . . .

Ronald D. Bryant

## RELIGIOUS CONTENTMENT AND RELIGIOUS ERROR

The way to God is Christ (John 14:6). There is no other name under heaven by which men can be saved (Acts 4:12). The gospel of Christ is God's power to save those who believe it (Romans 1:16).

Religiously speaking, there are many ways and many plans which men have created and embraced. But, it is the truth of God that saves, and which must be embraced, defended, and advanced.

Religious error, while putting its adherents on the road to destruction, offers them a first-class ride all the way! As C. S. Lewis observed, "Indeed, the safest road to hell is the gradual one – the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts."

That false system which offers its adherents a false security, might serve to remove their fears and even to give them comfort in life and hope for eternity. However, what religious error truly offers is but a sad and cruel delusion.

Only one thing is worse than being on a road to destruction, and that is to be on the road to destruction and think that it is safe, secure, and that it will lead one to eternal life.

It may sound a bit melodramatic; yet, it is true that the ruler of darkness, the deceiver, is a master at blinding man to his true spiritual state, and at blinding him to his need to know the truth of Christ. Religious error deceives, and it fills men's hearts with religious delu-

sions, and a false sense of spiritual security.

In a compelling fashion, Jonathan Edwards skillfully stated that these delusions are expressed in four patterns:

(1) "They are deceived about their own hearts; they think them much better than they really are."

(2) "Men are very prone to be deceived about their own state...they suppose themselves to have need of nothing; when they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind and naked."

(3) "They are vastly deceived about their own righteousness...they think their tears, reformation, and prayers sufficient to make atonement for their sins."

(4) "They are greatly deceived about their own strength...they think they are able to mend their own hearts."

Blasé Pascal wrote, "It is vain, O men, that you seek within yourselves the remedy for your ills. All your light can only reach the knowledge that not in yourselves will you find truth or good." False religions specialize in shielding the lost from realizing that such reasoning is indeed vanity.

Do we realize that the faithful proclamation of the gospel is essential, not optional? Do we truly understand that evangelism is spiritual warfare engaged for the souls of men, not against them?

Do we treasure the fact the weapons of that warfare are mighty through God to bring eternal souls captive to the

Christ? Do we understand that though the times may be difficult, the charge to preach the gospel to eternal souls has not been withdrawn?

Do we truly grasp the fact that it is only in upholding the faith that those who are separated from God can be made to yield to God? Do we truly realize that the only hope for mankind is the gospel of Christ?

Are we convinced that religious error is a grave danger that must be exposed and opposed? What do our actions supply by way of answer?

All that has been said has been to uphold but one point – namely, the person who is religious but deceived, no matter his sincerity, no matter his grasp of biblical terminology, no matter the quality of his conduct or character, is as much in need of the gospel as the man who denies God.

Knowing this to be true, we have no choice but to draw attention to the errors of humanly devised systems of religion, and the danger they represent to their adherents.

Yet, in all of our efforts to lead men to a knowledge of the truth, we must heed the inspired warning given by Paul to Timothy, for it is our guide, "And the Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach and patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Timothy 2:24-25).

The

GOSPEL



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

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We have been blessed to live in a country which grants its citizens the right to religious freedom. We have a religious freedom unprecedented in this world's history.

More than two hundred years ago devout Bible students, preachers, and church leaders used this freedom to return to the teachings of the Bible and restore the church of the New Testament in this country.

Many of you will find in your family's history parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents who came out of the darkness of religious error and returned to a religion based solely on the word of God.

In their approach to the Scriptures, these pious souls used certain fundamental principles to guide them. Let us study three of these maxims in this article.

**"Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; and where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent."**

In 1808, a special meeting was called at the house of Abraham Altars, and at this meeting Thomas Campbell declared his conviction that the word of God was all-sufficient as a basis of union and cooperation for Christians. Of course, this condemned all creeds.

He then stoutly urged all to abandon everything in religion for which there could not be produced the word of God. He announced the famous statement: "Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; and where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent."

Campbell's words have become a maxim for all who have given up creeds and have taken the Bible alone as their rule of faith and worship in the service of God.

The sentiment expressed by Campbell is a biblical truth. Man has always been instructed not to go beyond the boundaries of divine revelation.

At the giving of the Law of Moses we read:

"Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you" (Deuteronomy 4:2).

At the conclusion of the Book of Revelation we find:

"For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book" (Revelation 22:18-19).

The Scriptures not only teach this truth, but also how to obey it. Observe:

"And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another" (1 Corinthians 4:6).

"For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise" (2 Corinthians 10:12).

### **"No Creed but the Bible."**

"Raccoon" John Smith and John Rogers joined with Barton W. Stone and John T. Johnson in a series of unity discussions. The four men decided to call a general meeting to discuss the unity of their groups at Georgetown, Kentucky on December 23-26, 1831.

A second meeting was conducted over the New Year's weekend in Lexington, Kentucky. Smith was the spokesman for the Campbell group and after having pled for unity concluded by saying: "Let us, then, my brethren, be no longer Campbellites or Stoneites, New Lights or Old Lights, or any other kind of lights, but let us come to the Bible and to the Bible alone, as the only book in the world that can give us all the light we need."

On this basis he and Stone extended the right hand of fellowship to each other to symbolize the unity of the two groups.

You will observe that this too is a biblical principle. After all, who is to say which doctrines should be included in a

creed and which doctrines should be excluded? If a creed is one doctrine shy of the New Testament, it is too small for Christians. If it has one doctrine too many, it is too large for Christians.

The purpose for creeds in the Protestant world is to distinguish one denominational church from another. However, all that has ever been needed to distinguish the Lord's church from the world – the saved from the lost – is the testimony of the word of God (John 8:47).

The word of God must be our standard – nothing more, nothing less (John 12:48). If we will follow the Bible and the Bible alone we will walk by the same rule and mind the same thing (Philippians 3:16). "In matters of faith – unity; in matters of opinion – liberty; in all things – charity."

Restoration leaders followed Paul (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:1) by urging unity in matters of faith. Paul wrote, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:10).

The great apostle also urged liberty in matters of opinion. He wrote, "Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you" (2 Corinthians 13:11).

Of course, he also stated that charity was the greatest of all. "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things" (1 Cor. 13:4-7).

If we practice these maxims in our approach to the Scriptures and one another, we will be faithful to God. If we ignore these maxims in our approach to the Scriptures, we will inevitably return to the religious error and bondage from which our forefathers broke free.

Andrew D. Erwin

Editor, *Gospel Gleaner*

## God Gave Them Up!

Owen D. Olbricht

In writing to the Romans concerning the Gentiles, three times Paul repeats the phrase: "God gave them up" [or "over" NASB]. Observe:

- "God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts" (1:24).
- "God gave them up to vile passions" (1:26).
- "God gave them over to a debased mind" (1:28).

The Gentiles could have known God from the things He had created (1:19-20), and from nature they could have learned the principles of God that should govern their lives (2:14-15). But they did not follow the truths they learned naturally.

God desired that they worship Him only, properly use their physical passions, and develop a knowledge of Him that would lead to pure lives. Because they had failed to do what He expected of them, He gave them up to sinful practices.

### Why Give Them Up?

The patient and loving God of the universe gave up the Gentiles to their own vain way of living to let them reap the result of their evil ways.

**God gave up the Gentiles to practice idolatrous worship (1:24).** The Gentiles worshiped what the Creator created instead of the Creator.

Paul shared this truth with the Athenians on the Areopagus. He told them that they should not "think the Divine Nature is like gold or silver or stone, something shaped by the art and man's devising" (Acts 17:29).

Many of us in today's population, like the Gentiles of old, have our objects of worship. Instead of making images and idols, we offer homage to material things

to serve them. Our idols are our possessions, which we spend hour upon hour to obtain.

Paul wrote, "Therefore put to death...covetousness, which is idolatry" (Colossians 3:5). Our possessions possess us instead of our possessing them. Because of the lusts of the heart, God gave up the Gentiles to false worship.

**God gave them up to follow the perverted use of their sexual passions (1:26).** The sinful use of their passions included homosexual activities of women with women and men with men.

In doing this, they were perverting God's intended use of sex. They had gone beyond what is natural and had become so perverted that they were going contrary to the natural way of satisfying their sexual desires. Because the Gentiles perverted their sexual passions, God gave them up to misuse these passions.

**The Gentiles did not like to retain a knowledge of God, so He gave them up to live according to their debased minds (1:28).** Paul provides a rather thorough list of the godless lives of the Gentiles because they did not like to retain knowledge of God.

Notice how a repressed knowledge of God caused them to live. They were, "...filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them (1:28-32).

The result of not retaining the

knowledge of God was that they had not come to know God. Eternal life is dependent on knowing God (John 17:5).

For this reason, instead of being worthy of life, the Gentiles deserved death (1:31-32). Because the Gentiles did not like to retain their knowledge of God, God gave them over to many wicked practices that were contrary to His will.

### What about Us?

Is it possible, because our nation is filled with people like the Gentiles who did not want to retain the knowledge of God in their minds, that God will forsake us? Are our entertainment programs that are full of sex and violence an indication that our thinking is like that of the Gentiles who God said were worthy of death? Is the material in these programs a good barometer of a national disrespect for God and His principles?

If God gave over the Gentiles to their evil ways, why should we believe that we are any better than they? Why should we think that our nation, which is becoming full of "ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness" (1:18), is exempt from the wrath of God?

### God's Principle

We will reap what we sow (Galatians 6:9; Hosea 8:7). As God let the Gentiles suffer for the course they were following, God can do the same to us.

To punish us, God would simply have to let the direction we have chosen bring about its evident results. God did not have to punish the Gentiles. All He had to do was to give them up to their sinful ways and let their own deeds bring about their punishment (1:24, 26, and 28).

If America does not reap the wild

oats it is sowing, it will be because God has chosen to have mercy on us and be patient with us. He might be longsuffering with us as He was with the wicked world of Noah's day, for He gave them time to repent while Noah was building the ark (1 Peter 3:20). Our prayers should be for repentance within our nation like that of Nineveh (Jonah 1-4), so that God we will not let us reap what we are sowing, even as God had mercy on Nineveh whose wickedness had come up before Him (Jonah 1:2).

### Conclusion

Concerning the Jews in Rome, Paul asked, "What then? Are we (Jews) better than they (Gentiles)? Not at all" (3:9).

Another question: "Are we as bad as they?" If we are, we should expect God to give us up to our evil ways and to punish ourselves by our own way of living.

Will our iniquity be our ruin? Perhaps we have gone too far to return to God from our sinful ways.

The message we need for today is the same God gave to Israel. "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways," says the Lord God. "Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin. Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure of one who dies," says the Lord God. "Therefore turn and live!" (Ezekiel 18:30-32).

### Books by Owen Olbricht

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## Calendar Apostasy

John T. Polk, II

God sent His people, Israel, into the Promised Land under the leadership of Joshua, but with the following "statutes and judgments" in Moses' final declaration to them:

"These are the statutes and judgments which you shall be careful to observe in the land which the LORD God of your fathers is giving you to possess, all the days that you live on the earth. You shall utterly destroy all the places where the nations which you shall dispossess served their gods, on the high mountains and on the hills and under every green tree. And you shall destroy their altars, break their sacred pillars, and burn their wooden images with fire; you shall cut down the carved images of their gods and destroy their names from that place. You shall not worship the LORD your God with such things. But you shall seek the place where the LORD your God chooses, out of all your tribes, to put His name for His dwelling place; and there you shall go. There you shall take your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the heave offerings of your hand, your vowed offerings, your freewill offerings, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks" (Deuteronomy 12:1-6, NKJV).

### True Old Testament Worship Was Contrary to Paganism

The people in that land were pagans and idolaters who worshiped the Creation rather than the Creator. They worshiped the various "gods" which supposedly represented the powers involved in life on Earth. God did not allow His people simply to adopt, nor adapt, the Canaanites' religious practices as worship to Him. All of "the places where the nations which you shall dispossess served their gods," "their altars," "their sacred pillars," "their wooden images," "the carved images," were to be "utterly" destroyed so they would have no influence among the Israelites, whatsoever.

Only the specified worship in the manner God described would be acceptable to God. The Israelites were not to be allied to the worship proscribed by the seasons, but that which was determined by God.

### True New Testament Worship Is Contrary to Paganism

After the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 when the kingdom of Christ was established on earth, the gospel of Christ was to be preached to every creature (Mark 16:15-16). While in Lystra, Paul healed a lame man (Acts 14:8-10), but then the idolaters sought to worship both Paul and Barnabas.

"Now when the people saw what Paul had done, they raised their voices, saying in the Lycaonian language, 'The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!' And Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. Then the priest of Zeus, whose temple was in front of their city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, intending to sacrifice with the multitudes. But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard this, they tore their clothes and ran in among the multitude, crying out and saying, 'Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you, and preach to you that you should turn from these useless things to the living God, who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them, who in bygone generations allowed all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.' And with these sayings they could scarcely restrain the multitudes from sacrificing to them" (Acts 14:11-18 NKJV).

God's inspired Apostle Paul stopped any idolatrous practice from being used as an explanation for, or an application to, Christianity. There is nothing in idolatrous teachings or practices which should be admitted or accepted by Christians.

## Catholic Attempts to Blend Paganism with Christianity

Catholicism, whether Roman or Greek, has incorporated idolatrous practices and seasonal calendars into what they call "Christian." All they have done is to find some Scripture or event in Christ's life with which to "tag" what would otherwise be a rejected practice.

The disciples were called "Christians" by God first in Antioch (Acts 11:26), but Catholicism has spread the term, like an umbrella, over practices of paganism and idolatry. No Christian in the New Testament ever celebrated an "Easter," "Christmas," "Lent," "Seder," or any of the 40 days of mishmash found on today's religious calendars, which are mistakenly termed a "Christian Calendar."

No denomination is "Protestant" that follows Catholicism's religious calendar. "Seder" is simply a re-creation of the Jewish Passover, which Jesus died to remove (Colossians 2:14-16). "Yule" is from witches. "Eoster/Ishtar" is from idolaters. "Fertility rites" demonstrated by rabbits and eggs, are the very things forbidden by Paul (Galatians 4:8-11). And "Lent" is a hypocritical display of a misunderstanding of "fasting" condemned by Jesus (Matthew 6:16-18).

The Lord's death, represented in the Lord's Supper, must be kept free from the impurities of falsehood (1 Corinthians 10:15-22). Everyone who keeps special days on a religious calendar did "not so learn Christ" (Ephesians 4:20).

To be a disciple of Christ, one must believe the historical and factual evidence of His life found in the New Testament (John 20:30-31; 21:25) and obey His command to be baptized "for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38).

The only events in Christ's life to be memorialized are: (1) His death, burial, and resurrection (first, when a sinner repents and is baptized into death, Romans 6:1-6, then raised "in newness of life" and secondly, when Christians observe the Lord's Supper); and (2) the day

of His resurrection is to be remembered each week when Christians assemble ("the first day of the week," Luke 24:1-9; Acts 20:7). No other special or seasonal days exist for Christians, according to the New Testament.

"The churches of Christ" (Romans 16:16) never observed a religious calendar that would lead them into apostasy (1 Timothy 4:1-3), because those who follow such stand contrary to inspired truth (2 Timothy 4:1-5). "The churches of Christ salute you" but we salute Jesus Christ above all.

## THE CHRISTIAN HOME

Rod Rutherford

### The Most Important of All Institutions

I have been blessed to be part of a family all my life. I was privileged to know my grandparents as well as two of my great-grandparents. My father and mother remained married to each other as long as they both lived. I was blessed to have two brothers and a sister. My siblings and I enjoy a continuing relationship.

The home I grew up in was not a perfect family in every way. We had our weaknesses and sometimes had disagreements, but we remained a family in spite of them. It was the family as God ordained it.

My wife and I formed our own family when we married nearly fifty years ago. God has blessed us with three outstanding children and eight delightful grandchildren. We have sometimes had problems, but thankfully, none of major proportions. We continue to love each other and enjoy being together. It is not a perfect family, but it is the family as God ordained it.

The family is the most important institution in the world! Some disagree

with this and argue that the civil government is the most important institution. With the growth of socialism in our land and around the world, government has become more and more intrusive and strives to dominate every aspect of our lives. While the institution of government is approved of God and is essential for civilization, it is not the most important or most basic of institutions (Romans 13:1-7).

Others believe the church is the most important of all institutions. The Lord Himself built His church, died for it, and adds the saved to it (Matthew 16:18; Acts 20:28; 2:47). The church is essential for man's salvation (Ephesians 5:23). However, the family is more fundamental than either the nation or the church.

The family is the basic building block of all society. As a foundation is essential to a house so the family is essential to the nation and the church. It is the first and oldest of the institutions ordained of God (Genesis 1:27, 28; 2:18-25). The civil state and the church are made up of families. They are only as strong as the families which compose them. Truly, it may be said, "As goes the home, so goes the nation," and "As goes the family so goes the church."

Our nation faces grave problems today. Among these problems are huge, staggering national debt, a floundering economy, growing lawlessness and lack of respect for authority, ever increasing crime, the rapid decline of any sort of moral standard, etc.

The church also faces grave problems. Among these problems faced by the church are a lack of respect for God's authority as revealed in the Scriptures, a growing tendency to be conformed to this world rather than to be transformed by God's word, a growing disrespect for God's standard of morality revealed in His Word, a desire to compromise with manmade denominations, etc.

The problems in the nation and the church are simply a reflection of the

problems in the family. If the family is ordered according to God's plan revealed in His word, God-fearing, strong, honest, hardworking, trustworthy, moral citizens are the result. Both the nation and the church are strong when composed of such individuals. Neither the nation nor the church will be strong unless the families which compose them both are strong.

The God ordained family is under attack today! The attack comes from many quarters. The lack of reverence for God's word and consequently of His law of marriage is at the bottom of all the attacks on the family.

Among the forces attacking the family are: 1) The radical Feminist Movement which considers women who choose to be wives and mothers to be little better than slaves; 2) The Gay Rights agenda which destroys the union of a man and a woman in marriage which is essential for the procreation of the human race; 3) Materialism which values the physical things of this world above the importance of rearing and training children and, as a result, robs homes of a mother's love and influence; 4) Easy, no fault divorce which makes it easier to break up a home rather than work out differences; 5) Cohabiting without the commitment of marriage which stems from an inability and an unwillingness to accept long-term responsibility.

In lessons to follow we will discuss the family as God created it and the way He wants families to function today. We will deal in more detail with the myriad of problems facing God ordained homes and offer some solutions to them.

Unless we return to God's plan for the family, the nation and the church will become more and more corrupt. Our beloved country will soon join other once great empires of antiquity which forgot God and His plan for the home and now sleep in the dust of history.

The church of Christ will completely apostatize and become merely another human denomination with nothing more

to offer than any other man-made religious organization.

The matter is urgent! The hour is late! It is crucial that the family as God ordained it be restored!

## THE WORK AND INFLUENCE OF REX A. TURNER, SR

(AS A GOSPEL PREACHER)

Raymond Elliott

I first met brother Rex Turner, Sr. in the summer of 1948 when he came to my home congregation in Summerville, Georgia to preach in a gospel meeting. Brother Turner also informed the brethren of a new Christian school that was located in Montgomery, Alabama, having begun in 1942.

As a result of his encouragement, there were six of us from the South Commerce Street congregation who attended the Montgomery Bible School in the fall of 1948. As a lad of 13, I rode down from north Georgia with a newly-wed couple, James and Foye Watkins. I entered the 8th grade while James and Foye enrolled in the college department. Thus, brother Turner was a part of my life for 53 years until his death in January, 2001.

### EARLY LIFE

Brother Turner was born on February 13, 1913 in Corner, Alabama. His parents were Elijah Jesse and Odessa Fikes Turner. He married his high school sweetheart, Opal Shipp, also of Corner, on December 24, 1931. They were married for 64 years. She passed from this life on July 24, 1995. Brother and sister Turner had three children, Jacqueline (Jackie), Rex, and Mary.

I want to consider the work and influence of brother Turner from three distinct yet related viewpoints. First of all, he was a gospel preacher.

J. H. Horton baptized Brother Turner in July of 1928. His home congregation

was the Antioch church in Jefferson County, Alabama.

He preached his first gospel sermon on March 29, 1932 at the Corinth church of Christ in Cullman County, Alabama. In 1936, the Chisholm church (Now Eastern Meadows) in Montgomery, Alabama invited brother Turner to work with them as their preacher. He preached for the Highland Avenue congregation 1937-40. In 1940, he began preaching at the Panama congregation in Montgomery and with the exception of a couple of years (1943-45) remained their preacher for 25 years. He also served as an elder for several years.

### DAILY RADIO PROGRAM

During the 1940s and early years of the 1950s, he had a daily radio program over Montgomery stations. The coverage of this radio program was extensive, reaching to the counties in south Alabama.

While working with the Opp church during the 1970s, I baptized an elderly couple. The gentleman remarked that he had listened to brother Turner preaching on this radio program and knew then that he was preaching the truth, however, he did not obey the gospel until the middle 1970s. But, the seed of the kingdom had been planted in his heart by the preaching of brother Turner. Here was a man who had never seen brother Turner, yet he had heard him preach the gospel many times over the radio.

Brother Turner was a firm and fiery preacher in his early years. In fact, it is my understanding that the Montgomery Ministerial Association exerted its influence to have his program cancelled by the radio station. In the October 25, 1944 edition of *Sound Doctrine*, brother Turner mentioned this in an article entitled: "We Are Off the Air." The primary blame for his program being cancelled, he wrote, are the "Catholic 'Fathers' and the cowardly Ministerial Alliance."

**WEEKLY TRAINING CLASS**

Brother Turner, along with brother Joe Greer, conducted a weekly training class for young boys each Sunday afternoon before the evening worship assembly at the Panama Street congregation. It was in this class that many boys and young men made their first talks.

I remember well when I made my first talk. I had to memorize the first chapter of 1 John and recite the verses during this class. I remember that a haze came over my eyes and I could not see the people seated in front of me. However, I did survive the experience. There is no way to know fully how many boys and young men got their first experience and training in leadership in this weekly training class.

**SELF-TAUGHT**

Brother Turner never attended a Christian college to acquire his biblical knowledge. Although men like Gus Nichols aided him in the search of a greater knowledge of the word of God, brother Turner, like so many other men of his generation, was self-taught.

He purchased valuable books that became most important in his search for additional knowledge. His library grew to contain some 5,000 books.

I have a vivid memory of seeing him sitting in his chair by the fireplace in the den. Beside his chair were piles of books that he had been studying and researching for some lesson he was preparing, or for an article he was writing.

**INFLUENCE AS A PREACHER**

His sermons were always well-prepared and contained material that was both logical and truthful. His voice was powerful and clear. He possessed a good use of the English language.

The Bible he used for many years contained so many additional notes to

the margin that it became a commentary as well as the inspired word of God.

Brother Turner was zealous to spread the gospel of Christ and establish new congregations in central Alabama. He often preached in tent meetings in towns and communities where there was not a church of Jesus Christ. He helped to begin new congregations in Alexander City, Camden, Tuskegee, and Lightwood in Elmore County, and in Prattville.

I felt his influence in the last city because I preached in Prattville for nearly 17 years. Also, the brethren of the Panama Street church began the congregation on Narrow Lane Road in Montgomery that became known as the Druid Hills church of Christ. Several of the members of the Panama Street congregation started attending Druid Hills to help establish the work in that part of the city. Druid Hills later merged with the Lakewood church to form the Vaughn Park congregation.

Brother Turner was used extensively in gospel meetings and by the various Christian Colleges during their lectureships. His lessons have been published in at least 42 books.

I walked into his office one day and he had books stacked everywhere on his desk. Each book was opened to the place where his sermon or lecture was found. He said, as he often did, "I wish someone would take all these lessons and publish them in one book." Perhaps, in the future, someone will do that very thing. It would be a treasure to have for the serious student of the word of God.

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 [Editor's Note: Raymond Elliott's article is the first of a series of articles featuring the life and work of Rex A. Turner, Sr. The articles we shall publish appeared first in a lecture given by the same title at the Faulkner University Annual Bible Lectureship on Thursday, March 7, 2002.]  
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**R. H. Boll and the  
 "Thousand Year Reign"**

James R. McGill

Robert H. Boll was born in Germany in 1875. When his father died, his mother remarried. Boll soon afterward left home at age fifteen and sailed to America. He came to Tennessee and found farm work with a Christian family.

Boll learned the truth and obeyed the gospel in 1895, shortly before his twentieth birthday. The Christian woman who employed him noticed his fervent interest in Bible study. She encouraged him to enroll in the Nashville Bible School.

After working his way through the Bible school and graduating, he spent some time preaching in gospel meetings. In 1904, he began preaching for the Portland Avenue church of Christ in Louisville, Kentucky. There he remained for fifty-two years until his death in 1956.

In 1908, Boll attended a debate in Cincinnati between L. S. White, a gospel preacher from Denton, Texas, and Charles Taze Russell, the co-founder of the Jehovah's Witnesses.

Unfortunately, Boll was won over to Russell's premillennial views.

According to Boll's premillennial theory, the Second Coming of Christ will begin a thousand-year kingdom with Jesus ruling the world from Jerusalem. This is to be followed by the general resurrection. The theory is based on a misapplication of Revelation 20:4 combined with other Old and New Testament passages. The Latin prefix *pre-* [before] combined with the Latin word *millennium* [thousand] is used to identify the doctrine.

The Bible actually teaches that those who are, or were, to reign with Jesus, according to Revelation 20:4, were the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus. We have no

way of knowing (1) whether the “thousand years” was to be taken as a literal time period, or (2) whether the reign was to take place in heaven or in paradise, or (3) whether the reign has already taken place, is now occurring, or is yet future.

Certainly, no one is justified in taking the liberty of asserting that Jesus will reign on earth at His coming. Instead, He will take us to be with Him. See John 14:1-6.

R. H. Boll was the front-page editor of the *Gospel Advocate* from 1909 to 1915. His views about the millennium became unacceptable, and his association with that periodical was terminated.

Later Boll conducted a written debate with H. Leo Boles. This exchange was carried both by the *Gospel Advocate* and by R. H. Boll’s periodical, *Word and Work*. The debate was later published as a book. In that debate Boll affirmed that Christ’s coming is imminent and will be premillennial.

Boll had a special aversion to post-millennialism—the view that prior to the Second Coming of Christ there would be a widespread, worldwide turning to Christ which would include both Jews and Gentiles. According to postmillennial theory, Jesus would return at the end of that thousand-year period and the dead would be raised.

Boll’s special hostility to the postmillennial view was that he thought it took away all the surprise element and excitement of Christ’s return. Everyone would know when He is and is not coming. Boll believed we ought always to live each day believing that His coming is imminent.

R. H. Boll’s influence in the church was widespread, but stronger in Louisville than in any other city. David Lipscomb College opposed Boll’s theory with a zero-tolerance rule among the faculty. In my tenth-grade Bible class at David Lipscomb High School in 1945-46, Mack Craig taught an entire unit on the errors of pre millennialism, and it was a major examination question.

Harding College, however, took a milder approach. While never teaching Boll’s doctrine, the administration did allow freer discussion of Boll’s theory, especially among students, in student debates in particular.

In 1955, the year before his death, Boll spoke at the church of Christ in downtown Gallatin, Tennessee, a congregation supportive of his views, even to this day. I attended one session. I was impressed that he spoke without any trace of a foreign accent—an exceptional achievement, since he was already fifteen years old when he left his native Germany.

Pre-millennial advocates often have a way of making their theories very complex. They speak of the pre-, mid-, and post-tribulation periods, and the rapture, and the restoration of national Israel, and restoration of the temple worship, etc. But Boll presented his theory in a more understandable way.

Historians have mentioned that Boll often used chalkboard illustrations. He did so that night in Gallatin. It was very simple. When he finished he had drawn a stairway with five steps:

- (1) The bottom step he identified as the Patriarchal age.
- (2) The second step was the 1500-year Mosaic period.
- (3) The third step was the church age. According to Boll, Jesus established the church when the Jews rejected Him.
- (4) The fourth step, yet future, according to Boll, will be the kingdom age.
- (5) The top step, following the resurrection at the end of the millennium, is heaven.

R. H. Boll held other seriously mistaken views, too. For example, he concluded that since salvation is by grace, it must therefore be by grace alone—similar to the more current “Grace Alone” theory promoted by Rubel Shelly.

Boll’s considerable influence may have been partly because he was consid-

ered a true Bible scholar. Another significant factor, however, was that many people just liked him personally. Sometimes, probably, both factors played a part.

## The Importance of Taking Notes When Studying God’s Word

Stephen R. Bradd

In John 14:26, Jesus made a wonderful promise to His apostles. He said, “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.”

Wouldn’t it be wonderful to be able to recall everything we have ever read or studied from God’s word? Wouldn’t it be great if the Holy Spirit taught us “all things” and brought to our “remembrance” the words of Christ?

### Bible Knowledge Is Not Miraculous

We may earnestly desire to have the abilities mentioned above, but it is important to realize that this promise was made to the apostles of our Lord, not us (cf. Matthew 26:20ff; John 13:21ff). We today do not have a need for the Spirit to inform us miraculously of those things previously taught, because we have God’s completed revelation, which has been delivered once for all time (Jude 3).

The Bible is God’s word and it is able to make us “complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:17). Today we must believe that the Scriptures thoroughly equip us; we must not be deceived into thinking that the Holy Spirit will speak new revelations to us or give us personal reminders.

The Lord expects us to exert ourselves to learn His will and then obey it. As Paul wrote, “Be diligent [study, KJV] to present yourself approved to

God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).

### Be an Active Learner

At some point in all of our lives, we have attended school and hopefully tried our best to receive an education. In any secular class, whether the topic of study is biology, grammar, history, etc., one is much more likely to achieve success if he is actively learning; that is, he does the assigned homework outside of class and focuses his attention on taking notes and understanding the teacher's words while in class.

It is readily accepted in secular education that these activities aid in the learning process. But, do not the same principles work in the realm of spiritual education? Absolutely!

When one is studying the Bible, whether in the assembly or privately, he should strive to be an active learner. He should do his best to comprehend that which he is reading or hearing, and he should work to apply the lessons learned.

Studying God's word is certainly a worthwhile endeavor, and all should make it a point to do so both publicly and privately. The words of Solomon come to mind regarding this point: "Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might" (Ecclesiastes 9:10).

When we do anything in life, including studying the Bible, we should do it to the best of our ability. Without a doubt, one will learn by merely sitting and concentrating on the teacher's words. However, why not maximize your learning potential? Why not study with all your "might" and take notes to allow yourself to digest the inspired word of God more thoroughly (cf. Matthew 4:4)?

Taking notes is a productive activity for many reasons:

- It focuses the mind and helps discourage it from wandering.
- More of what was said or read will be remembered.
- It encourages further study and review at a later time.
- Questions that come to mind can be jotted down and inquired about later.

Are you an active learner, yearning to soak up the Scriptures like a sponge and grow spiritually to your fullest potential? Do you take notes when studying God's word? If not, start taking your spiritual learning to a higher level – take notes!

### Making the Bible School More Evangelistic

Andrew D. Erwin

For a Bible school program to achieve its greatest possible good, those involved (either as directors, teachers, or students) must be dedicated to evangelism and use this work to bring lost souls to Christ.

Spiritual growth and edification do not have to be the only benefit gained through a solid Bible school program. Congregations can also use this effort to help the church grow numerically.

In order to make the Bible school more evangelistic, each class should stress an emphasis on its growth. Each class should be dedicated to recruiting new students and seeing growth in the number of enrollees. We not only want souls to attend our Bible school, but to enroll. We want souls to feel a commitment to the program.

Such an invitation should be extended by the students and teachers to visitors and/or a visitor's parents. By taking the first step and asking a soul to enroll in the Bible school, you will not only

help them to learn more of God's word in that setting, but you will also be developing a relationship with them that could lead to studying with them at a more opportune time in a more in-depth way if needed.

We should want our Bible study program to become an instrument of growth for the congregation. From this effort, we should expect to see lost souls come to know the Lord.

Time should be allotted during each session to pray for the lost, specifically those with which we are presently working. We should also be found discussing plans for visiting in the upcoming week, and even reviewing what has been done in the previous week or weeks. Allotting time each week for evangelism will keep the class aware of the emphasis we are placing on the growth of the congregation through its Bible classes and their responsibility in this cause.

### Leadership Is Key

Each congregation's leadership should be directing and encouraging the growth of its Bible school program. We must continue to stress the need for elders to accept responsibility in organizing and administering activities for the growth of the Bible school.

One such activity is campaigning for the Bible school. Enrollment campaigns should be done on a personal basis. Such campaigns have for the most part become a thing of the past. Quite frankly, many good works which brought success have become a thing of the past and we are now reaping from the lackluster effort we have sown.

Encourage your elders to be the leaders of the Bible school, rather than facilitators. Elders should be open to brain-

storming ideas with members, preachers, and teachers, hearing concerns, and training teachers.

Time should be given to forming a Bible School Handbook for the congregation.

A deacon or capable member should be placed as a director of the Bible school program. He should be someone who understands the concept of an evangelistic Bible school and the importance of sound organization, communication, and most of all doctrine.

A secretary for the Bible school program can be appointed to organize paper work on the classes and recruiting records.

A curriculum should be set in place with a variety of classes offered for students according to available manpower.

Teachers and substitute teachers should be recruited and teacher prospects should be trained adequately. All teachers should have adequate training for the classroom and personal evangelism.

Hold regular meetings for the teachers to come together and discuss their prospect lists and those with whom they are working and recruiting for their Bible classes.

By applying the following objectives, a congregation will establish its expectations for the Bible school and clearly present what the leaders are hoping to accomplish and provide for the best possible learning experience and environment for all who are involved.

### **Objectives for the BSP**

Objectives should include but are not limited to the following:

1.) To use the Lord's treasury wisely in supplying the necessary tools and

supplies required for the Bible school program.

- 2.) To use the best and most capable teachers in the Bible school program. Not everyone should be asked to teach. Every teacher must first teach by their example before being allowed to teach in the classroom.
- 3.) To use the faithful teachers we are blessed to have in training and developing faithful Bible teachers for coming generations.
- 4.) To use Bible school enrollment as a key factor in bringing lost souls to Christ.
- 5.) To use the Bible school in an effective way by following up with visitors, even visiting children and their parents.
- 6.) To offer as wide a variety of classes, subject matter, and diversity among teacher styles as possible to educate teen-agers, young adults, and adult classes.
- 7.) To provide a setting conducive to learning with a comfortable, relaxed, non-threatening atmosphere allowing the students to feel comfortable to discuss the Scriptures in a free-flowing way.
- 8.) To offer adult classes conducive to adult education with the students learning to study and interpret the Scriptures for themselves.
- 9.) To provide adults with the opportunity to grow spiritually through our Bible school program to the degree that they have become capable teachers, possible preachers, and greater personal evangelists.
- 10.) To offer a "first principles" class perpetually for those who have recently obeyed the gospel to continue learning at their own speed or those who are visiting and have yet to obey the gospel.

Do we need to renew our commitment to the Bible school program? Are we doing our very best to make it the very best learning experience?

Many times in life we are faced with the opportunity to stop and examine what we are doing. Perhaps now is an appropriate time for our home congregation to exercise this judgment and closely evaluate its Bible school.

Whatever we do for God must be done with the hope of accomplishing the greatest possible good. Let us pray and work for the education of the saved and lost alike through our Bible school program. Truly, this is the greatest possible good we could ever do.

## **Challenges of Serving a Larger Congregation**

Neil Pollard

The Bear Valley church of Christ in Denver, Colorado, for which I preach, is considered a "large congregation" by church growth experts. In a 2003 survey, Mac Lynn reported that 32% of members of the church of Christ attend congregations of less than 100 members. Ten years ago, Bailey McBride revealed that 11,500 of our 13,000 congregations are less than 200, and that over 5,000 are less than 50 in membership.

I accepted my first work at the age of 21 with a church in West Alabama, a church of about 60. There were challenges. It was a small town. The church had no elders, limited leadership, and limited involvement. It was an established, comfortable church, and even suffered some from racial prejudices.

Nearly three years later, we moved to work with a congregation in the suburb of Richmond, Virginia, the capitol city

of that state. It was a church almost twice the size of my first work.

Now I had elders, great leadership, more resources, and involvement. They were a newer congregation that was active, and such racial harmony that when I left that work two of my five elders and about 30% of the congregation were black.

Yet, there were still several challenges, from developing closeness in urban sprawl, having faith to expand facilities to accommodate continuous growth, and helping mature and develop a large number of new Christians.

Moving to Bear Valley in the summer of 2006, I knew there would be challenges. It was, for me, a different culture and part of the nation thousands of miles from family. They were an older more established church with twice as many members.

The dynamics of a 300-plus member church is noticeably different than for a church of less than 200. There are more talent, resources, programs, and opportunities. There are more headaches, challenges, scrutiny, and adjustments, too. Let us notice three challenges in working with a larger congregation.

### Challenges with Time

Time management becomes more crucial in a larger congregation. You may have the same duties as in a smaller congregation, but it involves many more people. You are still expected to counsel, visit members and non-members, extend hospitality, attend showers, conduct weddings and funerals, and the like, all while doing the work of an evangelist and properly preparing to teach and preach on Sunday and Wednesday. You will also face many more interruptions to your schedule in any given

week. You must be a time manager to meet this challenge.

Do not delay! When you are given a task or assignment, do it as soon as possible. Delay is the death of effectiveness.

Monitor your time! Evaluate how much time you spend of the various aspects of your local work. Where are you spending too much time? Where are you being negligent? Write down how you spend your day and week in some kind of log sheet.

Prioritize tasks! Not all expectations are created equal. What is urgent and what is unavoidable? Does it have a deadline? How directly is it related to the salvation of a soul? Prioritizing does not mean omitting unpleasant, unappealing tasks like paying a visit to a cranky or cantankerous member, showing up for a workday, or attending a meeting. It means asking, "What should I do first or now?"

Rise early! The longer I preach, the more important this proves to be as part of proper time management. Go to bed at a reasonable hour and get up early. God's creation shows most of the world when to start and stop. We call it "sunrise" and "sunset." Getting up early will help with getting to the office early. It will allow you more uninterrupted study time. It will also allow you to get home to your family earlier.

Certain passages convict us on this matter. Romans 13:10-12 tells us to know the time and feel its urgency. 1 Thessalonians 5:6 spurs us to sober alertness. Psalm 144:4 reminds us of how little time we have.

The C.T. Studd poem includes these penetrating words:

*Only one life, yes only one,  
Soon will the fleeting hours be done.  
Then, in 'that day' my Lord to meet,  
And stand before His Judgment seat.  
Only one life, 'twill soon be past,  
Only what's done for Christ will last.*

### Challenges with People

Because our "business" is people, we would expect "people challenges," no matter the size of the congregation. Now, let us consider a few people challenges in a larger congregation.

There is the challenge of knowing people. Obviously, this challenge is a sheer numbers game. That is, the more people there are the more people there are to know.

Even if you can learn everyone's name, you simply cannot achieve the same congregation-wide intimacy you can with a small church. You overcome this challenge by involving yourself in the lives and interests of as many members as possible.

The second chapter of James reminds us that everyone deserves equal treatment. It is a constant effort to know and understand the members, but you are their preacher and your effectiveness is tied to knowing what is going on in their lives and the challenges they face.

There is the challenge of involving people. Not all are self-starters who roll up their sleeves and get to work. The larger the congregation, the more innovative and creative we must be to put those who desire to work to work! People look to us for help here. There is the challenge of accounting for people. People can more easily slip through the cracks in a large congregation. That ap-

plies especially to “fringe members,” those who have fallen away and even newer members. It also applies to the chronically ill and the homebound. We have to work harder to keep up with those non-core members.

The more people there are the more interpersonal issues you face. The less we know each other, the more prone we are to judge others or presume to know their motives. That is something of which we, as preachers, may be guilty, but it also something others in the larger congregation may be guiltier of regarding our families. We must simply keep these people challenges in the proper place of importance, being neither paranoid nor cavalier about them.

### Challenges with Balance

This is the perhaps the greatest challenge working with a large congregation. You are a full-time preacher and those demands are great. You are also a husband and father, with demands at home, too. You are an individual Christian, accountable for your spiritual, emotional, and physical health. You are a member of the community, with responsibilities there. Balance is a challenge in multiple ways.

Especially older preachers have had problems with being workaholics, neglecting wife and children for church work. They have been too worried about what the brethren think.

Many younger preachers have heard the sermons and their teachers in school talk about not neglecting family. But some younger men have been raised to be lazy. They know how to play, pursue hobbies, and enjoy life, but they have a terrible work ethic.

The very concept of balance requires a healthy, moderate view of work and play that falls between these two extremes. Balance requires knowing how to work hard, but not to the neglect of family.

Several things will help with the balance challenge. Limit distractions, day-dreaming, and other time killers when at work. Exercise daily. Go to work early and do not come home late. Try not to work in all three parts of the day. Faithfully work on your relationship with God each day. Come to terms with the fact that you cannot do it all, at least not all at once. When you work with a large congregation, you must balance your time and well as your focus.

There is a great appeal working in a small congregation. It is easier to get to know the whole congregation, having them in your home, having greater say in the work and worship, having fewer shut-ins to visit, and the like. There are also challenges like a lack of resources, fewer leaders, and it is harder to appeal to the community or families with children.

There is a great appeal working in a large congregation. There are more people of all ages, creating fellowship opportunities for peer groups. There are more resources and talent. But there are challenges in a large congregation, as we have seen.

The devil will see to it that God's people are challenged. Paul urges, “Do not give the devil an opportunity” (Ephesians 4:27). He has schemes (2 Corinthians 2:11) and wishes to devour us (1 Peter 5:8).

However, we must remember Philipians 4:13 and that we can do all things

through Christ. We can rise to meet every challenge we face as preachers.

God gives us different opportunities. He will give us different-sized opportunities at different times in our lives. Have confidence that God can equip you and help you meet and overcome every challenge you face as a preacher whatever the size church you serve.

### This Month in Restoration History

February 1, 1763 – Thomas Campbell is born in County Down, Ireland. He is the oldest son of Archibald Campbell.

February 3 – April 20, 1828 – “Raccoon” John Smith baptizes 339 people in an eleven week period.

February 4, 1831 – Thomas Campbell writes a long letter to his former co-worker, Sidney Rigdon, offering to accept his challenge to disprove the Book of Mormon. Rigdon reads the letter then burns it.

February 19, 1832 – Members of the “Stone” and “Campbell” churches commune together in Georgetown, KY. One week later a formal and public union would occur.

February 28, 1865 – Kentucky University moves to Lexington. One of its five colleges was the College of the Bible with Robert Milligan as its President.

February 9, 1868 – “Raccoon” John Smith preaches his last sermon in Mexico, MO. He dies eighteen days later at the home of his daughter.

February 3, 1894 – A.G. Freed arrives in Henderson, TN, to become President of West Tennessee Christian College.

## On Preachers and Preaching

M.W. Kiser

My assignment is about preachers and preaching. After serving as an apprentice preacher for the last 48 years I now have the opportunity to display how little I know about the subject. But I would not trade any of these past few 48 years for anything.

If I had it to do all over again, I would do it again. The only thing I would do differently is that I would be a little more straightforward with some brethren who thought I was a little too straightforward to begin with! I hope that I might through this department make some small contribution to help my younger preaching brethren along the way.

### More than Making a Living

I recently ran across this story in an old journal called *The Preacher's Magazine* (London, 1892.) It seems that a preacher moved to a new location. Running up on a villager he asked the fellow what his occupation was. "I am the village rat-catcher," the man replied: "and what are you?" "Well," the preacher said, "I am the new preacher in the village," whereupon the rat catcher made this observation, "we must all get a living somehow."

Mr. Spurgeon told this story to his preaching students, and made the following observation: "If a man's one object is to get a living, let him by all means take to rat-catching than to preaching. It is probably legitimate to kill vermin to earn your bread, but it would be prostitution of the sacred ministry to pursue it with that design. It is to be feared that not a few look upon the work in that light; and in their cases it is to the loss of the church that they did not buy a ferret and a couple of dogs and seek small game under the floors of barns and stables, they would have cleared men's houses of pests; but as it is they are themselves the pest of the house of the Lord. Preach with a single

eye to the glory of God or else hold your tongue."

This is a worthy observation about preaching. It brings to mind the quote, "Don't preach unless you have to!"

My one fear in taking on this assignment is that some might think this department is for preachers only and skip over to the next page; or that these thoughts are so authoritative that they will immediately and harshly judge their local preacher. I hope, good friends, you will refrain from either activity. So, let me share a few pointers I have gleaned along the way; and share them with you for the edification of the church.

### A Key to Longevity

I would give great emphasis to the thought that a preacher should never stop studying about preaching as long as he preaches; and he certainly ought not to quit preparing fresh sermons. One could spend fifty, sixty, seventy years in the pulpit and never exhaust the GRAND OLD BOOK!

Now I have heard some criticize a preacher's longevity with a congregation being accounted for because of what he did NOT preach. More often than not, a long ministry with a congregation can be so accounted because he always had something to say that was beneficial to those who felt he had the eternal interest of their souls in mind.

Some may find it easier to "move on" than to prepare new sermons. From time to time we will write about sermon preparation. All of us who preach could stand to improve our introductions and conclusions; and the first thought might be to get them closer together in the sermon!

No preacher should ever want to be labeled as an "issue oriented" preacher, but he should never be afraid to preach on any issue that is bothersome to the

cause of Christ. Evil and error were attacked by our Lord and his apostles, and we are not doing our job if the devil does not feel threatened by our work.

When I was a young man I remember my granddaddy using the expression "hobby riders" to describe meddling trouble-making preachers down in the mountains. Those horsemen were good at splitting churches, dividing brethren, and making disciples for themselves.

It is sad that we can read some journals (paper and paperless) and never catch the first glimpse of the Cross. We should never equate soundness with making a noise over a matter that in the end is one of human judgment. Don't waste your pulpit time!

### The Preacher's Ministry Is Preaching

More times than not, the critic of a preacher will not know diddly squat about preaching. Their expectation of the man is based on some preconceived idea of what his work is all about. I have often wondered over the years how some who know so much about preaching are going to escape their accountability for not preaching. Those whose sole interest in life is "rat-catching" ought not to be considered coinsurers of sermons, and correctional officers in charge of overseeing the preacher.

A word of advice to young preachers: avoid any so-called "ministry" that makes the prime focus of your work "social" work. Any congregation that is large enough to engage a "staff" of ministers is also large enough to have capable elders and deacons to oversee and carry on what they are hiring "ministers" to do! Do the work of an evangelist!

Our goal in preaching is given by the Lord Himself to the apostle Paul: "to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive the forgiveness of sins, and inheritance

among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Jesus Christ" (Acts 26:18).

Let us not discount the need for preachers and preaching. Paul outlines some important truths for us in Romans 10. Men must call upon the name of the Lord to be saved! They will not call if they do not believe. They will not believe unless they hear. They will not hear without a preacher.

### DEVELOPING INTEREST IN AN OPEN BIBLE STUDY

Roger Shepherd

The Open Bible Study method created by Ivan Stewart in the early 1950s is a blessing to those personally teaching the lost. Personal teaching is made simple with the open Bible and open heart method used by evangelists like Philip (Acts 8:25-40). He developed the interest of the Ethiopian by asking, "Do you understand what you are reading?" He manifested his interest in the study by responding, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" They began a study of the Bible at that point.

Developing interest is one of the most important parts of personal teaching. It is about 50 percent of the personal teacher's task. You can win the prospect's confidence or forever lose them in this conversation. Eighty-five percent of the people who do not obey the Gospel between the ages 18-30 will never! So, you must do a successful job in creating interest in a Bible study in the heart of youth. Developing interest is an honest effort to create a desire in another person to seek to know God's word so it can be properly obeyed.

Developing interest begins with a personal contact, conversation, and then a visit in the home. People will generally talk about many things. I have found it to be true that most people love to talk about money whether they have little or much of this world's goods. Most people talk about the lack of money. It is

easy in a world that demands so much to get caught up a desire for material things.

People also love to talk about their families. You must be concerned about the names of their family members, health, welfare, and spirituality.

And, people will talk about themselves. You need to find out some general information about the life and needs of the prospect without getting too personal. The personal evangelist must turn these material conversations into spiritual ones! You may approach them with a question from Matthew 7:21, "Will the majority enter heaven?" Listen to how the prospect answers the question. Then, set a definite time and place for the study.

#### The Five Minute Approach

The five minute approach is very simple. It is a "Do it yourself study of the Bible." I recommend using the Open Bible Study Introduction Lesson with the following approach:

"Sir, I would like to share with you how interesting the Bible really is. In fact, if you have five minutes, I would like to share with you how to study the Bible for yourself and by yourself." You must wait for a response.

In the next step you point out some very important parts of the lesson. Then, reply by saying:

"Sir, what day next week would be a good time for me to return with lesson two: Monday or Tuesday? What time is best for you 6 p.m. or 7 p.m.? Great! I will see you Tuesday at 7 p.m.!"

#### Jesus Developed Interest with a Direct Approach

Jesus Christ was the Master teacher. He used a direct and personal approach with Zaccheus (Luke 19:1-10). Today, we can be as direct as Jesus by saying to the prospect, "Sir, I am here to talk to you about your soul's salvation in Christ." Many people will appreciate our sincere interest in their soul.

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How direct would we be if the prospect were burning to death in a house fire (Jude 23)? Jesus made himself available to the interest of people (Mark 6:34). He was interested in children (Matthew 18:1-15). He was interested in young people's questions (Matthew 19:16-26). He was interested in people's benevolent needs (John 6). Jesus influenced more lives for good than any person that ever lived on earth. He was a people person!

### Who Are We Looking for as a Prospect?

Have you ever been asked? "What are you looking for?" You might respond, "Well I am looking for someone!" Then, the inquirer might say, "Who are you looking for?"

In personal teaching the church must pause briefly and ask the question, "WHO are we looking for?" One will spend less time looking if he/she knows who they are looking for to approach for a home Bible study.

I suggest that you look for people looking for a true friend, a teacher, a church, or a new opportunity (Proverbs 17:17). Look for interested people who have lost faith in a church or they are distressed in life (Mark 6:34). An interested person has a real need (John 3:1-5). One who is going through a transition in life (illness, problem, divorce, job change, moving, etc. (Romans 12:1-2) is teachable. Those who do not attend church anywhere can become interested.

### Conclusion

John D. Rockefeller once wrote: "The ability to deal with people is as purchasable a commodity as sugar or coffee. And I will pay more for that ability than for any other under the sun."

He has given us a very true principle of life. The personal teacher must learn how to deal with people to convert them to Christ. What would you pay for the ability to set up a Bible study with at least ninety-percent of the people you talk to daily? These principles work!

## There Are More of Us

Andy Robinson

The king of Syria, in preparing to make war with Israel, was seeking a place to set up camp. When he settled on a tentative spot, it was—much to the frustration of Syria's monarch—already known by the Israelites. The king of Israel, you see, received his information from Elisha, who received his information from God (2 Kings 6:8-10).

The king of Syria—with an assumed anti-supernatural bias—wondered who was providing Israel with the intelligence. He thought there was a spy among his people (2 Kings 6:11). Somehow, his astute servants realized and reported to him that Elisha the prophet was the cause of Syria's failed secrecy (6:12).

Being a man of authority and power—a man used to getting his way—he sent "horses and chariots and a great army" to Elisha's residence (6:13-14). He was apparently aiming to bring what he deemed foolishness to an end.

It is here that the story provides a powerful point for positive Christian living. Any who have ever felt alone in God's service will appreciate the upcoming turn of events. Any who have felt overwhelmed by the wickedness of the world; any who have loved and served the Lord only to be ridiculed by their fellow man; any who have diligently obeyed only to be awarded with temporal, yet ever so real, feelings of social abandonment will cherish the words of Elisha and the deeds of Almighty God.

The servant of Elisha shared the same sense of helplessness which we sometimes experience. He cried, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" (6:15)

Elisha's words of spiritual confidence ring in the ears of the empathetic: "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them" (6:16).

Before the servant had opportunity to question Elisha's sanity (not to mention his mathematical ability), Elisha prayed that the eyes of the young man would be opened.

When his eyes were opened, the servant saw a mountain full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha (6:17). Then he realized several things that calmed his fear.

- (1) He knew he was with the right company;
- (2) He knew he was serving the right God;
- (3) And he knew he was never outnumbered as long as he kept that up.

What an encouragement to those who similarly feel overwhelmed by the odds against them! What a great lesson for missionaries in lands of hostile leaders and apathetic citizens; for Christians in families of antagonistic unbelievers; for persecuted souls in the midst of agonizing emptiness!

God is with us. He fights for us. As long as we are on His side, there are more of us than there are of them. As long as we are faithful to Him, we win!

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## Biographical Sketches of Gospel Preachers

Editor's Note: In this month's issue we will be featuring the faculty of the West Virginia School of Preaching.

**Charles J. Aebi** is a native of southwestern Pennsylvania. He was raised with a denominational background, but obeyed the gospel in 1949 and began preaching in 1952.

He has a B.S. degree from Penn State, an M.A. from Abilene Christian, and a Ph.D. from Ohio University.

Charles has served for 58 years as minister for churches in Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas, and West Virginia. He currently serves as a minister and an elder at the Barlow-Vincent Church of Christ in Vincent, OH.

Charles and his wife Imogene have four children and twelve grandchildren. All of the men in the family preach on occasion; all of the men and women teach Bible classes; and all the grandchildren have obeyed the gospel. Two of the grandchildren are married, five are now students at Christian colleges, and three have graduated from Christian colleges.

**Aaron Burch** is the son of Eugene and Rita Burch of Salem, OH. He is married to the former Kathryn Langeman. They have two daughters, Esther and Hannah.

Currently, they are working with the Beaver Street Church of Christ in Lisbon, OH. Aaron is a graduate of the West Virginia School of Preaching (2007) and Freed-Hardeman University (B.A. in Biblical Studies 2009) and

is presently working on a Master's degree at Freed-Hardeman University.

**Emanuel B. Daugherty** was born in Philippi, WV on January 12, 1939 and married Judy Null in 1958. They have four children: Bruce, Ramona Haynes, Rachel Cornell and Rebecca Poe all living in Ohio. Emanuel graduated from Memphis School of Preaching in 1968 and Alabama Christian School of Religion in 1982.

He has preached at Alkire Road in Grove City, OH, Dewey Avenue in St. Marys, WV and served as Director of West Virginia School of Preaching for several years. Presently Daugherty is preaching for the Salem church in Glen Easton, WV and continues at West Virginia School of Preaching, teaching several classes.

**Ben Jones** was born in Fairmont, WV and raised in Grant Town, WV. He attended Freed-Hardeman University and earned a B.A. in Bible in 1998. He also completed three semesters of graduate studies at FHU while preaching for churches in Linden and Huntingdon, TN.

Jones has served as the minister of the University church of Christ in Morgantown, WV since January 2008.

**Terry Jones** was born in Parkersburg, WV and was raised in Toll Gate, WV. He is the son of Glenn and Linda Jones. He married Melinda S. Hilvers on August 10, 1985. They have two sons: Austin and Quintin.

Terry is a 1986 graduate of East Tennessee School of Preaching in Knoxville, TN, and received his A.A. and B.A. degrees from Ohio Valley University in May 1996. He worked with the church in Mountain City, TN from

1986 to 1989, and began preaching in Pennsboro, WV thereafter.

**Dan Kessinger** is the son of Bob (deceased) and Doris Kessinger. Though he was born in Michigan, Dan grew up in Roane County, WV. Kessinger received a B.A. in Bible from Ohio Valley College. There, he also met his wife, Mary Amy. They married in 1986, and have two sons DJ and Thomas. DJ was born in 1994, and Thomas in 1999.

He began preaching in 1982. Since 1994, Dan has preached for the Dewey Avenue church of Christ in St. Marys, WV. He conducts a weekly radio program in St. Marys and in Spencer, WV.

**Ed Melott** is a native of West Virginia. He and his wife Kim have two children, Hunter and Kameron.

Since 2004, he has worked for the Steelton church of Christ. Ed has also been blessed to go to India as a missionary to preach and teach the word of God. After one three week mission trip to India he was able to preach 37 times and baptize over 300 people into the body of Christ.

**Charles C. Pugh III** was born in Marietta, OH and spent his childhood in the Parkersburg-Vienna, WV area. Pugh and his wife Sharon live in Vienna, WV. They are the parents of three children and have several grandchildren. His higher education includes Ohio Valley University, Harding University, and Harding Graduate School of Religion where he did his graduate work in Philosophy of Religion and Apologetics under Thomas B. Warren.

Charles Pugh has preached since 1967 and was involved in local ministry for thirty years (1970-2000) serving churches in Ohio, Mississippi, and

West Virginia. He served as an adjunct faculty member at Ohio Valley University and has been a WVSOP faculty member since the school began. He is currently the Director of Warren Christian Apologetics Center.

**Andy Robison** is the director at the West Virginia School of Preaching as well as a full time faculty member.

In addition to preaching, he taught Bible and directed choruses at Jackson (TN) Christian School. Andy received his A.A. from Ohio Valley College (Parkersburg, WV) and his B.A. in Bible and Vocal Music from Harding University. He has received his teaching certification from Harding and done extensive graduate work with the Harding University Graduate School of Religion (Memphis, TN).

Andy has written a number of songs and is the editor of the songbooks, *Teaching & Admonishing*, and *100 Songs to the Glory of God*. He and his wife Marsha have two children, Hannah and Andrew.

**Steve Snider** was born in Clarksburg, WV in 1954. He is married to the former Dianne Hatcher and they have two children Aaron and Stephanie. Aaron is a gospel preacher and Stephanie is a school teacher and is married to a gospel preacher. Snider is a graduate of Preston Road School of Preaching. He also received a B.A. from Southeastern Biblical Institute and a M.A. from Southern Christian University.

Steve preached for the church in Barrackville, WV from 1977-1981, the Alpharetta church of Christ in Alpharetta, GA from 1981-1983, and then returned to preach for the church of Christ in Barrackville in 1983.

**Steve Stevens** is the son of Vonda Jean Tuttle Stevens and the late Earl P. Stevens. He is a native son of West Virginia. He married the former Karen S. Barnhart of New Freeport, PA on July 16, 1976. This union was blessed with eight children.

Steve was baptized by his father at Dewey Avenue church of Christ in St. Marys, WV in January of 1967. He graduated from St. Marys High School, and furthered his education at Ohio Valley College, Parkersburg Community College, Fairmont State College, and various extension schools in the brotherhood.

Steve delivered his first sermon at the age of 9 at the Daybrook church of Christ. He moved to Hundred, WV in March of 1981 where he continues to preach. Steve was one of the eight charter faculty members of the West Virginia School of Preaching when it began in 1994. He currently teaches all the courses in New Testament Greek at the West Virginia School of Preaching.

**W. Terry Varner** married Lillie L. Garrison from Littleton, over 50 years ago. They have 4 children, 11 grandchildren, and 5 great-grandchildren. Terry received formal education from Abilene Christian University, Waynesburg University, West Virginia State University, Moody Bible Institute, National Christian University, Malone College and Alabama Christian School of Religion.

Varner is presently the Research Coordinator for Warren Christian Apologetics Center, Vienna, WV.

**Gene West** is a native of Chester, WV. He is the son of the late Archie H. and Mary E. Henderson West. He married

his wife Shirley A. Bissett West, in 1957. He graduated from Freed-Hardeman University with an A.A. in Religious Education, West Liberty University with an A.B. Liberal Arts degree majoring in Philosophy and Religion and Fairmont University with a B.S. in Community Psychology. He was baptized into Christ by his friend and mentor, J. W. Nutter in 1950 at the age of thirteen and began to preach at age fifteen.

He has taught Bible classes and preached regularly since 1953. He has been preaching for the Hillview Terrace congregation in Moundsville, WV since 2001, the second time he has worked with this good congregation.

In 2001 he began visiting and preaching for churches in England and Scotland assisting missionaries and small churches in that land.

He has authored several commentaries, especially for students at the WVSOP. *Avenging His Holy Saints, Apostles and Prophets* is a work in Revelation. There is a series of commentaries, entitled *A Student's Commentary on Hebrews, Philippians, Philemon, Paul's Letter to the Church in Rome, Galatians and the Book of Acts*.

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Andy Robinson, Director

## NEWS & NOTES

James R. McGill

### Obituaries

**Jeanne Creasy Woodson**, 78, of Lawrenceburg, died Thursday, December 13, 2012, at her home.

She was a native of Union City and the daughter of the late Herman L. and Opal E. Creasy. She was also preceded in death by her husband, William E. Woodson Sr.; and brother, Fred Albert Creasy.

Survivors include daughters, Melissa Woodson Banks of Lawrenceburg and Allison Jeanne Woodson McKamey of Lawrenceburg; son, William E. Woodson of Knoxville; sisters, Clara Frances Newbill of Knoxville and June Reeves Creasy of Jackson; and six grandchildren.

**Benny Wayne Hester**, 72, of Irondale, AL, formerly of Sulligent, passed away on Friday, December 28, 2012, at Trinity Medical Center in Birmingham. He was born on January 30, 1940, in Sulligent, AL.

Brother Hester was a gospel preacher for 61 years.

He was preceded in death by his parents, Sherlie and Clora Hester; sister, Dot Madison; and two brothers, Foy Hester and Giles Hester.

He is survived by his wife, Mary Anne Hester of Irondale; daughter, Sandra Hester Lynch of Clarksville, TN; son, David (Brenda) Hester of Pinson, AL; brothers, Guy Hester of Corinth, MS and Johnny Hester of Sikeston, MO; grandchildren, Jaclyn Lynch, Randi Major, William Hester and Jonathan Hester; great-grandchild, Lyla Major; and a number of nieces, nephews and cousins.

### Retiring

On January 25, **Ernest Underwood** turned 79. He preached his first sermon in 1959. He has preached for the College Avenue congregation in DeFuniak

Springs, FL since for the past twelve years.

He and Shirley recently decided to retire from located preaching and to move to Atlanta to attend the Chestnut Drive congregation where their son Michael preaches.

Ernest believes, "It is likely that I will be teaching a class there from time to time, and will be available to preach by invitation whenever such is extended. Of course, I will continue my writing for *Gospel Gleaner* as long as you want me to do so."

### New Website

From: Rod Rutherford, minister of the Gatlinburg church of Christ, Gatlinburg, Tennessee.

Brethren: There is a new website for members of the churches of Christ. It was created by Richard Sortore and designed by David Barton of Gatlinburg, Tennessee. Its purpose is to ask members of the Lord's church to set aside the same time every day to pray for our country as it faces its most crucial time since the Civil War, if not since its founding. We face great economic and political uncertainty as well as threats from Islam and Communism. The greatest threat we face is the rapid moral decline of the American people, the destruction of the family, and the general disintegration of our society which comes as a result of turning away from God. The Bible commands such prayer (1 Tim. 2:1,2). The website is:

[www.prayforourcountry.net](http://www.prayforourcountry.net)

To sign up for a time to pray, email us at: [prayer@prayforourcountry.net](mailto:prayer@prayforourcountry.net).

Please pass this information along and urge other Christians to join us in petitions to the Almighty God that our beloved nation may be spared the inevitable collapse that will come upon us if we do not turn back to God.

### "Current Issues in the Church"

Raymond Elliott of Prattville, AL has a blog with this title. You will find a collection of timely articles addressing

many of the most relevant issues we face as a brotherhood.

He also has other blogs titled, "Other Writings of Mine," and "Ann Street Memories." *Ann Street Memories* deals with the early history of Montgomery Bible College, which is now Faulkner University.

### Bible Correspondence Course Teachers Needed

International Bible Teaching Ministries now has more than 6,300 students from 157 nations enrolled in the online Bible correspondence course program. During 2012 we had 14 of our BCC students to obey the Gospel.

IBTM also now has more than 100 teachers working in this study program – but we need more. The more teachers we have to teach, the more students that we can reach. Our volunteer teachers grade lessons, answer questions and encourage their students to keep studying God's word, all by email. It is a work that requires patience, commitment and a love for lost souls. But occasionally it is also a work that gives our teachers the joy of knowing that someone they have never met face-to-face has put on Christ as a result of their efforts. We are looking for faithful Christians, men and women who are willing to help in this great work. Each perspective teacher is required to fill out a doctrinal questionnaire.

If this sounds like a work you want to be a part of, please let us know.

[www.IBTMinistries.org](http://www.IBTMinistries.org)

[info@IBTMinistries.org](mailto:info@IBTMinistries.org)

Ronald D. Gilbert- Director-IBTM

### Gospel Gleaner Displays

The Gospel Gleaner will have displays at the following upcoming lectureships:

Freed-Hardeman University – February 3-7

Southeast Institute of the Bible (formerly ESTP) – February 24-27

If you are planning on attending one of these events, be sure to come see us!

**Reader Replies**

Dear brethren,  
I am glad to  
hear that the  
*Gospel Gleaner*

publication will once again be published... **Bill Noblin**

Brethren, please put the Lord's church in Cave City, AR in your files to receive a bundle...We are looking forward to providing the paper to every home in the congregation. **Dean Fugett, for the elders**

Dear brother Erwin, Enclosed you will find my check in the amount of \$10.00 for one year's subscription to the *Gospel Gleaner*. I call that a real deal! ...In love we must teach the truth but the truth needs to be taught ...May God richly bless you in labor of love in His kingdom. **Raymond Elliott, Prattville, AL**

Dear brother Andrew, greetings from Mexico. I am glad to know that *Gospel Gleaner* comes again...I would like to know how much the electronic subscription. May God bless and keep you. Your coworker in the Lord's vineyard, **Jaime Hernandez**

[Brethren, we will not be charging for an electronic subscription, and we will not be sending one. However, you will be able to find archived issues on the *Gospel Gleaner* website in a PDF file. We will usually delay the most recent issue by a month or two. Thanks, Andy Erwin]

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# The GOSPEL CLEANER

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Number Three

THE PRESENT TRUTH . . .

Ronald D. Bryant

## THE CATEGORIES OF MEN AS REGARDS EVIL

From the Bible it is clear that humanity, as regards evil, belongs to one of these three categories. First, there are those who are captives of Satan. They have been taken captive by him to do his will (2 Timothy 2:26). Undeniably they are "slaves of sin" (Romans 6:16ff.). Then, there are those that can be classified as "prey." Satan is a predator, and he views the naïve, the ignorant, and the innocent as his prey. He ceaselessly works to deceive, to entrap, and to corrupt these souls. Above all else he has one objective; to take these souls captive. Then there are those who stand in opposition to him; they are opponents of evil. They are opponents because they have yielded to God, and are actively resisting evil. Satan despises and longs to defeat all who are in opposition to him.

In dealing with humanity, regardless of the categories identified, Satan follows any course that he can devise to expedite his work of deception, corruption, and destruction. It is no stretch to suggest that he is willing to indulge his captives; to allow them the pleasures of sin for a season (Hebrews 11:25). It is evident that he is willing to use them to do his bidding; to use them fully as instruments of unrighteousness (Romans 6:20-21). It is evident that he is ready to use them for his amusement (as objects of contempt and of torture). In keeping with his malevolence, those who are his captives – captives of evil, are destined to be cast-off once they have served his purposes.

A moment's reflection provokes the thought that violence, wars, and overdoses have been used by him as ready devices to accomplish this! When it comes to his prey, Satan has a perpetual program of lies

and deception. They may or may not know God, they may not even desire to know Him, yet Satan ceaselessly works to deceive and then to take them captive. He is cunning, skilled, and cruel in exploiting weaknesses and failings, and will readily do so (1 Peter 5:8). He knows how to focus his weapons of destruction: temptations, riches, pleasures, the doctrines of men, and empty religious practices.

The evil one knows that he must neutralize those that stand in opposition to him, lest they bring the gospel to those he seeks to enslave (2 Corinthians 4:3ff.). He knows that he must defeat those called to function as salt and light in turning men from him (Matthew 5:13ff.). He works to make those who stand in opposition to him objects of ridicule. He ceaselessly works to discourage them, or persuades them to compromise with him.

Satan works relentlessly against God's people. He works to undermine their faith, to destroy their hope, and to defeat their love. He seeks to create division among believers. He sends false teachers, and "false brethren," who even appear to be messengers of light (2 Corinthians 11:14-15). He never stops trying to overthrow allegiance to the will of God. He sometimes succeeds, but his success need not be a sure thing; not because of the power of those yielded to God, but because of the power of God toward those that believe (Ephesians 1:15ff.).

God's power is toward all believers (Philippians 2:13; Ephesians 3:20-21). His love is real and is the possession of each child of God (Romans 5:6-10; 8:31ff.). Our Father has promised to keep those whose hearts are yielded to Him (Jude 24-25).

It is also clear from Scripture that believers are to avoid evil (1 Thessalonians 5:21-22), and must submit to God and must resist the devil (James 4:7). Additionally, each believer is to arm himself and stand against all that is evil (Ephesians 6:10-17).

The people of God are told that He will defend them and deliver them. God does not abandon His children but, even when they fall, longs to draw them back to Him (2 Peter 3:9). Yet, God makes it clear that He will not override the freedom of choice or the will of any. He continues to call the weak and erring to Him, promising them cleansing (1 John 1:5-2:2). God longs to save those that are no longer living in rebellion to Him (Romans 6:16-18).

The Scriptures never deal with Satan as an imagined being. Satan is real, he does exist. Evil is his realm!

There is no evidence that Satan wants to be known. There is no evidence that he longs to be loved or worshiped. There is no evidence that he cares anything about man's attitude toward him.

Instead, in every possible way, he ever seeks to deceive and to destroy (John 8:44). Satan despises God! He longs to destroy any vestige of faith in God! Yet, he works ceaselessly to lead any and all to be indifferent toward God, faith in God, or allegiance to God.

Satan is content to deceive man into being careless and negligent of genuine devotion to God. It is evident that he delights in humanly devised doctrines which allow men to be religious, but not devoted to God (Matthew 15:9-11). He has one aim and objective – to place all mankind into one category: "captive to do his will."

In Ephesians 4:11-16 we read instructions given to the church pertaining to their spiritual growth. We wish to study the statement made by Paul concerning "speaking the truth in love" within its immediate and related context in Scripture.

From the immediate context the following points are clear: Paul was concerned with the perfecting of the saints, which is also the edifying of the body. To perfect the saints is to edify the body, as both terms are synonymous and pertain to spiritual maturity.

Paul was also concerned with the unity of the faith that is based upon knowledge. He understood that such knowledge came by teaching and therefore warned the church not to be tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine – which of course means teaching and in this case false teaching.

The antithesis to every wind of doctrine is preceded by the word "But." "But (or we might say, "Rather than being succumbed to every wind of doctrine,") speaking the truth in love...."

Paul teaches us how the church is to be edified unto a perfect man; that is by the preaching of the truth. The prepositional phrase "in love" is restated when we are told that the "increase of the body" (that is the spiritual growth and maturity of the church) is done "unto the edifying of itself in love."

Love is undoubtedly the motivating factor for Paul's words and should be the motivating factor within the church. Ultimately it is love that will lead to our spiritual growth, maturity, and unity. Love must be the motivating factor for all that we do or say.

Some members of the body of Christ have been convinced that "hard preaching" is the antithesis to speaking the truth in love. If this is truly the case Jesus would be guilty of not speaking the truth in love, for He taught hard sayings (John 6:60). People quit following the Lord because of His hard preaching (v.66).

Let us also look to Paul, the man who wrote the saying under consideration. He was a hard preacher and admonished Timothy to be the same. He warned that the time would come "when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teach-

ers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Timothy 4:3-4).

Faithfully preaching the gospel requires that we preach difficult sermons at difficult times. However, one can preach a hard sermon and speak the truth in love if love is truly the reason for the sermon.

Preachers are often instructed to avoid any message of rebuke. It is believed that such a message is too "negative" and not conducive to speaking the truth in love.

Accordingly, if preachers are to speak the truth in love, we must avoid rebuking people who are living in sin. We are told that speaking the truth in love is purely positive in its nature.

However, God Himself loves those whom He rebukes and chastens (Hebrews 12:5-6). God is love (1 John 4:16) and God rebukes and chastens.

Some people can be saved with compassion. Other people must be saved with fear (Jude 22). Paul said, "...knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men" (2 Corinthians 5:11).

Paul persuaded men by the terror of the Lord because he loved their souls. He was speaking the truth in love. Thus a "negative sermon" may indeed be preached and the truth be spoken in love.

Many preachers of today have decided that the solution for preaching hard sermons while speaking the truth in love is to preach with more "balance." In other words, preach hard lessons when you must, but do not do it too often.

It is certainly wise for a preacher to provide a healthy diet of the meat and milk of the word (Hebrews 5:12). A preacher must also use good judgment in the assortment of sermons he selects – from subject to style.

However, as preachers, we must keep in mind that in some congregations certain sins need to be treated more aggressively than in other congregations. To avoid teaching such difficult lessons for fear of doing it too often is neither balanced nor faithful.

At times a gospel preacher may spend more time and energy trying to teach his congregation about a specific sin than oth-

erwise he would. Is he not speaking the truth in love because of the amount of time he spends trying to help them understand truth? Again we must see that as long as love is the motivating factor for what he does (assuming he is in fact preaching the truth) he will be speaking the truth in love.

On the other hand, some preachers seem overjoyed at the prospect of preaching a hard sermon. For them, it is an opportunity to prove to the audience that they are sound, or to make a name for being sound. Such preachers equate sensitivity with being unsound. Of course this would render Jeremiah as being unsound (Lamentations 3:48).

It seems that both the one who refuses to preach a hard lesson for fear of loss, and the other who seizes the opportunity with the hope of gain are preaching for selfish ambition (Philippians 1:16, NKJV). In either case, love is not their motivation, but personal gain.

It has become common to hear of preachers using more of a story-telling form of sermon, rather than a sermon filled with book, chapter, and verse, believing this is the way to speak the truth in love.

Paul warned that brethren would be turned from sound teaching unto fables (2 Timothy 4:4). A fable is a myth, legend, or tale. According to Thayer's lexicon, a fable can be a narrative story whether true or false. We must, however, be very careful in this accusation. Our Lord spoke by parables to illustrate a deeper spiritual meaning, but there was a deeper spiritual meaning. He did not tell stories merely for the sake of avoiding hard preaching, or saying something that might offend. He used parables as a teaching tool to get to the meat of the word. Such must be the case in our use of narratives.

Let us not make speaking the truth in love harder than it has to be. The truth can and must be spoken in love when our hearts are truly interested in the eternal welfare of the individuals we are teaching. Let us keep the souls of men in mind, eternity in view, and God's word near to our breast, and we will have no problem speaking the truth in love.

Andrew D. Erwin  
Editor, *Gospel Gleaner*

The

GOSPEL



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His Church*

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# DENOMINATIONAL DOGMAS

Ernest S. Underwood

## Denominational Views of the Scriptures

Let us observe the all-sufficiency of the Scriptures woven as a thread throughout the following three passages:

“Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall” (Matthew 7:24-27).

“But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:6-9).

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Contrarivise, as one observes the multiple creeds and the denominations who subscribe to them, he will also notice a common thread connecting them – that is, a disbelief in the all-sufficiency of the Scriptures. A few quotes from a variety of creed books will suffice as evidence for our observation.

### Roman Catholicism

According to their dictionary we learn, when they are speaking of the Scriptures versus tradition, when speaking of Scripture it is written:

“Its authority is equal to that of sacred tradition.”

When speaking of tradition it says:

“It is, therefore to be received with the same internal assent as Scripture, for it is the word of God . . . Tradition would suffice without Scripture; it is the safeguard of Scripture” (Donald Attwater, *A Catholic Dictionary*, 1952. pg. 41, 42).

### The Baptist Church

In the preface of a Baptist Manual are found these words:

“This manual is offered to Baptist churches because it is believed that such a book suited to modern church life is needed.”

In reference to this statement we would ask:

- 1.) Are the needs of the Baptist Church different from those of the church of the New Testament?
- 2.) What need does the Bible fail to supply that the Baptist Manual supplies?

### The Methodist Discipline

In this document it is written:

“Far from wishing you to be ignorant of any of our doctrine, or any part of our discipline, we desire you to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the whole. You ought, next to the word of God, to procure the articles and canons of the church to which you belong.”

Again, permit us to ask a question. What is the difference in “our doctrine” and the doctrine of the Scripture?

One of the articles which a member of that church is admonished to “read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest” states:

“Wherefore, that we are justified by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort” (Article 11)

Clearly, when one upholds a creed book, or a religion which has a man-made creed, he upholds the proposition that the Scriptures are not sufficient for man today.

Some deny the authority of the written word of God by claiming later and/or direct revelation.

### Mormonism

Joseph Smith, founder of the false religion known as Mormonism wrote:

“And because my words shall hiss forth—many of the Gentiles shall say: A Bible! A Bible! We have got a Bible, and there cannot be any more Bible....Thou fool, that shall say: A Bible, we have got a Bible, and we need no more Bible. Have ye obtained a Bible save it were by the Jews?...Wherefore, because that ye have a Bible ye need not suppose that it contains all my words; neither need ye suppose that I have not caused more to be written” (Book of Mormon, 2 Nephi 29: 3, 6, 10).

A simple and casual reading of Galatians 1:8-9; 2 Peter 1:3; and Revelation 22:18-19 will convince the honest student that Joseph Smith was nothing more than a false prophet, and the church which he established a false religion.

### Christian Science

Mary Baker Eddy, founder of the Christian Scientist movement, also claimed later revelation from God. In her book *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* she claimed the Bible is impure (cf. 139:20-22); parts of the Bible are lies (cf. 524:20-27); and, the Bible does not contain the final revelation of God. According to Eddy, God reserved that honor for her (cf. 107:46).

The Jehovah's Witness group and many charismatic groups take the same approach to the Scriptures.

### How Sufficient Are the Scriptures?

The Scriptures are sufficient to produce the faith that saves the soul.

“And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name” (John 20:30-31).

The Scriptures completely furnish one unto every good work.

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

The Scriptures and the Scriptures alone are inspired by the God of heaven, Creator of the universe.

“But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ” (Galatians 1:11-12).

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

### The Scriptures are Complete

The Scriptures are so perfect and complete that man is forbidden to alter or change them in any way.

“But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed” (Galatians 1:8-9).

“Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not

have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son” (2 John 9).

“Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3).

“For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book” (Revelation 22:18-19).

### The Scriptures Will Abide Forever

The Scriptures are eternal, abiding forever.

“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away” (Matthew 24:35).

“Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven” (Psalm 119:89).

“Having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever, because All flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, And its flower falls away, but the word of the LORD endures forever. Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you” (1 Peter 1:23-25).

It is by these very Scriptures that we shall be judged.

“He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him; the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day” (John 12:48).

In conclusion, the Bible claims for itself divine plenary inspiration. This being true, man must accept it and abide by its commands and principles if he is to be forgiven of his sins and have the eternal salvation it offers.

## THE WORK AND INFLUENCE OF REX A. TURNER, SR

(AS AN EDUCATOR)

Raymond Elliott

Permit me at this time to go back to the middle of the 19th century when Justus McDuffie (Mack) Barnes was born on February 10, 1836 in the community of Sellers that is located in southern Montgomery County, Alabama.

J. M. Barnes attended Bethany College and studied under Alexander Campbell. He received the A.B. Degree in 1856 and the A.M. Degree in 1861.

Brother Barnes fell under the influence of David Lipscomb and was conservative in his views regarding the innovations adversely affecting the body of Christ.

He returned to south Alabama and established the Strata Academy in 1856. In 1881, the school moved to Highland Home and became the Highland Home Institute. Later the school became known as the Highland Home College in 1889 and offered the A.B. Degree.

Barnes left the school in 1898 to establish a secondary school in Montgomery. The Highland Home College continued until 1916. Before it closed, the school was reorganized as a Bible College.

The school in Montgomery that Barnes established continued until 1942. His son, E. R. Barnes became the principal of the school in 1910. The cause of Christ in Alabama was greatly enhanced by the teaching and influence of J.M. Barnes. Let it be noted that he was willing to educate any man who wished to be a preacher free of charge.

### Montgomery Bible School

In September of 1941, brethren Rex A. Turner, Leonard Johnson, Joe Ben Greer, and a few others met for the purpose of discussing the possibility of beginning a Christian school in the city of Montgomery. This group of Christians had in promise the amount of \$235.00 to insure the establishment of a Christian school.

Montgomery Bible School (College) began on September 14, 1942 with 23 students, 19 students in high school and 4 in the college department. This was the same year the school that J.M. Barnes had established in Montgomery closed its doors.

The Montgomery Bible School was located on Ann Street. I believe the first address was 914 Ann Street. It is my understanding that when the brethren made the proposal to begin a Christian school that the location was uncertain at that time. But, the establishment of the Montgomery Bible School was one of the greatest decisions ever made by these Christian gentlemen. This one decision would impact our brotherhood for generations to come.

Rex Turner served as Co-President with Leonard Johnson for six years and as President for 25 years, making a total of 31 years of leadership of the institution known as Montgomery Bible College, Alabama Christian College, and now Faulkner University.

In 1967, the Christian Academy became a separate legal entity; with its own board for accreditation purposes.

#### Alabama Christian School of Religion

Brother Turner was President also of the upper division of Alabama Christian College that was called the Alabama Christian School of Religion. The primary purpose of this upper division of the college was to prepare and train men to become gospel preachers.

In 1973, ACSR relocated from the College Church building to the Landmark Church building on the Atlanta Highway. Later, the school would move to its present location near the Auburn University at Montgomery campus.

This institution attained university status and is presently called Amridge University. Rex Turner served as President until November of 1987 when he became Chancellor. He served in this capacity until his death on Tuesday, January 16, 2001.

#### An Educated Man

Brother Turner attended the

University of Alabama, Jacksonville State University, Samford University, and Harding Graduate School of Religion. He earned degrees from the following institutions: Samford University (B.A.), Jones Law School (L.L.B.), Auburn University (Ed.D.).

#### A Man of Vision

Brother Turner will be remembered, not only for being President of these institutions, but also for his teaching in the classroom, especially his class on the prophets. Numerous gospel preachers have gone forth from his classes to teach others of the knowledge that they received from brother Turner.

Like J.M. Barnes before him, brother Turner made every effort to make a Christian education affordable and accessible. Scores of preachers will testify that they perhaps would not be preaching today had it not been for brother Turner's philosophy. If a student was willing to work, he/she could get an education.

Brother Turner was a man of vision. He began the "cluster system" while President of ACC. He and other teachers would travel to various locations throughout the nation to teach classes in church buildings where students would gather.

Then ACSR began to send videotapes of classes taught on campus to students throughout the country. There are men who have been preaching the gospel for over 50 years who attended the Montgomery Bible College, or Alabama Christian College. Brother Turner's influence continues to live on through their teaching and work.

Brother Turner had the ability to recognize the potential in young men and would encourage them to preach. Many will testify that he was the one who influenced them the most to preach the gospel. Others have become college professors and presidents of preacher schools and Christian universities.

In memory of Rex and Opal Turner, Amridge University established the Turner School of Theology for graduate students of the Bible.

#### This Month in Restoration History

March 1818 – Alexander Campbell opens Buffalo Seminary, operating out of his home. It closes in 1822.

March 1, 1829 – J.W. McGarvey is born in Hopkinsville, KY.

March-June 1842 – Tolbert Fanning holds a gospel meeting in Columbus, MS. When he arrived, there was only one lady who was a member of the church. During the meeting he baptized between 80-90 persons, and debated a Presbyterian named Lyons. When he left, a self-supporting congregation was in place.

March 4, 1866 – Alexander Campbell dies at his home in Bethany, WV.

March 30, 1880 – John F. Rowe writes in the *American Christian Review* that two groups existed in the church – one which represented the "Ancient Order of Things" and one which represented the "New Order of Things."

March 4, 1881 – James A. Garfield is inaugurated as President of the United States.

March 29, 1906 – David Lipscomb writes in the *Gospel Advocate* that "the progressives have gone out from us."

March 4, 1918 – The name of the Nashville Bible School is changed to honor its founder. The new name is David Lipscomb College.

Feb. 27-March 3, 1967 – The First Annual Lectureship of the Getwell Road School of Preaching (the predecessor to the Memphis School of Preaching) is conducted.

March 4, 1972 – W.A. Bradfield passes at his home in Henderson, TN. His last request was for Jim McGill to lead him in prayer. His last word was, "Amen" to the prayer.

## Thomas B. Warren

James R. McGill

Thomas B. Warren (1920-2000) was born in Carrizo, Texas. He was the valedictorian of his high school graduating class, and then graduated with high honors from Abilene Christian College.

Throughout his eighty years he dedicated his great intellect wholly to the Lord's service. He received his Ph.D. from Vanderbilt. The last part of his doctoral dissertation became the basis for his well-known book, *Have Atheists Proved There Is No God?*

Warren excelled in many ways. He preached in evangelistic meetings with many congregations over the years. His preaching was articulate, fluent, interesting, and easy to understand. Even when he was debating the deepest topics, such as the "Existence of God" or "Creation versus Evolution," he made the truth very clear.

As a debater, Warren defended the faith against every kind of error, but he is most remembered as possibly the 20th Century's greatest defender of the faith against atheism. Of his debates with unbelievers, the 4-night encounter with Antony Flew, at North Texas State University, before audiences of up to seven thousand, is perhaps the most famous.

### The Warren Center

Warren's influence for good lives on. He was the author of fifty books. Along with Garland Elkins, he was also the longtime editor of the widely circulated *Spiritual Sword* quarterly, now edited by Alan Highers.

His work also lives on through the Warren Christian Apologetics Center, named in his memory and dedicated to carrying on the work that meant so much to him.

Of this center, Owen D. Olbricht wrote:

"The new Apologetics Center is much needed at this time in history to present sound materials that show there is a Creator who designed this universe, that the Bible is His word, and that Jesus is the Christ of God, the only Savior of the world. These are the right men at the right time to establish the Warren Christian Apologetics Center. All would do well to support this effort to present convincing evidence that the universe has been created and designed by almighty God."

### World War II

Just two months after Warren's marriage to Faye in 1941, America entered World War II. Serving as an aerial navigator in the Air Force, Warren was separated from his wife for years. He looked back on those years with thankfulness that he never wavered from his vow to be faithful.

Warren's characteristic sense of logic and of being a philosopher showed up even during the war years. He recalled a day when he was at a landing field working on math problems when an enemy fighter plane swooped down with machine guns blazing, while releasing its bomb and shaking everything around when it exploded. The plane came in so low that he could see the pilot. The thought came to Warren's mind, "That man up there is trying to kill me! And he doesn't even know me!" Obviously, he had a problem making logical sense of that.

### Educator

After the war, Warren taught at Abilene Christian College. He then served as President of Fort Worth Christian. In 1964 he moved to Henderson, Tennessee, to become chairman of the Freed-Hardeman Bible department.

Warren had a skin condition, caused by something that began during the war. The condition was made worse by exposure to the ultraviolet light of the sun and fluorescent lighting. Accordingly, he was given a reserved

parking space right next to the back entrance of the classroom building. In this way he would not have to be out in the sun. Also the light fixtures were changed from fluorescent to incandescent in the hallway, and in his office, and in his classroom just around the corner.

In 1971, Warren accepted a position as professor at the Harding University Graduate School in Memphis. He remained there until a special opportunity opened for him in Cookeville, Tennessee.

### "A Dream Come True"

In 1979, a former night school begun in 1975 became Tennessee Bible College. Founding President Malcolm L. Hill invited Thomas B. Warren to become graduate dean and Warren's son, Lindsey, to be the undergraduate dean.

This was the opportunity for which all of Warren's previous experiences as professor and administrator had prepared him, at Fort Worth, Abilene, Freed-Hardeman, and Harding.

He incorporated all his best ideas into this great work and developed a graduate school curriculum that reflected his life's great interests.

As Warren was beginning this exciting adventure in 1979, he wrote the following words repeatedly in the *Gospel Advocate* and other periodicals: "This is for me a dream come true!"

The good influence of Warren's years at Tennessee Bible College is still felt, now under the leadership of President David S. Hill, son of the founder.

### Back to Fort Worth

During his last years, Thomas and Faye Warren were members of the Brown Trail church of Christ in Fort Worth. For many years the Brown Trail School of Preaching benefited from his vast library which was housed in the school library. It has since been given to the Warren Center.

Thomas B. Warren died August 8, 2000. He was 80.

## THE TEACHER'S TOOLBOX

Brandon Renfroe

### Becoming a Christian

In his classic work *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis notes that the word “gentleman” originally referred to someone whose family had a coat of arms and also owned property. Thus, to call someone a “gentleman” was not to praise them, but merely to give information; conversely, to deny the title to an individual was not an insult—rather, it was simply stating facts.

All of this was changed, Lewis lamented, by well-meaning but misguided souls who felt that some were being slighted by the “gentlemanly” title being withheld. “He may not own land or have a coat of arms,” they said, “but isn’t ‘Bob’ as much of a gentleman as ‘Bill’?” As a result, the word “gentleman” is now used largely to describe an individual whose behavior we like—and thus has lost its original meaning.

Lewis’ observation was more than an exercise in etymology. He was concerned that, as was true of “gentleman,” the word “Christian” was in danger of similar tampering. Instead of denoting those who subscribed to a certain body of doctrine, he feared the word would come to be used simply of “good” people. His conclusion was clear: “We must therefore stick to the original, obvious meaning” (p. xv).

What is this meaning—and, perhaps more importantly, how does one become a “Christian”? The term is found just three times in the New Testament. Shortly after the conversion of Cornelius, we read that “the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch” (Acts 11:26). Later, when Paul stood before Herod Agrippa II, we hear the ruler say: “Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian” (Acts 26:28). Finally, Peter admonished the brethren: “But if a

man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this name” (1 Peter 4:16, ASV).

The Greek term for “Christian” in each of these three instances is *Christianos*. The word is composed of two parts: “Christ,” along with a suffix, “-ianos,” which basically means “belonging to.” Thus, we may say that a Christian is one who belongs to Christ. The all-important question is: When does this relationship begin?

When studying any matter that touches the soul’s salvation, our attitude must be that of the apostle Paul: “What do the Scriptures say?” (Romans 4:3; Galatians 4:30). No truly momentous question can ever be settled by polling the populace; we must appeal to an objective standard. In allowing the Bible to be its own interpreter, the truth is sure to emerge.

In 1 Peter 4, the apostle parallels being a “Christian” (v. 16) with being in “the house of God” (v. 17). From 1 Timothy 3:14-15, we see that the house of God is “the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.” Thus, to be a Christian and a member of the Lord’s church are synonymous.

In Paul’s epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians (among other texts), we learn that the church is the “body” of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18). Consequently, to be in the church is also to be in the Lord’s spiritual body. How is that body entered? Note 1 Corinthians 12:13: “For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body...”

Putting the pertinent passages together, we see that an individual becomes a Christian—which is to say, a member of the church of Christ—by being baptized. Those who have neglected baptism—in terms of its mode, subjects, or purpose—cannot correctly be described as Christians. When viewed in the light of New Testament teaching, the flippant way in which the term “Christian” is bandied about in many quarters ought to be cause

for embarrassment.

To facilitate memorization—which, in turn, will help you in efforts to evangelize—make notecards similar to the following:

1. Christians are in the house of God (1 Peter 4:16-17).
2. But the house of God is the church (1 Timothy 3:15).
3. Thus, Christians are in the church.

1. Christians are in the church.
2. But the church is the body of Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23).
3. Thus, Christians are in the body of Christ.

1. Christians are in the body of Christ.
2. But one is baptized into the body (1 Corinthians 12:13).
3. Thus, one is baptized to become a Christian.

#### Sources

C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: Harper Collins, 2001), xii-xv.

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## DUTIES OF ELDERS

Guy F. Hester

The elders of the church have a great responsibility to perform. Their task is perpetual and daily with the local congregation over which they rule.

An elder is not one who is an elder in name only. Neither is one a Christian who is a Christian in name only.

The elders have not been selected and appointed to "let someone else" do the work of overseeing and tending the flock, but they must take the lead and set the example for carrying on the work of the church. In some localities the bishops have committed all the responsibility of the work into the hands of the local minister. This is not God's plan.

When studying the duties of elders, we can see divine wisdom in setting a standard of qualifications for a man to meet in order to become an elder. His duties depend upon his qualifications. These duties are not to be taken lightly, but with the same seriousness that all other commands of Christ are taken.

### Take Heed to Yourself

Paul instructed the elders of the church at Ephesus in Acts 20:28, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves..."

An elder must be careful about his own life, able to see his own faults. He is liable to impose error upon the church if his own mistakes are not before him. He is required to watch carefully and continually his own life, that he may keep it as an example for good. He must "pray without ceasing" and be sure that he is right before leading others.

### Take Heed to the Flock

Paul said, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28).

It is not enough for an elder to look out for his own conduct. He must constantly look out for the conduct of each member of the church where he is an elder.

For this reason it is essential that the elders know the flock and to know their

spiritual needs so that they can feed them. The elders must constantly study the needs of the church and supply them with wisdom. No other man can take heed to the flock for the elders any more than he can worship for them.

### Feed the Flock

Peter said in 1 Peter 5:1-2: "The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind."

Spiritual food is as essential to our souls as the food which we eat is to our mortal bodies. Parents do not permit their children to eat out of garbage cans. Elders must keep the children of God from eating out of the garbage cans of the doctrines of men.

"But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:9). It is the responsibility of elders to see that the flock receives the "milk of the word." "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (1 Peter 2:2). The feeding does not always have to be done by the elder himself, but he must oversee it.

### Oversee the Flock

He is to take the oversight willingly, not being compelled or forced. Peter said, "Taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind."

One man said that he had never really had his heart into being an elder because, "They just forced the eldership upon me." He should have never accepted the appointment.

The elders, having the oversight of the congregation, have the responsibility when some begin to stray from the truth into the path of sin to lead them gently and kindly back to the path of righteousness and the fold of God.

However, there are times that having the oversight means that the elders must deal sternly and severely with stubborn and rebellious individuals who will not

repent and must, at times, lead the congregation in withdrawing fellowship from those who "walk disorderly."

"Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us" (2 Thessalonians 3:6).

### Be an Example to the Flock

Peter said in 1 Peter 5:3 "Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock."

"Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation" (Hebrews 13:7).

Good elders must be a pattern for the church to follow. They cannot "lord" it over the church as big bosses, but they must lead the church in such a way that others will follow.

### Watch for Grievous Wolves

Paul admonished the Ephesian elders: "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" (Acts 20:29-31).

To watch for grievous wolves is to watch for persons claiming to be teachers of God, who, in reality, are teachers of evil doctrines. Vigilance will enable the elders to see the first signs of coming trouble. A false doctrine has its weakest influence when it first appears. This is when it must be attacked.

It is necessary for the elders to know the Bible class teachers and what is being taught in the Bible classes. This is where much of the trouble in the church has had its beginning.

### Stop the Mouths of Vain Talkers and Deceivers

Titus 1:11 teaches that such mouths "must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake."

Many will not respond to sound teaching of the gospel. They will not submit to the rule of the eldership of the church. These must be dwelt with in a scriptural manner. Their mouths must be stopped. Their unruly attitudes must be exposed. The elders have the authority and the means to do this. When preachers or teachers are found not preaching sound doctrine it is the elders' duty to stop them.

### Support the Weak

It is the duty of the elders to support the weak (Acts 20:35). Just as a father must care and provide for those in his family who are not able to do for themselves, the elders must care for those in God's family who are not able to do for themselves.

The elders should lead the church in looking after the necessities of the poor and needy. Many are also weak spiritually and need encouraging.

### Pray and Care for the Sick

"Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord...The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:14, 16).

Elders must do something for the benefit of the sick. They cannot hire a preacher to do their visiting for them. James said, "Is any sick among you? Let him call for the elders of the church." Elders cannot heal the sick in a miraculous way, but because of their righteousness their prayers will avail much.

### Decide Matters of Difference in the Church

No greater responsibility is enjoined upon mortal man than that of settling the difficulties arising among the people of God.

In Acts 15 a great controversy on circumcision arose in the church. The apostles and elders were called on to settle the matter. We do not have the apostles now, but we do have the elders.

Such an awesome duty as this requires the qualifications of wisdom, patience, gravity, experience, justice, ability to rule their children and houses, soberness, vigilance, love for truth, and temperance.

### Select and Appoint Teachers and Preachers

Elders must be sure the preachers and teachers are sound and faithful in the work of the Lord. Elders must demand that they "preach the word...in season and out of season" (2 Timothy 4:2). Elders must not be deceived by the "good words and fair speeches" of those who come in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravaging wolves (Matthew 7:15).

### Watch for the Souls of the Church

"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you" (Hebrews 13:17).

Elders have been given these various duties because they are ultimately charged with watching after our souls. Each of these duties ultimately affects the way they watch over our souls.

To think of having to give an account of all the souls in the congregation over which you rule is the most sobering thought one could have. As Ezekiel was made a watchman over Israel (Ezekiel 3:7-16), so the elders are the watchmen over the Lord's church.

Since the elders have the job of watching for your soul and mine, we should make their job as easy as possible, "that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you."

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## Expositions of the Sacred Scriptures

Ron Thomas

### The Church at Smyrna (Revelation 2:8 – 11)

The church at Ephesus was exhorted to remember their first love just as they were commended in their works. From Ephesus we learn that one's motivation needs to be properly aligned with the Lord's will; this will result in purity of teaching because one will only teach as the Lord authorizes (cf. Romans 15:18). What do we learn from the Lord's words to Smyrna?

The city of Smyrna has a history of both destruction and abundance. When the Lord addressed His letter to the church in Smyrna the city was in the midst of abundance. By the end of the first century the city "...had become the highway terminus and commercial metropolis of an immensely fertile hinterland." (*The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, revised edition, volume 4, p. 555)

In such an environment vice runs rampant. Smyrna was plagued with immorality and debauchery. The leaders of the city of Smyrna desired to please Rome and so they sought and won the rights to a temple erected in honor of Tiberius, a temple that encouraged idolatry (emperor-worship). Add to this contention a strong anti-Christian Jewish community, and one can surely understand, in part, the discouragement that might have been felt by the Christians.

It was in this city, however, that the Lord's church had a foothold. They were striving to combat the evil in their environment. Interestingly, this is one of two churches whom the Lord addressed wherein He said nothing negative at all. His words were words of encouragement and instruction.

Whatever discouragement they might have had is now turned into great encouragement. They easily could have thought that they were able to do little on account of their poverty and, perhaps, their numerical size. The Lord, however, looked upon them as being rich. He did not measure with the same standard that many use even today – material wealth. Though they were poor economically, their spiritual wealth was accomplishing much good.

### The Lord's Identity

The church's wealth came from Him who is identified as the first and the last. He is what we might call "bookends" to all things in relation to time; that which is in the past and that which is in the future, whether one comes or goes our Lord is the sustainer of all.

Satan had knowledge of the spiritual realm and experience in battle; whatever limitations he may have had in the way of knowledge, he was conniving enough to gain what he needed in order to use it for his own ends. Perhaps Satan might have thought he was victorious over God's plan at the crucifixion. If he did think this, it was but a short time later that he learned (at the resurrection) that his time was effectively over (cf. Revelation 12:12; 2 Timothy 1:10).

### The Lord's Knowledge

Knowledge is a key to success in this world. Knowledge, however, can be a liability if one has knowledge but it is improperly used. People fear other people who improperly use knowledge.

Fortunately, the Lord's knowledge is no liability at all. What He knows about us He uses to help us become better than we are now. And if we are not where we should be, He uses that knowledge to help us get to where we need to be.

When one thinks about that which the Lord knows, it is not long before the impressive quality of just who He is stands forth. The Lord was quite aware of the experiences the Christians in Smyrna were enduring. He also knew

that Satan had a hold on those who actually claimed to belong to the Lord.

Those who thought they belonged to the Lord actually gathered at the "synagogue of Satan" (cf. John 16:2). The Lord's knowledge is simply incomprehensible! Because of this the psalmist said, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is high, I cannot attain it" (Psalm 139:6, NKJV).

He knows what is done, experienced, and thought by any one of us. In fact, He knows whatever can be known and, thus, He knows what we must do to get through the tribulations of life.

### The Lord's Encouragement

The Lord also knows what others attempt to do to His church. The church was going to endure tribulation for ten days (2:10). Exactly what time span we are to make of these ten days is uncertain. It is likely that a short time frame is in view, but whatever time frame is in view it would be intense.

The Lord said they would be tested, and we can be sure the test was not anything like a "multiple choice" test one has had in school! This test would bring about suffering, and much of it.

When experiencing such it brings to mind what things in life each man must determine to be valuable (cf. Joshua 24:14-15). He must determine what is precious, what is valuable, and what he will endure for that which he considers to be a pearl of great price.

The tribulations the Christians in Smyrna experienced originated with Satan and his servants. Do you think the Jews realized they were but pawns used by the Lord's adversary (cf. 2 Corinthians 4:4; 11:13-15)? With these tribulations in front of them the Lord gave words of encouragement; if they are faithful to Him who is the first and the last, they will receive the victor's crown.

### The Lord's Instructions

When we think about the Lord's will and His instructions, we might think His commands and admonitions are easy

to obey. We might think again, however, when we are put to a severe test that includes much suffering.

The church in Smyrna was to be faithful in order to receive the crown of life. Though it is easy to understand the admonition, it is another thing entirely when one has to endure what he understands intellectually.

It has been said, "...the church of Christ persecuted is the church of Christ pure. [On the other hand,] the church of Christ patronized has always been the church of Christ impure." (G.C. Morgan, cited by David Roper, *Revelation 1-II*, Resource Publications, p. 125)

The crown of life is eternal life, and it will be given to him who overcomes. A test is of no value if one is guaranteed to pass it, but one will pass if that which is held precious is not forsaken. Let us, then be determined to be clothed with white garments, purified of any stains.

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# Word Studies

Gerald Cowan

## “Holy”

“But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy’” (1 Peter 1:15-16, NKJV).

Peter’s quotation is from Leviticus 11:44 (see also Leviticus 11:45, 19:2, and 20:7).

“For I am the Lord your God. You shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and you shall be holy, for I am holy. Neither shall you defile yourselves...” (KJV).

Peter also asks, “What manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness?” (2 Peter 3:11, NKJV).

One may be inclined to think God has imposed impossibility upon His people here, because the word *holy* is misunderstood to mean pure, undefiled, sinless, and righteous. Since all humans are judged by God to be sinners (Romans 3:10, 23), with innate desires that make them vulnerable to temptation and sin (James 1:13-15), it necessarily follows that the word cannot mean pure, sinless, or undefiled.

Actually, as we shall see, holiness is not necessarily related to sin, except indirectly, by extension. Just so there is no confusion here, let us clarify the point. Of course God is pure, sinless, and righteous in all His attitudes and activities. But *holy* is not the word that defines Him as to those qualities and attributes.

Since the references are from both Old and New Testament writings, we must note both the Hebrew and Greek words translated as *holy*.

The Old Testament word is *QADOSH*. It means holy, devoted, consecrated, separated, sanctified – qualities of a saint.

The New Testament word is *HAGIOS* and it has similar meanings. There are cognates for both words. Of particular

interest is the related Greek word *HAGIAZO* (from the same root as *HAGIOS*), a verb meaning to consecrate, sanctify, set aside as separate, to make holy.

Holiness is *HAGIASMOS* (Romans 6:19, 22) and refers to the condition and conduct of saints, persons who are sanctified to God.

Holiness is about being true to one’s stipulated character, nature, and identity. God is God, and nothing else. God is not an angel; He is God. He is not a man, He is God. He cannot be anything other than God or He would cease to be God. This is an essential thought to be considered by those who insist that Jesus is God, or that God became a human being. Not possible.

To be holy, God must be God and nothing else. The same is true of man. He must be man, as God designed and purposed him to be – nothing else. Man is not an angel and he is not God. For the most part man does not try to be or pretend to be anything other than man, human. But he often fails to be the kind of man God designed him to be.

God has called us to virtue and glory (2 Peter 1:3). Virtue is from Latin *VIRTUS*, properly understood as manliness, the essence of manhood, ideal humanity – in other words, man as he was designed to be and is capable of being.

The holy God is perfect deity; the holy man is perfect humanity. Remember, Jesus said we are to “be perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48).

Holiness is also about relationships. Remember that *HAGIOS*, *holy*, is also translated *saint* or *holy one*, one who has been sanctified by God or has sanctified himself to God.

The key to understanding the connection of the words is seen in the references already noted from Leviticus: “I am the Lord your God; sanctify (consecrate) yourself; be holy as I am holy” (11:44-45, 19:2, 20:7).

The action of the person here is that he has chosen God, consciously separated himself from all that is foreign to God, committed and dedicated himself

to God and considers himself to belong exclusively to God – no divided allegiance, no loyalty or devotion to any other master (see Matthew 6:24).

The action of God here is that He has chosen and accepted the person, claimed the person as His own personal possession, one of *His own special people* (Titus 2:14 NKJV), and agrees to treat the person as His own son or daughter (2 Corinthians 6:17).

We see here another subtle aspect of the holy relationship that should not be missed. God is holy to the person – committed and devoted, and true to the person – and He requires that the person be holy to Him, committed, devoted, and true to Him. “Present your bodies (your own selves) a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God” (Romans 12:1).

We have two final thoughts for consideration. First a negative aspect: one cannot be devoted to God unless he is separated from all things that are contrary to God, or that conflict with service to God (Matthew 6:24, 2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

Here is where purity, righteousness, and being sinless become extended implications of the word holy. To be sanctified to God requires that one first be separate from ungodliness and that he maintain that separation.

We also have a positive aspect. The holy nation, holy priesthood, or holy person is to “show forth the praises (*excellencies*, ASV) of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

A part of man as God designed him is to reflect the attributes and qualities of God – we are made in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26-27). The holy God is to be seen in the holy man.

Yet, holiness is not automatic. “Be holy” means take the time and make the effort that is required for holiness.

Holiness is not optional. It is required. No one can see and please God without it (Hebrews 12:14).

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## Let Each One Take Heed

Grady Miller

When an inspired apostle writes and warns his fellow believers to “look out!” we should all sit up and take notice. And given the context, occasion, and audience of 1 Corinthians 3, those of us today who preach, teach Bible classes, write articles, and wield influence especially need to “take care” [ESV] and “be careful” [NASB] in our labors to build on the foundation of Jesus Christ.

The good Bible students who read the GOSPEL GLEANER are familiar with the setting and background of Paul’s message to the church of God at Corinth. You will remember those first several chapters of 1 Corinthians deal with congregational unity and the scandal of brotherhood discord and division.

We might say the saints in Corinth had “preacher problems.” They exalted human wisdom, polished rhetoric, and “pulpit presence” above all other considerations. Their allegiance to a personal favorite and unwillingness to follow anyone else was reflected in their boast, “I am of Paul” or “I am of Apollos” (1 Corinthians 3:4; cf. 1:12).

Paul certainly believed there is glory in preaching. He knew firsthand the high privilege and weighty responsibility of declaring the unsearchable riches of God’s grace. Why, even the feet of God’s messengers are beautiful! (Romans 10:15) He never lost sight of the wonder that God called and commissioned him, the chief of sinners, and entrusted him with the treasure of the divine message (1 Thessalonians 2:4; 1 Timothy 1:16).

A close reading of 1 Corinthians 2 documents that Paul understood both the great honor and personal accountability of preaching and teaching. The power of God was made known through the revelation of His Spirit (vs. 5, 10–13). One guided by that revelation has the mind of Christ (vs. 16).

The church in Corinth, however,

needed to see another point of view. They needed a pointed reminder that preachers are only servants of the Lord Jesus. From that strict perspective, Paul and Apollos were but seed-planters and water-bearers (3:7). God’s messengers are clay pots or earthen vessels (2 Corinthians 4:7). The emphasis ought not to be on the jar, but on the treasure inside!

“Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers...” (3:5; *diakonos*). “Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God” (4:1; *hyperetes*). The reader is encouraged to a deeper study on those Greek words. But even with our everyday English it is hard to elevate too highly one who is first and foremost a servant! The Corinthians’ desire to promote their favorite teacher and discount all others was carnal, shallow, immature, and destructive (3:1–3).

Notice the emphatic point Paul declared in verses 9–11:

“For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, you are God’s building. According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it. For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”

Three possessive cases are given — we are God’s fellow workers, we are God’s field, and we are God’s building. The field and building belonging to God are easy enough to understand, but perhaps the relationship of His servants needs a word of explanation.

“We are God’s fellow workers” is sometimes interpreted to mean “we work with God, are fellow workers with God, and share a working relationship with Him.” That is an excellent point, a detail Paul developed elsewhere (cf. Philippians 2:13; “it is God who works in you”). But that is not what Paul is saying in this passage. That is not the relationship Paul affirmed here.

The “we” refers to Paul and Apollos,

coworkers and partners with one another. They shared a mutual bond, were harnessed to the same great work, and labored together in the one vineyard of the Master. There can be no competition between fellow servants!

Both Paul and Apollos (the “we”) are described as “God’s fellow workers.” “God’s” (*Theos*) takes the form of a singular, masculine noun in the genitive case, indicating possession. It is exactly the same construction as “God’s field” and “God’s building.” We might say, then, that “we are God’s fellow workers” means “Paul and Apollos are fellow workers together, and are God’s own possession, servants belonging to Him.”

Think about it! Those grand teachers and proclaimers of the word that the Corinthians had promoted to party leaders were really just field hands and day laborers. Even the most eloquent and persuasive preacher is only a construction worker, toiling to build God’s building. Now, plowing a field or building a house is certainly a good and honest job. But “field hand” and “construction worker” are not exactly princely, prestigious descriptions.

Here, then, is the spiritual, profound, mature, and healthy perspective in regard to God’s servants — a complete one hundred and eighty degree turnaround from the Corinthians’ misunderstanding (3:1–3). Men must not preach themselves, but exalt Jesus the Christ (2 Corinthians 4:5). The message of the cross is of more import than the voice of the messenger (1 Corinthians 1:18, 21).

If one herald is more effective than another, by reason of his study, sincerity, vocabulary, appearance, power of persuasion or some other gift, he is still but a servant under obligation to his Master. And the humble servant knows that after he has done all those things which are commanded, nothing remains for him to say except — this! “We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do” (Luke 17:10).

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## Reflections

John T. Polk, II

### The Process of Faith

"For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me" (John 17:8, NKJV).

Truly, "faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17), but "hearing" is more than just "listening." Jesus spoke to people in parables because "hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand" (Matthew 13:13). Since comprehension is the purpose of hearing, then Jesus set forth the process of faith in John 17:8: "given to them the words," "they have received them," "and have known," "they have believed."

Notice the process involves: (1) God's words being accurately transmitted from God; (2) those words faithfully declared; (3) those words received; (4) knowing those words as truth; (5) believing.

#### Reasons for Reflection

(1) Whether spoken directly from heaven (Matthew 3:16-17), given by revelation (Ephesians 3:1-7), or embodied in Jesus Christ (John 1:14-17), God has spoken.

(2) Whether spoken by Jesus, Himself (John 12:47-48), inspired and revealed by the Holy Spirit (Galatians 1:11-12), or written by the Holy Spirit through inspired writers (2 Timothy 3:16-17), the Bible IS the Word of God!

(3) The Bible must be accepted by the reader. "For this reason we also thank God without ceasing, because

when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe" (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

The Devil is willing to do whatever it takes to shake confidence in the Bible as "the word of God." He claims it is full of "myths," of uncertain origin, incomplete, corrupted text, inaccurate translation, ad nauseum, none of which he can prove.

(4) Peter acknowledged the bedrock truth (Matthew 16:16), but after experience with that truth, he said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 6:68-69).

The saying, "we have come to believe and know" indicates that the process had worked in the Apostles. They came to their "firm confidence" in the same way as those of us who believe on Jesus "through their word" (John 17:20). This faith cannot be shaken and perseveres (Romans 5:1-4).

(5) Believing is the result of that process, and is, therefore, total confidence, not in ourselves, but in Jesus Christ! "Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise" (Hebrews 10:35-36).

Unless we throw it away, no one should stand between us and the love of God (Romans 8:31-39) - not a preacher, an elder, a Christian, a parent, a child, an employer, a politician, nor any other human! We may falter at times, but our faith will not fail!

## DON'T DWELL DEEP

J.J. Hendrix

The war in Afghanistan has to be tough for our soldiers. Not just because of the enemy's suicidal tactics, but because of where the enemy is able to hide. There are many caves in Afghanistan that Taliban soldiers can nestle into and American soldiers will not be able to find them. If the battle gets too intense and the American troops come too close, these Taliban fighters can run in the opposite direction and hide out in caves unfamiliar to Americans.

The depths of these caves are dark. It is true, they may hide from the troops, but they can't hide from God. In the Bible, there were a comparable people to these Taliban members.

Attacking nations had similar interactions with the Edomites. The sons of Esau took Mount Seir and dwelt there (Deuteronomy 2:12). The Edomites were known to live in this cavernous area and used the land as a benefit to themselves especially during times of war. As enemies climbed these mountains to attack, the Edomites could make easy pickings by shooting arrows down at their adversaries. One ploy the Edomite armies would use was taking advantage of their "home turf." If their foes were too great, they could retreat back into their caves. They would dwell deep in those caves.

God was about to bring forth His wrath on Edom and the surrounding areas. God knew the strategy that this people would invoke to attempt to abscond from their destruction: "Flee, turn back, dwell in the depths..." (Jeremiah 49:8, ESV). This verse was not giving advice to the Edomites, but just informing them that the Almighty knew what they were going to do.

The Lord's response to their foreseeable defense was this: "But I have stripped Esau bare; I have uncovered his hiding places, and he is not able to conceal himself. His children are destroyed, and his brothers, and his neighbors; and he is no more... If those

who did not deserve to drink the cup must drink it, will you go unpunished? You shall not go unpunished, but you must drink" (Jeremiah 49:10-12).

The Edomites' hope of escape was futile. They could not hide. The punishment from God was going to come... no matter how deep they dwelt.

How deep do we dwell in our sin today? How many people today think they can hide from God (see John 3:19)? When confronted with sin (cf. Galatians 6:1), a Christian can repent, can get defensive, or can turn and run.

Hebrews 4:13 says, "And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account." The judgment of the Lord will be precise and accurate. All secret sin will be laid out on the Day of Judgment. The things so desperately hidden in the dark will be made light.

There is no depth of darkness in which we can hide from our loving Creator. (Note: LOVING Creator) Unfortunately, some take the view that God is sitting in heaven with the book of life opened and readily erasing names with glee. This couldn't be further from the truth!

Inspired Scripture (2 Timothy 3:16-17) allows us to know why Christ came to die for us (John 3:17). The best life to live is one free from secret sin and darkness. "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

We should be constantly examining ourselves (1 Corinthians 9:23ff) to see if we are living a life pleasing to God. When considering sin, a sinner is often ashamed of the sin that is committed. Don't try to hide it from God. That effort is futile. If sin is in the Christian's life, the Christian must put it away, rather than think God does not notice (1 John 1:8-10). If we walk in the light, there will be no need to hide from our God.

## Questions & Answers

James R. Lewis

### Question: What is the mark of the beast?

Many have inquired, "What is the mark of the beast?" Such queries no doubt come from Revelation 13:17, which reads, "And that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name."

This statement is couched in the pinnacle of symbolism. If we are to learn what is meant by the "mark of the beast," we must give at least a cursory overview of the context in which it is located.

#### Persecution

The time of the writing of the book of Revelation is near the end of the first century A.D. Christians were under great persecution at the hands of Domitian, who was the emperor of Rome from A.D. 81 to 96. The Lord, through the apostle John, gives the last and great book of the Bible to comfort the saints, which, from earth's point of view, seemed to be doomed to destruction. However, the message of the book of Revelation is that the cause of the saints will prevail victorious and the enemies of God's people will be overcome.

#### Three Enemies

Chapters twelve and thirteen of Revelation present a very graphic picture of the enemies of God's children. These enemies are three in number. One, the Devil himself is identified as "that old serpent called the Devil, and Satan" (12:9). According to verse seventeen, he made war with the faithful of God.

Two, the ally of the Devil is pictured as a beast, which John saw "rise up out of the sea" (13: 1). This ally "opened his mouth in blasphemy against God, to

blaspheme his name, and his tabernacle, and them that dwell in heaven. And it was given him to make war with the saints, and to overcome them" (13:6-7).

The Roman emperors, especially Nero and later Domitian, enforced emperor worship among the citizens of the empire. Of course, Christians could not and would not worship man or any image of him. Because of this refusal to participate in emperor worship, the Christians became the objects of great tribulation.

Three, a beast symbolically pictured as coming "up out of the earth" (13: 11) is said to have power to "cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name" (13:15-17). This beast is specifically identified as "the false prophet" (16: 13).

The false prophet is the religious agency of the beast out of the sea. It was the task of this second beast to force the people to worship the first beast, which in turn was the servant of Satan. Those who bowed to the desires or the powers of the false prophet who enforced emperor worship were marked or identified. Christians, who refused, were subjected to great atrocities. They were also boycotted by the world, and denied the privilege of trade or to earn a living.

#### Number of the Beast

The number of the beast is given as six hundred sixty and six (13: 17). By assigning numerical values to letters of the alphabet many fanciful interpretations have been configured from this number to arrive at the names of various notorious individuals in history. The very fact that so many have been contrived is evidence that such effort is fruitless. We should keep in mind the symbolical nature of the book

of Revelation. It is not the name but the number which is significant.

To the Oriental the number seven was sacred and the number six was considered evil as it fell short of the sacred seven. In multiples of six – 666 – there is raised a power of evil which is indeed great. This is the number that was given to the beast embodied with political power and false religion.

**Symbolic Identification**

We should not understand the mark to be a literal mark. Most likely it was simply the fact that their life and conduct openly identified them as those who worshipped the emperor.

Consistent with the symbolism of the book of Revelation, and in contrast to the mark of the beast, we find also that the saved of God are identified as “having the seal of the living God . . . in their foreheads” (7:2-3), and having “the Father’s name written in their forehead” (14: 1). The seal, or mark, is a symbol of ownership.

In context of Revelation those who are marked with the emperor’s mark are servants of his. Those who are marked or sealed by the Lord are servants of the Lord. Therefore, the “mark of the beast” is symbolic imagery identifying those who were following the dictates of emperor worship. This amounted to a rejection of God and all that is holy.

**The Shroud of Turin**

Jackson Erwin

The Shroud of Turin is said to be the sacred relic of the burial cloth of Jesus Christ. It is said to contain wood from the cross, a fragment of Joseph’s robe, and a piece of Jesus’ crown of thorns which He wore the day He was crucified.

The Shroud of Turin came out in the year of 1354 and was recorded by the popular knight named Geoffroi de Charnay. But after a few years in display the Bishop of Troyes claimed it false as he thought that it was painted.

In 1453 Geoffroi de Charnay’s granddaughter, Marguerite, gave the shroud to the house of Savoy and there it was damaged by fire and water in 1532. After the Shroud was damaged at the house of Savoy, it was displayed only on rare occasions like the marriage of Prince Umberto in 1931 or the Shroud’s 400th year of its arrival in the year of 1978.

The Shroud of Turin has been carbon dated to the 1300’s, making it a fraud. But when researchers took a closer look at the sample they used, they found it was a replacement for a damaged part of the shroud. The replacement was made of cotton when the real part of the Shroud is made of linen.

The Shroud is 14 feet long and 3.5 feet wide and was preserved in 1578 in the royal chapel of the Cathedral of San Giovanni Battista in Turin, Italy.

No matter its origin, the Shroud of Turin isn’t to be worshipped or have reverence. If it is real it makes a great part of Christian history.

**Questions Concerning the Shroud**

If Christ’s image is really the one on the shroud, why is it that the early disciples of Jesus didn’t write anything about it? In the four gospels, we read of the linen cloths lying on the floor,

and the folded cloth that covered the Messiah’s face. Yet we never read of his face being imprinted on the garments.

John mentions, “...the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself” (John 20:7). Based upon this statement, we ask if there had already been a cloth around His head, why put another, larger one around His head as well?

In John 19:40 we find that Jesus’ body was to be prepared for burial in the same way as Jewish tradition. This would mean that before you would bury the body, you would have to wash the corpse. Therefore, if the body was to be washed before the burial, there would be no blood or sweat or dirt on the body. Therefore, there would be no blood, sweat, or dirt or thorns from the crown on the Shroud of Turin.

Scientists have claimed to have found blood, wood from the cross, sweat, or fragments from the crown of thorns which could not be found due to the body being washed. Also, some scientists say Christ’s image was on the Shroud due to the body having been due to decomposition.

However, in Psalms 16:10 it says, “For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, Nor will You allow your Holy One to see corruption.” This states that the body of Jesus would not corrupt or decompose.

**In Conclusion**

The mystery surrounding the Shroud might never be solved. If it is real, we shouldn’t make the cloth sacred. The One who is believed to have been in the cloth is sacred. He is the one that gave us our gift of salvation.

If the Shroud is a fraud, that doesn’t mean that Christ is not real. A cloth does not confirm or deny our faith in Jesus.

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Regardless of the authenticity of the Shroud, we need to have faith. We should remember the words of Jesus to Thomas, "Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed" (John 20:29).

Sources:

- www.christiancourier.com
- www.britannica.com
- www.allaboutarchaeology.com

[Editor's Note: I must confess it is with a great measure of pride that this article is printed. It was written by my thirteen year old son, Jackson. He originally wrote this piece as a report for his eighth grade Bible class at Mars Hill Bible School in Florence, AL. I felt it was worthy of publication. May God bless him and other young souls like him as they grow "in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man" (Luke 2:52).]

**NEWS & NOTES**  
James R. McGill

**Perry B. Cotham Passes**

Perry B. Cotham passed away February 26. He was 101 years old. Brother Cotham was born January 5, 1912 near Murray, KY. His parents were Ben and Nannie (Boyd) Cotham, members of the church at Antioch church of Christ, south of Farmington. He was baptized by Ira Douthitt in July, 1927, along with James W. Shockley, who later also became a gospel preacher.

Brother Cotham was a student at Freed-Hardeman College along with such classmates as Hugo and Lois McCord, Adron Doran, and J. W. McNutt.

He began preaching in 1930 and was a gospel preacher until the time of his passing. Thus, brother Cotham was a gospel preacher for approximately 83 years.

His first full-time local work was in Shawnee, Oklahoma, beginning in October 1934. While in Shawnee he married Teresa Overby, June 25, 1936. Her father was a preacher. She preceded him in death in 1998.

The couple then moved to Oklahoma City, Wewoka, and Duncan, all in Oklahoma. He worked also in Paris, Grand Prairie, and Big Spring, all in the state of Texas.

In 1971, he went into full-time evangelistic work. This work took him into all of the fifty states of America and into all the inhabited continents of the world (over sixty nations).

**Basil Overton Passes**

On February 28, Basil Overton passed away. He was preceded in death by his beloved Margie in 2010.

Brotherhoodnews.com reported that it was in 1968 that the Overton family moved to Nashville, TN, and Basil served as associate editor of the *Gospel Advocate*. He also taught in the Nashville School of Preaching and the Great Commission School.

In 1972, at the invitation of Charles Coil, Overton began serving as vice president of International Bible College in Florence, AL. He was also an instructor of Bible and Christian apologetics.

The first issue of *The World Evangelist*, a paper Overton edited for nearly 32 years,

was published in August of that year. The magazine reported on foreign mission work and served as a teaching tool in many countries.

**Gospel Preacher, Professor Passes**

From the *Tennessean*: On January 21, 2013, Bill Collins left this life for an indescribably better one. Bill became a Christian as a result of his own personal search for the Truth and dedicated Christians willing to teach him. He left his native Scotland to come to Freed-Hardeman and study the Bible so that he could teach others the Gospel. He earned a doctorate of philosophy from St. Andrews University in Scotland, and used his background and education and faith to teach hundreds and hundreds of people about the Lord. His whole life was about teaching - teaching the Truth in love. Bill is survived by his faithful wife of 48 1/2 years, Tommie Collins.

Many of us remember brother Collins as a professor of philosophy at Tennessee Bible College, Southern Christian University, and Lipscomb University. He was also a faithful gospel preacher. He preached for many years at the Pasquo congregation in Nashville, TN.

**Jane McWhorter Passes**

From brotherhoodnews.com: Jane McWhorter was born Nov. 14, 1935 in Nashville, TN. She lived in Fayette, AL, for the past 39 years, where her husband Don served as minister for the Fayette congregation and Jane taught first grade. She was Alabama's Merit Mother of the Year in 1994. Jane was a bestselling author of nine books and was a popular speaker at conferences and ladies' events across the U.S.

After a brief battle with leukemia, Jane passed away Feb. 26, 2013 with family by her side. She was preceded in death by her parents, Richard Shannon and Elma Delk Shannon; and by her husband Don, to whom she was married for 52 years. She is survived by her two children, daughter Kathy Kendall (Tony), and son Greg McWhorter (Shannon), and her six grandchildren, Shannon and Emily Kendall, Jack, Sam, Kate and Claire McWhorter.

**Wilson Wallace Passes**

Albert Wilson Wallace, son of Foy E. Wallace, Jr. passed away February 24 in Flower Mound, TX. An article in the October 1945 issue of the *Bible Banner* announced his decision to preach full-time. The article

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also told that he was named after A. W. Lee, an elder of the Tenth & Francis church in Oklahoma City. Brother Wallace wrote, "It is our hope that Wilson will be worthy of all of his connections and of the high and holy calling which he has chosen."

### 60 Years of Preaching the Gospel!

James Meadows is celebrating 60 years of preaching the gospel. He is 82 years young and nearing 800 gospel meetings and lectureships. Brother Meadows remains on the full-time faculty and serves as Dean of Students at the Southeast Institute of Biblical Studies (formerly East Tennessee School of preaching), where he served as the school's Director for ten years.

### 50 Years of Campaigns Northeast!

Owen Olbricht, at 80 years of age, is recruiting student workers and contacting Northeastern churches in preparation for his 50th year of leading campaigns in the New England and Middle Atlantic states. In this half-century, more than three hundred campaigns have resulted in more than three thousand being baptized into Christ. Erring Christians have been restored, and congregations have been strengthened.

Of the hundreds of young people who have worked with Owen in these efforts, many now look back upon it as their valuable first experience in personal evangelism and are now teaching others.

There is no way to measure the eternal good Campaigns Northeast has done and is continuing to do. Of the thousands converted, many have converted others. For instance, one campaign in Pennsylvania with just three baptisms seemed less successful than most. But one young lady who was baptized into Christ in that meeting later helped lead her husband to obey the gospel. He has now spent many years as an instructor and administrator in a school of preaching. Their children grew up to become Christians and establish Christian homes.

Owen was born in Thayer, Missouri, the youngest of the four children of Ben and Agnes Olbricht. His sister, my late wife Nedra, was the eldest. His brother Tom lives in Maine. His other brother, Glenn, died last year at 80, in Syracuse, New York, where he had preached for many years.

Owen received his B.A., M.A. and M.R.E. degrees from Harding. He was honored by the university in 1980 as the "outstanding alumnus in Bible." He taught Bible several

years at Harding University, including the courses in Acts of Apostles and Personal Evangelism.

Owen lives in the Little Rock suburb of Sherwood and preaches for the North Pulaski church.

He publishes *Unique for Christ* monthly during the regular school year. This periodical is widely distributed among Christian university students, and its articles are primarily written with their needs and interests in mind. Owen also writes for the *Gospel Gleaner*, *Gospel Light*, and other periodicals.

He has authored a number of valuable books, mostly published by Gospel Light. In the Truth for Today series of commentaries, Owen wrote the commentary on Colossians. He continues to write extensively.

Owen has preached and taught in many countries, but the ones in which he seems to have the strongest involvement every year are Russia, Venezuela, and Colombia. One teaching opportunity Owen accepted last year was teaching English in Sopot, Poland, using the English-language Bible as the reader.

### New Facility for Tri-Cities

The Tri-Cities School of Preaching and Christian Development is ready to move into their new facilities. The new facilities cost \$1,000,000 to construct and are completely debt-free due to the generous and gracious donations of brethren who believe in training gospel preachers to be sound and faithful men.

Wesley Simons is the Director of the school and one of the elders of the Stoney Creek church of Christ, in Elizabethton, TN. The school is a work of this congregation.

### Upcoming Events

Andy Robison will be conducting the gospel meeting for the Hillview Terrace congregation in Moundsville, WV, March 17-22. Hillview Terrace operates the West Virginia School of Preaching where brother Robinson serves as Director.

April 7-10, he will be in a gospel meeting in Mount Vernon, OH.

April 11 he will speak on "Christ and the Founding Fathers" in the Ritchie County, WV High School Auditorium.

Terry Jones will be presenting a lecture on "Christ and Lincoln" at the Ritchie County High School in Ellenboro, WV on March 21.

Brother Jones will also be conducting a gospel meeting for the Sandyville, WV congregation March 31-April 3.

Peter Ray Cole will be in a gospel meeting the week of April 7 in Shinnston, WV.

Steve Snider will conduct a gospel meeting March 17-22 for the Washington St. church of Christ in Fairview, WV.

John T. Polk, II will be in a gospel meeting April 7-10, with the Greenfield congregation, Greenfield, TN.

### Southwest Lectureship

The Southwest church of Christ is pleased to announce the 32nd Annual Southwest Lectureship, April 13-16, 2013. The theme for this year is "WHY DO WE...? Answers to the Fundamental Questions that Define Us."

We have invited twenty-one speakers to come and lecture to a large number of brethren who will gather in Austin from across the nation to attend the lectureship series this year.

Exhibits of various brotherhood publishers, mission efforts and works from around the country will be on display (upon prior approval). In addition, the lessons delivered during this series will be published in a full-color booklet, suitable for use in teaching Bible classes or for personal Bible study, and will be available during the lectureship. We will ensure production of CDs and DVDs. In addition, we will make available books from past Southwest lectureships.

The Annual Southwest School of Bible Studies Supporters' Dinner will take place on Tuesday, April 16. For further information regarding this dinner, please contact the school office or Rick Brumback, Director of the Southwest School of Bible Studies.

RV and camper spaces (with water and electrical hookups) are available at the Southwest building. For additional information, you may contact:

Sam Willcut, Lectureship Director

Southwest church of Christ 8900 Manchaca Road, Austin, Texas 78748-5307 (512) 282-2486 or 282-2438 • Fax (512) 282-5090 office@swcofc.org • www.swcofc.org

### A Cappella Singing CDs

Since 2000, volunteers on behalf of West Virginia Christian Youth Camp have recorded several hymns--a combination of older, newer, and original--for the benefit of the camp. The latest two are Resurrection (2010) and Amazing Grace (2012). A \$15

donation is requested for these. Checks can be made payable to WVCYC, and mailed to 327 Suzanne St., Washington, WV 26181.

### Churches in Need of Ministers

The **Cumming, GA church of Christ** is looking to hire a preacher that is sound in the faith and faithful to the Bible. They do prefer someone who is married. Contact Gary Headrick at (770) 861-5004, and/or Hank Carroll at (678) 456-8675.

The **Edgewood church of Christ** located in Greenville, SC is seeking an enthusiastic full-time pulpit preacher. Contact them by calling (864) 235-5661.

The **Boiling Springs congregation** in Boiling Springs, SC is looking for a pulpit minister. The congregation is about 200 in size.

The **church in Henderson, KY** is looking for a preacher. They are a congregation of 200-225.

The **church in Texarkana, TX** is looking for a preacher. They are a church of about 160-180. Send resumes to: Westside Church of Christ 524 Sowell Ln Texarkana TX 75503.

The **Tooele, UT church of Christ** is looking for a preacher that is true to the word of God. They are a congregation of 30 in the heart of Mormon country. This is a mission work. Contact Mike McDonald at (435) 843-0400, email: msmcdonald@getbeehive.net. Qualifications: BA or preaching school, able to drive in snow. They prefer a married man. If interested send resume, DVD lesson, references to: Tooele Church of Christ, Box 426, Tooele, UT 84074

The **Hillcrest congregation in Baldwyn, MS** is looking for a gospel preacher. They are a congregation of 100-115. Contact Jimmy Dillinger at (662) 365-8691.

The **Petersville church of Christ** is looking for a minister. Address: 3601 Cloverdale Rd. Florence, AL. 35633; Phone: 256-766-9690 email: petersvillecoc@comcast.net

The **Northview church in Columbia, TN** is looking to hire a preacher. The address is 865 Nashville Hwy. Columbia, TN 38401. Phone: (931) 388-5814

### Dominican Republic Mission Trip

*Gospel Gleaner* writer Wayne Kilpatrick recently visited the Dominican Republic from January 14-22. He spoke twice each day in the city of La Vega. The theme for his lectures was (1) Responsibilities of Elders to

the Church; (2) Responsibilities of the Church to the Elders.

Wayne also preached each night in various places, including five appointments on Sunday. Brother Kilpatrick was also able to preach through the medium of television while there. He plans to return next January for a similar format of teaching and preaching.

### Guyana Mission Trip Planned

Jerry O. Davidson continues to be very busy and very productive in his work with the Amerindians in Guyana.

The next trip is scheduled to depart March 11, 2013. The group will be gone for two weeks and plans to return March 25. A three-week trip is also scheduled to depart on April 1.

In 2012 these mission efforts resulted in 82 baptisms, 55 restorations, 8 weddings, and 2 newly established congregations.

### Congregations Merge

Ron Bryant reports that on March 3, 2013, a new congregation was formed in Gadsden, AL. This new congregation grows out of the merger of the Central congregation and the East Gadsden congregation.

The name for the new congregation is the Gadsden church of Christ. The address is 1203 Piedmont Cutoff, Gadsden, AL.

At the 9:30 a.m. assembly elders and deacons were set in office, and the congregation made its commitment to them and to the work. The first formal assembly for worship was at 10:30 a.m.

Ron reports, "The merger process has been both exciting and humbling. The members have been together for the past three weeks in assembly at Central. For the last scheduled use of the Central building, we had 214 in attendance. Remember us when you pray."

### S.F. Hester Article Published on [therestorationmovement.com](http://therestorationmovement.com)

Scott Harp has recently added Guy Hester's January article, "Remembering S.F. Hester" to his outstanding website: [www.therestorationmovement.com](http://www.therestorationmovement.com)

Photographs of S.F. Hester and his family will also be added to the webpage.

### Minister Hired

The Lord's church in Hardin, KY has hired Chris Lyden to be their new preacher. Chris is a recent graduate of the Tri-Cities School of Preaching and Christian Development.

### Warren Center Events

The Warren Christian Apologetics Center in Vienna, WV, will be presenting a Youth Weekend Apologetics Training Camp March 15-16. Speakers include Chip Pugh, Anthony Rex, Chand Brinker, Willie Franklin, and Bart Warren.

The Center will also be presenting a lecture-ship titled: *In God We Trust: Christ, Life, and American Culture*. The event will take place in the Ritchie County High School in Ellenboro, WV. Dates and times are March 21, 28, April 4, 11 at 7pm each evening.

### The International Gospel Hour Has a New Speaker

From brotherhoodnews.com: At the appreciation dinner given in his honor Feb. 26 at the Southeast Institute for Biblical Studies, Winford Claiborne announced that Jody Apple will follow him as the third speaker for International Gospel Hour.

Jody is a member of the SEIBS faculty and serves as Director of Information and Technology. He previously served churches in San Juan, Puerto Rico, Lebanon, Tenn., and Media, Penn.

The program is heard on hundreds of radio stations that blanket much of North America. It is presented in 30-, 25-, 15-, and 5-minute formats. Brother Claiborne has served as the director and speaker of the program since 1995. The program is overseen by the West Fayetteville congregation in Fayetteville, Tenn. IGH was begun in 1934 by V.E. Howard and is one of the longest running radio programs on the air.

A timetable has yet to be established for the transition.

Please send us your news and notes, notices of upcoming events, or reports of recent activities to be published in the *Gospel Gleaner*.

We wish to use this feature of the paper to report on the innumerable good works being accomplished by the Lord through His church all over the world.

**Reader Replies**

Dear Brother Erwin, Thanks for the work you are doing

as editor of the *Gospel Gleaner*. I have received it for several years and profit from reading the articles. I also appreciate you reporting on gospel preachers and their work. You also keep us informed about the deaths that occur in the brotherhood. The answers to questions are very helpful....May God bless your work. Yours in Christ,

**James Meadows, Knoxville, TN**

I was so glad to get an issue of the *Gospel Gleaner*. I sat down and read it thru before stopping. It should be a success.

**Helen Elkins, Buncombe, IL**

Andy: Thanks for sending the book. I read it last evening and enjoyed it tremendously. Also have read the *Gospel Gleaner* January 2013 edition and appreciated the articles. There isn't much better than reading good scriptural articles from sound and seasoned preachers. Thank you and them.

**Betty McDowell, Creal Springs, IL**

Andy, Thanks for the *Gospel Gleaner*. Good wishes as the Editor. This is a good work.

**E. Claude Gardner, Henderson, TN**

We appreciate so much all you are doing.

**Andy Robinson, Moundsville, WV**

Thanks for the good issues of the *Gospel Gleaner*. I was surprised to see my article one of the first in the Feb. issue, but thanks.

**Owen Olbricht, Sherwood, AR**

The first issue is great. Got my issue yesterday; finished it today. I like a number of things in there, but especially Ron Bryant's article; great lead article.

**Ron Thomas, Sullivan, IL**

The church here at Buford, GA received a recent issue of the *Gospel Gleaner*. Very good paper it seems to me. Good articles, and good layout. Thanks,

**Scott Harp, Buford, GA**

Please sign me up for the *Gospel Gleaner*. I appreciate your good work. God bless.

**Jerry Noblin, Cabot, AR**

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# The GOSPEL GLEANER

Volume 25

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Number Four

## THE PRESENT TRUTH . . .

Ronald D. Bryant

### THE IDENTITY AND MISSION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

The redeemed are to be a distinct people. They are to be distinct from the world and from those who are merely religious.

The New Testament sets forth the true nature of Christian conduct and character. One must go to it to discover the ethical and value system that imitates and honors Christ, and to obtain guidelines for holy relationships and God-honoring worship and service.

Christ and His values are central to life in the kingdom. The life of a disciple is fully human, yet it is ruled by the will and purpose of God revealed in Christ (Hebrews 5:8-9; 12:1-2).

If the people of a congregation are to live out their God-appointed roles, certain conditions must be met. First, they must understand who they are, and why they exist. They must yield to the high and holy view God has regarding the church. It is imperative that God's order and government for the local congregation be respected (Philippians 1:1ff). It is vital that they be able to articulate the message (the gospel) correctly, consistently, and convincingly. Finally, they must actually be what they claim to be – that which God has called them to be in their life, service, and worship together.

Some congregations hold to a distorted view regarding their identity and purpose. Some see themselves as simply a social club with a few religious overtones. They do religious things, but their focus is upon their social agenda, and they gauge success on the basis of their social interaction. They go to the same clubhouse, pay their dues, and give themselves to their agenda. They welcome visitors, especially those that “fit-in” and are viewed as potential contributors to the contented state of their club.

While the people of God are members of one another, and are directed to honor their “one-another” relationship, that relationship is far more than social. Primarily, they delight in being one in Christ. They love, serve, encourage, and honor one another, but their focus is upon knowing, honoring, worshipping, and serving God. They are convinced that they exist to proclaim and personify Christ, and that their mission to the world is to convince and convict their neighbors and friends regarding Christ and their need of Him. Yes, they care for people; but even more, they care for their eternal well-being, being convinced that through the very word taught, God is calling souls to Himself (2 Timothy 2:1-2; Romans 1:16-17).

Some congregations seek to accommodate the people around them. They focus upon the “felt needs” and the interests of the people of the world, even asking them what they desire to find and what they will accept by way of religious emphasis and activity.

The divine standard is set aside and the dictate of the market-place is pursued. To inquire of the people of the world as to that which they want in matters of religion may have its place, yet such is finally counter-productive. It is apparent that “felt-needs” and personal preferences are ever in transition. That which the people of the world may desire today, will change on the morrow, if not sooner.

God's people exist to advance His kingdom. The local congregation is an outpost of the kingdom. God's people are “salt” and “light” (Matthew 5:13ff). They work to be “examples” (2 Timothy 4:12).

God's people are not selling a product; they are upholding the words of the gospel to immortal souls. They are not seeking to

accommodate the latest religious fad, nor are they trying to accommodate people into the kingdom, but they are working to convince immortal souls to live for God.

Being convinced of the truth of the gospel, they have something to say – something that is vital! They are convinced that they exist to serve their Lord, not the world, or any of its programs. Those who set aside God's will in an attempt to please men are deceived!

Two traits mark out God's people. They are called of God to be “holy” and to “serve.” God called them out of the world to be one with Him; to be holy even as He is holy (1 Peter 1:16). To be holy is to be like God, and separate from the world. In worship and service they are a holy priesthood (1 Peter 2:5-9).

Secondly, they have a mission. They serve a high and holy purpose, one that is in full accord with Jesus.

The Lord came to seek and to save the lost (Luke 19:10). The church exists to turn men to Him (Mark 16:15-16; 2 Timothy 1:7-10). Christians are called of God to proclaim His word – to touch human hearts with the words of life, to speak the truth in love, and to teach and warn every person to the end that they might be saved (Ephesians 4:15; Colossians 1:28). This is God's program. Woe unto those who only pay lip-service to it!

The people of God have words of faith, hope, and love to proclaim. They care for souls and about eternity.

Being called of God, they are “a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation.” They remain, “His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness and into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9).

“The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion” (Proverbs 28:1). Biblical examples of this proverb include:

- Jesus spoke boldly when exposing the error of the Pharisees (John 7:26);
- Peter and John spoke boldly in defending the truth against the accusations of the high counsel (Acts 4:13);
- Paul preached boldly at Damascus in the face of enemies who would attempt to take his life (Acts 9:27, 29);
- Paul and Barnabas spoke boldly in Iconium, while being resisted by disbelieving Jews (Acts 14:3);
- Apollos spoke boldly in the synagogue of Ephesus (Acts 18:26);
- Paul boldly preached in the same synagogue for three months – “disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God” (Acts 19:8);
- Paul and Barnabas waxed bold in the face of envious, contradicting Jews while preaching at Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:46);
- Paul was not afraid to write or speak boldly to his brethren at Rome (Romans 15:15), Corinth (2 Corinthians 7:4, 10:1-2, 11:21), and Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 2:2) – or even unto Philemon (Philemon 8).

Every Christian should be so bold – “For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:7). Every Christian should be able to say boldly, “The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Hebrews 13:6).

The Lord’s church has the truth; but do we have the necessary zeal and boldness required to teach it? Indeed, if it could be said that something is lacking from among God’s people today, one could reasonably claim that we are missing the element of boldness which is fundamental to saving a lost and dying world.

As with Joshua in the days of old, we too must “Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest” (Joshua 1:9). Brethren, the Lord has made the same promise to us as we fulfill His mission in this world (see Matthew 28:20).

Having observed the need for greater courage and increased boldness among us, let us offer a few words of encouragement as to how we might become more courageous and speak with greater boldness.

➤ Pray for boldness.

The church in Jerusalem prayed that they could speak with boldness (Acts 4:29) and they did (v.31). Paul asked for prayers that he could boldly teach and preach the word of God (Ephesians 6:19-20, Philippians 1:20), which he did.

We too must offer this prayer for our sake and for the sake of our brethren.

➤ Study, Study, STUDY!

As we learn the truth and know the truth (John 8:32), we will be more confident to teach the truth. Paul was not ashamed of the gospel because he knew what it was, and that he was in fact preaching the truth (Romans 1:16 ff.).

➤ Place fear in its proper place.

So many times we do nothing because we are afraid of making a mistake, or losing a friend.

Yet, the only One we need to fear is God (Matthew 10:26-28). “But and if ye suffer for righteousness’ sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled” (1 Peter 3:14).

Rather than being troubled by what people might do or say, Peter teaches, “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (v.15).

Ezekiel was due to face his critics. And the Lord told him not to be afraid of their words or dismayed at their looks (2:6), but to listen to Him and speak His word (v.7).

➤ Remember that we will face the Lord in judgment and give an answer for what we did and did not do (James 4:17).

Paul could truthfully say that he was free from the blood of all men because he had the boldness to preach the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:26-27). Can we say the same?

➤ Refrain from criticizing your brethren who have the courage to speak boldly.

Oftentimes, we are our worst enemy in this regard. Do you find it interesting how some of our brethren are willing to rebuke the one who has boldness and cares enough to correct the erring brother, but will not rebuke the soul bringing shame and reproach upon the church? Truly, they are critics of criticism! They are bold enough to criticize the person who is attempting to do the right thing, but cowardly shrink away from doing the right thing themselves.

When we act this way, we strain out the gnat and swallow the camel (Matthew 23:24). Moreover, when we act this way we discourage our brethren who have boldness, rather than encourage them to use their boldness as a blessing. And we wonder why we are not growing?

➤ Dispel the notion that boldness is ugliness.

Certainly our Lord was not being ugly when He was speaking boldly. Boldness is not ugliness. Boldness is having the courage to teach the truth even when it is not welcomed.

The best way to dispel this notion is for our brethren who are so bold to be careful to season their speech with grace when necessary (Colossians 4:6). Give your critics nothing to criticize. Yet, if they persist in their criticisms, “Be strong and of a good courage” (Joshua 1:6), for you are doing the right thing.

➤ Draw strength from others who are bold in the truth.

Paul’s example even in spite of suffering helped others to speak the word with boldness (Philippians 1:14). We can do the same by setting the right example.

### Concluding Thoughts

The worst mistake we can make is to do nothing at all. None of us wants to go to the final judgment with blood on our hands because we were too afraid to speak the truth.

By caring enough to teach the lost we will offer a sweet savor to the Lord, regardless of the results (2 Corinthians 2:14-17). Let us have the courage to obey the Lord, and the boldness to speak the truth.

Andrew D. Erwin  
Editor, *Gospel Gleaner*

The

**GOSPEL**



**GLEANER**

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His Church.*

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## "Do You Think You Are the Only Ones Going to Heaven?"

Stephen R. Bradd

"You're a member of the church of Christ?"

"Yes, I am."

"Do you think you are the only ones going to heaven?"

Many members of the church of Christ have been asked this question before in some form, although often it is less of a question and more of an accusation: "You believe that only members of the church of Christ will go to heaven! How dare you hold such a judgmental belief!"

If you've ever been in a situation like this, knowing the best way to respond can be quite a challenge. Colossians 4:6 instructs us – "Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one."

It is good for us to reflect upon situations like this so we'll know how to reply in a gracious way with God's truth at any time.

When I find myself in a controversial conversation like this, I try to refrain from giving direct answers. My desire is not to be evasive or non-committal. But, to answer initially with a "yes" or a "no" is typically not in the best interest of the inquirer for a complex topic. It might kill the dialogue on the spot and extinguish any opportunity to explore the matter in-depth with them.

Instead, I will try to guide the dialogue to the Scriptures by using questions. God's word is the authority, not my opinion nor any other person's opinion for that matter.

For example, if I was accused of believing that "only members of the church of Christ go to heaven," I might calmly reply with this question: "**Whom do you believe will go to heaven – and why?**" This shifts the responsibility back to him

first to state his view on the matter and then explain why he holds that view.

Hopefully, he will bring up certain passages from God's word as a rationale for his position. If no reference to God's word is made in his answer, I might reply with a sincere question going in that direction: "**Where can I find this view you have suggested in Scripture?**"

Once he brings up a specific scripture (or perhaps several), that provides a place to start. I will open the Bible and study with him, guiding the conversation by using questions where possible (instead of assertions).

Getting the conversation grounded in the Bible as the authority is of utmost importance. The answer to any important question will be found in Scripture – either explicitly or implicitly – for God has given us everything we need to be thoroughly equipped as His workers (cf. 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:16-17). For him to state an opinion and for me to state mine will not maximize the opportunity for good. God's word needs to be opened.

If he struggles to cite a verse for his position, I would kindly suggest beginning with Hebrews 11:6 – "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him."

I would then ask these questions: "What will happen to those who do not have faith? Will they go to heaven?" Typically one in this situation will affirm that those who do not have faith cannot please God and, since they aren't seeking Him, He will not reward them (especially not with a home in heaven).

Thus, he will not likely hesitate to declare that those who are non-religious or atheistic will not live eternally with God. Faith in God is a *must!* This is a

significant (and correct) admission, and it establishes common ground (which is wise to pursue in dialogue).

Common ground enables me to proceed by saying: "**You're absolutely right. One cannot go to heaven without faith in God. But, what do you say to those who think you are judgmental on this point?**"

Hopefully he will reply by emphasizing that he isn't the judge, God is, and God makes the rules (this is exactly right). One can go a little further with these questions: "**Does it bother you to say that 'only those with faith in God can go to heaven'? Does it bother you that this will condemn hundreds of millions of atheists and non-religious folks to hell?**" Likely he will admit that it does bother him to think of so many being lost, but this is what God's word says; God is the judge.

Then I will transition to other scriptures and use the same type of questions. In John 14:6 Jesus declared – "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." He also stated in John 8:24 – "If you do not believe that I am He [the Messiah and Savior], you will die in your sins." Acts 4:12 teaches: "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

- "What will happen to those who don't believe in Jesus? Will they go to heaven?"
- "Is it judgmental to affirm that those who don't believe in Jesus will go to hell?"
- "Does it bother you to say that 'only those with faith in Jesus can go to heaven'?"
- "Does it bother you that this will condemn over half the world's population to hell (i.e., all those

who reject Jesus as the Messiah and Savior, like Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, etc.)?”

The above scriptures, coupled with these questions, will lead anyone with a respect for the Bible to the conclusion that many in our world are going to be lost.

This sad reality is precisely what Jesus taught in Matthew 7:13-14 – “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.”

To affirm that many are going to be lost and few are going to heaven is not judgmental; it is the truth of God’s word! This is an important point to stress.

From there I would focus upon Matthew 7:21-23 and some related questions. Jesus said – “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’” (cf. Luke 6:46).

- “What will happen to those who believe in Jesus, but don’t do the Father’s will? Will they go to heaven?”
- “Is it judgmental to affirm that those who don’t do the will of the Father will go to hell?”
- “Does it bother you to say that ‘only those who do the will of the Father can go to heaven?’”
- “Does it bother you that this will condemn many who claim to follow Christ but aren’t really doing God’s will?”

Matthew 7:21-23 is very powerful and explicit. The one I am speaking

with may start to struggle here. He may want to avoid this passage or focus on something else, but I will (if necessary) keep bringing him back to it kindly, yet firmly, with questions.

Christ’s words are clear, and I want the person I am speaking with to acknowledge the reality that only those who do the will of the Father can go to heaven. Therefore, it is implicitly true that those who do not do the will of the Father will go to hell. To affirm this is not judgmental; it is God’s truth (whether we like it or not). One cannot accept part of what God’s word teaches and reject other portions he finds less appealing. That will never work.

Now we’re ready to deal with the original question (or accusation) more specifically: “Do you think that only members of the church of Christ will go to heaven?”

I would ask at this point: “**What does the phrase ‘church of Christ’ mean to you?**”

If he indicates that he views it as a name and therefore a denomination (as if it is just one small part of the universal church), then I would ask: “**Does Scripture give a formal name to the church that Jesus built?**”

I believe the answer is “no.” God does not name it, but He does describe it in Scripture.

If someone pointed to my residence and said, “That’s the house of Stephen,” we would understand it as a description, not a name. The phrase “house of Stephen” means that the house belongs to Stephen; it is Stephen’s house. Likewise, the phrase “church of Christ” is a description, not a name (though some are careless with this distinction and consequently cause much confusion).

“Church of Christ” means that the church belongs to Christ; it is Christ’s church! That’s all I mean when I use the phrase. It might be necessary at this point to spend some time addressing the concept that there is only one church (i.e., the one that Jesus built; cf. Mat-

thew 16:18). There is only “one body” (Ephesians 4:4) and that “the church” is “His body” (Ephesians 1:22-23).

From there I would ask: “**Will Jesus save anyone who is not in His church?**” If the reply given is “yes,” I would ask for biblical evidence for that view.

Scripture should be explored to show that Jesus will save His church – the body (cf. Ephesians 5:23). He will save those who obey Him (cf. Hebrews 5:9).

Furthermore, “**How does one get in Jesus’ church?**” Taking time to go through the gospel plan of salvation is important here. There are a host of verses that clearly show the need for one to develop faith, repent of sin, confess Christ, and be immersed in water for forgiveness (cf. John 8:24; Luke 13:3; Romans 10:9,10; Acts 2:38; 22:16; etc.).

Those who are saved are automatically added to Jesus’ church by God (cf. Acts 2:47). That’s what the church is today – those who have been saved by grace through faith! One cannot be saved from sin today without being in Jesus’ church. If so, where is the biblical evidence?

2 Timothy 2:10 reveals that salvation is “*in Christ Jesus*” and Galatians 3:27 teaches that one must be “*baptized into Christ*.” Bible baptism is the culminating act that puts one into Jesus’ church, which is where the saved are today.

Once added to the church, it is up to that individual to remain faithful and to continue doing the Father’s will that he might one day go to heaven (cf. Matthew 10:22; Revelation 2:10). Such a one will believe, practice, and teach the pure, unadulterated gospel of Christ – nothing more and nothing less (cf. Galatians 1:6-9). Tragically, there are many (according to Jesus Himself in Matthew 7:21-23) who claim allegiance to Christ, but their claim is empty and hopeless since they do not do the Father’s will.

If I combine all of the above principles, I can now rephrase the question and ask: “**Do you think that today only**

those who faithfully do God's will and are in Jesus' church will go to heaven?" Now that our terms have been clarified and we have consulted Scripture, I will gladly answer "yes" to that question. To answer in that fashion is not judgmental; it is what God's word teaches.

Friends, when it comes to salvation, I am not the judge and neither are you. If God says someone is saved, then I can say that. If God says someone is lost, I can say that too (though it gives me no pleasure to do so).

God is always right! Let us close with 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9, which powerfully reiterates some of the principles we've considered, as Jesus will return "in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power."

Friends, do you know God and have you obeyed the gospel of Christ? You must if you want to be among the few on the narrow path to life! You must be a faithful member of the church that belongs to Jesus if you want to go to heaven. If we can be of service to you in any way, please do not hesitate to contact us.

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## **The Days of Noah**

Owen D. Olbricht

Noah was an unusual man for his time. He lived ten generations after Adam and before God promised Abraham that He would bless all nations of the earth through one of his descendants (Genesis 22:18). We learn later that this blessing came through Jesus (Galatians 3:16). Noah may not have known of the promised eternal life that would come through Jesus.

### **Family Influence**

By tracing Noah's genealogy back to Adam, we learn he was a descendant of Seth (Genesis 5:3), Enoch (Genesis 5:19), and Lamech (Genesis 5:26). His great-grandfather Enoch was taken by God so that he did not see death because "he walked with God" (Genesis 5:24), and "he pleased God" (Hebrews 11:5).

Noah's father, Lamech, the grandson of righteous Enoch, may have been a God-fearing man, for he named his son Noah, a name that means God will give comfort, rest, or relief.

Being dedicated to God, Noah's ancestors may have influenced him to live a godly life. Like his great-grandfather, Enoch, Noah walked with God (Genesis 6:9).

### **Noah's Character**

The civilization in which Noah lived was an extremely evil one, but Noah did not follow their ways. Instead, he pleased God and "found grace [favor] in the eyes of the Lord" (Genesis 6:8). "Noah was a just [righteous; NASB] man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God" (Genesis 6:9).

Noah's character can be seen in building the ark. God gave him specifications for the construction of the ark.

Observe, "Make yourself an ark of gopherwood, make rooms in the ark, and cover it inside and outside with pitch....The length of the ark shall be three hundred cubits, its width fifty

cubits, and its height thirty cubits. You shall make a window for the ark, and you shall finish it with a cubit from above, and set the door of the ark in its side, You shall make it with lower, second, and third decks" (Genesis 6:14-16).

After Noah had finished the ark, the statement is made, "Thus Noah did, according to all that God commanded him, so he did" (Genesis 6:22).

Along with building the ark, Noah's righteousness can also be seen in his immediate action after he and his family were brought safely through the flood. After leaving the ark, He built an altar and offered sacrifice to God, an offering that pleased God (Genesis 8:20-21).

### **Noah's World**

The world in which Noah lived had become very corrupt. Note, "Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5).

Moreover, "The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. So God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on earth" (Genesis 6:11-12).

Living in such an evil world would have been treacherous and unsafe. Such an environment with everyone "living it up" could have influenced Noah to be a part of it, but instead of letting it influence him, he tried to influence it.

### **Faith of Noah**

While Noah was preaching and working to prepare the ark for the flood, the world about him was partying, "For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage" (Matthew 24:38).

Noah could have "thrown in the towel" and said, "I am missing out on all the fun. Why struggle to go upstream when everyone else is carefree and happy as they float downstream?" But he had faith in God and not in the people

who lived around him, so he did not join them and say, "Everyone else is doing it."

Because Noah and his family were the only ones not joining the crowd, his righteous life and obedience to God most likely led those who lived around him to consider him an "odd ball." But this did not deter Noah. "By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith" (Hebrews 11:7).

Instead of living like the world around him, Noah tried to change the lives of those around him. We can imagine that the sight of the construction of such a large boat raised the curiosity of the people, which would cause them to come to Noah and ask, "What are you doing and why are you doing it?" Questions like that would have given Noah an opening to preach repentance to all who asked.

Peter called Noah "a preacher of righteous" (2 Peter 2:5). Noah probably preached about a long-suffering God, and how God was giving the wicked world a chance to repent, until the building of the ark was completed, before He would destroy that sinful generation (1 Peter 3:20; 2 Peter 3:9).

While Noah was building an ark to float in a flood of water, a flood like he had not seen and could not know for sure it was coming, he acted by faith. He "became the heir of the righteousness which is according to faith" (Hebrews 11:7b).

### A Type of Our Salvation

Peter used Noah's family, being saved in the ark by water, as an antitype of our salvation through the water of baptism. An antitype, Greek *antitupos*, is the reality of which something is a type.

God sent water to carry to safety Noah's family who was in the ark, which

is a type of the reality, our salvation by the water of baptism. Another way of stating it is that salvation by the water of baptism is the reality of which Noah's salvation by water in the ark is a type.

The water of baptism is our part in our salvation while the blood of Jesus and his resurrection is Jesus' part. Without Jesus, baptism will not save us, and without baptism Jesus will not save us (Mark 16:16). The blood of Jesus is *what* washes away our sins (Revelation 1:5); and baptism is *when* our sins are washed away by the blood of Jesus (Acts 22:16).

### Preservation of the Human Race

Through the righteous act of Noah in building the ark, the human race was preserved, but only through Noah and his family. Israel had become so corrupt that if Noah, Job, and Daniel were living among them, they would be able to save only themselves by their righteousness (Ezekiel 14:14, 20).

The lives of the most righteous people may not be able to influence the multitude that has gone astray to turn to the Lord. They may be able to save only themselves as also was the case of Lot.

### Conclusion

As Christians, we are to be a light to the world (Matthew 5:14-16), while we hold forth the word of life (Philippians 2:15, 17). Even if our generation becomes corrupt, we are to continue to be faithful to God.

Paul's admonition is one we should constantly keep in mind, "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of our mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable will of God (Romans 12:2).

None of us may become the person to save our generation, but we can try to make an impact wherever we are. God expects no more of us.

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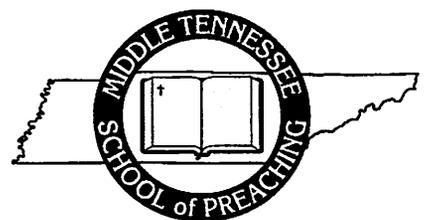
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## THE HOME: ITS DIVINE ORIGIN

Rod Rutherford

Society's concept of the home is evolving according to some sociologists, anthropologists, and feminists. The Judaeo-Christian idea of the home as consisting of a father and mother who are married and committed to one another for life with the children they have given birth to or legally adopted has become old fashioned and out of date. It no longer meets the needs of our changing and progressive lifestyle, some of these "experts" are saying. Various forms have been suggested to take the place of the family as set forth in God's word.

Some have suggested that marriage licenses should be renewable every four or five years. If a relationship is not working out, it would be easy to discard it without having to go through a messy divorce. Others are suggesting alternatives to the biblical model such as polygamous or polyandrous arrangements. A former first lady of our nation even advocated that children should be allowed to divorce their parents. Several states have now legalized the perversion of same sex marriages. A growing number today are ignoring all marriage concepts and are simply living together without complying with any societal or legal standards. The Bible plainly calls this fornication (Hebrews 13:4).

God ordained the home on the sixth day of creation. Therefore, the home is a divine institution. The Creator of man knows man and his needs better than any man or group of men ever will. He created a basic unit of society suited to the needs of man in all ages. No improvement

upon it can be made! Instead of trying to adapt the home to man's changing ideas, man needs to submit himself to God's plan. Only then will he find happiness and fulfillment. Only then will society have the stability and security provided by its basic building block, the home. Only then will the myriad of problems in society which have their root in the dissolution of the home disappear.

When God had created the heavens and the earth and all things in them, He created man on the sixth day when all was in readiness for him. Man was the crowning act of God's creation (Genesis 1:26-28). He formed man out of the dust of the earth (Genesis 2:7). He placed man in the beautiful Garden of Eden and gave him satisfying work to do - to tend and keep the garden (Genesis 2:15).

God then said: "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him" (Gen. 2:18, NKJV). God caused all the animals to pass before the man, Adam, and Adam named them. This interesting statement follows: "But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him" (Genesis 2:20). Man needed a companion on his level. Not only did he need someone suitable for him physically, but he also needed someone on his intellectual, emotional, and spiritual level.

None of the animals was able to meet this need. Therefore, "the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the

Lord God had taken from man, He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man" (Genesis 2:21-22). God united the first man and the first woman in marriage on the day the human race was created. At this time He laid down His basic law of marriage for all ages: "Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh" (Genesis 2:24).

Let us note the following conclusions from this inspired account: first, God created a woman for the man to be his "helper comparable to him." Only a woman can fulfill the God given purpose of marriage "to be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it."

The idea that another man can fill this need is ludicrous, contrary to nature, and a perversion of God's plan. Is it any wonder that God called it "an abomination" and pronounced the death penalty for it in the Law of Moses (Leviticus 18:22; 20:13)? Under the Law of Christ, Paul paints the picture of man's descent into sin as reaching its lowest point in the practice of homosexuality and lesbianism (Romans 1:26-32).

Second, let us note that God created only one woman for the one man. This writer has lived in nations where polygamy is widely practiced. A frequent defense of this manmade arrangement is that a male needs more than one female to satisfy his sexual needs. God who made man knew what was best for the happiness of both men and women and so ordained one wife for one

man and one husband for one woman.

Our Savior restored God's original plan and purpose for marriage when He quoted this plan as stated in Genesis 2:24. As the Son of God who has all authority in heaven and on earth, He made the matter even plainer by adding the word "twain" or "two." "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?' So then, they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let not man separate" (Matthew 19:4-6, NKJV).

Third, we note that in marriage a man leaves the home in which he grew up and establishes his own home. He is now the head of his house (Ephesians 5:23). His wife is no longer subject to her parents, but her submission is to her husband (Ephesians 5:22). When one marries, he will continue to love and respect his parents, but he is now responsible for his own home. Parents will continue to love their married children and be available to help them when called upon, but they must respect the home their children have created and not interfere in it.

Finally, we note that God's marriage plan is for life. What God has joined together, man must not separate! Paul's reference to marriage under the Law makes it clear that a lifetime commitment was God's original intention (Romans 7:1-4). We might summarize God's marriage plan succinctly by saying, "Marriage as God ordained it consists of one man and one wife for life!" Jesus gave only one exception to this law: "And I say

to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for fornication, and marries another commits adultery; and whosoever marries her who is put away commits adultery" (Matthew 19:9). Only when one's marriage partner is sexually unfaithful to him, does the innocent partner have the right to divorce his mate and remarry. Any other instance of divorce and remarriage is sin.

We must teach God's plan of marriage to our children and grandchildren! It must be taught to the church because more and more members of the church are either ignoring or rejecting the simple, scriptural teaching on this vital subject. We must also teach the world because few indeed today have a clue about what the Bible says regarding this most basic of all institutions - the home as God ordained it.

When vacationing in the Great Smoky Mountains, plan to worship with the **Gatlinburg church of Christ**. We are a small, friendly congregation striving to walk in the old paths of truth and righteousness. We are located at the corner of Reagan Drive and Trinity Lane three tenths of a mile from the main street of Gatlinburg going toward the National Park. Turn left on Reagan Drive when you see Ripley's Believe It or Not. Our "A" frame building is on the left. If you are thinking of retiring, there is no better place than Gatlinburg. There are beautiful mountains with dozens of hiking trails, all types of entertainment, skiing, shopping and restaurants, and arts and crafts of every kind. The church is small and needs your help. Contact us at 865-859-0717 if you are interested.

Rod Rutherford, evangelist  
[rodutherford@comcast.net]

### This Month in Restoration History

April 13-21, 1829 – The Campbell-Owen Debate: Alexander Campbell's third debate was with the atheist Robert Owen. This debate was held April 13-21, 1829 in Cincinnati, Ohio. The debate was held in the largest Methodist church building in the city and a former mayor of Cincinnati, Jacob Burnet, was one of the moderators. On the final day of the debate there were 1,200 present. During this debate Campbell gave an affirmative speech which lasted for 12 hours (2 sessions daily for 3 days). You can find this speech beginning with his twenty-second reply in the written record of the debate. At the conclusion of the debate, Campbell asked those who favored Christianity to stand. All but three stood.

April 16, 1861 – The question of whether or not to fight in the War Between the States heats up among brethren. The possibility of taking a brother's life in this war was very real. With that in mind, Benjamin Franklin writes to J.W. McGarvey saying, "I would rather, ten thousand times, be killed for refusing to fight than to fall in battle or to come home with the blood of my brethren on my hands."

April 23, 1861 – The great evangelist Walter Scott passes due to typhoid pneumonia. It was Walter Scott who perhaps more than any other (according to Thomas Campbell) put into practice the message of restoration. He fearlessly preached that baptism was on the basis of faith and for the remission of sins. The simplicity of his preaching led thousands to obey the Lord.

April 18, 1897 – N.B. Hardeman preaches his first sermon at Enville, TN, using Romans 1:16-17 as his text.

[Many thanks are due to John T. Smithson, III for his work *Tracing Our Steps, vol. I-II*, which expedites our study for this column. To purchase a copy of this work, contact Sam Hester, Henderson, TN (shester@fhu.edu).

## Remembering Perry B. Cotham

Andrew D. Erwin



On February 26, 2013, one of the great preachers on the twentieth century closed his marvelous earthly story. We speak of brother Perry B. Cotham.

### Early Life

Brother Cotham was born January 5, 1912 near Murray, Kentucky. His parents were Ben and Nannie (Boyd) Cotham. Mrs. Nannie Cotham died when Perry was in the 8th grade. Her death led to Perry taking on more work on the farm and in the family to help his father care for two younger brothers.

The Cotham family was faithful to the Lord, and members of the Antioch church of Christ, south of Farmington, Kentucky. Mrs. Nannie read the Bible and Bible stories to Perry from his earliest remembrance. As long as he could remember, brother Cotham wanted to be a preacher, and could recall that while he was a boy he would pretend to preach from a buggy to some of the children in the neighborhood and baptized sticks.

In addition to monthly preaching appointments booked by the Antioch congregation, beginning the third Sunday in July, the congregation would conduct an annual gospel meeting. During his boyhood, brother Cotham was blessed to hear the truth taught by such men as Ira and Boone Douthitt, John B. Hardeman, Jewell W. Norman, Fred W. Chunn, and A. G. Freed.

In his younger years, Perry Cotham was greatly influenced by Jewell W. Norman and Ira Douthitt because of their example of good preaching and their personal dedication.

Brother Perry was baptized by Ira Douthitt in July of 1927, along with

James W. Shockley, who also became a gospel preacher.

In the fall of 1929, Perry Cotham entered Freed-Hardeman College. He took his first trip on a train from Mayfield, Kentucky, to enroll in classes.

Brother Cotham soon came to love and appreciate all of his teachers and the student body. Hugo and Lois McCord, Adron Doran, and J. A. McNutt were some of his classmates.

### Begins Preaching

It was while he was a student at FHC that brother Perry began preaching. Shortly after he enrolled in FHC he was asked to speak on a Wednesday night service. At that time the church was meeting in the administration building (the church building had been partially destroyed by fire). He spoke on Abraham, a "Man of Great Faith."

Brother Perry would readily admit he was scared half to death speaking before N. B. Hardeman, L. L. Brigance, C. P. Roland, other teachers and their families, plus the members and the students. However, after he had finished, brother Hardeman arose and said many nice compliments about the talk, easing brother Cotham's mind. N. B. Hardeman had great influence in brother Cotham's life. Of Hardeman, brother Cotham would say, "He was a great teacher of the Bible and a wonderful speaker."

To his delight, brother Cotham soon was preaching in nearby country churches and gaining much needed experience. The pay was very little, due to the stock market crash that had occurred in October of that year.

From FHC, he enrolled in Murray State University and graduated in June of 1934 with a B. A. Degree. While a student in Murray State, he preached on Sundays and conducted gospel meetings. His first gospel meeting was in Athens, Ohio and lasted for five weeks.

### As a Local Evangelist

Brother Cotham's amazing life consists of two full lives! He lived a full life as a local evangelist (37 years) and he lived a full life as a traveling evangelist (over forty years).

His first full-time local work was in Shawnee, Oklahoma, beginning in October of 1934. While in Shawnee he married his bride of 62 years, Teresa Overby, on June 25, 1936. Her father was a preacher. To this union God gave three children.

Brother Cotham also preached in Oklahoma City, Wewoka, and Duncan, Oklahoma; and in Paris, Grand Prairie, and Big Spring, Texas.

### As a Traveling Evangelist

In 1971, brother Cotham left located evangelistic work to become a fulltime traveling evangelist. This work took him into all of the fifty states of America and into all the inhabited continents of the world (over sixty nations).

During this time brother Cotham wrote and distributed fourteen different tracts, which were also translated and printed in a number of different languages.

### As a Debater

Three of Perry Cotham's debates were published. All three of them dealt with the issue of miracles and the operation of the Holy Spirit today.

From March 31-April 2, 1981, brother Perry debated John Hartley. The debate took place in Melbourne, Australia at the Belmore Road meetinghouse.

In this debate, Hartley claimed to have the same powers which existed in the apostolic age. Hence, he would be able to drink poison and live (per Mark 16:18). Brother Cotham challenged this claim with a concoction he implied was poison. The potion would have caused vomiting and diarrhea if Mr. Hartley had chosen to drink it. However, Hartley

avoided the little bottle throughout the debate. It is believed that Hartley lost many of his followers as a result of this debate.

Perry B. Cotham also debated Billy Davis, of Macon, Georgia, on the Godhead and miracles today. The debate was held in the Swainsboro, Georgia high school auditorium December 7-10, 1986.

Years later, brother Cotham recalled that "Shortly after the debate the Pentecostal church closed up and the local preacher, who served as one of the moderators, moved out of town."

Mr. Davis promised to have another debate, this time in Texas, but he would never respond to any calls or answer any letters. Thus, no further debate was held.

The third debate which was published was the Cotham-John Debate. This debate was conducted in Grand Rapids, Michigan in the meeting house of the Eastern Avenue church of Christ on July 17-18, 1989.

Concerning debates, brother Perry believed that "there has been a decline in debating in the past few years, largely due to the fact that preachers are not exposing religious errors in their preaching as was formerly done."

Brother Cotham stated, "We have lost interest in trying to convert people from the denominational world," and that "some preachers are not studying the religious errors and how to meet them, and many members of the church do not want debates. A few may have been conducted in the wrong spirit and this has hurt debating."

### Exhorting Fellow Preachers

Perry B. Cotham strongly believed in placing an emphasis on the fundamentals of the New Testament church. He believed the distinction between the Lord's church and denominationalism was clearly drawn by earlier gospel preachers and that many people were converted to simple New Testament

Christianity because of this type of preaching.

He realized that in recent years preachers have developed a style in which "a more or less general attitude that all sincere, religious people are Christians and the church of our Lord is just another denomination." He believed "Due to this type of preaching the church has not been growing as it did some 75 to 50 years ago."

Brother Cotham encouraged his fellow preachers of the need for Christians to be taught the importance of living the Christian life and adding the Christian graces, but he also saw that "the lack of preaching on other basic principles of the faith has weakened, and continues to weaken, the glorious plea for a return to 'the Old Paths,' as given by the pioneers of the gospel."

"Look back on when the gospel was distinctively preached," brother Cotham said, "the Lord's church was recognized as the fastest growing religious body in America. The brotherhood needs to return to the type of preaching that was done many years ago. If our young people are not taught the truths of New Testament Christianity, we will go again into digression."

When asked for any word of encouragement to give to young preachers, he said:

- "I would encourage the young preachers to study the Bible more than books by sectarian scholars who write about the Bible. Buy good old books of the brotherhood and study them, especially all the old debate books that are possible. It is not necessary to have a large library and never use the books, but have a few good, valuable books and study them carefully along with the Bible."
- "Too, do all the preaching you can; hold meetings, mission meetings, pay or no pay. One cannot learn to preach without preaching, any more than one can learn how to swim

without getting into the water and practicing."

- "One should not preach for pay; he gets paid for preaching, but always, 'Preach the word' (2 Timothy 4:1-2; 1 Peter 4:11). We should never lose sight of the fact that God's power to save is in the gospel. So, preach the gospel with conviction and for the love of lost souls."

### An Enduring Legacy

Brother Perry was not only beloved by the brethren where he preached, and in the area where he preached and lived, but also throughout the brotherhood the world over.

As a local evangelist he was beloved by the congregations where he preached, and the area congregations. He was always in great demand to conduct gospel meetings, and brethren could rely on him to preach and defend the truth.

His numerous tracts have blessed many and led countless souls to a closer relationship with Christ. He also wrote a book of sermons on conversion, and his last book was titled "Beyond the Sunset" which treated the subject of last things.

Only heaven knows the depth of brother Perry's contribution to the brotherhood throughout the world. An estimated 15,000 souls were brought to Christ resulting from his missionary efforts in India alone.

The contribution he made as a teacher of fellow preachers is immeasurable. He has taught on hundreds of brotherhood lectureships, taught at various schools of preaching throughout the world, and in his later years he was able to instruct young preachers while they studied at the Brown Trail School of Preaching.

Brother Perry Cotham will be remembered as a faithful and godly man. He was a true soldier of the cross. While we will miss him, we are also happy for him, knowing that he has now attained the prize for which he dedicated his life.

## PROSPECTING FOR SOULS IN EVANGELISM

Roger Shepherd

The personal teacher has prospects. Prospecting for people to teach the gospel is about 50% of personal teaching.

### Who Is a Prospect?

Who is a prospect? A prospect for teaching is someone who is not right now experiencing the forgiveness of sins in Christ and faithfully serving Him in the church looking forward to a crown of life in heaven.

We come in contact daily with souls who are lost (Romans 3:23; 6:23). We contact people at church and from house to house who are not faithfully following Christ (Revelation 2:10).

The church loses an estimated 85% of members between the ages of 18 to 25 each year to unfaithfulness. These Christians are lost if someone does not reach them with the gospel (James 5:19)!

We come in contact with many good prospects without leaving our neighborhood. The story was told of a man named El Hor Fad who lived in a little house on a few beautiful acres of land. He became interested and very ambitious in looking for diamonds. His whole life became consumed with locating diamonds!

One day he decided to sell his little humble home and travel to the uttermost parts of the earth to search for diamonds. After the man sold his property the new owner one day saw something on the ground glittering in the sun. When analyzed, it was found to be diamonds! In fact, it was soon discovered that the property contained literally acres of diamonds. They were there under El Hor Fad's feet all the time, while he was elsewhere looking for diamonds.

We should not be guilty of overlooking precious souls who may live next door. Jesus commissioned the apostles to go into all the world beginning in Je-

rusalem (Luke 24:47). There are over seven billion people in the world today that will spend eternity in heaven or hell. There are 99 people dying somewhere in the world each minute; many will die lost without the Savior. What are we doing about the lost?

The best prospects are those you know personally. You must first consider who contacted you with the gospel: family, friends, neighbors, an elder of the church, deacon, preacher, etc.? You must look up – the fields are white unto harvest (John 4:34-38)!

Jesus taught the apostles to teach as they go among the sick, the diseased, and many other lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew 10:8). The "harvest is truly plentiful, but the workers are few" (Matthew 9:37). How many lost people do you know?

### The Availability of Prospects

Prospects are everywhere! Consider "Who do you know?" The church is in the people business. The people you are seeking to help save with the gospel must be more than a thought or imagination. They are to be identified by name. In personal teaching, people are in one of four groups:

- Souls to Teach: "And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature'" (Mark 16:15).
- Souls to Restore: "Brethren, even if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself, lest you also be tempted" (Galatians 6:1).
- Souls to Encourage: "Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the faint-hearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all" (1 Thessalonians 5:14).
- Souls to Help: "We then who are strong ought to bear with the scrup-

ples of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification" (Romans 15:1-3).

Obtaining and developing contacts for personal Bible studies is a practice with personal teachers. The personal teacher is surrounded with good teachable prospects. The personal teacher has an awareness of constantly looking for contacts or prospects wherever he/she goes.

How would you evaluate yourself in this regard? For example, do you love people? Do you enjoy talking to people? Do you believe people are lost without Christ? Do you know lost people?

### Who Do You Know?

A successful personal teacher realizes that he/she is in the people business. The people you contact at church, in the community, at school, and in the work place who you are seeking to save are of first priority.

They are to be identified by name. Remember, a person's name is the greatest sound to the prospect.

The following areas in life are places to locate prospects beginning with the most significant one first:

- Visitors in worship (Acts 2:1, 6, 38-47)
- Visitors in Bible classes
- Referrals from new converts, family, members, friends, etc. (John 4:15, 28-42)
- Your friends (John 1:43-46)
- Your family (John 1:36-42)
- Your neighbors (Luke 10:29-37)
- The hurting and the rejoicing (Romans 12:15).

The successful personal teacher continues to find effective ways to get people to attend worship and Bible classes

that are designed to teach the gospel. Such a person is searching for the lost.

What is the best way to get visitors to attend worship, Bible class, and home studies?

- Adapt/relate to the needs of people. Reach out!
- Show them that we care about their spiritual needs.
- Have person to person contact.
- Make a list of the people you know.
- Invite them.
- Be Friendly.
- Bring them to worship and classes.

### Conclusion

Do you really believe people are lost? This belief, coupled with love for God and others, is the greatest motivation in looking for and teaching the lost.

Picture yourself dropping a stone into a pool of water. Then watch the ripples go and go. Picture you and your congregation conducting a "Ripple Campaign for Christ" and begin teaching one soul, and then it ripples out to hundreds of people being saved. Think about! It works!

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## 7 P's of Effective Teaching

Brandon Renfroe

Christianity is a taught religion. Before one can come to God by means of His Son, he must be properly instructed (John 6:45). Although not everyone can teach in the public setting, it seems that God expects for all His children to teach in some capacity (Hebrews 5:12). What requisites should prospective teachers—and especially those who would teach publicly—seek to cultivate?

### Purity

Teachers should possess a twofold purity: of life and of doctrine. We often talk about practicing what we preach; perhaps we should instead seek to preach what we have first lived. The ready scribe Ezra endeavored to "seek," "do," and "teach" the law of the Lord (Ezra 7:10). The order is significant. In the opening chapter of Acts, Luke made reference to all that Jesus began both "to do and teach" (Acts 1:1). While all human teachers have flaws, nothing will stunt a message quicker than overt hypocrisy in the teacher.

### Purpose

What is the religious teacher's ultimate goal? As Paul told Timothy, it is to "save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Timothy 4:16). Everything else must be filtered through this lens if our teaching is to be focused and purposeful. The "purpose principle" applies even to individual lessons: effective teachers constantly ask, "What am I trying to accomplish?" Asking this question helps to keep lessons from veering off track.

### Preparation

William Barclay said that what happens in the pulpit or on the platform depends almost entirely on what has already happened in the study and at the desk. There is no substitute for proper preparation when it comes to teaching. Those who wait until Saturday night to begin work towards Sunday morning

have students who can't wait for the proverbial "bell" to ring, finally putting them out of their misery. Not all possess innate teaching or speaking ability, but every single person can be prepared! Paul's instructions to Timothy again are pertinent (1 Timothy 4:13, 15).

### Passion

Effective teachers are passionate. This does not mean they are bombastic or buffoonish; rather, it means they believe fervently in what they are doing—and their students can sense it. Barclay's words are appropriate: "More than half the problem of teaching lies, not in the communication of knowledge, but in the communication of enthusiasm" (*Fishers of Men*, p. 84). Better than Barclay is the example of Jeremiah: "There is in my heart as it were a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I am weary with holding it in, and I cannot" (Jeremiah 20:9).

### Plainness

No matter how prepared or enthused the teacher is, if they cannot be understood their efforts are to no avail. Go back and read the parables of Jesus—He taught in such a way that regular folks understood him. In one of his famous "Tabernacle Sermons," N.B. Hardeman said: "I love to preach so that folks will know what I'm talking about, and if I had all the education in the world, I think I'd still have sense enough not to try to delve into things concerning which the audience knows absolutely nothing" (Volume 4, p. 137). Pay attention to Paul: "I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue" (1 Corinthians 14:19). If you are over their heads, go back to the drawing board.

### Patience

This one is difficult to cultivate, but nonetheless necessary. Even the teacher's very best efforts will rarely yield immediate results. Don't despair; just realize that gospel seed sometimes takes years to germinate. Losing your cool just once—even with a "problem" stu-

dent—can do irreparable damage. The Lord’s servant, in contrast, must be patient (2 Timothy 2:24). Has God been patient with us? Then may we “go, and do likewise” with others.

**Prayer**

Perhaps the most overlooked requisite of successful teaching is prayer. Before we stand before others, we should kneel before God. As Wendell Winkler used to say, “Trying to win souls without prayer is trying to do God’s work without God’s help.” Pray that you will not get in the way of the message. Pray for those who hear you—that their hearts may be receptive to divine truth. Pray that God will be glorified by your efforts.

The influence of an effective teacher cannot be overstated. As one writer observed, every teacher has an impact—but great teachers make a difference.

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**Are the Words All that Matter?**

Andy Robison

In regard to congregational singing, oft is offered the quip: “Well, the words are all that matter, anyway.” This is a comfort to tone-deaf worshippers. But, the secular, well-intentioned proverb may be employed too far.

If the words were, indeed, all that mattered, perhaps God would have said something like, “Recite to one another in poems, rhymes, and spiritual verse.”

Could it be that the musical setting (a cappella) has more importance than often afforded?

Making music is an emotional activity. Composers of purely instrumental music (from symphonies and operas to punk rock and country) work to construct the chord progression, melodies, and harmonies to create a mood, often mirroring some occasion or historic event.

A fanfare for Olympic Games is an upbeat call to competition and potential triumph – a memorable melodic line punctuated with quick punches of harmonic brass. A mournful dirge, by contrast, might employ low strings in slow, solemn movements.

In authorized a cappella singing for congregations, the music generally fits the words. “Nearer My God, to Thee” would never be set to a driving rhythm (as in “Ring Out the Message”).

The thrill of “The New Song” is best with its buoyant beat and majestic chorus. It would not work with a contemplative chant-like feel similar to, “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross.” The musical composers seek to amplify the impact of the wording.

Singing might be viewed as the divinely authorized outlet for human emotion. Many sectarian groups take

emotionalism to unscriptural levels—mistaking shaking and rolling, hand-waving and moaning for being Spirit-filled. They do so despite God’s law (1 Corinthians 14:40).

God has thought this through, and has given us an avenue to express how we feel toward Him (and even others) at particular moments. This is why some of the deepest emotions of grief, sorrow, bitterness, joy, victory, and praise appealing to all generations are found in the book of...you guessed it...Psalms.

The Psalms were originally sung. Perhaps this is one reason (it is certainly at least a result) that singing was chosen as the authorized use of music in worship.

Instrumental music can make one feel a certain way without an intellectual reason as to why. With singing, the intellect is employed first

and foremost. One knows he is surveying the scene of the wondrous cross. Then, the music helps amplify the thought.

It behooves the brethren, then, to work on singing to the best of their abilities. God bless the monotone worshiper who “lets it fly” upon the song-leader’s cue.

However, those who excuse themselves flippantly from ever trying to understand pitch, tone, phrasing, harmony, and all the things that make singing more meaningful are missing a great opportunity in the service of God.

In order to “consider one another” (cf. Hebrews 10:24-25) in the worship setting, should we not aim at improvement in every aspect of worship—from attention in study to expression in song?

Words matter. Without the words, there would not be any teaching or admonishing. But remember, without the music (a cappella), there would not be any singing or song.

## Let Each One Take Heed

(Part 2)

Grady Miller

In our first look at Paul’s important admonition in 1 Corinthians 3, we gave notice to the apostle’s emphasis that God’s messengers — even an apostle! — are only servants of the Lord Jesus, seed-planters and water-bearers (verse 7).

The favorite teachers and preachers that some in Corinth regarded as party champions were but field hands and day laborers (verses 9–11). Certainly, there is a great privilege in preaching the unsearchable riches of the gospel. But we must never forget the message of the cross is far more important than the voice of the messenger (1:18, 21).

We now turn our attention to another important observation the apostle offered in this text:

“For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is. If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire” (3:11–15).

If the statement is generally true that just about every verse in the Bible has been wrested, misunderstood, and misapplied by someone, somewhere, at some time, then it will come as no surprise that this passage has also been made to teach something Paul never intended.

Roman Catholicism treats these verses as a proof text for the doctrine of purgatory. In other words, our life (“each one’s work, anyone’s work”) will be purged by divine fire in the hereafter.

“Ore mined from the earth is purified and refined in the heat of the smelter, yielding the valuable metals of silver, iron, or copper after the baser metals and slag is separated in the furnace. Just so, the failures, disappointments, sins and transgressions found in the life of even a good man are burned up in the fires of purgatory, yielding a soul now fit for heaven, where he will spend the rest of eternity.”

J. W. McGarvey refuted that preposterous assertion. “There is no hint that the evil in the individual is purged by fire, leaving a residuum of righteousness. Our sins are not purged by fire, but by the blood of Christ...” (*Thessalonians, Corinthians, Galatians and Romans*, p. 65).

Calvinism reads into this passage the false premise of “once saved, always saved” or the impossibility of apostasy. They argue that Paul has in mind the “P” in the TULIP acronym — the perseverance of the saints. As per this theory, the child of God may commit adultery, lie, cheat, steal, or kill, but he will still be saved. Those wicked deeds will rob him of joy and influence, the spiritual harvest he would otherwise reap. But his soul will survive, if barely. His eternal reward will pale if compared to others who serve the Lord with all their heart and might.

This passage is not a proof text for Calvinism, but a proof text against “once saved, always saved!” Good students of the word will read this passage and anchor these verses in the context of God’s messengers or servants — teachers and preachers. That’s the “who” Paul addressed when he warned, “Let each one take heed how he builds...if anyone builds on this foundation” (verses 10, 12). The “what” was their business or activity in God’s service as those ministers built upon the foundation of Jesus Christ and made disciples (verse 11). The “work” — a noun, and not a verb, found four times in three verses (13–15) — was the fruit or result of preaching and teaching, the converts brought to

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Jesus. And the “why” was because Judgment Day will reveal whether the fruit of one’s ministry will “endure” (“survives,” ESV; “remains,” NASB; “abide,” KJV).

God’s servant is to build on the foundation of Jesus Christ, plant and water the seed of the gospel, and labor in God’s field to bring in a harvest of souls. The measure of an effective preacher and teacher is the influence he wields on the disciples he makes. He nurtures, guides, counsels, shepherds, and safeguards them as they are babes in Christ. His greatest joy is seeing them grow up in Jesus and become pillars of the faith, imitators of God, examples of love and devotion to others, committed to sowing the seed and reaching others for the Lord.

These words were a stinging rebuke to the haughtiness and pride of the Corinthians. Their glory in the polished rhetoric of their favorite teachers, their boasting in men they judged most capable and superior to all others, was sadly misplaced. In truth, they regarded the wisdom of men — excellence of speech — more highly than the power of God (2:1-5). While Paul simply preached Jesus when he was among them in the beginning, they soon began to quarrel and divide over which messenger best presented the message. The “Corinthian system” resulted in disciples stalled in their spiritual growth, envious of other saints, suspicious, argumentative, judgmental, and — in a word — “carnal” (3:1-4).

That’s what happens when the church takes her focus off the message of Jesus and His way, and dotes on those teachers who are but messengers and servants!

Can you think of a greater horror, a more tragic waste, and a more disastrous and heart wrenching failure than a teacher or preacher giving his all to make disciples and win souls for Jesus, but the Great Fire consumes and destroys his life’s work? He stands before the Lord after his lifetime of ministry “empty handed.” The preacher is saved

because he obeyed the truth, but the souls he led to the Master fell away and are lost.

When one ponders that calamity, how could certain obvious questions go unasked? For example, What was wrong with his preaching and teaching? The preacher in question had to preach the truth about Jesus. After all, he will be saved and the souls he converted at least started out right before they fell away. What went wrong? What was wrong with him? Was it his life, his attitude, his focus? Was he more interested in making disciples to himself or to the Lord? Why didn’t his ministry have lasting, staying power?

In our third and final article in this series, let us take a closer look at how one may fail in his ministry, even though he preaches the truth!

## Judgment’s Role

Ron Thomas

Christians understand the role “judgment” has in the lives of each one. We understand that we are not to use a standard of judgment that is unrighteous.

The Lord said, “[j]udge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you” (Matthew 7:1-2). Moreover, He said, “Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment” (John 7:24). Thus, we understand that the standard we are to use is to be a righteous one.

With these two passages in mind, how does this fit with the problem that one thinks is before him when Paul said *not to judge*? “Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts. Then each one’s praise will come from God” (1 Corinthians 4:5).

Paul was a preacher doing the Lord’s work. It appears from the text that some were calling into question what Paul was doing. In fact, they were calling into question not just his methods, but his motivation.

When Paul learned of this, he mentioned the following: (1) he is a servant of God, with God’s mystery of redemption in hand (if you will); (2) as a servant (or steward) he understood the importance of being faithful with that task given him (cf. Acts 26:19; 1 Timothy 1:12); (3) Paul was unaware of anything that could stand against him; (4) when others, who were members of the church, did judge him it meant nothing to him; and (5) he brings it to a close with the exhortation that Christians are to judge nothing before the proper time.

In fact, “at the proper time” is when the Lord actually does the judging (1 Corinthians 4:1-5).

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Someone might reply, "Did not Paul say we are to judge those inside (within the church) in the next chapter (5:12)?" That he did. How shall we understand that in relation to what we were told not to do?

The contexts of both chapters clear up any misunderstanding. In chapter four the problem was that Christians were engaged in judgments that belonged only to the Lord (as we mentioned above). These judgments of the heart (motivation) are made by men, utilizing a standard of evaluation that has its origin in one's personal thinking.

In chapter five the problem was failing to judge what man is obligated to judge – the outward and immoral actions of a saint. Paul called upon the brethren to address the outward actions that brought discredit upon the Lord, His church, and the family name of the guilty one.

In conclusion, we learn that man is not to transgress into an area that belongs only to the Lord. To the Lord belongs the judgment of the heart.

Second, the area the Lord obligated man to judge is in actions, regardless of the motivations. Consequently, let us be careful, brethren, when we make judgments that we only go into that area in which the Lord authorizes man to move.

We cannot live in this world without making judgments, but we can refuse to go into areas where angels do not dare to tread!

### Notice for News & Notes

Please send us your news and notes, notices of upcoming events, or reports of recent activities to be published in the *Gospel Gleaner*.

We wish to use this feature of the paper to report on the innumerable good works being accomplished by the Lord through His church all over the world.

## Things Said in Haste

John T. Polk, II

When things are said "in haste" they seldom have been thought through, and need examination. "Firing from the lip" has caused much confusion and hurt in many souls.

Jesus Christ proclaimed God's word "is truth" in prayer (John 17:17), in purpose (John 1:17), and in His power (1 John 3:8). Thoughts either stated or accepted "in haste," need a close comparison to the well thought-out word of God.

Psalm 31:22 says, "For I said in my haste, 'I am cut off from before Your eyes;' Nevertheless You heard the voice of my supplications When I cried out to You."

Someone may draw a wrong conclusion about God. David had concluded that his plight was more than God would consider, but the truth was that God had not finished with David, but heard David's supplications and delivered him. David's hasty words were not true, God's actions showed him otherwise.

Psalm 116:11 says, "I said in my haste, 'All men are liars.'" In the previous verse it was stated: "I believed, therefore I spoke, 'I am greatly afflicted.'"

To speak what one believes is not a lie but an honesty, which is why the apostle Paul quoted Psalm 116:10 in 2 Corinthians 4:13 as applying to Christians about the gospel of Christ. We must know the gospel and speak straight from our heart. But if the Psalmist is right in verse 11, that "All men are liars," then he would have spoken the truth! He would be calling himself a "liar" in verse 10 for speaking his honest belief! Hence, compared with himself, he must have spoken "in haste."

However, since God is always right in everything He has said, a person who says anything that contradicts what God

has said "is a liar" (1 John 1:10; 2:4, 22; 4:20; 5:10). Compared to God, therefore, "every man [is] a liar" (Romans 3:4) who teaches otherwise (1 Timothy 6:3-5). Jesus' birth, life, teaching, and sacrifice were to "bear witness to the truth" (John 18:37) which reflects badly on all commentators who question His story.

Some hastily say: "Everyone in the church of Christ is a hypocrite." Oh, really? The apostles Peter and Paul were hypocrites? John, "the apostle of love," was a hypocrite? The Thessalonians were hypocrites (1 Thessalonians 1:6-10)? Since Jesus Christ died for the church of Christ (Acts 20:28), is identified with the members (Acts 8:1-3; 9:4-5), is represented each Lord's Day in the assembly (1 Corinthians 11:23-26), and is the head of it (Colossians 1:18) – does that make Jesus Christ a hypocrite?

Or, are you speaking only of present-day members of the churches of Christ who are trying to: "Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 1:13)? If Jesus, His apostles, and His church members in the first century were not hypocrites, then why are people who keep His word today hypocrites?

Everyone who "holds fast the pattern of sound words" recorded in the Scriptures is practicing the same thing that Jesus and His apostles taught. If not, why not? All who make such a hasty condemnation must examine their dirty glasses through which they are looking at the churches of Christ, for: "To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled" (Titus 1:15). "Little children, let no one deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous" (1 John 3:7).

Some have hastily concluded: "Einstein's 'Theory of Relativity' shows that everything is relative, and there are no moral absolutes." Is that really so?

If the "Theory of Relativity" is true (that everything must be defined "in relation to something else"), then it is absolutely true. But if it is absolutely true, then it is NOT "relative truth!"

Science is supposed to be about facts that do not change because they may be demonstrated to be true. "Einstein's Theory" is always called a "theory" because it never has been, nor can be, demonstrated as fact!

Truth is to be defined as fact, that is, it either is or is not true. If something is a fact, then it can be demonstrated each time. An example from the Bible is: "For as the churning of milk produces butter, And wringing the nose produces blood, So the forcing of wrath produces strife" (Proverbs 30:33).

Observe: [1] Milk churned is the source of butter; [2] a nose that is wrenched bleeds; [3] therefore (parallel to these), wrath, agitated, escalates to strife. Surely no one can dispute these "facts," of: [1] scientific observation ("milk"), [2] physical response ("nose"), and [3] human behavior ("wrath").

God's word states these facts accurately, so whatever guidelines God can give about behavior should be the best way to live.

Let us illustrate with: "The beginning of strife is like releasing water; Therefore stop contention before a quarrel starts" (Proverbs 17:14); "A wrathful man stirs up strife, But he who is slow to anger allays contention" (Proverbs 15:18). The conclusion is, one must do whatever can be done to avoid heating up a wrathful situation. "If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men" (Romans 12:18).

God's word is truth (1 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Timothy 2:3-4). By following it, one will be straight-forward (Proverbs 4:20-27; Matthew 7:13-27). Thus "Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, 'If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you

free.'" (John 8:31-32).

What God condemns or commands are absolute statutes that never change, regardless of how many or how few people abide by them (Colossians 3:1-25). Each individual is not his/her "own truth," but to the extent that God's word is made the standard for thinking and conduct. His way shows through a person's obedience.

Beware of believing, echoing, or following "hasty words." One should re-think the old adage, "haste makes waste," except when obeying the Lord (Luke 19:5).

## Leaving Sin Behind

J.J. Hendrix

The Corinthian brethren certainly had issues to work out. Like any new convert, there are things that are going to take some time to understand, and with them living in an immoral place, Paul had to be direct with some of the things that were transpiring.

Paul writes, "...do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

After this list of sins was given, Paul proclaimed, "...such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God" (v.11). When we read this list of sins, followed by Paul's statement, we can reach the understanding that the Christians of Corinth had left those sins and were living a Christian life that we should be living as well.

The lesson to be taken is that they had to repent and leave those sinful practices. Such should make a direct impact on us as Christians. There are many people in the world today that

want to feel sorry for something they have done, yet still continue in that sin – be it sexual immorality, adultery, thievery, or any of the other litany of sins mentioned. The example we can follow from the Corinthians is that they completely and utterly left the aforementioned sins behind and Paul commended them for it.

Are we truly repenting of our sins? It is one thing to pray for God to forgive us, but it is another thing to leave that sin behind and not to return to it. When we pray to God we need to have prayers of repentance choosing to leave whatever sin or state of sin that we may be in so that we can live our life pleasing to God and focused on Him (Colossians 3:1).

Some view feeling sorry as a reasonable way to have your sins forgiven, but our sins are only forgiven when we repent of them and leave them in our past. We must choose not only to feel sorry, but allow this sorrow to rid us of the things that are hindering our relationship with God (cf. 2 Corinthians 7:10).

Do as the Corinthians did. They did not merely feel bad; they repented of their sins by putting those sins behind them and leaving them in their past.

*"Repent therefore, and turn again, that your sins may be blotted out"*

– Acts 3:19

*"God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness."*

– Acts 3:26

*"I tell you, no; but unless you repent you will all likewise perish."*

– Luke 13:3

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## News & Notes

James R. McGill

### Obituaries

According to brotherhoodnews.com Jerry Yost of Hannibal, OH, died Monday, Mar. 11, at the Marietta Memorial Hospital in Marietta, Ohio. Brother Yost was 70 years old.

Brother Yost served as minister of the church in Duffy, Ohio for 38 years. He also was a director and loved working for the West Virginia Christian Youth Camp for over 40 years.

Survivors include his wife of 50 years, Doretta George Yost; two sons, Mike Yost and Greg (Bobbi) Yost; a brother, Tom (Barbara) Yost of Midland, NC; a step brother, Marvin (Kathy) Lough of Mentor, OH; a step brother-in-law, Archie Rowand of Ida May, WV; a grandson, Aaron Yost; a granddaughter, Kristen Yost; a sister-in-law, Katie Yost of Farmington, WV; four nieces and five step nephews.

J.E. Choate passed from this life on March 2, in Jackson, TN, at the age of 97.

Brother Choate preached for 73 years. He also taught Bible and philosophy at Lipscomb University for 40 years.

Not only was he a faithful gospel preacher, but he was one of the most educated preachers of the twentieth century, holding two terminal degrees from Vanderbilt University.

Many will remember brother J.E. Choate as being one of the great historians of the Restoration Movement of the last century. He wrote biographies for Marshall Keeble and B.C. Goodpasture, co-authored biographies for H. Leo Boles, and Hall L. Calhoun, and co-authored a historical study of the division over mechanical instruments of music in churches of Christ.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Marie Jones Choate, and is survived by his son, Jerry J. Choate of Jackson, TN; his daughter, E. Teresa Choate of Plainfield, N.J.; two granddaughters; and four great-grandchildren.

### Mission Report

Owen Olbricht returned recently from a preaching tour in South America among three thriving congregations he established in Colombia and Venezuela.

He is now in Russia revisiting churches where his teaching and preaching continue to be a welcome encouragement to the brethren.

### MTSP Graduation

The 11th annual Middle Tennessee School of Preaching graduation will be April 5, at 7pm in the College Grove church of Christ facilities. Fourteen students are scheduled to graduate.

Graduation speaker is Andrew D. Erwin, *Gospel Gleaner* editor, who was in the first graduating class in 2003.

### Upcoming Events

The **Green Plain church of Christ** in Hazel, KY will be conducting a gospel meeting April 7—11 with Dan Sikes.

The **School Avenue church of Christ**, Mtn. View, AR will be conducting a lectureship April 28 – May 1. The theme is "Building a Community of Faith."

The **Southwest church of Christ** in Austin, TX will be hosting the 32nd Annual Southwest Lectureship, April 13-16. The theme for this year is "WHY DO WE...? Answers to the Fundamental Questions that Define Us."

The **Eastside church of Christ** in Cleveland, TN will be conducting a gospel meeting April 28-May 1. Chris Clevenger will be preaching.

The **Greens Lake Road** congregation in Chattanooga, TN will be hosting a gospel meeting April 7-11. Tom Harrison will be preaching.

The **Marion church of Christ** in Marion, IL will be conducting a gospel meeting April 7-11 with Dennis Gullede preaching.

A **Six-State Singing** will be conducted on April 20 from 3-6 pm at the Southwind church of Christ in Memphis, TN. The Southwind meetinghouse is located at 8220 East Shelby Dr. in Memphis. Their phone number is 901-755-6699.

### Churches Needing Preachers

**James Avenue** in Nashville, TN is looking for a preacher. The work is part-time. If interested, contact Rick Lucas 615-714-5672.

The **Maud** congregation near Cherokee, AL is looking for a preacher. The work is fulltime. Maud numbers around 90. Sammy Johnson is the contact elder. His number is 256-359-4389.

The church of Christ in **Oneida, TN** is looking for a preacher. The work is fulltime. If interested, contact Jim Litton at 423-569-5471.

The **Lord's church** in **Mena, AR** is looking for a pulpit minister. It is a congregation of 100. If interested, contact Austin Emery, elder and retiring minister 479-394-2036.

The **Cullendale** church of Christ in Camden, AR is seeking a minister to work with them. For more information, contact Brandon Burns at 903-452-3569.

### Faculty Position

The Southwest School of Bible Studies invites applications for a full-time position as professor of New Testament.

The successful candidate will possess a degree in Bible/Ministry or equivalent, as well as a minimum of ten years' experience in local ministry or similar.

The principal instructional responsibility will be New Testament literature and early Christian history, but ancillary courses will be required as well; ability to teach biblical languages will be helpful.

Candidates will participate in student activities such as campaigns, lectureships, and workshops. Given Southwest's low student-faculty ratio, the applicant must be able to mentor students in a close academic community.

All candidates must be faithful members of the church of Christ.

Please submit a letter of application and curriculum vitae to Richard Brumback, Director, at r.brumbback@swsbs.edu.

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# The GOSPEL GLLEANER

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Number Five

## THE PRESENT TRUTH . . .

Ronald D. Bryant

### SPIRITUALITY AND INTEGRITY

What is the ultimate test of a person's integrity? It has been suggested that the greatest test one will face is when he faces the fact that he has been wrong – that he has made a miscue or a mistake. What do honorable people – people of integrity – do when they discover they have made a mistake; have done or said that which is inappropriate? What do they do when it is but a minor offense?

#### Integrity before the World

Integrity baffles those who are devoid of it. It has been suggested that nothing is more baffling to a person that is full of deceit and dishonesty than having to deal with a person who is honest and upright.

Deceivers view others as altogether like themselves. They do not respect or regard others as honorable. They operate on the level of suspicion, readily attribute motives and are eager to condemn even the smallest action. Lacking honor, they cannot recognize it even in the noblest of people. Lacking integrity, they give full range to their imagination, animosity, and selfishness.

Active ignorance is a frightening thing—but when joined with hatred and animosity it can be horrific. People ruled by ignorance and wrong motives are often incredibly cruel, but those devoid of integrity are in all things cunningly deceptive, ruthless, and destructive.

In contrast, people of integrity work to control and direct their anger and overrule any tendency toward suspicion and criticism; more, they earnestly en-

deavor to help and serve others. They seek to encourage and uphold that which is good and right, and they delight in seeing others succeed, and receive honor.

Who does not know that the choices we make inevitably make us? It is to be observed that thoughts become actions, then actions have a way of becoming habits, and habitual actions finally mark out one's character.

Habit and character are in reality clear illustrations of the law of the harvest. That which comes to control the outlook, the personality, and the destiny of a person, is the product of that which has been sown and cultivated by that person in his own heart. One reaps in himself the thoughts and actions he has sown. As regards character, one reaps in himself, both in quality and kind, in measure and degree, that which he has sown (Galatians 6:7-8).

#### Integrity before God

Integrity before God demands that each person own and be true to God, to His will and purpose. It demands the honoring of the holiest convictions. Integrity is a matter of the heart and mind, will and conscience. It is sobering to consider that God permits each of us to choose our own character and determine our own destiny (Romans 6:16-18).

Integrity before God demands holding fast to the conviction that God has a high and holy purpose for each of us. It centers in holding fast to the conviction that He sent His Son to seek and to save eternal souls; to call them out of the

world, and to fit them for His service and right relationship with Him and to heaven.

Christians hold fast to the conviction that they belong to God, that God has a work for them to do for Him in this world. They hold to the conviction that God is at work in His people, doing a work in and through them. Yielding to God, they can come to be ruled by the level of spiritual integrity God desires.

Christians realize it is not theirs to interpret life, nor is it their task to explain its morals, or pronounce its destiny. They are to value and hold fast to the eternal, to the end that they are transformed by it. They hold fast to the conviction that the eternal truths of the eternal God are the transcendent form and realm of their existence. For them, it is not simply a matter of being faithful to a few tasks, large or small, but of being faithful to their Father, the God of heaven, in all the tasks of life.

#### Conclusion

All who choose the mindset of this present age, will soon be cast adrift upon the tide of time, and will inevitably be overwhelmed by its destructive flow. The spiritual center for the people of God (individually and collectively) must be biblical – not cultural.

If the people of God are not ruled by a passion for the will of God, they will inevitably forfeit the truth of God. Those who are not ruled by a passion for the will of God are in reality devoid of spiritual integrity, and are cast adrift in this world with no means of survival.

We are introduced to Saul of Tarsus at the stoning of one of God's great and fearless men – the evangelist Stephen (Acts 7:58). The event of Stephen's death presents to us a clear contrast between the boldness of Christianity and the hatred exerted by those who would oppose it.

Stephen's valor was fully displayed as he stood in the shadow of the cross to declare unto his kinsmen, "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it" (Acts 7:51-53).

Stephen's sermon led to his martyrdom. The young man named Saul consented to his death (8:1), and would follow the same murderous course he had witnessed, as he "made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison" (8:3).

Yet, the harder he tried to stamp out the followers of Christ, the faster they grew, as "they that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word" (8:4).

### Saul's Conversion

The next entry of the life of Saul in the divine record is the story of his conversion (Acts 9). Herein we find a man blinded by a heavenly vision of the Christ, and implicitly instructed to go to Damascus and there "it shall be told thee what thou must do" (9:6).

The Lord sent the preacher Ananias to instruct Saul of His will. The preacher found a much different man than what he envisioned. He did not find the same man who had terrorized the church, rather he found a man who was praying and fasting, penitently believing in the

Lord Jesus Christ, and grieving over what he had done.

Ananias instructed Saul of the Lord's plan to use him as a gospel preacher, perhaps even filling the void left by Stephen's death. Ananias then laid his hands upon Saul so that he could receive his sight, and commanded him saying, "And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16).

### Saul Begins Preaching

Upon his conversion to Christ, Saul immediately began to preach Christ in the synagogues – a fearless gesture indeed! He increased in strength, and confounded the greatest enemies to the cross of Christ on earth at that time, proving that He was in fact the Christ (9:20-22)!

The Jews responded in typical fashion as they conspired to take his life. However, their threats did not deter the fearless apostle. He was taken into the lion's den of Jerusalem and there he "spake boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and disputed against the Grecians: but they went about to slay him" (9:29).

### The Missionary Journeys

By the time of his three missionary journeys throughout the Mediterranean world, his name had become Paul, and his life was set on a track that would forever change the world. However, such an impact is not made without great courage, sacrifice, or opposition.

Paul encountered opposition by Jews who were moved with envy in Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13:45). These envious souls stirred the high-handed, influential sort to drive Paul and Barnabas from their coasts.

In Iconium this same trend continued. Souls were seeking and obeying truth, while disbelieving Jews moved with evil intentions to thwart the preaching of the word causing a division in the city (14:2). Paul and Barnabas simply con-

tinued "speaking boldly in the Lord" (14:3).

In Lystra Paul was stoned and left for dead for preaching the gospel (14:7, 19). He returned to his feet, took strength and courage, and continued preaching the word (14:21). The fearless apostle would even return to that city to teach them "to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (14:22).

The second missionary journey required that Paul return to the churches established on the first journey and confront the false Judaizing teachers that had crept in among them "subverting their souls" (15:24). Indeed it would take a fearless man to withstand these false teachers to the face! Not only did Paul defeat their false doctrines, but while he did so the church "increased in number daily" (16:5).

In Thessalonica Paul again confronted envious, disbelieving Jews (17:1-9). In Athens, he stood in the midst of Athenian idolatry and philosophers and with a stirred spirit preached a message of repentance and eternal judgment (17:30-31). Some mocked him, some delayed, but some believed.

Paul would encounter similar reactions in places like Corinth, Ephesus, Jerusalem, and Rome. In all such encounters, the fearless apostle would stand for the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

### Conclusion

One might wonder if he would have done anything differently, or taken a softer approach. Paul provided an answer to this question when he said, "Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you" (Philippians 4:9). May Christians everywhere determine to have the courage of the fearless apostle Paul!

Andrew D. Erwin  
Editor, *Gospel Gleaner*

The

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## “How Many Churches May Be Under the Oversight of a Local Eldership?”

John T. Polk, II

How many churches may be under the oversight of a local eldership? According to the Bible, the answer is “one.”

### The Example of Ephesus

In Ephesus, Paul had established the church (Acts 19:1-20:1); warned the elders of apostasy from within the eldership (Acts 20:28-29); and written an inspired book to them (Ephesians 1-6). But by the time they had left their first love (Revelation 2:1-7), Jesus held no one accountable for their digression except themselves!

Though Paul’s journey to Ephesus began in Antioch of Syria, where disciples were first called “Christians” (Acts 11:26; 18:22-23), the church in Ephesus was completely and only under their own elders’ “oversight.”

Paul had committed their future to the elders and God’s word: “So now, brethren, I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified” (Acts 20:32). If another eldership had “oversight” in Ephesus, why didn’t Jesus hold them accountable for faith’s failure and write to them as “the angel” of Ephesus?

Only an apostle ever claimed that “what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches” (2 Corinthians 11:28). No Eldership or group of “sound” preachers oversaw “all the churches” in the New Testament.

### The Example of Antioch

Though Paul’s journeys began from Antioch in Syria (Acts 13:1-4; 14:26-28; 15:30-40; 18:22-23), after establishing churches with the gospel of Jesus Christ, he and Barnabas “appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting,

they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed” (Acts 14:23).

Nothing is ever said to indicate that the Antioch eldership maintained “oversight” over any of the churches established by the gospel and now with their own elders. Why did Paul set each church on its own, directly under “the Lord in whom they had believed,” and not under the Antioch eldership?

### Mission Efforts Today

Mission efforts seem to have become more sectarian than scriptural, possibly out of good intentions. New Christians may need “milk” and not “meat” (Hebrews 5:12-14), but no one grows without having “senses exercised to discern both good and evil.” If new Christians seek advice, surely no eldership would withhold their wisdom, but no other church, board of churches, or area elders are given direct “oversight” in any but their own local church.

Though “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, [wrote] To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,” he, as a “fellow elder” exhorted “The elders who are among you...[to]...Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers” (1 Peter 1:1; 5:1-2).

The “elders” among the “Dispersion” in various locations were to have “oversight” over “the flock of God which is among you.” Unless one advocates the position of the Roman Catholics that an eldership oversees “the flock” regardless of local lines, Scripture admits of only one set of elders overseeing “the flock” that chose them as elders according to 1 Timothy 3:1-7.

For Titus to “set in order the things that are lacking,” Paul commanded that he “appoint elders in every city” (Titus 1:5). Qualifications are then listed (Titus

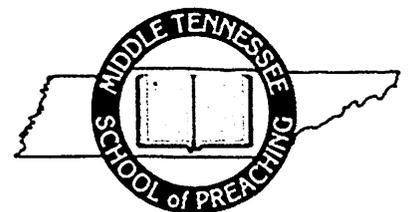
1:6-9), so that the local Christians would make their decisions, following the pattern set in Acts 6:1-6. This would complete their organization that Paul could not do personally as an apostle (Acts 14:26).

### Roman Catholic Pattern

The Roman Catholic Church developed from a local eldership maintaining control over more than one local church, thus perverting the gospel arrangement which the apostles approved (Acts 6), Peter taught (1 Peter 5), Paul followed (Acts 14), and Paul commanded as law (Titus 1). There is absolutely NO authority for an eldership to take the oversight of more than one congregation.

Now that some churches are having more than one “congregation” worshipping at different times in the same building (contemporary and traditional; congregational and cells; English and Spanish/other language; Youth/Children and Adults; inner-city and outer-city; *ad nauseum*), this doctrine must be re-examined, re-taught, and re-emphasized. Each church of Christ must be ordered by the word of God and directly under Jesus Christ as its Head, or else it is moving away from the body of Christ (Colossians 1:18-23).

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# Is the Office and Election of the Pope Justified by the Bible?

Owen D. Olbricht

Many people in the world have learned about Francis, the new Pope, who has been elected by the College of Cardinals as head of the Catholic Church. The question to be asked is, "Can the office and the election of a Pope be justified by Bible teaching?" The following is an effort to answer that question from the Bible prospective.

## Four Violations of Jesus' Teaching

Do the lives of the men who have become Pope fall under the condemnation Jesus gave the scribes Pharisees for doing the following? Note:

- 1.) They wear clothing to distinguish themselves as religious leaders (Matthew 23:5).
- 2.) They seek the places of renown so that they could be honored (Matthew 23:6).
- 3.) They desire greetings in the market places and synagogues that gave them special recognition (Matthew 23:7).
- 4.) They use exalting titles when referring those who are leaders among His followers (Matthew 23:8-9).

The word "pope" developed from the Greek *pappa*, and means papa or father. The Bible teaches that there is "one God and Father of all, who is above all" (Ephesians 4:4; also 1 Corinthians 8:6). Since there is only one "Father" who is God, the Pope cannot be that Father. Jesus condemns anyone who is called father as a religious title. "Do not call anyone on earth your father, for One is your Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 23:9).

None of the apostles, prophets, church leaders, or any other followers of Jesus was called "his holiness" or wore titles such as "Holy Father" and "Most Holy Revered Father."

The word "holy" means set apart in the sense of not engaging in the unholy practices of the world. We are to seek to be holy (1 Peter 1:16), but God alone possesses a perfect goodness or holiness.

Jesus wanted a rich young ruler who called him "good" to realize the implications of addressing Him as good, by telling him, "No one is good but One, that is, God" (Matthew 19:17). If he called Jesus good then he must realize that Jesus is God. God alone should be called, "Most holy" for no one has attained that degree of holiness.

The reason for these four scathing condemnations is that Jesus wants His followers to treat each other as brothers and sisters in Christ (Matthew 23:8; Galatians 3:28) by humbly associating with each other (Matthew 23:12) without exalting one above the other.

## Head of the Church

The Pope is honored as head of the Catholic Church, and he is such, but he is not head of the church of Christ. Paul wrote that God, "gave Him [Jesus] head over all things to the church" (Ephesians 1:22). "And He [Jesus] is head of the body, the church" (Colossians 1:18).

The Pope was not voted to be the infallible head of the church, when he spoke from the papal chair (*ex cathedra*), until 1870. Were the Popes fallible before 1870 when the College of Cardinals voted him to be infallible?

The one body of Christ (Ephesians 4:4; Colossians 1:18), the church, obeys Jesus as the one head over the church (Ephesians 5:23, 24), which is His flock (Acts 20:28) that listens to Him and follows Him (John 10:27). They will not listen to voice of others (John 10:5).

## Pomp and Show

The elaborate Pope-mobile, expensive and special clothing, special ring, high class living quarters and

spacious offices, and people bowing to him and kissing his ring is an earthly show that is not portrayed in the lives of Jesus and early church leaders.

## Consider Jesus:

- He became poor to make many rich (2 Corinthians 8:9).
- He was raised by a poor family that offered two turtledoves or pigeons at His birth (Luke 2:24).
- He had no income, and was supported by others (Luke 8:3).
- He owned no place of His own where He could lay His head (Luke 9:58).
- He associated with tax collectors and sinners (Matthew 9:10).
- He was without food at times, for He and His disciples had none when He fed the 5,000 and 4,000 men plus women and children (Matthew 14:14-21; 15:30-38).
- He did not have money to pay the temple tax of about one day's wages (Matthew 17:24-27).
- He had no animal of His own to ride, so He borrowed a colt (Matthew 21:2-7).
- He stayed at night on the Mount of Olives instead of inns or homes (Luke 21:37, 38).
- He was buried in another man's tomb, for He did not have His own (Matthew 27:59-60).

## Consider the Apostles:

- Peter and John had no silver and gold (Acts 3:6).
- Paul lived in want and lacked many comforts of life as he served Jesus (2 Corinthians 6:4, 5; 11:23-27).

The lavish lifestyle, public veneration, and special earthly material amenities of the Pope would have been an embarrassment to Jesus and His followers, as well as to John the Baptist (Matthew 3:4).

## Church Built on Peter

Jesus did not say to Peter, "On you Peter (Greek *petros*, masculine) I will build my church, but on this rock (Greek *tautai petra*, feminine) I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18). The church is built on Jesus, the rock (Greek *petra*) the only true foundation, and there is no other (1 Corinthians 3:11).

The Greek word rock, *petra*, is used in reference to Jesus (Matthew 16:18; Romans 9:33; 1 Corinthians 10:4; 1 Peter 2:8) and to His teaching (Matthew 7:24, 25; Luke 6:48), but never to Peter. The *petra* was a large foundation rock on which a house could be built (Matthew 7:24-25; Luke 6:48) and could be large enough for a tomb carved out a rock that two or more people could enter (Mark 16:1-5; Luke 24:3; John 20:6, 8).

Even if Jesus meant the church would be built on Peter, and the keys to bind and loose would be his, that would not prove Peter was given the papal office. **Jesus did not say:**

- The church would be built exclusively on Peter. Using another figure, Paul taught that the church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Ephesians 2:20). Peter was just one of the twelve stones in the foundation (Revelation 21:14).
- The keys for binding and loosing would be exclusively Peter's. Peter was just one of twelve apostles Jesus promised the authority to bind and loose (Matthew 18:18).
- Peter would be the head of the church. Jesus is the sole head of the church (Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 1:18, 24) and the one Shepherd (John 10:16), who is the chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4).

## Peter in the Early Church

Another way to determine if the church was built exclusively on Peter is to consider the practice of the early church.

Peter is not mentioned one time in the New Testament as being the head of the

church. No statement or implication is found in Scripture that someone would replace Peter as head of the church when he died.

The Catholic Church lists Linus (67-79 AD) as the next Pope after Peter. The question should be asked, "Who chose him and why would he be chosen instead of the apostle John, who had apostolic authority and who lived around 30 years after Peter died?"

The early church did not ask Peter to decide one important doctrinal matter by himself. Paul and Barnabas were sent to Jerusalem to an assembly of apostles and elders to find out if the Gentile Christians must be circumcised in order to be saved (Acts 15:1).

In the meeting, Peter gave his input after much discussion but did not decide what action to take (Acts 15:6-11). The assembly accepted the judgment of James, Jesus' brother (Acts 15:13-21; Galatians 1:19), while the decision was made through the help of the Holy Spirit (Acts 15:22, 28). The letter with the decision was not sent in Peter's name as the Vicar of Christ, but in the name of the apostles and elders (Acts 15:23).

Peter was considered one of the three pillars in the church (James, Cephas [Peter; John 1:41-42], and John), but not the only pillar (Galatians 2:9). According to Greek listing, James might have been considered the most prominent for he is listed first, then Peter.

When Peter erred from the truth of the gospel and led others into error, including Barnabas, Paul corrected Peter to his face (Galatians 2:11-14). Surely, if Peter was the infallible head of the church, he would not lead others astray.

The commission of Peter was to the circumcised, the Jews, and Paul's to the uncircumcised, the Gentiles (Galatians 2:7-9; Romans 11:13). Paul's commission included a larger segment of world than that of Peter.

Peter did not refer to himself with a special important religious title (1 Peter 1:1; 2 Peter 1:1), neither did any other

New Testament writer (Matthew 4:18; Mark 3:16; Luke 5:8; John 6:68; Acts 1:13; Galatians 2:11).

Peter did not accept reverence from Cornelius, but told him, "Stand up; for I myself am also a man" (Acts 10:26). Paul objected by saying, "We also are men with the same nature as you" (Acts 14:15). The Pope allows others to bow before him and kiss his ring.

Peter considered himself a fellow elder, not the chief elder or shepherd, but referred to Jesus as the chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:1, 4).

Jesus gave Peter the responsibility of feeding His sheep (John 21:16), but He neither indicated that Peter was the only one to feed His sheep nor that he was to feed all the His sheep. Elders were instructed to feed their own individual flock, the church (Acts 20:17, 28), and no other flocks.

Peter was a married man with a mother-in-law (Matthew 8:14-15) and a wife (1 Corinthians 9:5), and also was an elder (1 Peter 5:1), which office he could hold only if he had a wife (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6). According to the teaching of the Catholic Church, Peter would not be qualified for the office of an elder or bishop, much less the Pope, the chief leader in the church.

Jesus did not single out Peter as the most important follower but treated him as one of the apostles, or as one of the inner circle with James and John at various times (Matthew 17:1; Mark 9:2; 14:33; Luke 8:51; 9:28).

Paul wrote instructions concerning the doctrine, work, organization, and nature of the church. In Peter's two short books that are a very small portion of the New Testament, he did not discuss these topics as did Paul in his 14 books, which include about one half of the New Testament. If Peter was a Pope, it seems strange that he did not write more instructions for the church than did Paul or other writers.

James, Jesus' brother, seems to have been as much a respected leader as Peter, and perhaps more so. Peter reported to

him (Acts 12:17); James gave the judgment concerning the Gentiles that was accepted (Acts 15:13); he is singled out as the one Paul went to see among the leaders in the church in Jerusalem (Acts 21:18); and he is considered one of the pillars in the church along with Peter and John (Galatians 2:9, 12).

Only Jesus, not Peter, was recognized as the foundation and Head of the church (1 Corinthians 3:11; Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 1:18).

### Conclusion

Peter was a most highly respected apostle of Jesus. He was not given a place of authority above the other apostles, but was one of them on which the church of Christ is built (Ephesians 2:20).

He is to be respected along with the other inspired apostles and prophets of the New Testament, but not to be honored above them.

Jesus is the only foundation and head of the church of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 1:18). All glory and honor must be given to Him (Philippians 2:9-11), and not to any other man, including the Pope.

## KNOW YOUR BIBLE

Stephen R. Bradd

### The Limits of Loyalty

Loyalty is generally considered a noble virtue for one to possess. A strong loyalty to a person or organization is not intrinsically wrong, though such can be dangerous.

How so? Well, what if the person or group you are loyal to begins to promote or engage in immorality? What if they ask you to do something wrong for them or with them? What then? One's loyalty may be cause for temptation in such cases.

Abraham Lincoln once declared: "I must stand with anybody that stands right, stand with him while he is right, and part with him when he goes wrong." President Lincoln believed that there is a limit to human loyalty.

The apostle Paul believed the same centuries earlier – "For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ" (Galatians 1:10). As disciples of the Lord, we must ultimately be faithful to God, not men, and this is what the apostle means here. Paul had no intentions of allowing his loyalties to any individual or group supersede his devotion to God. In the ultimate sense, his intent was to please God, not men.

However, that is not to say that Paul did not try to please men as much as possible. He most certainly did labor and sacrifice much in an effort to appeal to men (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:19; 10:33), but these efforts were always guided by his overriding fidelity to the Lord. Paul was loyal to certain men; he stood with those who were right. But, this did not stop him from rebuking these same people when they erred.

In Galatians 2, for example, the apostle Peter was involved in the sin of being partial to the Hebrew Christians. His hypocritical behavior toward the Gentile Christians was wrong. Paul certainly had loyalty to Peter as a fellow apostle, but such did not lead Paul into committing the same transgression. When Paul arrived, he "withstood [Peter] to his face, because he was to be blamed" (Galatians 2:11). It might have been easier for Paul to keep quiet and simply honor his loyalty to the apostle, but such was not right. Paul understood there is a limit to one's loyalty toward his fellow man. Had Peter and the others not repented of their sinful behavior, Paul would have certainly parted company with them.

Another example of such can be seen in the case of Demas. Initially, Demas was a faithful servant of God and a co-laborer with Paul (cf. Philemon 24; Colossians 4:14). However, he later forsook the truth "having loved this present world" (2 Timothy 4:10). Did personal loyalty to Demas lead Paul to turn his back on God? Absolutely not, for the apostle's chief loyalty was with the Lord.

When people are kind to us and treat us well, there is a natural desire to be loyal to them. There is nothing wrong with such, as long as one remembers where his primary loyalty must always lie--with Almighty God and the ways of righteousness (cf. Matthew 6:33). Our loyalty to friends, family, and employers must always be subordinate to our devotion to the Lord (cf. Matthew 10:37). He who loves anyone or anything more than the Lord is not worthy of Him.

#### Questions for Review:

- (1) How can loyalty lead to temptation?
- (2) Is there anything inherently wrong with seeking to please others?
- (3) Our chief loyalty must be with whom?

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## The Most Important Job in the World

Rod Rutherford

Have you ever wondered what the most important job in the world is? Some might say it is being President of the United States. Others might think it would be that of a scientist seeking a cure for a dreaded disease such as cancer. Some might be more fundamental and suggest it is the farmer who raises the food essential for all life. A declining number of people might suggest the most important work in the world is that of preaching the saving gospel of Jesus Christ.

### One Work Is Above All Others

As essential as these jobs may be, there is one occupation that far outweighs them all in importance. It is the job of bringing children into this world and rearing them to be honest, productive, loving, God-fearing men and women. No work transcends in importance the role of mothers in the home!

When God created the first man and the first woman, He gave the basic law by which all human life is to be continued on earth:

“Then God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it’” (Genesis 1:28).

Following the sin of Adam and Eve in Eden, “Adam called his wife’s name Eve, because she was the mother of all living” (Genesis 3:20).

After he had discussed the reasons of why the public leadership role in the church is given to men, Paul, the apostle, stated of woman:

“Nevertheless, she will be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith, love, and holiness, with self-control” (1 Timothy 2:15).

The distinctive role that God has given to women is that of being wives and mothers. No man is equipped to fill this vital, fundamental role adequately. There is absolutely no replacement for a

wife and mother who serves her God by serving her family.

### No Greater Need

Many today denigrate the essential role of woman as wife and mother. Laborsaving devices, professional opportunities, economic needs (whether actual or perceived), and changing attitudes have brought a mass exodus of mothers from the home since the Second World War.

Stay at home moms are rapidly becoming an endangered species. Many women (and their husbands) have accepted the view of the modern Feminist Movement that a woman who devotes her life to the home and family is somehow inferior and must, of necessity, be “unfulfilled.”

There is no greater need than for a return of Christian women to their God-given role. Mothers have the most important career in the world, that of bearing, nurturing, guiding, and training the next generation.

No scientist, educator, statesman, or preacher equals the influence of a godly, devoted mother. Mothers will do more to determine the success and happiness of their children in this life and their eternal destiny than all the elders, preachers, and teachers combined. Truly, godly wives and mothers have the most important job in the entire world!

### Characteristics of a Godly Mother

Let us notice from God’s word some essential characteristics of godly mothers. First, godly mothers are married before they become mothers. Perhaps we should go a step further and state that godly mothers are married before they conceive children (Hebrews 13:4). Those who conceive children out of wedlock, both men and women, are guilty of fornication (Galatians 5:19-21).

The home is the sphere created by

God Himself for bringing children into this world (Genesis 1:28; 2:24). It is sad today that many young women are deciding not to have children, but pursue careers instead. They fulfill their maternal instincts by raising dogs or cats and will never know the joy that comes from children nor have the security of someone to look after them in old age.

Second, godly mothers are mature. Marriage is not for children, but those who are mature enough to leave their parents and establish their own home (Genesis 2:24). Those who marry must be mature physically and emotionally and be able to support themselves.

Marriage changes one’s life drastically. The care-free life of fun and dating must be put behind. Marriage requires dedication, discipline, and determination. One who lacks these vital qualities is not ready for the crucial task of rearing children.

The Bible charges older women to “admonish the younger women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands....” (Titus 2:3-5).

Younger widows are taught to “marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully” (1 Timothy 5:14).

Third, godly mothers are mentors. Webster’s dictionary defines a “mentor” as “a wise, loyal adviser, a teacher or coach.” It is commonly conceded by students of behavioral science that children learn the fundamental lessons of life by the age of seven. The old adage “As the twig is bent, so is the tree inclined” is certainly true in human growth and development.

Christian parents need seriously to ask themselves: “Do I want my child to embrace my Christian values or those of a baby-sitter or daycare center worker who may be motivated by the humanistic value system so common in

today's world?"

Timothy, a young preacher of the gospel, was blessed because "from childhood he had known the Holy Scriptures, which were able to make him wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 3:15).

Timothy's father was a Greek and most likely an unbeliever (Acts 16:1-3). However, he had a mother who was a Christian and a godly grandmother who had taught him God's word from infancy (2 Timothy 1:3-5). Truly, "the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world."

### Conclusion

As one who has lived well beyond the allotted "three score and ten years" (Psalm 90:10), and has spent more than a half century preaching the gospel of Christ, if I were asked, "What is the most pressing problem in the world?" I would answer, "The need for homes built upon God's word." If I were asked, "What is the most important work in the entire world?" I would reply, "Being a godly wife and mother."

When vacationing in the Great Smoky Mountains, plan to worship with the Gatlinburg church of Christ. We are a small, friendly congregation striving to walk in the old paths of truth and righteousness. We are located at the corner of Reagan Drive and Trinity Lane three tenths of a mile from the main street of Gatlinburg going toward the National Park. Turn left on Reagan Drive when you see Ripley's Believe It or Not. Our "A" frame building is on the left. If you are thinking of retiring, there is no better place than Gatlinburg. There are beautiful mountains with dozens of hiking trails, all types of entertainment, skiing, shopping and restaurants, and arts and crafts of every kind. The church is small and needs your help. Contact us at 865-859-0717 if you are interested.

Rod Rutherford, evangelist  
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## The Baptism of Abraham Lincoln

James R. McGill

In the February 5, 1942, *Christian Evangelist*, the following letter from G. M. Weimer was published:

"I met Brother John O'Kane...in Illinois...at a convention. We were together about all the time. The Lincoln matter as to whether he [Lincoln] had ever been baptized came up. Brother O'Kane told me one day: 'Yes, Brother Weimer, I know all about the affair. On the night before Lincoln was to be baptized his wife cried all night. So the matter was deferred, as she thought. But soon after, Lincoln and I took extra clothing and took a buggy ride. I baptized him in a creek near Springfield, Illinois. We changed to dry clothing and returned to the city. And by his request, I placed his name on the church book. He lived and died a member of the church of Christ.'" (Frederick D. Kershner, "Lincoln's Religious Status," *Christian Evangelist*, February 12, 1942, 290)

In September of that same year the *Christian Review* published a similar letter Weimer had written July 27, 1942. Weimer stated that O'Kane, in the presence of witnesses, said:

"I took Lincoln's confession one night at our church services in Springfield, Illinois. Then when Lincoln told his wife, she stormed the castle, and declared it with intense vehemence that she would not permit such a thing. Well, the result was a delay....We had a change of clothes under the buggy seat. I baptized him into Christ as the Bible demands. He lived and died a member of the church of Christ."

Discovery of the recorded oral history of Mariah Vance, who worked in the Lincoln home from 1850-60, is being heralded as "America's Dead Sea Scroll." The find has great historical significance.

The Library of Congress estimates that 5,036 books have been written

about Abraham Lincoln, yet very little is known about his private family life. Now, for the first time, an eyewitness answers the most controversial questions about Mary Todd Lincoln's drug addiction, her rages, the Ann Rutledge romance, Lincoln's baptism after being elected president and more.

How these reminiscences came to light after 135 years is itself a remarkable story. Mariah, a religious warm-hearted woman who could neither read nor write, was laundress, cook, and then housekeeper to the Lincolns from 1850 until he was elected president in 1860. When Lincoln's family prepared to move to Washington, Mariah, and her large family moved to Danville, Illinois.

For forty years Mariah told stories about the Lincolns to anyone who would listen. In 1900, Mariah, a widow in her 80s, was still supporting herself as a laundress. When Adah Sutton, a 17-year-old secretary, used Mariah's services and heard the Lincoln stories, she wrote them down in shorthand.

The note taking continued until Mariah died in 1904. Lloyd Ostendorf, the noted Lincoln artist, met Adah Sutton in 1955, heard some of the stories and begged her to write them down. It took Adah five years to transcribe her notes into a 259 page handwritten manuscript.

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# Getting Our Faith Out of the Building

Michael Shank

James said that faith without works is dead (James 2:17). James said this to the twelve tribes scattered abroad (1:1), and his words continue to apply to us today, both as individuals and as congregations.

## Apathy in the Church

“Church attendance” is not the only activity that defines individual faithfulness. Neither is the conducting of worship services in spirit and in truth (John 4:24) the only activity that defines congregational faithfulness (see Revelation 2:8-9; 3:7-12).

Paul teaches, “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:58).”

How many people come to mind when you think of someone who is “always abounding in the work of the Lord?” Sadly, in many congregations, the only person that seems to abide in this instruction is the paid preacher.

Friend, this is a deficiency that exists among us today and it desperately needs to be changed. Why? Be honest with yourself regarding the current condition of the Lord’s body, as it relates to our growth and maturity. Complacency and our individual lack of work (taking the gospel to our family, friends, and coworkers) are causing our faith to die. Apathy is destroying the church’s ability to go forward with zeal, excitement, and power.

## The Need for One-on-One Teaching

We Christians have bought into the contemporary approach of “inviting the lost to services,” rather than teaching the lost the gospel. Please do not misunderstand – it is certainly noble and honorable to invite a lost soul to attend our services so that they might hear the gospel;

however, how many instances do we find in the New Testament of a Christian “inviting” an alien sinner to worship services?

We see, time and time again, that New Testament Christians taught truth “on the spot.” Jesus says that this is the method He desires (Matthew 28:19). It’s the method we find in the apostolic examples when dealing with people on a “one-on-one” basis (Acts 8:26-40; 9:1-18; 22:16; 10:30-48; 16:13-15; 16:26-33; 19:1-7).

## Philip and the Eunuch

What if Philip had used today’s method when he encountered the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-35)? Possibly the Bible would read something like this:

“Then Philip opened his mouth, and invited the eunuch to Sunday services. Phillip sayeth to the eunuch, ‘I bid thee, stay until Sunday and attend our worship services that thou mayest hear our professional preacher and meet our friendly brethren.’”

If Philip would have actually used this fictitious approach (the approach many use today), how would this story have turned out?

Truth reveals that Philip didn’t invite the eunuch to Sunday service (Acts 8:35-40), but instead preached unto him Jesus (v.35). An additional and astounding discovery within Philip’s approach is that teaching the gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1-8) requires the necessity of teaching God’s plan of salvation (Romans 6:3-8). The two cannot be separated, just as blood and water cannot be separated (John 19:34).

How do we know? We know from the evidence within verse 36, “...they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?”

The eunuch, due to his honest and good heart (Luke 8:15), reveals his understanding of the knowledge that Philip had previously shared. The eunuch wanted to be immersed at the first body of water that followed Philip’s teaching.

We see the eunuch’s opportunity to make the confession of faith (Acts 8:37). Immediately following his confession, the eunuch obeyed our Lord’s command to be baptized (John 3:3-5), fully immersed (Acts 8:38-39), allowing God to remove his sins (Colossians 2:11-12), literally clothing himself with Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:26-27), becoming an heir to the promise (Galatians 3:29), achieving salvation (1 Peter 3:21), and being added to the church of Christ (Acts 2:47; Romans 16:16).

The eunuch became a member of the beautiful bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:23-25), the singular body of Christ (Ephesians 4:4), the precious blood-bought church (Acts 20:28) of the Lord Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:18).

Let us unite under the common bond of faith and love to ignite a revival in the church that will catch fire when we take our faith from the walls of our building and into the hearts of the lost and perishing!

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## A Soldier's Last Letter

Ernest Underwood

I was seven years old in 1941 when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. The war with Germany was raging in Europe, with the United States soon to be involved. I remember the drone of the B-17 bombers as the crews were training for war. We lived less than five miles from the training base.

I remember many of the country songs, as well as some popular, that were sung over the radio station. I especially remember one by Ernest Tubbs called "A Soldier's Last Letter." I remember seeing my grandmother cry when she heard that song. Her youngest son was in the Army serving as a medic. He was in both the African campaign and in Europe. Some who read these lines will remember the sad ending of that song.

This article is not about a country song, nor is it about America at war. It is however about a soldier's last letter to his son in the gospel. The writer is the apostle Paul, and it is his second letter to young Timothy. It is also the last inspired letter that he wrote. He was imprisoned in Rome and if tradition is true he was soon to be taken and beheaded.

### Chapters One & Two

In this epistle Paul expresses his love for and confidence in Timothy. He knows Timothy's background, having been taught the Holy Scriptures from a child by his mother and grandmother. He encourages this young man to "stir up the gift that is in you," a gift he received by the laying on of the apostle's hands.

He cautions Timothy about the possibility of being ashamed of the chains which presently bind Paul, chains that were there because the apostle proclaimed the gospel, stating that though he was bound, the gospel could not be bound. A statement is then made by him which should be memorized by all children of God: "...for I know

whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that day" (2 Timothy 1:12).

Paul wanted to instill this same zeal and attitude in his son in the gospel. With fatherly concern he wrote, "You, therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2:2).

He continues by reminding Timothy of the divine reason for his mission, that Jesus Christ is the promised seed of David, the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. And, should young Timothy become slack in his work, Paul commands him to "be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2:15).

### Chapter Three

Chapter three is an important catalyst to take the reader into chapter four. In chapter three Paul gives sober warning about things that are happening in the "last days" – the Christian Age.

By inspiration he warns of all sorts of ungodly men who will arise. They will be "lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanders, without self-control, brutal, despises of good, traitors, head strong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness, but denying its power" (3:1-5a).

The apostle recognizes that Timothy is not that sort of man, stating, "...but you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance" (3:10).

Knowing that "evil men and imposters will grow worse and worse,

deceiving and being deceived" (3:13), he urges Timothy to "continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them" (3:14).

Concerning the Holy Scriptures that Timothy has known from childhood, he states that they "are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Jesus Christ" (3:15).

It is at this point that the inspired apostle makes that great proclamation which is the very foundation of the Christian system: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work" (3:16-17).

This proclamation is all inclusive of the Holy Bible, but does not include any creed book, any so-called later revelation, or any other "holy" book whether from paganism, the Koran, the Book of Mormon, or some book of denominationalism, creed or otherwise.

It is by this Book, and only by it, that men can be pleasing to God, and only then as they humble themselves and obey it. It is the only standard of authority that man has. It is from God!

### Chapter Four

Chapter four of this "last letter" from that faithful soldier of the cross begins with a charge:

"I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearance and His kingdom. . ." (4:1).

Years ago I heard the late Roy Deaver give the following comments in a lecture. Since I probably cannot quote him word for word, I will not use quotation marks. However, in the lecture brother Deaver stated that it should be noted that this charge is given in relationship to God and the Lord

Jesus Christ; in relationship to the coming judgment; in relationship to the resurrection; in relationship to the second coming; and in relationship to the kingdom, the church. With all of the above having a definite relationship to this charge, the reader of it must surely realize the weight that it carries. This being true; just what is this charge, and what must be our attitude toward it? "Preach the word!" (4:2a).

In the March, 2013 issue of the *Gospel Gleaner*, editor Andy Erwin wrote on the subject of hard preaching, showing that preaching truth defines hard preaching.

He noted that such preaching can be done in harshness, without a true Christian spirit, but it can and must, according to the Scriptures, be preached in love. He indicated that preaching a compromised, so-called gospel cannot be preached in love. Love causes the preacher/teacher to preach the truth always, even when some hearer may be offended by such truth. With his sentiments all truth-loving souls will agree.

Summarizing the first section of chapter three we learn of the total ungodliness of those mentioned. They are encompassed in sin and hatred for God and all that is good. They hypocritically profess to be godly, but they deny its power, the word of God.

With Timothy having such an understanding, he is given a most sober and weighty charge to "preach the word." He is not charged to "try to get along with other religions." He is not charged to "go along to get along." He is not encouraged to look for a way to compromise. He is simply told to preach the word.

If one will come to an understanding of Paul's description of the inspiration of "all Scripture" he will then have the understanding of why this, and only this, must be preached.

In the remainder of the charge, and the reason given for it, the apostle states: "Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time

will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things. Endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry" (4:2b-5).

### Application for Today

Friends and brethren, does this charge apply to us today? Have circumstances changed? Do men and women today fit the description given in chapter three? Are we a "Christian nation" with no need for the hard preaching of the truth – the inspired word of God?

We all know these questions, and we should all know the answers. If so, then the charge is now, and shall be until Christ comes again: "Preach the word!"

Let us be busy in carrying out this great charge in the last letter of an old soldier of Jesus Christ. After all, it is the same charge that Jesus gave to the apostles just before He ascended to the Father.

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## Expositions of the Sacred Scriptures

Ron Thomas

### The Church at Pergamos (Revelation 2:12 – 17)

When we lived on the island of Guam nearly thirty years ago, I had occasion to sleep in the jungle under the stars. I had something to sleep on and a machete. The machete was to help me cut through the denseness of the jungle in order to have a place to walk, sit, and/or sleep. One side of that machete was sharp; the other not at all. With much force I could cut my way through, but if I used the wrong side progress through the jungle would come to a near stop.

#### The Sword of Christ

Jesus opens His words to the church at Pergamum as one who wields a sword that is powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword (even a machete). This imagery is not lost on those who understand the nature of battle. Whereas one side of the sword is sharp, but the other dull, the Lord's sword is as sharp as a razor on both sides.

Of course, the imagery of a sword is not to be understood as anything but a metaphor. The sword of the Lord is His word (Hebrews 4:12); this single volume of the Lord's healthy remedy to man's soul is able to penetrate the strongest shell of a man and expose him to the Lord's medicine. Into Pergamum the saints were to take this sword.

#### The City of Pergamum

Pergamum was a wealthy city, but not considered prominently commercial like the previous two (Ephesus and Smyrna). It housed the second largest library with around 200,000 "books" (Alexandria having the largest). It is not unlikely these "books" were probably there to give man an education that was second to none; the education one

gained, however, would only be of this world. Because of political loyalty to Rome the education received was secular in nature. The education received produced for that city, among other things, a temple for emperor worship (Augustus Caesar).

Though the city may have been prominent and well-endowed with things like great architecture, also present was the Lord's church.

### The Pergamum Congregation

The Lord's church was struggling, however. They were commended by Him who redeemed them because they held fast to the Lord's name, His way of life – at least in part.

Though the Lord looked upon His congregation as being one that lacked much, He was still able to note what good they were accomplishing at the time. The challenges they faced were monumental. Satan was enthroned politically, religiously, culturally, and morally. Such an environment can pose a problem to any and all who have a heart where thorns were allowed to spring up (cf. Matthew 13:3-9). This environment was a drag with heavy weights.

The local church struggled to keep their heads above water and to their credit they did not deny His name. Though their heads were above water the weight that was tied to their ankles was beginning to pull them under. They needed quick addressing.

We might say that the church at Pergamum was using one side of the sword with which to work. Satan, however, was in the way and flexing his muscle.

With one side of the sword being used (as if one was using a machete), the church at Pergamum had arrived at a point where the Lord gave warning (2:14-16). On the other hand, when both sides of the Lord's sword is used, as one swings in this direction, and then brings the sword back from the other direction it removes whatever is in the way. Satan's flexed muscles will then be nothing but butter as it meets a hot knife!

The church, however, did not properly use the sword as the Lord designed

(cf. Acts 20:20, 27-32). A sword improperly used allows an object in its path to stand, for the roots of that object hold it firmly in place.

### The Doctrine of Balaam

The "doctrine of Balaam" had taken root in the church and the Lord was mighty displeased. An improperly used sword could not achieve its design because the Christians (at least some of them) allowed a teaching to take root. They expended the spiritual wealth (and health) of the Lord in order to gain in material wealth of the world.

In the long ago, Balaam knew well what the Lord's purpose was with regard to Israel, but his desire to gain "economic freedom" encouraged him to think he could supplant God's purpose for his nation with a scheme that nearly brought Israel to a stop. Balaam planted weeds and thick foliage all around Israel (the male was vulnerable to the female), and this was why Israel suffered greatly (Numbers 22-25; 31).

### The Lord's Message to Pergamum

The church in Pergamum was also to know their vulnerabilities (cf. 2 Corinthians 2:11) and then prepare themselves to thwart Satan's attack that was surely to come. Paul told Timothy to flee youthful lusts (2 Timothy 2:22), and the Lord said to Peter, James, and John that the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak (Mark 14:38). Indeed, the flesh is weak, but there is no way for it to gain any strength when the Lord's weapon and arsenal is improperly used (cf. Ephesians 6:13-18).

In this light the Lord gives them an exhortation (2:16). The good they had associated with their works (2:13) was not adequate to save them in the end.

Thus, the Lord called upon them to repent. God's call to repent, it has been said, is His hardest command to obey – and well it might be.

Repentance gets to the core of who is actually "Lord" in one's life. Is it the inclinations of man's heart which is evil continually (cf. Genesis 6:5, 12) or will

one live in accordance with the Lord Jesus (cf. Galatians 2:20)?

The word "repent" is easily understood to mean they needed to have a change of mind with regard to their approach and tactics in this battle Satan was waging against them. The sword the Lord gave them had been improperly used (or laid down).

The Lord calls upon them to put to proper use His "implement of war" (Hebrews 4:12; Romans 1:16). If they refused to do so, then the sword the Lord made for them to use will be used on them (cf. John 12:48)!

### Conclusion

With the exhortation comes a promise to him who overcomes. After the battle is won the Lord's food is given to replenish one's strength. God's manna is not something kept in a jar only as a memorial, but a promise of strength that only one who can continually replenish the jar provides (cf. 1 Kings 17:14). If strength would be gained in a world that brings weariness to God's child, let each one hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

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# Word Studies

Gerald Cowan

## “Faith” and “The Faith”

What is the relationship of faith and belief? A confession of faith usually is a statement of what one believes and sometimes, but not always, an explanation of why he believes it. Faith requires belief, but it is more than belief.

### Faith and “The” Faith

“The faith” is mentioned often in Scripture – not just faith in the generic sense but rather the faith (for example, in Acts 6:7 and 14:22, Philippians 1:27, 2 Corinthians 13:5, and Jude 3 and 20).

Here are the relevant words in the Scripture text. The noun PISTIS is belief, faith, trust, assurance; having the power of persuasion (it is thus related to the verb PEITHŌ persuade, convince, convict, move to action or obedience).

The verb PISTEUŌ means “I believe,” implying acceptance and obedience.

The verb APISTEŌ is negative, to be without faith, to disbelieve and therefore to disobey (it is related to APEITHEŌ not persuaded, not convinced, not obedient).

Necessary inference: that which is believed is true and verified. One may believe things that are not true, but believing will not make them true. It is not true because we believe it. Rather, we believe it because it is true. It is no unsupported belief, but belief in the truth (2 Thessalonians 2:13).

When the definite article is added, HĒ PISTIS, it is “the faith” – a particular body of truth, belief, and action. Not generic belief (believing in faith, or faith in believing) but belief, acceptance and adherence to specific propositional truths and stipulations.

As used by the New Testament writers “the faith” is a reference to the

teachings and commandments of Christ, so it is the Christian faith, the way of Christ.

For example: “And the word of God increased; and the number of disciples multiplied...and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7).

Paul urged Christians to “examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith” (2 Corinthians 13:5). He does not say, “Check to see if you have any faith,” but to verify that you are *in* and obedient *to* the faith of Christ.

The faithful are true and obedient believers who not only know the truth but actually do what they know is true (John 8:31-32; 13:17).

Jude commands that we “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3).

Paul addressed Timothy as “my son in the faith” (1 Timothy 1:1) – not just *in* faith or as a believer, but as one with him in *the* faith of Christ. You can find other similar references in the writings.

### The Definition in Hebrews 11:1

“Now faith (PISTIS) is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

The common understanding sees faith as belief: i.e., your faith is what you believe.

Although belief is an integral part of faith, the two words are not strict synonyms, not completely interchangeable, and though they share some shades of meaning, they do not mean the same thing.

Notice, though the word PEITHŌ is not used here, the idea is present: to be persuaded and convinced, led to conviction by the evidence presented in support of what is believed. The ASV and ESV have it this way: “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”

Each of the terms listed in Hebrews 11:1 must be properly understood or the definition given will appear meaningless. A paraphrase of both parts

of the statement will be helpful.

**11:1a:** The substance (assurance) of things hoped for.

**Paraphrase:** Faith assures us that we will have what we hope for, giving form and substance to our expectation and desire.

**11:1b:** The evidence (conviction) of things not seen.

**Paraphrase:** Faith understands a statement made by God and the evidence which supports it leads to the conviction that it is true.

The weight of all evidence supporting one’s belief convinces him that his belief is valid. What God has said and what He has done to confirm it convinces us of two things.

First, that the answers He gives to questions beyond our comprehension are satisfying and dependably true.

As in Hebrews 11:3, for example, we know/understand by faith that God made the world out of something invisible to us, and that He formed it into the shape and function He wanted (Gen. 1:1ff).

Second, we know that God will do what He has promised and we shall actually have what He has told us to expect from Him. That is faith, the faith that supports our hope.

### Faith Is Not...

Faith is not “making some good guesses” and “pleasing God by accident or chance.”

Faith was involved in the sacrifices of Abel and Cain (Hebrews 11:4). Abel could not have offered “by faith” and Cain could not have offered “not according to faith” had both not known what God wanted and required. In this case faith refers to the instruction and request received from God.

What Cain did was called sin; whatsoever is not of faith is sin (Romans 14:23). But, sin is not imputed where there is no law, where no commandment or direction of activity has been given (Romans 4:15, 5:12). We are not told how or when they were informed of God’s will, requirements, and

commandments. It doesn't make any difference.

However, another inference from the text is that God spoke directly to them prior to the sacrifices they made. He certainly spoke directly to Cain in regard to the matter after Cain's failure. God has never left man ignorant of what is right and wrong, what is permitted and what is prohibited (Micah 6:8).

Sincerity alone is not faith. Untested and unproved faith is foolishness. One can sincerely and earnestly believe in something that is not true. He doesn't know it isn't true – he believes it is true. "Belief in belief" or "faith in faith" is not faith at all.

Demanding (miraculous) re-confirmation of God's word is not faith. It shows a lack of faith, and that is foolish. God's word has been confirmed (Hebrews 2:1-4) and we have an unimpeachable record of both the word as given and the confirmation of it. People who demand miracles and signs – they even specify the signs and personal benefits they want to see – may get something that satisfies them, but it will likely not be from God.

Undertaking something and "trusting God" to get you through it is fancy, wishful thinking, and foolishness – if God has not given prior assurance (in His word) that He will "be there for you" in that or similar things.

Faith (that brings approval and positive response from God) is not merely belief in God. The devils believe, and tremble (James 2:19).

Acknowledging God's existence and certain of His attributes is not enough to qualify as the faith that puts one into a right relationship with God.

Making claims for God that He will not honor or promises that He will not fulfill is foolish! Much of this is done, with great fanfare, by self-styled prophets and preachers today (pretended miracle workers, tongue speakers, healers, and other profiteers).

It amounts to telling LIES in the name of God, making God out to be a liar. People are so gullible and naive

that they really expect God to do something He has said He will not do, or not do something He has said He will do. It is fatuous fancy and foolishness, but it is not faith!

Faith is not unsupported belief, a mere belief in something that cannot be proved. Faith is firmly based upon two things. First, upon what God has said (Romans 10:17, Hebrews 1:1-2). Not only that; but faith is also based upon what God has done to confirm His word (Hebrews 2:3-4).

### Faith Requires and Must Include

**HEARING** the word of God – actually listening to what God says. Faith comes by hearing – applying your own mind to learning and understanding the word of God (Romans 10:17).

Be careful how and what you hear. The word preached did not profit them, because it was not mixed with faith in those who heard (Hebrews 4:2)

**BELIEVING** and **ACCEPTING** God's word and will. Compare the reception given to the word in Acts 2:38-41, 7:51-58, and 17:11.

The words and doctrines of Christ are worthy of acceptance by all (1 Timothy 4:9). One may think belief is automatic, once one hears and understands God's word. But it is not so.

Hearing it, being told or informed or instructed, does not mean one believes it. One cannot believe nor have faith in what he has not heard, but it is also self-evident that one can hear and yet not believe.

Many claim to be "people of faith" (or even of "the faith") but they do not believe the word of God. There is a contradiction here. How can one claim to believe God, or even believe in God, if he does not believe God's word, especially the words of Christ? Christian faith requires one to believe specific things about Jesus Christ (John 8:24, Romans 10:9-10, 12-13).

**OBEYING** God's word and applying it to one's own life is the proof that one believes God's word (Romans 6:17, 10:9-10 and 16-17).

Scripture says Jesus Christ only saves those who obey Him (Hebrews 5:9, compare 1 Peter 4:17-19 and 2 Thessalonians 1:8). To know what is good, what God requests or requires, but not do it is sin (James 4:17). One who says he believes but does not obey actually negates his claim to believe (Romans 10:15-17).

Two examples will demonstrate the point. The first is repentance. Scripture says very clearly that unless one repents of his own sin he will perish, which means he will die in his sin and be without hope of salvation (Luke 13:3-5, Acts 2:38, Luke 24:47). If he believes he can be saved without repentance, he does not have faith in God or God's word.

The second example is baptism. After the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) when the church was established and the New Covenant of Christ was implemented, not one person is said to be saved without baptism. Let the apostle Peter have the first, middle, and last word on it (Acts 2:38, Acts 10:47, 1 Peter 3:21).

Does everybody who reads or hears those words believe that baptism is essential for salvation? Of course not! The great majority of those who profess to be Christians believe "a loving God will not condemn a person just because he hasn't been properly baptized." That means they do not believe what they read and understand of God's word. That also means that, by God's definition, they do not have faith, they are not in the faith of Jesus Christ.

Obedience may not prove one has true faith, but disobedience can be taken as the lack of faith (Romans 10:16-17, 22; John 3:16, 18, and 36).

One may say, "I believe I am saved. I feel it very strongly." But if he has not obeyed the Lord he is not saved, no matter what he believes or how he feels. That is why we say faith is more than belief, and that feelings cannot take the place of faith.

**TRUSTING** God is the result of hearing and believing His truth (Ephesians 1:13). We trust in God who is the Savior of all who believe (1

Timothy 4:10). We trust God to keep His word, even to deliver us from death (2 Corinthians 1:9-10, 4:14). Such faithful trust in God anchors our hope in heaven with Christ (Hebrews 6:19-20).

**ENDURING** – commitment and loyalty cannot be temporary, or based upon situations and circumstances. We must not give up. We must continue, even when the trials and burdens we bear are difficult. Faith requires a living sacrifice in commitment to the Lord that endures to the end (James 1:2-3, Romans 12:1-2, Matthew 10:22).

**PLEASING GOD** is the goal and the end result of faith, the only faith that He accepts (Hebrews 11:6 and 13:20-21; 1 John 3:21-22).

Ultimately, faith is **VICTORY**, the victory that overcomes the world (1 John 5:4, 1 Corinthians 15:57, Romans 8:37).

By faith and faithfulness – believing and accepting the grace of God and obeying His commands and requirements for receiving it (Romans 5:1-5) – we have our access to Him and can hope to share in His glory.

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## Let Each One Take Heed

(Part 3)

Grady Miller

The strongly worded admonition of Paul in 1 Corinthians 3:10 was an apostolic rebuke of the “Corinthian system” that threatened to undermine the hard work he had invested in his brethren. Those saints were his “beloved children,” for he had begotten them through the gospel (4:14–15). Paul was the first to preach Jesus in Corinth (Acts 18). The church began with his pioneering efforts.

As a wise master builder, Paul laid the foundation for the Lord’s work in Corinth (3:10). It was never his intent to spend the rest of his days at Corinth, and he left after “a good while” (Acts 18:18; eighteen months, vs. 11). Other good men came along, including Apollos, and they watered the seed he had planted. God gave the increase! (3:8).

However, it was not long before other men began to compromise and corrupt the Cause in Corinth. New teachers, preachers, and leaders came to Corinth, or rose to prominence from within the body.

These were men consumed with personal ambition. They regarded other servants of the Lord as rivals for stature and prominence. They favored their own clique or party while dismissing the contributions others might make. This internal struggle for power and recognition between competing factions soon diminished the family of God, resulting in an immature, shallow and contentious congregation of the Lord’s people.

### A Warning to All Who Would Follow

Look again at Paul’s warning to all who seek to build up the church of God (3:11–15).

“For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one’s

work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is. If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.”

This emphatic text can hardly be misunderstood. A preacher or teacher can declare the good news that Jesus saves, uphold the truth of the gospel and win souls for the Master. He may be held in high regard among his brethren and considered a great man among us. And yet, the fiery trial of “the Day” will reveal whether his labors are of enduring value or inferior quality.

### Why Ministries Fail

In other words, one’s “ministry” may be proven a failure, even if he proclaims the truth of the gospel!

Just as the hard work of the farmer in the field is ultimately judged by his harvest, and the construction worker by whether his building stands or falls (3:9), the teacher’s or preacher’s “work” — a noun in this passage, and not a verb, meaning the results and not his effort — is gauged by whether his converts survive “the Day.”

The immediate connection of this criticism with the divisive, competitive party spirit of the Corinthian factions is clear to all. When a teacher converts someone to Jesus and himself (his group, his method, his school or paper, etc.) his work will not stand the test. Trials and tribulations will reveal “what sort it is.”

There may be other failures and shortcomings in one’s ministry that cause his followers to lose their spiritual footing and fall by the wayside.

For example, a man may teach “starting truth” in the most wonderful and powerful manner, but not ground his converts in “staying truth.”

Jesus wanted His apostles to make disciples, and then “teach them to observe all things I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:20). A good start

does not guarantee a good finish.

A teacher may influence his followers to believe the most essential aspect of our calling is an unwavering and strident policing of fellow believers and insuring they stay in the straight and narrow. A “sword and scabbard” perspective on the faith, over and beyond every other consideration, and endless preoccupation with the current “brotherhood issue” can steal away the very heart of the “good news.”

The preacher may not heed the admonition to “speak the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15). One who prides himself on how blunt and plain he is when he tells others what they need to know, and is always rebuffed when they refuse to accept his cutting criticism, may become so discouraged he falls away.

Preachers may promote a “peace, peace, when there is no peace” approach to God’s saving truth (Jeremiah 6:14; 8:11). Thus, the followers are carried about by every wind of doctrine that blows (Ephesians 4:14), and are ultimately blown down.

### Conclusion

“My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment” (James 3:1).

That “stricter judgment” for the preacher is more, much more than whether he teaches faith, repentance and baptism. It goes beyond the first principles of saving truth. It speaks to the lasting good, eternal effectiveness and lasting quality of one’s ministry.

The church at Corinth was plagued with leaders who taught truth, but were motivated by “selfish ambition” (Philippians 1:16). Their shoddy construction would not stand in “the Day,” even if the underlying foundation was sound. Let us “take heed” today!

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## This Month in Restoration History

**May 13, 1866** – T.B. Larimore preaches his first sermon by appointment in Hopkinsville, KY. His text is Luke 12:13-29. His sermon began a meeting which others also preached leading to forty conversions.

**May 3, 1874** - Tolbert Fanning dies after being gored by a bull some weeks earlier.

**May 18, 1874** – N.B. Hardeman is born in a log cabin near Milledgeville, TN.

**May 27-June 13, 1889** – The “Nashville Debate” is conducted between James A. Harding and J.B. Moody (Baptist) for 16 nights. Over 100 people are baptized in the Nashville area in the following weeks.

**May 1880-May 1893** – During this period churches of Christ are organized throughout Texas in such cities as Houston, San Antonio, Lubbock, and Waco.

**May 1916** – Gus Nichols began preaching for the Lord’s church that was meeting at the Iron Mountain School near Carbon Hill, AL. Brother Nichols supported his family by farming, and working at Galloway Coal Company during these years.

**May 26, 1926** – Of the nearly 40,000 souls to have been baptized by brother Marshall Keeble, the one that he said meant more than any other occurred on this date when he baptized his “dear old mother.” Mrs. Keeble had often said she was “born a Methodist, lived a Methodist, and would die a Methodist.” The baptism occurred while Keeble was preaching at the Jackson Street congregation in Nashville, TN.

**May 1942** – Eugene Smith debates Ben M. Bogard (Baptist) in Dallas, TX. The state fairgrounds auditorium hosts crowds in excess of 2,500 for the four-night debate.

**May 1956** – Batsell Barrett Baxter conducted an area-wide campaign in Lubbock, TX. More than 30,000 people attended these sessions which were conducted in the recently built Municipal Auditorium of that city. The sermons preached at the Lubbock Bible Forum were published in the book, “If I Be Lifted Up.”

**May 13, 1957** – A state charter is granted to Fort Worth Christian College. Roy Deaver, the first president of the college, began a campaign that produced \$254,000 for construction of administration and classroom buildings.

## Biographical Sketches of Gospel Preachers

**Jeff Archey** preaches for the East Side congregation in Cleveland, TN. He has been with this good congregation since December, 2002.

Jeff also teaches for the Chattanooga School of Preaching and Biblical Studies, which is a work of the Greens Lake Road church in Chattanooga.

He is a graduate of both the Nashville School of Preaching and Biblical Studies and the Great Commission School. Brother Archey has attended David Lipscomb and Freed-Hardeman Colleges as well as the Chattanooga School of Preaching and Biblical Studies. Jeff also hosts "Focus on Faith" on the Gospel Broadcasting Network.

**Stephen R. Bradd** has been a member of the Lord's church since he was baptized for the remission of his sins on February 4, 1987.

Stephen grew up in Clinton, IL and graduated from Clinton Community High School. He has earned a B.S. degree in Mathematics Education from Illinois State University. He has also completed World Video Bible School's in-depth program of study.

Stephen has served as a gospel preacher with the Lord's church in Clinton since the summer of 2000.

Stephen is blessed with a lovely wife (the former Ranae Breeden) and five sons, Adin, Abel, Abram, Amos, & Asa.

**Bill Brandstatter** is a native of northern Illinois. He and his wife Vonna have been married for 33 years and have four children and six grandchildren.

Bill is the minister for the Marion, IL congregation. He has been there for four years. Bill has been preaching for almost 30 years. He has preached in Missouri and Illinois and has done mission works in Jamaica.

Brother Brandstatter is a 1988 graduate of the Memphis School of Preaching.

He has a background in communication. He worked as a radio announcer for 11 years.

He currently writes a weekly newspaper column entitled, "From the Preacher's Desk." He preaches on a weekly radio program, "Search the Bible." He is a writer for the "Perspective" column in the *Gospel Advocate* and has articles in two lectureship books on Masonry. Brother Brandstatter has also recorded two television programs for "Getting to Know Your Bible."

**Matthew Clifton** is the evangelist for the church of Christ in McCrory, AR. In addition to being a Christian minister, he also has over 17 years of experience in publishing, graphic design, and internet technologies.

Brother Clifton has earned a B.A. in Biblical Studies, an M.S. in Ministerial Leadership, and a Master of Divinity from Amridge University in Montgomery, AL.

In addition to his ministry work, he is also an instructor for the Tennessee Bible College Distance Learning Program and is also engaged in doctoral studies there.

He and his wife have three children.

**Artie Collins** was born July 11, 1927. He has been married to his beloved Marie for 65 years. Together, they have four faithful children.

Over fifty years ago he preached his first sermon on a Sunday night in Lyles, TN.

He was also in the second graduating class on the Nashville School of Preaching.

Brother Collins entered fulltime ministry in 1966 for the church in Lynnville, TN.

From 1981-2011, he preached for the Springer congregation in Hohenwald, TN.

He was influenced by such gospel preachers as his brother, Charles Collins, W.L. Cochran (also a Hickman County, TN educator), and Harold Sain.

Artie was influenced early by chart sermons. His first chart sermon was a

stenciled sermon on cloth. He soon found that flannel board sermons were more effective for him. Over the course of his life he has made over 200 hand-crafted charts, numerous hand-made boards, stands, etc.

Brother Artie has preached these sermons in over 350 gospel meetings. His flannel board lessons are now available in a two-volume set from Hester Publications.

**Travis Quertermous** has been preaching the gospel since 1989. He has served six congregations of the Lord's church as a minister, all in his home state of Missouri.

He preaches for the Dexter church of Christ in Dexter, MO, and has been the evangelist there since June 2007.

Travis is the author of one book, *The Host of Heaven: A Biblical Study of Angels*. His articles have appeared in many brotherhood publications and church bulletins, including *Gospel Advocate*, *Firm Foundation*, *The Gospel Journal*, *POWER*, and *Voice of Truth International*.

Travis was born and raised in southeast Missouri. He is a 1990 graduate of Southeast Missouri State University in Cape Girardeau, MO, with a BS in Social Studies and Secondary Education. In addition, he has taken a few graduate classes at Harding Graduate School of Religion in Memphis, TN.

Travis and his wife Kelly were married on August 4, 1990, and have two sons, Logan (18) and Brandon (16).

**Michael Shank** lives with his family in rural Massac County (Illinois) on 9 acres of woodlands.

Michael earned a BS in Management Communication from Southern Christian University in Montgomery, Alabama.

He and his wife have been married 28 years and have 4 sons. He continues to serve the Lord through teaching, writing, publishing, speaking and personal evangelism.

He has recently written *Muscle and a Shovel* which tells of his conversion to

New Testament Christianity.

**Milton Stephens** a native of Georgia. He is the preacher for the Lynnville church of Christ, in Lynnville, TN. He married the former Julie Tinker in 1981. They have one son, Thomas (Courtney) Stephens. His parents are Roy and Shirley Stephens of Trenton, GA.

He attended Walker Technical School, Edmonson Junior College and is a graduate of Nashville School of Preaching and Middle Tennessee School of Preaching & Biblical Studies.

Brother Stephens has preached for churches in Georgia and Tennessee. He began working with the Lynnville congregation in June 1993. He is a speaker in gospel meetings, lectureships, and has written for brotherhood publications. He continues to teach classes for the Middle Tennessee School of Preaching & Biblical Studies where he has taught since 2004.

## Open Bible Study Materials

Ivan Stewart's the Open Bible Study materials have led countless souls to a truer knowledge of the word of God.

These materials continue to be made available by *Gospel Gleaner* staff writer Roger Shepherd.

Every tool the soul-winner could need to aid in teaching the Bible to the lost, instructing new converts, developing soul-winning methods in the local congregation, or restoring an erring brother has been made available through years of developing this system.

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**Open Bible Study Ministry**  
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 8101 Hialeah Lane  
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[reshep54@hotmail.com](mailto:reshep54@hotmail.com)

## News & Notes

James R. McGill

### *Gospel Gleaner* Announces Four New Staff Writers

The *Gospel Gleaner* is pleased to announce the addition of four new writers to our staff.

**Stephen R. Bradd** of Clinton, IL, will be conducting a monthly column titled "Know Your Bible."

**Travis Quertermous** of Dexter, MO, will be writing on a variety of themes.

**Andy Robison** of Moundsville, WV, will be writing on a variety of themes, especially focusing on the Educational Department of our paper.

**Michael Shank** of Metropolis, IL, will be helping us with articles pertaining to church growth and personal evangelism.

We are looking forward to many fine articles coming from the pen of these faithful and good men.

### Upcoming Events

**May 5-10** – **Steve Snider** will be conducting a gospel meeting for the Daybrook congregation in Daybrook, WV.

**May 9** – **Warren Christian Apologetics Center** presents: The Historical Jesus, 9:00am-4:00pm, Grand Pointe Conference Center, Vienna, WV

**May 12-15** – **The Bible Institute of Missouri** in Springfield, MO, will be hosting its annual Spring Lectureship. The theme will be "The Christian Family."

**May 15-19** – **23rd Annual Truth In Love Lectureship** will be hosted by the East Hill congregation in Pulaski, TN. The theme will be "Don't Ever Give Up."

**May 19-23** – **Andy Robison** will be conducting a gospel meeting for the church of Christ in Cairo, WV.

**May 23-26** – **John T. Polk, II** will be conducting a gospel meeting for the church of Christ in West Branch, MI.

**June 2-5** – **John Moore** will be conducting a gospel meeting for the Mabelvale congregation in Mabelvale, AR.

### Outreach Northeast Campaign Begins

This summer the team, known as Outreach Northeast, with 12 different workers coming at various times, is to be involved in two-week works in Mount Holly Springs, PA; Endwell, NY; Torrington, CT; and Caribou, ME. These efforts are to begin May 14 and end July 2.

*Gospel Gleaner* staff writer **Owen Olbricht** has been working in these campaigns since 1964. This campaign will mark his fiftieth in the northeast.

### Tragedy in West, Texas

An explosion occurred at 7:51 p.m. on April 17 in West, TX. Fourteen people were killed including ten first responders who died in the explosion.

The Adair family which owns the fertilizer plant belongs to the church of Christ in West.

They were in midweek Bible class when they learned of the fire, and were on their way to the location when it exploded.

The preacher for the church in West, and other church members, are among those who lost their homes.

Congregations that are assisting in relief efforts include:

West (P.O. Box 246, West, TX 76691-0246; phone: 254-826-5252)

Westhill in Corsicana (3400 W State Hwy 22, Corsicana, TX 75110-2434; phone: 903-872-5696)

Lakeshore Drive in Waco (2800 Lake Shore Dr., Waco, TX 76708-1010; phone: 254-753-1503)

**Email Your News and Notes Items**

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or

[jimrmcgill@clearwire.net](mailto:jimrmcgill@clearwire.net)

Reader Replies

Andrew Erwin is doing an outstanding job as the new editor of the Gospel Gleaner. The journal is staffed by a wide range of writers and authors. Each writer brings their own unique contribution to the printed page. The articles of Gerald Cowan and James R. McGill alone are worth more than the subscription price of the paper. The Gospel Gleaner continues to be a blessing to the brotherhood of Christ.

Bill Dillon

Mountain Home, AR

We're really enjoying the Gospel Gleaner. Jackson's article (March issue) was excellent!

Teresa Williams

Burns, TN

We used Jackson's article in our bulletin this past Sunday (West Avenue church of Christ, Crossville, TN). The article was great and I am looking forward to seeing more writing from him in the future.

Tim Hester

Crossville, TN

Keep up the good work. We need sound articles more than ever before. Mike Kiser will hold a meeting at the Austin church of Christ where I labor, this coming July. God bless.

Jerry Noblin

Cabot, AR

The Gleaner is a great periodical because it is not only teaching great Bible truths, but it meets the personal interest items related to news of interest. I think you are doing a great job, brother. Keep it up.

Ron Thomas

Sullivan, IL

We are delighted to add the following congregations to our family of subscribers:

Antioch church of Christ, Blue Springs, MS

Crestview church of Christ, Boaz, AL

Gadsden church of Christ, Gadsden, AL

Eastside church of Christ, Dickson, TN

Fraley's Chapel church of Christ, Corinth, MS

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# The GOSPEL CLEANER

Volume 25

June, 2013

Number Six

## THE PRESENT TRUTH . . .

Ronald D. Bryant

### DEATH HAS BEEN ABOLISHED

Sin and death have ever been connected. The reality of sin is joined to the reality of death. Death is the dreadful “wage” that sin pays (Romans 6:23). This is true of each form which death takes.

#### Three Forms of Death

The Bible speaks of three forms of death: physical, spiritual, eternal. Physical death is the result of the separation of the spirit from the body (James 2:26). Spiritual death is the separation of the soul from God (Isaiah 59:1-2; Ephesians 2:1-2). Eternal death is the separation of the soul from God forever (Matthew 10:28; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; Revelations 20:11-14). In each realm death is a consequence of sin – the wage and terrible yet just reward of sin.

Yet, death need not be viewed as the final state. A larger fact detailed in the following words: “...our Savior Jesus Christ has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Timothy 1:8-10).

#### Physical Death Abolished?

What does this mean? Does this mean that Jesus has “eliminated” death? If this be true, why do people continue to face and experience physical death? Does this mean that spiritual death is no longer an issue? Does this mean that sinners are no longer “dead in trespasses and sin?” Has Jesus actually eliminated the “second death?”

The fundamental meaning of the word translated “abolished,” is “to make ineffective or to nullify” (Arndt & Gingrich Lexicon). Death, though it continues to exist, has been “conquered.” its

strength has been nullified, or as Paul wrote, its sting has been removed. His words are figurative, but the message is clear: “O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:55-57).

The particulars regarding this “abolishing,” and “nullifying,” are as follows: In His resurrection Jesus literally conquered death, and in doing so He has given the basis for our liberation from the fear of physical death.

It is not poetic license to speak of death as “sleep” as does Paul in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; nor was comforting exaggeration being offered when he wrote, “For to me to live is Christ, to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21).

The good news can be simply stated: In our Lord’s death, burial, and resurrection the power of death has been broken.

“Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Hebrews 2:14-15).

Furthermore, according to the words of the gospel, death cannot separate the faithful from the love of God (Romans 8:38-39). They are “more than conquerors!”

#### Spiritual Death Abolished?

What is now true of spiritual death, has it been conquered? The grand truth of the gospel of Christ is that spiritual

death has been nullified by the blood of Christ.

It is correct to affirm that salvation from sin is victory over spiritual death. Thus, to be in Christ is to be “alive” (Ephesians 2:1-2).

Paul insisted, “Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. . . And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God” (Romans 6:11, 13).

The reality of spiritual life is detailed; to be in Christ is to be alive spiritually (Romans 6:1-6; 2 Corinthians 5:17).

Spiritual life is life eternal (John 17:4). It is begun on earth and completed in heaven. John wrote of a voice he heard from heaven saying, “Write: Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on. ‘Yes,’ says the Spirit, ‘that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them’” (Revelation 14:13; see also 20:6).

#### Conclusion

Death has been conquered by the Lord Jesus Christ, and life (in Him) is now ruled, not by despair, but a living hope through the resurrection of Christ (1 Peter 1:3-5).

The hope of the redeemed is real and it is powerful. It rests upon this grand and unconquerable fact: Christ has abolished death! Furthermore, “He has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”

The things that we shall discuss in this article are not new by any means. Concerning the training of men who seek to be gospel preachers, let us ask to what end are we training them?

### Reasons for Concern

That the change agent movement and certain false doctrines are at home in some of our schools has been well documented. Certainly this problem seems to persist. We ask, “Why?”

In one of our school’s publications a professor and later a Bible department dean encouraged attendance at the conferences of the Society of Biblical Literature, the American Academy of Religion, and the Evangelical Theological Society. In these gatherings you will find theological liberals, feminists, world religions, and lesbian/gay advocates. Why would our teaching brethren encourage supporting such associations?

A few of our schools have begun inviting denominational professors to their campuses to speak to their students at chapel and at special lectures where they are the keynote speaker. Why?

One school has been established strictly for the purpose of selling degrees. A man can become a Ph.D. without ever cracking a book! Why would anyone buy a degree not earned?

### One Possible Explanation

We hope to provide one possible explanation as to how these practices have come to be accepted, simply put – worldly pride.

Having a Bible department that trains tried and true gospel preachers no longer seems to be good enough for many of our schools. Rather, they are esteeming the praise of men through academic credentials offered by the world. The result is an aura of academic elitism and worldly pride.

Nothing short of worldly, sinful pride would have us believe that rubbing elbows with the academically elite in worldly associations is profitable to the Lord’s church. Nothing short of sinful pride would cause a school to invite a

“renowned” denominational professor to lecture to their students.

Nothing but sinful pride would have a man buy a degree and then flaunt it by having people call him “doctor.”

We have lost our focus when the goal of learning is replaced by the goal of academic achievement and notoriety according to worldly standards.

### The Results We Are Getting

It is not uncommon to hear a person say to a gospel preacher, “I haven’t heard a sermon preached like that in years!” To the contrary, we also hear, “He is a good Bible class teacher, but not much of a preacher.” We have also heard it said that preachers are spending more and more time in their office, and less and less time in the community. How have we reached this point?

We go back to the schools and the type of education our preachers have received. Gone are the days that our Bible faculties consisted first and foremost of faithful gospel preachers. Over the past few decades the gospel preacher who once taught has been replaced by the man credentialed in academia.

These days, our professors are up to date on the latest “scholarly” book written on some abstract theme which is not understood nor appreciated by the person in the pew. Yet these same teachers know very little of the classic debates or sermon books written by faithful preachers of yesteryear. How then could they possibly instruct a student to preach like their forefathers when they themselves know not how they preached?

Our professors have been at home in the library, but often lost in the pulpit. The result is a generation of preachers that knows how to study, but does not know how to communicate what they have learned to the common man.

### An Alternative

In the 1960s, men like Charles R. Brewer and Roy J. Hearn recognized these very symptoms, and saw the need for schools of preaching operated and overseen by faithful congregations. The

idea they had was to have the local congregation take responsibility for training preachers, employ men who had a reputation for faithfully preaching the gospel regardless of academic credentials, and allow the students to be trained free of charge.

The schools of preaching have provided an invaluable service through the years. However, a recent trend among a few of these schools is to become – you guessed it – more academic and more of a research institution. Thus, we are in danger of turning our schools of preaching into the same type of institution we have been discussing.

Why should we think that by doing the same thing repeatedly we would get different results? If our schools of preaching determine to focus on academic credentials for their teachers, rather than the credential of faithfulness to the Word, they will be dipping from the same well as has been noted, and the product will inevitably be the same.

### Reversing the Trend

How do we reverse this trend, and return to producing a preacher that is first and foremost a faithful gospel preacher? In the first place, we must recognize the principle of reproduction. We do not produce, we reproduce. We reproduce what we have become (2 Timothy 2:2).

If you want to see students encouraged to be first and foremost faithful gospel preachers, who really know how to preach and minister, support those schools who hire no one but faithful gospel preachers to reproduce themselves in the lives of their students.

Of course this requires that we let the schools know if they desire our money, support, and students that we expect them to be faithful in their responsibilities. To do so would mean that we would have to be more loyal to our heavenly Father than our alma mater. It would require that we repent of worldly pride and academic elitism.

The

GOSPEL



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His Church*

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## Why Do We Sin?

Owen D. Olbricht

Two reasons most frequently given as to why we sin are (1) that we were born with a sinful nature and (2) that we have two opposing natures that are at war with each other. The ones who believe such base their attitudes on misapplied scriptures, personal experience, and/or the fact that everyone sins because something in our nature causes us to sin.

By gathering all that the Bible says about this matter, we can learn the truth. We must begin by determining the character of our nature.

### God Made Us

After God created: "God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good" (Genesis 1:31). "God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes" (Ecclesiastes 7:29).

If everything was very good after God created, we were created with a good nature. If we conclude that our good nature became corrupted after creation, we must also conclude that Jesus took on a corrupted sinful nature when He took on a human body, for He came "in the likeness of men" (Philippians 2:7b). "Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren" (Hebrews 2:17). "All things" means that He took our complete nature so He could face sin from our perspective, thus He "was in all points tempted as we are" (Hebrews 4:15). If His nature was not like ours, He could not have been tempted in all points like we are.

If Jesus did not have a corrupted human nature after He was made in all points like we are made, then it must follow that we do not have a corrupted and sinful nature.

Jesus had our same feelings, appetites, sensations, and bodily passions. Even though He faced the same four factors that we face in our struggle with sin, He remained sinless.

These four factors are as follows:

### Factor One

God created for our enjoyment everything that can bring pleasure to our senses.

"Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness" (Acts 14:17).

"Command those who are rich...to trust...in the living God who gives us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Timothy 6:17)."

"Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights" (James 1:21).

### Factor Two

God created our strong feelings, senses, appetites, and bodily passions so that we can experience and enjoy all the good things He has created and is providing for us to enjoy.

"As for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, and given him power to eat of it, to receive his heritage and rejoice in his labor" (Ecclesiastes 5:19).

"Let your fountain be blessed, And rejoice in the wife of your youth...Let her breasts satisfy you at all times; And always be enraptured with her love" (Proverbs 5:18-19).

Every passion God has given us is strong and good, and can bring great enjoyment when engaged correctly. Because they are so strong, however, we may think they are sinful passions, but they are strong in order to give us great enjoyment. Nothing is wrong with them, but the misuse of them is wrong. We sin when we satisfy them by seeking pleasures outside God's boundaries.

### Factor Three

We have the ability to choose whether or not we will use our faculties for pleasures inside or outside God's

parameters. Moses is an example. He chose "rather to suffer afflictions with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin" (Hebrews 11:25).

We have freedom to choose because we are not puppets on a string. God would not be praised by automatons, but rather is pleased and glorified by those who cheerfully choose to worship and serve Him according to His will (Matthew 4:10; 7:21; 2 Corinthians 9:7).

### Factor Four

The devil uses the good things God created for us to appeal to our good feelings and appetites, which God has given us to enjoy. He uses these to tempt us to use them contrary to the purpose for which God has given them to us.

Our warfare is against our adversary, the devil (Ephesians 6:11), who seeks to destroy us by misleading us to misdirect our God-given passions. He tries to deceive us by offering us what seemingly will give us freedom to enjoy boundless pleasures. Instead they can cause us harm and make us miserable slaves. He is the source of lies and deception (John 8:44). We cannot trust him.

### Test Case

The temptation of Eve can serve as a test case. She did not have a sinful nature, so why did she sin?

Satan tempted Eve (2 Corinthians 11:3) by appealing to her appetite, her ability to appreciate the sight of appealing food, and her freedom to make a choice to eat or not to eat. Through these Satan tempted Eve to eat of the fruit the tree of knowledge of good and evil. He did not appeal to an evil nature on her part, but rather tempted her by directing her attention to what God had made appealing to her physical senses and by pointing out the possibility of her gaining God's good

ability to know good and evil. She gained this ability after she ate of the tree (Genesis 3:5, 22). She was not punished because she was motivated by her God-given senses to eat but because she allowed Satan to use them to entice her to disobey God.

Perhaps a good analogy would be that of a hunter who baits a trap with food that is "mouth-watering" to the animal he wants to catch. The animal's passion for food is good and not bad. What is bad is that the animal does not realize that going into the trap to satisfy his good appetite for the tasty food will cause him to be trapped.

Satan's approach is the same. He does not appeal to a corrupt nature but to the pleasurable things God created and to the appetites God gave us, thus tempting us to fulfill our desires in the wrong way. Like the animal is deceived and trapped by food he enjoys, Satan deceives and ensnares us by appealing to our good passions with good things God created.

This was Solomon's point in his advice to a son that he is to be "always enraptured" with the love of his wife and not "enraptured by an immoral woman" (Poverbs 5:18-20). Both can provide the same appeal and the same pleasure.

Satan even tried to tempt Jesus through His human appetite, like a craving for food, to satisfy His hunger (Luke 4:2-13). Satan was the cause of the downfall of both Judas (John 13:2) and Ananias (Acts 5:2) through their freedom of choice.

The devil seeks to tempt us, not by appealing to a sinful human nature but by the good strong passions God gave us, to experience the enjoyable things God has provided for us.

### Enslaved

Once Satan allures us to begin practicing a sin, he enslaves us to continue doing that sin, thus creating a habit that gives him an advantage over us. In this way we become slaves to sin as taught by:

Jesus said, "...whoever commits sin is a slave of sin" (John 8:34).

Paul said, "...you are slaves of the one whom you obey" (Romans 6:16; NASB).

Paul also wrote of the "...snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will" (2 Timothy 2:26).

Peter wrote, "...for by what a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage" (2 Peter 2:19).

### Our Adversary

Satan knows he can tempt us to sin by using pleasant things God created that appear to our strong God-given appetites. He uses them to ensnare us.

We must not:

- Follow the desires of the devil (John 8:44).
- Give Satan an advantage (2 Corinthians 2:11).
- Do that which will make us easy prey for the devil (1 Corinthians 7:5).
- Be deceived by the devil (2 Corinthians 11:3).
- Give place to the devil (Ephesians 4:27).
- Turn aside to follow the devil (1 Timothy 5:15).
- Let him take God's word from our hearts (Luke 8:12) through:
  - A. Lies by his agents (Acts 12:10; 2 Corinthians 11:13-15).
  - B. A lack of protection by our Christian armor (Ephesians 6:11).

Our warfare with Satan requires that we correctly direct our appetites so that we can use them according to God's design and not contrary to His will. We are to enjoy God-given pleasures in the right way as we fight against Satan's efforts to get us to misuse them.

### Our Part

As Christians, we have help to overcome Satan if we do our part to follow God's warnings against his activities.

We must:

- Flee immorality (1 Corinthians 6:17).
- Control our bodily passions, which are good if used within God's parameters (1 Corinthians 9:27). The NIV incorrectly translates the word *sarks* (Greek, flesh) in many passages to mean "sinful nature." It should be translated, "fleshly passions."
- Cleanse ourselves of all defilement of flesh and spirit (2 Corinthians 7:1).
- See that we seek to satisfy our desires God's way and not be tempted to satisfy them Satan's way (James 1:13-15).
- Resist the devil through faith and through the help of Him who dwells in us (James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:8-9; 1 John 4:4; 5:4).

Jesus showed the way to resist Satan by saying, "Away with you [or get behind Me] Satan! For it is written..." (Matthew 4:10; Luke 4:8).

### Why Do We Sin?

Satan tempts us to satisfy our good senses, appetites, sensations, and bodily passions contrary to God's intended purposes. Our passions, which are strong and good when fulfilled correctly, can be our downfall if we allow Satan to trick us into indulging them in the wrong way.

If we satisfy these for our enjoyment and pleasure the way God intended, we can have full and happy lives, but if we abuse them by using them Satan's way, our lives will be empty and without lasting enjoyment, and will cause Jesus to reject us on the Day of Judgment.

We sin because Satan tempts and entices us to choose to satisfy outside God's parameters the good God-given passions with pleasures He created for our enjoyment.

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## Who Is Dancing Among the Stars?

John T. Polk, II

No matter what someone's life has been like, it seems at the funeral he/she is continuing that life "in heaven." A family sees their pet dog there playing "fetch;" another "knows" that their Uncle is pulling pranks on Moses; another "wants to believe" their Mother is cooking special meals for Jesus; still another says their family member "has joined the chorus in heaven."

People whose lives are in rebellion against God seem to worm their way into heaven. Whatever "talent" someone has shown on earth, we are told, will be added to the activities of heaven: entertainer, singer, athlete, media personality, dancer, teacher, etc.

While on the one hand, it demonstrates how strongly humans are attracted to the concept of heaven so that they want everything they know to be a part of it; but on the other hand, it is profanity to make heaven merely an extension and continuation of life on earth! If heaven is more of earth, then the diseased, disabled, distraught, deformed, dangerous, and damnable would bring their terror and tears with them!

### Defining Heaven

Heaven simply means "upward" and there were three "heavens" referred to in God's word. The Apostle Paul said, "I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago--whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows--such a one was caught up to the third heaven" (2 Corinthians 12:2).

The word of God begins with: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1).

The first "upward" from the earth's surface is the atmosphere we breathe and in which birds fly (Genesis 1:20-23). It is "under heaven" where eagles

fly (Proverbs 23:5), birds live (Jeremiah 34:20), nations dwell (Acts 2:5), and Jesus' name saves (Acts 4:12).

The second layer of "upward" from the earth is the heaven we call "outer space" where the sun, moon, and stars reside (Genesis 1:14-19; 15:5; Deuteronomy 4:13). These two were the "heavens" God created along with "the earth."

The third "heaven" is the ultimate "upward" where: God lives (Ecclesiastes 5:2; Daniel 2:17-19), the righteous are rewarded (Matthew 5:12), God's throne is (Matthew 5:34), and where Jesus is now.

"So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God" (Mark 16:19).

Jesus taught disciples how to pray: "When you pray, say: Our Father in heaven" (Luke 11:2).

The God who created the "heavens" dwells in an unreachable "heaven," where Jesus now is.

Having lived on earth, Jesus Christ "...alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom *be* honor and everlasting power. Amen" (1 Timothy 6:16).

"Unapproachable" literally means "unable to go there." No "space probe" can travel far enough to reach God's "heaven!"

Jesus Christ clearly taught that God's heaven is NOT simply an extension of activities from the earth. "For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven" (Matthew 22:30). The following figures of speech describe the church of Christ in Revelation 21:1-22:7, and end in the heaven where God is!

### The Holy City

The church of Christ is the "holy city, new Jerusalem" which came from heaven (Hebrews 12:22-23; Revelation 21:2, 10). It is the Lamb's bride (2 Corinthians 1:1; 11:2; Revelation 21:2, 9). It is the "temple of God" where God is represented as dwelling on earth (2 Corinthians 1:1; 6:16; Revelation 21:3, 22). It will be delivered up to God, not established, at Jesus' Second Coming (1 Corinthians 15:23-26; Revelation 22:3).

No fleshly gratification will be there (Revelation 21:4, 8, 27). This is why the saved in the church of Christ strive to please God by avoiding sin (Colossians 3:1-11), and being spiritual (Colossians 3:12-25).

### God's Heaven

God's heaven is devoted only to worshipping Him in acceptable ways (Revelation 4:1-5:14), which are learned on earth: singing (Colossians 3:16), praising Him (Philippians 1:9-11), bowing before Him and confessing to Him (Romans 14:11-12). Heaven is for those who enjoy attending church and worshipping God!

All worship will be totally God-centered, NOT man-pleasing! People do not "join heaven's chorus" unless they have "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (Revelation 7:9-17). Those who obey the gospel of Christ have been "buried with Him through baptism into death" in order to "walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:3-5). This baptism is not for the saved, but for the lost (Mark 16:15-16).

There is no hope of heaven if it is the same as life on earth! "For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. Not only *that*, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit,

even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. For we were saved in this hope, but hope that is seen is not hope; for why does one still hope for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance" (Romans 8:22-25). If what we see on earth is what will be in heaven, then there is no hope!

Physical bodies of humans and animals both go back into the dust from where they came, but their "spirits" are different: "All go to one place: all are from the dust, and all return to dust. Who knows the spirit of the sons of men, which goes upward, and the spirit of the animal, which goes down to the earth?" (Ecclesiastes 3:20-21)

All dogs won't go to heaven. Children won't have hamsters, video games, or dolls. Professional singers won't be intoning their lyrics about drunkenness, divorce, sexual antics, or hatred. It will not be a "family reunion" for cooking or visiting. Nor will it be a glorified "Facebook;" *ad nauseum*.

To those who have learned to worship and serve Him because He saved them by His grace in Christ, through their faith in obedience, He will say, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord" (Matthew 25:21).



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## KNOW YOUR BIBLE

Stephen R. Bradd

### The Certainty of the Written Word

Are you familiar with the game called "Telephone?" It's a simple game that can be played with a group of people sitting in a circle. The first person has a brief message that he whispers to the person on his left. That individual then passes the message on by whispering it into the ear of the next person. This process continues until the message gets back to its originator. However, by this time the message has almost always undergone significant changes. Why? Somewhere along the line the message is typically misunderstood by a listener and then passed on incorrectly. It is difficult to overcome this problem in communication that is strictly oral. Even when the speaker is not whispering retaining accuracy when passing on verbal messages has always been a challenge for mankind.

Now with those thoughts in mind, imagine what it would have been like to live in the first century shortly after Jesus' ascension into heaven. The book of Acts makes it clear the gospel message was spreading rapidly (cf. Acts 8:4). People all over the world were learning about Jesus the Christ through a message that was primarily communicated through spoken words. No doubt there were some unintentional inaccuracies being spread by zealous disciples (just like in the Telephone game).

If the gospel message was only communicated orally, then it would be destined to change gradually as it was transmitted from one person to the next. In such circumstances, those who had not heard the message directly from Jesus, the apostles, or others who were inspired, would have rightly had doubts about the accuracy of what they were hearing. But, thankfully, the gospel message was not just transmitted by speech. It was also written down by divinely-inspired men in order to record and preserve God's truth accurately for all time (cf. 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Corinthians 2:9-13; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

We can see that Luke penned his account of the gospel for this very purpose – "Inasmuch as many have taken in hand to set in order a narrative of those things which have been fulfilled among us, just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word delivered them to us, it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed" (Luke 1:1-4).

Many oral teachings and written testimonies being circulated in Luke's day, even from eyewitnesses, were insufficient due to their incompleteness and imperfections. Thus, Luke, an inspired author (which explains his complete understanding of the subject matter), wrote this account that Theophilus, and future readers, could know *assuredly* of the things in which they had been instructed. This assurance of accuracy when it comes to the Bible text is extremely important since man's faith is based upon the testimony of the written word (cf. John 20:30-31).

Oral communication is a wonderful tool, but it often lacks the accuracy and permanency of written words. Praise be to God for the Bible, His inspired, written communication for man! He has given us exactly what we need in an objective form (cf. Psalm 119:105). We can know the certainty of the things recorded therein.

## When Will Youth be Baptized?

E. Claude Gardner

Teenagers can be saved if they are "snatched out of the fire" (Jude 23). Thanks be to God for loving parents, teachers, or friends who will rescue our precious young people from eternal hell. Those who are pulled out of danger are delightful youth who are beautiful or handsome. They have not become hardened and coarse by sin and numerous popular illicit activities.

These young people have talent, conduct, and personality which will make them a dominant force and leaders in the church in adulthood. A young person who becomes a Christian has the prospect (with good health) of serving God for 75 years! It is a challenge to us to see that they are saved and snatched out of the fire.

When will these precious, maturing children choose to be baptized? The youth may procrastinate and this gives the devil time to enlist you into his evil kingdom.

Yet, the blessings are fantastic for becoming a Christian, but there are hindrances some youth consider. They may be waiting for their parents to encourage them, as they observe their maturity and readiness. It is discouraging when young people are baptized but continue to live recklessly. One deep concern is whether they are mature and know right from wrong.

We observe some young people and we conclude they will be baptized soon. We wait patiently to see them make the major decision to become a Christian.

To help them make that choice, it is profitable to teach them to cultivate the right condition of heart. They need to be impressed with God's love, mercy, and grace. These truths will soften their heart and cause them to have a gentle and obedient spirit.

In the book of Acts, we have examples of those who became Christians. On the day the Lord's church began (Acts 2) the audience was first

taught about the goodness of God before they were commanded to obey. When loving hearts inquired what to do to be saved, they were instructed in Acts 2:38.

Another example in Acts, the book of conversions, is the case of the Ethiopian traveler. The preaching softened his heart by the story of Christ's life. After this message, he was ready and anxious to be baptized. This type of teaching will make a person more receptive to being baptized.

As a teenager, one has to learn from the New Testament of God's supreme love in the gift of His Son (John 3:16). Jesus came that we might have life and life more abundantly (John 10:10). No one but the Lord can wash away sins. "He who does not love does not know God, for God is love" (1 John 4:8).

Teenagers who are ready to be baptized will know (1) the love of God; (2) that they are sinners; and (3) the plan of salvation. These three truths will enable any honest youth to be baptized. If they truly understand these truths, they will never doubt becoming a Christian as a teenager.

God has a message to youth. He encourages young people to "Remember the Creator" while they are young (Ecclesiastes 12:1). God does not want young people to be misled or unaware of the many pitfalls they will have to face.

The age for youth "to remember" is not given. The age when one is capable of knowing right from wrong will vary. When one becomes a teenager, it is time to give serious thought to a relationship with God. Some youth may mature sooner than others. Some, who are about twelve years of age, are considered responsible and accountable to God. You may remember that Jesus was twelve years old when he was discussing serious truths with older persons (Luke 2:41-51).

Age may not determine how

accountable a person is before God. This decision must be made by the young person. It cannot be decided by others – friends, preacher, parents, or others. These can help with encouragement and teaching. But always the question remains: "What must I do to be saved?" It is what "I" must do. The decision may be influenced by how much Bible teaching the young person has had.

Teenagers must face the decision of whether to become Christians. As they grow physically and mentally, they will soon have adult responsibilities.

We are impressed with young men and women as they attend worship and live carefully as they have been taught in the home and church. Because of their potential and good influence, we pray they will be baptized soon. We kindly ask, "When will you be baptized?"

The young person must learn and understand the plan of salvation. They are taught commands they must obey. It is necessary to become a believer. A believer must have a "faith working through love" (Galatians 5:6). Prior to baptism one must confess Christ as Savior. James teaches that one is not saved by "faith only." The faith that saves is the faith that acts obediently (James 2:17-26).

The Scriptures teach that the one who is a believer must repent of sin and confess Christ sincerely and then be immersed into Christ and added to His church (Galatians 3:26-27; Acts 2:47). These commands are not given to babies and small children. It is when a young person understands the truth that he/she is ready to be baptized.

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## Remembering T.B. Larimore

James R. McGill

T. B. Larimore (1843-1929) was born in poverty in east Tennessee. His full name, not often used, was Theophilus Brown Larimore. He did hard farm work. He was always studious and enrolled in a college when he was sixteen.

At the beginning of the War Between the States in 1861, he enlisted in the Confederate army, serving as a scout. While he was looking down on Union troop movements from a high elevation, two Federal soldiers came upon him from behind and captured him. Prisons were already extremely overcrowded. Possibly because of the prison situation, Larimore was paroled upon the condition, of course, that his military career was over. He returned to his mother's home in Hopkinsville, Kentucky. The story is told that, after the war, Larimore located, taught and converted one of the two Union soldiers involved in his capture.

### Franklin College

Larimore was baptized into Christ on his twenty-first birthday, July 10, 1864, in Hopkinsville. He began preaching two years later. He entered Franklin College in Nashville the same year, where he graduated with honors. Tolbert Fanning was founder and president of the college. Larimore said Fanning was one of the best teachers he ever had. This was the school where David Lipscomb and his brother William received their college degrees, along with a number of others who were effective preachers and teachers.

### Mars Hill College

In 1871 at Florence, Alabama, T.B. Larimore opened the Mars Hill Academy (which he re-named Mars Hill College). Hundreds received an outstanding education including a strong emphasis on Bible knowledge. Among those graduating from the college in 1875 was R. P. Meeks of Stantonville, Tennessee. He married Larimore's

sister. Meeks was the preacher who baptized N. B. Hardeman, the co-founder of Freed-Hardeman University.

After sixteen years, Larimore left the school work in order to devote his full time to evangelism, preaching day and night in many gospel meetings.

From the beginning, his preaching was successful in leading many to obey the gospel. That he preached with kindness was a comment often made by those who heard him preach. His preaching led thousands to obey the gospel.

In one year he received requests from up to five hundred locations to come and preach in evangelistic meetings!

### Longest Meetings

Larimore's longest series of gospel meetings occurred in 1894 in Sherman, Texas. It continued more than five months, from January to June. Preaching twice each day and three times every Sunday, he preached 333 sermons, resulting in two hundred additions to the church. The next year, in Los Angeles, he preached in his second longest gospel meeting, of three months duration, with 120 baptisms.

Some years after the death of his first wife, in 1911, Larimore married Emma Page in Nashville. Ten years earlier Emma had started taking down his sermons in shorthand, when Larimore was preaching in a series of gospel meetings at the Lindsley Avenue (formerly called South College) church.

This was a congregation David Lipscomb had established in 1855 when he first met with a few ladies for worship in a fire hall on 2nd Ave. S. It was Lipscomb's home congregation and where his funeral was conducted. Emma continued to take down the sermons Larimore preached in Nashville at the request of the Gospel Advocate Company who published them.

### Washington, D.C.

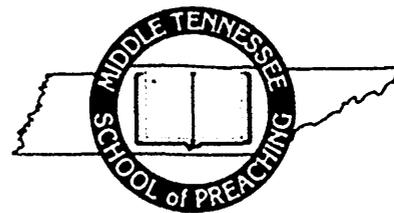
The longest T. B. Larimore worked with any church in one location was in Washington, D. C., where he remained for three years (1922-1925). He was there when he learned the sad news of the death of another noted orator of his time, William Jennings Bryan, at Dayton, Tennessee, just five days after Bryan had successfully defended the Bible teaching on Creation against Clarence Darrow in the 1925 Scopes Evolution Trial.

### The Final Years

Upon leaving Washington, D. C., in 1925, Larimore evangelized in California for the remaining few years of his life. He preached his last sermon in Los Angeles at the Sichel Street church of Christ, on December 2, 1928.

Two weeks later, weakened by the flu, he fell and broke his hip. He lived three more months and died on Monday, March 18, 1929. He was 85.

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## Do Preachers Deserve Any Respect?

Andy Robison

Once in a while, one ponders a question that has more answers than one. Our subject is such a query.

One possible answer is “no.” Preachers deserve no more respect than any other member of the Lord’s church. Denominationalism wallows in the error of a clergy-laity distinction, found nowhere in the Scriptures. In fact, the Lord taught against such artificial homage (Matthew 23:8-12). Paul’s perpetual humility shone through even in the midst of defending himself against attacks on his apostleship: “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God” (2 Corinthians 3:5). Also, “For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your bondservants for Jesus’ sake” (2 Corinthians 4:5).

Another possible answer is “yes.” Preachers deserve some amount of respect for the work they do, even to the point of adequate financial remuneration. Paul experienced the eternal losing battle on this issue, defending his right to receive funds, while not exercising this right (1 Corinthians 9:1-15). Some, it seems, would criticize him for taking pay, but then some even found fault with his not doing so when he did not (2 Corinthians 12:13). In any case, the right in itself was a sign of honor (compare elders’ pay as an indication of their double honor—1 Timothy 5:17-18).

Proper balance is often an elusive trait. There was a day (and there are probably still places) where anyone calling himself a preacher probably received too much deference. People would believe him because of his

position, and even take pride in association with said evangelist. This was the problem of 1 Corinthians 1, and is in direct contradiction of the noble searchers’ attitude of Acts 17:11.

Pendulums swing, though, and many—even in the Lord’s church—regard preachers as a whole with an unwarranted disdain. They are seen as “just preachers” who may be able to study and present lessons, but they really don’t know anything about life. They are horrible with finances and don’t know how to do anything of practical use. This is a common rejoinder implied from many sources to this author over his twenty-five years of preaching.

“One bad apple spoils the whole bunch” is a secular proverb that need not apply here. Many preachers (and their wives) are unheralded financial experts. How else would they be able to manage their homes and families, and even provide good educations for their children, on the woeful budget many congregations are willing to pay? Such budgetary concerns often constrain the same preachers to be consummate handymen.

These constraints, further, force time-management skills beyond most folks’ recognition. While juggling the responsibilities to come up with two brilliant (as the expectation goes) discourses (packed in the allowable 25 minutes), a bulletin article, perhaps a newspaper article and radio program, and, oh, yes, two Bible classes of equal value, and however many Bible studies with individuals can be gained during the

week, along with visiting the members faithfully in their homes, nursing facilities, and hospitals (sometimes the driving time is overwhelming, and the gas money staggering—another budgetary consideration), and often being in charge of the educational program, ordering the materials, preparing the business meeting notes, and the endless hours of conversation aimed at keeping peace between brethren, the preacher lacks hours. The run-on sentence was purposeful. It is a run-on life! (Did I mention answering angry phone calls and letters, correspondence courses, and furthering his education?)

These things need to be said, lest preachers be unfairly disdained. Most will not speak on their own behalf, lest they be deemed whiners and disrupters of the status quo. This author has frankly been treated quite well, but has witnessed many selfless, quiet sufferers who were not. Appreciate the preacher, dear brethren. At least, as the colloquialism goes: “Cut him a little slack.”

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## A FATHER'S FAILURE

Raymond Elliott

"O my son Absalom—my son, my son Absalom—if only I had died in your place! O Absalom my son, my son!" (2 Samuel 18:33)

Here is an exceedingly bitter cry. It is one of the saddest passages in the entire Bible. One would think that such was the cry of a mother who had lost the dearest thing on earth to her, a child. But no, it is the bitter cry of a man weeping for his son who had been killed.

Absalom, the son of David, had been slain while leading his forces against his father, the King of Israel. David had instructed Joab and his men to deal gently with his son (2 Samuel 18:5). Regardless, they slew the young man (2 Samuel 18:14-15).

### David's Successes

In the rearing of his son Absalom, David was indeed a failure. But wherein had David failed?

We must be fair and note that in other ventures in life, David was not a failure. In fact in many things he was very successful. We observe that David rose rapidly in rank. We saw him first as a shepherd boy. He possessed a brilliant mind and fortitude. As a courageous lad he went out to meet and defeat the great giant Goliath in battle.

David was a many-sided man. He was not only a shepherd but a poet, a singer, and later the King of Israel. A man like this will usually make good in any situation. While as king much wealth was accumulated in the treasury. Israel's enemies had been defeated. The time of his reign is known as the "Golden Age of Israel." David provided the proper foundation upon which his son Solomon eventually erected the temple. But in what way did this successful man fail?

### David's Failure

He failed as a father. David paid a great price for his success. When David looked over his life he saw it too. It cost him many hours of sorrow. Our text in 2 Samuel 18:31-33 reveals only one time

of his weeping. His son was killed while rebelling against him. Many fathers are like David today. They too will pay that price. Some men are successful at building fortunes but completely unsuccessful at building men.

One might ask: Why did David take this failure so hard? No doubt it was because of his tender love for the son he had lost. Fathers are not supposed to do much weeping, it is often thought by misinformed individuals. We should understand however that often fathers are just as devoted to their children as mothers.

David also took his failure hard because his loss was without remedy. We may blunder in some things and correct them next time, but there is no next time in the rearing of children.

David could have said, "I would make Absalom a different boy if I could only have my time over with him." No wonder he cried. David took failure hard because he knew he lost his son hopelessly. Absalom was gone for good. He could not be brought back again. Death always produces this feeling when we lose loved ones. David lost his son needlessly. If he had been the right kind of a father, perhaps he could have saved his son. Many a father carries this accusation in his bosom.

### The Negligent Father

The story is told about a father who took his little child into the field one afternoon and it being a hot day he laid down in the shade of a beautiful tree. The little child ran about gathering wild flowers and little bits of grass and coming to his father and would cry, "Look how pretty!" At last the father fell asleep and while he was sleeping the child wandered away. When the father awoke his first thought was, "Where is my child?" He looked around but he could not see him. He shouted at the top of his voice but all he heard was an echo. Running to a little hill he looked around and shouted again. There was no

response. Then going to a steep cliff at some distance he looked down and there, far below on the rocks and briars he saw the mangled form of his precious child. He rushed to the spot and took up the lifeless corpse and hugged it to his bosom and accused himself of being the murderer of his child. While he was sleeping and neglecting for a just a short time his child had wandered over the precipice.

Such depicts so many fathers and mothers today. While their children are wandering closer and closer to the edge of the cliff and to certain destruction, parents are asleep regarding the moral and spiritual welfare of their off-springs.

Often parents contribute to the downfall of their children because of their own way of life. Some fathers drink, gamble, and are unfaithful to their marriage vows; and then they wonder what went wrong in the rearing of their children.

King David was crushed beneath the burden of thought that he had lost his son Absalom for all eternity. It should be noted that providing the daily necessities for one's family is not enough. More important is the rearing of children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4). Money may provide for the body but not for the soul. Money may buy groceries but not character.

### How Did David Fail?

Another question to ponder: Is why was David a failure as a father? When John was born, the question was raised, "What kind of child will this be?" (Luke 1:66)? It is required of parents to train children in the way of the Lord (Proverbs 22:6). David undoubtedly shifted his responsibilities to someone else.

He had many obligations, cares, troubles, and political problems but he should not have neglected his son. Perhaps Absalom never thought about

going to David with his broken toy and he never thought about going to him with his broken heart. David gave him everything but himself. Many fathers are like that today.

David in his sins concerning Bathsheba could have influenced his

son, adversely so. David repented and returned from the far country of sin, but Absalom never came back from that land of sorrow.

Fathers, you should consider your responsibilities toward your children before it is eternally too late. Lead your

loved ones in the way of the Savior Jesus Christ. Make every effort to save your family from sin and an everlasting separation from the God of heaven. You cannot afford to lose your sons and daughters.

## The Mission of God in Tanzania

Roger Shepherd

God is a sending God in both the Old and New Testaments. One of the first that He sent to the mission field was Abraham. Moses wrote: "Get out of your country, from your family... to the land that I will show you" (Genesis 12:1). Abraham went without hesitation! God sent Jesus Christ "to seek and save the lost" (Luke 19:10).

Christ sent us with these words, "Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you" (John 20:21). He sent His disciples to preach the gospel to every creature and teach all nations (Matthew 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16). It is understood in the great commission text that it is the nature of disciples to go forth making other disciples.

The mission field has been the richest experience in my years of preaching the gospel. People have been converted to Christ that would have otherwise been lost in eternity without my going to the field!

The first trip that I took into the mission field was in 1974 when God provided the opportunity for me to go to Germany to evangelize. The mission of God has lead me to many mission fields of the United States to plant churches, Barbados, Ghana in West Africa, Ukraine, New Zealand, Canada, India, and Tanzania, East Africa. My mission efforts have been concentrating on Tanzania since 2001.

### Incarnation Evangelism

The work in Tanzania is a great joy during the past few years because of the incarnation approach to evangelism. What is meant by incarnation evangelism? The word incarnation means the embodiment of the gospel and Christian life as taught and exemplified by Jesus Christ.

For example, Christ embodied humanity (Philippians 2:5-10). He also embodied the truth of the gospel, the way of salvation, and the life that His disciples live in order to evangelize (John 14:1-6). Likewise, we embody the gospel message in our lives to evangelize effectively. In this way we share in the lives of the people on the mission field to offer them a better way of life.

Tanzania is a beautiful culture of African people. They are a very loving and pleasant people to visit. They are very appreciative of our visiting in their homes and lives. Many houses are made of mud and cow dung, but very warm and pleasant because of the people who live in them. They are an easy people to share in their lives. This makes sharing the gospel with them a pleasant experience.

### The Kingdom of God

In Tanzania it is easy to demonstrate the dynamic character of the kingdom of God through the Christian life. The kingdom of God as taught and exemplified by Christ in His ministry is extended as the church moves into the nations (Matthew 4:23-25). We are doing this in Tanzania by seeking to implement the kingdom (God's rule) into the lives of the people (Matthew 6:33). It is a beautiful thing to see the changes in their lives and economy because of the influ-

ence of Christ. It is easy to see in Tanzania that we are in the kingdom business rather than the church business. In the church business, people are concerned with church activities, religious behavior, and traditions. In the kingdom business, people are concerned with spirituality and kingdom activities, which is first and foremost the mission of God. Thus, it is so refreshing to work in God's mission in Tanzania.

### Getting the Kingdom into the World

We work to get the kingdom into their world. We do this by getting the kingdom rule into their lives. Many of them convert to Christianity as a result of seeing for the first time that God's rule is the authority for Christianity. We convert them from the world in general and denominationalism.

Many are converted from preaching, home Bible studies, and group studies. The number that is converted when the gospel is spread by loving missionaries is amazing. In Tanzania there is one soul obeying the gospel of Christ every 12 hours. We are totally free of church activities and involved one-hundred percent of the time in the mission of the kingdom with personal evangelism!

Sunday worship is a great joy as we experience singing in Swahili, the national language. We have opportunity to share in the culture in these services. Bible lessons are simple and aimed at the kingdom rule. We teach lessons such as: (1) Working Together With God (2 Corinthians 6:1-10); (2) The Coming of Christ; (3) Spiritual Blessings in Christ (Ephesians 1); and (3) How to Shine Like a Star in the World (Philippians 2); and (4) many lessons on

the plan of salvation and the church, which any mature Christian can teach.

The Arusha Bible College and the Andrew Connally School of Preaching, are extensions of the teaching program of the church to teach Bible, train evangelists, general educational studies, and job skills to address the above needs, not only in the lives of the students, but also in the community. This is bringing hundreds of souls to Christ! These schools have beautiful buildings that house the school and students. They are equipped with classrooms and a workable library for undergraduate and graduate levels of study.

There is another study session, one of many, that is worthy of note concerning evangelism. It is teaching young families "How can Christianity benefit my family?" Bible lessons such as the following are taught: (1) You must stay united with wife and children (Ephesians 5); (2) You must rear your children in the Lord (Ephesians 6); (3) There must be a demonstration of mother and father in the home (Ephesians 5:23). We also study the kingdom rule of God for their lives to make their physical and spiritual lives better in the home. We do studies from Genesis 2:1-15; 3:15; 12; Isaiah 2; and Mark 7:1-8 to break down long held traditions which make void the word of God in the home. It is a joy to see their lives get better when traditions change!

The future of my missions will be to train men to spread the gospel both local and foreign to the glory of God. God is a sending God. We are involved in His mission, not the mission of the church. The church is the mission of God. Kingdom work involves teaching the gospel to lost people. The Lord needs a few good people to evangelize the world.

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## Expositions of the Sacred Scriptures

Ron Thomas

### The Church at Thyatira (Revelation 2:18 – 29)

In our day we find it relatively easy to locate employment and "go to church" whenever and wherever we desire; we are doubly fortunate in that this is an opportunity free of any hindrance. In some locations of the ancient past this was not at all a possibility. If you had an opportunity to go back to that time, how would you get along in such an environment?

#### **A Confrontation**

Thyatira was a wealthy city, but not large. It was noted for being a city of commerce and trade (cf. Acts 16:14), with trade guilds (unions) having prominence in the city. They were powerful and no man could find employment unless he was a member of one of the many guilds (cf. Acts 19:24-29). Each guild had its own patron deity and festive occasions surrounded them. These patron deities and their festive occasions were associated with idolatry – something no *faithful* Christian would allow to enter into his life. Not to allow such was a serious problem if one wanted to provide for his family; thus, a Christian in Thyatira had to choose whether to serve the Lord or have economic peace as he thought about the needs of his family.

The Lord addresses this longest and most instructive of the letters to his church in a midst of such an environment. He understood what problems faced each Christian. As the Son of God, his eyes were (and are) penetrating, seeing and understanding whatever it is that can be seen and understood. This terminology conveys the omniscient quality of God. When Samuel was to anoint Israel's next king, you might remember, he was sure he saw Israel's next king standing right before him. The Lord told

him, however, that he does not see as man sees, but he who sees all looks on the heart (1 Samuel 16:7).

#### **Encouragement and Concern**

He who sees all is also the one who had been tested by the fires of affliction. This experience "allows" Jesus to address the church as one who has been there and understands. He commends the church and says that their love as manifested early on has only increased. They were a working church. Ephesus lost their first love. Thyatira did not seem to have a problem. The Christians in Thyatira desired to be of service to others, endured patiently in things that called upon them to wait, and with this the Lord was pleased. They trusted and obeyed God – for this is what love does.

The whole condition of things at Thyatira was exactly the reverse of what it was at Ephesus. There much zeal for orthodoxy, and for the maintenance of sound doctrine, but little love, and as a consequence, no doubt, few ministrations of love. Here the activity of faith and love; but insufficient zeal for the maintenance of godly discipline and doctrine, a patience of error even where there was not a participation in it.

Though the Lord spoke favorably of their works, he was greatly concerned about other matters (2:20-23). He quickly identified a person named Jezebel who encouraged immorality and idolatry. Who this Jezebel was we are not told, but that she was active in the church is clearly indicated. She was a self-appointed prophetess, one who taught error. Since it was customary for the guilds to have festivals and those festivals to be encumbered with immorality and idolatry, it seems possible this woman was connected with such. Perhaps she said something along this line: "God told me you need to be part of the guilds so you can support your families."

The Lord did not find anything she did to be acceptable; in fact, because He loved her so, He gave her time to repent. She considered the Lord's admonition and rejected it and, consequently, was judged! There is an old saying that goes like this: the bed you make is the bed

you lay on. Jezebel made her bed, it was a bed of sickness and tribulation; now the Lord was going to make her experience it to the degree she never had!

The only remedy to lying in that kind of bed is a healthy dose of the medicine called penitence. This is a rather humbling pill to swallow for one so proud. She was determined, however, to have it her way and, unfortunately, there was a second generation of Christians who also were plagued with her evil deeds.

Not all, however, were plagued with the "Jezebel disease." Those not plagued were offered encouragement. Those who received the Lord's exhortation (remedy) for a sin-sick soul were expected to oppose her presence and teaching, and they were encouraged to be faithful until He who sees all comes.

### Be Faithful

Let us make an application to some current problems in the Lord's church in some locations. Is there a particular role that God has assigned the male and female? Paul addresses this in his letter to Timothy (1 Timothy 2:8-15) and even briefly touches on it when he wrote to the church at Corinth (1 Corinthians 11:2-16; 14:26-40). The "Jezebel disease" is a disease of spiritual corruption; it is a disease that promotes, in part, the removal of a female from a God-ordained role and places them in a role that is of Satan's origin.

For instance, does the New Testament teach that it is proper for a female to serve as an elder, a preacher, or as a deacon in the same way that men are to do so? A strong answer in the negative! Then why is it done?

It is done because many Christians have failed to hear God. The Lord appealed to the church to be faithful (2:25), but those plagued with the "Jezebel disease" can hardly be faithful to the Lord because that which the Lord had (and has) to say is not heard. His last exhortation to the church in Thyatira was: "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." Let us hear it brethren!

## Word Studies

Gerald Cowan

### Hope

On any list of important words, three that are most likely to appear are faith, hope, and love (1 Corinthians 13:13). We have discussed faith in this column, and are now ready to discuss hope. We will discuss love in the next installment.

As noted before, "the faith" includes the whole Christian life and way, and exists independently of personal belief or action. But personal faith is required if one is to have any benefits from God.

Hope is a pivotal word on which many good things turn. We would not do certain things if there was no hope of success, no hope of benefit from them.

To get a feel for the importance of hope just think of the negative, hopeless. Despair means "without hope" (2 Corinthians 1:8). Surely the saddest condition in all the world, if one understands it properly, is having no hope and being without God in the present world (Ephesians 2:12). Hope does not "spring eternal in the human breast." Many give up hope and end in despair. However, God has not departed from us, and He has not left us without hope of better things to come, salvation, and eternal life in His heaven (Titus 3:7; 1 John 2:25).

### A PROPER DEFINITION OF HOPE

The word hope is frequently misused. We cannot exercise it properly unless we know what it is and is not.

For some, hope simply means desire. Desire without expectation is not hope at all.

The New Testament word is ELPIS and is invariably used as a positive thing – the expectation of something good to come, a good hope, not a bad hope or dread. Some Old Testament cognates emphasize trust and confidence (BETACH, Psalm 16:9), or desire and expectation (TIQVAH, Job 11:18; Psalm

71:5).

The proper practical definition of hope is "desire plus expectation." If either of these ingredients is missing, it cannot be called hope. One may desire something without expecting to receive it. That is not hope. Expectation alone, without desire – as for example, expecting punishment (Hebrews 10:26-27) – is not hope. Hope is always for the future, the desire and expectation of something not yet received. You do not hope to get something if you already have it (Romans 8:24).

It is also important to know that hope does not necessarily imply morality or righteousness. One can hope for (desire and expect) a difficulty or misfortune for some other person. One can hope for (desire and expect) an immoral or improper thing for oneself. However, we usually use the word hope in a good, constructive, and appropriate sense. We hope for a good or proper outcome to circumstances, etc.

### RESULTS FOR THE CHRISTIAN WHEN HOPE IS PLACED IN CHRIST

The one hope that somehow includes all others is the hope of salvation from sin and the consequences of sin. "And let us take as a helmet the hope of salvation" (1 Thessalonians 5:8). Other things we can hope for as saved persons include:

#### ➤ Glory

We have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God (Romans 5:2, 4). Christ in you is your hope of glory (Colossians 1:27).

#### ➤ Righteousness

For through the Spirit we wait for the hope of righteousness which is by faith (Galatians 5:5).

#### ➤ Assurance of reward from God

Things that accompany salvation...God is not unrighteous to forget your ministry....Show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end....by faith and patience inherit the promises (Hebrews 6:9-12).

➤ **A place in Christ's spiritual house**

[His] house we are, if we hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of hope firm to the end (Hebrews 3:6).

➤ **Stability**

We have hope as an anchor for the soul, sure and steadfast (Hebrews 6:19).

➤ **Eternal life, inheritance in heaven**

In hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before the world began (Titus 1:2, Hebrews 6:18).

Being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life (Titus 3:7); Begotten again to a living hope...to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, reserved in heaven for you (1 Peter 1:3-9).

➤ **Confidence and boldness in speaking to others**

Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts and be ready to give an answer to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you (1 Peter 3:15).

Since we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech (2 Corinthians 3:12).

**JESUS CHRIST IS OUR HOPE IF WE OBEY HIS GOSPEL**

Jesus Christ is our Hope (1 Timothy 1:1). He not only gives us hope, but is our hope – the hope of the individual, the church, and the world personally, collectively, nationally, internationally, and universally. He is the only real hope we have for escaping judgment and condemnation. He is our hope in every sense of the word: the object, the author, the foundation, the substance, and the guarantee of our hope; He is the personal embodiment of our hope.

Christ is our hope because His death on the cross supports our hope of forgiveness and salvation from sin (1 Peter 1:18-21; Hebrews 10:4, 12-14).

His sinless life of love and mercy set an example for us to follow in relationships with each other (1 Peter 2:21-24).

He provides access for us not only into the presence of God, but also into the perfection God offers those who

draw near to Him (Hebrews 7:19, 10:19-23).

How can we lay hold on the hope that is set before us (Hebrews 6:17-20)? There are both positive and negative aspects to consider.

The beginning point is FAITH (Romans 5:1-4). Without faith in God one has no hope (Hebrews 11:6).

OBEDIENCE: Jesus is the author of salvation to all who obey him (Hebrews 5:9). Disobedience or failure to comply is a negation of any claimed faith, leaving no place for hope. Without obedience to the commands of the gospel, one has no hope (2 Thessalonians 1:8).

REPENTANCE is a necessary part of obedience (Luke 24:47; Acts 2:38). It may seem negative to emphasize what one is not to do, but repentance means one will stop doing what God says must not be done (2 Corinthians 7:9-10). Repentance is also positive, because it requires one to submit to the will of God and actually do what God says is right and required (2 Corinthians 7:11). Without repentance one has no hope (Luke 13:3, 5).

CONFESSION is also a part of one's obedience. It is not a one-time thing, and it is more than saying one believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

One must confess that Jesus is his Lord, his Master, the one he obeys (Romans 10:9-10). Unless one's life is an ongoing confession of Christ, in word but also in act and deed, he will be denied by Christ. He has no hope (Matthew 10:32-33).

BAPTISM is not the end of obedience, though it amounts to the proof of one's faith and repentance that makes him a Christian, a person saved by Christ (Acts 2:38). Unless one is baptized into Christ, buried with Christ, and raised to walk in and with Christ, he has no hope (Romans 6:1-4).

Many claim baptism is not essential, that it actually has no bearing upon one's salvation, and that one is saved by faith or grace or predestinated choice of God, etc. However, if baptism is not necessary

then one can be saved outside of Christ, without the blood/death of Christ, without the body/church of Christ – actually without Christ, and without the forgiveness of sin.

Scripture says baptism is where we are placed into Christ and His church, identified with His death, and given the new life that is only in Him. It is where we receive remission of sins (Romans 6:1-4; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Colossians 2:11-12; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16).

If he is our hope, we must be in Him to have hope. There can be no hope for those who are not in Him. We cannot hope our way into Him or believe our way into Him. But a penitent believer can be baptized into Him, and unless he does so he has no hope.

FAITHFULNESS to Christ and His gospel is required of those who want to maintain their hope in Him (Revelation 2:10). Unless one is faithful to Christ, keeping the commands and requirements of the gospel, he has no hope. One who departs from the faith departs also from Him who is our hope (Matthew 7:21-28). We must be careful not to let the things of the Lord slip from us (Hebrews 2:1-2). Let us hold fast to our profession of faith because He who promised is faithful (Hebrews 10:23).

Jesus Christ is our hope and our salvation. We can say also that Jesus Christ is our faith. He is the one who gives substance to our hope and convicting evidence for our faith (Hebrews 11:1).

All things needed for salvation, for peace of mind, for reward from God and escape from punishment and wrath of God, for hope of eternal life in heaven – everything needed is available and ready in Jesus Christ. But we cannot hope for any of those things, either for ourselves or others, if we do not respond properly to Him who is our hope.

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*Special Feature***Pleasant Valley****Killen, Alabama**

Almon Watson  
&  
Andrew D. Erwin

The church at Pleasant Valley began soon after the Civil War (perhaps as soon as 1870). The first worship services were held in a one-room log school building, located three-quarters of a mile southeast of the present church building. It is remembered by older people as being located "down in the swamp."

The first schoolhouse was used for worship services until a new one was built in 1897 on the site of the present church building. A third schoolhouse would later be built in 1916 on the site of the preacher's house. Wood from that building was used in the construction of the house.

The school buildings were also used for services of the Methodist, Missionary Baptist, and Presbyterian churches.

The first preacher of record was Dr. Jones, a dentist from the Coxey community. He baptized some of the earliest leaders of the church, among who were Collins Comer and Dan Comer. Billy Harrison also preached by monthly appointment from 1912-1930. Others who preached during this time were E.O. Coffman, C.C. Burns, Coxey Coffman, Claude Jeter, Mark Love, and John Crews.

**Historic Gospel Meeting**

In the mid-1920s several families moved to Lawrenceburg and became acquainted with Gilbert Gibbs and his excellent way of preaching the gospel. When some of these families moved back to Pleasant Valley in 1931, the church began discussing plans to have brother Gibbs conduct a gospel meeting for them.

On July 31, 1932, Gilbert Gibbs began a 12-day gospel meeting under the big cedar trees between the schoolhouse and the well (the current site of the lot between the church building and preacher's house). The people who attended the meeting sat on benches made from unfinished lumber, and oil lamps were used for light.

Hebrews 11:6 was the basis for the entire meeting. Brother Gibbs preached afternoon and evening lessons.

The meeting soon became the talk of the community. Wherever people met, they were discussing what the preacher was teaching. Bibles that had been closed for a long time were opened. The crowd grew to capacity, and with no seats available, people stood or sat upon their wagons to listen.

On August 8, when Gilbert Williams (a non-Christian himself) led the invitation song "There's a Fountain Free" thirty-four souls responded to be baptized. Over the next two days twelve more were baptized. The meeting closed with fifty-one baptisms, sixteen restorations, and twenty souls asking for prayers so that they might live more faithful lives. Brother Gibbs preached twenty-one sermons and was paid \$31.00 - which at that time was a fine contribution.

**The Church Grows**

Brother Gibbs would return to hold future meetings in 1933 which produced nine baptisms, in 1935 with ten baptisms, and 1936 with six baptisms.

With the growth of the church, some of the leaders felt that a permanent meeting place was needed. On November 11, 1935, one acre of land was donated by the Houston family for the purpose of erecting a church building. The building is still being used today for classrooms. It was built for \$930, and all but \$70 was contributed by the members. It is believed that T.C. King preached the first sermon in the new building.

On May 20, 1946, an additional one-

half acre was acquired to be used for a cemetery. Then, on March 3, 1970, another acre was deeded to the church, making a total of two and one-half acres.

In October of 1938, the congregation started engaging in mission work. C.C. Burns was the first preacher who was given assistance.

In April of 1939, the first communion set was bought, prior to this time two glasses were used for the grape juice.

In March, 1940, power lines were run to the church building and the building was wired for electricity. The old oil lamps and Aladdin gas lamps were discarded.

As the congregation continued to grow, there was a need for classrooms. Until this time all the classes were taught in the auditorium. Myrtle Tays was one of the first teachers of the "card class," and later Birdie Tays Riley taught some of the present members who worship here today.

In the spring of 1943, three classrooms were added across the rear of the building. In June, 1946, the coal heater was replaced with butane heat.

In March 1952, two more classrooms were built on each end of the existing classrooms. In 1956, the building was bricked, and restrooms were added. The next classrooms were added in November of 1967, to the south side of the auditorium.

In the summer of 1973, the auditorium was expanded to permit additional seating. Also included in this addition was a foyer, a nursery, an office, and restrooms. These facilities were used until June 7, 1981, when we moved into a new auditorium, with elevated baptistry, plenty of storage space, and other added conveniences. The old auditorium was converted into classrooms.

An annex was constructed in 2002, providing excellent facilities for Bible classes, meals, and various ministries. The church building's basement was also completed in the winter of 2005-2006.

## Elders and Deacons Appointed

No church is complete without dedicated elders and deacons. In the summer of 1936, after careful consideration and prayer, the first elders and deacons were appointed. The first elders at Pleasant Valley were: Alton Tays, Henry Williams, and Grady Yancey. Those appointed to serve as deacons were: Claude Dean, George Henry Tays, and Luther Tays. Luther Tays was appointed Treasurer in 1938, and he served faithfully in that capacity for over forty years.

Pleasant Valley has been blessed with sound, steady, and stable leadership throughout much of this time. Brother Alton Tays served as an elder from 1936-1972. His son Don Tays has served as an elder since 1991.

Brother Grady Yancey served as an elder from 1936-1980. Brother Emerson Stone served as an elder from the 1950s-1996. Brother Almon Watson served as an elder from 1974-2001.

Pleasant Valley has also had a number of deacons to serve for a decades at a time. Victor Bailey is one example as he has served for the past twenty-five years.

## Gospel Preachers

In September of 1950, the first regular preacher, A.R. Hill, was hired at Pleasant Valley. For the next 20 years, six different preachers worked with the congregation, including Gilbert Gibbs.

Andy Erwin, editor of the *Gospel Gleaner* is the preacher for Pleasant Valley today.

Through the years, Pleasant Valley conducted two gospel meetings each year. Preachers who have held some of these meetings at Pleasant Valley include Lindsey Allen, John D. Cox, B.B. James, Ira North, Alden Hendrix, Lamar Plunket, and Gilbert Kretzer. The congregation now has a Spring Series instead of a spring gospel meeting, while continuing to have an annual fall gospel meeting and homecoming the first Sunday of August.

## James Bridges

Our sketch is by no means a complete history of the Pleasant Valley congregation. Yet, no matter how brief the sketch might be, it would not be complete without mentioning James and Lois Bridges.

Brother Bridges began preaching for the congregation at Pleasant Valley in October of 1969. With the exception of two years off due to health reasons, he remained at Pleasant Valley until September 30, 2007.

By the sound and stable leadership of the elders, coupled with the faithful preaching of brother Bridges, Pleasant Valley was able to avoid many of the extremes and false teachings that rocked the brotherhood during these years. The congregation was allowed to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord into one of the kindest and truest churches among us.

## Present Day

Today the Lord's church at Pleasant Valley is blessed to have the able and willing leadership of David Campbell, Brad Pointer, and Don Tays. These men complement each other very well and provide an eldership that is in keeping with the Scriptures and the history of Pleasant Valley.

The congregation continues to remain heavily involved in mission work, as has been the case since 1938. Benevolence is also at the heart of Pleasant Valley. Hundreds of meals are prepared every month to feed the needy and elderly. Two deacons currently work to aid benevolent causes.

Pleasant Valley is blessed with a volunteering spirit. We have two deacons who serve as youth directors. We have many women with the spirit of Dorcas. They encourage everyone by their good works. We have an abundance of men who are willing to lead singing, and men and women who are willing and able to teach excellent Bible classes for all ages.

The young people at Pleasant Valley are a true joy and delight to all. They

are respectful, well-mannered, and very considerate of spiritual things. The smallest children love each other and play so well together, while our teenagers encourage each other to make heaven their home.

The church at Pleasant Valley is truly characterized by its love and faithfulness. It is dedicated to sowing and watering the seed of the kingdom. For this cause, God has blessed us with excitement, encouragement, and growth. May God continue to bless Pleasant Valley!

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## Training Preachers – *for what?*

Continued from pg. 2

A real change for the better would require that we expect more out of these schools and tolerate nothing but absolute faithfulness to the Lord.

## To be Clear

It is not the intention of this article to dispute the validity of an education. We are not "against the colleges." We are not against earning a degree, or a preacher having a degree. Some colleges have excellent Bible teachers. We are, however, *for* Christ and His church.

We are merely stating the obvious and hoping to provide encouragement to be more faithful to the Lord in the work of training gospel preachers. It is our hope that all preachers and preachers-to-be are using their education to become soul winners for Christ, and that the institutions teaching them are training them to this end. Degrees are meaningless to preachers if they are not faithful and do not use their education to lead others to Christ.

## Is It Possible?

Is it possible to be a faithful gospel preacher without a degree? Absolutely!

Is it possible to be a faithful gospel preacher with a degree? Sure!

Is it possible to be a faithful gospel preacher even if men of like faith are not your teachers? You can, if your will to preach the truth is strong enough. But if you do become such a gospel preacher,

it will probably be in spite of your teachers, and not because of them. This is like asking if it is possible to marry a non-Christian and convert them. You can, sometimes, but it is not the recommended course. The recommended course would be to marry a faithful Christian.

Of course this leads us into a discussion of whether or not a school (if it is a brotherhood school) is remaining true to its founding purpose. After all, if the founding purpose is to train preachers, and the school is more interested in conferring degrees than training preachers, and its students have to find encouragement to preach and defend the truth elsewhere, is that school remaining true to its original purpose?

In a similar way, most of the professors who have gone the academic route through seminaries and worldly universities have had to find their encouragement to teach the truth in other places.

Those men who did not find encouragement to remain faithful have not so remained. Thus, the gospel preachers who have had to sit at the feet of such professors in our schools in order to get a degree have had to find their encouragement to stand in the gap elsewhere. It certainly seems more expedient to sit at the feet of faithful gospel preachers, listen to their sermons, read their debates, study their works, and heed their advice. Allow such men to reproduce their faith in you.

Preaching the gospel is the greatest work in the world. Let us do all we can to promote faithful gospel preaching. Let us take this work seriously.

If our schools decide to be research institutions and exist to confer academic degrees, so be it. But, the work of training faithful gospel preachers must go on, and the church must be the one who shoulders the load. Is this not what we should have been doing all along?

Being a gospel preacher requires more than being academic. It requires absolute faithfulness to the Lord, His word, and His church.

Andrew D. Erwin

## This Month in Restoration History

**June 19-20, 1820** – Alexander Campbell debates John Walker, a Presbyterian, in the Quaker community of Mt. Pleasant, OH. The debate was on the mode of baptism, and infant baptism. The Baptists of that area actually asked brother Campbell to represent them in this debate.

**June 1873** – J.W. McGarvey is fired from Kentucky University after refusing to resign. He is restored two years later. Some believe that McGarvey was fired due to his criticism of the handling of school finances. Benjamin Franklin claimed that the entire affair was orchestrated by those who wanted to bring the College of the Bible more in line with the emerging views of skepticism and theological liberalism.

**June 23, 1877** – The great evangelist Samuel Rogers dies.

**June 8, 1880** – James A. Garfield is nominated as the Republican candidate for President at the Republican Convention in Chicago.

**June 17, 1880** – Moses E. Lard dies.

**June 1884** – The question of re-baptism is discussed between Austin McGary (*Firm Foundation*) and David Lipscomb (*Gospel Advocate*). McGary held that a person needed to be baptized who was not originally baptized for the remission of sins. Lipscomb believed that it was sufficient for a person to be baptized knowing only that their baptism was an act of obedience to God. He believed the blessings bestowed at baptism could be learned later.

**June 29, 1890** – Jesse L. Sewell dies. He is the brother of E.G. Sewell. David Lipscomb wrote his biography titled: *Jesse L. Sewell: Early Tennessee Preacher*.

**Summer 1896** – The Nashville Bible School has completed five years. Its students have converted 3,400 persons and started 28 congregations.

**June 29, 1905** – T.W. Brents passes away.

**May 31-June 5, 1923** – Hardeman-Boswell debate occurs in Nashville on the subject of mechanical instruments of music in worship.

**June 6-9, 1933** – The second Foy Wallace-Charles Neal debate occurs in Chattanooga on the subject of the 1,000 year reign of Christ.

**June 1967** – The Nashville Christian Institute closes. NCI opened as a night school for adults in 1940 and became a fully accredited elementary school and high school in 1942. It ceased operation on June 2, shortly after the racial integration of David Lipscomb College. From 1942 until 1958 the president of NCI was brother Marshall Keeble.

## News & Notes

James R. McGill

### Obituaries

Brother **Goebel Music** passed away May 9, 2013 in Tulsa, Oklahoma. He was 78.

Goebel was an evangelist for churches of Christ in Texas and Arkansas. He served as Director of Texas Tech Bible Chair in Lubbock, Texas from 1954-1956. He was a prolific writer of religious materials. Perhaps his best known works were *Behold the Pattern* and his sourcebook on the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Brother Music is survived by four children: Angela (Larry) Growns of Sapulpa, OK; G. G. (Joanna) Music, Jr. of Chickasha, OK.; Alicia (Gerald) Hamric of Keller, TX.; Gaylon Trigg Music of Keller, TX. He is also survived by five grandchildren, one great-grandchild; his brother, Earl Dean Music of Norman, OK, and his sister, Mabel Lee McCord of Oklahoma City. Goebel was preceded in death by his parents.

### Meeting Results

**Gatlinburg, TN** – “We have just concluded a great weekend gospel meeting with Michael Shepherd of Pensacola, FL. If you want to have a great meeting with old fashioned Bible preaching delivered with great power, Michael Shepherd is your man. He preached on the theme ‘Why Are There So Many Churches?’ It was the kind of preaching I remember hearing as a boy back in the 1950’s.” - Rod Rutherford

### 60 Years of Preaching the Gospel

Gene West will be honored at the graduation of the West Virginia School of Preaching on June 14 for completing sixty years of faithful gospel preaching. Brother West is one of the founders of the school and the minister for the Moundsville congregation which oversees the school.

### Mission Report

**Gerald Cowan (Dongola, IL):** “I traveled to Elbasan, Albania in March in order to arrange the purchase of a suitable vehicle for use in the church's work and to work with the church preaching and teaching for two weeks.

With the contributions of several persons and churches in Illinois, Oregon, Kentucky, Missouri, and Arkansas we were

able to purchase a relatively recent model Mercedes van with relatively low mileage that we hope will give good service for ten years more.

We got the vehicle at a bargain price for the area, actually a good deal less than the asking price of several lesser quality cars, both European and foreign.

I baptized two while there, a man and his 20 year old daughter. His wife and another family member are to be baptized soon. All have been studying with our preacher Ilir Kura for more than one year. This brings the total number of those who have obeyed the gospel in Elbasan in the last six months to five, four of them adults.

Ilir was one of the principle speakers at an All-Albania Retreat that was held in Durres, Albania over three days in mid-April. His progress as an effective indigenous evangelist is nothing short of phenomenal. My wife and I have tentative plans to work with the church in Elbasan for three weeks or more, later this year, probably in early October.”

### Mission Request

**Ernest Underwood (Doraville, GA):** “I have recently passed my 79th birthday, and shortly afterward retired from 56 years of full-time preaching. As some of you may know, my wife Shirley and I served as missionaries in the Republic of Singapore in 1987 and 1988. In 1992 we moved to Pechora, Russia to live there as missionaries, being fully supported by the Maysville church in the Huntsville, Alabama area. We established the church in this city and remained there for three years. During these years I was able to teach and train a new convert to preach. When we left Russia this young man took over the preaching duties of the church there.

In 2006 brother Jim Waldron contacted me requesting that I consider traveling to India to teach in a preacher training school located in Shillong. I accepted his invitation and worked there on the month he assigned me. For the next three years Shirley and I continued to do this, staying for a month each for two years, and for three months in 2009. For health reasons I had to temporarily discontinue this work.

Brother Waldron has again requested of both Shirley and me that we resume our work with this school of preaching which

has been moved to the city of Guwahati. He wants us to go with a commitment to stay from four to five months each year. If at all possible, Shirley and I plan to do this, and continue the practice for several years to come, as the Lord sees fit to grant to us good health. We have committed to go October/2013 – February/2014. I will be teaching both men and women, and Shirley will be teaching special classes designed for the women only.

In order to accomplish this we will need at least \$2,500 per month support for travel and living expenses, and for the work fund. At present our only income is our small monthly Social Security checks. Therefore, we are requesting and appealing that you consider helping us, and becoming partners with us in this great work.

On May 12 the elders of the Chestnut Drive church of Christ agreed to be my sponsors. They also have agreed to support us financially in the work. If any who read this is able and willing to also support us, please make your checks payable to:

Underwood Mission Fund  
Chestnut Drive church of Christ  
3545 Chestnut Drive  
Doraville, GA 30340

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### Exhibit Evangelism

**Exhibit Evangelism** will be on the fairgrounds at the Illinois State Fair, Springfield, Illinois; August 9-18. This is a cooperative work of the churches of Christ in Illinois, with the work currently overseen by the elders at the Highway church of Christ in Sullivan, IL. Director and Coordinator is J.E. Miller (217-728-4146).

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# The GOSPEL CLEANER

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Number Seven

THE PRESENT TRUTH . . .

Ronald D. Bryant

## The Character of Jesus

The ordinary elements of life cannot begin to account for the person, the life, or the character of Jesus of Nazareth. He cannot be accounted for on the basis of race, place, family, possessions, education, or time. While these factors can be gathered and examined completely, they cannot begin to account for Jesus. He is unique to all of human history. Everything about Him is perfectly normal, and yet He is manifestly supernatural.

An exhaustive study of His life fails to find in Him an imperfection, or even the hint of a moral stain. No shadow or stain attaches to His conduct or character.

It is recorded that He went about doing good – He injured no one. He never spoke an unkind or improper word. He committed no wrong. His life was characterized by a complete absence of any trace of a selfish, self-seeking, or self-serving deed.

In the presence of His moral purity, sensuality is shamed. Falsehood shrinks back, having no place in the One who is eternal truth. Error and injustice are silenced in the presence of His authority and errorless teaching. His love exposes as false any accusation of envy, greed, or unkindness. His humility and sacrificial service remove forever any suggestion of selfishness or of self-serving ambition on His part.

How is the character of Jesus to be explained? From the purely human perspective, it is a matter of record that He was reared in a poor village, in a poor social and economic setting, in an out-of-the-way and despised Roman prov-

ince. He did not have the advantages of rank or property. He had the education that was available to the common people, and was trained only as a carpenter. Additionally, it is also a matter of record that He was misunderstood and finally rejected by His own people.

Jesus was born and reared amid the confines of narrow Jewish tradition, yet in conduct and character, in attitude and pronouncement, He was infinitely above all national and racial limits. The Jewish world did not contain Him, nor can it begin to explain Him. He is too large and too grand for the Jewish race.

Neither can He be explained by the Gentiles. He does not bear the marks of those called the Gentiles. Nor is it possible to accept and incorporate all of the noble qualities of both the Jews and Gentiles and find that which will serve to explain Him.

Simply stated, and undeniably, Jesus does not fit into the limited and limiting mold of humanity. Yet, the high degree of character and integrity which have been accorded Him throughout the ages is a matter of a vast record.

So many things about Jesus are unfathomable. When He began His ministry, He was a young man from an insignificant and unimportant village. By way of His resume, He only had the credentials of a village carpenter. He had no wealth, no station, no reputation, and no backing. Those who became His associates were also from the ranks of the insignificant and powerless. They came from obscurity, and were marked out as insecure. Yet, without fanfare, and without dramatic presentation, Jesus quietly

called these common men to follow Him, and calmly began to declare to them the reality of His person and His extraordinary purpose. Then He began to preach the coming of the kingdom of God! Yet, He did not preach in the centers of influence nor to the learned and elite, but in out of the way places and to the common people. Then, in the course of time, in the presence of many witnesses, with signs and wonders He demonstrated that He was indeed the promised one – the Messiah.

Jesus made claims of the highest spiritual significance, yet conducted Himself with quiet humility as a servant. He worked miracles to demonstrate the truth regarding His person (Mark 2:1-12). Yet, He refused to perform works simply to impress the curious, or the conceited power-brokers (Matthew 12:38ff.). He taught in such a fashion that the common people heard Him gladly, and with kindness He consistently challenged the integrity of “the spiritually elite.” He dealt gently with the weak and erring (John 8:1-12), yet, firmly and in an uncompromising way with the hypocritical (Matthew 23). In a measured and amazing fashion, He touched all who came into His presence; hardening some and winning others.

A number of disturbing facts are also recorded. Although sinless, Jesus was condemned as a malefactor. He, the Truth, was condemned as a liar. He came to honor and to fulfill the law, yet was condemned as a law-breaker.

*Continued on page 17*

There are many ways to be wrong, but only one way to be right. And it has always been required of God's people to make that distinction clearly.

Before her captivity in Babylon, righteous Judah was filled with a multitude of corrupt spiritual leaders which led to her demise as a kingdom. God's indictment was clear, "Her priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: **they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they showed difference between the unclean and the clean,** and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them" (Ezekiel 22:26).

Without making any distinction between right and wrong, the people of God in the Old Testament would eventually profane Him and hide their eyes from His law. The correlation between their actions and the religious world today is abundantly clear. Moreover, certain lines of comparison can be drawn between the actions of Judah and the actions of the Lord's church today. Have we been careful to distinguish the holy from the profane? Do our people know the difference between the doctrine of Christ and the doctrines of men? Do they know how to tell the difference?

### **The Distinctiveness of the Lord's Church**

The church of our Lord is as distinct as the doctrine she teaches. If no distinction exists between our doctrine and the doctrines of men, inevitably no distinction will exist between the churches of Christ and the churches of men. We will become just another denomination among denominations.

A great many distinctions of right and wrong must be stressed in the Lord's church today. Not only should we continue to teach and preach the distinctive plan of salvation, we must also continue to teach the distinctive nature of the Lord's church, and all the biblical beliefs which separate us from the world.

It is my conviction that denominationalism is still the greatest enemy of the cross facing the church. I realize that atheism is prevalent in our public schools and universities. I realize that Islam is rapidly growing in power in this country. But I would venture to say that we lose more young people to denominationalism than too atheism and Islam combined. It seems that most of the people who leave the church to enter denominationalism do so being ignorant of the facts. They were never taught to distinguish right from wrong doctrinally speaking.

### **Teaching the Fundamentals**

Fundamentals must be taught and understood. The basic facts and distinctive nature of the Christian religion must be stressed. Christians must come to understand the meaning of "one Lord, one faith, and one baptism" (Ephesians 4:4-6). Brethren must believe the faith was "once and for all delivered to the saints" and be willing to contend for its defense (Jude 3). Truly, "Whosoever transgresseth (*goes beyond*), and abideth not (*does not stay*) in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God" (2 John 9). If we have not God, we have no hope (Ephesians 2:12).

It is no trivial thing to go beyond the boundaries of the written word of God. Faith comes by hearing this word (Romans 10:17). Without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6), and overcome the world (1 John 5:4). Anything introduced into the Christian religion and imbibed by men that is not "of faith" is sin (Romans 14:23), carrying the penalty of spiritual death (Romans 6:23). One reaches this point of spiritual death by attempting to chart his own course and direct his own steps (Proverbs 14:12; Jeremiah 10:23), rather than walk by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7). To walk by faith, we must walk according to the word of God, for this is how true faith is derived.

Such fundamentals of sound doctrine need to be taught and stressed in the

Lord's church today. It is a matter of right and wrong. If one is not willing to teach the fundamentals of the faith, they are wrong, if for no other reason than for failing to distinguish the holy from the profane.

### **The Time Is Now**

Now is not the time to worry about who we might offend by teaching the fundamentals of the faith. We have been living under the umbrella of such fear for the last generation or two. Consequently, the Lord's church overall has not grown in wisdom or number. Numerically speaking, we have been at a standstill since 1980. And it is amazing to listen to many of our brethren who have lived through these past few generations of fundamental silence, and being well advanced in age, they remain untaught and unclear about basic fundamental distinctions which exist between New Testament Christianity and the denominations of men. Or, they simply do not care. Truly, those who have taught them and led them "have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they showed difference between the unclean and the clean."

Brethren, we must do better in this regard. I would suggest adding a class on denominational doctrines to your Bible School program. Allow it to be taught on a regular basis. Teach old and young alike. Make the distinction clear so that they might avoid falling into the trap of false religion. Allow them to see the beauty of truth when contrasted against the dark backdrop of manmade religions.

The Bible has the answer! God has given everything we need pertaining to the life (*the physical*) and godliness (*the spiritual*). Let us take advantage of the blessing God has given us in His word, and use it to make the clear distinction between right and wrong. One cannot be completely right, without learning what is wrong.

The

GOSPEL



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His Church*

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## God's Plan "B"

Ernest S. Underwood

In a recent article a faithful gospel preacher made the statement that God didn't need a PLAN B. This statement is absolutely true. Please consider the following thoughts on this subject.

### Creation

In the Creation account as recorded in chapter one of the Book of Genesis it is stated seven times that God declared that what He had done was good (Genesis 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31). In fact, in verse 31 it is stated, "Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good." There were no flawed works of God – everything was good, it was "very good." Thus, in the Creation all things were as God planned them and He didn't have and didn't need a "Plan B."

### Redemption

When man sinned, God set in motion His plan of redemption that He had devised before the foundation of the world. "... and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ; to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Ephesians 3:9-11). This plan, too, was and is perfect. It perfectly enables man to put this plan into practice in his life with the results of having the forgiveness of sins, and the joy of knowing that through Christ he is reconciled to God the Father.

### The Unfolding of God's Plan of Redemption

God began His plan of redemption with these words: "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel (Genesis 3:15). Many

centuries passed from the time of that statement until this statement: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). During which time God was bringing before man a plan that could deliver him from a state of sin and degradation and usher him into the state of his being a child of God. It took His Son's sacrificial death to accomplish this plan. Thus, as Jesus was dying on the cross He said, "It is finished!" (John 19:30). God had finished that part of His plan.

It was God's purpose and plan that the Christ would be born of a virgin, grow up as a man, and when this was accomplished, the Christ would establish His kingdom. The Old Testament contains many prophecies concerning the time, place, and conditions of that kingdom to be established.

Jesus, Himself, made several statements about the kingdom that He came to establish.

- "... on this rock I will build My church . . . and I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 16:18-19).
- "Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power" (Mark 9:1).
- "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:5).

In John 17:4 Jesus, in His prayer to the Father, plainly stated, "I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do." In Acts 2:47 we read of people who have received the remission of sins being added to the church of which Christ stated that He would build. Several years later we read where the apostle, a man who had preached the gospel

of Christ, wrote to the Christians at Colossae reminding them of their salvation and their present position. In Colossians 1:13-14 we read: "He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins."

Note carefully that Paul stated that God had delivered them out of the kingdom of darkness and had conveyed "us" into the kingdom of the Son of His love. This conveyance occurred at the time they came into contact with the blood of Christ, thus receiving the forgiveness of sins. Thus, God's PLAN to bring salvation to man was complete and it was perfect.

He then gave to man certain and understandable conditions that he must obey and abide in if he wished to be the recipient of God's wonderful and gracious plan.

### God's Plan of Salvation

God's plan for man was that he be saved by obeying the commandments that He gave as found in the New Covenant – the gospel. The apostle Paul stated it in this fashion: "But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness" (Romans 6:17-18).

God's plan for man's salvation requires that man hear the gospel (Matthew 28:19). After hearing, man must believe (Hebrews 11:6; Romans 16:31). Next in the progression, as man seeks forgiveness of sins, is the commandment to repent (Luke 13: 3, 5; Acts 2:38). Jesus, Himself, stated that one must confess Him before men, stating that He then would confess that man before God the Father (Matthew 10:32).

Having accomplished these things man is now ready to enter into Christ where he will have remission of sins. What does God's Plan say about this? Note the following Scripture passages:

- **Mark 16:16** "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."
- **Acts 2:38** "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

## Non-Denominational or Pre-Denominational

Owen D. Olbricht

The sign in front of the meeting place of the church of Christ in Mount Holly Springs, Pennsylvania that was placed there by Charles Yana II, the local minister, and reads:

**CHURCH OF CHRIST**  
**Pre-denominational**

His sign expresses the truth that the church Jesus established (cf. Matthew 16:18) was built before men started denominational churches. Churches that have used denominational names in order to set them apart from other churches have denominated themselves because they differ from each other in doctrine, and/or organization, and practice.

In recent years churches that accept people of all creeds call themselves non-denominational because they no longer embrace a specific denominational creed but accept people of all creeds. They open their doors to almost all people with differing beliefs who do not want to be identified with any denomination.

- **Acts 22:16** "And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord."

Is this the PLAN that you followed? If not, do you believe that the plan you followed is superior to God's Plan? If the plan you followed was not God's plan as given above, then you followed the plan or doctrines of men. Concerning such doctrines Jesus said, "These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with their lips, But their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, Teaching as doc-

trines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:8-9.)

For this reason the term "non-denominational" does not identify churches of Christ as being different than these groups and thus does not best communicate our goal.

### Development of Denominations

Denominational practices began when churches began to be led away from Christ by men, even as Paul warned the Ephesus elders that such would happen (Acts 20:28-31). One bishop began to take control of one congregation, then a number of congregations, and finally all congregations fell under the umbrella of one leading bishop, known as the father bishop, the pope.

The lack of biblical authority for this arrangement, and for many other practices, was opposed by Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Wesley, John Smith, and many others. These men began what is known as the Reformation Movement, which was built on some biblical principles, but which also fathered contradictory doctrinal teaching. From these men and those of like nature have come the many denominations we have today.

Modern churches that have wanted to avoid identifying with those denominations began congregations that would accept people from all denominations. In order to attract followers they invited people to join

trines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:8-9.)

God did not have and did not need a PLAN B. His first and only plan accomplished everything that He planned for it to do. God has no Plan B! If one fails or neglects to follow His one and only plan, that person must meet Him in a terribly unprepared condition.

them regardless of their religious viewpoint and to become a part of a conglomerate of beliefs under a non-denominational umbrella. Their purpose in most cases was not to go back to the teaching that preceded the development of denominations, but was to include teaching and practices of all denominations and thus to be known as non-denominational.

### The Biblical Goal

The goal of the churches of Christ is to follow Jesus' teaching, which preceded the teaching that has created the many denominations of today. In order to do this, we accept only the teaching that predates the teaching of denominations.

In order to communicate this effort, we should express it by letting the world know that we are not simply non-denominational but pre-denominational. Since non-denominational has come to mean an amalgamation of doctrinal beliefs, the term pre-denominational might better communicate our plea to return to the simple New Testament teaching of Jesus.

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## In Search of Balance

Bill Brandstatter

In almost 30 years of preaching, I have noticed that generally there are two areas in which many Christians find themselves. One group looks mostly at doctrine. This group points to doctrine to guide every thought and move. That is good. However, some in this group may leave out the spirit of Christianity. The love that should be evident may be absent because of their desire to find and refute any error that is not according to the doctrine.

The other group is one that emphasizes the spirit of Christianity. This group talks and preaches a lot about love, unity, praise, and similar topics. While these are all good, some in this group may go to extremes. In an effort to emphasize the spiritual, some neglect the doctrinal. Some will go with the flow of emotions, feelings, excitement, and dynamics to the exclusion of doctrine.

Both of these areas are important. Both should be included in our Christian walk. The problem lies in the extreme areas.

Jesus practiced balance in all that He did. He refused to be caught up in the traditions of the Pharisees (Matthew 15:2). He didn't go along with the liberal view of marriage that was held by the woman at the well (John 4:18) He spoke what the Father wanted (John 14:24)

In areas of preaching and teaching, Paul sought this balance. He became all things to all men with the purpose and the desire to save them (1 Corinthians 9:22). We too must seek the same.

God expects us to keep the doctrine right, but the spirit must be right also. Jesus told the Pharisees about this problem. They neglected the "weighty" matters such as justice, mercy, and faith (Matthew 23:23).

As a preacher, I often have to work in trying to find the perfect balance. I must speak as the oracles of God (1 Peter

4:11). I must also be gentle to all (2 Timothy 2:24). Paul struggled for balance in his personal life. He mentions in Romans chapter seven the difficulty he had in trying to balance what he wanted to do and what he needed to do.

Paul wrote in Romans 14 how we are to deal with people of different opinions. Toleration to other brethren who think differently is a must. There can be no unity if this is not done. Yet, many congregations have split over matters of opinion and personalities. We must deal with people daily who think differently and who live differently than us.

In homes, parents struggle for balance. We don't want to "church" our children to death. We don't want our kids left out of certain activities. We want our children to have and do what we couldn't. We may even want to live our lives through our children.

Yet, there are some lines we must not cross as parents. There are certain areas that must be off limits to our children. These limitations may mean our children can't participate in certain activities. It may mean there are certain places they cannot go. There may be certain things they simply cannot see. Yet, some parents are too strict and provoke their children to the point they become discouraged (Colossians 3:21). Other parents loosen all restraints (1 Samuel 3:13).

Neither extreme is right. There must be a balance in parenting. That balance is not always easy to find. The key is found in raising them to love God (Ephesians 6:4). Children should be taught early in life. Even a one year old can learn something about God. Parents should not wait for the church to provide a teacher for their child. Teaching should begin in the home.

In the church, balance must evidence itself in what is allowed and what is not allowed. The opinion of one person or one group does not make the majority in the church. Yet, often church leaders will not make decisions for fear of "offending somebody." Although no

one wants to offend another, a stance for the truth has in the past, and will in the future offend.

On the other hand, some church leaders will not allow any departure from tradition. Just because something was done in the past should never be the criteria for whether or not it is done in the present or future. Many of us today have benefited greatly from computers that have helped in church work immensely. When I first started preaching, I told our two older boys that I didn't need a computer. Now, I don't know what I would do without one. Change for the sake of change is one thing. Change for good that will further the cause of Christ is something totally different. The church in some areas is in desperate need of this balance.

The Christian life in general should be characterized by balance. We should know the doctrine. We must practice Christianity. However, the spirit of love, unity, and peace must be underlying all that we do and think. We are no doubt in search of such balance. With prayer and God's help it can be achieved.

How can we know whether or not we are balanced in our lives and in the church?

Use the right standard of authority. Paul wrote: "For we dare not class ourselves or compare ourselves with those who commend themselves. But they, measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves are not wise" (2 Corinthians 10:12).

Self is a faulty measurement. We should always use the Word of God as our measure.

Use liberality in areas of opinion. Paul dealt with this situation at length in Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8. Paul's main point in both of these chapters dealing with opinion is that we should not try to force other brethren into going along with our opinions.

The crux of his statements about opinion is found in Romans 14:13 where he writes, "Therefore let us not judge

one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way."

Allow the word of God to take precedence over all you say or do. Peter stated that if any man speaks, he must speak as the oracles of God. (1 Peter 4:11). We must be true to the doctrine which includes love (Ephesians 4:15).

Balance may be hard to come by for some. To be balanced may require looking differently at something. To be balanced may require loving others more and self-less. To be balanced one must know it is not "My way or the highway." Our goal should be the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3).

Balance and unity are closely connected. The Psalmist wrote, "How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity (Psalm 133:1). Jesus indicated the unity found among brethren sends the world a very powerful and profound message: "That the world may believe that you sent me" (John 17:23).

Let us strive to be balanced and biblical. God will be pleased, and we will be blessed.

## The Need for Modesty

Travis L. Quertermous

As the weather gets warmer, it seems the fashions get "hotter" as well, at least in terms of how the popular culture defines "hotness." It seems that style these days is defined by how much of our bodies we can reveal. So-called stars like Britney Spears and Paris Hilton with their lewd, "peek-a-boo," fashions and lifestyles are all the rage it seems if the coverage they (and others like them) receive is any judge.

Now, call me old-fashioned (I am only 44), but it seems a sad thing to me that such people have become the role-models for our children. Modesty it seems is all but a dead, quaint relic of a by-gone, simpler, era. I have heard many Christian mothers complain about the lack of modest clothing to buy for their daughters. Instead, what is available makes their children look like, to borrow a phrase from a St. Louis radio news commentator, "prosti-tots." Women used to be admired for their grace and dignity as well as their physical beauty. Now, beauty ("hotness" if you will) is defined solely in terms of looks and sex-appeal.

So just what is true beauty? Can one be modest and beautiful at the same time? The Bible answers "yes" to these questions. True beauty, according to God's standards, is much more than just skin-deep. In describing a virtuous wife, Scripture reminds us, "Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD, she shall be praised" (Proverbs 31:30).

Moreover, the apostle Paul taught, "...that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works" (1 Timothy 2:9-10). In a similar way, the apostle Peter taught, "Do not let your beauty be that outward adorning of the hair, of wearing gold, or of putting on fine apparel; but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible

ornament of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God" (1 Peter 3:3-4).

Neither apostle was teaching that it is wrong for Christians to dress nicely or that it is sinful to wear jewelry or fix one's hair. What both writers were condemning is going overboard and emphasizing one's outward beauty to the neglect of one's inward beauty. That is the very mistake so many people make today! They spend countless hours and dollars working out, going to the hair salon, eating and dieting properly, and buying the latest fashions and totally neglect to improve their character through Bible study, prayer, church attendance, and service to others.

This naturally raises the question as to what is modesty. When Scripture demands that women dress modestly with propriety and moderation, what does it mean? When Paul spoke of modest apparel he meant that which is orderly, well-arranged, and decent. Propriety is a sense of shame or a desire to avoid that which would embarrass oneself or one's family; to behave in a fitting and proper manner. Moderation refers to having sound judgment or good sense so as to have the self-control to avoid extremes.

While opinions will sometimes differ on what clothing is modest, some things are clearly off-limits. Clothing that reveals too much of one's body, is too tight, or meant to emphasize one's sexuality is surely off-limits for Christians in mixed company. Women especially need to understand that when they dress immodestly or provocatively, they place a temptation to lust before men. Men are sexually stimulated by what they see; women by what they feel.

Two great scriptural examples of truly modest people are Joseph and Esther. Many people are familiar with the story of Joseph in the book of Genesis. At the age of 17, he was sold as a slave by his jealous brothers. An Egyptian officer named Potiphar bought him. We are told, "And Joseph was handsome in form and appearance" (Genesis 39:6). But more importantly,

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Joseph was handsome on the inside. Even as a slave, he worked hard, God blessed him, and he was soon managing Potiphar's whole household. And when Potiphar's evil wife continually tempted him to commit adultery, Joseph answered, "How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9). What a great role-model for our young people today who are continually tempted to be sexually immoral!

Esther's story is told in the Old Testament book of Esther. Like Joseph, the Bible also describes Esther as "lovely and beautiful" (Esther 2:7).

Through the providence of God, this young Jewish girl became the queen of Persia and saved her people from extinction. But what impressed people about Esther was not just her good looks, but her grace, wisdom, and kindness (Esther 2:9, 15-17). She was a woman of courage and faith (Esther 4:13-17). Also like Joseph, she was sexually pure. Scripture describes her as a virgin on her wedding night (Esther 2:17). Though she dressed in the royal robes of a queen, she still dressed modestly and appropriately (Esther 5:1-2).

Thus, we learn that one can be both beautiful and modest. In fact, God insists upon it! Let us strive to be truly beautiful people, inside and out, but most especially, on the inside remembering that this is "precious in the sight of God."

Despite the best of our efforts to the contrary, time will eventually rob us all of our outward fitness and good looks. If we have been nothing but a pretty face, where will that leave us?



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## KNOW YOUR BIBLE

Stephen R. Bradd

### Why Study the Old Testament?

My favorite subject in school was mathematics; my least favorite was literature. Math was exciting, but literature was typically a chore. I just wasn't motivated to read many of the older novels. I failed to see the benefit in studying those works of old, and consequently did not put forth my best effort.

I wonder if some today view the Old Testament in similar fashion – as an irrelevant and useless document of antiquity. They might not affirm this verbally but actions speak louder than words.

Let us never forget that God's Word, the Bible, is composed of sixty-six books, thirty-nine of which are in the Old Testament. How many of those first thirty-nine books have you studied in-depth? Have you even read all of them from beginning to end? Could you find the book of Habakkuk quickly, if asked to do so? Tragically, there are many books in the Old Testament that most Christians know little, if anything, about.

Perhaps you are wondering: "So what, Stephen! The Old Testament is no longer binding upon man today (cf. Col. 2:14); we live under the New Testament and are to be guided by the doctrines taught therein. Why should we spend our time studying in the Old Testament?"

It's a good question, but before answering, let me say this: It is true that God does not expect anyone living today to pattern his or her life around the Old Testament. It has been superseded by the authority of the New Testament (cf. Hebrews 8:6,7,13). However, that is not to say that the Old Testament does not serve a purpose for mankind today. Listen to what Paul wrote in Romans 15:4: "For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope." The apostle was referring to the Old Testament books, and he provided an inspired answer to our question.

Christians should spend time studying the Old Testament because there is much to be learned therein. Without the Old Testament we would be ignorant about the details of the creation, specifically the origin of man. We'd also be lacking much information about God and His nature. Furthermore, much of the history of God's children would be unknown. Without the Old Testament it would be very difficult to prove Jesus Christ as the Messiah. Without these thirty-nine books it would be impossible to understand and defend much of the New Testament since there are hundreds of Old Testament references found within it. Additionally, we would be without numerous examples recorded for our admonition (cf. 1 Corinthians 10:11). Although the Old Testament is no longer binding upon man today, only a fool would dismiss it as being unworthy of diligent, in-depth study.

Although my literature teachers told me of the benefits of reading and reflecting upon certain literary works, it took me quite a while to believe them. Friends, I hope you will take Paul's inspired words to heart and realize the Old Testament was written for your learning. To neglect these books is to deprive oneself of much spiritual nourishment. I pray that you will put forth the effort to mine some of the many jewels that are present within the first thirty-nine books of the Bible.

#### Questions:

- (1) What are three things we wouldn't know today without the Old Testament?
- (2) Why is the Old Testament so important for proving Jesus to be the Messiah?
- (3) What epistle would be impossible to understand with the Old Testament?

## LESSONS FOR PARENTS IN ECCLESIASTES 12:1

Raymond Elliott

“Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, Before the difficult days come, And the years draw near when you say, ‘I have no pleasure in them.’”

Our passage of Scripture is ordinarily used in encouraging young people to remember God and to give their lives for the Lord; however, I believe there are several lessons contained in this text that would be applicable for parents

### LESSON ONE

First of all, parents should remember that children are not ours to rear as we choose to do so. The Psalmist declared, “Behold children are a heritage from the Lord...” (Psalm 127:3).

We should have the same attitude of Hannah when she made this vow to God, “O Lord of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and remember me, and not forget Your maidservant, but will give Your maidservant a male child, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life, and no razor shall come upon his head” (1 Samuel 1:11). Our attitude should be same, that is, when God gives us children, we should give them back to Him by rearing them in the “training and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4).

### LESSON TWO

Second, youth is the time to teach our children of God and Jesus Christ. Their hearts are receptive and not filled with prejudice. Children trust their parents and they can be impressed with the teaching they receive from the Word of God.

Jocbed, the mother of Moses, must have greatly influenced him while he was in her care. It was in his adulthood that this man of God made an important decision as is recorded in Hebrews 11:24-25, “By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing

rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin.”

Then there is the case of Timothy who was greatly influenced in his youth to give his life to Christ. Paul wrote, “When I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded in you also” (2 Timothy 1:5). “And that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:15).

### LESSON THREE

Third, parents should realize that soon the difficult (evil) days will come. Parents will not always be around to help their children in making the decision as to what is right or wrong. It is when the child is at home that parents must prepare them to be able to face the “difficult days” when they are away from home.

There is the example of a young soldier in the Far East when the time came for him and his buddies to have a period of rest and relaxation. The decision was made by the majority of the soldiers to go to a town and commit sins of immorality and drunkenness. The young Christian soldier refused to follow the crowd because he remembered that his parents were praying for him and his safety. He also remembered the lessons from the Word of God relative to keeping his body pure (1 Timothy 4:12).

### LESSON FOUR

Fourth, parents know their children are growing older and will soon leave home in a matter of a few years. It is during the age of innocence that children should be influenced to give their lives to the Lord. Youth is not the only time to “remember God” but it is the best time. The case is, the older a child

becomes the more difficult it is to make the decision to obey the gospel. The reason being, Satan can harden the heart through the deceitfulness of sin (Hebrews 3:12-13).

### CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the inspired writer states in this text that there is a point of no return. There are many influences such as higher education that can destroy the young person’s belief in God as being the Creator of the universe and can cause one to become an agnostic or even an atheist. The practice of sin can harden the heart of an individual so that he will have no desire to repent and return to God. Through the influence of evil companions, a son or a daughter can be led astray (1 Corinthians 15:33). Many a young adult no longer has any pleasure in the former years when he was at home and associating with friends who were Christians and all were attending the various assemblies of the church. It is sad to say that not all stories about ‘prodigal’ children end well as did the one in Luke chapter fifteen.

### A PIECE OF CLAY

I took a piece of plastic clay  
And idly fashioned it one day,

And as my fingers pressed it still,  
It moved and yielded at my will.

I came again when days were past;  
The bit of clay was hard at last,

The form I gave it still it bore,  
But I could change that form no more.

I took a piece of living clay,  
And gently formed it day by day,

And molded with my power and art  
A young child’s soft and yielding heart.

I came again when days were gone;  
It was a man I looked upon;

That early impress still he wore,  
And I could change it never more.

- Author Unknown

## Honoring Joe Blue

James R. McGill

Joe Blue (1875-1954) was born in northern Arkansas. He was one of twelve children. He lived most of his life on their farm in Fulton County, Arkansas, on the Missouri border. This is the county where Salem and Mammoth Spring are located.

Joe's father was a gospel preacher, but he did only limited preaching near home. Joe obeyed the gospel at age sixteen. From that time, he read the Bible every day.

When he was twenty he began traveling with two experienced gospel preachers conducting gospel meetings. They did the preaching, and Joe read the Scripture and worded the prayers. Joe preached his first sermon in 1896.

In 1897 Joe began traveling and preaching on his own. In his saddle bags he had only the Bible and one other book. That book was T. W. Brents' *Gospel Plan of Salvation* (first published in 1874).

Joe married Mary Montgomery in November, 1897. They reared three children. Joe said, "Mary is the bridge that has taken me over." They were married fifty-seven years. Joe and Mary spent their first year of marriage working long hours together on the farm.

### Early Success

At first there were only six members of the church of Christ in the community where they lived. There were four denominational churches. The Lord blessed Joe Blue's preaching with great success. Many people left the denominations and obeyed the gospel. All the denominational churches were soon gone. The church of Christ was the only religious group remaining in the area.

Joe was so underpaid in his preaching that he often went hungry and cold when he was traveling between preaching

appointments because he could not afford food or a place to spend the winter nights. Yet he never made an issue of asking for financial aid, for fear someone might think he was preaching for the money.

In his almost sixty years of preaching, Joe Blue preached in 870 gospel meetings. In some of these he preached each day and night for two weeks or more. He participated in an amazing 107 debates with great success.

He baptized ten thousand souls into Christ for the remission of their sins! Joe's and Mary's own children grew up to be faithful, active Christians.

Joe did much of his preaching in Arkansas, especially in Fulton County, his home county. But he was also called upon to preach in gospel meetings in a number of other states, even as far away as California.

### Amazing Memory

At Coal Hill, Arkansas, he once stated that he knew the Scriptures by memory well enough that if anyone read a Bible verse, he could quote the verse that preceded it and the verse that followed. His daughter tested his claim. It seems she was convinced he could do it!

Joe quoted many Scriptures in his preaching and in his debates. His favorite verse was the words of Jesus recorded in John 8:32: "And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."

### Great Courage

It should not be surprising that Joe's love for the truth (and the clear, plain way he proclaimed it) would arouse opposition from those who were hostile to the truth. This intense antagonism often led to violence.

Joe wrote:

"I have been stoned, beaten with green walnuts, and with eggs. I have had dynamite put under the pulpit while I was preaching [Note: The fuse was lit but thankfully it went out before it got to the dynamite.]... I have had them to

threaten to take me out of the pulpit and fix me so I would never be able to get into another one. I have had them threaten to hang me.... I am now 68 years old and want to preach many more years. To God be all the glory for the great Victory."

Joe H. Blue died in 1954 at 79 years of age.

## Garfield's Rules for Successful Living

A.T. Pate

One of the most illustrious careers found in the pages of American history is that of James Abram Garfield, 20<sup>th</sup> president of the United States. Before his election to this country's highest office, he was a college president, state senator, major general, U.S. congressman, and U.S. Senator – a combination of honors without parallel in the nation's annals.

When Garfield was a young man, someone placed in his hand one day a slip of paper, which he carried with him all his life. Inscribed on this paper were the following lines:

- Make few promises.
- Always speak the truth.
- Live within your income.
- Never speak evil of anyone.
- Keep good company or none.
- Never play games of chance.
- Drink no intoxicating drinks.
- Good character is above everything else.
- Keep your own secrets if you have any.
- Never borrow if you can possibly avoid it.
- Do not marry until you are able to support your wife.
- Keep yourself honest if you would be happy.
- When you speak to a person, look into his eyes.
- Make not haste to be rich, if you would prosper.
- Save when you are young to spend

when you are old.

- Never run into debt, unless you see a way out again.
- Good company and good conversation are the sinews of virtue.
- Your character cannot be badly hurt except by your own vices.
- If anyone speaks evil of you, let your life be so that no one will believe it.
- Never be idle. If your hands cannot be employed usefully, attend to the culture of your mind.

As one thinks of this great and successful man, it is well to remember that he was devotedly religious. From his mother, Garfield learned the value of prayer and daily Bible reading. It was his practice through life to pause each evening at sunset and read the Scriptures. Because of his belief in prayer, he was often referred to as the "praying colonel" during his army career. Moreover, he always faithfully met with the church for worship. Garfield firmly believed that, "There is nothing that can so shape youth, manhood so strongly, and old age so beautifully, as the religion of Jesus Christ."

While yet a teenager, he espoused the cause of Christ and took his stand with those calling for a complete return to the New Testament. A few months after preaching his first sermon, Garfield wrote to a friend: "I tell you, my dear brother, the cause in which we are engaged must take the world. It fills my soul when I reflect upon the light, joy, and love of the ancient gospel."

## This Month in Restoration History

**July 1855** – Tolbert Fanning establishes the *Gospel Advocate* in Nashville, TN, to examine the issues of "church organization and Christian cooperation." He did so hoping to challenge the American Christian Missionary Society which had been established in 1849. William Lipscomb is co-editor.

**July 2, 1881** – President James A. Garfield is shot by Charles J. Guiteau, a disgruntled office seeker, in the train station in Washington, D.C. He would die September 19.

**July 2, 1882** – The cornerstone is laid for the Garfield Memorial Church in Washington D.C. It is a subject of controversy, as brethren discuss whether or not it is scriptural to name such things as church buildings or congregations after other brethren.

**July 1888** – This would be an extremely busy month of debating for James A. Harding. He again debated J.B. Moody (Baptist), in Pikeville, TN from July 5-11; J.N. Hall (Baptist) in Conyersville, TN from July 17-21; and A. Malone (Baptist) near Franklin, KY from July 30- August 4.

**July 14-16, 1891** – A very sick David Lipscomb pushes himself to attend the Missouri Christian Lectures to deliver his lecture on the duty of Christians to civil government. J.W. McGarvey later wrote of his lecture, "He led us along a line of Scripture evidence that was new to many, and that few were able to grapple with on the spur of the moment, and although everyone felt that he was certainly wrong, very few were prepared to show it..."

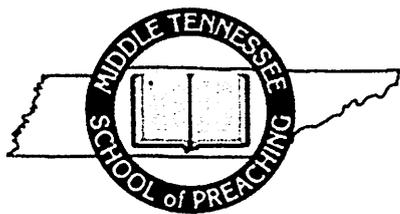
**July 10, 1899** – William Lipscomb is shot during a worship service of the Pearl and Bryan congregation in Dallas, TX by John T. Carlisle. Lipscomb was the principal of Dallas Central High School. Carlisle had been fired from his job as janitor and believed Lipscomb was responsible. While the congregation sang an invitation song, Carlisle walked to the front row where Lipscomb was standing and shot him. The event occurs during a gospel meeting with James S. Dunn preaching.

**July 12-15, 1904** – N.B. Hardeman debates T.P. Clark in Sharon, TN on the subject of the church. Hardeman is paid a handsome sum for the time of \$42.00 for the debate.

**July 2-5, 1946** – Guy N. Woods debates A.U. Nunnery on baptism and the possibility of apostasy. The debate takes place in the Cedar Hill Baptist Church building north of Parsons, TN.

**July 23-26, 1952** – Thomas B. Warren debates L.S. Ballard on the subjects of baptism and apostasy.

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## Educational Issues in the Local Church

Andy Robison

The educational system of the church is the most important educational system there is next to the home. While God designed the home to be the primary source of instruction in spiritual things (Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Ephesians 6:4; Titus 2:4-5), the Bible classes (Sunday, Wednesday, VBS, etc.) serve undeniable and irreplaceable roles.

### The Importance of Bible Classes

First, some children tragically do not have the homes where a father and mother can plan a system of study for their children. Who will intervene? The Bible class system offers at least an introductory venue for great spiritual truths to be inculcated into young minds.

Second, some parents, even in good homes, just abdicate their responsibility. Sometimes, the godly Bible class teacher is the only role model of Christian living and study that children will have. And, sometimes those children can learn truths in a Bible class that will “come out of the mouths of babes” at home and even trigger a needed lesson for mother and/or father.

Third, the Bible class can be a great source of outreach to the many, many families who never darken the church-house door. Children might be invited by a friend from school or sports, and, for the first time ever, hear the message of the sacrifice of the exalted Christ.

Who should be teaching these classes? How much organization should be involved? What planning should there be? The answer to these questions is hopefully obvious after the significant role of the Bible class is explained.

Some places, however, it does not seem so obvious. Bible class systems have often degraded from a planned curriculum with well-prepared teachers to a haphazard, fly by the seat of your pants, chaotic scramble to put a body in a classroom to baby-sit the few who might show that Sunday. This is tragic, and

has consequences that reach through the generations of the church and throughout individual lifespans to eternity. Please consider these suggestions:

### Choose Curriculum Wisely

Curriculum of Bible classes should be well-planned. In some places, the elders simply default to allowing whoever is willing to teach the class to choose whatever book he or she likes from whatever publishing house they choose.

Sometimes those teachers might do well in their preparation, and sometimes they might choose the flashiest material that requires the least amount of study on their part.

Where does the fifth-grade curriculum fit into the overall objectives of gained Bible knowledge? If that question were to be answered honestly, the answer, in many cases, would be unknown. But as long as that body is willing to be in that class and the educational director doesn't have to look for anybody else, the proverbial boat will not be rocked.

Curriculum should be well-thought-out and organized with specific goals and objectives in mind. A godless government organizes the curriculum in evolutionary dogma for the public. Should the church submit to the carelessness desired by the devil?

### Choose Teachers Wisely

Teachers of Bible classes should be well-screened. They should be diligent students of the Bible, even before they knew they were going to be teaching any classes.

It is the height of absurdity to put a barely faithful novice in charge of young souls. Some so justify it, “Well, if we give him some responsibility, he might be more faithful.”

We should try old-fashioned rebuke, reproving, and exhortation to keep a soul

faithful. And only after that soul has proven faithful, put him or her over the precious souls of the untaught children. Otherwise, class will devolve into a series of “I think’s” after an unanimated and uninformed reading of a page from the Bible class story book. Oh, and maybe they'll get to color a pretty picture.

Teachers should be knowledgeable and submissive to godly elders. A teacher who has a proven acumen to use private settings as a flashpoint to ignite tensions over doctrinal and/or personal issues should be kept out of the classroom.

A Christian who seeks to subvert sound doctrine through any kind of small group, Bible classes included, must not be given, by sound elders, that possibility, especially with young minds! They are the most impressionable!

Elders have the responsibility that faithful words must be taught (Titus 1:9). Therefore, they must have the courage to say no to the eager teacher who is eager for all the wrong reasons.

Finding teachers can be a pain for those in charge. This is a result of a commitment problem in the church. Nevertheless, to fill classes with unprepared, uninvolved, unsound teachers is worse than having no class at all.

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## The Cloak and the Books

M.W. Kiser

“The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments” (2 Timothy 4:13).

The old gospel preacher, Paul, is in prison once again in Rome. Times have changed in that short time since his last incarceration there. It is now a crime to be a Christian in Rome, since Nero has laid on them the charge of setting fire to the city. He misses his friends. It is dangerous for them to come and see him. He misses something else, his books! He had left his books with the good brother in Troas the last time that he was in the east before going to Macedonia. He probably expected to come back by Troas and pick them up; but, instead he goes as a prisoner to Rome.

At first glance one might find these words unworthy of such a great mind. Why would Paul bother to speak of such common things? But, on the other hand, these words certainly show the human side of the noble apostle! These few words paint for us a picture of this eminent man as he faces the last days of his life on earth. It touches our heart with its simple suggestion of human needs, both bodily and mental.

It was later in the sixteenth century that a similar request was made by the great Englishman, William Tyndale. In 1535 he was imprisoned in Belgium. Not long before his fiery martyrdom he wrote a letter to the Marquis of Bergen, Governor of the castle requesting, “I entreat your lordship, and that by the Lord Jesus, that if I must remain here for the winter you would beg the Commissary to be so kind as to send me, from the things of mine which he has, a warmer cap; I feel the cold painfully in my head. Also a warmer cloak, for the cloak I have is very thin. He has a woolen shirt of mine, if he will send it; but most of all, my Hebrew Bible, Grammar, and Vocabulary, that I may spend my time in that pursuit.”

One might wonder if Timothy got there before winter or even before Paul’s martyrdom. Did the grand old man ever get to warm himself with his old familiar cloak and to bend over his books again?

What do we know about Paul’s books and parchments? We know Paul was a literary man. He was from Tarsus, a university city, and was schooled in Jerusalem in the famous seminary established by Hillel, a liberal Pharisee. His teacher was Hillel’s grandson, the celebrated Doctor Gamaliel, (Acts 22:3). He gives evidence of his familiarity with the Greek poets such as Epimenides, Menander, Pindar, Aristophanes, Euripides, and other great Greek writers, (Acts 17:28; Titus 1:12). As a philosopher, he certainly held his own in Athens and Corinth. Paul was the busiest evangelist that ever lived; but one thing is certain, he did not neglect his intellectual life.

If I knew I was walking out of my study to go on a long trip and would not see my old friends for a long time, or ever again, which fifty pounds of books would I pull of the shelf to carry with me as my intellectual companions? Here is my factual answer:

- ✓ My old *Thompson’s Chain Reference Bible*
- ✓ *Vines Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*
- ✓ *The Complete Word Study New Testament*
- ✓ *Studies in The Life of Christ* by R.C. Foster
- ✓ *The Life and Epistles of St. Paul* by Conybeare and Howson
- ✓ *God’s Prophetic Word; Bulwarks of The Faith; and The Gospel for Today* by Foy E. Wallace, Jr.
- ✓ *A Guide to The Psalms* by W. Graham Scroggie
- ✓ *Knowing The Scriptures; and Godly Self Control* by A. T. Pierson
- ✓ *Sermons on Salvation; Shall We Know One Another in Heaven; and The Second Coming* by Guy N. Woods

- ✓ *The Philosophy of Christianity, A System of General Ethics, A System of Natural Theism; and A System of Christian Evidence* by Leander S. Keyser
- ✓ *The Scheme of Redemption; and Hebrews* by Robert Milligan
- ✓ *The Fourfold Gospel; Original Commentary on Acts; and Commentary on Thessalonians, Corinthians, Galatians, Romans* by J. W. McGarvey
- ✓ *Prophecy* by Alexander Keith
- ✓ *Holy Living and Dying* by Jeremy Taylor
- ✓ *The Saint’s Everlasting Rest* by Richard Baxter
- ✓ *The History of Apostasies* by John F. Rowe
- ✓ *Foundation Facts and Primary Principles* by G. C. Brewer.

There you have it. Some are in print. Some are out of print. Some are by my brethren. Some are by denominational authors. They weigh fifty pounds all together. I know! I just weighed them on a postal scale. I still have twenty pounds for all else I would ever need. Hopefully the airline would not lose my seventy pound suitcase along the way!

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# Word Studies

Gerald Cowan

## Love

Paul says, of three things that abide in Christian experience the greatest of them is *love* (1 Corinthians 13:13). The KJV has the word *charity* instead of love. There is important significance in the use of charity, here and a few other places, in the common version of the New Testament. We will explain it in the course of this essay.

Love is seen as a basic aspect of God's nature, perhaps as a metaphor of God (1 John 4:8). It is also the tie that binds man and God to each other, and should bind a man together with other persons (Deuteronomy 6:4-6, Leviticus 19, Mark 12:28-30). If we are to be identified with God as Christians our love must be like the love of God (1 John 4:10-11) and the love of Jesus (John 13:34-35).

Love is a learned concept, an acquired ability and attitude. It is not something implanted in us that functions according to design. It is learned by imitating the example of God and of His Christ. To love as God loves or as Christ loves means to treat people as the Lord would treat them. It means to treat others the way Christ treats you.

The Old Testament words which can be translated *love* are important for Christians because Jesus quoted them and gave them new meaning and application. The most frequently used is *AHAB*, which can be as ambiguous and wide-ranging in its meanings as our English word *love*, covering everything from love of food, objects, possessions, and persons to love relationships, including romantic and sexual.

The words used in the Greek New Testament are more precise. We must be careful to note here that we are not concerned with modern Greek words, words spelled the same as in ancient manuscripts, but with meanings that

have changed since that time. It is a problem that occurs too often with Bible students who try to use modern dictionaries to determine the meaning of words found in the King James translation of Scripture.

It is known that about 300 words used in the KJV and other 17<sup>th</sup> century translations have changed meanings enough to require a revision, an updated translation. Our concern should be to find the meanings of words used by original authors of Scripture, in particular the *Koine Greek* of the New Testament. There are four words that apply in our present study. Two of them do not appear in the Greek New Testament, although the concepts they represent do appear.

First is *EROS*. The word itself does not appear in the New Testament, but the implied attitude and action does. It is gratification of one's personal desires, lust rather than love, whatever brings pleasure and satisfaction. This can be very childish and immature, though obviously not completely invalid. If there were no personal pleasure or benefit in it, not many would do it, whatever it is. Some never outgrow the selfish "please me" attitude or experience any deeper love. "If it feels good to me, or if it 'turns me on,' I'll do it. Let's do it."

The second word is *STORGE*. This word too does not appear in the New Testament except in negative or compound form, for example *ASTORGE*, *without natural affection* (Romans 1:31). *STORGE* can sometimes be understood as "covenant love," the particular affinity that binds together the members of a defined and limited group, such as a family. It should apply to the members of the family of God, the body of Christ, the church.

*PHILIA* appears 25 times in the New Testament, frequently as the verb form *PHILEŌ*, to love, to experience the feeling or to do the loving thing. It is sometimes called friendship love, but is best understood as affection, appreciation of shared relationships, of those who have something in common. It is not simply affection or emotion, though feelings are

usually involved.

This is the word to use when we say we *like* something or someone. *PHILIA* recognizes the common ground, shared aspects, the likeness shared with others. It is the basis for fellowship, community, mutuality, brotherhood. So it is "friendship love" (James 4:4), "brotherly love" (1 Peter 1:22). *PHILIA* is often commanded, or strongly urged. Christians are to *love* the brethren (1 Peter 3:8, Hebrews 13:1). Wives are to *love* husbands and children (Titus 2:4). If anyone does not *love* Christ, let him be anathema (1 Corinthians 16:22). It is sometimes used with reference to the Lord's feelings for His people (Revelation 3:19): "As many as I *love* I rebuke and chasten." But notice the emphasis on likeness, the capacity for sharing characteristics and relationships. There are obvious similarities in *PHILIA* and *STORGE* and *EROS* which may explain why the latter two words are not used in New Testament writings.

*AGAPE* with the verb form *AGAPAŌ* is the most frequent and most important word for love in the New Testament, appearing some 116 times. It is not necessarily emotional, but more volitional – action based upon perceived value. It is unselfish good will and concern and therefore can be directed to all, good and bad, friends and enemies. This is "love, with no strings attached," love which does not have to be earned or repaid, or even returned. This love has a special priority basis: it puts the object of love above the lover himself. It is not to be limited to a select few who deserve it or may return it, from whom one may gain some personal benefit – that kind of love is neither virtuous nor praiseworthy and it receives no reward from God (Luke 6:32-35). This kind of love makes one to be like God the Father (Matthew 5:43-48).

The Latin word *CARITAS* (from which we get our word "charity") is sometimes used in the KJV to translate *AGAPE* (in 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 and elsewhere for a total of 17 times in Paul's writing, and 6 times in Peter and John). *CARITAS* or charity means "of

or pertaining to the heart." Not the emotional heart but the mental and volitional heart, the reasoning faculty with its thoughts and intents (cf. Hebrews 4:13).

Charity implies care and concern. In general, the love which is God's nature, and which is to be shared and demonstrated by God's people is *AGAPE*. God is *AGAPE* (1 John 4:8). "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have the same *AGAPE* for each other that I have for you" (paraphrase of John 13:34-35).

Remember that, if we are to be identified with God as Christians, our love must be like the love of God (1 John 4:10-11) and the love of Jesus Christ (John 13:34-35). Not just our affection and our feelings for family members, but our concern and willingness to do what is good for all persons, even wicked, non-Christians, and enemies.

In Scripture it is called *AGAPE*. It is a basic attribute of God and of Jesus Christ, and must also be an integral part of the Christian's character and will. We can be bold enough to say that without *AGAPE* one cannot please God or be truly identified with Christ and cannot be a proper Christian. It occurs to me that at some point in these studies we must define and apply properly that word, Christian. Probably no word is more misunderstood, misapplied, and generally abused. But, to the point here: love must be perfected in order to be effective.

John tells us about perfect or perfected love and what it can do. He does not spell out in specific terms what he means by perfected love. That will be our task in this part of our essay on love. The primary reference is 1 John 4:18 "...Perfect love casts out fear. ...He who fears is not made perfect in love." Perfect here is from *TETELEIOS* which means completed, finished, or mature; fulfilling its design and purpose and achieving its proper end. It does not necessarily imply moral or sinless perfection, never making a mistake, never needing correction or improvement. Love is dynamic, not static. It grows and develops with time and understand-

ing, especially in relationships.

Notice that John says perfected love casts out fear, even fear of the judgment. If one is fearful it is because love has not been perfected in him.

Unless we read John's words in his own context and with his own explanation we will probably expect something we have no right to expect. We may be inclined to condemn ourselves or others – even to blame God – for failure based upon improper attribution and expectation.

To exemplify the point, notice first that John does not refer here to God's love, the love given by God himself to His creatures. God's love is perfect. It has neither flaw nor deficiency. That could mean to some that since God's love is perfect we have nothing to fear, even in His judgment of us.

God's perfect love is assumed to be unconditional, and so it will save everybody God loves – at least all those who accept it from Him. Such platitudes as: "Smile! God loves you and we love you too" can put one too much at ease about his condition. Adding that "love covers the multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8) may lead one to think, "God loves me and covers all my sins – He will find a way to save me from my sins, no matter what." That is not true.

Let us say it right now, emphatically, and then show how the context and other words of John support the contention: God's love does not save anybody who does not obey Him. In the same way that God's love does not save anybody without faith (Hebrews 11:6, Mark 16:16), or without repentance (Luke 13:3, 5 and 24:47). God cannot love anyone into salvation or into heaven.

Perfect love does not mean wholehearted, as in "I love God, the Lord, Jesus (or you) with all my heart." Jesus said the first and greatest commandment is to love the Lord your God with your whole heart, soul, mind, and strength and then expand it into loving your neighbor as you love your own self (Mark 12:28-30). Perhaps the word unreserved fits here – holding nothing

back, willing to give all. True, love does not withhold anything that is of benefit, certainly anything needed for the welfare or to prove the merit and value of the loved one.

Giving something or doing something that is not in the best interests of the person, something actually detrimental, disagreeable, or destructive to the person is not true love. All of that is an appropriate application of those words of Jesus, but that is not the point John is making in the text we are considering here. It is not, "I love you, so you must not hold against me anything I do to you, or fail to do for you – do not hold my sins against me." Neither your love nor the other person's love can cover your sins.

Loving God means that one obeys Him, and nothing God commands or requires is too difficult, too great a burden for one to bear for, "This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments" (1 John 5:3). Compare the statement of Jesus in John 14:15, "If you love me, keep my commandments."

It is not just a matter of knowing the commandments, but rather of doing them. "If you know these things, happy are you if you do them" (John 13:17).

Earlier in the present epistle John explains what perfected love is. If one reads through the epistle from beginning to end, rather than reading only one enigmatic statement, such as 4:18, and letting it stand alone, he should have no trouble understanding what is being said. Notice 1 John 2:3-5. We know that we know God if we keep His commandments (v. 3). One who says he knows God but does not keep His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him (v. 4). But when one keeps the words and commandments of God the love of God is perfected in him (v. 5).

That makes it simple, doesn't it? Perfect or perfected love means keeping the commandments of the Lord. How many of the commandments? Jesus said, "Keep my commandments." But how many of them must we keep? "Teach them to observe everything that I

have I have commanded” (Matthew 28:19). Keeping some, or even most of the Lord’s commands, means imperfect love. Imperfect love is imperfect or incomplete obedience to what one knows is required.

Unperfected love cannot cast out fear of the judgment and of God’s reaction to one’s life and deeds. Doing what one knows is right and seeking forgiveness for any violation or failure to keep what one knows is commanded by God – that is to say, perfected love – is the only thing that can remove one’s doubts and fears about his own salvation.

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## Expositions of the Sacred Scriptures

Ron Thomas

### The Church at Sardis (Revelation 3:1 – 6)

It comes without a shock to any thoughtful person that our place of residence can influence our thinking. If we live in a socially liberal environment, and because of this look at social issues differently than if we lived in a socially conservative environment, would there be a large surprise in this? Sardis was not socially conservative, but it did have a social perspective of looking at life. They were a wealthy commercial city with a glorious past, and that historical environment played a role in the current thinking.

It is said of Sardis that its location was an area where confidence came easily because of their “impregnable” location. Unfortunately for them they lived with a perceived idea about themselves and, consequently, their overconfidence had them twice fall to invaders. They also experienced in A.D. 17 a significant set-back when a natural calamity (earthquake) destroyed the city. Though rebuilt, the status it once had

was never regained, but their perception with regard to themselves did not seem to wane – they still desired to live on their previous reputations.

#### Evaluating Self

So often it is that some feel like they are in good standing with the Lord as they think about the way they live (or have lived) their lives. Thinking this way of oneself does not allow a proper evaluation to take place (cf. 2 Corinthians 13:5). There are many who genuinely try to do what is right (cf. Judges 17:6) and there is a desire to think: “Surely the Lord won’t find fault with me because I am trying to do the right thing, will He?” Some of these people who feel good about themselves think the Lord’s way is right, but they are not quite willing to submit to his righteousness because, to them, it’s a bit too cramping. Unfortunately, the church in Sardis felt good about itself, when in truth their perceived good reputation was but a reputation that was lacking substance. People feel good about themselves many times because they evaluate their good intentions and not necessarily their actions. Good intentions are, of course, good, but without good actions following there is little to be said for those good intentions (cf. James 2:26).

Fortunately for the church in Sardis, and for all who live today, the Lord gave (and gives) warning of this evil approach to life before his judgment day comes.

#### Evaluated Properly

The Lord was able to offer the proper evaluation because of who he was (is). He is identified with similar language as that of the Holy Spirit (Revelation 1:5) and the Father (Revelation 4:5). When he looked at his church he looked upon his church and saw some things that were not complete, and a church that was one the verge of dying spiritually. Dead works adversely affects the Lord’s church (cf. James 2:14-26)! The Lord said these needed to be tended to rather quickly. Perhaps some looked upon their past as a glorious past and felt this was an adequate approach to a glorious future without having to put in the necessary work (cf. Titus 3:8). “It’s desirable

to learn from the past, but it is disastrous to live in the past.” Whatever reputation they might have had, whatever reputation a person today might have, the reputation may not be the substance of reality. The old saying that “reputation is what people think you are, but character is what you really are” is surely true. The reputation they had of themselves was but “dead substance!”

#### Jesus’ Warning

This is one of two churches where nothing good was said about the congregation as a whole. Their problem was not with regard to understanding the Lord’s demand, and neither was it with regard to their memory; their problem was with regard to their observation and evaluations. The failure to observe things as they actually are resulted in a failing to tend to matters as they needed to be addressed. They were not watching as they should have; not paying attention to those things to which they ought to have been paying attention. This failure brings about a lack of preparedness. The Lord will come as a thief and when he comes they will not be prepared for his arrival. Those who have to get additional oil for their lamps are surprised when the Lord denies them entry (cf. Matthew 25:1-13). The Lord calls upon each of us to watch.

#### Christians Not Soiled

Many Christians in Sardis felt better of themselves than was warranted. They walked in garments that were soiled and they didn’t even know it. How could such a white garment become stained and one not have known it? It is the result of becoming accustomed to living in an environment that accepts a standard of evaluation that is not the Lord’s (John 14:6). Eye-sight is cloudy and discernment more difficult.

In our day, a Christian can fight the influences of a negative environment when he refuses to allow the white garments worn to be tainted with the things of this world (1 John 2:15-17). Why would a Christian watch a television program that uses language that is unbecoming of righteousness? Why would a Christian listen to the music that is un-

becoming of righteousness? Why would a Christian parent allow his or her child to be taught that it is okay to be like their friends, wear similar things they do, go to places they go, talk like they talk – when that which is done is contrary to the righteous standard of the Lord? These “little things,” as they are sometimes called, have a big impact on a person’s life.

Christians who walk in white garments, unstained by sin, are worthy of the Lord’s invitation because they have refused to allow their garment to be soiled. These are men and women who daily walk with the Lord, addressing him as they would one to whom they are close, and hearing what he has to say about this life and the one to come. These are Christians who struggle, but in their struggle they look to him who has overcome (cf. Hebrews 12:1-2).

### Decision Time

Just how long does one stay in an environment that fails to observe and evaluate by the proper standard of the Lord? When the garment worn is no longer white, but “off-white,” discernment and clear thinking become all the more difficult.

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”

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Continued from page 1:

### The Character of Jesus

He worked miracles, and in doing so gave honor to God, yet was accused of being in league with the devil. Claiming to be one with God, He was condemned as a blasphemer. In every detail He was the most honorable and noble being ever to walk this earth, yet He was despised and rejected. He came into the world to serve, and to turn people to God, and the people of this world rejected Him.

Following His death on the cross, the Father raised Him from the grave and declared Him to be both Lord and Christ. It is He that calls us to be one with Him. He enables us to be the children of God. He calls us to be righteous, and yet many of us are content with just being religious.

## Questions & Answers

James R. Lewis

### “Please Explain Why Barnabas Was Called an Apostle.”

Barnabas is indeed called an apostle in Acts 14:4,14, but he was not an apostle of the same order as the twelve who were selected and named apostles by the Lord (Luke 6:13).

An understanding of the meaning of the word *apostle* as it is used in the New Testament will help us see why Barnabas, and others, may correctly be called apostles.

The word *apostle* literally means, “One who is sent forth.” The English word *apostle* is a transliteration of the Greek *apostolos*. This same word is also translated “he that is sent” (John 13:16), and messenger(s) (2 Corinthians 8:23; Philippians 2:25).

An apostle is “a delegate, messenger, one sent forth with orders” (*Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon*). He is “one sent out with the personal authority and as a representative of the one sending” (Reinecker and Rogers, *Linguistic Key to the New Testament* at Matthew 10:2). The verb form *apostello* means “to send forth a messenger, agent, message, or command” (*Analytical Greek Lexicon*).

In the New Testament, the word “apostle” is used to denote the following: (1) the Lord Jesus (Hebrews 3:1); (2) the twelve chosen by the Lord (Luke 6:13; 9:10); (3) Matthias, who was chosen to take Judas’ place (Acts 1:20-26); and (4) Paul, who was selected by the Lord to be an apostle, especially to work among the Gentiles (Acts 9:15; 22:19; 26:15-28). Others identified as apostles are Barnabas (Acts 14:4, 14); Silvanus (Silas) and Timothy (1 Thessalonians 1:2; 2:6); two unnamed brethren sent by Paul with Titus to Corinth (2 Corinthians 8:23, translated messengers, KJV); and Epaphroditus (Philippians 2:25, messenger, KJV). Some think Andronicus and Junia (Romans 16:7) should also be so

identified, but the language is inconclusive. Perhaps Apollos is also identified as an apostle (1 Corinthians 4:6; 9).

From the above we can derive the following concerning Barnabas: he was an apostle because he was one sent, and obviously sent with authority to carry out a specific work.

Barnabas was sent by the Holy Spirit with Paul “for the work whereunto I have called them” (Acts 13:2, 4). Thus, his authority and apostleship came from God.

The fact that Barnabas, as well as Paul, did “signs and wonders” is conclusive evidence that his authority and apostleship came from God (Acts 14:3). It is also said that the church at Antioch “sent” Barnabas and Saul away” (Acts 13:4). In Paul’s and Barnabas’ report back to the church at Antioch it is said that the church had “recommended them to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled” (Acts 14:26). In other words, the church was fulfilling its responsibility of sending God approved men to carry out God’s approved work.

In summary, in the New Testament the term *apostle* specifically identified one who was sent as a representative with authority to act in behalf of the sender. In addition to Christ Himself and His apostles, Barnabas and other men are identified as apostles. These were men approved of God and duly delegated with authority from God.

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## Biographical Sketches of Gospel Preachers

**Hardeman Nichols** is a native of Alabama. He grew up in Jasper, where his father, Gus Nichols, preached for many years.

He is married to Virginia Montgomery of Moundsville, West Virginia, and they have two daughters and two grandsons.

Brother Hardeman is a frequent speaker on college lectureships and special congregational programs, and he has conducted evangelistic meetings in forty-five states and several foreign countries including several extended series in the nations of India and Romania.

He has engaged in local ministries at Cordova, Alabama and Columbus, Mississippi, as well as in Texas at Sunset in Lubbock, North A and Tennessee Street in Midland, Walnut Hill in Dallas, Southside in Fort Worth, and Austin Street in Garland. Presently he is an elder and preaches for the Pleasant Grove church of Christ in Dallas.

He also spent about ten years in full-time meeting work, averaging forty meetings per year during that time. He is an instructor at the Brown Trail School of Preaching in Fort Worth.

**David R. Pharr** was born in Wilkesboro, North Carolina, February 22, 1937. His early religious life was with the Methodist denomination. His mother led the way into the New Testament Christianity and he was baptized while in his teens. His father, his brother, and his sister also came into the church. His brother, Claude, is also a preacher.

David married Margaret (Peggy) Bunker of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, while both were students at Freed-Hardeman College, and considers her his greatest asset in the ministry. They have four children. Two of the sons (James and Neal) are also preachers. The third son, Stephen, is a deacon in the Charlotte Avenue congregation. Their one

daughter is Elizabeth (Beth), of Mansfield, Texas. They have ten grandchildren. Peggy operates Good News Enterprises, a mail order Bible, book, and supply company. She has also been active in speaking for ladies' groups.

David completed the A. A. degree at Freed-Hardeman College with an additional year in Bible. Further work was done at Rio Grande College and Alabama Christian School of Religion (now Southern Christian University), where he received the B. A. degree.

David has been in full-time church work since leaving Freed-Hardeman College in 1958. His first full-time work was in Point Pleasant, WV, followed by Gallipolis, OH. He has had two tenures with the Charlotte Avenue Church in Rock Hill, SC. He was with Charlotte Avenue for almost 25 years before moving to Knoxville, TN in 1988 to serve for about seven years as Director of East Tennessee School of Preaching. This was followed by three years with the Clinton, TN church. His return to Charlotte Avenue was in 1998.

David Pharr retired from full time preaching in February 2009 but continued to preach part time at Charlotte Avenue until August 2009.

He was editor of *Carolina Christian* magazine for a few years. When the board of directors wanted the publication to take a more liberal direction he resigned that position and in 1997 he accepted the editorship of *Carolina Messenger* (formerly *Palmetto Messenger*). He is a regular writer for *The Spiritual Sword* and provides occasional articles for other publications.

Published books are: *Five Minute Radio Sermons*, *Modern Messages from the Minor Prophets*, *The Beginning of our Confidence*, *A Happy Coincidence on a Desert Highway*, *The Simplicity System*, and *Thy Kingdom Come*. He has also published two Bible correspondence courses: "Acts of Apostles" and "Getting to Know Jesus."

David has an ongoing schedule of gospel

meetings and regularly speaks on various lecture programs.

**Robert L. Waggoner** is an evangelist and an educator who speaks about the challenge Christians now face from humanistic philosophies such as secularism, naturalism, materialism, statism, feminism, hedonism, etc.

Brother Waggoner was born near Lawton, Oklahoma (1931) and baptized by Will W. Slater (1941).

He Graduated from Harding University (BA, 1954), Harding University Graduate School of Religion (MA, 1959), Vanderbilt University (BD, 1965), and Erskine Theological Seminary (DMin, 1999).

Brother Robert has served as local evangelist for churches of Christ in Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, New Mexico, Michigan, Tennessee, and Utah.

He taught Bible and Speech at Rochester College (1959-1974), served as missionary to Monrovia, Liberia in West Africa (1974-1976), and taught at Preston Road School of Preaching in Dallas, Texas (1976-1977).

Since 1985 he has given over 75 church seminars about modern humanism and its anti-Christian influence

Since 1991 he has made one or two overseas mission trips annually of 10 days to six weeks duration.

From 1992-2013 he taught at Southern Christian (now Amridge) University in Montgomery, Alabama.

Susan and Robert married at her home congregation in Kalamazoo, Michigan in December, 1961. Two years later, on their wedding anniversary date, their son was born. They have two married children. Their son Clark, his wife, and their daughter, live in Alabama. Their daughter Anita, her husband, and their two children, live in New Hampshire.

### Notice to Gospel Preachers

If you would like to have a biographical sketch in the *Gospel Gleaner*, submit it to [andyerwin@gospelgleaner.com](mailto:andyerwin@gospelgleaner.com).

## News & Notes

James R. McGill

### Gospel Meeting Reports

**A.T. Pate** (Nashville, TN): "April 7-11 I was in a meeting at Stanton, KY where nearly 50 years ago I was privileged to preach in the first gospel meeting conducted by the then newly established congregation."

"July 21-26 I am to preach for the Leipers Fork church near Franklin, TN where I was privileged to preach when I was a young college student."

During June 9-12 brother Pate was also in a gospel meeting for the Eagleville, TN congregation.

A.T. Pate will also be joining the faculty of the Middle Tennessee School of Preaching and Biblical Studies for the fall 2013 term. He will be teaching at the Meads Chapel extension in Nashville.

**Artie Collins** (Florence, AL): "I was in a gospel meeting with the Little Swan congregation (in Lewis County, TN) from June 9-11. The meeting was well-attended and had good interest, and good support from other congregations."

Brother Collins was able to use his flannel graph sermons during this meeting. He has conducted over 300 meetings with this very effective method of preaching.

He and Marie also recently celebrated their 66<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary!

**John T. Polk, II** (Dover, TN): "Recently I was in a gospel meeting with the church in West Branch, MI (May 23-26). This is a mission area, but there are many sound churches who love the truth of the gospel. I thoroughly enjoyed being with them and seeing visitors from miles away."

### News from the Southwest School of Bible Studies

From Rick Brumback, Director: "We will bid Godspeed to our 35th

graduating class on July 14, 2013. Six men will go out to preach and teach in various places across the United States and also in Europe.

In August we will welcome commence our 36th year of operations at SW, as we have five continuing students and twelve entering students. This represents one of our largest enrollments, and we thank both the Lord and the brethren for the ongoing support of this work."

### Upcoming Lectureships

**Southaven, MS:** July 21-25 the Southaven church of Christ will be conducting the annual Power Lectures.

For a full listing of the event visit their website at [www.southavencoc.org](http://www.southavencoc.org).

**Nashville, TN:** August 4-7 the Meads Chapel church of Christ will be conducting their annual Restoration Revisited Lectureship. The speakers include: Robert Taylor, Jr., Keith Mosher, Sr., Bill Greer, and Jim Dearman. David H. Prophater is the lectureship director.

**Henderson, TN:** The annual Christian Training Series is set for July 18-20 and will be conducted on the campus of Freed-Hardeman University. *Gospel Gleaner* staff writer, Sam Hester, is the director of this event.

For a full listing of this event see the FHU website.

### Mission Report

**Ron Gilbert** reports that the work of training preachers and establishing churches is going strong in various places in Africa. He writes, "We have had 29 baptisms and 75 restorations reported. We have enrolled 3 new students in our preacher training program and have about 30 that will graduate from preacher training schools in Africa this fall." He also reports 3 new congregations being established.

For information about how to support this work, contact the Rock Valley church of Christ in Cookeville, TN.

### Middle Tennessee School of Preaching and Biblical Studies

At our recent graduation Mike Stewart (Director of MTSP) mentioned the following facts about the school since its start in June, 2002:

- 11 annual graduations, beginning in 2003
- 84 men & women have graduated
- 59 men have graduated from the school of preaching
- 25 women have received diplomas in Biblical Studies
- 65% of the men who have graduated are currently preaching in six states.

For more information about how to support this fine work contact Jim McGill at (615) 332-0583.

### West Virginia Christian Youth Camp

West Virginia Christian Youth Camp runs all through July.

A special Singing Emphasis Week (July 28-August 3) is a new week in which they will have Bible classes around songs and singing, Music Theory classes, Song-Writing classes, etc.

### Exhibit Evangelism

**Exhibit Evangelism** will be on the fairgrounds at the Illinois State Fair, Springfield, Illinois; August 9-18. This is a cooperative work of the churches of Christ in Illinois, with the work currently overseen by the elders at the Highway church of Christ in Sullivan, IL. Director and Coordinator is J.E. Miller (217-728-4146).

Email News Items to:  
[jimrmcgill@clearwire.net](mailto:jimrmcgill@clearwire.net)  
 or  
[andywin@gospelgleaner.com](mailto:andywin@gospelgleaner.com)

## Reader Replies

I have just re-read your June editorial on training preachers. It is excellent, timely and relevant. You have addressed, in my thinking, one of the most crucial problems facing our brotherhood today. You may get opposition, not only from those associated with the colleges, but from some associated with the schools of preaching, but you are speaking the truth and it needs to be heard!

**Rod Rutherford**  
Powell, TN

The June issue is great! Excellent content! It is so readable and uplifting to all who are interested in spiritual things.

**James R. McGill**  
Nashville, TN

I have just read the May issue, and read with great interest "The Baptism of Abraham Lincoln." This account confirms what I had heard about Lincoln possibly being a member of the Lord's church. I appreciate the other sound and biblical articles as well. I publish a weekly bulletin and this good material will come in handy to pass on. Take care and God speed as you continue to promote the cause of Christ, and His church on earth.

**Jeff Grimes**  
Andalusia, AL

I enjoy reading the *Gospel Gleaner*. As a sister in Christ, and as one who does our church bulletin, I am always searching for sound, gospel articles that I can use in our bulletin.

**Geraldine Cannon**  
Livingston, TN

I am very grateful to you for once again publishing the great articles that the church so desperately needs today.

**Name Withheld by Request**  
Montgomery, AL

Thank you for the great work you do in editing the *Gleaner*, and for allowing us (Southwest School of Bible Studies) to be mentioned. I hope all these efforts aid the spread of the gospel and the strengthening of the church.

**Rick Brumback**  
Austin, TX

Dear brother Andy, I like the *Gospel Gleaner* – its soundness, its balance, its variety of departments. The "News and Notes" are a timely PLUS. As a former teacher of yours, may I say – "Congratulations! I am proud of you."

**A.T. Pate**  
Nashville, TN

Brother Erwin... I just wanted you to know that I appreciated very much your article in the June 2013 issue of *Gospel Gleaner* entitled "Training Preachers--for what?" Our lectureship this coming year, God willing it take place, is entitled "Still Standing, But Not Standing Still." ...Would it be alright with you if I quote some of your concerns in my manuscript?

**Keith Mosher, Sr.**  
Memphis, TN

I've read your article on training preachers and think you are right on target. Church leaders need to encourage their young people to become preachers of the gospel, and assist them in doing so, even if it means granting them financial scholarships for that purpose... May the Lord continue to bless you in your work.

**Robert L. Waggoner**  
Montgomery, AL

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# The GOSPEL CLEANER

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Number Eight

THE PRESENT TRUTH . . .

Ronald D. Bryant

## The Factious

Disputes have in every place produced great harm. Often disputes have served to disqualify some who claimed to follow Christ, for in the midst of a dispute some forsake the very principles He taught. It is the case that the human desire to prevail, to obtain a personal victory, becomes more important than the will of God. A minor dispute often portends a major disaster.

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

Paul's words provide an accurate description of the character traits of the factious – the divisive. First, "He is proud." He sees himself as possessing superior knowledge and is lifted up in his own mind. The original expression meant "to smoke, to fume;" then "to be inflated, to be conceited." This is descriptive of one who has no real knowledge of the Christian faith, yet thinks he possesses superior knowledge, and sees himself as superior to others. It has been observed that the factious are not hesitant to tell you what they think, and are quite willing to tell you what you think!

Yet, Paul described such a person as "knowing nothing." The original states that "he is a fool." This expression suggests that a fool is one that is devoid of any real understanding, yet pretends to have great understanding.

The factious person – the divisive person – is not teachable. Instead he "is obsessed with arguments about words." He is interested in, and desires to proclaim, argue, and debate matters beyond his knowledge. The original word – *nosew* – means "to be sick; then to languish, to pine after." This is one who has a diseased appetite (no love for the truth). Instead, he has an appetite for controversies involving personalities and preferences.

Reasonable and godly people use words in order to communicate. The divisive use words as weapons of warfare. They delight in disputes! They delight in taking a few words out of context and producing an indictment.

The Jews of Paul's day excelled at this. They made bold affirmations and accusations, and constantly brewed strife. They were always armed with suspicions. They asked questions, not to obtain answers, but to stir up strife. They made accusations without basis, and readily misrepresented those they opposed. Just consider the lengths to which they went in their determination to destroy Jesus.

Paul speaks of the result of the actions of such men. He wrote, "from which comes envy." Envy is "uneasiness, pain, mortification, or discontent, excited by another's prosperity,

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

Predictably, envy and strife go together. Moved by envy, the divisive seek to exploit those who will not readily yield to their opinions. They delight in taking advantage of those that are poorly-informed. They blast away with a broad-side and delight in upsetting those unprepared for their attack. They spread word of their victory, yet of course with feigned concern for the poor deluded souls of those that oppose them. Their feigned concern for "the brethren" or "the church" is usually covered under the rubble their strife has produced.

The divisive engage in "revilings" (railings, KJV). They eagerly hurl criticism and censure, use harsh and abusive language towards those who will not accept their pronouncements. They revile them. To "revile" means to ridicule. Ridicule is one of the major weapons of the divisive.

Paul said that the divisive are ruled by "evil suspicions" (evil surmisings, KJV). Love of truth and evil suspicions are mutually exclusive. Evil suspicions proceed from hearts ruled by motives that are both base and ungodly. The divisive readily judge motives. This of course opens the door for all others to do the same. The divisive know full-well that evil suspicions guarantee the perpetuation of strife.

*Continued on page 18*

Jeremiah was sent to the rebellious house of Judah to prophesy against them and foretell their destruction as a nation by the hand of Babylon. Judah was being overthrown by God because they “perverted their way, and they [had] forgotten the Lord their God” (Jeremiah 3:21).

Judah’s defection from their covenant with God began at the top, with their supposed spiritual leaders, and trickled down to the common man. Observe the shame of the house of Israel: “As the thief is ashamed when he is found, so is the house of Israel ashamed; they, their kings, their princes, and their priests, and their prophets” (2:26). Jeremiah was being sent to prophesy against “the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land” (1:18) – in that order.

Through the wicked schemes of their leaders, the people were being led from one error to another (9:3). They went backward and not forward (7:24).

The common man certainly was not innocent of this treachery against God. The citizens of Judah and Jerusalem were very much supportive of the wickedness of their leaders.

Note, “The prophets prophesy falsely, the priests rule by false means (power, NKJV), and my people love to have it so” (5:31). They had developed an attitude that was revolting and rebellious in their compromises with false religion (5:23).

### The Shepherds of Israel

As with any error pertaining to things religious, the fault can be attributed personally to the individual and more widely to contributing factors. As in Judah’s case, the apostasy began at the top, with their leadership. As went the leadership, so went the flock.

From the Lord’s indictment against the shepherds of Israel in the book of Ezekiel (chapter 34), it appears that the spiritual leaders of God’s heritage had

become negligent in their responsibilities to the flock.

The Lord addressed this issue by asking, “Should not the shepherds feed the flock?” (Ezekiel 34:2) We can and should ask the same question today (cf. Acts 20:28). When the shepherds of the flock become careless with their responsibility of feeding the flock, apostasy will result.

The shepherds of Israel were not concerned with strengthening the weak, ministering to the sick and broken, bringing back those who had been driven away, or seeking the lost (Ezekiel 34:4). Instead of functioning as godly and faithful keepers of the flock, they drove away the flock by ruling them with force and cruelty (Ibid.).

The result of this type of failed leadership was a people “scattered because there was no shepherd; and they became food for all the beasts of the field when they were scattered” (34:5). The Lord said, “My flock was scattered over the whole face of the earth, and no one was seeking or searching for them” (34:6).

Due to the negligence of the shepherds of Israel, God took the matter into His hands proving to us the importance of seeking and saving the lost. The Lord said, “Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out” (34:11). “I will feed My flock” (34:15). “I will seek what was lost and bring back what was driven away, bind up the broken and strengthen what was sick...” (34:16). Ultimately, God would establish His Son as Shepherd over the flock (34:23-24; 1 Peter 5:4).

### The Shepherds of the Church

Throughout God’s dialogue with Ezekiel, He continually referred to Israel as “My sheep” and “My flock.” By such statements we are reminded that the flock does indeed belong to God.

Equally true is God’s possession of the church today (cf. John 10:14, 27; 1 Peter 5:2-3). How can we prevent this same type of trickle-down apostasy from

occurring in congregations of the Lord’s church today?

Let us provide what we hope will be a few helpful suggestions.

- (1) Use the guideline God has given us for determining elders (1 Timothy 3; Titus 1). Seek only those who are qualified to serve as shepherds. Lay hands on no man suddenly (1 Timothy 5:22). Decide carefully and prayerfully who will lead you as God’s people.
- (2) Encourage faithful elders. Be sure that they know how much they are appreciated for their love for your souls and for their stand for the truth (Acts 20:17-35).
- (3) Remember your elders in prayer (Hebrews 13:7; Acts 20:36). Pray for their souls, their wisdom, and their leadership of the flock.
- (4) Obey and honor those who rule well (Hebrews 13:17; 1 Timothy 5:17). A faithful and godly elder is one who is concerned for the well-being of your souls. He should be continually encouraged to this end. Honor him for his life of seeking the lost and restoring the wayward. Obey him as he obeys the Lord (Hebrews 13:7). Be careful not to distract him from the work he is called to do by burdening him with the sundry matters of little or no significance.

It has been said that the greatest need in the Lord’s church today is the need for godly, faithful, and scripturally qualified men to serve as elders. I cannot help but agree.

Simply put, it is not good enough to have shepherds. Israel had shepherds, but they were not faithful, and as a result the people were led into apostasy. So too must shepherds in the Lord’s church be the right kind of men to do the great work they have to do. Only by following God’s instructions in appointing, encouraging, and following these men, will we be sure to avoid the sinful effect of a trickle-down apostasy.

Andrew D. Erwin

The

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## “Is This the Church of God?”

Raymond Elliott

Several years ago, while I was in my office, the telephone rang. When I answered, a lady inquired if a certain person was there. I replied in the negative. She asked, “*Is this the Church of God?*” I answered, “This is the church of Christ.” She replied, “Oh, I have the wrong number.” I then said, “I want to assure you that this is the church of God.”

This short conversation made me realize once again how denominationalism has really confused matters regarding biblical terms applicable to the church of the Lord. In fact, it made me feel uncomfortable to answer the lady in the manner I did. While I did not deny that this was the Church of God, realizing the confusion this would cause, I answered by saying this was a church of Christ. I knew if I answered in the affirmative to her question, she would not understand as to why the party she was asking for did not work here.

What would you say if someone asked you if you were a member of the church of God? Now, think before you answer. And, why would you answer in the way that you would. Could it be that you would not want to be associated with another religious group? Would you be truthful and unashamed by answering in the positive?

Several years ago, I preached a sermon relative to the undenominational nature of the church of Jesus Christ. I emphasized the scriptural using of all the biblical terms for the body of Christ. Of course, I mentioned that the term “church of God” was scriptural (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:2; Acts 20:28, KJV). After the assembly that evening, one very fine Christian lady was heard to say, “I will never call us the church of God.” Herein we have a deep-seated problem among many brethren.

There has evolved within our brotherhood the notion that the term “church of Christ” is the name to be worn to the

exclusion of all other terms found in the Bible.

Please understand the term “church of Christ” is scriptural (the singular of “churches of Christ,” Romans 16:16). But, the Lord never intended for us to make this the official name of the church.

Actually, the term “church of Christ” is not a name, but a biblical term that denotes ownership. Jesus said in Matthew 16:18, “I will build my church.” That is possessive in nature. The church belongs to Christ.

We often speak of the Lutheran Church, the Presbyterian Church, and the Church of Christ in the same manner. Of course, our religious friends consider us to be just another denomination. The sad fact is, by our attitude and the improper usage of biblical terms, we may contribute to the confusion.

Brethren are often heard to say, “The church of Christ teaches,” “he is a church of Christ preacher,” “he is a church of Christ person,” “church of Christ church,” “church of Christ college,” “church of Christ literature,” and even a “church of Christ ball team.”

The fact is we should not use one term to the exclusion of another biblical term regarding the church. If we do, we have secularized a scriptural expression.

Study the Bible and observe the other terms that can be used in regard to the body of Christ. It is right to refer to the Lord’s church as being:

- 1.) The “church of God” (1 Corinthians 1:2)
- 2.) The “church of the First-born” (Hebrews 12:23)
- 3.) The “church of the Lord” (Acts 20:28, ASV)
- 4.) The term used the most often in the New Testament, especially in the book of Acts, is simply the expression “the church.”

Let us become more aware that the expression “church of Christ” is not a proper name *per se* but a term denoting ownership. Moreover, by using other

scriptural terms regarding the body of Christ we would help to clarify the undenominational nature of the New Testament church in the thinking of others.

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## What about Abortion?

John T. Polk, II

“When does life begin?”

The Bible answer surely begins with David’s inspired description of God’s working in a birth: “For You formed my inward parts [organs]; You covered me in my mother’s womb [woven with muscles, tendons, veins, arteries, and sinews]. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well. My frame [skeleton] was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth [the privacy of a womb]. Your eyes saw my substance [embryo or tissue mass], being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me [gestation, as if written in a book], When as yet there were none of them” (Psalm 139:13-16).

Since, at the same time, God “forms the spirit of man within him” (Zechariah 12:1), at what point is abortion NOT a “fight against God” (Acts 5:39) making a new person?

It is well-established that “life must come from life,” then since the male’s sperm is living, and the woman’s egg is living, at what point is the fertilized egg NOT alive?

At the moment of conception, a chemical change on the surface of the egg takes place to prevent another sperm’s penetration. At the moment of conception, the baby’s genetic makeup is entirely complete. From the moment of conception, there is a separate, different individual developing, with the help of God, inside the mother. At what point is this baby a part of the woman’s body, over which she maintains the right of decision? Her “right to do with her body whatever she wants to do” ended

after she was impregnated! She's made her choice, now it is up to God!

The Supreme Court of the United States' (SCOTUS) ruling in *Roe v. Wade* has remained virtually unchanged since it was handed down on January 22, 1973. The Judges ruled (7-2) that though states did have an interest in protecting fetal life, such interest was not "compelling" until the fetus was viable (placing viability at the start of the third trimester), *Roe v. Wade* 410 U.S. 113 (1973) Supreme Court of the United States 1973.

Thus, all state abortion laws that forbade abortion during the first six months of pregnancy were thereby invalidated. Third trimester abortions were declared to be legal only if the pregnancy threatened the life or health of the mother.

In Section IX, B, the ruling stated: "Texas urges that, apart from the Fourteenth Amendment, life begins at conception and is present throughout pregnancy, and that, therefore, the State has a compelling interest in protecting that life from and after conception. We need not resolve the difficult question of when life begins. When those trained in the respective disciplines of medicine, philosophy, and theology are unable to arrive at any consensus, the judiciary, at this point in the development of man's knowledge, is not in a position to speculate as to the answer. [410 U.S. 113, 160]"

The entire ruling depended upon the Judges' confusion over, and ignorance of, when, exactly, life begins in pregnancy! While trying to consider only human opinions, they "legalized" the slaughter of 50 Million innocent U.S.A. babies since then, based entirely upon what they did not know! Here are some things they ignored:

(1) The History of Medicine and Millions of Physicians.

The Oath of Hippocrates (c.a. 400 B.C.) included this statement: "I will give no deadly medicine to any one if asked, nor suggest any such counsel; and in like manner I will not give to a woman a pessary to produce abortion." This

Hippocratic Oath has been required of physicians for many years.

(2) God has always condemned government slaughter of babies.

The Egyptian Pharaoh demanded the death of all male babies (Acts 7:18-19), but Israelites "who feared God" refused (Exodus 1:15-22). God made Pharaoh release His people and destroyed Pharaoh and his army (Exodus 8:1-15:21). Pharaoh's plan was to kill boy babies immediately after birth!

God's prophet, Elisha, wept at the future actions against Israel by the king of Syria, Hazael, because he would "dash their children, and rip open their women with child" (2 Kings 8:10-13). God brought withering war against Syria in Hazael's son's reign (Amos 1:3-5). Hazael's plan was to kill all babies before birth!

Herod's slaughter of all male children, aged 2 years old and under, in Bethlehem (Matthew 2:13-22) led to his death shortly thereafter. His plan was to kill male children from birth to toddler!

"Is abortion ever justified?"

Since God's plan for "normal" birth works almost always, it takes a highly unusual circumstance that would bring "abortion" into consideration. Only in a very miniscule percentage of occasions would "abortion" be a necessary alternative to a live birth. Remembering how God sees it, aborting a baby would only be done in an extremely desperate situation involving the mother's life, and only when there would be no other alternative.

Planned Parenthood (a government-supported organization in the Abortion Industry) presents "abortion" as an alternate decision in every case of pregnancy: "If you are pregnant, you have three options to think about — abortion, adoption, and parenting... And if you are considering abortion, you should know that abortion is very safe, but the risks increase the longer a pregnancy goes on." (Taken from their website)

The time to avoid "abortion" is before any sexual relation, and the only

safe sexual relationship is within the marriage of a husband and a wife for life (Matthew 19:1-6).

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## The "Not" in the Serpent's Tale

Travis L. Quertermous

I wish I could take credit for the catchy title of this article, but I borrowed it from another preacher. It is a play on words that refers to the fall of man into sin recorded in Genesis 3:1-7. In this familiar story, the devil, in the guise of a serpent, comes to Eve in the Garden of Eden to tempt her to eat the forbidden fruit and sin against God.

The serpent asked Eve, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?'" (Genesis 3:1). Eve understood perfectly what God had commanded. "And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die'" (Genesis 3:2-3).

Our title is taken from the devil's reply in the next verse. "And the serpent said to the woman, 'You will not surely die'" (Genesis 3:4). Notice that he slipped one little word, "not," into God's command and completely twisted the meaning. God had said, "You will surely die." The serpent said, "You will not surely die." Thus we have the "not" in the serpent's "tale."

How could Eve have fallen for such an obvious trick? The devil suggested to her that God was unfairly restricting them and that He did not want them to have certain knowledge lest they be like Him (Genesis 3:5). Thus, Eve justified her disobedience by noting that the forbidden fruit "was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise" (Genesis 3:6). Sadly, she and her husband Adam chose to listen to the devil rather than their Creator and found out to their sorrow

that he had lied to them. The whole human race has been paying the price ever since as sin and death became a tragic reality in our world.

But surely Satan could not deceive us with such a simple trick? Surely we have become too sophisticated to fall for so obvious a temptation? Not so fast! In 2 Corinthians 11:3, the apostle Paul wrote, "But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ." Despite the simplicity of God's command, Eve was deceived by the "not" in the serpent's "tale." Satan has not changed a winning strategy. The simple truth is that millions of people have fallen into sin in the exact same way as Eve.

For example, God has clearly condemned fornication which is any sexual intercourse outside of marriage. Hebrews 13:4 says, "Let marriage be held honorable among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge" (NASB). This command could not be simpler, but the devil has convinced most people in our world that "fornicators and adulterers God will not judge." They justify themselves, as Eve did, by saying that they are in love, that everyone is doing it, that times have changed, that we will practice "safe sex," etc. Just like Eve, they have been deceived by the "not" in the serpent's "tale."

For multitudes of others, Satan has deceived them into thinking, "Let marriage not be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed not be undefiled..." So they divorce and remarry for any and all kinds of frivolous reasons, live together without marriage, redefine marriage as a union between two homosexuals, etc. They too have their excuses as to why they think God will accept such, but like Eve, they have been fooled by the "not" in the serpent's "tale."

Another example is the plan of salvation. In Mark 16:16, Jesus Christ said plainly and simply, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be con-

demned." Yet the devil has convinced many folks that the truth is, "He who believes and is not baptized will be saved," and thus they think one is saved by faith alone before and without water baptism.

Still others have accepted this "not" in the serpent's "tale": "He who believes not and is baptized will be saved." Thus they "baptize" their babies without any personal faith on their part and think they are saved. The truth is they are not lost in the first place (Ezekiel 18:20).

There are many arguments made to justify these positions, but in the final analysis, they are still contradictions of God's word. In both cases, the serpent has slipped his "not" into the command of God in the minds of too many good people.

Friends, let us not allow the serpent to corrupt our minds from the simplicity that is in Christ as he did Eve. Let us not justify our sin and disobedience as she did. Above all, let us not be deceived by the "not" in the serpent's "tale."

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## SHOULD WE "RE-TRADITION"?

Neal Pollard

The lead article in the fall 2009 edition of *Reflections*, a quarterly produced by the Yale Divinity School, is written by guest editor Martin B. Copenhaver. It is entitled "Back to the Future: 'Retraditioning' in the Church Today."

In it, Copenhaver writes of the huge upheaval going on within many "Reformed" or Protestant denominations. The author contrasts mainline churches with both Emergent Churches, the darling and hip face of ultimate change in religion today, and Judaism—which is the ultimate anti-Emergent Church in philosophy and practice.

To summarize, Copenhaver says that churches are finding new life and

vitality by doing more than just going back to their traditional roots. They are going back to ancient faith practices, particularly those discovered in scripture. He seems to indicate that as our culture has replaced Christ with secularism or hedonism as the foundation of society, churches have found new motivation not to assume that people believe in Christ or desire to be distinctive.

"Retraditioning," a term Copenhaver borrows from Diana Butler Bass, is a movement "through which a congregation adopts, or reclaims, practices and understandings that have been part of the wider Christian tradition, but, for some reason, have been abandoned or diminished in importance." She has much more to say that would be fodder for a different article, but the *Reflections* article is all about the identity crisis so many in Christendom are facing in these changing times. To be fair, many congregations within churches of Christ have been wrestling with an identity crisis, too.

While we should always be people ever open to more effective methods of fulfilling our God-given mission as His people in ways that are in harmony with scripture, we should never be a people wrestling with an identity crisis borne of having been faddish and preeminently desirous of being seen by the culture as relevant. We do not have to revisit how often to take the Lord's Supper, what basic form the sermon will take or the role of the Bible in it, whether or not women will lead in worship, what form church music will take, and the like. Since all of this was settled in the New Testament 2000 years ago, our role as disciples of Christ is simply to read it, understand it, and do it.

This is true, whether culture accepts and appreciates us for it or not. As a side benefit, we do not have to go back to the "drawing board" time and again, rewrite creed books, or publish a new

edition of a Church Manual. We do not have to grab on to the next, new, and biggest religious trend.

Our never-ending work continues to be to restore New Testament Christianity in faith and practice, calling people to submit to Christ's authority and shape their lives, individually and congregationally, by His Word!

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## KNOW YOUR BIBLE

Stephen R. Bradd

### Who Is Jesus?

How would you respond if you were asked: "Who is Jesus?" Would you tell about His virgin birth (see Matthew 1:23)? Would you speak of all the good things Jesus did, especially the miraculous healings (Acts 10:38)? Would you talk about all the Old Testament prophecies He fulfilled which prove Him to be the Messiah (Luke 24:44)? Would you detail the last day of His life where He was betrayed, tried, and brutally executed on a cross (Matthew 26 & 27)? Would you expound upon His resurrection and explain what it means to the faithful today (see Matthew 28; 1 Corinthians 15)? Certainly all of these points (and others) are worthy of mention when one speaks about Jesus of Nazareth.

But, where would you go if you could only turn to one passage of Scripture to teach about Jesus? Although there is no single passage that encapsulates all of the major ideas above, there is one passage that comes to my mind that seems to declare who Jesus is to a great degree of depth – The Gospel of John, chapter one.

Let us briefly highlight some of the marvelous descriptions of Jesus found within John's prologue:

1.) Jesus is eternal, having existed with God from the beginning (1:1);

though He wasn't called "Jesus" at that time),

2.) Jesus is deity for He is declared to be God (1:1),

3.) Jesus is the agent by which all things were created--nothing was made without Him (1:3),

4.) Jesus is the means and source of moral life (1:4),

5.) Jesus is the one that John the baptizer bore witness of and prepared the way for (1:7),

6.) Jesus is the true Light for mankind (1:8),

7.) Jesus became flesh and dwelt among men (1:14),

8.) Jesus was characterized by a unique kind of glory--He is truly one-of-a-kind (1:14),

9.) Jesus is the means and source of abundant grace (1:16),

10.) Jesus is the means and source of ultimate truth (1:17),

11.) Jesus is the only begotten Son of God (1:18),

12.) Jesus showed the world who the Father is, even though no one has seen God at any time (1:18),

13.) Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (1:29),

14.) Jesus was anointed with the Holy Spirit and would baptize others with the Holy Spirit (1:33),

15.) Jesus is the Messiah or Christ (1:41),

16.) Jesus was written about by Moses and the prophets (1:45), and

17.) Jesus is the King of Israel (1:49).

When reading John 1, it's almost as if someone inquired of the apostle: "Who is Jesus?" And John responds magnificently, via his inspired pen, as if to say: "Here is my announcement of who Jesus Christ is. Here are some

of His awesome attributes. Anyone who possesses these attributes has to be divine. In the remainder of this book, I will proceed to prove to you that He did indeed possess these attributes."

As one continues reading in the fourth account of the gospel, it is easy to see that John did exactly that. John wrote an amazing book, which includes many of Jesus' miracles, in order that those who read it "may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing [they] may have life in his name" (John 20:30, 31).

Friends, do you genuinely believe in Jesus the Christ? Are you a friend to Him (John 15:14)?

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## Honoring Hall L. Calhoun

James R. McGill

Hall L. Calhoun (1863-1935) experienced repeated disappointments in his years of serving the Lord as a Bible teacher and gospel preacher, right up until the last great work of his life.

His parents were religious. His father taught a Sunday school class in the Methodist Church. The family lived in northwest Tennessee at Conyersville in Henry County, near the Kentucky border.

When he was twelve, his mother gave him a Bible. He kept it with him wherever he went and read from it every day for the rest of his life.

When Hall Calhoun was fourteen, he entered a school in Mayfield, Kentucky, where he remained for two years. While in Mayfield he attended a series of gospel meetings being conducted by the church of Christ. All that Calhoun had heard about the church of Christ was negative. He had often heard them called "Campbellites." But he decided to investigate for himself.

### Calhoun Obeys the Gospel

The gospel meeting series included day and night sessions each day. After Calhoun had heard forty-two sermons and realized that every one of them was in total harmony with the Scriptures, he responded to the invitation, repented of his sins, confessed his faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and was baptized into Christ for the remission of sins.

Hall L. Calhoun had the wonderful opportunity in 1888, at age twenty-five, to enroll in Transylvania University and the College of the Bible at Lexington, Kentucky. There he studied the Bible under teachers he greatly admired, including J. W. McGarvey. He graduated in 1892.

The next year he was back at home preaching at Conyersville. Later he preached in Paducah, Kentucky, and

Franklin, Tennessee. It took Hall Calhoun a long time to develop convictions against the use of instruments of music in worship and against using a missionary society to do the work of the church in evangelism.

In the fall of 1900, when Calhoun was interviewed by David Lipscomb and James A. Harding for a possible teaching position in the Nashville Bible School (later renamed David Lipscomb College), it was Calhoun's unwillingness to take a stand on these two issues that disqualified him. Thankfully, eventually he did take a stand.

Following the Nashville Bible School rejection, he and Mrs. Calhoun took teaching jobs at West Tennessee Christian College (renamed Georgia Robertson Christian College), under President A. G. Freed in southwest Tennessee at Henderson.

From Henderson in 1901 Calhoun wrote to J. W. McGarvey to apply for a teaching position in the College of the Bible at Lexington, where he had graduated. He was advised that he should first acquire advanced degrees so that his teaching credentials would be impeccable. The College of the Bible would help him financially with the understanding that he would repay the college by returning and teaching.

### Lexington and Bethany

Accordingly, Calhoun received an advanced degree in religious studies from Yale. Next he enrolled in graduate school at Harvard where he received a master's degree and a Ph.D. in 1904. Calhoun returned to the College of the Bible as promised. He taught there until 1917, when he felt he had to resign because the board and the faculty had come to be dominated by unsound theological liberals.

Calhoun next accepted a teaching position at Bethany College in West

Virginia. Bethany had been founded by Alexander Campbell. Calhoun experienced a similar disappointment there. He resigned in 1925.

He thought his next opportunity would be just what he had been looking for. He accepted an invitation to become associate president of Freed-Hardeman College alongside N. B. Hardeman. His experience turned out to be a bitter disappointment. He felt very mistreated by Hardeman. Before the end of the school year, he left and was hospitalized for a time in Nashville to be treated for his shattered nerves.

### Calhoun's Crowning Work

When Calhoun recovered enough to resume preaching, the opportunity of a lifetime opened for him. The Central church of Christ had just been started in 1925 in downtown Nashville. A. M. Burton, one of the Central elders, had bought a radio station. It was one of only two stations in the city. Since this was the first decade of radio, there was much excitement about the new invention.

The church employed Hall L. Calhoun as their fulltime radio evangelist! He spoke thirty minutes over WLAC each afternoon from 12:25 to 12:55.

He proved to be a great communicator through this exciting medium. The program had a very large and appreciative regular listening audience, covering a wide area far beyond Nashville. Many people were taught and converted. Congregations were established. Calhoun received a great many letters from listeners. This was by far the crowning work of his life.

He continued through the years as the regular speaker on the daily program until his broadcast of September 3, 1935. He suffered a heart attack the next morning and died that night. He was 72.

## The Influence of J.W. McGarvey upon Hall Laurie Calhoun

Andrew D. Erwin

Hall Laurie Calhoun was an educator and preacher for Christian churches and later churches of Christ in the early part of the Twentieth Century. Calhoun was born in Conyersville, Tennessee, December 11, 1863. Conyersville was once a thriving little place just a few miles north of Paris in Henry County, Tennessee, on the Tennessee-Kentucky state line. Not much remains of the community these days.

Hall Calhoun was always an exceptional student. He attended elementary school in Henry County until he was fourteen years old. In the fall of 1877 he entered the Mayfield Seminary, located in Mayfield, Kentucky. For the next two years, he studied spelling, writing, geography, arithmetic, English grammar, and United States history.

While living in Mayfield, Calhoun made the decision to be baptized for the remission of his sins. He was fourteen at the time.

In 1879, Hall moved with his sister, Mattie, and her husband, W. T. Shelton, to Union City, Tennessee. Shelton would become the minister of the local Christian Church.

At the time, Union City had one of the finest schools in the area (the Union City Training School). The school was housed in a brick building located on North First Street and was headed by R. E. Crockett, one of the outstanding educators of his day. While at Union City, Calhoun received instruction in algebra, higher mathematics, Latin, and Greek, to name a few. He graduated from the Union City Training School in 1893 and remained two more years with the institution as one of its teachers.

Hall Calhoun had proven himself as an exceptional student in every school he had ever attended. Upon graduating high school, Calhoun desired to attend the United States Military Academy in West Point, New York. Having passed his entrance examination, he was intending to enroll in 1888, when his father

persuaded him instead to enter the College of the Bible in Lexington, Kentucky.

What a decision that proved to be! It was at the College of the Bible that Calhoun was introduced to John William McGarvey. McGarvey became Hall's mentor and would forever change the young man's life.

In 1892, Calhoun graduated as an honor student from Kentucky University with a Bachelor of Arts degree and from the College of the Bible with the Classical Diploma, meaning he had met the language requirements in Greek and Hebrew. According to Calhoun's biography written by Doran and Choate, "No student who had graduated from the College of the Bible surpassed him in ability and achievement in the estimation of John W. McGarvey."

Calhoun's first opportunity to engage in a career in higher education came in April, 1897. James A. Harding and David Lipscomb wanted him to teach at the Nashville Bible School, but Calhoun would not break his fellowship with "organ" churches, and soon the men parted ways.

On December 7, 1897, A.G. Freed had Calhoun deliver the dedication sermon for the newly established Georgia Robertson Christian College in Henderson, Tennessee. Calhoun joined the faculty of the newly formed college for the 1900 and 1901 sessions. He was listed as the Principal of the Bible Department and taught Sacred Literature, Hermeneutics, and Hebrew. His wife was also a teacher in the new school.

McGarvey's influence was not only felt in Calhoun, but could also be seen in the textbooks used by the new school which included: *McGarvey's Notes on the Sacred History*, and *McGarvey's Text and Canon*. Moreover, two of McGarvey's fundamental maxims were stated in the college catalog: 1.) An education without knowledge of God's word is incomplete; and 2.) The demand

for an educated ministry is so great that every preacher who can afford to do so must avail himself of such a course of study.

While teaching in Henderson, Calhoun received a letter from his mentor asking him if he was open to the idea of returning to Lexington to teach in the College of the Bible. Calhoun was delighted by this opportunity and immediately agreed to join his old teacher and friend on the faculty.

Before coming to Lexington, however, McGarvey suggested that Calhoun should work towards a greater education. Prompted by McGarvey, Hall Calhoun would be the first preacher in the grand Restoration to achieve a doctorate in theology prior to 1925.

Arrangements were soon made for Calhoun to enter Yale Divinity School. The College of the Bible agreed to support the Calhoun family while he was working on his education with a stipend of \$50.00 per month, with the stipulation that Calhoun would return to Lexington and teach for them after he had completed his education.

McGarvey was hoping Calhoun's advanced education would help prepare him to be his successor at the College. While away at school, Calhoun remained in constant communication with McGarvey. The disciple was fast becoming everything the teacher thought he could be, both as a scholar and an ally in the war against "destructive" criticism.

At Yale, Calhoun studied elocution at the feet of Samuel Silas Curry, the foremost celebrated speech teacher of his time. McGarvey would later rely on this aspect of Calhoun's education to provide a new Public Speaking Department at the College of the Bible.

In June of 1902, Calhoun graduated with a Bachelor of Divinity degree, again being awarded with honors. With McGarvey's permission, in the fall of

1902 Calhoun entered Harvard Divinity School. He remained there for nearly two full years and completed all requirements for the Master of Arts and Doctor of Philosophy degrees respectively. Calhoun again graduated with honors and was held in high esteem by teachers and classmates alike.

At Yale and Harvard, Hall Calhoun was exposed to the rankest liberals in the field of biblical criticism. By that time in American history, the "destructive" movement had taken over many of the early American theological institutions.

McGarvey had hoped that such training would enable Calhoun to keep similar trends out of the College of the Bible after his retirement. T.Q. Martin, who was also a classmate of Calhoun at the College of the Bible, remembered how, "J.W. McGarvey once said to me, 'I have selected Brother Calhoun as the man upon whom my mantle shall fall.'"

Calhoun returned to Lexington in 1904 and worked alongside his mentor until the time of McGarvey's death in 1911. McGarvey's esteem for Calhoun only increased during his waning years, and vice versa. Calhoun's students recalled how he seemed to want to teach what McGarvey taught – exactly how McGarvey taught it. It is said that Calhoun would follow the class notes of McGarvey, write them on the blackboard, and have his students memorize them.

In the spring of 1911, Calhoun was appointed Dean of the College, and upon McGarvey's death on October 13, 1911, Calhoun was selected by the Board as the acting President. It was upon McGarvey's death that R.H. Crossfield, the President of Transylvania University, shrewdly made his play to become the joint-President of the sister schools.

He first resigned from his office, he claimed, to accept a "pastorate" for a large Christian Church in Atlanta. Upon his resignation, however, he suggested that the time was right to appoint a President over both schools. In December of that year, the Board appointed Crossfield

to fulfill the dual presidency he recommended.

In truth, Crossfield had no business overseeing a Bible college. In the first place, he was a theological liberal. Secondly, he had absolutely no sympathy for the founding purpose of the school – to educate ministers for better service in the church.

Slowly the "old guard" which presided over the College of the Bible had passed, and by 1917 Calhoun found himself standing as the lone semblance of McGarvey's influence in the College. As the old guard passed, they were replaced one-by-one with liberals of the same mind as Crossfield. Calhoun was helpless to do anything about it as the Board and President were in the same camp.

In the spring of 1917, controversy between liberal teachers and conservative students reached a boiling point and Calhoun found himself squarely in the middle. One of the liberal teachers Crossfield appointed, William Clayton Bower, allegedly taught that Jehovah was nothing more than a tribal God of Israel, and that a missing link had been discovered – the Java Man – which proved the doctrine of evolution. Another of Crossfield's professors, Elmer Snoddy, was accused of being a "hard evolutionist" and considered the first chapter of Genesis to be mere poetry. A third professor, Alonzo Willard Fortune, denied the physical resurrection of Christ, the complete inspiration of the Bible, and that the men who wrote the Bible were inspired.

After a mockery of a "hearing," conducted by an already biased Board, the faculty was exonerated of all charges. The last remaining conservative teachers were forced out or resigned, and the College of the Bible (now Lexington Theological Seminary) became one of the most liberal "theological" institutions in the country.

Calhoun resigned from the College, remembering McGarvey, I.B. Grubbs, and Robert Graham who opposed destructive criticism at every turn. He

could not stay at a place that allowed such grievous error to be taught, while dishonoring the memory of those who had sacrificed so long and hard for the school.

McGarvey's influence lived on in Calhoun at stops in Bethany (1917-25), Henderson (1925), and finally in Nashville (1926-35). Calhoun went to Bethany for the purpose of developing a graduate program in religion; however, this failed to materialize. From there, Calhoun returned to Henderson, Tennessee, and this time Freed-Hardeman College, the successor to Georgia Robertson Christian College, where Calhoun had previously been in 1900-01.

During this period Calhoun severed his ties with the increasingly liberal Christian Church, denounced the organ and missionary society, and devoted the remainder of his life to serving churches of Christ. One might wonder why he did not make this decision sooner. Again the influence of McGarvey must be considered. While McGarvey would not hold membership with an "organ" church, he did preach for them by appointment. Thus, we have a case where the inconsistencies of the teacher became the inconsistencies of the student. Calhoun simply did not draw a distinction in preaching for them and being in full fellowship with them.

Yet, in time he came to see how a disregard for Bible authority *on one issue* would lead to a complete disregard for the Bible's authority *on every issue*. Therefore, he sought to be completely consistent in his convictions and remained that way for the rest of his life.

In Henderson, Calhoun would join N.B. Hardeman in a co-presidency of the college. However, this relationship proved untenable and Calhoun would resign after only one term.

In 1926, Hall Calhoun was admitted to a mental hospital in Nashville, Tennessee, as he sank into a severe depression. It appeared his best days were behind him, and many doubted if he would ever teach or preach again.

Remarkably, he would soon recover to preach some of the finest sermons of his illustrious life. Two men especially would not allow Calhoun's talents to go to waste. George Bethurum, an elder at Belmont, and A.M. Burton of the Central congregation in downtown Nashville, put Calhoun to work in the pulpit and over the radio. He would first serve the Belmont church of Christ as their fulltime minister and later he served the Central congregation in the same capacity.

Since his days as a student at the College of the Bible, Calhoun was recognized as a gifted preacher. While a student, he attended the Broadway Christian Church in Lexington and sat at the feet of McGarvey. It is said that Calhoun replicated McGarvey's style as a teacher, and it is entirely possible that he did the same as a preacher.

At Central, Calhoun had the opportunity of presenting his sermons every day on WLAC. Calhoun preached his "Daily Bible Lessons" from 1928-1935. To this day, Hall Calhoun remains the standard for a broadcast that has become the longest continual running religious broadcast in our nation's history.

In summary, when surveying the influence John William McGarvey had on the life of Hall Laurie Calhoun, one can see such evidence in his convictions, education, teaching, and preaching. Moreover, Calhoun even met his wife while attending the Broadway church.

It is hard to imagine what this man's life would have been had he chosen a military career. Given his immense capabilities, perhaps he would have been a legendary military figure. Yet one thing is certain: countless souls were made better because one man in a small college in Kentucky took another man beneath his wing and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.

## This Month in Restoration History

**August 1823** – August 1823 proved to be a very historic month in Restoration History, especially for Alexander Campbell. During this month Alexander Campbell would begin publishing the *Christian Baptist*. The Brush Run congregation would also leave the Redstone Baptist Association. And, on August 31, 1823, Campbell would form a congregation at Wellsburg, OH near his home of Bethany.

**August 1830** – Having reached the conclusion that associations are not authorized by the Scriptures, the Mahoning Association on the Western Reserve of Ohio disbands. Even though Walter Scott enjoyed his greatest success as an evangelist for this association, he would reason with Alexander Campbell about the lack of authority for such an organization, and was a leading voice for its dissolution.

**Summer – Fall 1883** – John F. Rowe writes what may have been his best series of articles in the *American Christian Review* titled: "Lift Up a Standard for the People." The articles addressed issues like mechanical instruments in worship. Isaac Errett, editor of the *Christian Standard*, takes the articles as a threat and blames Rowe and others for causing division in the brotherhood.

**August 4, 1885** – The Masonic Male and Female Institute is incorporated as West Tennessee Christian College at Henderson, TN.

**August 18, 1889** – 6,000 members of the church gather in Shelby Co., IL, for the Sand Creek Meeting. Daniel Sommer preaches. From this meeting the *Sand Creek Address and Declaration* is issued recommending that brethren withdraw fellowship from those using the instrument. Three years later, another recommendation is made suggesting that deeds should be drawn indicating that the instrument cannot be used on church owned property.

**August 1964** – Jimmy Allen conducts an area-wide meeting in Dallas which averaged 8,500 in attendance each night. He would conduct another successful meeting in this city in 1966.

**August 1994** – The West Virginia School of Preaching opened in this month with six full-time students and a faculty of Wirt Cook, Denver Cooper, Emanuel Daugherty, Charles Pugh III, W. Terry Varner, D. Gene West, Bert Jones, and Steve Stevens. The Hillview Terrace congregation in Moundsville, WV conducts the school.

**August 2001** – The Tri-Cities School of Preaching and Christian Development begins in Elizabethton, TN. The school is a work of the Stoney Creek congregation.

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## Spiritual Education and Schools of Bible Studies

Rick Brumback

For the person interested in a spiritual education in order to serve more effectively within the framework of the local congregation, many often think first of a Christian college or university. However, there are other avenues available for gaining a comprehensive Bible education. One such avenue is through study at a school of Bible studies or a school of preaching.

When I decided to attend such a school, one well intentioned friend—himself a gospel preacher—was doubtful, encouraging me to attend a Christian university and complete an undergraduate program in Bible and ministry. On another occasion, a university professor, himself a member of the Lord's church, was completely dismissive when speaking of these schools. And a director of chaplain services for one of the military branches, also a member of the church, encouraged one brother to avoid schools of preaching and instead attend a seminary to earn a divinity degree.

Why such disregard for schools of preaching or Bible studies? Some may assume that all such schools are unprofessional and haphazardly managed. Similarly, some may doubt that a quality education can be had from an unaccredited institution of higher learning, preferring instead that one have a degree from an accredited school. Then there are those who feel that such schools are unscholarly since they typically do not support modernist views of the Bible and Christianity. Yet, the following responses may be offered.

First, while it may be true that some institutions are not academically rigorous, each school must be evaluated individually. There are numerous ones that have comprehensive educational structures and demanding curricula which provide a spiritual education as robust as that of virtually any college or university. Several Christian colleges and universities will accept a significant number of transfer credits from schools of Bible studies. In addition, the specialized

training of such schools is what draws some to these institutions. Here you have the chance to study solely the biblical text and related subjects.

The issue of accreditation is sometimes misunderstood and deserves clarification. The first effort in the United States at standardizing post-secondary education for quality assurance was the establishment of the Regents of the University of the State of New York.

By the late Nineteenth Century the proliferation of schools in the United States had caused some educators to fear that educational standards were plummeting. Thus began voluntary accreditation to regulate and insure educational quality.

With the passage of veterans' educational assistance programs following World War II, accreditation became necessary to qualify for federal educational funding, and this is so today. Thus, the voluntary nature of accreditation has been somewhat reduced by the financial inducements of federal programs.

The broad spectrum of accredited institutions in the U.S. demonstrates that specific levels of educational quality are not indicated by accreditation; rather, such indicates which institutions have met various criteria so as to receive federal monies.

As early as 1936, voices of concern were being raised at the power of colleges and schools to introduce "infidelity, radicalism, moral corruption." Miller has observed that in their rush to secure academic respectability, some faculties were infiltrated by men with impressive credentials but subversive agendas. Even some inside the Christian colleges and universities voiced such concerns, as evidenced by a letter from thirty faculty members to the president of Pepperdine in 1975, pointing to the influence of secularism and compromised Christian convictions. With these types of challenges associated with seeking accreditation for federal funding, schools of

preaching and Bible studies have chosen to forego accreditation and maintain complete autonomy over curricula and administrative matters while still striving to maintain educational excellence.

Some in more progressive churches will consider schools of preaching to be unscholarly because of their conservative theological views. However, just as mainline Protestant seminaries and theological schools have often been the mission centers for leftist and progressive trends that are then carried into churches, some colleges and universities associated with the church have played a pivotal role in advancing such changes in the Lord's church.

It has been charged that such schools, founded to give students an education in an environment shielded from the influences of secularism and false religion, have now become key instruments for change in churches of Christ—violating their founding principles. Such changes include "modern thought [that] to a great degree rests upon a philosophical foundation which is hostile to supernatural, revealed Christianity."

As a rule, schools of preaching and Bible studies reject this theological bias, maintaining a high view of Scripture and faithful proclamation within a framework of academic excellence.

While we appreciate the fine education that can be attained in faithful universities, the educational opportunity presented by either a school of Bible studies or a school of preaching should not be undervalued. Under the auspices of the local congregation, such institutions can provide an excellent spiritual education for the individual wanting to serve the church through preaching and teaching the gospel. Such schools adhere to Paul's thoughts to Timothy, "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou unto faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2).

## Mission Memories, Reminiscences, & Results

Ernest Underwood

Brother Erwin has requested that I write some words about my preaching life as it has related to mission work. He also has asked that I evaluate some results of that work. To this end I will dedicate myself to the task. Note: I may wander a bit now and then.

I preached my first sermon in 1959 in Arlington, Tennessee. When the invitation was offered a young fourteen year old girl came forward stating that she wanted to be baptized for the remission of her sins. I must admit that in my inexperience I was 'scared to death.' However, I knew at that time that I wanted to preach the gospel wherever I had the opportunity to do so.

If I remember correctly it was in 1966 when I received a phone call from brother Alan Highers asking me to consider going to Bermuda for two weeks of a campaign of knocking doors, passing out tracts, and inviting people on the street to attend a gospel meeting that was to take place beginning on the next Sunday. We also set up as many Bible studies as we could. There are many wonderful, and sometimes humorous, accounts which I could relate.

One of them is as follows. We were assigned a certain section of the island where we were to knock every door and either leave an invitation or if we found the resident at home, personally invite him or her to the meeting, also inviting them to listen to ZEB radio for some preaching that brother Highers would be doing.

At the end of the first day when I had finished my assignment I strolled down to the ocean and sat down on a rock. When I pulled off my shoes to put my feet in the water I saw that they were bloody from the blisters that had burst and begun to bleed. I wrung the blood out of my socks. I tell this incident because sometimes some folks seem to

have the idea that such jaunts are nothing more than a paid vacation with the church picking up the tab.

Through the years I have written articles complaining that some such trips are truly nothing more than a vacation. However, I can personally vouch for the fact that such is not always the case. I still believe that to take a group on a campaign to a place where there is no full-time worker, or if there is not such a one, to fail to leave a full-time worker after the campaign is generally a waste of money.

I was a part of such a campaign to a city in Russia. The group of which I was the leader consisted of nine people who were hard workers and who stayed busy every day. After thirteen days we had baptized one hundred and thirty-three people. Then, we packed our bags and headed back to the States.

Soon after I reported to the elders where I was preaching at the time and told them that there was a great need for a full-time missionary to go to that city. They then challenged me by saying, "Who better than you to go." I was taken aback. I had not intended to move to Russia, but when they offered to support me fully for three or four years, my wife and I consented to go. When, three months later, we arrived back in that city we were able to find only two of those whom we had baptized on the campaign.

When we left three years later it had been our joy to teach and baptize some sixty souls, one of them being a young man whom I had the pleasure of training on an almost every day class, to study, and then to preach the gospel to the church there upon our departure.

But, perhaps we should back up a bit and relate something of our work of preaching and teaching in the Republic of Singapore.

On January 25, 1984 which would be my 50th birthday, Shirley and I had planned to leave and go to Hong Kong and do mission work there for four or five years. All things were ready for the trip. We had our visas, our plane tickets, and were waiting for the day.

I wanted to leave on my 50th birthday to make a statement that one could do mission work even as he gets older. Sadly, on December 30, 1983 our oldest son was killed in an automobile accident. We were so emotionally shaken by this that we felt that we simply could not carry out our plans.

We returned all the funds we had collected, then at the invitation of the Gilt-Edge church in Tipton County, Tennessee, we moved there and worked for three more years. We had previously begun our full-time work with this good church and stayed there five years. After three more years with this church we again began to think about going into the mission field.

We raised the funds to take a six week tour of Southeast Asia, preaching in three short meetings in three cities of Taiwan. From there we traveled to Singapore where I was scheduled to teach in Four Seas College of Bible and Missions.

As we prepared to depart this small island nation, David Chew who was the director of the school invited me to come back and become a faculty member of the school. Some four or six months later we accepted his invitation and moved to Singapore. Continuing on our tour, we traveled to Thailand and preached in a gospel meeting and taught in a Vacation Bible School.

I also did some preaching in a couple of settlements in the jungles of that area. I believe it was there in Ching-Mai, Thailand that I first met Jim Waldron, a

man with whom I would later become a co-worker in India.

After about a year and a half we left Singapore and eventually were asked by the elders of the Maysville church with a Gurley, Alabama address to come and preach for them. We spent four wonderful years with this church. It was this church that fully supported us in our three year stay in Pechorah, Russia. However, before going to Russia, the elders sent a group of the members of whom Shirley and I were a part, to the West Indies island of Nevis to help in a gospel meeting and a vacation bible school.

The Maysville church fully supported the native preacher there. Also, during my stay at Maysville the elders sent me to Ghana, West Africa for a month to preach in a lectureship being held in Tema, and to preach in some gospel meetings.

About six years later the College Avenue church in DeFuniak Springs, Florida sent me back to Ghana to teach for a month in a school of preaching that had been established in Takaradi (not sure of the spelling). I accompanied brethren Bill Dillon and Mike Kiser on that trip. They had been engaged for some years in the work in Ghana. It was hot, and it was hard work, but we were planting the seed in the hearts of young men, and some not so young, who would go forth and teach it to others.

In 2005 or 2006 I received a call from brother Jim Waldron asking and inviting me to go to Shillong, India and teach for a month in a school of preaching located there. After presenting his request to the brethren at the College Avenue church in DeFuniak Springs, Florida where I was presently doing the preaching, I was told by these good brethren to go with their blessings and with their full moral and financial support.

I let brother Waldron know that I would be going, and I did. Shirley stayed home this time. However, there was and still is a need for the missionary

man to take his wife if at all possible. The young women there need the Bible teachings which they will get, but they also need a Christian woman to help them to learn how to be Christian wives and mothers, something a woman is much better doing than is the man.

It should be noted that most of the young men who attend these schools are not married. When they graduate and go back to their home area they will want and need a Christian wife by their side.

After the first year my wife was able to go with me. We continued the next three years in this work, staying for one month the next two years, and staying for three months the last year.

Interesting note: As we were returning home that last year we were in Bombay (Mumbia) at the airport. As we were waiting for our flight time there was an urgent call for all passengers of our flight to make their way immediately to the gate and as quickly as possible board the plane. Within less than thirty minutes our flight was on its take-off run. When the landing gear lifted off the runway the airport was shut down. This was the night that the big hotel in Bombay was bombed by terrorist. When we reached Atlanta on a non-stop eighteen hour flight, our children were there to meet us. Our daughter frantically ran to us and asked if we had been hurt. It was then that we first knew of the bombing.

Because of some severe health problems I was not able to return to India for about four years. Then, came the call from brother Waldron wanting to know if my health would allow me to resume my work there. This brings us to the present date. Shirley and I are planning on leaving the last of September to begin our work there (the school has now been moved, and it now has enrolled many young women who will be trained as mentioned above.)

When we leave in September I will be 79 years of age; when we return about the first of March/2014 I will be 80, with Shirley not very far behind. We both plan to continue this work until we

simply are no longer able to do so, whether it be age or health. We are raising our funds on a year to year basis. We now have enough for this year, but none so far for next year. If there are those who can help, and who will help, we will gladly accept and appreciate such help.

To close, Andy Erwin asked me to evaluate such work. How do I begin? I first will say from experience that age should not be a hindrance to one who is able and willing to go. We need to learn that there are billions of souls who do not reside in what we call "the Bible Belt" of our country.

We need also to know that those who are able to go, and those who are able to send share equally in the work being done. Both are doing "missionary work" of spreading the gospel.

I may be old fashioned but I have never rated the success of any work by a head-count of it. Jesus stated that one was to go into all the world and preach the gospel, and to teach all nations (Mark 16:15; Matthew 28:19). The apostle Paul spoke of some who plant, others who water, but it is God who gives the increase. I am content to leave it at that.

From the time that I first developed the desire to go into all/some of the world and preach, the following prophecy found in Isaiah 55:1-14 has been my standard of evaluating what I may have accomplished.

"Ho! Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters; And you who have no money, Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk Without money and without price. Why do you spend money for what is not bread, And your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, And let your soul delight itself in abundance. Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; And I will make an everlasting covenant with you; The sure mercies of David. Indeed I have given him as a witness to the people, A leader and commander for the people. Surely you shall call a nation you do not know,

And nations who do not know you shall run to you, Because of the LORD your God, And the Holy One of Israel; For He has glorified you. Seek the LORD while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the LORD, And He will have mercy on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon. For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, And do not return there, But water the earth, And make it bring forth and bud, That it may give seed to the sower And bread to the eater, So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it. For you shall go out with joy, And be led out with peace; The mountains and the hills Shall break forth into singing before you, And all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress tree, And instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree; And it shall be to the LORD for a name, For an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."

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# Expositions of the Sacred Scriptures

Ron Thomas

## The Church at Philadelphia (Revelation 3:7 – 13)

"Philadelphia" is literally translated "love-brother," or, "brotherly love." The city was known for its fertile land and for being the gateway to the east. Later in its history it became known as a little Athens. It was a "missionary" city that sought to promote both the Greek language and culture. This missionary spirit of the city's leaders would naturally filter down to the general population. The Lord's church would have those within who would likely have adopted such an approach to spreading the message of Christ, which was one of substance and value.

The Lord opens His address to the church with the identification of one who could open and close the door – with no one altering the Lord's decision. Many years previous to this letter, the Lord said to His apostles that He (Jesus) has the "keys to the kingdom." This phrase is used in clear association with the church He has since established. Thus, whatever Satan hurls against the Lord's church will not overcome what the Creator builds (cf. Daniel 2:44).

With such a missionary spirit within the community of Philadelphia, and with such an encouragement toward an open door, it is no wonder why the Lord commended the church within this community the way he did. One will remember that another church of the seven, Smyrna, was also commended in glowing terms.

With the Lord's authority being what it is, those who serve in His kingdom are charged to do what they can with what they have regardless of how much it is (cf. Luke 19:12-27).

## Jesus' Knowledge (3:8-9)

As Satan continued his effort to devour individual Christians in Philadelphia (cf. 1 Peter 5:8), the Lord encouraged His saints in their work, for He knew what they did. Satan, on the other hand, tried hard to shut off all opportunities that presented themselves before God's saints (cf. Revelation 12:7-12). Perhaps the saints in Philadelphia were discouraged by these roadblocks they were experiencing.

The Lord, knowing their discouragement, could very easily have said: "You may be small (in your own eyes or in number), but a door is open to you and I will keep it open. And though you may feel like you cannot do much, because of your faithfulness, you already have."

What is that door? It is unspecified, but with Jesus being the very "door" (John 10:9), surely brother West is correct when he says, "In a very real sense this church was the door by which the citizens of Philadelphia, whether Jew or Gentile, would enter into the Messiah's Kingdom" (D. Gene West, *Avenging His Holy Saints, Apostles and Prophets: A Commentary of the Book of Revelation*, p.212).

The idea in these words is that the Lord knew there were people in that area who were ready to hear and willing to submit to his authority (cf. Acts 18:10).

It is likely the church in Philadelphia struggled against the false accusations Satan hurled against them. These false accusations came from none other than those who worshiped and worked at the synagogue of "the father of lies" (cf. John 8:44).

The Lord has knowledge of those who fight against His church. To those of Philadelphia, He reassures them that He is their protective measure. There was nothing that could (or can) be done and there is nothing that could (or can) be planned against them that would (or will) overcome those who belong to Jesus. Paul and Barnabas encouraged the saints to be aware of Satan's efforts, but they could be sure they would enter God's kingdom in spite of these afflictions.

tions if they stayed faithful to the Lord (Acts 14:22).

### Jesus' Commendation (3:10)

The nature of the trial that the church in Philadelphia was to experience, once again, is unstated. It really does not matter, however, because the persecution afflicted on others by Satan's synagogue is no match for anything of the Lord. As intense as Satan is in his effort to overcome the Lord's way, the Lord's intensity far surpasses anything that a fallen being could sustain.

As Paul encouraged the saints to persevere through the trials they were going to face, the Lord commended the church in Philadelphia for their staying power through all the afflictions they experienced. They kept His word and did not deny His name when they were called upon to do so. Thus, when the hour of trial descends upon the "whole world" the Lord gave an "excused absence" to the Christians in Philadelphia because they have already passed the prerequisite tests given to them.

### Jesus' Exhortation (3:11-13)

Having experienced all that they have, Jesus again exhorts them to hold fast to the pattern of sound words that delivered them from the bondage of corruption (cf. Romans 6:16-18). As they hold fast, they can be reassured that the Lord will come quickly and render judgment against those who war against His saints.

Whether this referred to some local judgment or to their paying the "ultimate price" is unknown. What is known, however, is that the Lord will reward all them that wait on Him. In either case, there is an eminent aspect to it.

Donald Taylor remarks that the Greek construction can give two different ideas relative to it. First, it can refer to the rapid rate of His coming, that is, fast. Second, it could be understood in the sense of soon. It seems best to understand it in the sense of soon based upon context (Donald R. Taylor, *The Apocalypse: A Revelation of Jesus Christ*, p. 73).

Overcoming trials is always easier said than accomplished; it has always been this way and always will. Nevertheless, the Lord's exhortation to each of us is to do exactly that.

His exhortation, however, is never accomplished without Him alongside of those He loves. When the Lord's teachings dwell in our hearts (Colossians 3:16) we have the Lord with us (Ephesians 3:17). For those sanctified in Christ this is no small matter. In fact, it is so powerful that, as Paul asked, what can man do to anyone of us (Romans 8:31-39).

The Spirit of the Lord encourages us, as He did to those in Philadelphia, to hear what is said by God. His words are not for our pleasant reading, but for serious heeding. Only the Lord has authority to remove His candlestick (1:20). He will only do this once the light of Jesus' life has gone out within the individual and then within the congregation.

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## Flee. Follow. Fight

James W. Boyd

### 1 Timothy 6:3-12

"If any man teach otherwise and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness, he is proud and knowing nothing, but dotting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envying, strifes, railings and surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness, from such withdraw thyself. But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world and it is certain that we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment, let us therewith be content. But they that will be rich fall into a temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil, which while some

coveted after, they have erred from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things, and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith. Lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses."

### Our Guide

We should appreciate such instruction and instructors that provide for us the right direction, good advice and godly counsel. Such is the nature of this inspired passage that we have presented by Paul. It is teaching that should govern the manner of our lives here on earth.

The two books that were written to Timothy primarily consist of two elements. One, they serve as guidelines for those who preach the gospel. Timothy was an evangelist. Obviously, some of the book is to him personally. Most of it is instruction that is applicable to all who would attempt to preach the Word.

Two, the Word that preachers are to preach to others, especially to their brethren, are found in these books. Therefore, great portions of the text were written for the admonition and edification of any who would go to heaven through Christ. Paul told Timothy, "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). So it is obvious that the words to Timothy were also words to which we all must give attention.

Our text consists of three divisions. One, there are warnings against teaching false doctrines or following after such things.

Two, there are exhortations to be content with such as we have materially. We came into this life with nothing and we shall leave the same way. We are stewards of certain things which God has given us for which we are to care and use responsibly for our limited time in this life. We are not to strive for material gain and lose the soul.

Three, there is the three-fold instruction to flee, follow and fight. These three directives are designed as guidelines to direct and govern our lives as Christians. Upon these three we shall focus our attention in this lesson.

### Flee

Paul tells us, verse 11, "Flee these things." The inescapable inference is that it is not always cowardly to run from some things. To flee is the action of wisdom and prudence. To flee can reflect common sense, good judgment and respect for what is right and good.

We are to flee from those things that can destroy the spiritual welfare of the soul. In living the kind of life the Lord would have one to live, there are times when running is the proper and wise course and is in keeping with the will of God. There are those things from which we are to separate ourselves, including people as well as situations.

### Flee What Things?

From what things are we to flee? This particular text concerns itself with money and the covetous grasp many have for it. The love of money is described as a snare or a trap. It is the devil's device to capture the souls of people who are not cautious. Like when one drowns in deep and dark waters, being overcome and losing one's life in the depths of the sea, so the love of money can overwhelm one into eternal perdition.

The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. It feeds evil. People will commit almost any and every kind of transgression if they think it will pay them well in money. The love of money, both by the rich and the poor, has caused even those who had come to Christ to turn away and follow Him no more.

There are other things from which we are to flee. 2 Timothy 2:22 teaches us to "flee youthful lusts." We should run from those opportunities to satisfy passions that are so strong and powerful in the days of youth. We must learn to

control them and not remain with those people and in those circumstances where we are tempted to sin. The physical body was planned and designed by Almighty God and ought not be used for the dissipation of it and exploitation for sinful pleasure.

Too many do not flee from such things but actually seek them out, daring the devil to ensnare them in transgression. Paul taught in 1 Corinthians 6:18 that we are to "flee fornication." This is such a prominent and promoted sin in our society, if we can believe the reports that we read and hear. There are so many evidences that more and more people have no respect for purity and chastity as God teaches people to have. The moral standards of American society have been lowered to alarming levels of base degeneracy and publicly paraded as the acceptable behavior and lifestyle today. But we read from the Bible that fornicators shall be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone (Revelations 21:8).

Like Joseph of old, when he was tempted but fled from the scene rather than sin against God, so should be our behavior.

We are told to "flee idolatry" (1 Corinthians 10: 14). We are not to think that idolatry only consists of bowing before the images of pagan and heathen worship, or the statues of Romanism, even though this is included. Surely that is idolatry. But we can make most anything an idol. Whatever comes between us and God, and our dutiful service to God, becomes an idol to us. Not only can such things be evil, but they can even be things that are not evil in and of themselves, but because we put them first in our priorities and goals of life, many things that could be a blessing to us can become our undoing and become idols that will bring our condemnation eternally.

Why flee these things? The answer is found in verse ten of the text when Paul speaks of some being led astray from the faith and being pierced through with many sorrows. These words were written to Christian people and serve as warnings to flee lest it cost us our salva-

tion in heaven. What an awesome price to pay for the paltry offerings of this sinful world!

We will have trials and tribulations in life without seeking them. But we sure do not want to flirt with them. We should pray that we not be led into temptation, and when we are tempted, that we will not yield. Flee such things for there is nothing to be gained in them, but everything to be lost.

### Follow

The second instruction is to follow certain things. What are we to follow? Verse 11 reads, "Follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness." These are traits of Christ, characteristics of the divine nature.

To be righteous means to be harmonious with the Lord's will in the way we live. Godliness is reverence and respect for that which is holy and sacred. Faith, love, patience, meekness are qualities of character of Jesus that we are to add to our own characters and lives.

Peter teaches us to add these things in 2 Peter 1:5-11.

In living the Christian way of life there is a time to flee from wickedness, which is a defense mechanism to help us avoid sin. But there is also the positive side of being a Christian because there are things to follow and pursue. We must go where the Master wants us to go. This is the nourishing, constructive, needful and positive side of Christianity. We cannot live in a vacuum and total void. Our lives will be filled with something. They are to be emptied of evil but filled with these righteous traits Paul and others have listed in Scripture.

### Fight

The third instruction is to "fight." That which we are to fight is the good fight of faith. See it clearly as we can. There is a time to flee, and a time to follow, and a time to fight. There exists that call to do battle against the devil and for the cause of Christ, standing our ground no matter what comes or what the cost and consequences may be.

All fighting is not evil. There are those situations in life when a person must take a stand and fight for his convictions of truth, contending with all his moral fiber for what he knows to be right and just, not flinching in the process.

The reason Paul was prepared to die was because he had been a fighter in his lifetime. 2 Timothy 4:6-8 reads, "For I am now ready to be offered and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth, there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give unto me in that day, and not to me only, but to all them that love his appearing."

Paul taught Timothy, "This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before thee, that thou by them mightest war a good warfare" (1 Timothy 1:18). Paul knew that being a Christian in a sinful world would necessitate a fight to survive.

### The Nature of Our Fight

Our fight is the fight of the faith. We do not wage carnal warfare to promote or protect the kingdom of God (2 Corinthians 10:4).

Such is not the nature of the Lord's kingdom (John 8:36). We are to equip ourselves with the armor of God so we can fight as we ought. Ephesians 6:11-13 teaches us to, "Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand."

Paul then lists that armor as the armor of truth, righteousness, the gospel, faith, salvation, the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God, and prayer. With these as our weaponry we are to fight for

the way of the Lord among those of a sinful generation.

We are never to be ashamed of the truth, or afraid to do battle for the cause of the right. We are in the Lord's army, and Christ is the captain of our faith (Hebrews 2: 10). Read 2 Timothy 2:3, "Thou therefore endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." Also read Jude 3, "Contend earnestly for the faith once delivered unto the saints." Paul also said he was set for the defense of the gospel (Philippians 1: 17).

### To "A Man of God"

With these three instructions to flee, follow and fight, words that are addressed to one who was a "man of God." let us give heed to them as we rise and go forward toward the remainder of our lives to live for the way the Lord has died. Flee evil, follow good, fight the fight of faith. To do less is to sacrifice our salvation for this world that offers nothing but sin and death when all is said and done. For each of us there will come that time when all will be said and done.

It goes without saying that we want to go to heaven. The Lord's words serve as a "lamp unto our feet and a light unto our pathway." He pleads with all people everywhere that they be Christians. Having once heard, believed, repented, confessed Christ and been baptized into Him, we must continue to abide in Him. This we do as we walk in the light as He is in the light (1 John 1: 7). May we soberly, seriously, reverently, intelligently and prayerfully consider and heed these three instructions to flee, follow, and fight.

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Continued from page 1:

*The Factious* by Ronald D. Bryant

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

Paul said that the divisive are "destitute of the truth." Truth no longer matters to them. They have no proper regard, or conviction about truth. If it is to their advantage they will quote, or even use certain truths, but they possess no genuine love for or commitment to the truth from God.

Paul also states the motive of the divisive. They proceed "supposing that gain is godliness." This "gain" may come in the form of power, prestige, pleasure, or property. Any course which contributes to that "gain" fuels their efforts. They judge their religion by its capacity to promote the "gain" they desire. They work to come to possess something – some advantage, some prestige, some power, some pleasure, some position, or some victory.

The divisive desire "gain" not godliness. They judge every point or principle, even those authored by God, by its ability to bring them to the "gain" they desire. They want no more of God than they suppose is necessary to promote their interest, and they are willing to sacrifice any principle which conflicts with their objective.

The divisive, the insincere practitioners of religion, of every stripe pursue the same things – some "gain." Yet, they stand under this indictment set forth by Paul, not only here but in (Titus 3:10-11). Paul not only indicted the divisive, but gave this directive to those who would honor God, "from such turn away."

## News & Notes

James R. McGill

### Exhibit Evangelism

**Exhibit Evangelism** will be on the fairgrounds at the Illinois State Fair, Springfield, Illinois; **August 9-18**. This is a cooperative work of the churches of Christ in Illinois, with the work currently overseen by the elders at the Highway church of Christ in Sullivan, IL. Director and Coordinator is J.E. Miller (217-728-4146).

### Upcoming Events

**August 10** – The East Main congregation in Murfreesboro, TN will be hosting a **seminar for Elders, Deacons, and Preachers**. The seminar will last from 8:15 am – 2:00 pm.

**August 25-28** – The Lorain congregation in Lorain, OH will be hosting the **15<sup>th</sup> Annual North Central Ohio Bible Lectureship**. For information call (440) 233-5489.

**September 8** – The Northeast congregation in Cookeville, TN will be celebrating their 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary and homecoming as a church family. Bart Warren will be speaking at all three sessions (Bible Study 9am; Worship 10am; and Evening Service 6pm).

**September 13-14** – The **Dianna Singing** will take place just outside of Pulaske, TN. The singing begins each night at 7:30 on Friday and Saturday nights and lasts until the wee hours of the morning on Friday night and ends at 11:30 on Saturday night.

The Diana Singing is held five miles off I-65, exit #22 (South of Nashville towards the TN-AL line). After exiting, travel west on Hwy. 31A to the Diana

community. Turn left on Diana Rd. (be looking for the Diana Singing sign).

**September 15-19** – The 39<sup>th</sup> Street congregation in Independence, MO will be hosting their annual Bible Lectures.

**September 19-21** – The St. Peters congregation will be hosting the annual **St. Louis Bible Lectureship**.

**September 19-22** – The Bear Valley congregation in Denver, CO will be hosting the annual **Bear Valley Bible Institute Lectureship**.

### Incredible Week in Mt. Juliet

The Mt. Juliet, TN church of Christ recently had **seventeen baptisms** in one week, with the young people very much involved in evangelism.

### Crieve Hall Prison Ministry

Pat Waggoner, an elder in the Crieve-Hall church of Christ in Nashville, reports **seventy-five baptisms** in their prison ministry already this year.

### From Garland Elkins

Garland Elkins' tract entitled "Come and See" has gone through more than forty printings with well over a million copies circulated in English, besides being published in several other languages. The booklet describes in understandable language the gospel plan of salvation and the worship and work of the New Testament church – always with the book, chapter, and verse Scriptures references.

Recently, Garland submitted a sequence of three teaching articles to the Memphis newspaper, showing from the Scriptures that practicing the homosexual lifestyle is sin. The first two articles appeared as planned, receiving much attention. This included some negative feedback. A reporter even called it "hate speech."

The newspaper refused the third article, and returned the \$2,500 that had been pre-paid for the final article.

### Tuscaloosa Congregation Rebuilds after Tornado

The Central church of Christ has completed construction of a new building at the original location on Hargrove Road after the last building was destroyed by the tornado of 2011. For the past two years and three months, the church has worshipped at the Alabama Fire College.

### News from Schools of Preaching

The **Southwest School of Bible Studies** in Austin, TX will begin its 36<sup>th</sup> year August 12<sup>th</sup>. The school announces that 13 new students have enrolled for the fall session. SWSBS has also added Dewayne Bryant as its newest faculty member.

The **West Virginia School of Preaching** in Moundsville, WV announces that five new students plan to begin studies with them when classes resume.

The **Southeast Institute of Biblical Studies** in Knoxville, TN announces the enrollment of six new students for the next session.

The **Middle Tennessee School of Preaching and Biblical Studies** recently opened a new extension with the Smyrna congregation in Culleoka, TN. Approximately 25 students enrolled in this extension.

### Online Classes at TBC

Tennessee Bible College in Cookeville, TN continues to experience a steady increase in enrollment through their online program. In addition to offering Bachelor's and Master's degrees, TBC continues to offer an earned Doctorate (Th.D.). The fall quarter is set to begin on September 9<sup>th</sup>.

**Reader Replies**

Andy,  
I just wanted you to know

how much I enjoy receiving and reading *The Gospel Gleaner*. I certainly enjoy reading the articles concerning restoration history and the preachers of that era. My wife (Lynne) and I appreciated and enjoyed the article in the July 2013 issue written by bro. McGill *Honoring Joe Blue*. Brother Blue was my wife's uncle. Her grandmother Ada (Montgomery) Girdley was Mary Montgomery's (Joe Blue's wife) niece. So this article was of special interest to us. I am very grateful to you for publishing the great articles the church so desperately needs today.

**Ferrell Hester  
Corinth, MS**

Hello Andy,

I received my copy this morning of the *GG* and I have read practically all the articles, news items, restoration stories, etc. I do enjoy the publication very much. You are very kind to use my articles....I do agree that each generation should be taught what the Bible teaches about the church of our Lord. I witness the leaving of so many of our young people moving to the more 'progressive' element of the church and then to a community church or a mainline denomination. This breaks my heart because I have known personally some of these people.

Your friend and brother in Jesus Christ,

**Raymond Elliott  
Prattville, AL**

Mike Kiser just finished a gospel meeting with the Austin Church of Christ at Austin, AR. He did an outstanding job and much good was done. Your work at the *Gospel Gleaner* is great and is appreciated. How can I correspond with brother McGill? I appreciate his work so much.

**Jerry Noblin, Sr.  
Cabot, AR**

[For those wishing to contact Jim McGill with news items, his email address is: jimrmcgill@clearwire.net]

Thanks for a great journal and faithful service to the Lord.

**David O'Connell  
Rogersville, AL**

Dear Brethren,

I received a copy of your paper, "The Gospel Gleaner" and enjoyed it very much...

**Glendon W. Cantrell, Sr.  
Smithville, TN**

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# The GOSPEL CLEANER

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Number Nine

## THE PRESENT TRUTH . . .

Ronald D. Bryant

### Devotion or Distraction

When reality disappoints or disturbs, or when it does not please us, most are prone to try in some way to escape from reality, or find some kind of stimulation, some distraction. Even in religion we are given to seeking some kind of distraction.

Serious subjects that may require more than we are willing to expend, we tend to avoid, or turn our attention elsewhere. We tend to deal with an intimidating circumstance the same way. Simply stated, our tendency is to seek some distraction to hide behind, when we are challenged.

Fortunately, most of the distractions we seek are not harmful. Yet, to seek a distraction, in the face of a responsibility is unwise, even as it is limiting. The course which serves to feed laziness, negligence, and indifference, is not an asset to one's intellectual, moral, or spiritual progress.

In matters of religion, in matters of faith and devotion to God, distractions seem to be readily available. "Human speculations" are ready distractions. Yet, such speculations are common practice. One excited practitioner of a new progressive religion almost shouted when he said, "Who does not know that the new and novel is far more exciting than the 'ho-hum drivel' of worn-out Bible stories?"

Some have a greater preference for speculation about biblical subjects than interest in or allegiance to truth given in Scripture. As regards speculation, who does not know that it is easy to speculate? Anyone can do it! Yet, human

speculation about the will of God is not a harmless process. To be distracted for a moment by human or personal speculation may not be a serious matter, but what of being turned away from the truth of God by such?

In religion, there is also the distraction offered by "hype." The stock and trade of many religious entrepreneurs is their interest in and their program of getting and holding attention by "hype" activities. They perpetually hype "special programs," "exciting events," "special occasions," "special speakers," and/or dramatic presentations; passing such off as spiritual, though they neither uphold nor produce anything of true spiritual benefit. Some hype personal experience as evidence of spirituality.

Of interest is the fact that most religious entrepreneurs engage in the ceaseless activity of raising money with which to fund that which they are hyping. Some beg constantly for viewers to give money to support their ministry. The question that goes begging for an answer: What ministry?

The people of this earth have historically had to suffer religious people who make claims of experiences, a direct leading from God, and advance unscriptural doctrines and practices. One scholar describes such as "the distraction of the hysterical—the out of control—anything goes variety."

Then there are "the holy ritual" distractions. Rituals packaged as ancient, approved, and appropriate. Yet, they are finally devoid of actual reverence for

God, or humility before Him. Such are upheld in opposition to the will of God.

In a different, yet surprisingly similar fashion, performing groups and dramatic presentations are a major part of modern religions. When a practice is not of God, how can it be called "holy?" When is a rejection of the will of God, how can it be called obedience, let alone worship? Such may impress for a moment, and may even have vast appeal while being greatly entertaining, yet of what value is it, if it is ruled by human expertise, and not biblical guidelines?

Such rituals are not holy! While they are popular, their popularity is not a mystery! Who does not know that theater is popular, or that drama is exciting? Yet, performance is not praise! Theater is not worship! Drama is not devotion! Such are but empty rituals – rituals devoid of spiritual value, that readily serve as distractions.

Another distraction in religion is the "therapeutic." The therapeutic (counseling) in a religious context may serve well for a moment, yet it is only a distraction, unless it is in itself a careful, even deliberate effort to point men to God, to help them draw nigh and yield to His will.

The counselor, who uses God's word, for purposes of mere flavoring, on a par with human sources and human authorities, owes God and man an apology. Secular psychology is not a friend of grace, and does not point the way to God!

*Continued on page 10*

During the past generation the Lord's church has experienced a division in the United States. The division has centered on the basic fundamental way the Scriptures are to be regarded. On one hand we have brethren who believe in keeping the letter of the law. On the other hand we have brethren stressing the need to consider the spirit of the law. Truthfully, neither the letter nor the spirit of the law should be forsaken. It must not become an either/or scenario.

Unfortunately this is not the first time the Lord's church has divided over this fundamental issue; and, it may not be the last time such division occurs, if we do not learn from our history.

### Learning from Our Past

In the last half of the Nineteenth Century men like Isaac Errett used their influence to stress the need to consider the "spirit of the law." Men like Errett did so knowing they could not use the letter of the law to introduce such things as mechanical instruments of music into worship. They needed something more than the letter of the law. They needed a different angle. They needed brethren to accept the "spirit of the law" according to *their* understanding.

The progressive movement, as it would soon be designated, was immediately resisted by faithful gospel preachers. Yet, the damage was being done wherever the progressives could teach and persuade men to accept their view of the spirit of the law. Many of the congregations north of the Ohio River accepted these views, as this area was heavily saturated by Errett's *Christian Standard*.

By 1900 fellowship had been severed a two distinct bodies existed. In 1901, A.I. Myhr (a Christian Church preacher and missionary society advocate) issued the fourth edition of the *Year Book* giving only the statistics for the Christian Church. In the government census of 1906, the two bodies were distinguished as being the churches of Christ and the Christian Church.

### Churches of Christ

According to the census of 1906, the combined number of the two groups was 1,142,359 members in 10,942 congregations. Of this number, 982,701 members in 8,293 churches would call themselves the Christian Church or Disciples, while 159,685 members in 2,649 congregations would be known as the churches of Christ.

By the time of the 1926 census there would be an estimated 433,714 members and 6,226 local churches of Christ. From the time of the 1906 census to the 1926 census, the churches of Christ grew by an estimated 274,056 members and 3,577 congregations.

The increase of individual membership was 171% and 135% for congregations. This period marks the most phenomenal period of growth by percentage for the churches of Christ in the Twentieth Century. The church outgrew the nation, even as the nation grew very well (38% from 1906-1926).

### Christian Churches

How did the Christian Church movement, and the "spirit of the law" agenda fair during this period? In 1902, they decided to join Protestant churches in the "Federation of Churches and Church Workers." By so doing, they stated their desire to be one of the denominations. The plea to come out of denominationalism had been lost to them forever.

In 1909, a Centennial Convention was held by the Disciples in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. During this affair, Samuel Hardin (grandson of Barton W. Stone) attacked the old-time beliefs of the brethren, repudiated the Virgin Birth, and stated that baptism should be dispensed with and all denominations should be accepted without it. It is said that the chairman could scarcely quiet the crowd of protestors.

By 1912, at the International Convention of Disciples of Christ which met in Louisville, Kentucky, the Disciples'

leaders decided to establish a delegated central organization to manage and control their denomination.

By 1917, Hall L. Calhoun charged that "destructive criticism" was being taught in the once faithful College of the Bible. While the school denied such, eventually the truth came out, and this was indeed the case.

By 1924 a new college was established in Cincinnati and would be known as the Cincinnati Bible Seminary. Hall L. Calhoun later withdrew from the Christian Church to work with churches of Christ.

### A Lesson Learned for Today

Truly the spirit of the law that was advocated was neither the spirit nor the law of Christ. We are hearing much about the "spirit of the law" today. We should try these "spirits" to see if they are from God (1 John 4:1).

Just as a tale of two churches was written in the Twentieth Century, it seems that another tale of two churches will be written in the Twenty-First Century.

Lord willing, what will they say of our generation 100 years from now? Undoubtedly, the brethren of 1900 were discouraged and disappointed by the digression of their brethren. It would have been easy for them to allow their frustrations and disappointments to overrule their better judgment.

Thankfully, they resolved never to quit, never to give in, and never to give up! As a result, they launched the church into a period of unprecedented growth. Where would the churches of Christ be today without this outstanding generation of brethren?

What shall be our resolve? What shall be our legacy? Will we leave the Lord's church in a better condition than we found it? Will we move beyond the division of a past generation and help the church to grow once again?

Andrew D. Erwin

The

# GOSPEL



# GLEANER

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

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## The Work of the Church

Ferrell Hester

The church belongs to Christ. He is the builder of the church (Matthew 16:18). He is the foundation of the church (1 Corinthians 3:11). He purchased the church "with His own blood" (Acts 20:28).

In speaking of the church, He called it "my Church" (Matthew 16:18). He claims ALL authority (Matthew 28:18-20). And, since He is "the head over all things to the church" (Ephesians 1:22-23), He alone has the right to specify what works the church is to do.

According to the teaching of the New Testament the work of the church can be divided into three categories: (1) preaching the gospel to the lost; (2) edifying the saved; and (3) benevolence.

### Preaching the Gospel

First of all, the church has the responsibility of preaching the gospel to a lost and dying world. The Bible tells us in 1 John 5:19 that "the whole world lieth in wickedness." Then the Bible says in Luke 19:10, "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." We read in John 3:16-17, "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. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved."

God's power to save the world is the gospel. Paul said in Romans 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."

Now let us look at 1 Corinthians 1:21, "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."

Jesus said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be

saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15-16).

The church is the only institution in the world that is authorized to preach the gospel. We read these inspired words in Ephesians 3:10-11, "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."

God never intended that the preaching of the gospel be the work of a missionary society, or any institution other than the church. In Matthew's record of the great commission Jesus said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. 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" (Matthew 28:18-20). Hence those who have been taught and baptized have the responsibility of teaching others. These are the marching orders to the church.

### Strengthening the Saved

Secondly, the work of the church is to edify, encourage, and strengthen the saved. While the Christian life is the best life that one can live, it is sometimes difficult. It would be much more difficult if it were not for the help and encouragement that Christians receive from one another.

Paul instructed the brethren in Romans 14:19, "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another." And again in 1 Thessalonians 5:11, "Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do." And, "Let all things be done unto edifying" (1 Corinthians 14:26).

One of the great benefits of assembling ourselves together is mutual edifi-

cation and exhortation. "And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." (Hebrews 10:24-25).

### Helping the Needy

A third work of the church is the work of benevolence. The church is God's benevolent institution. While the church is not to take the place of the American Red Cross and other such benevolent institutions, we must not depend upon the organizations of men to do the work that has been placed upon the church by the Lord.

We read in 1 John 3:17, "But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?"

It is the responsibility of the church to provide the needs of the less fortunate in as much as we are capable, whether they are Christians or not. Paul said in writing to church of Galatia recorded in Galatians 6:10, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."

While the household of faith, our brothers and sisters in Christ, should have priority over all others in our work of benevolence, Paul also said, "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men."

Again we read in James 1:27, "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." The expression "visit" in this passage means to "go with the intention of relieving needy circumstances." This applies with equal force to individuals and churches.

In Matthew 25, Jesus pulls back the curtain and gives us a preview of His second coming, the resurrection, and the judgment. Beginning with verse 31 and reading through verse 46, we find Jesus plainly telling us what will become of those who neglect those less fortunate. One can be lost just as easily for neglecting the less fortunate and failing to minister to their needs, as he can for committing murder, adultery, or any other sin.

While benevolence is a work of the church, a real Christian does not try to dodge his individual responsibility. The Christian has duties to perform and burdens to bear. He gladly performs these duties, and meekly carries his burdens. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 3:9, "For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building." Yet, regardless of the good works that one may do, if that person is not a child of God, it will not benefit them in any way on the Day of Judgment. Only those who have obeyed the gospel and lived the Christian life will go from the Judgment into life eternal.

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## Why Did My Savior Come to Earth?

Guy F. Hester

One of my favorite songs in our song books is titled, "Why Did My Savior Come to Earth?" This is a favorite song of mine because it expresses a favorite scripture, John 3:16, the "Golden Text of the Bible."

### Why Did My Savior come to Earth and to the Humble Go?

Indeed, He came to the humble, "the poor in spirit" (Matthew 5:3), not just to the wealthy, the prominent, and the kings of the earth.

He Came to Earth because He Loved ME So! Jesus came to this earth because He loved me so. That is a universal "me." Everyone should be able to make that application. He did not only love me, He loved you too.

That Jesus "so" loved me, shows the extent of His love. He "so" loved me. Who can measure the height, the depth, the width, or the all-inclusiveness of that love? We can call upon the mathematicians, the engineers, and all the great educators of the world, and with all their instruments they cannot measure the love God has for mankind. The surveyor cannot survey it. The ends of the earth cannot contain it.

Romans 5:8 teaches us, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Who would you be willing to die to save? I am sure you would say that you would die for your spouse or your children, maybe even a brother or sister. But would you die for a "skid row" drunk, a common thief, or would you die for me? Yet, Christ died for all humanity.

### Why Did He Drink the Bitter Cup?

Why was He willing to die such a cruel and inhumane death? Think of the way He was beaten. Think of the pain He experienced when He was nailed to that old rugged cross. It is no wonder that shortly before His crucifixion with sweat falling as great drops of blood our

Savior prayed, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me. Nevertheless, not My will, but Thy will be done."

During World War II, Korea, and succeeding wars, many soldiers died so that we might have freedom in this country; but would those same soldiers be willing to die for the Nazis, communists, pagans, etc.?

Jesus died for the vilest of the vile. Why was He willing to do that? Because He loved me so! Why on the cross be lifted up? Because He loved me so!

Jesus said, "If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men unto Me" (John 12:32). No wonder He says, "Come unto Me all ye who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

### How Can I Reign with Him through Endless Days?

In view of all this, what should be my response to the love of God? I believe this great spiritual song gives us the answer, "Till Jesus comes, I'll sing His praise."

I'll sing His praise through faithful, obedient responses to His commands as long as I live upon the earth. And then "to glory go, and reign with Him through endless days" (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17) – because He loved me so!

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## Where There Is No Vision

Raymond Elliott

“Where there is no vision, the people perish; but he that keepeth the law, happy is he” (Proverbs 29:18, KJV).

The usual connotation of the term ‘vision’ in this verse coincides with a definition given by Webster: “The ability to perceive something not actually visible, as through mental acuteness or keen foresight (a project made possible by one man’s vision); force or power of imagination (a statesman of great vision).”

The understanding of the word “vision” colors one’s interpretation of this verse. Thus, many suggest that when the leaders of a congregation have vision, projects and programs will be introduced into the work; otherwise, where there is a lack of such, the church will suffer greatly. This may in fact be true in principle; however, this is not the correct meaning of the passage under consideration. Let us examine carefully the scriptural exegesis of this verse.

The New King James Version renders the first part of Proverbs 29:18: “Where there is no revelation...”

The Revised Standard Version reads: “Where there is no prophecy...”

The Douay Version records: “When prophecy shall fail...”

The Hebrew word for vision as used in this verse is *haza*. The *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* offers the following insight for this word: “The revelatory vision granted by God to chosen messengers, i.e. prophets. Such apparently was the experience of Balaam the son of Beor (Numbers 24:4, 16). This vision of the prophet took place sometimes in the waking state, but also in ‘the spirit’ (Numbers 24:2). Sometimes the experience of seeing a revelatory dream is designated by *haza* and *hazen* (Aram). (See Daniel 2:16, 4:5:9).” (Volume I, pages 274-275)

Thus, a vision was one of the ways by which God revealed His will to certain people. We learn this fact in Hebrews 1:1, “God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets...”

The source of their messages was the Spirit of God: “For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21).

The revelation of ancient prophecy was not continuous and uninterrupted, but came in flashes; and between them were intervals of darkness. Sometimes those intervals were long and most distressing to a people that had learned to draw its chief lessons from divine oracles. The following passages bear out this fact.

1 Samuel 3:1: “And the word of the Lord was rare in those days; there was no widespread revelation.”

2 Chronicles 15:3: “For a long time Israel has been without the true God, without a teaching priest, and without law.”

Lamentations 2:9: “The law is no more, And her prophets find no vision from the Lord”

Ezekiel 7:26: “Disaster will come upon disaster, And rumor will be upon rumor. They will seek a vision from a prophet; But the law will perish from the priest, And counsel from the elders.”

Some 400 years of silence lasted from the closing of the Old Testament until the opening of the New Testament. During this period God did not give any revelatory messages to His people. The absence of such was like the vanishing of the cloud and pillar of fire from the children of Israel. They were lost without divine guidance.

In the absence of divine revelation, false prophets often deceived the people.

“And the Lord said to me, ‘The prophets prophesy lies in My name. I have not sent them, commanded them, nor spoken to them; they prophesy to you a false vision, divination, a worthless thing, and the deceit of their heart’ (Jeremiah 14:14, see also Jeremiah 23:16).

Today, God has not left us without a guide that we might grope about in darkness. Rather, His divine light has fallen from heaven to men in the form of the Holy Scriptures. God speaks to us now through His Son Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1, 2). We are to “Hear Him” (Matthew 17:5)!

When Christ left earth to ascend back to the Father, God sent another comforter to guide the apostles into all the truth (John 14:26; 16:13). Paul declared that what he received he received by revelation (Ephesians 3:3, 5). The Holy Spirit revealed all the truth to the apostles and inspired men enabling them to speak that “which the Holy Spirit teaches” (1 Corinthians 2:10-13). These inspired Holy Scriptures once delivered, guide us unto all good works (2 Timothy 3:16-17; Jude 3). It is the duty therefore of Christians to study the Sacred Writings, to circulate them throughout the world, and to teach them to their children and to those yet in their sins.

Let us also observe the end result, when there is no revelation from God or when men refuse to follow His revealed word. Observe, “The people perish,” or “The people cast off restraint.”

It was said of Ahaz: “For the Lord brought Judah low because of Ahaz king of Israel, for he had encouraged moral decline in Judah and had been continually unfaithful” (2 Chronicles 28:19).

The prophet Hosea informs us that the people of God in his days were destroyed because of their lack of knowledge of God. They committed various sins because they hearkened not

to the commands of the Lord (Hosea 4:1-6).

In Paul's time the heathen world "did not like to retain God in their knowledge." As a consequence, "God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting" (Romans 1:18-32).

The fatal effect of the absence of divine revelation is confusion, disorder, and rebellion. The people are uncontrolled, and they fall into grievous excesses, which nothing but high principles can restrain. Such explains the reason why so much violence, immorality, divorce, strife, and all manner of sin exists today; the vast majority of people desire not to be guided by the Holy Scriptures. They couldn't care less as to what God might have to say on such matters.

"But happy is he who keeps the law" is the promise given by the Lord to those who desire to do His will. The man who is truly blessed is one whose "delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night" (Psalms 1:1, 2).

"He who heeds the word wisely will find good, And whoever trusts in the Lord, happy is he" (Proverbs 16:20).

James writes, "But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does" (James 1:25).

Those who keep the law of the Lord shall be blessed eternally (Revelation 22:7, 14).

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## KNOW YOUR BIBLE

Stephen R. Bradd

### The Grasshopper Complex

Have you ever felt small and powerless – like a grasshopper, maybe? Some of the Israelites felt this way in Numbers 13:33, when the ten spies returned and gave their report – "There we saw the giants [of the land of Canaan]...and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight."

Although Joshua and Caleb tried to reason with and calm the people, their efforts were in vain. Israel's faith failed at the prospect of attempting to conquer the giants in Canaan who had strong, fortified cities. Consequently, God's wrath was stirred up against His children for their disbelief, and He made them wander in the wilderness until that generation perished.

Was there any reason for the Israelites to doubt? No! The Lord had delivered them from the Egyptians with a mighty hand, and they had witnessed numerous miracles from God. He delighted in them and would have fulfilled His promise to them in Moses' day had they not rebelled.

The Israelites failed to remember that with God on their side it did not matter what enemy they faced. Physical size and human strength is irrelevant in comparison with Almighty God. When the Lord is on your side, it matters not who is against you, for you are on the winning side, even though you likely won't be in the majority.

Consider some examples from Scripture where the minority won because they were on God's side.

- While building the ark, Noah was very much in the minority, but he won (Genesis 6-8).
- When Joseph was sold as a slave, he was in a decided minority, but he won (Genesis 37-45).
- When Moses appeared before Pharaoh and demanded freedom for Isra-

el, he was very much in the minority, but he won (Exodus 5-15).

- When Gideon and his three hundred followers put the Midianites to flight, they were an insignificant minority, but they won (Judges 7).
- When Samson crushed the temple and destroyed his enemies, he was very much in the minority, but he won (Judges 16).
- When David went out to meet the giant in battle, he was, in size, the minority, but he won (1 Samuel 17).
- When Elijah brought down fire from heaven and put the prophets of Baal to shame, he was a notable minority, but he won (1 Kings 18).
- When Jesus Christ was crucified between two thieves, He was a conspicuous minority, but He won (Matthew 27 & 28)!

Friends, size and numbers are irrelevant if you are on the Lord's side. Those who faithfully battle on the Lord's side will be victorious (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:57).

Many times we will find ourselves in the minority when it comes to our faith (e.g., at work, school, recreation, and even at home). May we take strength and courage from those who found themselves in the minority and yet won!

Let us, like them, be found in God's service doing His work, regardless of the foes that rise against us. May we fight the good fight that the Lord has laid out for us, and may we not grow weary in well doing (Galatians 6:9; 1 Corinthians 15:58). There is much to be done in the Lord's kingdom, but it will go undone by those who doubt God and view themselves as small and powerless – like grasshoppers.



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## A Lodging Place in the Wilderness

Andy Robison

An August 9 Newser.com article reported on a man and his son who had lived forty years in the wilderness away from their people. During the Viet Nam War, a bomb killed Ho Van Thanh's wife and two of his sons. One might surmise that the avalanche of grief drove him to extreme measures. He took his one-year-old son into the jungle and there foraged a living from wild plants and hunting. They lived in a makeshift tree-house, wore loin cloths for covering, and didn't speak much. The son only knew two or three words and the father lost much of what he had known. Twenty years ago, another of Van Thanh's sons found them, but could not persuade them to rejoin society.

Suffering is the bane of sin in the world. When that suffering comes home, many probably wish they could escape society, because society just brings pain and evil, in their view. This desire, in and of itself, is not wrong. The prophet Jeremiah, prophesying in the waning days of the kingdom of Judah, had become completely fed up with all of Judah's wickedness. Idolatry was the norm. Children were being casually murdered in offerings to idols (Jeremiah 7:28-31). Ezekiel reports that in the same time frame, the people of Judah had become more wicked than other nations God had previously punished (cf. Ezekiel 16:46ff.). They lived on lies and savored dictatorship (Jeremiah 5:30-31). It must have been an awful time to be alive. Children could not safely play in the streets and violence ruled the behavior of many (Jeremiah 6:7; 20:8; 22:17).

Jeremiah thus confesses with tears (9:1): "Oh, that I had in the wilderness— A lodging place for travelers; That I might leave my people, And go from them! For they are all adulterers, An assembly of treacherous men" (9:2).

Grief-stricken, he wanted to escape his people. Unlike Van Thanh, though,

he did not act on the wish. He had a calling. He was supposed to bring God's word to the people of Judah, as one of God's servants who would constantly warn them of the doom that awaited if repentance was not made (cf. Jeremiah 1:1-13; 35:15).

Might there be in every generation those who fantasize about such a flight? The thought is warranted; the action is not. Christians are called by Scripture to function in the world as lights, but not to be of the world in practice (Matthew 5:16; John 17:15). Christians cannot escape contact with evil people, though they are to separate (withdraw) from impenitent sinners posing as church members (1 Corinthians 5:9-13).

Christians are, indeed, "strangers and pilgrims" who seek a better "homeland," "a heavenly country," a "city" prepared by God (Hebrews 11:13-16). While on this sin-riddled earth, our labor is needed (Philippians 1:23-24), though our real citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20-21).

While so laboring, anticipation is a strength-providing motivator (cf. Hebrews 12:1-2). When this life is over the desired rest may come (Revelation 14:13), in a place not challenged by wickedness (Revelation 22:14-15).

### *A Call for Articles*

Are churches of Christ more evangelistic overseas than in America? If so, why, and in what ways is this true?

I would like to open the pages of the *Gleaner* to a free discussion of things pertaining to evangelism at home and abroad.

It has been said that the church is growing greater overseas than in America. I would like for us to study this observation to see if it is true, and if it is true, what we can learn from our brethren overseas.

Andrew D. Erwin

## The Attractiveness of Humility

Neal Pollard

There are magazines and media outlets that list the most attractive men and women on the planet. Beauty contests, the Junior Miss, Ms. America, and Ms. University pageants are seeking the most attractive people. There is a reality show trying to find the next supermodel. In an image-conscious world, people have their idea about what beauty and attractiveness are. Yet, the Bible says that humility makes one beautiful.

### The Humble Look Wealthy (Psalm 37:11).

Wealth and glamor are seen as hand in hand by the world, but this is not the kind of wealth the worldly would recognize. David speaks of the humble "inheriting the land" in much the same way Jesus says "the meek shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5). The contrast of the Psalm is between evil-doers who trust in themselves and the righteous that depend upon God. Those who rely on God put their trust in the One who has it all.

### The Humble Look Well-Preserved (Psalm 76:9).

The good news is that no face lifts or cosmetics are needed for this well-preserved look. The Psalmist exalted at the fact that God will save the humble. Here, the writer speaks of salvation from a physical calamity. Scripture repeatedly demonstrates humility as a precursor to salvation.

### The Humble Look Like Jesus (Matthew 11:29).

It seems that Isaiah prophesied that Jesus would be plain and ordinary in physical appearance (Isaiah 53:2), but no one in all the histories of men is more attractive than Jesus in all the ways that count. Jesus says "I am humble." When we come to Him and imitate Him, we will look like Him.

### The Humble Look Childlike (Matthew 18:4).

Everyone wants to look younger. Spiritually, Jesus says we must humble ourselves like a child to enter the kingdom. Children in their innocence have the attractive qualities of trust, forgiveness, and gentleness. Those who humble themselves like a little child bear the same marks.

### The Humble Look Well-Placed (James 1:9).

It takes no corruption or “knowing somebody” for the humble to look “well-placed.” The Bible says that God gives a promotion to the one who humbles himself.

### The Humble Look Graceful (James 4:6).

Thankfully, that is not the same as coordinated and adroit. Simply, God gives grace to the humble just as He resists the proud.

### The Humble Look Well-Clothed (1 Peter 5:5).

You do not have to wear the latest fashions or make the cover of GQ. Humility is the clothing and it perfectly coordinates with anything in a spiritually mature “wardrobe.”

As we contribute our share of money to the billions spent on improving our physical appearance, let us spend more time on the “inward man.” Let us watch and care about our appearance – spiritually! It will make us more attractive to the sensible and spiritual around us, but most importantly it will make us attractive to God!

## Honoring A.G. Freed

James R. McGill

A. G. Freed (1863-1931) was born in Indiana as the third child in a family of six children. He graduated from Teachers' College and received his M. A. degree. He then took two years of additional graduate work at Valparaiso University. Freed accomplished all this by the time he was 24. In 1887 he enrolled in a school of preaching and graduated in the spring of 1888.

After doing some preaching in Indiana, Freed responded to an invitation from D. S. Nelms, in a letter published in the Gospel Advocate, to come to Essary Springs, Tennessee, to establish a college. The community is located in the southwest part of the state, just north of the Mississippi border. The school opened in 1889 and flourished for six years.

### The Move to Henderson

In 1895 Freed received an invitation to become president of West Tennessee Christian College, located in Henderson, Tennessee, north of Essary Springs, and to merge his school with the Henderson college.

The powerful influences of the missionary society and those who advocated the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship, forced Freed to accept E. C. McDougle as his co-president. McDougle was the epitome of the religious liberal—an advocate of the “new hermeneutic” which held that “we must interpret the Bible in the context of our modern times.”

Freed was forced out in 1905 and moved to Denton, Texas, just north of Dallas. There he served very effectively as president of a new Christian college, until he contracted typhoid fever and gave up his work there.

In 1907 he returned to Henderson with plans to start a college to replace the one that had ceased operation. In 1908 Freed opened the new college. He chose N. B. Hardeman, one of his for-

mer graduate students, to be his vice-president. In 1919 the board of directors named the school Freed-Hardeman College.

By 1923 the two men were constantly at odds. Hardeman claimed Freed was “set in his ways” and not open to standardizing the curriculum to correspond to what other schools were doing. Historian C. P. Roland, who was present through all the conflicts, stated that the board of directors required both men to leave.

Freed went to David Lipscomb College in Nashville where he served as vice-president and principal of David Lipscomb High School under President H. Leo Boles. After having been president of four colleges over a 35 year period, for the first time Freed was in a secondary role.

In 1927 a group of Christians brought Freed and Hardeman together where the two men were reconciled.

A. G. Freed continued to preach at many places and to engage in religious debates. His preaching stayed with the basics and relied on logic more than on appeal to emotions. Usually his lessons were thirty minutes or less.

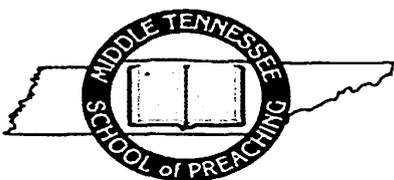
In 1931 his long-standing desire to have his book published became a reality. *Sermons, Chapel Talks, and Debates* was published by the Gospel Advocate Co.

Freed continued to be active in teaching and preaching until the fall of 1931, when he became seriously ill and entered Nashville's Vanderbilt Hospital. He had exploratory surgery and was found to have inoperable liver cancer. As he was being rolled into the operating room, he was heard reciting to himself, “Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me.” (Psalm 23:4). He died November 11, 1931. He was 68.

### Defining Freed

What kind of man was Freed? Those who knew Freed or those who heard him

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preach and debate often held very opposite views. Freed's biographer, Ancil Jenkins, based on an interview with E. R. Harper, quoted the famous Baptist debater, Ben M. Bogard, as saying, "...A. G. Freed was the meanest...man I ever met." My own father, not then a Christian, heard Freed debate, and he shared Bogard's appraisal.

To my great surprise, a couple of years after I heard my father's negative view of Freed, I received a totally opposite impression from a Christian pharmacist in Bruceton, Tennessee. He had attended Freed-Hardeman College when Freed was president. He told me:

"A. G. Freed was the most wonderful man I have ever known. He was always cheerful. He greeted every student each morning as they entered the building. He was friendly, genteel and humble. If ever I would expect to see anyone in heaven, it would be brother Freed!"

For years I talked to everyone I could find who had known Freed. Finally, I went to C. P. Roland. He was a teacher and administrator at the school when Freed was president and for many years thereafter. He explained that Freed was normally just the way the pharmacist described him. But in his debates or in his preaching, when he was refuting religious error, he was merciless.

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*Continued from page 1*

### **Devotion or Distraction**

By Ronald Bryant

The history of the church is filled with examples of well-intentioned people who have flitted about from one distraction to another. They have squandered time, energy, and eternal verities for things that did not bring them to God. They may have even longed for deeper devotion, yet were distracted by the things they valued more than God.

## **This Month in Restoration History**

**September 1852** – J.W. McGarvey began preaching. McGarvey went on to become an outstanding author, educator, and evangelist.

**September 1863** – Moses E. Lard began publishing *Lard's Quarterly*. The *Quarterly* is still regarded by many as one of the finest works of literature from the Restoration Movement. It ceased publication after only five years due to a lack of support.

**September – December 1873** – Add-Ran College was chartered in Thorp Springs, TX. This school later moved to Fort Worth and become Texas Christian University. In the fall of 1893 an organ was used at Add-Ran College which caused division between J.A. Clark and his two sons Addison and Randolph who refused to silence the instrument. In the fall of 1895, Add-Ran Christian University moved to Waco, TX, taking with it the progressive faculty members.

**Fall 1875** – The College of the Bible separated from Kentucky University. For a while the College of the Bible was a separate entity and not associated with Kentucky University. But it was again incorporated as part of Kentucky University in 1878. C.L. Loos served as President of KU during this time, while McGarvey was over the College of the Bible.

**September 1884** – The *Firm Foundation* began in Austin, TX. The *Firm Foundation* began with Austin McGary as its editor. In time it would become the second oldest periodical among churches of Christ.

**Fall 1889** – A.G. Freed and David H. Nelms opened Southern Tennessee Normal College at Essary Springs, TN.

**September 18-October 2, 1927** – G.C. Brewer preached a series of lessons at the First Baptist Church building in Fort Worth. The building was selected because of its size. The sermons were later published as *Brewer's Sermons*.

**September 1950** – Central Christian College opened. It was later renamed Oklahoma Christian College.

**Fall 1959** – Classes begin at Fort Worth Christian College. The college would later close.

**September 14, 1960** – Ohio Valley Christian College opened.

**September 1965** – Brown Trail and Bear Valley schools of preaching opened.

**September 20-23, 1976** – Thomas B. Warren debated Antony Flew on the existence of God. Flew would abandon his proposition during the course of the debate admittedly taking more of an agnostic position than that of a positive atheist. Warren, on the other hand, would never let up on pressing his points and pressing Flew to answer his arguments.

**Fall 1976** – Magnolia Bible College began with nine students. The school's home was Kosciusko, Mississippi. It later closed in 2009.

## Mission Work: Pro & Con

Ernest Underwood

I will tell you at the outset that some who read this article will be offended, not because I am trying to do so, but because of the content of it.

This article deals with what I believe to be many misconceptions of what mission work really is, and about how some elders fail to give proper attention to those who request to be supported.

First of all, as a preacher I am not against missionary work. I have served in the mission field on a full-time basis for several years in the past. Presently, having retired from full-time preaching after fifty-four years of doing it, now at age seventy-nine, my wife and I are planning on spending five months each year in the mission field as long as our health permits us to do so.

Neither am I, as one who has served as an elder in two different churches, against elders and the work they have committed to do. In both churches where I served as an elder, those who deserved support were generously given such as the church had the ability. I love preaching and preachers. I also love elders and their willingness to serve. Both of these should be deeply appreciated for their desire to participate in mission work, whether it is as one who sends or one who goes.

### Prospective Missionaries

First, let us look at some of the ones who want to “go into the mission field.” It has been my observation that some who want to go, want to go for two weeks or so, then return to the comforts of their home, then they add “mission work” to their resume. While we admit that in some such campaigns there are those who actually spend their time in working to teach or preach, we also must realize that many of these who go are simply going to some exotic location to pass out a few tracts, then spend a great majority of their time in sight-seeing,

and they are doing this with a church somewhere picking up the tab.

We need to question ourselves and others if this is what missionary work truly is, and what it is really about. If such a situation as described above is actually true, then what good was accomplished?

Elders who support them, and those who actually go need to ask themselves if one can spend an hour or two with one who has never seen a copy of the Bible and who knows absolutely nothing about Jesus Christ, and give such a person enough information to bring him or her to Christ. Even if one might in his own thinking give a “yes” answer to this question, what is to become of the new convert?

When the “missionary” packs up his bags and returns home, who will teach the newly converted how to worship, to pray, to study? I ask these questions because in an article in an earlier issue of the *Gospel Gleaner* I wrote about such an experience as this which we had on a mission campaign. On that campaign there were 133 people who were baptized, but no one remained with them to teach them. Just three months later when my wife and I moved to that same place in Russia to do extended mission work, we were able to locate only two of the number who had been baptized, and they were not worshipping anywhere simply because they had no idea how to do so.

### Possible Solutions

May I be so bold as to suggest some solutions to this problem?

First of all, elders, or the men of the congregation where there are no elders, must make sure the one who is asking for support is actually qualified to go to the mission fields. It must be remembered that the one who goes will be dealing with souls that are precious – souls

that God gave His Son to die in their stead.

If I am to have open heart surgery I really don't want someone who was not able to dissect a frog in a high school class assignment to do the surgery. Neither should we send those who for lack of time have not yet become mature in the gospel. The one going must be willing to forgo the “niceties” of life that he enjoys in his home country.

Allow me to offer an example. Once while eating a meal in our home in the mission field a cockroach crawled across the wall. Our guest, a two-week campaign worker, made the statement that this was one reason that he could not go into mission work, stating that his wife hated cockroaches. I had an urge to tell him that this is why we were in the mission field...we loved these little creatures...that we had the folks back home to send us a box of them every now and then just so that we would always have a sufficient supply of them.

Of course I said no such thing. We constantly did all we could to eliminate this problem. However, one in the mission field must be able to deal with cockroaches, snakes in the house, no hot water, electricity that seems to come and go at will, and many other such inconveniences. He, like Paul, must know how to abound and how to be abased. In the words of an old adage, “If you can't stand the heat, stay out of the kitchen.”

Elders should also do a background check on the person's moral and doctrinal position. These men must be morally pure. One just cannot imagine the problems that are generated in the area by the “missionary” who commits any immoral act. They must have some idea of the applicant's ability to deal with problems which will surely arise in his work.

For instance, they must have some idea of how this person would deal with

an old African chief who wanted to be baptized, while contending that he would also keep all four of his wives. This old chief promised to "get behind the work you are doing here" if we would be willing to compromise on this one point.

### Basic Matters

It seems to me that, when possible, the elders of any given church who desire to participate in mission work would do well to make two choices. First, choose the area, local or foreign, where they plan to do this work. Second, choose the man and his family that they think will best do that work. When this is done, if needed, they can enlist the help of other churches in supporting this work.

The elders and the preacher chosen for the work need to determine the amount needed to accomplish the work. Travel expenses will naturally be included in this amount. There will then be the need to search out and provide the missionary family with suitable living quarters.

If both the preacher and the elders are men of integrity and honesty, I personally have found it to be a good practice to designate the total amount the preacher will receive either as salary, or as a working fund. If it is designated as a work fund, the elders then can require a monthly or bi-monthly financial report. If it is designated as a salary, then the preacher will be at liberty to use it as needed in the work, and will need to file such on income tax forms.

Again, if they are men of integrity there will be no room for doubt as to the honesty of either. On the other hand, if the elders feel that the one they have chosen to send has a tendency to be loose or dishonest with such funds, then, brethren, look for another, one that you can trust.

### Time to Review

It may be time to review the way we use the Lord's money in mission work. It is my firm belief that those going will have a far more lasting success if they

use their time training men and women in the area where the mission work is done to become preachers and teachers.

Have men and women go and stay for a longer period of time to train men and women to do the local work in their own community. I am presently involved in such a work.

Years ago good men went forth in the foreign fields and began schools of preaching. Once established, these men began to encourage other men to come and help teach in the school. Some could come for a month and teach an assigned specific course. Others could come and stay for two months, three months, or longer. In this way there is always a missionary on the grounds to continue the work. Such a situation eliminates the need for "two week vacationers."

One last thing: If you choose to go and work in the type of school just mentioned, bring your wife if she can come. However, regardless of who comes and how many, just remember that you will be a worker, not a "guest." Help with providing and preparing meals, make up your own beds, sweep your own floors, wash your own clothes, and help with the general responsibilities of this home away from home.

My wife and I have always welcomed those who come to help in the work. Many times traveling missionary families have spent time in our home, and we enjoyed every moment. The ones who were the most enjoyable were those who did not expect to be served as if they were on vacation.

### Support Your Leaders

In the August 2013 issue of the *Gospel Gleaner* brother Andy Erwin gave four points that I believe will again help those elders who are planning mission works to realize the great responsibility of meeting the qualifications for the work, then doing that work to the best of their knowledge and wisdom. With his permission I am adding them to this article. I fully agree with his statements about choosing qualified men, then supporting them fully in praying for them.

They are:

(1) Use the guideline God has given us for determining elders (1 Timothy 3; Titus 1). Seek only those who are qualified to serve as shepherds. Lay hands on no man suddenly (1 Timothy 5:22). Decide carefully and prayerfully who will lead you as God's people.

(2) Encourage faithful elders. Be sure that they know how much they are appreciated for their love for your souls and for their stand for the truth (Acts 20:17-35).

(3) Remember your elders in prayer (Hebrews 13:7; Acts 20:36). Pray for their souls, their wisdom, and their leadership of the flock.

(4) Obey and honor those who rule well (Hebrews 13:17; 1 Timothy 5:17). A faithful and godly elder is one who is concerned for the well-being of your souls. He should be continually encouraged to this end. Honor him for his life of seeking the lost and restoring the wayward. Obey him as he obeys the Lord (Hebrews 13:7). Be careful not to distract him from the work he is called to do by burdening him with the sundry matters of little or no significance.

As all elders, churches, and prospective missionaries begin planning some good work, please, brethren, spend much time in prayer imploring our God to give you the wisdom to be a good steward in the work you are planning.

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# PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR PREACHERS

Robert L. Waggoner

Having been a preacher at numerous congregations, having been involved in preacher training at several schools, and having observed various practices of preachers, I have several practical suggestions that may be helpful, especially for young or inexperienced preachers.

## Know the Word

First, a thorough knowledge of God's word is fundamental to good preaching. To acquire this knowledge beyond formal schooling, I suggest that preachers spend about thirty minutes in daily Bible reading, seven days each week. (If your schedule demands that you occasionally miss a day or two, make it up either ahead of schedule or at a later time.)

Ideally, a routine of Bible reading for one half-hour each day should be in addition to sermon or class preparations. (Three ten minute segments could substitute for one thirty minute reading.)

By reading the Bible thirty minutes each day, the New Testament can be read in a month, and the Old Testament can be read in just a few days more than three months. This can be accomplished by a reading speed at the rate normally spoken over the radio or to a public audience.

This daily Bible reading procedure can result in reading the Old Testament twice and the New Testament four or five times each year with several extra days to spare, depending on one's personal reading speed. If a preacher does this for ten or more years, he will have acquired an excellent and balanced knowledge of the Bible.

The more general Bible knowledge a preacher has, the less time he'll need to spend for specific lesson preparations, the more capable he'll become in memo-

rizing Scriptures, and the greater understanding he'll have of particular Scriptures to meet needs of his audiences.

## Know the Audience

Second, a thorough knowledge of a preacher's audiences is essential. By audiences, I mean individuals, families, and their communities, individually and collectively.

When a preacher moves to a community where he has not lived previously, he should seek to become well informed about that community and its history. A preacher should learn everyone's names in his congregation. Whenever possible, preachers should visit in everyone's homes and work-settings and become informed about significant events and happenings in peoples' lives.

Whenever I'm initially getting acquainted with people I like to ask a couple of questions, whenever appropriate. The first question concerns what factors motivated them to become Christians. Did they grow up in the church? How did they learn the gospel? Who influenced their decisions, etc.? The second question relates to how a husband and wife met and decided to get married.

People generally do not hesitate to answer non-intrusive personal questions. In fact, they are often pleased to have been asked. I try not to pry into personal backgrounds. Even so, their answers often provide me with information I would otherwise not have. Their answers enable me to assess how I might better serve their specific spiritual needs. Of course, if they want to know more about me I'm willing to answer those same (and other) questions.

## Know How to Make It Relevant

Third, a thorough knowledge of how to apply God's word to people's needs is important. When Paul told Timothy to "be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim 2:15), he was not exhorting Timothy to study the Scriptures so

much as he was encouraging him to be very diligent in rightly dispensing it to others.

Just as a mother needs to know the benefits of particular foods and which foods are most appropriate to meet each child's health needs, so also the preacher must know the Bible and his audiences well enough to realize those portions of God's word that should be given to meet their individual specific spiritual needs.

If a preacher has excellent knowledge of Scripture and a thorough understanding of his audiences' spiritual needs, he can then set goals, establish procedures, and develop lessons to assist individuals to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord. In dispensing the Scriptures, the preacher needs to know how to do so effectively whether in public or private. He should do so lovingly, perhaps tactfully and diplomatically, yet boldly and without hesitation whenever needed.

While these suggestions are intended primarily for preachers, they may also be appropriate, in various degrees, for teachers and others. Whenever preachers and teachers have an excellent knowledge of the Bible, a thorough knowledge of needs of people to whom they preach and teach, and some understanding of how biblical truths should be presented, they'll not need to be concerned about what subjects need to be preached or taught because subject matter may become not only self-evident, but perhaps even more abundant than time is available. In any case, whatever subject content is presented in the available time will more likely have greater richness and appropriateness.

*An optimist sees an opportunity in every problem. A pessimist sees a problem in every opportunity.*

-Winston Churchill

# Expositions of the Sacred Scriptures

Ron Thomas

## The Church at Laodicea (Revelation 3:14–22)

In Central Illinois we are surrounded by agricultural fields of corn and beans. The interstate from my home is about a twenty-five minute drive. About thirty miles south of where I live is the convergence of two interstates, with the junction located near the city of Effingham. Consequently, Effingham prospers.

During ancient times Roman roads were major conduits of transportation throughout the empire, and it was in Laodicea that the junction of three roads met. With as much traffic as these roads brought to the city it grew rapidly and became very wealthy. One can just imagine what the residents of the city might have thought as they were prospering financially.

When prosperity comes, the wise man prepares for the heartache that is just around the corner. In the middle of the first century a devastating earthquake hit the area and destroyed many cities; Laodicea was one of them. Though destroyed by an earthquake the city was proud of their self-sufficiency and, thus, refused help from Rome to rebuild.

Laodicea was also a city in a prime location for another reason. Nearby was a medicinal hot spring at Hierapolis; thus, added to Laodicea's reputation of financial prosperity, in close proximity, was the very important benefit of good health, as promoted by Hierapolis.

This reputation encouraged the residents of the city to think much of themselves and their environment. It appeared the members of the church in Laodicea perpetuated this way of thinking (3:17). They had an attitude of heart

with the prosperity experienced in their "pocketbooks" that surely the Lord blessed them in those activities in which they were engaged.

### Who and What

As they judged themselves, they failed to remember Him who is judge of all. Jesus is the one who walks in the midst of the churches knowing whatever can be known. To the Laodiceans, however, He identifies Himself in a peculiar way: "the beginning of the creation of God" (3:14). Why would the Lord identify Himself as "the Amen" (God) and also include Himself as "the beginning" – of what is Jesus the beginning?

The Greek word that gives us our English word "beginning" is used three times in the book of Revelation (3:14; 21:6; and 22:13); with each use it is connected with identifying God by name. In fact, in the translation by Hugo McCord, the Greek word is rendered: "the first cause of God's creation." In other words, as the Amen (God), He is the creator of the material universe and is all-knowing.

As mentioned earlier, in the area of Laodicea were springs of water, both cold (in Colossae) and hot (in Hierapolis). The communities of Colossae and Hierapolis were known for something of significance, but the church of our Lord in Laodicea was known for something not desired. They were known for being lukewarm in the eyes of the Lord. This was not a satisfactory measurement! The word "lukewarm" has its only location here, but the word is easily understood within its context. Jesus was not pleased and He placed a value judgment on them in this regard!

We know the Lord did not find their lukewarmness particularly pleasing; in fact, it made Him sick! Sickness, of course, can bring about a violent eruption of the contents of the stomach; this illustration the Lord uses to convey to them His dissatisfaction. The lukewarmness of the church was in regard to their failing of seeing themselves as they needed (3:17; cf. 2 Corinthians 13:5). Have you not heard it said that between

two extremes lies the truth? Being lukewarm, in this case, was not good!

Just as the church at Sardis thought of itself in a particular way (3:1), the Christians at Laodicea also had a wrong perception of their own standing before the Lord. They not only had a wrong understanding of their standing (if you will), they also failed to realize just how exposed they were. That's the power of God's word (Hebrews 4:12); it is able to reprove, convict, instruct, and expose. When Christians are in the wrong it is a painful experience to be exposed. In the end, however, it will be well worth the pain, if there is medicinal application of the ointment Jesus offers (3:18).

Though they perceived themselves as being "rich toward the Lord," I am sure it was a surprise to hear the Lord's admonition concerning their poverty. Consequently, Jesus counseled them to purchase "gold refined in the fire." The gold, however, was not "gold of this world." The gold that Jesus had in view was much more precious than that: "In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:6-7). Gold is a precious world commodity, but one's faith in God will go much further than any worldly commodity.

### Application

Not only did they need gold the Lord would give, they also needed clothing (3:18). Paul traveled through life as the Lord's servant on a mission, and he understood well the difficulty associated with having very little. He wrote to the Philippians words of encouragement because they tended to his needs (Philippians 4:10-19), but what was of more value to him than his physical needs was his strength in the Lord (Philippians 4:13; cf. 2 Corinthians 1:3-11). There is value in being able to purchase things that are needed, but there is also value in having the proper vision. Being able to see men walking around like trees is not

the kind of vision we need (cf. Mark 8:22-26). Let our eyesight be sharp, like an eagle flying high in the sky scanning the ground below. With such focused vision we will continually see ourselves as we ought to. Paul told the Corinthians that they were not to be unmindful of the schemes of the devil (2 Corinthians 2:11). When we don't allow ourselves to be taught by God, is it reasonable for us to think that our eyesight will be sharp? We are to have eyesight that is clearly focused on Jesus and not any wealth that is material and fleeting (cf. Hebrews 12:1-3).

Jesus stands at the door of our heart and knocks; he appealed to those of Laodicea to open the door to him, and he is appealing to us to do the same thing (3:20-22). If we allow the Lord to come in and feed us (as the Chief Shepherd feeds all his saints) we can be sure that our spiritual health, once sickly, can be regained and strengthened.

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## “Abiding” in the Gospel of John

Denny Petrillo

We all understand the structure of a plant. It has two primary parts: the stem, (also called the vine or trunk), and branches. These branches draw their life giving water and nutrients from the vine. The association with the trunk permits the branches to be alive, beautiful, and productive. What would happen if one were to break off a branch? In a very short time, it would wither and die. It has no chance of surviving on its own.

Jesus said to the disciples: “I am the vine, and you are the branches; he who abides in Me, and I in him, he bears much fruit; for apart from Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). These words are consistent with what Jesus taught to all those who would hear Him and follow Him (6:56; 8:31; 12:46).

The apostle John, in 1 John, deals extensively with the idea of “abiding”

(using the Greek word *meno*, 24 times). This then, is obviously a very important concept to Jesus and His inspired apostle John. But do we really understand the implications of this great concept?

In our brotherhood, we are debating many questions: Who should we fellowship? Who is a Christian and who is not? Does doctrine matter all that much to faithfulness? Many other questions could be added to this list. Perhaps an understanding of “abiding” will help us answer those questions.

We must realize that our relationship to Christ is just like the branches' relationship to the vine. Without a *connection* to Christ, we will die and be fit for nothing but to be thrown into the fire. Thus, we cannot overstate the importance of abiding to our hope of salvation. But this fact raises several important questions.

### How Do We Establish this Connection?

The need for establishing the connection to Christ is clearly spelled out by Jesus Himself: “I have come as a light into the world, that everyone who believes in Me may not *remain* in darkness” (12:46). Everyone who has done evil is in darkness, and as long as he practices evil remains in that darkness (3:19-21).

The Scriptures answer the question on how this vital connection is made. First, one must believe in Jesus. This is the same as having “His word abiding in you” (John 5:38). If one does not go to the Scriptures for *all* his authority then he does not truly believe in Jesus.

Second, he must keep those words which he has heard. John says that “the one who keeps His commandments abides in Him” (1 John 3:24; cf. John 15:10). This continuing process must always be maintained (1 John 3:9).

But what is meant by “keeping His commandments”? Again, John answers that question. He writes: “by this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us His Spirit” (1 John 4:13).

The Holy Spirit is given to those who have “repented and been baptized” (Acts 2:38; cf. 5:32). Therefore those who have not forsaken their former lives of sin and been immersed into Christ cannot be said to be abiding in Christ!

In addition, John writes: “Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him and he in God” (1 John 4:15). We know that confession is made unto salvation (Romans 10:9, 10). Therefore, those who have not confessed that Jesus is Lord and the Son of God do not abide in Christ.

By considering these points, it is fair to say that **anyone** who has failed to take these steps has never established a connection to Christ. He cannot receive all the spiritual blessings that are a part of being connected to Him (Ephesians 1:3-9).

### How Do We Maintain this Connection?

Certainly, the Scriptures do not support the idea that once one is in Christ that he forever remains there. However there is no excuse for not remaining in Christ if one does what the Scriptures teach (2 Peter 1:10).

What, specifically, does one do to maintain that connection to Christ? First, as Jesus said, he must “abide in My word” (John 8:31). The Greek tense here indicates active and continuous effort. One must continue to study God's word and grow because of that Word being in his heart (2 Peter 3:18; 2 Timothy 2:15; James 1:21).

Notice that it is in *the word of Jesus* that one abides. His words form the basis of everyone's judgment (John 12:48).

Second, one must “walk as He walked” (1 John 2:6). Jesus kept the Father's commandments (John 15:10). He did His will and accomplished His work (John 4:34).

If one wants to maintain his life sustaining connection to Christ then he must **actively** do the will of the Father. This includes everything from being a part of Christ's church to having a proper

attitude and action in worship.

Third, he must "love the brethren" (1 John 2:10; cf. 4:12). This type of love involves going to any measure for the benefit of that brother – even to death (3:16). It is impossible for one to avoid the works and activities of the church for which Jesus died and still maintain that he loves God (1 John 4:19-21).

Fourth, one must share and be generous if he hopes to abide in Christ. Note what John says: "But whoever has the world's goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?" (1 John 3:17). A child of God is one who is continually interested and involved in giving to his brethren.

Fifth, one must not practice sin if he hopes to maintain his connection to Christ (1 John 3:6, 9). Sin, John tells us, is "practicing lawlessness" (1 John 3:4). Is worshipping incorrectly lawlessness? Is promoting methods of conversion other than the one faith and one baptism (Ephesians 4:4-6) lawlessness?

Certainly, we know from the words of Jesus that just being active in His name does not make us law abiders (Matthew 7:21-23). We must teach and promote the "one baptism" and the "one church" or else we will be going too far and will be guilty of practicing lawlessness.

### **What Are the Results of this Connection with Christ?**

No discussion of this kind would be complete without considering the benefits of abiding in Christ. When we abide in Him, the Scriptures teach us that several events take place.

First, we have the love of Christ. Jesus said "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love" (John 15:10). Jesus is going to save those whom He loves (John 14:23).

Second, we have power as God's children. Jesus instructed the disciples that "if you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you" (John 15:7). The apostle John says virtually the same

thing in 1 John 5:14-15. When we abide in Christ then we have the heavenly Father's eyes upon us and his ear attending to our prayers (1 Peter 3:12).

A third result of our connection with Christ is that we will "bear much fruit" (John 15:4). Those who are attached to the vine will be productive. If we are not bearing the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22) then we are not attached to the vine.

Are those who are in denominations, and encouraging others to join them, bearing fruit *for God*? When their contribution dollars are spent promoting "another gospel" (Galatians 1:6-9) are they bearing fruit for God? They have, in effect, "established a righteousness of their own" (Romans 10:1-4). Those who do this are in need of salvation according to Paul.

A word of caution needs to be extended here to our own brotherhood. Division is a clear sign that we are not disciples of Jesus (John 17:23). Just because a group claims that they are the "church of Christ" does not mean that they are truly Christ's church. If all have the Word abiding in them, then unity ought to be easy and natural. But there are those among us that are promoting a "different gospel" than the one that is preserved on the pages of the New Testament. When one teaches different plans of salvation, or different ways of organizing the church, or different ways to worship, he is an example of one who does not have "the Word abiding in him."

John says in 2 John 9: "Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son."

From this we learn that only one teaching or doctrine is true. Anything else, everything else, is false.

Jesus said in Matthew 15:8, 9: "This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me. But in vain do they worship Me, teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men."

Consider then this truth, any worship other than that authorized by the

Scriptures is the doctrine of men. If one adheres to or practices the doctrine of men, he does not have God. Therefore, it is impossible for anyone who is worshipping un-scripturally to have God. This involves everything from instrumental music, to women preachers, to various ways of observing the Lord's Supper, to teaching and promoting anything that is separate from the New Testament pattern.

Certainly, we are not maintaining that one needs to be perfect and have a complete understanding of all biblical doctrines when they put on their Lord in baptism. There are many things a person may do and believe that are not in harmony with New Testament teachings. But as truth is learned, he or she is responsible to follow that truth. God allows His children to grow and mature.

Have we then answered some of the questions asked in the beginning? Yes. We have fellowship with those who are abiding in the doctrine of Christ as we abide in the doctrine of Christ.

If they worship or teach doctrines different from what is taught in the New Testament then it would be wrong to fellowship with them. Those who are Christians are those who keep His commandments, have His word abiding in them, and are bearing fruit for God.

All of these areas are defined by the Scriptures. It has not been left up to man to decide what commandments are, or what needs to abide in a person, or what fruit is. Despite what some may say or imply, following the correct doctrine or teaching is crucial to being considered faithful (2 John 9).

The Scriptures make it plain that everyone has *something* abiding in them. It is either the love of God (1 John 4:12, 16, 19) or the wrath of God (John 3:36; cf. 1 John 3:14).

Can we honestly maintain that we abide in Christ? Eternal life, for us and those we teach, is weighing in the balance (1 Timothy 4:16).

\*\*\*\*\*

## Questions & Answers

James R. Lewis

### What happens between death and the resurrection?

Jesus promised the repentant thief, "Today thou shalt be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). If we can learn where Jesus was following His death that day, then we can learn what paradise is.

Rienecker and Rogers in their *Linguistic Key To The New Testament* say that paradise is "a Persian word meaning park or enclosed garden, then used in Judaism as the abode of the redeemed between death and the resurrection."

From *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, we learn that "Paradeisos is an Oriental Word, first used by the historian Xenophon, denoting the parks of Persian Kings and nobles. It is of Persian origin (Old Pers. *Pariridæza*), akin to Greek *peri*, around and *teichos*, a wall) whence it passed into Greek."

Thus, in general, the word paradise carries the idea of a walled or enclosed place for the pleasure, peace, and joy of the inhabitants thereof.

Where was Jesus when He died? Some say in heaven, but not so. He did not ascend into heaven until about 40 days after His resurrection from the dead. The apostles witnessed that ascension and it is recorded in Acts 1:9-11.

Two passages of Scripture help in understanding where Jesus was following His death. From John 19:38-42, we know where the Lord's body was laid when it was taken from the cross. It was placed in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. His soul, however, was not placed in that tomb. It had departed the body at death, as all souls depart their bodies at death (cf. James 2:26).

From Acts 2:25-27, we learn that Jesus was in *hades* (hell, KJV). The

word *hades* simply means the unseen, and in this context has reference to the place where Jesus was, but was not seen by those on earth. We learn here another name of the place where Jesus was following his death.

What more can we learn about this place called *hades*? In Luke 16:19-31, we learn of a beggar named Lazarus who died and was carried by the angels into the bosom of Abraham.

A rich man also died, at whose gate Lazarus had laid, "desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table" (Luke 16:21).

The record says, "And in *hades* he lift up his eyes being in torment, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom." Both Lazarus and the rich man had died. Their bodies had been buried, but their souls were yet alive and conscious. One was in a place of torments and the other was in a place called Abraham's bosom where there are no torments, but rather "where he is now comforted" (v.25). Between the two "there is a great gulf fixed" so that those who would pass from one place to the other could not (v.26).

Both Lazarus and the rich man were/are in a place of the unseen; hence both are in the *hadean* realm.

Jesus also was in *hades*, but obviously not in a place of torment. Rather, He told the thief on the cross He would be in paradise (Luke 23:43).

We thus conclude that the term *paradise* references the same place that is called Abraham's bosom in Luke 16:22. The word *paradise* in Luke 23:43 pertains to the unseen place of the departed spirits of the righteous dead. It is a place of comfort, joy, and provision, where man awaits the resurrection at the last day. It is the abode of the redeemed between death and resurrection.

The spirits of the unrighteous are also in the *hadean* realm, but are not in paradise or Abraham's bosom. They are in the place of torment which is separated from paradise by the great gulf.

## Special Feature

### Green Plain

Hazel, Kentucky

Andrew D. Erwin

One of the congregations I have been privileged to serve as an evangelist is the Green Plain congregation in Hazel, Kentucky. Truly, some of the best people on earth are members of this church family. Many of my dearest friends from this congregation have now gone to be with the Lord. The following information is taken from a church history done by one of Green Plain's members. I am sorry that I cannot give credit with certainty as to which one wrote it.

The Green Plain church of Christ, located near Hazel, Kentucky, in Calloway County, was organized January 28, 1854. Nine charter members signed a constitution stating: "We, the members of the Church of Christ whose names are subscribed, do organize ourselves into a congregation and pledge ourselves to take the New Testament scriptures as a guide for our faith and practice."

In 1868, Abe S. Thompson donated an acre of land on the Murray Paris Road that was to become the location of the meeting house for the Green Plain church of Christ. It is possible that prior to 1868, the church had been meeting in the Green Plain School building about a half-mile west of the Green Plain Cemetery on Highway 641.

It is assumed that the church moved from the cemetery area to the new location because a new road had been built connecting Murray to Paris, Tennessee, and more people would be able to stop for worship. Mr. W.F. White and Mr. and Mrs. Elwood White donated additional property.

The first service held for the newly located congregation was on the second Saturday in October 1868. John McCoy was the preacher in this service and con-

tinued as the regular preacher for the congregation for several years. He would preach both Saturday and Sunday once a month; his pay was by contributions, sometimes receiving no more than \$2.50 for the two days.

As the church membership changed over the years, so did the church building itself. A new building was built in 1912. In 1946 a basement was dug and the building was remodeled and moved onto the basement. Additional classrooms were added in 1970. In 1999, an annex was built which is used for classrooms and fellowship activities.

Baptisms during the early days of the Green Plain church were quite different from today's baptismal services. The baptisms were conducted in the Jenkins, Green, and Clarks River. A baptistery was installed in the church building in 1948.

Taking the New Testament Scriptures as the guide for our faith and practice means that we strive to duplicate the pattern of the first century church as we find revealed in the New Testament. We do not conform to this world (Romans 2:2), or to the commandments of men (Matthew 15:9); but we constantly strive to be transformed that we may show and teach what is good, acceptable and perfect will of God (Romans 12:2). This transformation causes us to constantly put on the new man, which we became when we obeyed the Gospel. This is down by renewing our minds in the knowledge of God's Word (Romans 6:4; 12:2; Colossians 3:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17). It is our desire that all people who believe the God of the Bible and in Jesus Christ His Son will join us in being just "Christians" as we find in our New Testament.

The Green Plain church of Christ is now more than 150 years old. If the past years are any indication of the church's future, things look bright for the congregation. We believe the close adherence of this congregation to the will of God will insure the Green Plain church of

Christ a place in the future of Calloway County just as she has in her history.

In addition to this fine sketch of their history, I would like to add that for years Green Plain has been involved in radio and television evangelism. You can still listen to their radio program: "Searching the Scriptures" broadcast each Sunday from Murray, Kentucky.

Also, the congregation is active in teaching church leaders, preachers, and teachers throughout the area by offering courses through the Green Plain School of Biblical Studies. They offer these courses twice a year – spring and fall – to provide in-depth studies to any person interested in attending. No prior enrollment is required. Classes resume on September 16th and continue each consecutive Monday through December 2nd. The school began in 2005.

Jonnie Hutchison is the preacher for Green Plain. He moved from North Carolina to begin his work with the congregation in April, 2012. He is a 1976 graduate of the Memphis School of Preaching and has done local work in Arkansas, Missouri, Virginia, Texas, and North Carolina.

The church is served by three elders: Rex Enoch, Mike Ernstberger, and James Pigg.

### Green Plain church of Christ

3980 Murray Paris Road  
Hazel, KY 42049

Sunday Bible Classes  
10:00 AM

Sunday Worship  
10:45 AM & 6:00 PM

Wednesday Bible Study  
7:00 PM

## News & Notes

James R. McGill

### Recent Deaths

**Kerry Anderson**, president of the Gospel Advocate Co. Kerry was recognized as being very much into the electronic age. He produced the outstanding Gospel Advocate Bible program on CD. He also made a number of Gospel Advocate books available for reading on electronic (Kindle) readers. He was 52.

**Wayne Coats** of Mount Juliet, Tennessee, was a longtime faithful gospel preacher and prolific writer. He was especially forceful and effective in responding to the errors of the change agents who were seeking to restructure the church. He was 87.

**Lorenzo Collins** of Ohio, was a faithful gospel preacher for more than half a century. He graduated from the two-year program at Southwestern Christian College in the late '50's, and then served in the army medical corps in Germany.

He was a very capable preacher even as a 20-year old, and he preached for us some in Munich (1961-62). After leaving the army, he received his B.A. degree from Abilene Christian. Most of his preaching was in Ohio.

**Richard England, Sr.**, preached for many years, sometimes devoting his full time to preaching and sometimes supporting himself with secular employment. He was a very close friend of the late Guy N. Woods and spoke at his funeral.

**Bertrum Shearer**, 92, died September 9 in Gallatin, Tennessee. He spent a number of years preaching in South Dakota and then many years preaching in Sumner County, Tennessee, at Fountain Head, Hartsville Pike, and Cottontown

(where he preached for thirty years). He was also involved in the public schools in teacher training and as school principal.

### Summary of Exhibit Evangelism

From Ron Thomas (Sullivan, IL):

Exhibit Evangelism at the Illinois State Fair has wrapped up; the churches of Christ have presented themselves very favorably as part of the state fair for quite a number of years.

In fact, for the last fifty years there has been an exhibit associated with the Lord's church. It has been our intention to take the gospel into the "market place."

Over the years this has been a very successful work, and again this year it proved very successful. We have made it a mission of ours to be involved in friendly engagement with the public concerning Bible study.

This year we enrolled over 400 people in Bible studies (Bible correspondence courses by mail). Our most popular studies have been "Christian Evidences" (Apologetics Press) and "Introduction to the Bible," (the John Hurt Series and the House to House series). The cooperative effort of the churches of Christ in Illinois has been very encouraging, and to the Lord goes all the glory.

### Recent Gospel Meetings

**A. T. Pate** recently preached in a series of gospel meetings at the historic Leiper's Fork church in Williamson County, Tennessee. This congregation began in 1830.

In 1864, in the War Between the States, during the Federal occupation of Tennessee, the military governor of the state, Andrew Johnson, issued an execu-

tive order for all able-bodied men in the state to report for induction into the U. S. Army. A number of brethren, including David Lipscomb, got together at Leiper's Fork to compose a letter to Governor Johnson, explaining their position of not becoming involved in the military on either side. They expressed their intention to continue to be good citizens. The governor invited them to his office in the Capitol and accepted their position as being out of sincere conviction.

### Upcoming Events

**Chattanooga, TN:** The Greens Lake Road church of Christ will be celebrating the congregation's 54<sup>th</sup> anniversary and homecoming October 6<sup>th</sup> with Doug McVey preaching.

**Memphis, TN:** The Getwell church of Christ will be conducting their annual Spiritual Sword Lectureship October 20-23. The theme is "In Times Like These." Gary Colley is the minister for the Getwell congregation and the director of the annual lectureship. For more information call (901) 743-0464.

**Moundsville, WV:** The Hillview Terrace church of Christ in conjunction with the West Virginia School of Preaching will be hosting the annual Victory Lectureship October 20-24. The theme will be "Living Lessons from the Book of Job." For more information call (304) 845-8001.

**Gadsden, AL:** The Gadsden church of Christ will be conducting a gospel meeting October 27-29. Gospel Gleaner editor Andy Erwin will be preaching. For more information call (256) 453-9500.

**Mechanicsville, VA:** The Cold Harbor Road church of Christ will be conducting their annual lectureship from October 31-November 3. For more information call (804) 746-8224.

**Essex, MO:** The Essex church of Christ will be hosting a gospel meeting with Ronald Bryant November 1-3.

**Toccoa, GA:** The Toccoa church of Christ will be conducting a gospel meeting November 3-6 with John T. Polk, II preaching.

### New Staff Writers Added to the Gospel Gleaner

We are pleased to announce the addition of three new staff writers to the *Gospel Gleaner*.

**Bill Brandstatter** is an excellent writer and gospel preacher. He preaches for the Marion, IL church of Christ.

**Raymond Elliott** is a man well-known for his many years of preaching and writing for brotherhood publications. He has already been a valuable helper for the *Gleaner* and now will write on a permanent basis.

**Robert Waggoner** is an outstanding preacher and teacher of the Word of God. He will be writing articles chronicling God's plan of redemption throughout the history of the world.

### Mission Update

Ernest and Shirley Underwood will be leaving September 24, to teach Bible students in Guwahati, India. They will be returning March 4, 2014.

Brother Underwood has also recently revised his tract, "The Church of Christ: Who Are these People?" The tract is available through the Chestnut Drive congregation in Doraville, GA.

Email News Items to:  
jimrmcgill@clearwire.net  
or  
andyerwin@gospelgleaner.com

## Reader Replies

Dear Brethren,

I hate all so much to have to report this on any person, but since this has happened here at the Carbon Hill congregation last week this is a must, to stop someone from taking advantage of our sister congregations and abusing our Lord's funding to spread the gospel and benevolence.

A man, who is using the name of Don Hopkins, is going around asking for help. The story that he is using is that he is from the Mississippi area of Ty-lertown and that he has recently moved into the area. He also said that he was supposed to be renting one house but had to rent another and to have the utilities turned on he needs a payment on the rent. He also said that he has a family with two teenage daughters and has to claim residency to enroll them in the school in the area.

The names he has mentioned as reference is Henry Taylor with the phone number of 662-701-9802 from the Oak Grove congregation in Mississippi. Also he said to be working with some construction group in the Jasper area with these numbers 256-303-9761 or 256-230-7582. All these numbers are a Verizon cell phones and no longer active.

He drives a PT Cruiser grey in color. He has attempted to ask the same help from the Flint church of Christ in Decatur, AL. giving the same story and using similar phone numbers, but under the name of Ron Harper.

It appears to be more than one person that might be involved so please be aware of this person. If you need any additional information you may contact me or the elders here.

May God be with us all in doing what is right. Please pass this along and warn the other brethren of this scam.

In His Service,

**Phillip Harkness**

Carbon Hill Church of Christ

Brethren,

This is the link to a new blog of mine.

<http://reminiscings.blogspot.com>

I am writing about some of my experiences during my preaching over some 56+ years. Some are humorous and some are not. I hope you will find some entertainment and enjoyment when you read them.

**Raymond Elliott**

Dear brother Erwin,

I have just finished your editorial on *Training Preachers, for what?* This reminder is long overdue to our brotherhood. We must reverse the present trend of powerless sermons. Thanks for such a timely article.

I have begun a personal work of sending to preachers and bible teachers sermons on CD by Foy E. Wallace, Jr. These are free upon request at:

[hrw38@bellsouth.net](mailto:hrw38@bellsouth.net)

Sincerely,

**Claytus Wilson**

Dear Andy,

Having been gone since May 11, it is good to be back home.

The paper has very good articles in it.

God's Care,

**Owen Olbricht**

**The GOSPEL GLEANER**  
Celebrating 25 Years

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# The GOSPEL GLEANER

Volume 25

October, 2013

Number Ten

THE PRESENT TRUTH . . .

Ronald D. Bryant

## Consider an Incredible Thing

Consider an incredible thing: religious systems make ready and frequent use of the name of Christ, and yet are devoid of genuine respect for Him, for His will, and for His purpose. Such systems have no interest in yielding in obedience to Him.

All of this is apparent for their tenets are superficial and pragmatic, yet are finally without spiritual or moral substance. While they pay lip-service to the word of God, their real scriptures are the mandates of the present culture and its religious marketplace.

They draw nigh to God, but only with their lips; they teach for doctrines the commandments of men (Matthew 15:8-9). They prefer drama to revelation, and smooth words to the dictates of righteousness.

Not a few of them know more about theatre and theatrical presentation than they do of the simple tenets of Scripture. Their "audiences" are fed a steady diet of the gurus of excitement, and have a voracious appetite for the latest offerings of the latest experts with their human counsel. These "experts" possess no penetrating knowledge of the Bible, or devotion to it.

An amazing number of religious folks thrill at relating "personal experiences," and in telling stories of

"human interests." Many have grown accustomed to pageantry and spectacle, from high church rituals to vaudeville routines, from rock-concerts to sound and light shows. They declare that such activities and programs serve to hold the interest, if not the devotion of the masses.

Bottom-line: there are religious folks that are one with the world; they are one with its agenda, and are eager to accommodate it. Bigger, better, more exciting, more fulfilling – these are their watchwords.

To contrast these systems to the will of the Son of God, and consider the things that He did, and the things He taught, is to be saddened and deeply disturbed. The difference between Jesus and those that presently "do business" in His name is glaring.

The difference between the discipleship and the devotion which He demands, and the religious product presently being marketed, in His name, is vast indeed. Sadly, eternity bound souls are content to go to "church" as religious customers, and to give their allegiance to the religious entrepreneurs that are in fact leading them away from God and away from the faith and devotion which Jesus came to enthrone.

Many of the things that are now accepted as part of the Christian faith

which are so far removed from the truth He gave cause a flood of tears. To consider our Lord's purpose for coming to this earth, and the purpose and power of His cross, and compare it with those things that are now being promoted in His name, leads to this question: How could He be so misunderstood, how can it be that He is so fully misrepresented? How is it that He, the Lord and Savior, is being treated so shamefully, and His way so horrible perverted? Is there no cause for tears, for repentance?

It is sad beyond words, to consider the tragedy of the tens of thousands of souls bound for eternity, who genuinely long to know God and His will, who want to be Christians, yet, are being deceived into embracing that which has its origin, not in God, but in human deceptions. These false systems offer many things, but they do not, and they cannot bring eternity bound souls to God. Instead of becoming one with God, many become the victims of the deceivers.

The world, all dressed up in religious finery, is still the world. The world can offer many things of a temporary nature, even in religion. However, it can offer nothing of eternal benefit!

\*\*\*\*\*

To say that the church is at war with false teachers and the false doctrines they teach is no understatement. "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled" (2 Corinthians 10:3-6, NKJV). Paul also encouraged Timothy to "wage the good warfare" (1 Timothy 1:18) and "fight the good fight of faith" (1 Timothy 6:12).

### Jude's Purpose for Writing

Jude was inspired to address this need as well. God wanted His people to know the importance of contending earnestly for the faith (Jude 3). To contend literally means to fight in defense of something.

God, through His servant Jude, was teaching us that our faith, the faith which is in Christ Jesus, is worth fighting to protect. As Paul said, it is not a carnal or physical war that is being waged, but a spiritual war, a war of knowledge between good and evil, between obedience and disobedience.

### Know the Enemy

To win this war against the forces of darkness, God's people must first know their enemy. Anyone willing to walk after the works of the flesh and not the will of God is an enemy of the cross of Christ, whether they realize it or not.

Paul wrote, "Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame who set their mind on earthly things" (Philippians 3:17-19).

So that we might know the enemy and what to expect of them, Jude gives us several descriptions. Beginning in verse four, Jude writes, "For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ."

You will observe that these "ungodly men" crept in unnoticed. Having crept in, and perhaps having gained a foothold, they began promoting their Satanic agenda of defiling the flesh, rejecting authority, and speaking evil of glories or "glorious ones" (Jude 8).

They "speak evil of whatever they do not know; and whatever they know naturally, like brute beasts, in these things they corrupt themselves" (Jude 10).

Jude continued by describing them as "spots in your love feasts, while they feast with you without fear, serving only themselves; they are clouds without water, carried about by the winds; late autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, pulled up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame; wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever" (Jude 12-13).

Doubtless, these false teachers are "ungodly sinners" committing "ungodly deeds... in an ungodly way" speaking "harsh things" against the Christ who shall ultimately bring His victorious judgment against them (Jude 15).

Jude's inspired description of these ungodly men continues: "These are murmurers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts; and they mouth great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage" (Jude 16).

Having read that verse, you will observe that another one of their methods is to flatter people to gain advantage – not to encourage, not to teach, not to love – but solely for the advancement of their devilish schemes and "ungodly lusts" (Jude 18).

They are "mockers... sensual persons, who cause divisions, not having the Spirit" (Jude 19).

Having read Jude's description you can see how terrible an enemy they are. Indeed, those who love the Lord and His church have their work cut out for them.

### How Do We Win?

In order for the Lord's people to win this war, not only must we know the enemy we face, but we must "remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ... building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit... keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And on some have compassion, making a distinction; but others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh" (Jude 17-23).

Herein Jude gives us seven admonitions to secure victory against the ungodly enemy we face: (1) Keep in memory the teachings of scripture; (2) Keep building your faith; (3) Keep praying in the Spirit; (4) Keep yourselves in the love of God; (5) Keep looking for the mercy of Christ that will lead to life eternal; (6) Keep saving souls – whether by compassion or fear; (7) Keep hating the works of the flesh which defile the precious souls Christ came to save.

When we practice these seven principles we will be earnestly contending for the faith once delivered, exposing the enemies of God and their satanic agenda to destroy the church, while continuing to win souls for Christ by keeping His precious mission alive and well.

Jude teaches us that as Christians, it is our job to expose these creeping and ungodly men for what they are and what they are trying to accomplish, comparing their devilish deeds to the true grace, mercy, and teachings of Christ Jesus.

*Continued on page 12*

The

GOSPEL



GLEANER

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

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## The Kingdom of Christ

Owen Olbricht

Jesus began to reign over the universe when He returned to heaven. He is now ruling over all heaven and earth. He will continue to reign at the right hand of the Father until He returns to raise and judge the dead. After this He will return the kingdom to the Father.

Jesus' reign was prophesied before He came, preached while He was on earth, and written about after He ascended to the Father.

### Prophesied

Nebuchadnezzar saw in a dream a great statue. Daniel explained the four parts of the statue as being four kingdoms:

**Head of Gold – Babylon**

**Chest and Arms of Silver – Medo-Persia**

**Belly and Thighs of Brass – Macedonia, Greece**

**Iron Legs and Feet of Iron and Clay – Rome**

The fourth kingdom was one kingdom (not one that in recent years divided into 10 different governments being represented by the toes, as is popularly taught today). Daniel stated, "And as the toes of the feet were partly of iron and partly of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile." He does not say the toes will be divided into 10 kingdoms but stated that "the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile" (Daniel 2:42).

The interpretation of the image was that God would set up His kingdom during the fourth kingdom. "In the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed" (Daniel 2:44). Thus, the kingdom of God would be established during the Roman Empire. This was why the people of Israel were in expectation, thinking John might be the Christ (Luke 3:15). The scribes, who explained scripture to the people, realized that the

fourth kingdom was the Roman kingdom.

In a later vision Daniel saw a person like "the son of man" who ascended before the Ancient of days (God) and was given a kingdom and dominion over all peoples (Daniel 7:13, 14). In fulfillment, Jesus, Who was called "the son of man," like the person in Daniel's vision, ascended into heaven, instead of descending to the earth, to receive His kingdom.

### At Hand, Near

As long as Jesus was on earth, His kingdom was at hand, near, and about to come.

- John preached, "Repent, the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:1-2).
- "Jesus began to preach and to say, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand'" (Matthew 4:17).
- Jesus sent the twelve to preach, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 10:7).
- He sent seventy others to preach, "The kingdom of God has come near to you" (Luke 10:7, 9).

The kingdom being near was so certain that Jesus told the people and his disciples (Mark 8:24), "Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God present with power" (Mark 9:1). The kingdom that was near was clearly the kingdom of God, and it would come in the lifetime of Jesus' listeners.

If the kingdom of God was not near after the eighty-four persons preached that it was near, every one of them would have been false prophets, including John and Jesus. If this were true, forget about Jesus and Christianity! Throw your Bible out the window and forget about it!

### The Kingdom Came

Jesus began His reign when He ascended into heaven. Paul wrote concerning God's work, "...according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named...And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church" (Ephesians 1:19b-22).

Paul's phrasing reflects the wording in Daniel, which stated that one like the son of man would ascend to the Father and receive dominion and a kingdom (Daniel 7:13, 14). Jesus fulfilled this prophecy: when He ascended to the Father and began His reign.

Just before Jesus ascended, He stated that all authority in heaven and earth was given to Him (Matthew 28:18). He then ascended to the right hand of God, from which He now reigns and will continue to reign until He returns (see Psalm 110:16; Matthew 22:44; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42; Mark 16:19; Acts 2:33, 34; Romans 8:34; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Peter 3:22).

Presently, Jesus reigns over everything, except the Father who put all things in subjection under Him (1 Corinthians 15:27).

Christians in the first century (and all who have since become Christians) were delivered from darkness and conveyed or transferred into Jesus' kingdom (Acts 26:17, 18; Colossians 1:13), which is also evidence that Jesus' kingdom existed when Paul wrote the letter to the Colossians.

John stated, Jesus "...has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father" (Revelation 1:6; NASB). At present, through baptism, when we are

born again of the water and spirit, we enter the kingdom of God (John 3:3-5).

### At the End

Jesus' rule over all heaven and earth became a reality when He ascended to the right hand of the Father and will continue to be a reality until He comes again.

On the great day when Jesus returns, Jesus will raise the dead and heaven and earth will be destroyed and be no more (2 Peter 3:10, 11; Revelation 20:11).

Following this, Jesus will judge the dead and the living (John 5:22; 2 Timothy 4:1; Revelation 20:11).

He will separate the evil from the good (Matthew 25:31-33) and gather the cursed evil ones out of His kingdom and cast them into the fire (Matthew 13:33-42, 47-50; Matthew 25:41, 46).

The righteous ones will be blessed and shine as the sun in the kingdom of the Father (Matthew 13:43; 25:34, 46).

When Jesus returns and separates the wicked from the righteous, this will be the end of the world or age as Jesus taught (Matthew 13:39, 40, 47-50) and as Paul wrote: "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts the end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. For He has put all things under His feet" (1 Corinthians 15:22-27).

Jesus now reigns over all heaven and earth, and will reign until He comes again. When He comes again, His reign will end, for He will return the kingdom to the Father. He will then be subject to the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24-28).

### Conclusion

Daniel prophesied of the kingdom coming in the days of the Roman Em-

pire. John, Jesus, the twelve apostles, and Jesus' seventy disciples testified that Jesus' rule over God's kingdom was near.

Jesus began His reign when He ascended to the Father. Ten days later He extended His kingdom to earth with power on the day of Pentecost (Mark 9:1; Acts 1:8; 2:1, 4), making possible heavenly citizenship in the kingdom (Philippians 3:20) for those who are born again (John 3:3-5).

The earthly part of His kingdom is the church, which is comprised of the citizens of His kingdom. All others are aliens to His kingdom and will be removed at the time of harvest (Matthew 13:39-41).

Jesus now reigns in His universal kingdom and will reign until His return, at which time He will return the kingdom to the Father. The citizens of His kingdom will then shine as the sun in the kingdom of the Father (Matthew 13:43). The sons of the devil will be cast into the fire (Matthew 13:42).

Many preachers use the highly symbolic Revelation chapter 20 to teach that Jesus will reign on earth a thousand years. Symbolically, the saints will reign with Jesus a thousand years, but this does not reveal how long Jesus' reign be —1,000 or 10,000 years. Moreover, nothing is said about the reign being on earth. Revelation 20 should not be interpreted to contradict plain Bible teaching that Jesus is now reigning and will reign until He returns.

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## God's Word "Fulfilled"

John T. Polk, II

Fulfilled Bible prophecy is one of the main proofs that the Scriptures are the inspired Word of God, because only God could make such precise, detailed predictions regarding future events.

To "fulfill" means a person or event has met all the conditions or requirements stated.

- In Matthew 3:13-16, there was no "righteousness" Jesus did not complete in His baptism.
- In Matthew 5:17-18, there was no part of the Law of Moses Jesus did not complete in His life under that Law.
- In Philippians 2:2, Paul's "joy" in the Philippians would be completed by their unity.
- In Colossians 1:24-28, the gospel brings Gentiles into the church and completes "the mystery" of God's Word.
- From Colossians 4:16-17 and 2 Timothy 4:5, we learn that a study of all Scripture would let Archippus, Timothy (and all preachers!) preach complete lessons.
- In 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12, we find the prayerful hope of Paul was that the Thessalonians would completely obey Jesus Christ.
- Only the virgin birth of Jesus Christ "fulfilled" the prophecy of it (Matthew 1:20-23), and the phrase kept that meaning in the New Testament, especially in Matthew (see 2:14-15, 22-23; 4:13-16; 8:16-17; 12:14-21; 13:34-35; 21:1-11; 26:47-56; 27:35).

### Bible Prophecy Is Verbally-Inspired

Each word of Scripture was selected from the writer's vocabulary and correctly guided onto the writing surface by the power of the Holy Spirit. Clearly this is claimed for the writers of the Old Testament in 2 Peter 1:16-21 and for writers of the New Testament in 1 Corinthians 2:9-16.

Peter claimed gospel facts were substantiated by: (1) eyewitnesses, and; (2) the fulfillment of those prophecies being accurately given by the Holy Spirit.

Paul said: (1) there is no knowledge of a spirit, God's or man's, without it being revealed by that spirit; (2) the inspired writers had "the mind of Christ" freely given to them by God; and (3) that it was taught and written in words not of man's wisdom but the Holy Spirit's choosing.

There is no such thing as fulfillment of prophecy unless both the prophecy and its fulfillment are accurately recorded down to the very wording of it. So argued Paul regarding the "seed" promised to Abraham. Observe: "Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, 'And to seeds,' as of many, but as of one, 'And to your Seed,' who is Christ" (Galatians 3:16).

God's original promise to Abraham is recorded as, "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice" (Genesis 22:18). There is no argument about the Hebrew word "seed" that can make that promise apply to the Israelites, Levites, or anyone before Jesus Christ. If this argument is not true, then there is no provision in God's promise for Christians, for those baptized into Christ "have put on Christ" and "are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:26,29).

If we had no verbal record of the promise, there could be no visible fulfillment in Christ. If there is no visible fulfillment in Christ, there is no such thing as being saved by faith in Jesus Christ!

### **"Only the Bible Has Recorded History So Accurately."**

The late Robert Dick Wilson, master of 45 Bible-related languages, observed: "The Hebrew Scriptures [here referring to Genesis 14] contain the names of 26 or more foreign kings whose names have been found on documents contemporary with the kings. The names of most of these kings are found to be spelled on

their own monuments, or in documents from the time in which they reigned in the same manner that they are spelled in the documents of the Old Testament" (*A Scientific Investigation of the Old Testament*, p.64).

Commenting on Daniel, Ezra, and Esther, Wilson said, "Thus we see that every one of the 22 consonants composing the names of the kings of Persia mentioned in the Bible has been transmitted correctly to us over a space 2300 or 2400 years. It may be added that in no other non-Persian documents are they so accurately transliterated" (ibid, page 69).

To conclude this point, hear Wilson again: "Thus we find that in 143 cases of transliteration from Egyptian, Assyrian, Babylonian and Moabite into Hebrew and in 40 cases of the opposite, or 184 in all, the evidence shows that for 2300 to 3900 years the text of the proper names in the Hebrew Bible has been transmitted with the most minute accuracy" (ibid, page 71). And, "No stronger evidence for the substantial accuracy of the Old Testament records could possibly be imagined than this collection of names of kings" (ibid, page 75).

The Bible accurately records numerology, geography, history, topography, genealogy, as well as lessons, miracles, teaching, and ritual – and there is no reason to disbelieve any part of it!

### **On-Going Revelation**

There is absolutely no promise in the Bible that there will be on-going revelations given from God to mankind. The Bible is a complete and finished statement.

Jesus said His words that He spoke "are spirit, and *they* are life" (John 6:63); that His word spoken, if anyone rejects it, "will judge him in the last day" (John 12:48); and that all nations must be taught "to observe all things that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:20).

Jesus never anticipated that there would be any other revelation that superseded the one He gave through His apostles, to whom Jesus gave the Holy

Spirit to "teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you" (John 14:26).

Any claimant of Holy Spirit gifts, real or imagined, can only "acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord" (1 Corinthians 14:37).

It is only by this written Word of God that all are challenged to: "Examine yourselves *as to* whether you are in the faith. Prove yourselves" (2 Corinthians 13:5). Paul commanded Timothy to "Preach the word" (2 Timothy 4:2). There never was any question as to which "word" Paul meant.

God is a Friend to everyone who listens and heeds, and is a Foe to all who live in unbelief (Romans 2:1-11; 11:22).

God never condemns righteousness and only the Devil would claim that God does (Genesis 3:1-13).

It is the Devil who makes men too sensitive to the light of God's word, so that they will not obey it (John 3:18-21; 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12; 2 Corinthians 4:3-6).

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## Original Sin

Ernest S. Underwood

*"And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."*

It should be the desire of everyone who claims to love God to *know* the truth.

In his book *The Gospel for Today* the late Foy E. Wallace, Jr. wrote, "Error preached, error heard, and error believed cannot result in the truth obeyed. No man can accidentally obey God. The truth preached, the truth believed, and the truth obeyed makes a Christian. Nothing else does. How important, therefore, is the word of God, and how careful men should be in their handling of it." (p. 107.)

We believe that brother Wallace has correctly stated the crux of the matter for man and his salvation. It is the case that one doctrinal sin can and does lead to other destructive doctrinal sins. Certainly this is the case with the false doctrine of "Original Sin."

The belief in the doctrine of original sin with its attendant doctrine, "Total Depravity" is the study to be made in this article. This doctrine, and the other false doctrines that it spawns, involves a wide range of false doctrines held by men today.

The belief in this doctrine, having its origin with the apostate Roman Catholic Church and not the Word of God is the natural catalyst which demands the belief in many other false doctrines. It was his belief in this doctrine of original sin that caused John Calvin to set forth his well-known acrostic - T. U. L. I. P.

Each of the points of this acrostic depends upon the other, and all of them depend upon the doctrine of original sin. Yet, none of them depend upon the Word of God, nor can any of them be sustained by that Word. These doctrines are:

T - Total Depravity;

U - Unconditional Election;

L - Limited Atonement;

I - Irresistible grace;

P - Perseverance of the saints.

### The Doctrine Stated

In *The Baptist Confession of Faith - 1869 Updated English* with notes, by, Peter Masters, on pages 17-18, Number 6, under the heading of "The Fall of Man, Sin and Its Punishment" in items 2-4 the following is found.

"2. Our first parents by this sin [Adam's] fell from their original righteousness and communion with God, and we in them. [We fell with them, as a race.] For from this, death came upon all: all becoming dead in sin and wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body.

"3. They being the root, and by God's appointment, standing in the room and stead [the place] of all mankind, the guilt of this sin was imputed [ascribed], and their corrupted nature conveyed, to all their posterity descending from them by ordinary generation [birth]. Their descendants are therefore conceived in sin, and are by nature the children of wrath, the servants of sin, and the subjects of death and all other miseries, spiritual, temporal, and eternal, unless the Lord Jesus sets them free.

"4. All actual transgressions proceed from this original corruption, by which we are utterly indisposed [rendered unfit for good], disabled, and made opposite [averse and antagonistic] to all good and wholly inclined to all evil."

There are two other statements which will perhaps give the reader a more down-to-earth definition of this doctrine.

"The sinfulness of that estate whereunto man fell, consists in the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of his whole

nature, which is commonly called original sin" (*The Westminster Shorter Catechism*, page 10).

"That man is totally depraved is evident from his being a child of the devil -- fathered by the devil, of the same moral nature, without salvation, destined to the same hell to which the devil is destined" (*Gospel in Water*, by Dr. W. A. Jarrell, pp. 251, 252).

These three statements of definition of the doctrine of original sin, as given by the different authors, clearly affirm that the doctrine is scriptural, and that it applies to every person born since Adam. The doctrine, as stated, also affirms that the described condition is the actual and real condition of that person at the moment of his or her birth. Some even say that it is at the moment of conception. In short, it simply means that your child, even at the moment of conception, was infused with the moral nature of Satan, being destined at that moment to the "same hell to which the devil is destined."

### Proof-Texts

One of the proof-texts that is given by those who believe this doctrine is Ephesians 2:1-3 which states, "And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others."

It is claimed that the phrase "were by nature the children of wrath" is proof that one is born totally depraved, or born with original sin.

However, as one analyzes the passage such a doctrine is not found. First,

Paul is writing to Gentiles who, before they obeyed the gospel, were dead in their own trespasses and sins. They were in this condition because they "walked according to the course of this world."

No Adamic sin can be found here. These Gentiles chose the path they were walking in and it wasn't until they heard the gospel that they changed their choice, and it should be noted that they changed when they chose to obey the gospel which Paul had preached to them (Ephesians 19 & 20).

When this choice was made they were made alive in Christ. No longer were they conducting themselves "in the lust of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind. No longer were they following the "long habit," (the meaning of, according to the Greek scholars), the Greek word that is translated "nature," but were now in Christ. (Ephesians 2:6).

Another proof text for this doctrine is Psalm 51:5. In the New International Version this verse reads: "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me."

By translating this passage in this manner, the translators indict Jesus of Nazareth. If "we fell with them [Adam and Eve] as a race" as stated in the definition above, then it would be necessary to believe that Jesus Himself was born in sin and a sinner. The false doctrine of the immaculate conception of Mary would not remove His being born in the human race, and thus, a sinner at conception or at birth.

Considering further, if the doctrine of original sin is true, then it necessitates that one must believe in the doctrine of total depravity. If this is true, and it is, it means that man in his total depravity is unable to do any good, even the good of coming to Christ. After all, he is totally depraved and according to the doctrine itself, he is incapable of doing even one good thing.

Thus, if he is to come to God he must be irresistibly drawn to God by the unconditional election of His bestowing

that grace, yea, even forcing it upon the individual.

And, as the doctrine goes, since God unconditionally elected the individual, forced His grace upon him, then it is totally and utterly impossible for that individual to fall from that grace even if he desired to do so. Sam Morris, a Baptist preacher of years ago, truly expresses the logical consequences of the doctrine of the impossibility of apostasy. His statement, to this writer, is nothing short of blasphemy. He wrote:

"We take the position that a Christian's sins do not damn his soul! The way a Christian lives, what he says, his character, his conduct, or his attitude toward other people have nothing whatever to do with the salvation of his soul...All the prayers a man may pray, all the Bibles he may read, all the churches he may belong to, all the services he may attend, all the sermons he may practice, all the debts he may pay, all the ordinances he may observe, all the laws he may keep, all the benevolent acts he may perform will not make his soul one whit safer; and all the sins he may commit from idolatry to murder will not make his soul in any more danger...The way a man lives has nothing whatever to do with the salvation of his soul."

Though this writer has known some people who espoused the doctrines of original sin, total depravity, unconditional election, irresistible grace, and perseverance of the saints (impossibility of apostasy), he has also known some of them who did not agree with Mr. Morris' statement.

However, Morris accurately stated the actual consequences of the doctrine. In short, if the doctrines mentioned above are true, Morris' statement would also be true! Who can believe such doctrines, and, why would one even want to believe them?

The Word of God teaches no such doctrine. Let us stay with it and with Him.

\*\*\*\*\*

## **"WHOM DO MEN SAY THAT I THE SON OF MAN AM?"**

Max R. Miller  
(1925-2001)

*"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power" (Colossians 2:8-10).*

Who is this Jesus? Was He merely a lowly carpenter of Nazareth? Was He God? Was He the only begotten Son of God? Was He really from heaven? Was He only a good man blessed of God in unusual ways? Was He a real flesh and blood human being, or a ghost-like phantom figure? Who was this Jesus of Nazareth?

### **A Controversial Question**

Throughout the Christian Age the true identity of this holy character has been a great controversy. To the wise men of the East and even Herod himself, Jesus, born at Bethlehem, was only an earthly king. Pontus Pilate asked of Him if He was a king, and received little for his inquiry.

Controversy followed the man of Nazareth everywhere He went. Pharisees and Sadducees, strongest of the religious leaders of Israel, denied the true nature of Jesus. Rather than accept Him as King of the Jews and the only begotten Son of God, they crucified Him. These of New Testament times, passed on, others came and passed on, but the controversy about the person of Jesus Christ has continued until this day.

The Ebionites of the second century denied the divine nature of Jesus Christ. To them, Jesus was the son of Joseph and Mary, who so completely fulfilled the Jewish law that God chose Him to be the Messiah. He would come again to found a Messianic kingdom for the Jews. Along with them, the Docetists

also denied the Lord's true nature. They deemed Him to be "only seemingly (docetic) human" (an apparition, ghost-like appearance). They taught that His body seemed to be flesh and blood. He seemed to suffer. His tears of pain and sorrows were apparent, not real. He appeared to be a man of flesh, bone and blood-but what seemed to be real was not real at all. Docetics denied His humanity.

### The Gnostic Heresy

We here give attention to an even more dangerous sect that denied the true nature of Jesus – the Gnostics. Gnosticism was pre-Christian in its origin, and was in existence before Christianity came into the world. The height of its influence was from about 135 to 160 AD, though it continued a force long afterward. Gnosticism threatened to overwhelm the Christian faith, and brought the gravest crisis to the church since the Paul's battle for freedom from the Law of Moses.

The term Gnosticism is derived from the Greek word *gnosis* (knowledge). Through mystic, supernatural knowledge Gnostics were brought to a true understanding of the universe, and were saved from the evil world of matter. By that mystic endowment of knowledge Gnostics attained to the realm of perfect Light. This knowledge and its source were believed superior to the Gospel of Christ.

Gnostics taught that sparks, or seeds of the Divine Being, fell from this transcendent realm of Light into the material universe, which is wholly evil, and dwelt in human bodies. Reawakened by knowledge, the divine element in humanity can return to its proper home in the transcendent spiritual realm of Light. The end and object of Gnosticism was to purify its followers from the corruption of matter, and to raise them to a higher order of being, suited only to those who were made perfect by knowledge.

Gnostics taught the existence of two gods. One was the god of Light who sent Christ into the world; the other, the

Demiurge, was the creator of the world of matter. All matter was evil. The Demiurge, the God of biblical creation (Genesis 1:1-2) could not be the high and good God, the God of Light, but an inferior and imperfect being.

Gnostics denied the divine spirit touched evil, material human flesh. Therefore, the person of Christ could not be a composition of material elements. To them, Christ was totally a spirit being, a subordinate spirit, one of the angels, that emanated from the High God of Light.

He had not come "in the flesh," but in ghost-like, Docetic appearance. Christ did, indeed, appear. He taught His disciples but as a heavenly being, not one of flesh and blood. Gnostics denied the humanity of Christ.

### Jesus Came in the Flesh

The apostle Paul stated, in the face of rising Gnosticism, "For in him [Jesus Christ] dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 2:9). His compass of the ministry of Jesus Christ-from heaven to earth and back to the heavenly is stated fully: "Without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory" (1 Timothy 3:16).

About the years A. D. 85-90, John writes his Gospel and his First Epistle. He begins his Gospel by stating clearly: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:1, 14).

John's First Epistle begins with the testimony of an intimate bosom companion of Jesus who declared, we (John and other apostles) heard Him with our own ears, we have seen Him with our own eyes, and we have handled His fleshly body with our own hands (1 John 1:1-3).

John boldly incriminates those who deny that Christ came in the flesh as liars and antichrists. Hear him:

- "And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world" (1 John 4:3).
- "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son" (1 John 2:22).
- "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time" (1 John 2:18).
- "For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist" (2 John 7).

John identifies Jesus, born of the virgin Mary, conceived in her womb by the Holy Spirit of God, as the Immanuel of prophecy (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:19-25).

This Immanuel (God with us) is "the image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15). For "in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead [deity] bodily" (Colossians 2:9).

### Jesus Is the True Light

Furthermore, John refutes the growing menaces of Gnosticism by identifying the true Light. John turns the word light, as misused by the Gnostics, against them and their heresy. Rather than Light being the god above the God of Creation, he shows the true Light is the God of Creation: "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5).

Jesus Christ said of Himself, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12).

Paul urged Timothy to keep the commandments "of our Lord Jesus Christ...Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto..." (1 Timothy 6:14-16).

The children of God walk in the light with the God of Light (1 John 1:5-7).

There is no darkness in the God of the apostles, neither is there darkness in the children of the true God of light. "Ye are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14-16).

God's children are made to be "partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light...delivered from the power of darkness...translated into the kingdom of his dear son" (Colossians 1:12-14).

His children are a "chosen generation...called out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9). "Ye [Christians] are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness" (1 Thessalonians 5:5).

Paul praises the God of heaven "who commanded the light to shine out of darkness [who] hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Corinthians 4:6). The children of God are to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Ephesians 5:11).

### Paul's Summary of Jesus

The apostle Paul summed up the fullness of divinity in Jesus Christ as he wrote to the Philippian saints, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:5-11).

Christians may ever be grateful for the God of love, who sent the light of His Son Jesus Christ to seek and save

the lost, delivering them from the captivity of Satan and darkness and giving them the light of life. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be made rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9).

The Holy Spirit in God's Holy Book reveals to us the truth and knowledge of Immanuel, God manifest in the flesh. This is He who gives life and light to His faithful disciples. For He "hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Timothy 1:9-10).

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## KNOW YOUR BIBLE

Stephen R. Bradd

### Count It All Joy

"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience" (James 1:2-3).

What does James mean here? Let's start with some definitions. A **trial** is an affliction or outward difficulty where you may be tested. **Temptation**, on the other hand, is the inner desire to sin. These words are often closely related, but there is a distinction.

Allow me to illustrate. Let's say a driver pulls out in front of you and causes a terrible accident. You are not injured, but your new car is totaled! At that moment, you are in the midst of a **trial**; this difficulty will test you. You may also be facing an inner **temptation** to get out of your car and curse at the driver or punch him in the face. Or maybe you just want to swear under your breath. Whether or not you actually do any of those things depends upon how strong you are spiritually. But, do you see the difference between the two terms? A **trial** is an affliction or **outward** test, but **temptation** is that **inner** desire to commit sin.

Now, does James really mean that we should **rejoice** when in the midst of difficult and trying situations – **always**? Yes, that's exactly what he means (cf. Philippians 4:4)! But, how can a person find joy in such situations?

You might be thinking, "Stephen, if someone smashes up my car, I'm going to have a hard time praising God for it! I might not give in to temptation and commit sin, but I definitely won't be rejoicing!" But friend, shouldn't you be rejoicing? Shouldn't you praise God that only your car was damaged and you've been nothing more than inconvenienced? Putting things in perspective and count-

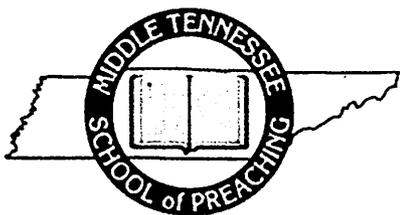
ing one's blessings always helps in these situations. God is still good, even when your car is wrecked (cf. Job 1:20-22).

We must understand "that the testing of [our] faith produces patience" (James 1:3). Our faith is tested when we are confronted by trials, whether it is a wrecked car, a lost job, or a loved one's passing. Sorrow, sickness, pain, and disappointment--these are all trials--and they present us with the opportunity to react improperly and commit sin by giving in to temptation. But, that is not what God wants us to do! He wants us to react properly and resist sin. He wants us to know that there is a point to life's struggles, and the purpose is not to cause us to stumble but to help us mature and grow stronger--to help us produce patience (i.e., steadfastness, active endurance).

The joy is not necessarily in the trial itself, but in the fact that enduring trials properly will make us stronger. As an athlete willingly embraces painful training in order to increase his strength and endurance, so also must the Christian welcome trials as useful and necessary to increase his spiritual might.

Every trial we are presented with will either make us stronger, if we endure it righteously, or weaker, if we succumb to sin. Each trial is a test of our faith and is like a big stone that's been dropped in our path. Are you going to trip over that stone and fall, or are you going to use it as a stepping-stone to maturity? The choice is yours: choose joy!

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## Honoring Batsell Baxter

James R. McGill

Batsell Baxter (1886-1956) was a leader in Christian higher education for much of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. He was also a fine Bible teacher, a skilled writer, and a faithful gospel preacher.

He was born in Sherman, Texas. He became a Christian there in 1895, during one of the longest gospel meetings ever conducted. In that soul-saving effort, T. B. Larimore preached daily and nightly for almost six months, resulting in many baptized into Christ for the remission of their sins.

When Baxter's father abandoned the family, and the household became a single-parent home, Batsell took on an added measure of responsibility in helping his mother.

Baxter attended the Nashville Bible School from 1908 to 1911. This school, founded in 1891 by James A. Harding and David Lipscomb, was renamed David Lipscomb College after the death of its co-founder in 1917. It was during these student years that Baxter did his first preaching, in Nashville.

### The Baxter Family

In 1912, at age 26, Baxter married Frances Scott. The Baxters had one child, a son, Batsell Barrett Baxter, born in Cordell, Oklahoma, in 1916. Because of their name similarity, the two are easily confused. The Baxters were married for twenty-eight years until her death in 1940. Batsell Baxter was a widower for the last sixteen years of his life.

Baxter's career as a leader in Christian education began (after receiving a B. A. from Texas Christian and an M. A. from Baylor) by serving first as the dean of Cordell Christian College in Oklahoma. Then, two years later, he became the dean of Thorpe Spring Christian College near Ft. Worth. Next, he was at Abilene Christian from 1919 to 1932,

the last eight of those years as president of the college

He was then called to Nashville to become president of Lipscomb. The college was in a crisis. Baxter was president there from 1932 to 1934. These were perhaps the bleakest years of the decade-long Great Depression. Besides that, the campus had suffered fire losses. The worst loss was the women's dormitory fire. Besides suffering burns, some students suffered other injuries when they were forced to jump from the upper stories to escape the fire.

### Firmness and Humility

The qualities of firmness and humility may be what people observed most about Baxter. His firmness is illustrated by what occurred at his first meeting with the school faculty as Lipscomb's new president in 1932:

"Because of our severe financial situation," Baxter said, "effective immediately, I am cutting the salary of each instructor in half." The irate teachers said immediately that his proposal was unacceptable.

President Baxter's response: "This is the alternative: I have here the keys to the college; I am prepared to shut the college down this afternoon." It took little time for the faculty to realize that a half-salary was better than no salary.

### Founding Pepperdine College

In 1934, after returning to teach Bible at Abilene Christian, and then back to Lipscomb in 1937 for a very short time as vice-president, Baxter responded that same year to a call from Los Angeles to become the founding president of Pepperdine. Within months of Baxter's first meeting with George Pepperdine and Hugh Tiner in February, 1937, they bought the land, constructed the campus buildings, employed the faculty, and welcomed the first student body in September! The school was awarded accreditation as a four-year college during its first year of operation.

After launching Pepperdine successfully, Baxter went next to Harding Col-

lege in Searcy, Arkansas, as Bible instructor. Then, in 1943, he was called back to Nashville to serve as president of Lipscomb once again. He remained there for the rest of his life, serving as president until 1946, and then, for the final ten years of his life, as Bible department chairman.

### The Closing Years

Batsell Baxter's son, who was also teaching at Lipscomb during those years, had this to say about his companionship with his father:

"During the last half-dozen years of his life, as we taught together at Lipscomb, we arranged our lunch schedules so as to have two hours free, time enough for us to go off-campus to eat lunch together. The conversations, going, coming and during the meals, as we talked of anything and everything, were among the richest experiences of my life. Somewhat lonely during the last sixteen years of his life, after my mother's death, he looked forward to these daily visits at lunchtime."

Brother Baxter died Sunday evening, March 4, 1956, after suffering a stroke in the afternoon. He had taught his regular Sunday Bible class that morning. He was 69.

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*Continue from the Editorial:*

As God's people, let us gratefully and sincerely appreciate all that He is willing to do for us. Let us live according to the teachings of the Holy Spirit, while faithfully and accurately depicting the glorious Christ in an ungodly world.

*"Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to God our Savior, who alone is wise, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen" (Jude 24-25).*

Andrew D. Erwin

## This Month in Restoration History

**October 15-21, 1823** – Alexander Campbell debated W.L. McCalla (Presbyterian). This debate was held in Washington, Kentucky and the subject and mode of baptism was discussed. It was in this debate that Campbell introduced the scriptures which teach baptism for the remission of sins as a means of answering infant baptism. Campbell's two debates with Presbyterians convinced him that "a week's debating is worth a year's preaching."

**October 5, 1829** – Alexander Campbell serves as a delegate for the Virginia Constitutional Convention.

**October 1851** – Alexander Campbell writes in the *Harbinger* that instrumental music in worship would be "like a cowbell in a concert."

**October 20, 1878** – Benjamin Franklin preaches his final sermon. He dies two days later.

**October 5, 1891** – David Lipscomb and James A. Harding begin the Nashville Bible School.

**October 8, 1901** – James A. Harding begins Potter Bible College in Bowling Green, KY. The college opens with 107 students. This school closed in 1913.

**October 1901** – McGarvey resigns as an elder of the Broadway congregation in Lexington, KY, due to deafness. On Nov. 2, 1902, this congregation introduced the instrument, causing McGarvey to leave and place membership with the Chestnut Street congregation.

**October 5, 1911** – J.W. McGarvey passes away.

**October 16-October 31, 1938** – The fourth Ryman Meeting with N.B. Hardeman occurred in Nashville, TN. The Tabernacle Sermons at the Ryman Auditorium would become the highlight of Hardeman's preaching career. A series of five meetings in all were held.

**October 6-9, 1947** – James D. Bales debates Woosley Teller on the existence of God.

**October 7-14, 1962** – Willard Collins conducts an area-wide meeting in the newly built Nashville Municipal Auditorium.

## Read the New Testament Every Month

(A Suggested Plan)

Robert L. Waggoner

<u>Day</u>	<u>Scriptures</u>	<u>Minutes</u>
1.	Luke 1 – 5	27
2.	Luke 6 – 11	34
3.	Luke 12 – 18	29
4.	Luke 19 – 24	31
5.	Acts 1 – 7	28
6.	Acts 8 – 14	31
7.	Acts 15 – 21	31
8.	Acts 22 – 28	29
9.	Romans 1 – 11	35
10.	Romans 12 – 16	13
	1, 2 Thessalonians	14
11.	1, 2 Timothy; Titus	24
12.	Ephesians, Philippians	26
13.	Mark 1 – 5	20
	Mark 6 – 9	20
14.	Mark 10 – 16	32
15.	1, 2 Peter; Colossians	31
16.	Galatians, James	27
17.	Matthew 1 – 9	29
18.	Matthew 10 -14	26
19.	Matthew 15 – 22	27
20.	Matthew 23 - 28	30
21.	Hebrews	35
22.	1 Corinthians 1 – 10	27
23.	1 Corinthians 11 – 16	20
24.	2 Corinthians	30
25.	Phil, Jude, 1, 2, 3 John	20
26.	John 1 – 6	29
27.	John 7 – 12	31
28.	John 13 – 21	34
29.	Revelation 1 – 11	26
30.	Revelation 12 – 22	29
<b>Total Reading Minutes</b>		<b>875</b>
<b>Average Daily Minutes</b>		<b>29</b>

**Note:** Whenever a month has 31 days, Mark 1 - 9 may be read in two days, with the exception that since February has only 28 days, January and March must each give a day to February.

You might prefer to read the books of the New Testament in the order they are arranged in the Bible. That's fine although not essential. The reading schedule suggested here is intended to optimize learning. It does the following:

- Books written by the same authors are listed together (except for Paul's writings). These are:
  - Gospel of Luke and Acts of Apostles - Since they introduce Jesus and his church, they begin the monthly reading.
  - Paul's ministerial letters to Timothy & Titus
  - Mark's Gospel is often associated with the Apostle Peter and is therefore placed before 1 & 2 Peter.
  - Gospel of John, 1, 2, & 3 John, and Book of Revelation conclude the monthly reading.
- Books that are similar are intentionally listed separately for reading at different times during the month – to enable contents of each to be more distinctive in the mind of the reader. These are:
  - The Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John (One Gospel is read each week.)
  - Prison epistles: Ephesians and Colossians
  - Epistles on the law and the gospel: Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews.

This reading schedule is designed to consume an average of about thirty minutes of daily reading time. (This is not speed reading. Minutes listed are times it took me to read orally each day's Scriptures.) You may require a little more or a little less reading time.

You might prefer a different reading schedule. If so, design one that best suits your needs. In any case, your balanced reading of God's word will more likely be accomplished if you make plans for it.

**SUGGESTION FOR CHURCH LEADERS:** Print the suggested monthly reading schedule (as given in the left hand column) on one side of a book marker. On the other side, print the meeting schedules and contact information about your local congregation. Distribute these widely to friends and neighbors. Rationale (as given above on the right side) for reading New Testament documents in the order given above could be published in a church bulletin. Encourage everyone to spend much time reading their Bibles. Our nation has turned away from God because our people have lost knowledge of God's word. When people are acquainted with God's word, they are more inclined to follow Godly values.

## -It's a Given-

Ron Thomas

Some years ago, I wrote an article on what I noticed were some interesting employment requirements for many of the churches. In other words, it appeared, at the time that there were many churches interested in male candidates for the position of preacher, youth minister, or family minister, but in those requirements little was said about what is really important: one who is well-informed concerning what the Scriptures teach, or words that are equivalent to this. I am not sure that which I noticed a number of years ago had really changed.

For instance, a church in the north-western part of West Virginia had an expectation list that totaled over 600 words; the word "Bible" was used twice. Someone might reply, "so what!" Well, that may not be an important indicator to you, but to me, as I looked at the 600 plus word description and expectation, that was a problem. I would expect the word "Bible," "Scripture," or something equivalent to be used more often than it was, indicating something of significant importance in the use of the word or idea. Not even the language of the description and expectation left me with the impression that there was a heavy emphasis upon being biblically sound or knowing the Bible.

"It's a given," someone might reply. Perhaps, but because so often "it is a given" we have many churches departing from Scripture's moorings and floating in the sea of confusion and uncertainty.

There is no surprise in this; the Bible teaches as much when Paul said,

"I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doc-

trine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables. But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry" (2 Timothy 4:1-5, NKJV).

Let us briefly note a few things. First, God's preacher will stand before God, if he loses sight of the destination while contributing to the steering of the local congregation, the ship upon which he rides will have its knot loosen and begin to drift.

Second, God's preacher is to preach the word. If there is anything of importance in "youth" ministry or "pulpit" ministry, it is in preaching God's word. Whatever organizational skills may be lacking, let not God's word be lacking.

Third, in order to be ready on every occasion, God's preacher must know the word; this takes time – a lot of it.

Fourth, some people are not interested in hearing God's word, but they are interested in hearing other things. Thus, God's preacher must stand ready to correct and reshape a person's thinking.

Fifth, God's preacher must pay particular attention to his own anchor (complementing the first point), understand and be willing to endure much affliction (a study of Jeremiah is helpful along this line).

Sixth, he must carry God's word with him in his heart wherever he goes; he is to be ready to give an answer for the hope that lies within him (1 Peter 3:15), and bring his ministry (service, work) to a completion similar to what Paul said he did (2 Timothy 4:7).

Brethren who lose sight of what really is important will bring more harm to the local congregation than is realized. They will not realize it because they will not know what the Lord said concerning such things. It is a given.

## What Can I Do to Win My Unbelieving Husband to Christ?

James Meadows

"Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives; While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear" (1 Peter 3:1-2).

The first use of "word" in our text refers to the Word of God. The second use of "word" refers to the word of the wife. It implies she has been talking to her husband, trying to get him to become a Christian, but it may finally become nagging that just provokes to argument and more resistance. At this point the wife must quit trying to talk to him about this matter and depend upon her "manner of life." The unbelieving husband will "behold" his wife's manner of life, i.e., he will give it "close and minute examination." He must see that being a Christian makes a difference in your life in the home, on the street, on vacation, in relation to people, etc.

The Christian wife must adorn herself properly (1 Peter 3:3-4). Peter does not forbid a woman taking care of her hair, wearing any gold, and putting on clothes, but he does forbid excessive concern for these things. Christians, whether men or women, must always array themselves in garments "befitting their station in life, and the cause which they have espoused," as brother Guy Woods has said.

The unbelieving husband who sees his wife spend considerable time dressing the outward man, but little time studying the Bible, attending Bible classes, and engaging in the Christian works will be little impressed with Christianity. She must show great concern with adorning the "hidden man of the heart with a meek and quiet spirit."

The unbelieving husband who sees his wife truly practice Christianity in all phases of life can be won to Christ.

# Word Studies

Gerald Cowan

## Blessed and Happy

There are many *beatitudes* in scripture. The best known are the beatitudes of Jesus given in Matthew 5:3-12, though there are others spoken by Him or attributed to Him and several by others inspired by God to deliver them.

Most standard translations render the word *MAKARIOS* in the text as *blessed*, but some are not consistent in so doing. Some of the more modern translations and paraphrases render the word as *happy*. This is a shallow, misleading, and inappropriate interpretation (not a proper translation), that cannot be of significant value, especially given the ambiguity of the words *happy* and *happiness* in our language. We will say more about that below.

Perhaps the translator's choice of words is influenced by the modern philosophy which maintains that happiness is the key to everything and that finding happiness justifies everything. Some are sure that every person has a "right to life, liberty, and happiness," or at least the pursuit of happiness. That concept is not biblical, though it is declared by some Bible-believing persons to be in harmony with the Bible.

With regard to life, the Lord who gave it and sustains it can also end it. Instead of guaranteed liberty those who are servants are taught to serve well and faithfully. Everyone can be free from sin by being in Christ, in God. But nobody can ever be free from God. Nobody should expect freedom to be, have, or do whatever it takes to make him happy according to his own definition of happiness.

### Happiness and Blessedness Are Not the Same

Our English words *happy* and *happiness* come from the root *hap*, which means *chance*. It is not something de-

signed or purposed, but rather an event or situation that just happens. Happiness is dependent upon chance, luck, and fortune – good things that are the result of blind chance or lucky choices and not of specific planning or volition.

When whatever happens pleases or benefits the person he can call himself happy. If it does not, it will be viewed as unhappiness. Few words in our language are more ambiguous, therefore essentially meaningless, than the word happy. So it is often trivialized: happiness is a full belly, a warm puppy, easy money, ice cream with no calories. The drug addict might say happiness is a high that never comes down.

Of course some definitions do not seem trivial. Happiness is a loving and faithful mate, parents who love you and love each other, friends and neighbors who are willing to help when you need it. Happiness is peace on earth, with an end to all war. For the spiritual person, happiness is knowing assuredly that God loves you in spite of everything. What would you say? "Happiness is \_\_\_\_\_" (you fill in the blank).

If, as already noted, *happy* is not an appropriate translation of *MAKARIOS*. Why is *blessed* a better word to use? *MAKARIOS* is an evaluation of character, not of circumstances. It conveys the idea that one is worthy of praise and commendation, that one deserves to be approved, applauded, and rewarded – and will be.

In the context we are studying here, the beatitudes of Jesus and others in the New Testament, blessedness is shown to be God's assessment of the person who possesses the stipulated qualities or characteristics. We can paraphrase and clarify it as follows: the person is *praiseworthy*. He is approved and commended by God. He deserves to be rewarded and believes he will be, because God says he will be.

### Happiness Does Not Require Blessedness

When a person knows he has the approval of God, that he is accepted and

will be rewarded by God, he can say, and mean it sincerely, "It is well with my soul. I am *blessed*, and therefore I am *happy*." One who makes Jesus his Lord, thus implementing the beatitudes and other teachings of Christ into his character, enjoys true security and true joy. The righteous one who trusts in the Lord can rejoice; the upright in heart can shout for joy (Psalm 32:10-11).

If true and abiding happiness were a matter of outward circumstances, the apostle Paul should have been among the most miserable men alive. By accepting Christ he lost worldly wealth, position, power, popularity, and prestige – he was anathema to his own countrymen, the Jews. But though he often had weariness, pain, poverty, insults, injury, and imprisonment, what he received from Christ was a treasure that made other things seem like refuse or trash by comparison (Philippians 3:8-13).

In Christ he learned the secret of real contentment as well as true spiritual strength and security (Philippians 4:11-13). He considered himself blessed by God with every spiritual blessing in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:3). He could rejoice and call upon others to rejoice because the supply of God in Christ made all required things possible for him (Phil. 4:13). Was he *happy* in his circumstances? Would he not have changed his circumstances if it were possible? But he was *blessed* in spite of circumstances. His contentment was not approval and satisfaction but rather acceptance, trust in God in spite of circumstances and not because of them.

When Paul said he was *happy* because he was allowed to speak in his own defense and for the cause of Christ for whose sake he was a prisoner (Acts 26:2 KJV), *blessed* would be the better translation of *MAKARIOS*. The same is true for 1 Peter 3:14 and 4:14 where the KJV translates *MAKARIOS* as *happy* when *blessed* would be more appropriate in the context.

The blessed provisions of God gives the persecuted the serenity and ability to accept limitations and situations without resentment and to make effective use of

whatever one has. Blessedness and its consequent happiness is not external but internal, relational and not circumstantial. It is the blessedness of sharing somehow in the nature and glory of the blessed God (2 Peter 1:4). But, as noted before, it is only for those who are in Christ (Ephesians 1:3).

### The World Needs to See the Blessedness of Christians

The world is waiting to see the blessedness of Jesus applied and demonstrated by those who wear His name as Christians. One who knows he is approved, accepted, and blessed by God can be and should be happy.

One may be happy in some sense without knowing or following Christ, but he is not blessed by God and does not deserve to be.

If Christians are not experiencing the blessedness of God, perhaps it is because they have not fully yielded to the Lord, and are not applying the principles of His word in their own lives, and therefore do not deserve to be blessed or happy.

Perhaps, as has been done in other cases (such as baptism and communion), we should transliterate the word *MAKARIOS* instead of translating it. Instead of saying we are *blessed* or *happy*, we could say we are the *makarios* of God. Our contentment, security, stability, and rejoicing would probably attract many others to Him who can make them *makarios* too.

## An Exposition of Romans Chapter Seven

Raymond Elliott

Who was the wretched, miserable, pitiable, unhappy man in Romans 7:24? Was this man Saul, the un-regenerated Pharisee? Or, was this man the re-deemed apostle Paul?

### Romans 6

The apostle Paul wrote in Romans chapter six concerning the person who had become a disciple of the Lord. By using the personal pronoun, he included himself in the following:

- He had “died to sin” and would no longer live as a sinner (v.2).
- He was “baptized into Christ Jesus” (v.3).
- He began to “walk in newness of life” (v. 4).
- The “old man was crucified with Him” (v. 6).
- He was no longer a “slave of sin” (v. 6).
- He had been “freed from sin” (v. 7).
- He was “dead to sin” and “alive unto Christ” (v. 11).
- Sin no longer reigned in his “mortal body” (v. 12).
- Sin had no ruling power over him because he was “under grace” (v. 14).
- He was no longer a slave to sin but a willing, obedient servant of Jesus Christ and righteousness (vv. 16-18).
- Becoming a slave to God, Paul bore “fruit to holiness” (v. 22).

### Romans 7:1-10

In Romans chapter seven Paul speaks of the followers of the Lord as being delivered from the Law of Moses in this manner:

- (1) They were “dead to the law through the body of Christ, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God” (v.4).

- (2) Paul and the Roman brethren were able “to serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter” (v. 6).
- (3) It was under the Law that he learned it was a sin to “covet” and to have all “kinds of forbidden desires” (v.8).
- (4) The commandment was “to bring life” but it actually brought death because sin took advantage of the weakness of his flesh (v.10).

### Romans 8

The apostle continues in chapter eight to describe the life of a Christian who is led by the Spirit of God. In verse one he makes a contrast between what is previously recorded in chapter seven when he writes: “There is therefore NOW no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit” (Emphasis mine).

Paul had been writing about the power of the Law, and its inability to provide freedom and deliverance from sin, which he personified as controlling the life of one under law. The “flesh” can represent the Law because of its nature as well as the body with its passions and appetites, which within themselves are not sinful; only the abuse and misuse of the same.

- Romans 8:2: Paul writes that “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” had made him “free from the law of sin and death.”
- 8:4 declares that he and others did not “walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”
- 8:5: Those who live according to the Spirit, mind the things of the Spirit.
- 8:9: Paul states that the brethren were not of the “flesh” but of the “Spirit” “if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you.”
- 8:10 clearly states, “And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.”
- 8:12 makes it very clear that Christians are debtors but “not to the flesh.”

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- 8:13: "if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live."
- 8:14 declares, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God."

### Related Passages

Paul was no different from children of God today. We all are tempted to sin and in spite of our endeavoring to live for Jesus, we often succumb to sin; but, that is entirely different from sin controlling our lives.

Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 9:27: "But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified" (NKJV). He was able to do that by the strength of the Lord.

In Philippians 4:13, he wrote, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." The apostle Paul exclaimed in Romans 8:6 that to be "spiritually minded", the child of God would have "life and peace" and not turmoil and unhappiness.

He had previously written in Roman 5:1, 2, "Therefore, having been justified by faith we have PEACE with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Emphasis, mine, RE).

His manner of life was known by the brethren in Thessalonica as worthy of emulating. In 2:10 of this letter to the church in that city, he wrote: "You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe."

He could sincerely write to the church of God in Corinth, "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ" (11:1).

In Galatians 2:20 he declared: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I NOW LIVE in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who

loved me and gave Himself for me" (Emphasis, Mine, RE).

In Galatians 5:16, Paul wrote, "I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh." Following the listing of the fruit of the Spirit (vv. 22, 23), he stated in verses 24 and 25, "And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." This is the apostle Paul we know and love for his complete devotion to Jesus Christ and His commitment to His cause, even unto death (2 Timothy 4:6-8).

### Romans 7:13 ff.

I truly believe agreement can be had among us of what has been written previously relative to the saved and Christ-like life of the apostle Paul, and all redeemed disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. And, if the seventh chapter of the book of Romans had concluded with verse 12, there would be no difficulty to be found as we read chapters six and eight regarding the freedom from sin found in Christ.

Of course much has been written as to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, but that is not the burden of this article. The problem at hand is our understanding of Romans 7:13-25.

All my adult life I have been taught that a particular text is to be understood in light of the immediate context of scripture and even in the greater context of an entire book. In our present discussion regarding Paul's statements in Romans 7:13-15, there has to be harmony with chapters 6 and 8, as well as other statements that he wrote in additional books.

The following will not be a scholarly exegesis, but an effort to present my understanding of this difficult passage of scripture. The greatest obstacle is Paul's usage of the personal pronoun "I" in the present tense. Biblical scholars have differed over the centuries regarding this section of Romans chapter 7. Was Paul speaking of his status spiritually while under the Law of Moses or as a Chris-

tian saved by God's grace and cleansed by the blood of His Son Jesus Christ?

Who is this miserable, pitiable, unhappy man mentioned in Romans 7:24? In verse 14, Paul refers to the Law of God (Moses) because it was the only law that could be called "spiritual." This 'law' has been mentioned throughout the context of chapter 7:1-13. However, any system of law requires perfection and brings to those who are subject to it the realization of their failure to meet its requirements. Furthermore, sin is personified as the ruling power in this person's life that he could not overcome.

In verse 14, Paul wrote, (1) "I am carnal" (unspiritual, fleshly); and (2) I am "sold under sin." That is, sin is the controlling principle in his life.

The verb "dwells" (OIKEO) as found in 7:18 is defined by Vine's Dictionary as follows: "to dwell, to inhabit as one's abode...of the indwelling of sin, Romans 7:20; of the absence of any good thing in the flesh of the believer, Romans 7:18."

The man in Romans 7 is a prisoner of sin (v. 23). His body is a slave to the law of sin (v. 25).

The question may be raised: does the body of man operate separate and apart from the mind of man? Where does sin originate?

James wrote "But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin..." (James 1:14, 15).

Jesus clearly taught in Matthew 15:19, that "out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies." It is not possible for the body to sin without the consent of the mind (heart).

In this passage we find that the power of sin prevents this person from controlling his own actions. He doesn't understand what he does. He does what he doesn't want to do, even that which he hates he does. The reason he does so is because sin "dwells" in him (7:15-23).

Thus, we are faced with a dilemma. First of all, you have the sin principle that “dwells” (“to dwell, to inhabit as ones’ abode...” of the indwelling of sin...of the absence of any good thing in the flesh of the believer”) in this wretched person.

But in Romans 8:9, 11, the apostle Paul wrote that the Spirit “dwells” in the child of God.

The Greek word (OIKEO) used in these verses is used in 7:18, 20. Vine’s Dictionary has this meaning of “dwells”: “of the indwelling of the Spirit of God in the believer, Romans 8:9, 11, or in a church, 1 Corinthians 3:16.”

How can sin dwell (“inhabit as one’s abode”) and at the same time the Spirit dwells (“the indwelling of the Spirit of God”) in the Christian? Can a Christian serve two masters (Matthew 6:24)?

Paul wrote in Romans 6:16: “Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one’s slave whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness.”

In Romans 7:24, this wretched, miserable, distressed, pitiable man cries out, “Who will deliver me from this body of death?”

I believe the answer is found in Romans 6:1-6 when Paul wrote that he had died to sin, buried with his Lord in baptism and had been raised to walk in newness of life; and that the “old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.”

That is why Paul continued to write in Romans 8:1, 2, “There is therefore NOW no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death” (Emphasis, mine, RE).

In 8:6, Paul declares “To be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is LIFE and PEACE” (Emphasis, mine, RE). This is in direct contrast

to the “wretched”, miserable, unhappy, pitiable man mentioned in Romans 7:24.

It is my personal understanding of Romans 7:13-25 that Paul was speaking of the time when he lived under the Law of Moses and was unable to experience the sense of true peace of mind that was to be enjoyed by all those whose sins were forgiven by the blood of Jesus Christ.

If this is not case, we find ourselves having to deal with Paul making contradicting statements according to what he wrote in chapters 6 and 8 regarding being set free from the bondage of sin and being led by the Holy Spirit.

At least, this interpretation is in harmony with Paul’s writing regarding the absence of sin controlling his life; and the fact that he enjoyed the peace that passes all understanding in Christ Jesus our Lord (Philippians 4:4-6).

The following hymn describes the new life of the individuals who have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:7; Revelation 1:5).

#### A NEW CREATURE

“Buried with Christ, my blessed Redeemer, Dead to the Old life of folly and sin; Satan may call, the world may entreat me, There is no voice that answers within.

Dead unto sin, alive through the Spirit, Risen with Him from the gloom of the grave, All things are new, and I am rejoicing In His great love, His power to save.

Sin hath no more its cruel dominion, Walking “in newness of life,” I am free—Glorious life of Christ, my Redeemer, Which He so richly shareth with me.”

Chorus

“Dead to world, to voices that call me, living a new, obedient But free; Dead to the joys that once did enthral me—Yet ‘tis not I, Christ liveth in me.”

- T. O. Chisholm

## News & Notes

James R. McGill

### Recent Deaths

**Marie Collins**, of Florence, AL, died September 30, 2013 at Eliza Coffee Memorial Hospital.

She was born on October 11, 1928 in Lincoln, Iowa, to the late William Ernest Myatt and Bessie Bell Brown Myatt. She is survived by Artie Collins, her husband of 66 years. Marie had a tremendous influence upon Artie becoming a Christian, being a faithful Christian, and serving the Lord’s church as a faithful gospel preacher for many years.

Marie was a member of the Sherrod Avenue Church of Christ in Florence, AL. Prior to moving to Florence in 2010, she was a member of the Springer Church of Christ in Hohenwald, TN, where her husband served as a minister for thirty years.

Sister Collins is also survived by her sons Larry Collins and wife Anne of Florence, AL, Mike Collins and wife Wanda of Lawrenceville, GA, and Bill Collins and wife Sabrina of Dequincy, LA, her daughter Brenda Vick and husband Jerry of Gallatin, TN; six grandchildren, Chris Collins, Rusty Collins, Brad Vick, Holly Hester, Briana Nelson, and Will Collins; twelve great grandchildren, Bailee Vick, Jenna Vick, Riley Vick, Reagan Vick, Nicholas Hester, Maddey Hester, Claire Hester, Fisher Collins, Sawyer Collins, Briley Neslon, Jonah Nelson, and Liam Collins. She is also survived by two sisters, Mary Goff of Bowling Green, KY and Dorothy Jean Wettereau of Bon Aqua, TN.

Memorials may be made to the Swindle Zambia Mission Fund, in care of the Sherrod Avenue Church of Christ in Florence, AL.

**Harvey Hasha**, of Muscle Shoals, Alabama, died September 16. For ten years, starting in 1989, he was involved in evangelism in Bangladesh. With Harvey's encouragement, the Highland Park church in Muscle Shoals purchased land in Bangladesh. This became the campus of Khulna Bible College. The college has already graduated 34 men.

Working with the encouragement of the Highland Park congregation, Hasha expanded his evangelism to Nepal for six years. Both nations have benefited from his zeal to save the lost.

**Frank Higgenbotham** devoted sixty years to preaching in the Ohio valley of West Virginia. He died at his home September 27.

After graduating from Florida Christian College, he returned to West Virginia and preached for the Columbia St. church in Fairmont, then the Wellsburg church, next the West St. church in Weirton, and finally the Virginia Ave. church of Christ in Chester, where he was located for the past fifty years.

Frank encouraged others to preach. The Chester congregation, where he preached for so many years, produced more than two dozen men who dedicated their lives to preaching. More than fifty preachers attended his funeral.

For many years Frank had a daily radio program. He conducted hundreds of gospel meetings. He spoke on many lectureships throughout the country.

**Wendell Bloomingburg**, 89, passed away on October 17. He had taught Bible and history at Freed-Hardeman University.

He and his twin brother Wayne graduated from Washington and Lee High School in Arlington, Virginia, in 1942. They enrolled at Freed-Hardeman the same year.

After a year in college, they were drafted for service in WWII, where Wendell served as a medic. He was wounded in action and was awarded the Purple Heart.

After service, they returned to Freed-Hardeman and then to Lipscomb University, where Wendell was "Bachelor of Ugliness" and his twin was class president. Wendell later received a Master's from Harding School of Theology and a Master's from Vanderbilt University.

He married Mary Dunham in 1947, who preceded him in death. He preached in Lafayette, Indiana, and Springfield, Illinois. He returned to Freed-Hardeman in 1958 as professor of Bible and history.

He was preceded in death by three brothers and is survived by two sons, Randy Bloomingburg and Dr. Larry Bloomingburg, four grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. [Retrieved from brotherhoodnews.com]

### Other News

**Owen Olbricht** returned to preach in Chelyabinsk, Russia (October 1-15), along with **John Otis** of Bookville, Pennsylvania. Owen says that John was a big help in the Russian work. Already this year, the Bookville church, where John preaches, has been blessed with thirteen baptisms.

**Kevin Wilson** is now working with the James Avenue church of Christ in west Nashville.

**Bruce Pate**, long-time gospel preacher, regularly conducts the Sunday 5:30 A.M. worship at the Antioch church of Christ in southeast Nashville. Bruce and his wife **Dale** have just celebrated their 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary.

**A. T. Pate**, who preaches for the White's Creek, Tennessee, church of Christ in Davidson County, reports:

"Last Lord's Day, October 6, was a great day for us at White's Creek. It was Homecoming for this congregation that began 111 years ago in 1902 with five families meeting in a one-room school building. One came forward requesting prayer." Recently one was baptized.

"On November 10 I am scheduled to speak at a special day for the church in London, Kentucky. This will be my 12<sup>th</sup> meeting (beginning in 1964) with this good church."

**John T. Polk, II**, will be in a gospel meeting in Toccoa, Georgia, from November 3-6. The theme of the meeting will be the book of Colossians.

The **New Hope** church in Nashville is planning a special day Sunday, November 10, with two guest preachers: **Clifford Dobbs** of the Charlotte Heights congregation and **Hubert Raines**, of the Meads Chapel church. **Jim McGill** has been the regular preacher at New Hope for the past ten years.

### Churches Looking for Preachers

The **Ivy Point** church of Christ in Goodlettsville (in Metropolitan Nashville) is seeking a preacher. The work is part-time, but with the possibility of becoming full-time. The Address is 2705 Greer Rd., Goodlettsville, TN 37072. Telephone: 615 859-4781.

Email: ivypoint1@juno.com.

The **Arlington** church of Christ, 2500 Faulkner Springs Rd., McMinnville, TN 37110, is also looking for a preacher. Telephone: 931 668-4481.

### Sad News from Prattville, AL

The elders of the Hunter Hills congregation (north of Montgomery, Alabama), have posted a letter to the congregation on the church's website stating their desire to introduce mechanical instruments of music in the Sunday morning worship assembly.

In this letter they state the following reasons for introducing instrumental worship:

- (1) Scripture does not prohibit the use of instrumental music in our assembly.
- (2) Instrumental music has been used as background on video clips and as a part of our youth assemblies for some time. These would not be present if we felt their inclusion was not acceptable to God.

Here we see the danger youth activities can pose if these too are not conducted in spirit and truth.

Moreover, the elders are looking to make their final decision based upon the desire of the congregation, rather than the authority of the Bible.

It is my understanding that this was a fine congregation at one time. It appears that over the course of time, the very things described in the book of Jude happened here. Our hope and prayer is that if there remains a righteous remnant in that congregation, they will take a stand for the truth. (ADE)

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# The GOSPEL CLEANER

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Number Eleven

THE PRESENT TRUTH . . .

Ronald D. Bryant

## True Worship

When will we learn what it means to worship God truly? The people of God exist to worship and serve Him. They are privileged to come before Him, to commune with Him, to offer the sacrifice of praise, and to commit themselves to knowing and doing His will.

The joy of belonging to God, of being His workmanship, is far greater than any human estimate. The joy of serving and worshipping Him is ever increasing, and by His design is serving to transform us into His likeness.

Worship is essential, and it is not easy. It is an incredibly demanding spiritual activity. All who would engage in worship must begin with an examination of their own heart, giving careful attention to attitude and motive. They must come to understand that worship is not about them, but is about God. They must come to know the purpose and value of every aspect of worship. Those who would truly worship are under the obligation to prepare for and then participate in it wholeheartedly, even desiring to lose their selves in adoration of the Lord.

Worship is holy. It originates with the decree of God, and is a holy response to Him. Activities which originate with man cannot be offered to God as worship! Human innovations are not only inappropriate they are unworthy and unholy! One dare not offer unto God that which is not holy!

Worship is an act of obedience. The ruling passion in the heart of the people of God, and the stated objective of their

worship and service is obedience to the Father. If this objective is abandoned, many things might be done, but who would dare call it worship?

If the objective is to please man – to please self – not God, how can it be to the glory of God? In this particular, there is a vast difference between “God has spoken,” and “after much study, we have decided.”

Obedience to God is irrefutable evidence of sincere faith. Worship, if it is to be God-centered and pure, is fueled by the desire to do only that which is true and right; that which the Father desires. The foundation of worship is faith, its action is obedience, its motive is holiness, and its aim is the honoring of the Lord.

Worship is in every aspect an act of faith. Faith comes from hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17). That which is not of faith, that which does not originate in biblical truth is not only empty, it is worthless. There are no true spiritual benefits to be derived from such. God requires that we come to Him in faith, and abide under the control of that faith (Hebrews 11:6). Worship that is offered to God must be ruled by loyalty to Him and to His will.

Worship is an act of the understanding. Of necessity, worship is the application of the mind to the majesty and glory of the Lord, and it is the intelligent acknowledgement of His sovereignty. Worship is coming to apprehend His attributes and their glory manifest in Christ. It is coming before Him on the

basis of spiritual reality. Worship is an intelligent response to God (1 Corinthians 14:15).

It is to be insisted that worship is reasonable and that it is rational. In worship the mind is set upon God. An act of the senses cannot be an act of worship! Christian conduct and Christian worship is always a rational act involving rational faculties. Activities growing out of ignorance cannot rise to the level of the spiritual. Sensual acts can never rise to the level of the spiritual worship.

Spiritual worship proceeds from the spirit of man – from the depths of his being. It is essential that one’s heart and mind be cast into the mold of the truth of God – the gospel of Christ so that one might be able to respond to the Lord in the actions and attitudes that He requires.

Spiritual life must precede spiritual devotion. Until one is in Christ and is one with Him, he cannot engage in spiritual devotions.

Being in Christ is as essential to spiritual life and worship as unity of the body and soul is essential to physical life. It is not possible for anything to exceed the limits of its nature. A beast of the field cannot conduct itself like a man, nor can a man conduct himself as an angel. One devoid of spiritual character cannot engage in acts of spiritual devotion; though he may go through the motions.

*Continued on page 7*

I would like to use this month's editorial to speak to you about a danger facing certain congregations of the Lord's church. It could be that you have never considered this danger, or considered this topic to be dangerous. I suppose that is one of the reasons I wish to consider it here. I am speaking to you about the "family owned and operated" mentality that can overcome a local congregation.

### What Are We Discussing?

Many congregations have been in existence for many years. Thus, a family (or families) can be part of a congregation for generations. Eventually, a family can become the dominating influence in a congregation through sheer majority in numbers alone. Elders, deacons, teachers, and sometimes preachers are selected from/by this family. Men's business meetings are run by this family. Decisions are not made without consulting said family or its patriarch (or sometimes the matriarch). All decisions and practices must have the favor of this family to be permitted.

Is this necessarily wrong? Is there really any danger in such a practice?

### Possible Pitfalls

In some communities an overabundance of congregations can be observed. On one occasion, I noticed that there were at least five congregations within ten minutes of each other. Each congregation had about thirty members, no elders, no deacons, and no adequately supported minister. I have often wondered why these congregations did not merge. They could have had approximately 180 members, elders, deacons, and a fully supported minister. It is here that we see one of the possible pitfalls of being family owned and operated.

However, each one of these congregations had strong family ties to the history and meeting house of their home congregation. They simply could not bear the thought of not worshipping where their family had always wor-

shipped. In some ways, they were more loyal to the church building than to the church.

The "family-run" mentality can also affect the way a congregation worships and works. The worship period can become nothing more than a weekly family reunion. The members of the family simply "go to church" because that is what the family does for that period of time on that particular day. As long as they have a place to go, and someone to preach a little, everything is good.

According to the family owned and operated model, the ruling family usually appoints elders and deacons from within the family. They believe that because they have X amount of family members in the congregation they should be represented (and in control) in the church's leadership.

According to the family owned and operated pattern, the ruling family decides who will be their preacher, and how much he will be paid. The patriarch (presiding bishop) or family will let him know what will go and what will not go from the pulpit.

In one family owned and operated congregation the presiding family threatened the other members by letting them know that if they leave, they will take X amount of members and X amount of dollars with them wherever they go. They used these figures as a means of leveraging the congregation to get their way. Indeed, this would have been a case of addition by subtraction, but no one had the courage to stand up to these bullies.

I have also observed that a congregation which is family owned and operated will not practice church discipline among their own. How could they? That would disrupt the purpose of having "church" for the family. That would disrupt holidays, birthdays, etc.

Thus, the family owned and operated church becomes a very sickly organism which eventually dies with the family. It

cannot succeed. How could it? It is patterned for failure.

Do keep in mind that one of the earmarks of the departure from New Testament Christianity was the practice of presiding bishops. The presiding bishop made the decisions for the entire eldership and congregation. I must ask, what is the difference in this denominational practice, and the practice of a family patriarch or domineering family making the decisions for a congregation? If you have one man or one family ruling over an entire congregation you have a presiding bishopric that is no less unscriptural than the denominational practice.

### The Biblical Pattern

In order for the Lord's church to be biblical, it must have and follow *biblical* leaders. Not one word in the Bible is ever mentioned about leaders being members or patriarchs of certain families. These men had to be qualified to the task of biblical leadership, according to the qualifications given by God, regardless of their last name. The church had to submit to them only as these men submitted to God.

The congregation that is family owned and operated risks the danger of losing sight of who is really in charge. Rather than seeking the family's approval, we ought to be worried about God's approval. If God is not happy with us as our Father, and if heaven is not our eternal home, we have missed it all. If you are so fortunate as to have your family in your congregation, be thankful, and teach them how to live!

Any man who would attempt to use his family as leverage to have a greater say in the decisions of the local church has by his deeds proven himself to be unfit for leadership. Every prospective leader should ask why he wants to be a leader. He must never forget that the church is owned by Christ (Acts 20:28), and that it is to be operated according to the Rule of this Chief Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4).

The

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## A Noble People

Raymond Elliott

In Acts 17:11 (ASV), we read; "Now these were more noble than those in Thessalonica..." Why would such a statement be made regarding the people of Berea? What is involved in being noble?

One definition of the word *noble* is "having or showing high moral qualities or ideals, or greatness of character; lofty" (Webster Dictionary). This understanding has nothing to do with one's birth or ancestry. This is dealing with the moral fiber of an individual. There are many noble people from various backgrounds simply because they possess a worthy heart that is honest, fair, understanding and receptive to new and lofty ideals.

The same writer that declared the people in Berea noble also informs us why he did so. In the remainder of Acts 17:11 we read, "...that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so."

### An Open Heart and Receptive Mind

The first important ingredient in one's being noble is to possess an open heart, a receptive mind. That is basically what Luke means when he wrote that the people "received the word with all readiness of mind." There is a great need today for people to be intellectually honest with themselves and the Word of God.

A person may be honest in his dealings with others, and yet refuse to have that integrity of heart that is needed to receive the teachings of God. It is easier sometimes to be fair and honest in business dealings than to be open-minded when it comes to a study of the Holy Scriptures. It requires fortitude and courage to permit the Word of God to have free course in one's heart and life. Very few people today are willing to permit God to shape and mold their thoughts, habits and character by His revealed will.

### The Evil of Prejudice

Prejudice is peculiar to the human race. To some degree all are adversely affected with this trait of character. Because we are, we refuse to eat certain foods, associate with some people, and avoid being seen in various places.

Prejudice is defined as "An adverse judgment or opinion formed beforehand or without knowledge or examination of the facts. A preconceived preference or idea; bias" (*The American Heritage Dictionary*).

There is the thought of prejudging something or someone. One biased individual was heard to say, "Don't confuse me with the facts; my mind is made up."

Jesus Christ knew prejudice in His day. There were those who were prejudiced against the place where he lived. Philip informed Nathanael of "Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Nathanael's reply was, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Later when Nathanael met Jesus, that prejudice which inferred that no great one could come from such an insignificant city was removed. He said, "thou art the Son of God; thou art King of Israel" (John 1:45-49).

There was a great deal of prejudice among the Jews toward the person of Jesus Christ. They would not accept the fact that Jesus was indeed the Son of God. John recorded, "He came unto his own, and they that were his own received him not" (John 1:11,120).

This terrible disposition of heart contributed to the eventual crucifixion of Christ. Peter declared, "He is the stone which was set at naught of you the builders, which was made the head of the corner" (Acts 4:11).

The truth that Jesus taught was often rejected because of pre-conceived opinions. Actually, one of the reasons why Jesus spoke in parables was to conceal

the truth from those whose ears were dull of hearing, eyes that were closed, and hearts that had been hardened against the truth (Matthew 13:10-15).

Today, the power of prejudice is so prevalent among people that it prevents many from studying the Holy Scriptures. There are those who will not permit their family members to attend a series of gospel meetings. Some will warn others not to get mixed up with that group of people, having reference to the church of the Lord.

Prejudice is often the motive behind such statements as, "they believe that everybody is going to be lost except them." How wonderful it would be if there were more noble people like those of Berea who "received the word with all readiness of mind" (Acts 17:11).

The good soil in the parable that Jesus gave as recorded in Luke 8:4-8 represents the heart that is receptive to the gospel of Christ.

It was said of Ezra that he "had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord" (Ezra 7:10).

Indeed, it is a matter of an attitude that one can develop. One can "prepare his heart" to be receptive to the truth.

The apostle Paul spoke of some who did not possess a love of the truth. This fact contributed to the blinding of their eyes that they might not be saved (2 Thessalonians 2:9-12). In contrast, how wonderful it is to know individuals whose minds are open and who manifest a spirit of eagerness to learn more of God's Word.

### Examine the Scriptures Daily

The second characteristic of the noble people of Berea was that they were willing to examine the scriptures daily to see if the things being taught were true (Acts 17:11).

One definition of the word *examine* is "to inspect or scrutinize carefully; in-

quire into or investigate." Thus, to examine or to search implies more than a casual reading. It means to exert effort to discover, to understand, to learn.

The source of investigation in the time of the people of Berea was the Old Testament writings. The eunuch in Acts 8 had in his possession a portion of these Scriptures that contained the writings of Isaiah.

The Hebrew Scriptures had been translated into the Greek language in the year 285 B.C. Thus, the Septuagint Version was available to a greater number of people.

Luke mentioned the frequency of the searching of the Scriptures by the citizenry of Berea and that was daily.

An open Bible is a prerequisite to the understanding of the will of God. One should not accept anything that mortal man may say relative to religious matters without examining the Word of God to see if such is true. Yet, many will simply listen and agree because a person has declared himself to be a preacher of the gospel. Since there are no inspired men today, it is necessary that the teachings of men be compared with the inspired Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16, 17). Multiplied millions are being led astray by false doctrines propagated through the various media like television, radio, internet, etc.

This investigation of the Scriptures is a perpetual matter. The Psalmist spoke of a righteous man in this manner: "But his delight is the law of Jehovah; and on his law doth he meditate day and night" (Psalm 1:2).

Again, "Oh how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day" (Psalm 119:97).

Paul exhorted Timothy to "give heed to reading" and to "study to shew thyself approved unto God" (1 Timothy 4:13; 2 Timothy 2:15).

Jesus said, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness for they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6).

And, "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from myself" (John 7:17).

Each person has a moral obligation to himself to study the Bible. Another person should not determine what one believes.

Jesus referred to blind leaders leading blind followers and both falling into a pit (Matthew 15:14). It is bad enough when men teach falsely, but it is even worse when others will follow without a proper investigation of the Word of God.

The apostle John gave this directive, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1).

In summary, there are two requirements for people who would be noble as those in Berea, namely, an open heart and an open Bible. There must be a receptive mind to the teaching of the Word of God and a willingness to search the Scriptures to see if such teaching is in harmony with the revealed will of God.

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## "I Thirst"

(A Word of Suffering)

Bill Brandstatter

As Jesus was dying on the cross, he stated, "I thirst" (John 19:28). These words are words that can teach us a great deal. Jesus said them after all things were accomplished and scripture was fulfilled.

The scripture was Psalm 69:24. In these two simple words, "I thirst" and in the events that were happening on crucifixion day, we see four reasons for suffering. So often people want to know why people suffer. The answer is found in these words and in John's account.

**First, men suffer because men are often cruel.** That is the reason Jesus is on the cross. Pilate found no fault in Him. Pilate's wife advised her husband to have nothing to do with this "just man" (Matthew 27:19). Yet, the people demanded that He be crucified (Mark 15:13-14).

Crucifixion was one of the most inhumane and cruel ways for a man to die. The Romans had specialized in it so that the agony would last longer and the pain would be most intense.

Throughout the history of man and Bible history, there are records of mankind being cruel to others. We read early in the book of Exodus about a Pharaoh that wanted all male babies thrown in the Nile River. He did this because of the multiplying of the children of Israel. He was afraid they would be able to form an army and defeat the Egyptians, so he decreed that all male babies were to be killed. Moses, of course, was saved from that when Pharaoh's daughter found and rescued him.

Another example is in the New Testament when Herod tried to kill Jesus (Matthew 2:16). He had ascertained from the wise men that the one who was born King of the Jews was about two years of age. So, he had all male babies two years and under killed. There is no doubt a lot of tears were shed and hearts

broken because of the decree of this cruel ruler.

In recent days and months we have read of the atrocities in Syria, the killing at a mall in Kenya, and the shootings in schools. These are all examples of suffering that comes because man is cruel.

**Second, men suffer because it is God's will.** Scripture was being fulfilled in the suffering of Christ (Psalm 22:15; Psalm 69:21).

Isaiah wrote that he was "wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities and the chastisement of our peace was upon him" (Isaiah 53:5).

Peter wrote that He bore our sins on the tree (1 Peter 2:24). It was according to God's foreordained plan that all this happened (1 Peter 1:18-10).

Elsewhere in the Bible we read of God's will being done. With Joseph, God's will was being carried out. It wasn't until many years after his brothers sold him into slavery that Joseph said, "You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good, that he might save many people alive" (Genesis 50:20).

Sometimes God may allow certain events to take place. Regarding the children of Israel in the wilderness for forty years, God said, "I allowed you be hungry that you may know that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceeds out of the mouth of God" (Deuteronomy 8:3).

God has laws which he has put in place. One of these is the law of nature. Sometimes when tornadoes, hurricanes, and tsunamis occur, people suffer. The young people in Job's family died when a great wind struck the four corners of the house they were in (Job 1:19).

**Third, men suffer because they are human.** Jesus was human and divine. Some in His time didn't believe He was both human and divine.

John makes a clear point that Jesus was human. The first case he makes is in his gospel account. There he states "The word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory

as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

Later he gives abundant evidence of the humanity of Christ. In his first letter, he states "What we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands concerning the Word of Life" (1 John 1:1).

Jesus was human. He was suffering because of His humanity. The statement "I thirst" is the only one of the seven last sayings of Jesus that demonstrates and declares Him to be human.

Because we are human, we also suffer. Our bodies wear out. Paul wrote, "Those this outward man is perishing, the inward man is renewed day by day" (2 Corinthians 4:15-16).

Solomon detailed the aging process in Ecclesiastes 12:3-5. Included in that list are: loss of teeth, failing eyesight, and failing hearing.

The apostle Paul suffered because he was human. He referred to his sleeplessness, hunger, thirst, and exposure to the elements (2 Corinthians 11:27).

We live in a world full of humans and sometimes we suffer because we live in physical bodies. Paul adds that if we sin in the human body, we will suffer for it. In his Galatians letter, Paul wrote: "Whatever a man sows, that he will also reap" (Galatians 6:7).

**Fourth, men suffer from neglect.** To be clear, I am not suggesting that Jesus was neglecting anything.

Whenever a person neglects that which is so desperately needed by the body, that person will suffer. Sometimes people choose to do so deliberately. Sometimes neglect comes by accident.

When Jesus said, "I thirst," His body was being neglected of that which was so desperately needed. Through no fault of His own, His body needed fluids.

But besides physical neglect, spiritual neglect is also very prevalent. Jesus offered to help this neglect when He stated, "Blessed are those who hunger

and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6).

Perhaps He saw the spiritual needs of the Samaritan woman at the well when He told her, "Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst" (John 4:14).

As bad as physical suffering is, spiritual suffering will be much worse, because it will last forever. Let us not neglect the salvation offered by Jesus. Let us not neglect all that Jesus went through because we want to "enjoy" ourselves.

The writer of Hebrews tells us, "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2).

It was not a joyful time for Jesus, as we can see from John 19:28. The joy in this passage refers to the ultimate outcome of salvation for all mankind.

The writer of Hebrews also stated, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him" (Hebrews 2:3).

The rich fool in Luke 12:13-21 was a successful businessman yet God called him a fool (Luke 12:20) because he had neglected his soul. Let us never be guilty of spiritual neglect. Suffering will come if we do.

In the simple statement of Jesus, "I thirst," we can better understand the reasons suffering occurs today. It still hurts. It is still painful. It is still devastating. Yet, knowing that Christians do not suffer like others because we have hope of eternal life (1 Thessalonians 4:13-14), makes the suffering of this world easier to bear. Truly, one day we will rest from our labors (Revelation 14:13).

## KNOW YOUR BIBLE

Stephen R. Bradd

### **Wrong Is Always Wrong**

We live in an age of declining morals and increasing efforts to rationalize improper behavior. Christians must remember that wrong is always wrong--despite the temptation to make excuses for sinful actions in certain circumstances. Let's elaborate on this theme in five ways.

#### **1. Wrong is always wrong--even if you don't get caught.**

For instance, it is wrong to cheat on one's taxes, even if the government doesn't catch you (cf. Romans 13:7). We need to remember "the eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good" (Proverbs 15:13).

In truth, we are always caught when we sin, for God sees all things! It matters not if other mortals are unaware of our transgressions; the Almighty sees everything.

#### **2. Wrong is always wrong--even if you do it for a good cause.**

Having an honorable purpose does not justify committing dishonorable deeds. The end doesn't justify the means.

All sin is transgression of God's law (cf. 1 John 3:4). An example of sinning for a "good cause" would be stealing from the rich in order to give to the poor. Though giving to the poor is generally good, it is always wrong to steal (cf. Ephesians 4:28).

A common transgression in our society is that of couples living together before marriage. Some attempt to justify the practice thinking that it will help them determine if they're compatible or not. It doesn't work statistically, but even if it did it still wouldn't be right. Do not commit evil with the intent that good may result (cf. Romans 3:8).

#### **3. Wrong is always wrong--even if others are doing things that are worse.**

If you are sentenced to eternal destruction, you won't be comforted on the Day of Judgment knowing that others did things you considered to be worse than your sins.

If a man lusts after a woman (cf. Matthew 5:28), he has committed sin. He is deceiving himself if he thinks that such is acceptable since other people are doing things worse--like actually committing adultery.

Sin separates from God, period (cf. Isaiah 59:2). Simply because you aren't as "bad" as someone else doesn't mean that you're living a life pleasing to God.

#### **4. Wrong is always wrong--even if it doesn't bother your conscience.**

The conscience can be trained to accept wrongdoing. Simply because a person commits an act in sincerity, and it doesn't bother his conscience, does not guarantee that God is pleased.

In Acts 23:1, Paul said - "Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day." Did Paul, in good conscience, commit sin prior to that day? Indeed he did, especially when he persecuted the church! Imprisoning and killing Christians did not bother his conscience, but he was still sinning.

Sins of revenge often fall into this category. Some feel justified in seeking vengeance when they have been wronged. Such ought to be left to God (cf. Romans 12:19). Just because a certain act doesn't make you feel guilty does not mean that you aren't guilty.

#### **5. Wrong is always wrong--even if it is commonly considered acceptable.**

The Bible says - "You shall not follow a crowd to do evil" (Exodus 23:2). The Christian should not be trying to blend in with the world but standing out as a servant of God against all sins, even those that society may deem acceptable.

Abortion has been "legal" for over forty years in America, but it is still wrong to shed innocent blood (cf. Proverbs 6:16-17).

Homosexuality becomes more acceptable in America every day, but God still calls it a sinful perversion (cf. Romans 1:24-27). Just because many believe something is okay doesn't mean that it is.

Friends, the Bible is the standard for right and wrong. Let's study it to know it and then live like we believe it!

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### **True Worship**

*Continued from page 1*

What can proceed from a heart that is not yielded to the Lord? It is out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks (Matthew 12:34).

Is it possible for the carnally-minded to offer spiritual sacrifice? It is sobering to consider how often the carnally minded demonstrated their willingness to corrupt the worship of God.

In some places the leaders of the church defer to men, to human preference and taste. Are such leaders spiritual or carnal? What is evident when human preference and taste is allowed to trump the will of God?

Spiritual worship is ruled by simplicity and sincerity; the simplicity of the gospel and the sincerity of the soul. Pretense is not worship! Performance is not worship! External rites and empty ceremonies are not worship! God is neither impressed nor honored by pomp and ceremony.

It ever remains that God is to be worshiped in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). It also remains that learning to worship will ever be a part of our existence.

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## Which Church?

Owen D. Olbricht

Some time ago I interviewed a number of students to determine what they would teach and how they would do as outreach workers for Christ. In this way I learned their attitudes and how they would approach people.

Deciding who to take as a member of an outreach team was sometimes difficult. I felt I had the responsibility to include those on the team who would be dedicated, effective, and faithful to the Word. Since Jesus did not send everyone, but chose who He wanted to send to teach the gospel to others (Luke 6:13; 10:1), I thought it was best to do the same.

One young man was reluctant to answer some questions and seemed a little irritated when I asked him what he believed about the role of women, what was to be used in worship, and the requirements of salvation. Finally, he demanded, "Do you believe that only members of the church of Christ will be saved?"

Sometimes this question is asked to show that members of the church of Christ are prejudiced toward others who are not members of the church. A "Yes" or "No" answer can leave the wrong impression.

I paused a few moments; and then I asked, "Do you know another church Jesus is going to save?"

He did not expect a question, but perhaps desired the answer, "Yes," to which he could respond, "So you believe that you and your little group will be the only ones saved?"

He sat thinking a few moments and then decided to end the interview.

### Jesus Has Only One!

Do you know of another church Jesus has promised to save, other than His church? If so, which one is it? Does the

Bible mention another church that will be saved?

After Peter confessed that Jesus is the Christ, Jesus promised, "upon this rock I will build My church" (Matthew 16:18). Notice He did not say churches. His church is the only one He said He would build.

Jesus also taught, "And other sheep [the Gentiles] I have which are not this fold [Jewish nation]; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock [church; Acts 20:28] and one shepherd [Jesus; John 10:11]."

Jesus' purpose was to "gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad" (John 11:52). His goal was not to begin all the churches that exist today.

Jesus built only one church of which He is the shepherd and head (Ephesians 5:23). His church is made up of those who believe in Him. "And the believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of men and women" (Acts 5:14); and is "the church [that] is subject to Christ" (Ephesians 5:24).

The believers who were added to the Lord were not added to many churches, for this was not the will of Jesus. In His longest recorded prayer, He prayed first for the apostles, making a request of the Father. "Holy Father, keep through your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as are we" (John 17:11b).

Following His prayer for the apostles, Jesus prayed for all who would believe on Him through their word, "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe on Me through their word; that they all may be one as You Father are in Me and I in You; that they may be one in Us...that they may be made perfect in one (John 17:20,23b).

Jesus does not approve of the hundreds of churches that have developed over the past twenty centuries. He will save only His church and not those started by men.

### Jesus Saves Only One

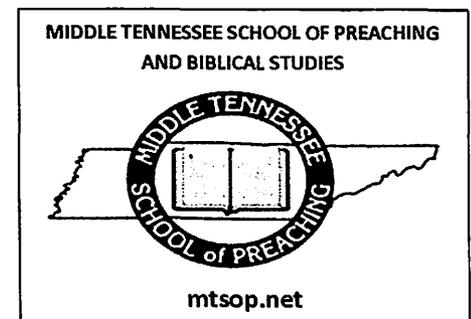
Paul wrote, "Christ is head of the church; and He is Savior of the body" (Ephesians 5:23). The church and the body are one and the same (Ephesians 1:21, 22; Colossians 1:18, 24), thus He is the Savior "of His body, which is the church" (Colossians 1:24b).

Jesus has only one body into which we are baptized (Romans 12:5; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 2:16; 4:4), and thus only one church which He will save.

Which church is the one church Jesus will save? His is the only one He promised to build. His must be the only one He will save.

We enter His one church through believing in Him (Acts 8:12; 18:8), repenting (Acts 2:38); confessing our belief in Him (Romans 10:10), and being baptized (1 Corinthians 12:13). Following our baptism we must live a new life (Romans 6:4) and live for Him who died for us (2 Corinthians 5:15).

Does the New Testament mention any other church that Jesus will save? If not, you should not be a member of that church. Be a member of His church and not one that has been started by men.



# What God Requires of a Nation

John T. Polk, II

When God had a chosen people living in their Promised Land under Moses' Law, He called Israel to turn back to their basic morals with this appeal: "Thus says the LORD: [1] 'Execute judgment and righteousness, and [2] deliver the plundered out of the hand of the oppressor. [3] Do no wrong and [4] do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, or the widow, [5] nor shed innocent blood in this place'" (Jeremiah 22:3).

All five principles were centered in God's wisdom which He instilled throughout Moses' Law. God no longer has those people entitled to that land, and under that law.

Paul has written: "For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God" (Romans 2:28-29; also Romans 9:6-33; Colossians 2:14-16).

However, every society would benefit by infusing these five principles throughout their laws and lives.

## Execute Judgment and Righteousness

Executing judgment and righteousness rules out tyranny and dictatorship, for "judgment and righteousness" require firm, objective rules for everyone in and out of government.

Constitutional laws objectify law and order more than the whims of minorities and individuals.

## Deliver the Plundered Out of the Hand of the Oppressor

Whatever the "oppression," whether slavery, excessive taxation, overburdened work, or socialized medicine; "the plundered" are the people that have had their weakness unfairly taken advantage of.

## Do No Wrong

A self-evident, God-given morality is reflected in the system of law. Please read, "But we know that the law *is* good if one uses it lawfully, knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for *the* lawless and insubordinate, for *the* ungodly and for sinners, for *the* unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust" (1 Timothy 1:8-11).

Every "civilized society" has been made "civil" by moral law which has been defined by God!

## Do No Violence to the Stranger, the Fatherless, or the Widow

"Violence" should not be permitted against "the stranger, fatherless, or widow." These are all people who do not have the protection of a complete home: the stranger is absent from home, the fatherless (orphan) is without both parents, the widow must fend for herself.

A "stranger" is NOT an illegal alien, but one who accepts the regulations of the land in which he dwells, as clarified by Exodus 12:48-49: "And when a stranger dwells with you *and wants to* keep the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as a native of the land. For no uncircumcised person shall eat it. One law shall be for the native-born and for the stranger who dwells among you" (Exodus 12:48-49).

Hospitality toward strangers should come from shared experiences: "Also you shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the heart of a stranger, because you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Exodus 23:9).

Jesus condemned scribes and Pharisees who would "devour widows' houses" (Matthew 23:14), analogous to the inheritance and capital gains taxes which keep widows from receiving all of their husbands' insurance provision for them!

## Nor Shed Innocent Blood in this Place

King David spent a faithful soldier's life in battle to conceal his own gross immorality, and then lied about it to conceal that murder (2 Samuel 11:1-27; 12:1-14). Politicians who deliberately send soldiers into undefined, unregulated, or continual wars just to conceal their own misuse of power must hear the prophet Nathan say, "You *are* the man!"

Manasseh, King of Judah, "shed very much innocent blood, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another, besides his sin by which he made Judah sin, in doing evil in the sight of the LORD" (2 Kings 21:16).

Like a Supreme Court, Manasseh made it "legal," but not morally right, to shed "innocent blood," something God hates (Proverbs 6:16-19) and never forgave (2 Kings 24:1-4).

Killing the innocent in a land kills the innocence of that land! Even Jesus' betrayer, Judas Iscariot, admitted, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood" (Matthew 27:4). All right-thinking people will protest the killing of innocent men, women, children, and, certainly, babies in their land!

## God's Remedy for Sin in the Land

God's remedy for wickedness in the land was outlined in Isaiah: "When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you; Even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil, Learn to do good; Seek justice, Rebuke the oppressor; De-

fend the fatherless, Plead for the widow. 'Come now, and let us reason together,' Says the LORD, 'Though your sins are like scarlet, They shall be as white as snow; Though they are red like crimson, They shall be as wool. If you are willing and obedient, You shall eat the good of the land; But if you refuse and rebel, You shall be devoured by the sword'; For the mouth of the LORD has spoken" (Isaiah 1:15-20).

### What Others Have Said

Others, in other lands and times, have also seen the need to correct their own countries. Frenchman, Frederic Bastiat, whose writings influenced the French Revolution, wrote: "When law and morality contradict each other, the citizen has the cruel alternative of either losing his moral sense or losing his respect for the law."

American, Martin Luther King, Jr., called attention to unjust, prejudicial laws by writing: "One has not only a legal but a moral responsibility to obey just laws. Conversely, one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws. I would agree with St. Augustine that 'an unjust law is no law at all.' Now, what is the difference between the two? How does one determine whether a law is just or unjust? A just law is a man-made code that squares with the moral law or the law of God. An unjust law is a code that is out of harmony with the moral law. To put it in the terms of St. Thomas Aquinas: 'An unjust law is a human law that is not rooted in eternal law and natural law.'...We should never forget that everything Adolf Hitler did in Germany was 'legal' and everything the Hungarian freedom fighters did in Hungary was 'illegal.' It was 'illegal' to aid and comfort a Jew in Hitler's Germany. Even so, I am sure that, had I lived in Germany at the time, I would have aided and comforted my Jewish brothers. If today I lived in a Communist country where certain principles dear to the Christian faith are suppressed, I would openly advocate disobeying that country's antireligious laws."

Since "there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist

are appointed by God" (Romans 13:1), no country can be properly governed by leaders who are not humble before God!

It is up to Christians in every country to help the Word of God be a positive influence in their land.

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## What Constitutes the Gospel?

Robert L. Waggoner

The English word *gospel* is derived from the Greek word *euangelion*, which means good news or glad tidings. *Euangelion* is also the source from which the English words evangelist and evangelism are derived. An evangelist is one who conveys the *euangelion*, the good news.

The good news is about Jesus Christ and "the kingdom" (Matthew 9:35; 24:14; Mark 1:14). The substance of the good news (gospel) is defined as salvation, i.e., that "Christ died for our sins, that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day . . ." (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

But the concept of the gospel is not limited to his death, burial, and resurrection. The whole of Jesus' life and teachings may also be considered as constituting the gospel.

Mark began his document by saying, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mark 1:1) and treated the entire ministry of Jesus. Matthew and Luke began their writings with the birth of Jesus, while John began his account by focusing on the pre-existent Word of God who took on flesh and dwelt in human form (John 1:1, 14).

Moreover, the substance of the gospel message also included God's activity in Old Testament times to bring salvation to humanity. For example, "the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, 'In you all the nations shall be blessed'" (Galatians 3:8). That quotation comes from Genesis 12:1-3.

After John the Baptist was put into prison (Mark 1:14), "Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom" (Matthew 4:23, see also Matthew 9:35).

He admonished people to "repent, and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15); and that was before his death, burial and resurrection.

During His earthly ministry, Jesus' gospel message was especially directed toward the poor (Matthew 11:5; Luke 4:18; 7:22). He declared that the gospel should eventually be preached to all nations (Matthew 24:14; Mark 13:10).

After his resurrection, Jesus commanded his disciples to preach the gospel throughout the whole world (Mark 16:15) for the purpose of making disciples (Matthew 28:18-19).

New Testament documents confirm that the apostles and other disciples traveled extensively preaching the gospel (Acts 8:25; 14:7, 21; 16:10; Romans 1:15; 15:20; 1 Corinthians 1:17; 9:14, 16, 18; 15:1; 2 Corinthians 10:16; Galatians 3:8; 4:13; Colossians 1:23; Hebrews 4:2; 1 Peter 1:12; 4:6).

The content of their preaching is designated as "Christ's gospel" (2 Corinthians 2:12) and "the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Ephesians 3:8). They declared "him" (Galatians 1:16, Colossians 1:28) to be "Christ Jesus the Lord" (2 Corinthians 4:5), and "the son of God" (Acts 9:20).

The substance of their message is described in various ways. It is designated as the "gospel of Christ" (Romans 15:19), "gospel of God" (2 Corinthians 11:7; 1 Thessalonians 2:9), "gospel of peace" (Romans 10:15), "gospel of the kingdom" (Matthew 24:14), "gospel of the kingdom of God" (Mark 1:14), and the "everlasting gospel" (Revelation 14:6).

Essentially, the gospel message is about the *person* and the *kingdom* of Jesus Christ, i.e., His church because the terms "church" and "kingdom" are sometimes used interchangeably (Matthew 16:18-19).

Since the gospel message was partially proclaimed in Old Testament times and since the kingdom of Christ is everlasting (2 Peter 1:11), then God's good news is best understood when fully considered as revealed from the first biblical book of Genesis to the last book of Revelation.

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## Dangers Now Confronting the Church

Marshall Keeble (1878-1968)

*This was the sermon bro. Keeble delivered in 1954 at the close of the Freed-Hardeman lectureship. His concerns then are also relevant today for a current warning. – E. Claude Gardner*

I tremble when I see the church losing its influence, and power. I look at the church as a great Lighthouse, to guide the world to our Savior.

When our Lord was born, a star guided the wise men to where He was, and if we are wise today we will let the Word of God lead us to where He is today, because Jesus taught, when He was on the earth, if we do His sayings we are wise, and if we fail to do what He says we are foolish, or unwise.

One of the greatest dangers confronting the church is jealousy among preachers. It causes preachers to envy each other, and in this way it weakens and kills the influence of the church and cause people to lose confidence in the preachers. This is causing much stumbling and sin.

Another great danger is playing cards, dancing, beer drinking, and such like. All of this will cause the Christian to stand in the way of sinners.

When the children of God do such things, they have never repented, they are still in the world, the Bible teaches us to come out from among them.

For the sake of the church brethren, let us abstain from these dangers, and press forward and keep your selves unspotted from the world. Not giving as we are prospered is another great danger to the church.

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## This Month in Restoration History

**November 25, 1826** – Barton W. Stone begins publishing the *Christian Messenger*.

**November 10, 1836** – Students arrive for classes at Bacon College in Georgetown, KY. This is the first college of the movement and Walter Scott is the unanimous selection to serve as the first president.

**November 15, 1843** – A sixteen day debate commenced between Alexander Campbell and a Presbyterian preacher named Nathan L. Rice. Henry Clay was the moderator. This debate was held in Lexington, KY. Subjects discussed were baptism, creeds, and the operation of the Holy Spirit. When the Presbyterians began losing big numbers to the restoration plea after the debate's publication, they stopped publication of the written record, providing Campbell the opportunity to pick up the rights and continue to publish it. Campbell's greatest satisfaction from this debate came from the news that his uncle Archibald in Ireland gave up infant baptism after reading it.

**November 9, 1844** – Barton W. Stone dies in Hannibal, MO.

**November 2, 1880** – James A. Garfield is elected President. He is inaugurated March 4, 1881.

**November 1, 1889** – F.D. Srygley joins the *Gospel Advocate*. The years from 1889-1900 are considered by many as the golden years of the *Advocate*.

**November 11, 1917** – David Lipscomb dies.

**Thanksgiving Day, 1924** – Boles Orphan Home begins near Greenville, TX. Flavil L. Colley had been approached by Mr. and Mrs. W.F. Boles concerning a tract of land they wished to give to be used for an orphanage. Flavil then went to his father, A.O. Colley, and the church where his father preached, the renowned Pearl and Bryan congregation in Dallas, to see about overseeing the project. This home has been one of the best and most successful through the years. The following is from their website: "The Home began in 1924 on a 436 acre tract of land donated by William Foster Boles and his wife, Mary Barnhart Boles for the care of children. Having been originally established as a home for orphans, it currently has been expanded to serve the needs of troubled youth."

**November 11, 1931** – A.G. Freed dies.

**November 18-23, 1957** – The Roy Cogdill – Guy Woods debate is held in Birmingham, AL. In this debate these brethren discussed issues pertaining to church benevolence.

**November, 2005** – The Highland church of Christ in Dalton, GA begins the Gospel Broadcasting Network.

## Changes in American Marriages

E. Claude Gardner

Change is now the most popular word in American conversation. Change in human affairs is inevitable and we must adjust to the different way. As we reflect on changes in the last few decades, we try to be reconciled to them. Obviously some changes are good; whereas, others are inconsequential. Others, however, are detrimental and costly.

Even to casual observers of the American scene on modern marriage, it is evident that changes have taken a radical turn. *Time* magazine had a significant cover story entitled, "Marriage: What's It Good For?" (Vo. 176, No.22, Nov. 29, 2010).

The managing editor, Richard Stengel, introduces this blockbuster report based on collaboration with the Pew Research Center. Pew Research is a respectable research organization which causes us to give serious thought about the results.

Mr. Stengel offers a serious question that must be confronted. He asked, "Do such changes weaken the social fabric, or are new and evolving definitions of family making a more vibrant and diverse society?" (p. 6). As Christians, we believe it is the first alternative.

Believers in God and the Bible do not believe in changes diametrically opposed to revealed eternal truth. God and Christ change not. They are not fickle, engaging in experiments. "For I am the Lord, I do not change" (Malachi 3:6a). "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever" (Heb.13:8). Hence, the teaching of the Bible on marriage cannot be changed to suit humanity.

### CHANGES IN THE PURPOSE OF MARRIAGE

Current changes are revealed in the Pew Research regarding the purposes, worth, and permanency of marriage (pp. 48-56).

Marriage is rejected as a divine institution and therefore, not holy in the minds of the couple. *Time* managing editor Belinda Luscombe writes that the spiritual is "not as necessary as it used to be. Neither men nor women need to be married to have sex or companionship or professional success or respect or even children – yet marriage remains revered and desired" (p. 49).

Morals are abandoned. No doubt as a result of this philosophy fewer people marry.

Fifty years ago, 70% were married and today it is reported as half that many. Today it is reported that "eight times as many children are born out of wedlock" (p. 48).

Census researchers were surprised by a "13% increase in couples living together from 2009 to 2010" (p. 52). The report reveals that "41% of babies were born to unmarried moms in 2008."

### CHANGES IN THE WORTH OF MARRIAGE

We are concerned about the question and probable conclusion by the *Time* writer that asked, "Could living together become respected and widespread enough that it challenged the favored-nation state of marriage?" (p. 56).

Marriage is questioned as to its worth in daily living. The change indicates that people do not expect much out of being married. It is no longer considered as laying a foundation for a happy life. This view is one reason church membership and attendance is declining.

The Pew poll concludes that it is common to think that marital status is irrelevant for successful endeavors. The editor surmises: "Rarely is there a bigger chasm between what Americans believe to be the best thing for society and what actually happens than in the bearing and rearing of children. Half or more of the respondents in the Pew poll say that

marital status is irrelevant to achieving respect, happiness, career goals, financial security or a fulfilling sex life. When it comes to raising kids, though, it's a landslide, with more than three-quarters saying its best done married" (p. 52).

"The Pew survey reveals that nearly 40% of us think marriage is obsolete," according to Luscombe. Also, the editor adds, "The pew poll found that although 44% of Americans under 30 believe marriage is heading for extinction, only 5% of those in that age group do not want to get married" (p. 50).

### CHANGES IN THE PERMANENCY OF MARRIAGE

The third change in American marriage is the increase in divorce. Permanency for marriage is a legitimate promise in the marriage ceremony for it is "until death do us part."

The statistics reveal that "two-thirds of all divorces, it is estimated, are initiated by wives" (p. 50).

### TRUTH DOES NOT CHANGE

Our wonderful country may change in marriage and may finally disintegrate as did Sodom and Gomorrah, but the truth will endure forever (Matthew 24:35).

It behooves us to preach and teach that marriage is of God (Genesis 2), and that marriage is worth more than the world if properly lived (Ephesians 5:21-33).

Just ask couples who have celebrated their Golden Anniversary to express why they are so joyful and thankful to have been married for a half century. They know marriage is worth it every year and day. We need to remind everyone that marriage is for life (Matthew 19:3-9).

Thanks to *Time* for revealing with charts and statistics the status of marriage in America. It pays to read!

*Special Feature***Highway****Sullivan, Illinois**

Ron Thomas

The Highway church of Christ in Sullivan, Illinois, is an active, but small congregation of Christians faithfully adhering to the Lord's word. It is our firm conviction that what the Lord said in His word (the New Testament), we are obligated to teach and live.

In order to get a better sense of the church in east central Illinois, there is some history that might be of interest to the readers. We will begin with a brief sketch of the Lord's church and its establishment in these parts.

**Sand Creek Church of Christ**

The Sand Creek church of Christ got its start in 1834 by John Storm. Storm was already preaching for the Ash Grove Christian Church (organized in 1832) -- "[T]he Ash Grove church being the parent church from which the other churches [in the immediate area] sprang" (Gordon, p. 45).

John Storm was present at the Cane Ridge Revival some 20 years previous (Windsor, p. 11), and to this area he came and settled with his family. The Sand Creek church building that sits on the present location is not the original building, but the red-brick building is about 140 years old (built in 1874). The church prospered in this area; on one occasion in 1889 there were 6,000 people present for a meeting with Daniel Sommers.

Unfortunately, this meeting was not an ideal occasion, as history tells us. In the midst of this large number there were competing ideas; a most unfortunate occasion in church history, but one that was bound to occur when respect for the Bible had begun to wane. Those things that were points of contention were the use of the mechanical instrument of music in the worship, the use of a full time minister (implying the "pas-

tor" system), missions, fund-raising, and church festivals on church property (Windsor, p. 13). Those opposed to such things were known as conservative and those who supported them were progressives.

In 1889 Daniel Sommer and Peter Warren put forth the Sand Creek Declaration that essentially drew a line for each person to identify with conservatives or progressives. This document included the leadership of men from area churches such as Ash Grove, Liberty, and Sand Creek. "Later during the famous trial to determine whether the church was of the Christian or the Church of Christ denomination, the Sand Creek church became known all over the United States" (Gordon, p. 64).

The "famous trial" was in relation to whether or not the church would accept the introduction of things not previously done, or innovations. At the turn of the century, there was an effort by the progressives to "take over the property of the Sand Creek church" (Windsor, p. 13). In order to thwart this effort the "conservatives" beat the "progressives" to the court house to "register the church as "The Sand Creek Church of Christ" (Windsor, p. 13). The progressives filed suit against the conservatives, and all the way to the Illinois Supreme Court the case eventually went.

The Supreme Court of Illinois ruled in favor of the conservatives. "The courts ruled that although the church was originally titled as the Christian Church of Sand Creek, it had not been registered as such, and because the progressives had left the church, and the conservatives were in possession of the property and had properly registered the name as The Sand Creek Church of Christ, the title of the church and possession of property would remain with the conservatives and named The Sand Creek Church of Christ" (Windsor, p. 13).

This historical sketch helps to paint a picture of the Lord's church in east central Illinois. Today the church building stands empty (the ground upon which the building resides is well kept).

**The Church in Sullivan**

Not long after the events associated with Sand Creek, in the fall of 1914 (about a 10 year gap) Noah Smith and his family moved to Sullivan (about 8 miles north of Sand Creek). Finding no meetings of the church of Christ taking place, Noah began to look for members of the church living in the area. Having located some few members, they soon began worshipping in their homes (the earliest records the church has go back to 1929).

The facilities of the congregation, initially, were not permanent. They met in homes, then met the local Baptist and Presbyterian buildings during the afternoon hours. Eventually they were able to meet in a hall, owned by a local resident, located on the Northeast corner of the town square in Sullivan (now the home of the Sullivan Pharmacy). They met in this facility for several years.

In time, the location was too small to accommodate the number present and, eventually, the church purchased a building on a farm north of Sullivan on State Route 32 (about 1929 or 1930). This building was torn down and moved to Sullivan and rebuilt by James Cook, just northwest of the town square. This was the location of the first permanent meeting house of the church of Christ in Sullivan. In the early 1950's another piece of property was purchased and a church building was erected by the members (Bert Cain being instrumental in its building). The new facility was completed in 1952 and is the present meeting place for the church.

**Preachers through the Years**

Many evangelists have held meetings for the church through the early years. They include (not extensive): C.C. Parker, W.E. Ballanger, Daniel Sommer, E.M. Zerr, D. Austin Sommer, Edward Buttram, W.G. Roberts, Robert Edwards, H.D. Leach, C.R. Turner, W.C. Ketcherside, A.L. Gepford, Robert Duncan and others.

Within the last 15 years, such men as Dwight Butler, David Pharr, Phil Sand-

ers, and Earl West have preached in meetings at the building's current location.

Only within the last forty years has the congregation had a "located" minister. The list of men who served in that capacity are Johnnie Fleener, Ron Bantanen (first full-time "located" minister), Gary Breezel, Roy Enoch, Wayne Harvel, Raleigh Batty, and the current preacher is Ron Thomas.

### A History of Good Works

The Highway church of Christ is currently involved in many good works; that is, many works for such a small congregation. We actively support mission activities such as a work in Nigeria, the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, Exhibit Evangelism at the Illinois State Fair, and Children's Homes (Shults-Lewis and Potter's).

On an intermittent basis we have supported various works like Garry Jones in India, Randal Matheny in Sao Paulo (Brazil), Disaster Relief, and Helping Hands International.

We are also engaged in local evangelistic works such as the periodical *House to House*, a weekly newspaper article, and occasional door knocking campaigns. We are small, but our work is large and, we believe, much good is being accomplished.

Through the years there have been many changes in the congregation. Though some members have died physically, some have moved, and even some have died spiritually, the church has a presence in the small town of Sullivan, Illinois. One thing truly can be said of this congregation; it loves and teaches the truth God revealed in the New Testament.

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## News & Notes

James R. McGill

### Curtis Cates Passes at Age 72

Long-time director of the Memphis School of Preaching, Curtis Cates passed away October 25. He will be remembered for his direction of the school, teaching and training of a generation of gospel preachers, and the many books he authored and edited.

Brother Cates is survived by his wife of 53 years, Annette Cates, by his sons Andy (Michelle) Cates, and Dan (Shelly) Cates. Brother Cates is also survived by one brother, Paul Cates, and by four grandchildren, Maggie Cates, Trey Cates, Caitlin Cates, and Conor Cates.

### Bear Valley Bible Institute Annual Lectureship

Neal Pollard has provided the following synopsis of this year's Bear Valley lectureship.

It has been the decision of the faculty of the Bear Valley Bible Institute to alternate our lectureship studies each year between topical and textual. This year, we dealt with a textual theme-- "Majoring in the Minors: A Study of the Minor Prophets" (Part One).

We were utterly thrilled with the response and participation of so many. Our speakers hailed from all over the nation, but so did our guests. We had people in attendance from more than 40 congregations in Colorado in addition to guests from 19 more states. How thrilling to think that our efforts "way out west" interest brethren from the far west, southeast, and mid-west to the de-

gree that they make time, effort, and expense to be a part of the lectureship.

It was also a joy to see so many alumni in attendance. We thank God and give Him the glory that so many of them are working fruitfully for Christ all across the nation and throughout the world.

This year, we added some breakout sessions strategically throughout the weekend. Last year, we doubled our ladies sessions from two to four and doubled the number of ladies' speakers from one to two. The hours in which our ladies speak are, outside of Sunday, our best attended sessions.

On Sunday morning, Matt Vega, lawyer and professor at Faulkner University in Montgomery, Alabama, spoke before 465 people. This was our largest attendance for a lecture in several years.

This year, we also expanded our effort to get the written material in the hands of more people. For the fifth consecutive year, we preserved the lectures in hardback book form. As usual, the demand for the book is high. But, for the first time in 2013, we are making the book available in various e-reader formats. Information about ordering the book in either form can be found at [www.wetrainpreachers.com](http://www.wetrainpreachers.com).

Each year, ladies from the congregation staff and run a "bookstore" in the foyer. As usual, this attracted great interest and attention. The same can be said of the several displays, the hearty breakfasts on Friday and Saturday, and the Sunday potluck.

The fellowship is enriching in its own right, and many friendships are made and strengthened during these lectureships.

Next year is such an important year for the Institute. August, 2014, will mark the 50th year of training men to preach at Bear Valley! Because of the momentousness of that milestone, we would love you to help us commemorate it in a couple of ways.

First, we have set a goal of having at least 500 people present at our Friday night banquet. Second, we want to have at least 600 on Sunday morning of the lectureship. We have some additional plans and ideas, which we hope to share in the future. What exciting, challenging times in which we live!

### West Virginia School of Preaching Annual Lectureship

The West Virginia School of Preaching (Moundsville, WV) just completed its 19th Annual Victory Lectures (Oct. 20-24). The topic was "Living Lessons from the Book of Job." Speakers from the area joined keynote speakers Jody Apple (of Southeast Institute for Biblical Studies) and Earl Edwards (of Freed-Hardeman University) for a week of study on the timely lessons from the historical account of Job, his suffering, and the search for answers.

The lectures were well-attended, and the lessons affirmed of mix of deep theology and practical application. The theme was especially timely due to the recent passing of Frank Higginbotham, the Gospel preacher at the Chester, WV congregation, who had closed out the lectures for several years. His son, Steve, took his place, and gave a great lesson on "The Patience of Job", employing examples from memories of his father.

All lectures may be heard online at [www.wvsop.com](http://www.wvsop.com). The school has announced the theme of next year's lectures (Oct. 19-23, 2014): The WORD in John. Keynote speakers are Denny Pettrillo, President of Bear Valley Bible Institute, and Neal Pollard, preacher for the Bear Valley church of Christ in Denver, Colorado.

### West Virginia Youth Camp Hosts First Ever Singing Emphasis Week

West Virginia Christian Youth Camp hosted its first annual Singing Emphasis Week this summer. WVCYC is a Christian youth camp that hosts several weeks of fellowship and Bible learning each summer, including weeks for different

age groups and a sports week, dedicated to the growth of Christian sportsmanship through biblical teaching. And this year, for the first time, Singing Emphasis week was added.

Campers were treated to a full schedule of Bible classes dealing with biblical teaching on singing, as well as practical classes on such topics as song-leading, music theory, and songwriting.

The staff was made up of many preachers and teachers, several of them expert musicians, and camp counselors who dedicated their full time to the teenagers attending, and to the young children of the staff as well (affectionately called "staff brats".)

Throughout the week several new songs were presented, all written by members of the church who were present at the camp to introduce their own songs. Devotionals were presented by several preachers based on both the new songs and on famous gospel songs of the past.

The new songs written by members of the church were powerful declarations of faith, and reminders of how few of the songs in our songbooks (since most were written by people with a denominational background) actually mention such important topics as baptism and the church. Not so at Singing Emphasis camp!

The idea for Singing Emphasis week began with brother Andy Robison, a gospel preacher who was recently appointed director of the West Virginia School of Preaching. Brother Andy credits his teenage experience at WVCYC as being a turning point in his life, when he realized the importance of being an active Christian. After studying music in college, Andy began to write spiritual songs and hymns, and he soon developed into a prolific songwriter--to date he has written over 50 gospel songs that are being sung by many congregations of the Lord's church.

To hear some early recordings of songs by brother Andy and friends, go

to [ChurchOfChristSongs.com](http://ChurchOfChristSongs.com). You can also download copies of the music for printing and Powerpoint presentation at this website. For more information on ordering these or some of the latest CDs, call brother Andy at (304)966-6397.

To hear and download some of the new songs by Jonathan Hinckley, click on the "New Songs" and "Free" pages at [ChurchOfChristSing.com](http://ChurchOfChristSing.com). For more information and to order a complete CD and songbook, call Jonathan at (626)287-8184.

### Pennsylvania Congregation Shares "God's Love Story" and Grows

The church of Christ in Camp Hill, PA, has recently completed a major work, developing a new personal growth and outreach program that they call *God's Love Story*. This work was undertaken as a new and exciting opportunity to reach the lost, and to educate and strengthen the church, and is now available across the brotherhood.

The centerpiece is a book titled *God's Love Story*. This book gives a broad overview of the Bible, from start to finish. It is intended to help the readers grasp the story and purpose of God's plan for mankind. *God's Love Story* provides an easy way to obtain a clear viewpoint of the Bible message, from beginning to end, and opens the eyes of the reader to understand the Bible as never before. The full Bible then becomes a more powerful tool to influence the life of the reader.

The book is over 95% scripture, so it contains the direct word of God. The book contains between one fourth and one third of the Bible, and is presented in an easy-to-understand format:

- It is presented in 39 short, easy to read chapters, with selected and compiled portions of the Bible.
- Chapter and verse notations are removed, so it reads more like a novel – reverting back to the original textual form, as it was written many years ago.

- The scriptures are placed as best as possible in chronological order, as a means of giving a readable and easy to understand synopsis of the Bible.
- Short transition statements have been written to aid in understanding. They are simple, Biblically based, and written without espousing any personal doctrines or beliefs - preferring to let the scriptures speak powerfully for themselves. These "transitional statements" are useful in bridging the gaps over sections that were not included, for the sake of brevity.
- Using this approach, material from several different books of the Bible may be combined in one chapter of **God's Love Story** to provide an easy-to-understand and seamless storyline.
- At the end of the book, a "Bible Reference Map" clearly shows the Bible verses used in each chapter, and the location of all transition statements.
- The book is available in regular print, large print, E-book and audio book format.

The Camp Hill congregation is currently in the midst of their own "God's Love Story" campaign. Each week, for 39 weeks (three quarters) a new chapter of the book serves as a template. All students, from toddler to adult, cover the same material each week - leading to further home discussion and reinforcement. The sermon is designed to draw application each week, and the singing and worship program is designed to fit with the theme.

To aid other congregations, a "campaign publicity kit" has been developed, containing:

- Curriculum. A detailed curriculum has been developed, for all ages.
- Graphics Files for Printing Banners. These are great for advertising upcoming campaigns. Currently

three sizes are available, but other sizes could be developed upon request.

- Customizable Flyers, Postcards and Door Hangers
- Implementation Guide. This booklet contains suggestions to help make your church campaign successful.
- Bulk Book Pricing. Reduced prices for bulk book orders help keep your church campaigns at a reasonable cost.

A 501-C-3 nonprofit, **God's Love Story Ministries**, has been established to keep the work and finances separate from that of the local congregation. All donations and proceeds of book sales go into the work of the ministry - no person is profiting individually from this work. The ministry is under the oversight of the board of directors, which is comprised of current and former elders of the Camp Hill church of Christ.

One goal of the ministry is to produce the book in other languages, for use in domestic and foreign missions.

Many more details, including information on how to obtain **God's Love Story** materials, can be viewed at the web site: [www.getgodslovestory.com](http://www.getgodslovestory.com)

Alternatively, if you have questions, we can be contacted at [god-slovestory2@gmail.com](mailto:god-slovestory2@gmail.com)

Email News Items to:  
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# The GOSPEL CLEANER

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THE PRESENT TRUTH . . .

Ronald D. Bryant

## The Holiness of God

In the Scriptures the holiness of God is synonymous with His majesty, His greatness, and His power. In every particular God is exalted and honored on the basis of His holiness. Five of the psalms are spoken of as "the holiness psalms" (Psalm 93, 96, 97, 98, 99). God's holiness is the basis of biblical faith, worship, and service (cf. Exodus 15:11; I Kings 8:23).

Exodus 15:11 – "Who is like You, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like You, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?"

I Kings 8:23 – "LORD God of Israel, there is no God in heaven above or on earth below like You, who keep Your covenant and mercy with Your servants who walk before You with all their hearts."

Being holy, God will not be mocked! We dare not be casual in our response to Him. Familiarity with God and with that which belongs to Him borders on contempt. A number of examples of such casual disregard for Him and of its consequence are recorded.

Seventy Philistines chose to peer into the Ark of the Covenant and doing so they died (I Samuel 6:19). Uzzah presumed to lay hands upon the Ark of the Covenant, and doing so he died (II Samuel 6:7). Ananias and Sapphira, with astonishing smugness lied to the Holy Spirit and they died (Acts 5:1-11). Additionally, Christians are warned to partake of the Lord's Supper in a "worthy manner" (I Corinthians 11:30). All are

warned that God is not mocked (Galatians 6:7).

Because God is holy He is to be had in fear. Curiously, some long for God to be other than He is. They prefer a god they can control; that caters to them, and makes no demands of them. However, because He is holy God stands in opposition not only to all that is wrong, but to all who do not respect His will.

Not a few forget that apart from God, and His purifying purity there is no basis for faith or hope. They forget that the conflict between truth and error, good and evil, is real, and that God is on the side of truth and goodness.

Because God is holy He can deal with sin. Because He is holy He can redeem man from the guilt and depravity of sin. He calls man out of sin and into a holy relationship with Him. That call is proffered to all through the gospel of Christ. The gospel demands an end to rebellion and a wholehearted return to God (II Corinthians 5:18ff). In the fullest sense God's holiness is the basis of life (Ephesians 2:1-10).

Apart from the holiness of God sin cannot be defined or described. Apart from the holiness of God grace is no more than a nebulous concept – it has no specificity. Apart from the holiness of God there is no real enduring standard by which life is to be ordered.

Sadly, while the fact of God's holiness is declared repeatedly, and He calls upon us to be holy, even the subject is basically ignored. Occasionally it receives lip-service. The necessity is un-

deniable; we must study this subject, not to the end that we might master it, but that we may come to be ruled by a deep and abiding awareness of the Lord God and know Him in His holiness.

Through benign neglect, the church has forgotten its place before God, and is becoming increasingly worldly. The preferences and the demands, the will and agenda, of sinful people, are being advanced, while God is being ignored. When and where man is in charge, and the wishes of benighted souls become central, God is disregarded, the truth of God is compromised, moral and spiritual depravity increase, and death reigns!

The word of God is truth, yet for too long it has been read but not truly revered, quoted but not loved or lived. Although given to equip man in every good work, some stand eager to dismiss it and offer in its place their own pronouncements. In many assemblies God's word is not the guide even in what is supposed to be worship. God is neither known nor revered!

Presently, the man in the pulpit is to be a personality, obligated to give a performance. Sermons have become storytelling! God rests too lightly even upon the assembly! He is not central, His will is of little concern, and His honor is not actually considered!

Yet, all of this is fine, if the "service" is over in less than an hour. But, heaven help the man that would dare stand and preach the word!

*Continued on page 12*

Every one of us will live somewhere forever. There are only two possible destinations for the soul – heaven or hell. Someday all who are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God and come forth, either to a resurrection of reward or a resurrection of damnation (John 5:28-29). It is a life or death decision. I want heaven to be my eternal home, and here are some reasons why.

### To Avoid the Horror of Hell

I want to go to heaven, if for no other reason, to avoid the horror of hell. Hell will be a lake of fire (Revelation 20:14) and a place of everlasting punishment for the wicked (Matthew 25:46); where the smoke of their torment will ascend forever and ever (Revelation 14:11); where the worm will never die, and the fire will not be quenched (Mark 9:48).

Hell is going to be a place created by God and intentionally forsaken. It is going to be a God-forsaken place of outer darkness filled with the weeping of the wicked and the gnashing teeth of the lost (Matthew 25:30).

The Bible clearly states that hell is a place of punishment for “the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars” (Revelation 21:8). I do not want to live that way. I do not want to face that destiny. I don’t want to have that kind of person as my neighbor now, and I certainly do not want to have them as my neighbors for eternity?

### To Experience the Joy of Heaven

Secondly, I want to live a faithful, godly, Christian life so that I can experience the joy of heaven. I want to go to heaven so that I can experience the joy of that blessed home of the soul.

I want to be there with my Savior. I want to kiss Him and worship at His feet. I want to live in that land that knows no parting, and where tears shall never dim the eye (Revelation 21:4).

We will not have to worry about pain or death any more. Our days will be filled with bliss and our souls with eternal gladness. The pure water of the river of life shall flow as clear as crystal (Revelation 22:1) and light shall radiate from the very presence of God.

The voices of all the redeemed shall blend in one accord to the Lamb that was slain and the Father whose face we shall at last see as He sits upon His glory-circled throne. How beautiful heaven must be!

I want to go to heaven. I want to see the mansion my Savior has prepared for me. I want to meet my heavenly neighbors. I want to bask in the light of God’s redeeming love while the ceaseless ages forever roll.

### To Be Gathered unto My People

Thirdly, I want to go to heaven to be gathered unto my people. “Thus link by link the strong chain is broken that binds us to earth, and our passage soothed to another world.”

I want to live and encourage my family in such a way that we will someday reunite in that home of the soul. In this life we have to say goodbye and let go of the people we love most. Upon losing his son, King David said, “I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me” (2 Samuel 12:23). To turn loose of those we love is a very hard thing for us to do. But, in heaven, we will never have to let go of them again.

I also want to be with those who I have seen obey the Lord, “that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain” (Philippians 2:16). I want to know that they finished their course and made it safely home.

I also consider “my people” to be the faithful men and women who will have gone on before me. “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may

rest from their labors: and their works do follow them” (Revelation 14:13, KJV).

I want to see all those faithful gospel preachers of yesteryear that I never had a chance to meet in this life. I want to see all the loving, faithful preachers, elders, teachers, and members of the Lord’s church who encouraged me to preach the word and took me under their wing to teach me the way of the Lord more perfectly. Truly, “the memory of the righteous is blessed...” (Proverbs 10:7).

### To Hear “Well Done”

Lastly, I want to go to heaven so that I may hear “Well done good and faithful servant.” I want to know and hear that Jesus was well-pleased with my efforts. I have not done enough. I can never do enough to measure up to His deserving worth. I have failed Him many times and in many ways. But, I know that I can repent of those failures and be faithful with the abilities and opportunities He grants.

Beloved, if we will finish our course, someday the Lord – the righteous Judge – will say to us, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matthew 25:34). If we will keep the faith, the Lord will give to each of us a crown of righteousness just as He gave Paul, and to all those who have loved Him (2 Timothy 4:8).

I want to go to heaven and I want you to come with me. For any man to enter heaven he must be born again (John 3:3-5). He must obey the Lord (Hebrews 5:9). Christ beckons now, “Come unto Me...” He is awaiting your decision, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock...” Heaven’s gates are swung wide open for you, “The Spirit and the Bride say come...” I speak for every child of God when I say we want to go to heaven and we want you to come and go with us.

The

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## Weightier Matters of the Law

Ron Thomas

The “weightier matters of the law” is an interesting idea, but exactly what is in view when Jesus speaks about it? Notice what the Lord said: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone” (Matthew 23:23, NKJV).

To get a good sense of what we are to understand, let us note that in the first portion of the chapter (vv. 1-12). Jesus contrasts outward appearances with internal motives. The word is spoken, but not lived; there is a load levied, but no effort at sharing it; there is a desire to present visual aids to be seen, but no modesty of heart; and there is a desire to be recognized as a teacher, but no real desire to serve. All of these examples address a great problem to be found in man.

Jesus then issues some pounding “woes.” One brother had some rather plain thoughts regarding Jesus’ denunciation: “With the most caustic and severe language he ever employed, the Lord hurls at them charges calculated to strip them of their inflated bigotry, conceit and arrogance, and expose the true character of their corrupted hearts” (Waymon Miller, *Gospel Advocate*, Vol. 98, issue 2, January 12, 1953, p. 29).

Think about what the Lord said: they shut up God’s kingdom, they devoured widow’s houses, they proselytized people toward hell (as they themselves were going), they were blind guides, valued the wrong things and took oaths by the wrong objects, they paid particular attention to details, but failed to notice what was really important, and, in fact, they were dead inside while on the outside everyone thought they were just wonderful and devout!

Brother Miller’s article in 1953 has a ring and theme that still fits today. He

suggested some applications that could be made during his day. He zeroed in on the formalism that he noticed. “A great service will be rendered also by those who now realize this [falling into meaningless ritualism], and labor to rescue the church from the throes of empty formalism. We have done remarkably well in restoring the forms of New Testament Christianity, but we have fallen tragically and woefully short in restoring the spirit of it” (p. 30).

Exactly what are these weightier matters Jesus speaks of and what application can we make in our day? Clearly we can see that Jesus broke down these weightier matters into a series of three: justice, mercy, and faith (NKJV). Let me “piggyback” a thought from brother Miller (“restoring the spirit of it”) by considering three biblical passages.

### Justice

Early in Jesus’ ministry, an accusation was leveled against Him and His disciples concerning breaking the Sabbath. “Look, why do they do what is not lawful on the Sabbath?” (Mark 2:24)

Jesus rejected this accusation for two reasons. First, in their quickness to make an accusation against Jesus they failed to notice the example of Israel’s great king, David. Any one of good sense would realize that David’s predicament was not one of his own doing, but the result of King Saul having a jealous spirit and seeking to kill God’s chosen servant (David; 1 Samuel 21). David did nothing wrong at all!

Second, they failed to understand the significance of the Sabbath command. The Pharisees gave so many prohibitions to things forbidden on the Sabbath that these prohibitions became a weight in themselves. This is illustrated with the descriptive language of Acts 1:12, a “Sabbath day’s journey.” Where is justice properly applied by these religious leaders?

### Mercy

On another Sabbath occasion (Mark 3:1-5; cf. Luke 6:6), Jesus had opportunity to help the religious leaders, and people in general, understand where value is properly placed. Should value be placed on the man or on the day?

A man was physically impaired, but manifested a good amount of faith in desiring to see Jesus. Jesus took advantage of this occasion to teach the people a great lesson. He did this by asking a simple question that would clearly indicate to any hearer what is to be understood: “Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?” (Mark 3:4).

If the religious leaders answered that it was okay to do good, then they would have given up their point of opposition and recognized the value of the man; the particular day in relation to that would not have been significant. On the other hand, they could hardly answer that it was okay NOT to do good when one could. This would have removed credibility from them amongst the people.

They did not miss the point. They set about to plot against Jesus because he humbled them with this question (Mark 3:6). Was mercy properly applied in this circumstance?

### Faith

Though Jesus altered nothing regarding God’s command relating to the Sabbath, they still accused him of wrongdoing. Recall Nicodemus’s observation (John 3:2), and note that the thoughtful, God-fearing man would pay attention.

On another occasion, while Jesus was teaching, there were five men who had much difficulty seeing Jesus. There was a large audience crowded into a small place and they could hardly see the Lord, much less get to Him. Not to be thwarted, they took the initiative and got to Jesus (Mark 2:1-12).

Jesus knew who was present, and a greater opportunity could not have been given to Him to teach an important lesson. Jesus saw the active faith of those who opened up the roof, and declared the sins of the paralyzed man forgiven. This enraged the religious leaders because no man can forgive sins but God (Isaiah 43:25).

That is exactly the point! As they failed to understand the Sabbath, they also failed to understand on this occasion. What Jesus did (declaring sins forgiven) was no insignificant thing. He forthrightly challenged the religious leaders to hear His declaration, note who had authority to declare such, and observe exactly how He demonstrated who He declared Himself to be in the physical healing of the paralyzed man. This was not missed by them!

### Application

It is our Christian duty to obey God in all that He said. He gave us no "optional" commands! In the application of those commands, there is an application of the heart in relation to the affairs of man and in relation to devotion to God.

The weightier matters of the law, during Jesus' day, were in relation to man's heart (mind) and God's will. Micah preached: "He has shown you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8)

It is not our privilege to set aside anything of God for the benefit of man. It is our responsibility, however, to help others see that God's commands are not burdensome, but helpful to their walk of life (1 John 5:3).

## Must All Accountable Persons Obey the Gospel to be Saved?

Ernest Underwood

The question is asked, "Must all accountable persons obey the gospel to be saved." We would answer this question by posing a counter-question: "Must all living persons have oxygen in order to live?" The answer to this second question is a resounding YES! No one with normal and rational thinking abilities would claim that the life of a normal physical human being can be sustained without an ample supply of oxygen. Having put forth these two questions, let us now give attention to the first one.

The question is asked about an accountable person. Not all persons are accountable. An accountable person is one who has reached an age where he can receive evidence, then use reasoning powers to assimilate and draw conclusions from such evidence. For instance, there is no need to talk to a one year old child about politics, morals, ethics, scientific equations, and so on. Is this little individual hampered in some way that causes him to be unable to discuss and understand these matters? No! He is just not of the age to be accountable concerning them. In short, no one would chastise this individual for not voting in any election.

This same principle applies in the spiritual realm. The Scriptures state, "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." (Hebrews 11:6).

Now, can a new-born baby have this faith? Can he diligently seek God? Again, obviously he cannot. Children who have not yet come to the age of accountability are not yet subject to this statement of the writer of the book of Hebrews (Hebrews 11:6).

Neither are those who have developed physically in years, but who did not have the same degree of mental de-

velopment and are still as a small child in that area, come to the age of accountability. It needs to be understood at this point that such individuals as described here are not sinners, the doctrine of Calvinism notwithstanding, and have no need of salvation. They are SAFE.

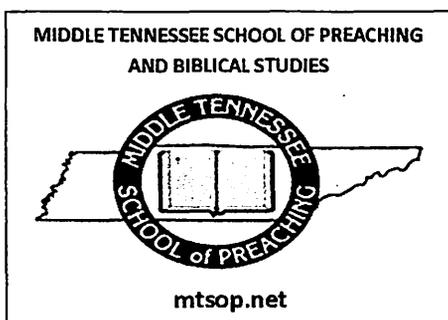
However, having learned and accepted these facts, the question still remains unanswered. Let us now turn to the Scriptures to learn from them the answer.

The apostle wrote in Romans 3:23, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." This passage places all accountable persons under the curse of sin. In Romans 6:23, this same author wrote, "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." It must be understood that if one dies in his sins that sin will pay it wages — the sinner will experience eternal separation from God — spiritual death.

Hundreds of years before the Christ appeared on the scene the prophet Ezekiel wrote, "The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of the father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous shall be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself" (Ezekiel 18:20.)

This passage simply tells us that each one is responsible for his sins. In short, none today, or in any other period of the world's history, is guilty of another's sin. The Scriptures do not teach the doctrine of original sin. Such is the product of men who have departed from God's word — popery, Calvinism, denominationalism.

To the church at Ephesus the apostle Paul wrote, "And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature



children of wrath, just as the others" (Ephesians 2:1-3.)

In this remarkable passage the apostle tells those Ephesian Christians that at one time they were spiritually dead. The cause of such death was that they walked according to the course of the world; they fulfilled the lust of the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and as a result, they were by nature the children of wrath. The word "nature" is translated from a Greek word which means "by use of long habit." They had lived so long in sin that it had become a habit with them.

In verse 12 of this same chapter the apostle gives a vivid description of any and all who have never obeyed the gospel. Here he states, "that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world" (Ephesians 2:12).

Now, friends, if you have never obeyed the gospel this verse of Scripture describes you. But, you don't have to die in sin and be lost. Pay close attention to the very next verse – verse 13, "But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ."

This verse tells us that in Jesus Christ one is brought near by the blood of Christ. Question: How and when does one reach the blood of Christ to be brought near and to get into Christ wherein salvation is found? Before answering this point, let us continue, and then come back to it.

The writer of the book of Hebrews nails it down concerning the one who will be saved, that is, have his sins forgiven. In Hebrews 5:8-9 he wrote, "though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him."

If one is accountable, he must obey the gospel if he wishes to have the "eternal salvation" offered by Christ. If one respects Jesus Christ, he will hear and do His commands (Matthew 7:21-27).

If one is not yet convinced by these passages, perhaps the statement of Paul in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9 will awaken him to the reality of the absolute necessity of every accountable person obeying the gospel which is God's power to save. This passage reads "... when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power."

One last thing, the point that we promised to come back to: The Scriptures teach that man is cleansed by the blood of Christ. The question arises, how does one contact that blood?

Again, the apostle Paul tells us plainly that we contact that blood as we are baptized into Christ, and into His death where His blood was shed. Let us close this article by reading Rom. 6:16-18 – "Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness."

At this point one is free from sin and is placed by God into the kingdom/church of His dear Son (See Colossians 1:13-14.)

## KNOW YOUR BIBLE

Stephen R. Bradd

### How to Bring Up Children

The poet Coleridge was visited by a man who had a theory about child-rearing. "I believe children should be given free reign to think and act and thus learn at an early age to make their own decisions. This is the only way they can grow into their full potential."

Coleridge didn't comment but simply led the man to his garden. The opinionated visitor took one look at the overgrown garden and remarked, "Why that's nothing but a yard full of weeds!" The wise poet declared, "It used to be filled with roses, but this year I thought I'd let the garden grow as it willed without tending to it. This is the result." The visitor immediately understood the point.

Children, like gardens, will not automatically flourish. They need daily attention and care. If parents allow a child to grow up as he wills without properly tending to him, the results will be disastrous.

Examples of this abound in our culture. Many children see very little of their parents either because they or their parents are too busy. Busy with work, school, sports, friends, computer, video games, etc.

In any case, traditional families where the husband provides for the family and the wife is a homemaker (giving special attention to the children) are not that common anymore. Both parents working outside the home is common.

Divorce is common. Immorality is common. These factors, and others, add up to disaster in many homes, so far as bringing up children is concerned. In the busyness and stress of life, children today often are not getting the kind of nurturing and attention they need in order to grow up to be righteous, God-fearing individuals. Even parents who

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faithfully take their children to the assemblies of the church often see their children departing from the faith when they enter into the independence of adulthood.

Okay Stephen, so you've described a very serious problem, but what's the answer? Ephesians 6:4 – "And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord."

Children ought to obey and honor their parents (Ephesians 6:1-3). Parents ought to love and respect each other (5:22ff). Parents ought to pour their energy and time into bringing their children up to be servants of God (Ephesians 6:4; cf. Prov. 22:6).

Fathers and mothers must work together to tend to their children daily. If they allow the cares of this life to dominate their time, their children will suffer.

Metaphorically speaking, weeds will pop up in every child's life at various times, and parents are needed to pull them up before they take over. Children need a lot of attention and guidance (time and love), and if they don't get the instruction and moral training they need from their dad and mom, they will get it somewhere else--perhaps from their peers or TV.

Parents, children will never reach their fullest potential in life or for the Lord if they are not carefully guided and trained from infancy. To merely feed your child, clothe him, and provide a place for him to stay is not nearly enough. Train your children to love God, His word, and His church. Train your children to love people, truth, and righteousness. This takes a lot of time and effort, but it's worth it.

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## Questions & Answers

James R. Lewis

### What is the "new hermeneutic"?

In recent years we have heard of that which has been called a new hermeneutic. Hermeneutics, by definition, is simply the art or science of the interpretation of literature (Webster's New World College Dictionary).

The Bible is literature, but not of the ordinary kind. The Bible is inspired of God, meaning the words of the Bible were written by select men of God as they were directed by the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21).

Since the Bible is God's word, and not man's, wisdom teaches us that we must be careful how we handle it. We are not at liberty to design our own method of hermeneutic. In fact, God warns against adding to or taking from His word, either literally doing so, or by changing the meaning of it.

Death exists because Eve and Adam developed a new hermeneutic about God's word (Genesis 2:17; 3:1ff). They tried to change the meaning of what God had said, but God's word did not change.

However, disobedience to God's word did change Adam and Eve. The same is true for Cain who failed to offer unto God as he has been directed (Genesis 4:3ff; Hebrews 11:4).

The entire population of the earth (except for eight souls) was destroyed from the earth in the universal flood when "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5). It is obvious they chose to interpret God's word to suit their way rather than follow God's way. We know God's word was present in that day because Noah was "a preacher of righteousness" (2 Peter 2:5).

We are further reminded that Israel's blessings depended on their not adding to or taking from God's word (Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32).

The same is true for God's people today. His blessings for us depend upon our faithfully hearing and obeying His word. His word is that by which we live (Matthew 4:4). They are the "words of eternal life" (John 6:68), and they are the words by which we will be judged in the last day (John 12:48). We are not to "think of men above that which is written" (1 Corinthians 4:6); and, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God" (2 John 9). Adding to the Scriptures or taking from them brings the greatest of consequences, even the removal of one's "part of the book of life and out of the holy city" (Revelation 22:18-19).

### The Example of the Instrument

When men begin to talk about a new hermeneutic, they are talking about a new way of interpreting the Scriptures. For the purposes of this article we can use the example of the renewed digression advocating the use of mechanical instruments of music in the worship service. Their arguments suffice to provide an example of the new hermeneutic at work.

The current day digression asserts, among other things, (1) that the Bible says nothing about not using the instrument in the worship, (2) that using examples such as Cain and Abel, and Nadab and Abihu to oppose the use of the instrument is not good hermeneutics, and (3) using mechanical instruments in worship is merely a matter of opinion, or choice, and is not a salvation issue.

### That Silence is Permissive Not Prohibitive

These three assertions are easily exposed as being false. In the first place, the fact that the Bible does not mention using instruments of music in worship service of the church is not a permission to use them, but rather a prohibition.

Since God has not authorized the use of the instrument in worship, then it

must be a doctrine which comes from men. Jesus says, concerning worship which is authorized by men, "But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:9). The introduction, by men, of instrumental music into the worship of the church is vain worship.

### That Old Testament Examples Do Not Apply

Secondly, the Hebrew writer specifically used Abel as one who offered to God "by faith" (Hebrews 11:4); this is in contrast to Cain who offered by choice. Here is explicit Bible hermeneutics of using Old Testament examples which demonstrate prohibition of offering in worship to God that which God has not commanded.

Furthermore, Nadab and Abihu indeed stand as a supreme example of two worshipers who "died, when they offered strange fire before the Lord" (Numbers 26:61). The record in Leviticus 10:1-2, specifically says they "offered strange fire before the Lord, which the Lord commanded them not."

Mechanical instruments in New Testament worship is no less strange that the fire offered by Nadab and Abihu. It is offering that which the Lord commands us not. The Bible teaches we must worship God "in truth" (John 4:34), and there is no truth in adding instruments of music to the worship services of the church.

Bible hermeneutics (principles of interpretation) requires we do not add that which God has not authorized (see above references), and instrumental music in the worship services is not authorized.

### That It Is Not a Salvation Issue

In the third place, the addition of that which God has not authorized most certainly is a matter of salvation. It was with Eve and Adam, with those who perished in the flood of Noah's day, with Nadab and Abihu, and with those who worship according to man's doctrines and not Christ's doctrine (Matthew 15:9; 2 John 9).

Again, instrumental music in worship is a doctrine not authorized by Christ, and Christians are neither to receive those who advocate such doctrines nor bid them "God speed" (2 John 10-11).

### In Conclusion

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, men who sought to add instruments of music to the worship services failed miserably in attempting to offer Bible authority for such additions. Their failure to respect God's word brought great division and the loss of many souls who were pulled away by self-pleasing doctrines which are unauthorized by the Bible.

In contrast, those who truly love the Lord are those who keep His commandments (John 14:15, 1 John 5:3). Let us "speak as the oracles of God" (1 Peter 4:11), and rejoice in the Lord, not in the things which the Lord prohibits.

## Honoring Franklin Camp

James R. McGill

Joseph Franklin Camp (1915-1991) was a lifelong student of the Bible. He was both an outstanding preacher and a fine Bible teacher. He was also a very good writer. He devoted six hours every day to personal Bible study. He arose at 4:00 a.m. in order to be able to devote the early morning hours to study and meditation on God's Word.

Franklin Camp was born in 1915 at Munford, Alabama, just a few miles from Birmingham. Camp's grandfather, Joe Camp, and his father, Benjamin Camp, were both preachers of the gospel.

In his lesson on *The Bible*, Camp said, "The Bible is every man's book. To know the Bible and to handle it aright is the greatest accomplishment within the reach of any person. One may know English, astronomy, literature, music, sociology, and philosophy; but if one does not know the Bible, one has failed in the only subject that brings

all things into their proper relationship and that enables one to know life at its best."

Camp introduced his sermon on the *Providence of God* by stressing to his audience, "Don't take just what the preacher says without comparing it with the Scriptures." He had a strong, resonant, clear speaking voice. Camp was emphatic in declaring, "This life will soon be over and we will stand before God in judgment."

### Preacher Training

He had an active interest in training gospel preachers. For a number of years in the 1950's, he conducted a school of preaching, devoting a night each week to teaching interested young men who were preparing to preach. Later, and for as long as he lived, he continued his interest in preacher training with weekly daytime classes. Preachers drove from considerable distances to attend.

After his death, the Franklin Camp Scholarship Fund was established to fund preacher scholarships "to help deserving men prepare themselves to preach the gospel of Christ" while attending a school of preaching or a Christian college.

The fund also provides money for the distribution of Franklin Camp's books and audio materials.

### Full-time Preaching

Franklin Camp engaged effectively in full-time preaching. He preached at Munford, Alabama, for twelve years; for Park Avenue in LaGrange, Georgia, for two years; for the church at East Gadsden, Alabama, for thirteen years; and for the Shades Mountain congregation in Birmingham for ten years.

After 1972, he left full-time preaching in order to devote all his time to writing, lecturing, and holding gospel meetings. Three of the themes on which he lectured were (1) *Evolution*, (2) *The Inspiration of the Bible*, and (3) *The Work of the Holy Spirit*.

Franklin Camp also supported Christian college education. For sixteen years

he was a member of the Board of Trustees of Alabama Christian College.

### A Successful Writer

One of Camp's best known books is *The Work of the Holy Spirit in Redemption*. In a glowing, lengthy review of this book, published in the August 8, 1974, issue of *Truth Magazine*, Florida College President James R. Cope commends Camp for his thoroughness. "Unlike many writers," Cope says, "the author ignores no difficult passages."

Some of Camp's conclusions, though, are controversial. He says that the Book of Revelation was written before the Jerusalem temple was destroyed in A.D. 70, and that this was the time when miracles ceased, and that it marked the "end of the age." His view is that the "gift of the Holy Spirit" was always miraculous and was always conferred by the laying on of an apostle's hands—except on the day of Pentecost and at the household of Cornelius.

He authored a number of other books, including two books of sermons.

Franklin Camp died in 1991, shortly before his 76<sup>th</sup> birthday.

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## Pre-Evangelism

Robert Waggoner

Presenting the good news about Christ and his kingdom to people in the early twenty-first century requires more time and effort than it did in the early nineteenth century. In the first half of the nineteenth century, most people believed in the existence and relevancy of God, the inspiration and authority of the Bible, the deity of Christ, the sinfulness of humanity, the resurrection, the Day of Judgment, eternal destiny, and in the need for salvation. That was a time when personal behavior and public policies were generally directed by biblical values.

Now, however, we live in a secular world wherein cultures generally reject ideas related to the existence and relevancy of God, the spiritual nature of humanity, sin and its eternal consequences, and the need for human reconciliation to God. While many now may desire to believe in life after death and accept the idea of heaven, many seem inclined to disregard the biblical concept of hell. Many people in our secular world are not interested in hearing the gospel message because they consider it meaningless and not relevant to their lives. Our world is fast becoming more atheistic.

Whereas a century or two ago, the gospel message could be presented with greater ease and in less time because most people in the Western world had a biblical foundation for their way of thinking and their way of life, now people are extremely uninformed about God and biblical values. This means that informing people about the good news of eternal salvation generally cannot start with the teachings of Jesus and the apostles, but must begin by instructing them in fundamental biblical precepts.

In order to convince people about God's good news, we must often start by observing how God revealed himself and his message to humanity in the Old Testament, and why he revealed himself only gradually. People need to know

foundational biblical concepts in contrast to contemporary non-biblical ideologies. These biblical concepts relate to God's nature and activity, the creation of the universe, the nature of humanity, sin with its consequences, the inspiration and authority of God's revelation, the existence of absolute truth, and the nature of reality.

Once people understand these concepts, then a little understanding of Old Testament historical chronology will help them observe how God slowly unfolded his mysterious plan and promises of human redemption. An understanding of the significance of sacrificial offerings to God, shadowy indications of things to come (i.e., types and antitypes), covenants, and prophecies also helps people understand the meaning of Christ's death on the cross. This effort is sometimes designated as pre-evangelism.

With that background, we can then focus more specifically on the disclosure of God's good news in the New Testament. John the Baptist prepared people by heralding the imminent coming of the Messiah and the kingdom of God.

Jesus of Nazareth claimed to be the promised Messiah (i.e., Christ, the son of God) and also preached the imminent coming of the kingdom of God. He gathered disciples to himself, trained them, and sent them forth to preach. But most importantly, Jesus voluntarily died on a Roman cross in order to make a sacrificial atonement for the sins of believers.

In so doing, he also established a new covenant between God and humanity. By God's grace, Jesus died to save believers who acknowledge and confess that Jesus is the Son of God, who repent of their sins, who are immersed for the remission of their sins, and whose faith toward God continues for the duration of their lifetimes.

After people learn these things, they can be taught how God's Holy Spirit is active in the conversion and sanctification of believers. They can more fully learn about the nature of the Christian

life, the function of the church (which is the body of Christ), the nature of Christian worship, and the responsibility of all believers to proclaim God's good news of human redemption.

Quick conversions through home Bible studies are not necessarily a thing of the past, but converting people to Christ now usually takes much more time and effort than in decades gone by. We must realize that we live in a vastly different world than did our Restoration church forefathers.

We are not as productive in evangelism as we once were partly because the hearts of people are not nearly as receptive as they once were. We now have to spend more time and effort preparing people's minds to receive God's word. Then we must take extra care to cultivate the word as it grows in believers' minds because the weeds of secular philosophies are growing all around and are often choking the growing faith of young Christians.

Since we live in a secular world, many people are not familiar with religious vocabulary terminologies associated with salvation. We must therefore make special efforts to explain such concepts as adoption, conversion, election, glorification, justification, the new birth, redemption, regeneration, righteousness, predestination, and sanctification.

Since secularism in our culture has tended to emphasize the temporal, it has largely avoided eternal considerations. We therefore need to emphasize biblical concepts related to eternity, e.g., the end of world, the second coming of Christ, the resurrection, the judgment, and eternal destiny to either heaven or hell.

While we must oppose false religious doctrines, we must insist that our standard of authority for all religious beliefs is the Bible because it is the word of God. We must therefore encourage everyone to read their Bibles diligently in order to verify that every religious teaching is confirmed by Scripture.

## America's Roots

Owen D. Olbricht

The greatness of the United States of America is built on the religious faith of those who founded it. It will continue to be a great nation only if it remains firm on the foundation on which it was built. "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people" (Proverbs 14:34). Lacking respect for and wandering from the principles that motivated and guided the founders of this country, who trusted in a Creator, can bring the demise of the greatness of this country.

### New Jersey

The moving spirit of the men who founded the state of New Jersey is an example of the bedrock attitudes on which our nation was built.

New Jersey is one of the first settled and developed states of the United States. Its history is told in a set of historical volumes, *The Story of New Jersey*, edited by William Starr Myers (New York, NY: Lewis Historical Publishing Company, 1944).

Volume two contains the chapter, "The History of the Churches in New Jersey," by William Thomson Hanzsche. It gives insights into the religious influences that shaped and determined the nature of the government of New Jersey and of the other early colonies.

The chapter concerning churches in New Jersey begins with these words, "The early history of New Jersey reveals the deep religious foundation upon which our American democracy has been built. ... Our continued idealism in the lines of all endeavor began with men of varied faith but of real and virile faith." (p. 230).

In 1676 New Jersey was divided into East and West New Jersey. The West New Jersey governing body of Proprietors in 1681 in the "Charter of Fundamental Laws of West New Jersey," stated: "That no man, nor number of men upon earth, hath power or authority to rule over men's consciences in religious

matters, therefore it is consented, agreed and ordained, that no person or persons whatsoever within the said Province at any time or times hereafter, shall in any ways upon any pretense whatsoever, call in question or in the least punish or hurt, either in person, estate, or privilege for the sake of his opinion, judgment, faith, or worship towards God in matters of religion. But that all and every such person, and persons, may from time to time and at all times, freely and fully have and enjoy his and their judgments, and the exercise of their consciences in matters of religious worship throughout the Province." (p. 247).

### Religious Influence

The Great Awakening of the 18th century left its imprint on New Jersey and the colonies. "The religious revival laid in men's minds the foundation principles of the Christians faith out of which liberty and democracy grew." (p. 269).

George Whitefield's messages helped create a more tolerant attitude among citizens and religious groups. From the balcony of the courthouse on Market Street in Philadelphia he asked, as though he was talking to Abraham, "Father Abraham, who have you in Heaven? Any Episcopalians?" "No." "Any Presbyterians?" "No." "Any Baptists?" "No." "Have you any Methodists, Seceders, or Independents there?" "No, No?" "Why, who have you there?" "We don't know those names here. All who are here are Christians, believers in Christ--men who have overcome by the blood of the Lamb, and the Word of His testimony." "Oh, is that the case? Then, God help me, God help us all, to forget party names, and to become Christians in deed and in truth." (p. 271).

The hardcore sectarian attitude which existed in most of the colonies, including New Jersey, was softened through such preaching by Whitefield.

### George Washington

Religion impacted politics because of the faith of many of the leaders, such as General George Washington. The fol-

lowing report is made concerning His stay near Morristown, New Jersey.

“General Washington typified heroic Christian faith both as commander-in-chief of the army and as President. In his effort to check the rising tide of army vices, in his private habits of devotion and in his public utterances, he did much to strengthen the cause of the churches. One of the cherished traditions of the Presbyterian Church at Morristown, New Jersey, is that Washington, while commander-in-chief, encamped there in the winter of 1776-77, participated in the Lord’s Supper with members of the church. ...The church building being occupied as a hospital for the troops, Washington and his officers partook of the communion with the church members in the apple orchard.”

“The day after he assumed command of the army, Washington issued an order: ‘The General requests and expects of all officers and soldiers not engaged on actual duty, a punctual attendance in divine service, to implore the blessing of heaven on the means used for our safety and defense.’ When the situation of the army did not permit Sunday services, he required the chaplains to hold services other times and to report to him. ‘While we are duly performing the duty of good soldiers, we certainly ought not to be inattentive to the higher duties of religion,’ he wrote. ‘To the distinguished character of Patriot, it should be our highest glory to add the more distinguished character of Christian.’” (p. 299).

### Separation of Church and State

In 1776, New Jersey framed in its Constitution the statement that provided for the citizens “inestimable privilege of worshiping Almighty God in a manner agreeable to the dictates of his own conscience” (p. 300). This privilege, however, included only Protestants.

Immediately following the end of the Revolutionary War the Presbytery of Hanover in Virginia “petitioned the Virginia General Assembly for a separation of church and State, and the end of an established church. The Baptists and Quakers added their petitions there, and

the Methodists and Episcopalians presented counter petitions, asking for the continuance of an established church. It was due primarily to the exertions of the Virginia Presbyterians, Quakers, and Baptists, even more than to Thomas Jefferson, that the first legal action was taken in 1784 in Virginia to separate church and State. Mr. Jefferson’s famous Act ‘for establishing religious freedom’ came the following year, 1785, in the Virginia Assembly.” (p. 300).

“Much of the credit for the Virginia rejection of the established church is due to James Madison, who had graduated from Princeton, and who, therefore, had a close sympathy with the Presbyterians. ...Thus was established the new principle of separation of church and State, and the support of churches by voluntary offerings.” (p. 301).

Not many years later in 1789 the first of the original ten amendments to the Federal Constitution, declared, “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” (p. 301).

In order to understand the thinking behind the first amendment, a person needs to understand the background for this legislation. The colonies had been established by various religious groups that had come to America, some of which had made their religion the only one that was to be supported by their state taxes. All other religious groups, after paying the required taxes, had to support their religion by free will offering.

The intent of the first amendment was to prevent the government from interfering with religious practices and establishing a state religion that taxed its citizens to support it. The amendment was not written, as interpreted today, in order to restrict the free expression of religion in private and public places.

Hanzsche seemed to make a connection between the influence New Jersey churches made on the rest of the country as well as on Abraham Lincoln’s parents, thus also on his life. He wrote, “Abraham Lincoln was reared in the

country of the emotional camp meeting revivals. His parents were predestinarian Baptists. He read and studied the Bible. ...He had a strong Calvinistic belief in the Providence of God. His faith grew more profound as his burdens increased. One of his best public statements of religion is that issued in a proclamation dated August 12, 1861: ‘...it is fit and becoming for all people at all times to acknowledge and revere the supreme government of God, to bow in humble submission to his chastisements, to confess and deplore their sins and transgressions in full conviction that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and to pray with all fervency and contrition for the pardon of their past offenses and for a blessing upon their present and prospective action...’” (p. 331, 332)

Lincoln wrote, “I have never united myself to any church because I have found it difficult in giving my assent, without mental reservation, to the long complicated statements of Christian doctrine which characterized their article of belief and confession of faith.’ In Springfield, however, he rented a pew in the First Presbyterian Church; and in Washington he regularly attended the New York Ave Presbyterian Church, and used to go privately and sit alone in the neighboring open room at midweek meetings, where he could hear and not be seen, and find strength for his soul.” (p. 332).

### Summary

The religious history of New Jersey gives insight into the influence Christianity had on the laws and Constitution of the United States. This country is drifting from the legal and judicial principles on which it was built. It will stand or fall to the extent it remembers or forgets what has made it great. God will greatly bless those who respect and honor Him.

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Continued from p. 1  
*The Holiness of God*

Some wonder why the church is so enfeebled. The truth is that we are where we are because for too long we have cultivated habits that are ruinous to spiritual health.

Primarily, we have been careless and indifferent toward God. We seldom give any depth of thought to what it is to come into the presence of God! Having dumbed-down the place of God's word, we have cut ourselves off from Him. We are adrift, without chart or compass!

Lamentably, many are content to simply drift, and are so devoid of understanding that they think that there is nothing to be concerned about; that everything is going to be just fine. To think on these things should move us to tears.

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## This Month in Restoration History

**December 1822** – Alexander Campbell closes Buffalo Seminary. In 1818, Campbell opened and operated this school in his home of "Bethany." He hoped to train preachers. However, he soon realized the students were not interested in ministry, but other professions. Campbell and his family lived in the basement while the students lived in the upstairs addition of the house. Tuition was \$5.00 per quarter and room and board was \$1.50 per week.

**December 23, 1831 – January 2, 1832** – Unity meetings take place in Georgetown and Lexington, Kentucky between the Stone and Campbell groups. Stone conducted a gospel meeting in November, 1831 at the Great Crossings congregation where John T. Johnson was the minister. "Raccoon" John Smith and John Rogers would join with Stone and Johnson in a series of unity discussions. The four men decided to call a general meeting to discuss unity at Georgetown, Kentucky on December 23-26, 1831.

A second meeting was conducted over the New Year's weekend in Lexington, Kentucky. Smith was the spokesman for the Campbell group and, after having pled for unity, concluded by saying: "Let us, then, my brethren, be no longer Campbellites or Stoneites, New Lights or Old Lights, or any other kind of lights, but let us come to the Bible and to the Bible alone, as the only book in the world that can give us all the light we need." On this basis he and Stone extended the right hand of fellowship to symbolize the unity of the two groups.

**December 1865** – Alexander Campbell preached his last sermon in the Bethany College chapel.

**December 23, 1886** – Daniel Sommer buys the *American Christian Review*. He would merge it with the *Octograph* and call it the *Octographic Review*.

**December 7, 1897** – N.B. Hardeman joins A.G. Freed on the faculty of Georgie Robertson Christian College in Henderson, TN. After this school was closed, another school re-opened and would eventually bear the names of both Freed and Hardeman.

**December, 1925** – The Central congregation in downtown Nashville begins a daily radio broadcast. Today it is the longest running and oldest religious broadcast in America.

**December 4, 1928** – G.C. Brewer preaches to "one of the greatest audiences ever assembled" in Detroit, MI, on the subject of "Evolution and Its Relation to Christianity."

# IS THE CHURCH ONLY A PART OF THE WHOLE?

Raymond Elliott

The American Heritage Dictionary of The English Language defines the word "denominate" to mean, "To give a name to: designate." And according to the same source, one definition of the word "denomination" is "A class of units having specified values, as in a system of currency or weights."

I want to notice first of all the problem of endeavoring to be just the church of our Lord without becoming a denomination. Bible students are acutely aware that Jesus Christ promised in Matthew 16:18 to build (establish, found, begin) His church (ecclesia, assembly). This He did as recorded in Acts 2.

From Acts 2:47 the church of Jesus Christ is always spoken of as being in existence. It was Jesus who died on Calvary in order to purchase the church with His precious blood (Acts 20:28; Ephesus 5:25). Jesus is its builder (Matthew 16:18), its foundation (1 Corinthians 3:11), its head and its Savior (Ephesians 5:23). The church was often referred to in the book of Acts as simply the "church" (Acts 5:11; 8:1).

Some of the other scriptural terms are "church of God" (KJV, Acts 20:28), "church of the firstborn" (Hebrews 12:23), "church of the living God" (1 Timothy 3:15) and of course "the churches of Christ" (Romans 16:16). Because there is a diversity of terms used in the New Testament regarding the church, it is safe to conclude that one term should not be used to the exclusion of others.

To insure that we do not "denominate", that is, "To give a name to: designate" the church of our Lord, we should refrain from using such language as "Church of Christ School", "Church of Christ Preacher", "Church of Christ Camp", "Church of Christ Ball Team", "Church of Christ people" or even "Church of Christ Church".

However, it is sad to note that some brethren do consider the church as being just a denomination, that is, only a part of the whole body of Christ. In other words, that the church is a denomination and it is no better or worse than any other religious organizations that manifests faith in God and in Jesus Christ that comprise the entire body (church) of Christ. One brother writes:

*"As I continue writing, mostly because I'm enjoying this moment in English, I wonder: Why do people keep writing 'churches of Christ' instead of 'Churches of Christ'? I hope it's not the old illusion of innocence (to borrow from Leonard and Richard's incredible book) that we're the true church. I.e., since we're the real church (code language: the LORD'S church), we are Christ's church, or (lowercase) churches of Christ.*

*I prefer "Churches of Christ." This admits that while we love much about our heritage and the nondenominational dream, we are a group, a denomination. We have our own colleges, our own camps, our own papers, our own quirks, our own family stories, and our own language. We're just a small part of the body of Christ," (Mike Cope's Blog, 6/16/05).*

I want to make a few observations concerning several mistaken and unscriptural statements this brother has made in the two preceding paragraphs:

1. Knowledgeable Bible students know that the original language (Koine Greek) of the New Testament did not have a mixture of small/capital letters. They were all the same size. The oldest manuscripts were written between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries and were called "Uncials". They are considered to be the most important witnesses to the original text of the New Testament. They were written entirely in capital letters. The oldest of these is thought to be the Codex Vati-

canus. Later manuscripts that appeared between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 15 centuries were called "Cursives", that is, they were written in small running letters linked together. But the old manuscripts did not have a mixture of capital and small letters.

2. That the expression in Romans 16:16, "churches of Christ" is not the official name of the church, rather it is a term denoting ownership. That is, the church belongs to its builder and head Jesus Christ. In Young's Literal Translation it is "The assemblies of Christ". Should we capitalize "assemblies"? According to this brother's understanding, we should. Darby translates Romans 16:16 in this manner, "all the assemblies of Christ". The Contemporary English Version has "Christ's churches". And McCord's New Testament Translation of the Everlasting Gospel has "All of Christ's congregations greet you." It is worthy to note that all the translations of the Bible that I have personally checked use the small letter 'c' in the expression "churches of Christ" as is found in Romans 16:16. So it seems that all these scholarly persons understood the expression "churches of Christ" to mean congregations (assemblies) of Christ and not to be understood as the official name of the church. Thus we have every right to use a small 'c' when using the expression "churches of Christ".

3. It must be admitted that some of the congregations of Christ have become a denomination and it is understandable that these brethren now wear the official name "Church of Christ". These brethren believe that the church began during the Restoration Movement here in America in the early part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The word 'denomination' carries the meaning of being a part of the whole. It is liken to our currency when we speak of how we might want a hundred dollar bill divided into various denominations, that is, we would desire

four twenty dollar bills and two ten dollar bills. Our brother believes *"We're just a small part of the body of Christ."* There are literally thousands of denominations in the world and all of these religious entities comprise the body of Christ, of which the "Church of Christ" is *"a small part"* according to our brother's understanding.

It is necessarily implied in this brother's belief that it doesn't matter what the various religious bodies teach on how a sinner should be saved. One way of salvation is as good as another. One can be saved by "faith only" or by saying the "sinner's prayer". A person would be accepted by the Lord by being sprinkled as a child or being immersed into water because one's sins have already been forgiven. In this brother's thinking, the diversity of doctrines propagated by the various denominations is not to be considered as a barrier to unity among the different segments of "the body of Christ".

During the approximately fifty-five years that I have been preaching, I have never taught a person that he should become a member of any denomination. I have never baptized a person with the understanding that he would then become a member of any denomination, *"a small part of the body of Christ"*.

Just like the apostles taught on the Day of Pentecost, I have instructed believers in Christ to repent and be baptized in the name Jesus Christ for the remission of their sins (Acts 2:36-38). I have further instructed these baptized believers that the Lord who saved them also added them to His church (Acts 2:41, 47).

These new disciples of Christ were taught they should come together with others who have been born again of *"water and the Spirit"* (John 3:5) to worship and work as children of God (Acts 2:42). If people in the first century who believed in Jesus Christ and who obeyed the commands to repent and be baptized were saved from their sins by the blood of Jesus and who were added to the Lord's church, can we not do the same today? If not, why not?

The apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians 1:22, 23 that the church is the body of Christ. In Colossians 1:18 Paul stated that the body of Christ is the church. He declared in Ephesians 4:4 that there is *"one body"*.

According to Paul in I Corinthians 12:13 we are "baptized into one body" (church). It is sad indeed that many of our scholarly(?) liberal brethren are making light of Christians who refer to the church being "Christ's church" and/or "The Lord's church".

Our brother has the right to refer to himself as a denominational preacher and the church where he preaches as a denomination but he should not pass judgment on the rest of the congregations of Christ of being a denomination, that is, *"a small part of the body of Christ"*.

### *Special Feature*

## Clinton church of Christ Clinton, Illinois

Stephen R. Bradd

In the summer of 1958, a group of Christians established a congregation of the Lord's church in Clinton, Illinois. The group consisted of the families of: Robert & Ruth Stinson, Almos & Rubye Barnhill, Bill & June Evans, Chuck & Elizabeth Lynn, Gary & Ina Thomason, and Coyce & Beulah Walden.

They first met in the Knights of Pythias Hall in the downtown area, with Bill Evans doing the preaching and Gary Thomason directing the singing. The congregation soon had some new members and continued to grow slowly.

A dwelling was then purchased on Mulberry street, and the congregation met there for a time. Then, Almos Barnhill bought the home for his own, and the church met in the Washington and Lincoln schools for a period of time. The money derived from the sale of the building on Mulberry street was used to purchase lots on which to construct the present building. The building was dedi-

cated in the spring of 1965 with R.C. Thompson delivering the dedication sermon.

Bill Evans resigned as the minister, and Leon Powell served for a short time. Then, Bill was rehired until he moved to Dale, Oklahoma. Several young men also served the congregation for a while: Richard Williams, Dennis Ruch, and others. Bill's dad, W.C. Evans, then came to serve as minister full time.

Bobby & Betty Cary came to work with the Clinton church from 1970-72, and then moved on to another work in Michigan.

The next minister to work with the church was Chalmer Van Rheenen and his wife Lornia and their daughter. Chalmer served from 1972-73 and returned to Arkansas.

The next was Bill Clary and his wife Marie and their two daughters. Bill was a school teacher and was to come only for the summer, but support was raised for him to stay full time and he was with the Clinton church for five years, from 1973-78. Robert & Kathryn Bradd were converted by Bill during these years.

The congregation at Clinton now had an average attendance of approximately 65-70, of which about half were coming from the Lincoln-Beason area. As there was no congregation in Lincoln, the brethren who had been commuting from there decided to start a work in Lincoln. The Clinton members bid them God-speed and Bill moved with them. Since that point in time, the Clinton congregation has never surpassed an average attendance of 40 (though they are close presently).

Next came Ed & Barb Loyd to work with the Clinton church. They were from Springfield and were close to home. They were here from 1979-82. Ray & Nina Christman also became members of the Clinton congregation at that time. Ray, having preached for several years, alternated the pulpit work with Ed until Ray was transferred to Danville. Ray at this time was an employee of the Illinois Power Company. Soon after this, the Loyds moved to Wynne, Arkansas.

The next minister to work with the Clinton church was Rod Cameron, with his wife Belinda and son Daniel. They were with the church from 1983-84.

Then came Robert & Marla Housby, with their son Jason. After a period of about 3 years, Bob decided to go back to school and complete his work on his degree. They were here from 1985-88.

In the summer of 1988, Emery "Chip" Green came from Springfield to work in Clinton, along with his wife Lorri and their two sons, Mason & Travis. They were here from 1988-90.

During the years of 1990-92, Terry Marx & Harold Driskell alternated preaching for the congregation. Two of the three elders, Almos Barnhill & Merle Fulks, both passed away in 1991, thus dissolving the eldership.

The next full time preacher was Tom Marshall and his wife, Donna. They were here from 1993-94.

From 1994-95, Ray Bailey served both the Lincoln and Clinton congregations.

In September of 1995, Larry Fryer became the minister of the Clinton church. He and his wife, Essie Mae, had previously served as missionaries in Sri Lanka for 20 years and continued to help out in that country about three months each year. A working relationship was established at this time between the congregation in Milan, Tennessee (who primarily supported the Fryers) and the congregation in Clinton. The Fryers labored in Clinton until March of 2001, when they went to work in Monroe, Georgia.

In December of 1996, Stephen R. Bradd, at the encouragement of the Fryers, became the associate minister with the Clinton congregation. He worked with Larry closely and preached during his absences abroad. Stephen was a college freshman and continued commuting to classes and studying mathematics. The church built up an extensive library of videos (from World Video Bible School) and other materials which Stephen used for his ministerial training.

Stephen graduated college with honors and earned a mathematics education degree in May, 2000. He married Ranae in June. He then assumed full-time duties in July as a gospel preacher in Clinton.

On May 30, 2003, the church building was damaged by a tornado. It was repaired over the course of about 4 months at a cost of over \$60,000. The congregation was able to continue using part of the structure while repairs were being made. Gary Thomason passed away late in 2003. Gary had been a strong leader in the church for decades and was one of the reasons why the Lord's church in Clinton survived, despite its small size.

In 2004, the Clinton congregation began a live radio broadcast on WHOW, which was hosted by Stephen R. Bradd and Patrick English. After 7 months, it was decided that the congregation's time and effort would be more wisely spent on developing a website that would serve as a Bible study tool for edification and evangelistic purposes. All materials posted on the site would be in full-text and MP3 formats. AudioEvangelism.com was formally launched in January of 2005.

By the end of 2013, Audio Evangelism will surpass 1600 lessons in its online archive. Each day about 1000 people (on average) visit the website. Tens of thousands of free audio CDs have been requested and shipped to over 100 foreign countries. Stephen continues to labor with the church and is also involved in some "tent-making work" to supplement his income. He and wife Ranae have been blessed richly by God. They have 5 boys (Adin, Abel, Abram, Amos, & Asa) whom they educate at home.

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## News & Notes

James R. McGill

### Obituaries

**Guy Ferrell Hester**, age 77 of Corinth, MS passed away Thursday, December 5, 2013, at Magnolia Regional Health Center in Corinth.

Brother Hester was born February 15, 1936 in Vernon, AL to the late Sherlie (S.F.) and Clora Price Hester. He was a minister, and preached for sixty-four years.

He served as a full-time minister for churches of Christ in Alabama, Arkansas, Indiana, Iowa, Mississippi and Tennessee. He did foreign and domestic mission work, and helped to found and direct the Vreed-en-Hoop School of the Bible in Guyana, South America.

He was the senior-most staff writer for the *Gospel Gleaner*, and published a collection of sermons entitled *Keep It Simple, Son*, which was inspired by his father who was also a preacher.

He was a veteran of the U.S. Army, and served as a medic in Korea.

In addition to his parents, he was also preceded in death by his sister, Dorothy Hester Madison; three brothers, Foy Hester, Giles Wade Hester and Benny Wayne Hester; and a great granddaughter, Allison Rosella Ham.

Bro. Hester is survived by his wife, Shirley Dorrrough Hester of Corinth, with whom he would have celebrated their 61st wedding anniversary on Dec. 15; two daughters, Connie Montgomery (Larry) of Steens, and Jalema Tidwell (Jay) of Myrtle; two sons, Ferrell Hester (Lynne) of Corinth, and Tim Hester (Amy) of Crossville, TN; a brother, Johnny Hester of Sikeston, MO; 10 grandchildren; eight great grandchildren; and a host of nieces and nephews.

[Editor's Note: The January 2014 issue of the *Gospel Gleaner* will be a special issue in memory of brother Hester.]

### Congregations Celebrating Milestones

The **Antioch church of Christ** in Blue Springs, MS recently celebrated their 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

The **Ripley church of Christ** in Ripley, MS recently celebrated their 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Congratulations to these fine churches!

### Upcoming Lectureships

The **Brown Trail church of Christ** will be hosting the annual Fort Worth Lectures, January 12-14. This year the books of Galatians and Ephesians are to be studied.

The **Florida School of Preaching** in Lakeland, FL will be hosting their annual lectureship, January 20-23. This year's theme is "Do You Understand Truth?"

### Gleanings from the Mission Field

From **Ernest Underwood**: There are some things that are just completely non-understandable. When one asks about such things as they happen, there is no way that a rational answer can be given. For instance, a thing is happening even this day in the Karbi district of Assam, India that one does not want to believe even though it is absolutely true. Let me relate the account then I will make some comments.

From 2006 to 2009 I traveled to India each year to teach in the school of preaching in Shillong, India. During two of those years there was young man who was in my classes. He later graduated from the school and moved back to his home state.

Rather recently he was asked to come to Guwahati where the school of preaching is now located, and to be a teacher of the students who speak the Karbi dialect. He came and is doing a splendid work in the kingdom. About a week ago (As I write this it is November 16<sup>th</sup>) he went to Karbi Anglong, a province of the Indian State of Assam to preach in a gospel meeting. In that meeting six people obeyed the gospel. They were added to

the Lord's church by the Lord Himself (Acts 2:38-47).

In the village where the gospel meeting was conducted is a Baptist Church. Upon learning of the conversion of these six precious souls the leaders of the Baptist Church came to them, and to the young preacher, and threatened to beat them. They also stated that they would drive this family out of the village.

Today, the day that I am writing this, we have heard that those leaders of that Baptist Church have hired some base and vile men to go and beat these new members of the Lord's church and drive them from the village....

This morning I received this report from the brother/former student concerning the situation in Karbi Anglong. The leaders of the Baptist Church in that village threatened the new Christians with beatings, have told them that they have two weeks to take their personal belongings and be out of the village. All the leaders had their beating sticks in their hands when they gave this ultimatum.

The father of the former student has land in the general area and has offered to give these new saints enough land to build a building on it. When these Christians leave the village by force under the threat of being beaten they will have no home, and must by some means build houses.

We, in this area are calling on faithful Christians and churches in India to assist these brethren in getting settled in their new location....

These Baptist Church leaders who are guilty of these evil and hateful actions will now have more than just their false doctrine to answer for on the Day of Judgment....

One more statement... Several churches in India have answered the call for assistance, including the church that meets here at the school, made up mostly of the students. It now looks like that the families that were ousted from their homes will have enough assistance to at least get them somewhat settled. Please continue to pray for these new saints.

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