

Are We Moving Away
From The Cross Of
Christ?

Bobby Liddell, Editor

1988 Bellview Lectures

Are We Moving Away From The Cross Of Christ?

Thirteenth Annual
Bellview Lectures

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Are We Moving Away From The Cross Of Christ?
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DEDICATION



George and Ida Williams

This book, containing the lectures delivered in the Thirteenth Annual Bellview Lectures, May 11-15, 1988; at Pensacola, Florida, is gratefully dedicated to brother and sister George W. Williams.

George and Ida Williams have been faithful members of the Bellview church since its beginning in 1952. Naturally, when the Bellview Lectures began in 1975, they were diligent in their support of that work. Every year they have given generously to the support of the lecture program, as they have faithfully supported every other work of the Bellview church. Their lives have been a history of love and strong support for gospel preaching. They are members whose actions in the Lord's church often go unheralded.

It is a sincere privilege to bestow recognition, upon these distinguished servants of the Lord. They deserve far more honor than they will receive in this life, but may this volume be a lasting testimony to the deep appreciation the Bellview church has for this couple who have served so faithfully down through the years.

Elders,

Bellview Church of Christ

PREFACE

In the book of Galatians, Paul wrote, “I marvel that ye are so quickly removing from him that called you in the grace of Christ unto a different gospel; which is not another gospel: only there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ” (Gal. 1:6-7).

There always has been in man the tendency to move away from the divine standard to ways devised by men, determined to end in spiritual destruction. Even before the New Testament had come to a close, we are told of those who had gone beyond the doctrine of Christ and were actively seeking to draw away disciples after them.

Times and men have not changed. As men have moved away from the cross of Christ in centuries past, so are they moving away from the cross today. Therefore, we think it very timely that the Thirteenth Annual Bellview Lectures present the theme, *Are We Moving Away From The Cross Of Christ?* The answers given to this soul-searching question will be of great benefit in helping men to grow spiritually and return, with purpose and intent, to the cross of Jesus Christ.

The lectures presented in this book have the balance we envisioned when the rationale for the lectureship was completed and assignments were made. Twenty-three gospel preachers, prepared twenty-seven manuscripts which make up this most excellent volume. Problems, of particular interest to brethren who diligently are striving to “walk in the old paths” and be pleasing to the Lord, are given special attention in this lecture program. Included is a special, two lecture study of the book of Galatians.

We give special thanks to the men who graciously have prepared the manuscripts for this book. They were chosen because of their soundness in the faith and their ability to preach the word of God, boldly and in love. We also express appreciation to the Bellview elders, Hairston Brantley, Bill Gallaher, and Fred Stancliff who oversee the lectureship. The Bellview church has done a tremendous work for many years in presenting the Bellview Lectures, and in so doing has made a significant contribution to the cause of Christ. The elders, and the members of the Bellview church are to be commended highly for their work’s sake.

This volume is sent forth with the fervent prayer that it will assist all who read its pages, and that only good will come from its publica-

tion. It deserves wide distribution among a brotherhood that has within it those who definitely are moving away from the cross of Christ.

William S. Cline, Director
March 24, 1988

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BRETHREN, WE ARE DRIFTING

Joe Gilmore



Joe Gilmore, Jr., has been a gospel preacher for forty-eight years and is now working with the congregation in San Lorenzo, California. He lectures for the Federal Government on Indian Culture, participates in debates, ranches, and is an oil producer. He attended Abilene Christian University, East Central State University and San Jose University. He and his wife, Joy, have one daughter and one granddaughter.

Writing to the Hebrew Christians Paul said, “Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip” (Heb. 2:1). We are made to see the figure of a ship slipping off the cables drifting away from her moorings. The sea has its derelicts and so has the church. It is important that we recognize that no ship drifts into harbor and no soul drifts into heaven.

Here is a graphic word picture of a ship held from drifting by her anchor. While the anchor holds fast the ship is perfectly safe. The gospel of Christ was the anchor of the Hebrew Christians. The Hebrews letter was written for the purpose of encouraging complete confidence in the gospel. There would be fearful consequences if they were to drift from it.

Many today are just drifting through life. Going with the tide and the crowd in the way of least resistance is a modern scene. There are those who drift from one job to another; from marriage to another one, and from place to place. People leave one insecurity to embrace another. When men drift from one pleasure to another, lasting satisfaction cannot be found.

We see today many members of the Lord’s church drifting from one belief to another without being convicted. The voice of history is

warning against drifting. The church of the first century during the first generation began to drift. Each generation of Christians must be warned lest they leave the doctrine of the New Testament.

When I was in my teens, brother J. D. Tant was constantly writing in the brotherhood papers saying, "Brethren, we are drifting." If brother Tant were living today he would be saying, "Brethren, we are drowning."

Drifting is the word which describes the process by which most people leave the church.

HOW DRIFTING BEGINS

Drifting begins by letting things slip. The lack of earnest attention causes drifting. Boat owners often let their boats slip and drift away. In the religious life, it is never the intention of anyone to drift away from God. Good people do not want to throw religion away. They want it to remain. Many church members are like children playing in the sand. They let it slip through their fingers because no "earnest heed" is given to it. Drifting may seem easy and something that just happens. However drifting never just happens. Someone went to sleep at the oars. Someone deserted the helm. The compass was dropped overboard. One does not need to know much to drift. Ignorance is so blissful until one wakes up. Then horror grins at you. It is at this point that one must reckon with reality. It is so easy to drift. Drifting requires no effort. The Catholic church is the product of a gradual drifting from the New Testament order of things.

The spirit of *compromise* causes spiritual drifting. History records how a famous fortress was taken by merely tying a thread to a beetle's wings and letting it crawl up the rocky rampart. From that a cord followed, and from that a rope, and then a ladder, and then a soldier who slew the guard and threw open the gates. Compromising with error and sin is always dangerous. "Soft preaching" is responsible for the tendency to compromise with error. Many yield to popular trends and do not denounce and condemn error. Compromising with error seems to be on the increase today. No congregation can be strong in the faith when it is fed on soft preaching. Our colleges for the most part have failed to produce preachers who will stand for the truth. Elders should not let preachers stand in the pulpit who compro-

mise the gospel. Preachers must be settled on the scriptures. They cannot be in a state of flux. Paul told a young preacher what to preach. Paul said, "Preach the word" (2 Tim. 4:2). A saving message must be preached. Preachers must stress "the inspiration of the scriptures"; the authority, totality and finality of the Word of God; the conditions of pardon; details of worship and the importance of the church. Great preachers of the past such as Joe Blue and C. R. Nichol did not relinquish any of these. Some preachers in the early church drifted away from the truth. Many in that day fell by the wayside because they were influenced by false teachers. Paul warned those who were responsible for the welfare of the church to watch for this very thing (Acts 20:29-30). Paul also predicted that there would come a falling away and warned Christians that it might be expected (2 The. 2:3). One departure led to another, until it was consummated in "the great apostasy." This has been known in history as the Dark Ages, lasting over 1200 years, during which time the people were not permitted to read their Bibles. Then the various Protestant denominations arose after the beginning of the sixteenth century. Thus, the religious world drifted away from the religious order of things that were instituted and established by the apostles. We urge those who have drifted from the old paths and standards to return to the New Testament order of things in faith, doctrine and practice.

Bad *companionship* leads to spiritual declension. "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise, but a companion of fools shall be destroyed" (Pro. 13:20). Paul said, "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Cor. 15:33). Trying to keep one's worldly companions has resulted in slipping back socially. Unbelieving friends may by ridicule influence the Christian to drift from the faith. Worldly friends may charge that you are holding to something unproved and without official recognition. They may also tell us that we are suffering without justification. The danger of discouragement is the same today as it was in the first century. Many give way to digression by taking the easy road for the sake of peace rather than staying with the gospel of Christ. The majority today are timid when it comes to taking an unpopular stand!

It is sinful to be so engrossed in business that religion does not get a chance. One cannot be interested in two paramount things at a time. Only one thing can be chief Jesus said, “Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Mat. 6:24).

The indulgence in secret sins is sure to bring about spiritual declension or drifting. We are told that “little foxes” spoil the vines” (Song of Sol. 2:15). Little sins pave the way for big sins. Love grows cold (Mat. 24:12). When this happens one leaves his first love. Many have drifted from the true standards and now only profess a form of godliness. Christians are warned about this sin. Paul said,

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof (2 Tim. 3:1-5).

People guilty of these 18 sins are said to be “having a form of godliness.” They gradually drifted into these sins.

Drifting occurs when we *love the world* as did Demas. “For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world” (2 Tim. 4:10). The apostle John warns Christians “not to love the world, neither the things that are in the world” (1 John 2:15). The apostle James gives us the same warning, “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (Jam. 4:4). The world is being brought into the church. Sometimes those who are worldly-minded are found taking control of local congregations. No wonder so many congregations are divided and unrest pervades the whole! Paul warned Christians “Be not conformed to this world” (Rom. 12:2). Many today are trying to retain the connection with God and at the same time do all the things that are popular with the world. When people conform to the world and attend worship to be entertained, they have drifted far away from righteousness.

When members of the church are not *properly fed* the “sincere milk of the word” (1 Pet. 2:1-2), they will drift. Proper food is re-

quired for strength. Elders and preachers should see that new members have a good Bible, one that is properly translated such as the King James or the American Standard, 1901 edition. The reading of most of the new English Bibles will take one into error. You can tell what a man believes by the Bible he carries. Failing to give earnest heed to the things of the gospel will surely sink one's boat (Heb. 2:1). Anyone can be a first-class drifter. One does not have to know much to drift. Ignorance is so blissful until you wake up and the horror of reality grins at you. Drifting is a gradual process. Members who are against debating and hearing the Bible quoted in the pulpit giving book, chapter and verse are certainly drifting. Bible preaching is not in style in many congregations today. This makes us fear for the next generation. Our generation is being told that preachers should not preach "the plan but the man." Mention is made that even the preaching of baptism is offensive to so many people and no reference to it should be made in the pulpit. One cannot preach the man without preaching the plan. When Jesus told Nicodemus "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5). He was preaching His plan. Peter preached the Lord's plan in Acts 2:37-38. Philip preached Jesus to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:35). Preaching Jesus included the plan. "Behold, here is water, what doth hinder me to be baptized?" (Acts 8:36). When the apostles preached Jesus Christ it always led to preaching the Lord's plan to save sinners. The denominations for years have been preaching Christ and excluding His plan to save. Strange that some preachers in the church are aping the denominations. Jesus said, "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments" (John 14:15).

Members of the Lord's church need the right kind of exercise. Food is essential and so is *exercise*. New converts need something to do when they enter the church through obedience to the Word. Their "senses must be exercised to discern good and evil" (Heb. 5:14).

Every congregation should see to it that all members recognize and sense they are accepted by other members. They should know they are a part of the congregation. Warm friendship and association are so necessary for the spiritual welfare for each member. People drift

from the congregation when they feel *lonely, discouraged* and *unwanted*.

We will never really know how many have drifted away because of *gossip*, and other *sins of the tongue*. These sins of the tongue will cause the weak to drift or stumble (1 Cor. 8:12-13).

Many drift away because they *married out of the church*. Each year there are vast numbers leaving the church for this reason. Arguments ensue as to what is authority in religion. One goes to a church and the other to the church. Since neither one can change the other, they either separate or both drift from religion altogether.

DANGERS OF DRIFTING

Most of the members who drift from the church did not intend to do so. The drifting process is gradual. It starts by neglect and the relaxing of our commitment to duties. Then we wake up one morning and find we have drifted away from God, Christ, the church and the gospel. There are more church members drifting than are rowing!

There is danger to *self*. Drifting never takes us in the right direction. No one drifts toward God. To go in the direction of God requires labor on our part. "Save yourselves from this untoward generation" (Acts 2:40). "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phi. 2:12). We do not have to be evil or in motion to drift. Just neglect, be careless, take the easy way and to destruction we will go. The faithless pilot will go down with the ship. He will sink with the cargo. Such a pilot is called upon to pay personally. A man's soul is his most precious possession. If a man loses his own soul, all is lost (Mat. 16:26). Drifting means ruin. If a man lets his business drift where does it drift to? If a gardner or a farmer does the same with his garden or crop, what happens? It is so in the individual's religious life. Drifting means *loss and ruin*. The danger of relaxing one's grip on spiritual realities is serious.

Drifting is dangerous to *others*. A ship adrift may sink other ships. Sometimes there is more than one in a boat. A reckless pilot can cause others to lose their lives. Before we become careless drifters, let us consider that others can be hurt. We neither "live to ourselves" nor "die to ourselves." "For whether we live, we live unto the Lord, and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore,

or die, we are the Lord's" (Rom. 14:8). No one goes to heaven or hell alone. We are sure to take someone else along! When brethren hate and wrangle with each other they likely will succeed in destroying each other. Paul said, "But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another" (Gal. 5:15). When preachers go about like king Saul throwing javelins at each other, a bad example is set for other members of the church. There are some very prominent preachers doing a lot of harm in the church today. We should be setting better examples and cultivate more love for each other. All have seen too much hate. The non-Christian often judges the entire church by one indifferent, drifting member. Children often see their drifting parents and cease to be impressed with the importance of Christ, the Bible, and the church. Children have the tendency to become like that by which they are surrounded. Children need a proper atmosphere in order to reach spiritual maturity.

LAODICEA, AN EXAMPLE OF DRIFTING

Laodicea failed to take heed and drifted from Christ (Rev. 3:14-22). Laodicea was situated near Colosse. It is said to have been a very wealthy town. The apostle Paul had written a letter to them (Col. 4:16). The city was founded in 250 B.C. by Antiochus of Syria and named for his wife Laodice. The name means "pleasing to the people." Laodicea was on the trade road to Ephesus, and this commerce assured the city of great wealth.

The message to Laodicea was important as it came from the "Amen" (v. 14). Jesus begins this letter by mentioning who He is. He is the "Amen." Many think this is a strange title. The word "Amen" is usually used at the end of a prayer. It means truly or verily. Since the word here is capitalized it is a proper name. The word literally means "true." Jesus is the embodiment of truth (John 1:14; 14:6; 2 Cor. 1:20). "Amen" involves the idea of swearing (Num. 5:22), acceptance (Deu. 27:15-26), and truthfulness (John 3:5). The message came from the Faithful and True Witness (v. 14). Thus, the testimony is reliable (Pro. 14:5; John 8:14). The Author and Addressee of the message is also called the Beginning of Creation (v. 14). This phrase does not mean that Christ was the first creation of God but that he is

the Author, Origin or Originator, Beginner of Creation (John 1:1-3; Col. 1:15-17; 1 Cor. 8:6).

Let us consider the condition of the church described in the message. There were some things known and condemned by Christ. "I know thy works" (v. 15; Luke 16:15; Pro. 15:11). In the other congregations or churches, there were things to praise. There was nothing to commend in Laodicea. Laodicea was lukewarm, "neither cold nor hot" (v. 15). Here was a fifty-fifty proposition for they were attempting to serve two masters. They had no zeal for either (Mat. 6:24). Lukewarmness is caused by: cares of the world (Mat. 13:22), and lack of faith (Jam. 1:6; 1 Tim. 2:8). The symptoms may be described as: neglect of private duties, prayer, neglect of Bible study; neglect of public worship; indifferent to benevolence. "Would that thou wert cold or hot" (v. 15). Lukewarmness is worse than zero. Lukewarmness is nauseating will spue thee out" (v. 16). Here is apostasy in unmistakable terms.

Laodicea's fancied condition is expressed in verse 17, "I am rich." Laodicea may have been materially rich (Psa. 52:7; Jer. 9:23). "Increased with goods" (Psa. 62:10). "Have need of nothing." Not even the Lord (Luke 12:15-21).

They were self-deceived. The Lord said they were wretched and miserable." "They were poor." That is, they were destitute of true riches (Luke 16:11; Eph. 3:8). "They were blind" (Mat. 15:14; Eph. 4:18). "They were naked" (Rev. 16:15).

THE CURE FOR DRIFTING

The Lord offered Laodicea His remedy for drifting and lukewarmness. "Buy gold tried in fire"; "Mayest be rich" (Rev. 3:18). Faith is more precious than gold (1 Pet. 1:7). In Christ are all treasures of wisdom (Col. 2:3). The gold of God is that tried in the fire. Gold ore in its natural state is worth little until it is refined with fire. "White raiment;" "Mayest be clothed" (v. 18; Rev. 19:8). The Laodiceans boasted about their expensive clothes. But God requires a different kind of clothing: a robe made white in the blood of the Lamb. "Anoint eyes"; "mayest see" (Rev. 3:18; 1 John 2:20). "Rebuke and chasten all I love" (Rev. 3:19; Pro. 3:11-12; Heb. 12:5-6). Love prompted the letter. "Be zealous" (Rev. 3:19). This means boiling with heat (Gal.

4:18). “Repent” (Rev. 3:19; 2 Pet. 3:9). “Stand at door and knock” (Rev. 3:20). The Lord does not break in. Must hear and open door (Rev. 3:20). The Lord is on the outside and will come in. Laodicea failed to hear, heed, the message. Laodicea is now a scene of utter desolation.

We must stop trusting our feelings. To those who are “turned around” east may seem west. As we sit in the *drifter’s* boat, we think we see the banks and the trees moving, but it is only ourselves. We should take our bearings. Then we must get back to God as fast as possible. Do not drift to certain destruction.

Our neglect laid the oars down. Pick up those oars. Pick them up quickly and use them against the current before it is too late. “Pray without ceasing” (1 The. 5:17).

We should pull for safety (Phi. 2:12). It takes backbone and not wishbone to keep off of the rocks. The hard pull to regain the lost space and distance gives the word “drifting” a meaning that we never before realized. Do not wait until the busy season is over or the time when you will have more money or better clothes. Salvation is an individual affair. It is important that we save ourselves even if others choose the way of eternal death.

Pulpit indoctrination is needed today. When preachers refrain from quoting scriptures to prove the points under discussion, people know they have drifted from the truth.

“Consider the apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus” (Heb. 3:1). Think of Jesus, ponder, meditate on His position as messenger of God, apostle, and leader, and high priest. We find Him faithful to the commands given by the Father to accomplish salvation. The church is His house, the household of faith, whereas Moses served in God’s, the tabernacle. It is plain that a Son is in a higher position than a servant. While we steadfastly contemplate Him, we must hold fast to the truth.

To keep from drifting we must guard against unbelief. “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Heb. 3:12). Daily encouragement of one another is the remedy against this danger. If doubts are allowed to enter the mind it is easy to fall away. Satan knew this when in-

spiring a doubt in Eve's mind as to what God had said and thousands have lost faith through the word of doubters. When we think we may compromise a little the deceitfulness of sin is at work. We at this point must hold to our original confidence. We should never become hardened against scriptural truths. The example of developing murmurings and doubts is clearly shown by the Jews in the wilderness, who saw the impossible happen at the Red Sea after the plagues of Egypt and were fed with manna, yet disobeyed and failed.

Other drifting preventives are: (1) We should let God say something to us every day. God speaks to us through His Word. When we listen to God we will not be walking in darkness. "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psa. 119:105). (2) We should say something to God every day. Sincere prayer avails much (Jam. 5:16). (3) We should say something for God every day. Paul said, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels" (2 Cor. 4:7). It is God's will that man preach to man. Each day we should be telling others of God's great plan to save the human soul. (4) There are things to do for God every day. We should look for opportunities to do good (Gal. 6:10). God knows and rewards the good that we do. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58).

CONCLUSION

Salvation is an individual matter. We must save ourselves even if others choose the way of destruction. "Turn ye, turn ye from your evil way: for why will ye die?" (Eze. 33:11).

Let us not be among those who drift. It is dangerous to drift from the path that leads to eternal life. "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard lest at any time we should let them slip" (Heb. 2:1).

ARE WE MOVING AWAY FROM THE SPIRIT OF THE CROSS?

Guss Eoff



Guss Eoff, Jr. was born March 7, 1923 in Fort Worth, Texas. In February of 1942, he married Lla Laline Norris. Guss and his wife have one son, Larry, who has been preaching for about 18 years. Guss attended Pepperdine College in Los Angeles, California and Southwest State Teachers College in San Marcos, Texas. He has preached for local congregations in California, Oregon, Texas, Oklahoma, Louisiana, Missouri, and North Carolina. He has preached in eighteen different countries and twenty-three states. Guam has been preaching for forty-six years. Since August of 1987, he has been working with the church in Independence, Missouri.

“But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. But if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his” (Rom. 8:9).

INTRODUCTION

The apostle Paul gives great enlightenment concerning the Christian life in the eighth chapter of Romans. The child of God does not walk after the flesh, but after the Spirit (Rom. 8:4) “For they that are after the flesh mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit” (Rom. 8:5). “The mind of the flesh is death” (Rom. 8:6a). It is not and will not be subject to God. “But the mind of the Spirit is life and peace” (Rom. 8:6b). “The mind of the flesh [carnal mind] is enmity [enemy] against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be” (Rom. 8:7). Those who serve the flesh are enemies of God. The fleshly mind serves the things listed by Paul in Galatians 5:19-21; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, and Ephesians 5:3-5. “And they that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom. 8:8). “But ye are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. But if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his” (Rom. 8:9). “And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteous-

ness” (Rom. 8:10). “But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you, he that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall give life also to your mortal bodies through His Spirit that dwelleth in you” (Rom. 8:11). Paul tells us we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh (Rom. 8:12), for if we live after the flesh, we must die (Rom. 8:13a). “But if by the Spirit ye put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (Rom. 8:13b). Then the apostle concludes, “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God” (Rom. 8:14). Here we can plainly see that the spiritual law of Jesus Christ stands opposed to the sinful law in man.

ARE WE MOVING AWAY FROM THE SPIRIT OF THE CROSS?

The cross is the symbol of the death of Jesus. The cross is that in which Paul gloried. He said, “but far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Gal. 6:14a). The cross was the fulfillment of the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah.

The crucifixion, the cross, the tree, and the death of Jesus are synonymous. The writer of Hebrews said, “Looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:2).

Paul said, “For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel; not in wisdom of words, lest the Cross of Christ should be made void” (1 Cor. 1:17). Again he stated, “For the word of the Cross is to them that perish foolishness: but unto us who are saved it is the power of God” (1 Cor. 1:18). To the brethren at Philippi Paul wrote, “And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the Cross” (Phi. 2:8).

The apostle Paul also used “the tree” to refer to the crucifixion. “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us; for it is written, cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree” (Gal. 3:13). Notice the statement of the Apostle Peter, “The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew, hanging him on a tree” (Acts 5:30). And again he said: “And we are witnesses of all things which he did both in the country of the Jews, and in Jerusalem; whom also they slew, hanging him on a tree” (Acts 10:39). Hear Peter again:

“Who his own self bare our sins in his body upon the tree, that we, having died unto sins might live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed” (1 Pet. 2:24). Paul referred to the same thing. “And when they had fulfilled all things that were written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a tomb” (Acts 13:29). So when Paul mentions the Cross and crucified, he is speaking of the same thing. “O foolish Galatians, who did bewitch you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was openly set forth crucified” (Gal. 3:1).

THE SPIRIT OF THE CROSS

The death of Jesus proved the spirit of love. The crucifixion of Jesus displayed the love of God. How he loved us to give His only begotten Son! “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life” (John 3:16). The apostle put it, “But God commendeth his own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). John said, “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10).

The cross was also a display of the love of Jesus. Not only did Jesus teach how much love it took to die for friends, but He gave His life for enemies. “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). Our Saviour also said, “even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Mat. 20:28).

The apostle Paul gave us insight as to the love of Jesus. “Grace to you and peace from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us out of this present evil world, according to the will of our God and Father” (Gal. 1:3-4). In the second chapter of Galatians he stated,

I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me; and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me (Gal. 2:20).

Further Paul told the Church at Ephesus, “And walk in love, even as Christ also loved you, and gave himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for an odor of a sweet smell” (Eph. 5:2).

Our Lord Jesus Christ gave us a new commandment. “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another” (John 13:34). How much did Jesus love us? Paul explains to Titus how much Jesus loved us. “Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a people for his own possession, zealous of good works” (Tit. 2:14). Finally, I must mention what John said in the Revelation, “And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by his blood” (Rev. 1:5).

It is the great theme of salvation that God loved us and gave his Son. The Son of God loved us in that He gave His life for us. The spirit of the Cross is love!

THE DEATH OF JESUS PROVED THE SPIRIT OF OBEDIENCE

Obedience was essential in the death of Jesus on the Cross. It was the Father’s will that Jesus be an atonement for sin. The apostle Paul explains how Jesus was obedient.

Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the Cross (Phi. 2:5-8).

What obedience! It is plain to see that the death on the Cross was in obedience to the Father’s will.

The Hebrew writer does not leave us guessing. He explains, “Though he was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered; and having been made perfect, he became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation” (Heb. 5:8-9). Jesus does not demand of us that which he was not willing to do. He demands that we obey, but He was first an example.

In the Roman Letter, Paul explains, “For as through the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one shall the many be made righteous” (Rom. 5:19). We

can see Jesus' willingness to obey in His prayer to His Father, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Mat. 26:39). The death of Jesus was in the spirit of obedience.

THE DEATH OF JESUS WAS IN THE SPIRIT OF HUMILITY

"And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the Cross" (Phi. 2:8). The statement of the wise man is surely true in the case of the Cross. "Before honor goeth humility" (Pro. 15:33b). The saying of Jesus was put into practice on the Cross. "For every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke 14:11). In the parable given to certain men that trusted in themselves, Jesus tells of the Pharisee who prayed.

The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week; I give tithes of all that I get. But the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes into heaven, but smote his breast, saying, God, be thou merciful to me a sinner. I say unto you, This man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; but he that humbleth himself shall be exalted (Luke 18:11-14).

When Jesus taught that we should be humble, He used a child for an example. "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Mat. 18:4). James is in complete agreement. "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall exalt you" (Jam. 4:10). Again James says, "But he giveth more grace, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble" (Jam. 4:6).

THE DEATH OF JESUS SHOWS THE SPIRIT OF FORGIVENESS

One cannot read of the crucifixion without seeing the spirit of forgiveness which is so obvious. On the Cross Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34a). If our Master could offer up such a petition to the Father on behalf of those

who were murdering Him, it is plain that forgiveness is a spirit of the Cross.

Our Lord Jesus had taught forgiveness. In teaching His disciples to pray, Jesus said, “And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors” (Mat. 6:12). He further states, “For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Mat. 6:14-15). Note again His instruction, “And whensoever ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any one; that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses” (Mark 11:25).

When the apostle Peter asked Jesus, “How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Until seven times?” (Mat. 18:21), Jesus gave a parable about a king reckoning with his servants. He had a servant that owed him ten thousand talents. When the servant could not pay what he owed, the lord commanded that he be sold, also his wife, children, and all that he owned. The servant fell down and worshipped the lord and begged him to have patience until he could pay. The Master had compassion on him and forgave him the debt. He released him completely! That was forgiveness! Yet, that same servant went and found a fellow servant that owed him a hundred shillings—about seventeen dollars in our money—and grabbed him by the throat and demanded that he pay him. When the poor fellow could not pay right then, he begged that his fellow-servant would be patient with him and he would pay what he owed. But instead of showing mercy, he had him cast into prison till he could pay all that was due. When other servants saw what was done, they were very sorry and they went to their master and told what had happened. The master called in the servant that he had forgiven. He said,

Thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt because thou besoughtest me: shouldst not thou also have had mercy on thy fellow-servant, even as I had mercy on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due. So shall also my heavenly Father do unto you, if ye forgive not every one his brother from your hearts (Mat. 18:32-35).

We can certainly see that spirit of forgiveness was a part of the spirit of the Cross. The blood that was shed on the Cross was given that we

might have forgiveness. “In whom we have our redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace” (Eph. 1:7).

CHRISTIANS MUST LOVE TRUTH AND HATE ERROR

Some of our brethren have fallen for the false doctrine of “truth is relative”—there is no absolute truth. The Bible teaches that there is truth! In the Bible, truth is what is opposed to falsehood, lie, or deceit. “He that uttereth truth showeth forth righteousness; but a false witness, deceit” (Pro. 12:17).

Truth in the Bible is also fidelity, sincerity, and punctuality in keeping promises. Truth is put for the doctrine of the gospel.

Note the character of Jehovah as described in Exodus 34:6, “And Jehovah passed by before him, and proclaimed, Jehovah, Jehovah, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in loving-kindness and truth.” Again notice, “The rock, his work is perfect; for all his ways are justice; a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he” (Deu. 32:4).

God is the source of truth. “I will also praise thee with the psaltery, even thy truth, O my God: unto thee will I sing praises with the harp, O thou Holy One of Israel” (Psa. 71:22). In the realm of religion, God is always truth. “Into thy hand I commend my spirit; Thou hast redeemed me, O Jehovah, thou God of truth” (Psa. 31:5). Note again, “Who made heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is; who keepeth truth for ever” (Psa. 146:6).

The Bible teaches that God’s Word is *truth*. “The sum of thy Word is truth; and every one of thy righteous ordinances endureth for ever” (Psa. 119:160). Jesus said, “Sanctify them in thy truth: thy Word is truth” (John 17:17). Jesus said that God’s Word is *truth*. I notice again that Jesus made this promise to His apostles,

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak from himself; but what things so ever he shall hear, these shall he speak: and he shall declare unto you all things that are to come (John 16:13).

Jesus revealed the truth. “For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17). Again Jesus

said, "I am the Way, and the Truth and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). And we find in John 18:37,

Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, thou sayest that I am a king. To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.

The truth sanctifies, sets apart, and saves. "And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth" (John 17:19). As we have seen, the Word is truth (John 17:17). That Word shows how we are made clean. "Already ye are clean because of the Word which I have spoken unto you" (John 15:3). We can understand what Paul was saying in Ephesians 5:26, "That he might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the Word." Thank God!, the truth will make us free. "And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).

We must accept the truth. Jesus said to Pilate, "Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice" (John 18:37). Notice the condition of hearing God. "He that is of God heareth the Word of God: for this cause ye hear them not, because ye are not of God" (John 8:47).

On the day of Pentecost the multitude heard Peter preach. "They then that received his word were baptized: and there were added unto them in that day about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:41). When one receives the Word he accepts it as God directs. "Now when the apostles that were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the Word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John" (Acts 8:14). Hear again what Luke writes, "Now the apostles and the brethren that were in Judaea heard that the Gentiles also had received the Word of God" (Acts 11:1).

Many will not accept the truth. Paul wrote to Timothy,

for the time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine; but, having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

Paul gave this sad warning, "And with all deceit of unrighteousness for them that perish: because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved" (2 The. 2:10). Again Paul said, "For that they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served

the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever, Amen” (Rom. 1:25).

We are going to be judged by the Word. Jesus said, “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him: The Word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:48). The Word of *truth* will judge us. “That they all might be judged who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness” (2 The. 2:12).

God’s people must love the *truth*! They must hate error. As the Psalmist said, “Through thy precepts I get understanding: Therefore I hate every false way” (Psa. 119:104). Note again, “Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way” (Psa. 119:128).

There are many false teachers teaching their false doctrines. John said, “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). We must be careful. “Ye therefore, beloved, knowing these things beforehand, beware lest, being carried away with the error of the wicked, ye fall from your own stedfastness” (2 Pet. 3:17). We must test those who claim to be of God. “We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he who is not of God heareth us not. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error” (1 John 4:6).

We have seen that we must love truth. We have found what truth is. The Word is truth. We must love the truth and hate error. We must stand for the truth, but we must be careful to stand in the right spirit. We must be firm, but we must be fair. We must have the right attitude!

Jesus was known as “the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah” (Rev. 5:5). When no one could be found to “open the book,” that is, to loosen the seals to expose the contents, one of the elders said to John, “Weep not; behold, the Lion that is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath overcome to open the book and the seven seals thereof” (Rev. 5:5). This no doubt looks back to the time when Jacob blessed his sons and said concerning Judah, “Judah is a lion’s whelp...The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between

his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the obedience of the peoples be” (Gen. 49:9-10). This long-expected descendant of Judah, who would possess the strength of the lion, bear the sceptre of rule over the peoples, and speak peace or bring rest to men, had now come. “For it is evident that our Lord hath sprung out of Judah” (Heb. 7:14). He had strength to overcome Satan, every temptation, even the horrible death on the Cross. He has the strength to rule. He could be very hard, as with dealing with ungodly men. He drove out the moneychangers (Mat. 21:12; Mark 11:15). He dealt harshly with the hypocritical Pharisees (Mat. 23). So we can see His strength and fierceness. Yet, we can see that He is also the Lamb of God (Rev. 5:6; John 1:29).

Jesus showed strength when standing for righteousness and truth, yet he was meek and kind. When men move away from the truth we must be strong as a lion to uphold and defend the Word. But we must have a spirit of love and meekness to gain the erring if possible.

HAVE WE MOVED AWAY FROM THE SPIRIT OF THE CROSS?

Where is the spirit of love? Some of the meanest people I have ever known were members of the Church. They never missed services, they visited, contributed, and so forth, but they were as mean as the devil wanted them to be. They never manifested the spirit of love. You do not backbite people you love. You do not mistreat people you love. You do not purposely hurt those you really love. You do not cause people to suffer that you love. Selfishness causes people to hurt others. Jealousy causes people to do all kinds of hateful things. I have known many in the Church who have moved away from the love that Jesus showed on the Cross. Among those who have not the love of the Cross have been elders and preachers, as well as other members. In forty-six years of preaching, I have never been treated as mean by non-Christians as I have by those who claim to be children of God.

We need to move back to the Cross of love. “Seeing ye have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth unto unfeigned love of the brethren, love one another from the heart fervently” (1 Pet. 1:22). “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar:

for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen. And this commandment we have from him, that he who loveth God love his brother also” (1 John 4:20-21). Elders have fired me, lied to me, stolen a house from me, sent me a month’s pay and said, “that is it”—when I was ten thousand miles away from the United States doing mission work in Hong Kong. No job, no money, no place to live. You tell me they loved me! The preacher was the one that caused it. Does that sound like the love of the Cross?

Brethren, who is going to hell first? That man that does not follow all the truth, but has a real spirit of love like Jesus, or that man who is a stickler for the Word, but does not have the spirit of *love* like Jesus? So many brethren do not have any idea about the spirit of love. They do not know the difference between *lust* and *love*. Oh, how we need to move back to the love of the Cross!

Have we moved away from the spirit of obedience? Of late we hear more and more about brethren that teach that we no longer have to obey. The gospel is a gift, salvation is a gift. There is nothing we can do to earn salvation. This doctrine is not new! We agree that salvation is a gift. But we have conditions to obey before we obtain that gift. Jesus willingly obeyed his Father’s will. “My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to accomplish his work” (John 4:34). Notice again, “I can of myself do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is righteous: because I seek not mine own will, but the will of him that sent me” (John 5:30).

Too many today refuse to do the will of the Father. They just will not stand. They will not obey. Why have we lost the desire to obey? The Apostles were told not to preach and teach in the name of Jesus (Acts 5:28). “But Peter and the apostles answered and said, we must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29).

We have a generation of rebellious young preachers that are trying to show the brotherhood they are more intelligent than brethren in the past. They act as though they have learned something new that no one else has heard of before. They have come up with things that have been debated a hundred years ago. Instead of reading so many denominational books, they need to read and reread debates of seventyfive

or a hundred years ago. They need to search for the “old paths” instead of trying to discover something new.

Have we moved away from the humility of the cross? Oh!, how many have moved away from the humility of the Cross!

The wise man said, “Pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall” (Pro. 16:18).

Hulda the prophetess told Josiah, the king,

because thy heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God, when thou heardest his words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, and hast humbled thyself before me, and hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me: I also have heard thee, saith Jehovah (2 Chr. 34:27).

So many members will not humble themselves. They are haughty. Their spirit shows no humility. Many preachers are filled with pride. They will not humble themselves to go to the mission field to work. They will not sacrifice. Many young preachers will not start at the bottom. Elders rule with a haughty spirit. The office of an elder overpowers them. They change when given a little authority. The advice given to the young applies to the older as well.

Likewise, ye younger, be subject unto the elder. Yea, all of you gird yourselves with humility, to serve one another: for God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time (1 Pet. 5:5-6).

Many that are not Christians show a much more humble spirit than Christians. Who is going to hell first? The man who stands firm in the Word of God, but is filled with pride, or the man who does not have all the truth but is humble?

Have we moved away from the forgiveness of the cross? We have seen the spirit of forgiveness in the crucifixion. I have seen so much of an unforgiving spirit in the church. So many brethren will not seek to be reconciled or they refuse to seek to be forgiven.

If therefore thou are offering thy gift at the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift (Mat. 5:23-24).

So many will not try to be reconciled. Then many will not forgive if attempts are made to be reconciled.

I have personally gone to friends that I had been close to for thirty years. For some reason, unknown to me, they became my enemy. I tried to visit and get things right. I made no headway. I wrote letters, but received no answer. I phoned, but until this day they have not revealed the problem or made any attempt to be reconciled. I have openly asked them to forgive me of whatever I had done. I feel I have done all I can do, so I no longer push myself on them. How can they be brethren? How can they go to heaven? Listen to what Paul said,

Put on therefore, as God's elect, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving each other, if any man have a complaint against any; even as the Lord forgave you, so also do ye (Col. 3:12-13).

Again Paul wrote to the Ephesian brethren, "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you" (Eph. 4:32).

Many elders, deacons, and preachers have failed to follow our Lord's instruction concerning forgiveness. Many problems could have been settled if the spirit of the Cross in forgiveness would have been followed. Congregations could have been saved heartache and division if the spirit of Jesus would have been put into practice.

Thank God, there are a great number of brethren that have read the Bible teaching on the spirit of the Cross. They truly manifest the spirit of the Cross in love. It is wonderful to see them striving to be obedient in the spirit of the Cross. The spirit of humility is displayed in their lives. The forgiving spirit of the Cross is their glowing attribute. This is the spirit of the Cross that is so sorely needed by some who are moving away from the spirit of the Cross.

WAYS TO APOSTASY

Michael Hatcher



Michael Hatcher, son of a gospel preacher, was born on November 27, 1952 in Pensacola, Florida. Mike married the former Karen S. Savage of Trenton, Texas, on August 4, 1978. They have two sons, William Andrew, and Daniel Michael. He graduated from Harding College in 1976, with a degree in Bible. Presently, brother Hatched is the local preacher for the Church of Christ in Burkburnett, Texas. He has spoken on several lectureships and youth programs, and has also written several articles which have appeared in brotherhood publications.

INTRODUCTION

Allow me to begin by expressing my appreciation for being invited to speak on this lectureship. I deem it an honor and a pleasure. I have held this congregation in high esteem for many years, as I know others have, for the many good works which you perform in the spreading of the truth.

Paul wrote to his son in the faith,

I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables (2 Tim. 4:1-4).

Possibly, there has never been a time in the history of the church when these words have been more applicable than they are today, for people have turned away from the truth. So many members of the church today will not endure sound doctrine. All they wish to hear is the platitudes of man.

The Bible, comparatively speaking, has little telling man how to be saved in comparison with what we must do to stay saved. The bulk of the Bible is directed to the saved telling them what they must do to

remain saved. One book, Acts, has been directed toward how to be saved, while the remaining twenty-two books are written to those who have been saved from their sins. Of course there is overlapping within these books, but we are speaking about their emphasis. Much of the teaching in these twenty-two books, as well as the four gospel accounts and Acts, is to warn against the possibility of apostasy. This term comes from the Greek word “apostasia” which means a standing apart and, thus, defection or a desertion from one’s faith. Therefore, it is natural that we study the ways of apostasy as described in these books.

POSSIBILITY OF APOSTASY

John 15:1-6 deals with our abiding in Christ. In verse 6, Christ says, “If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.” Here is a person, a branch, who is in Christ, the vine, and is then cast forth into the fire because he is not bearing fruit.

Paul says, “Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace” (Gal. 5:4). Here are individuals who had fallen from the grace and salvation found in Jesus Christ. Paul also makes mention of the fact that there will be a falling away or apostasy. “Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition” (2 The. 2:3). In writing to Timothy, Paul says there will be a departure from the faith and identifies some of the false teachings in 1 Timothy 4:1-6. In writing the book of Hebrews, Paul’s purpose in writing was because some were falling away from the truth to go back into Judaism. Notice that in chapter 2:1-4, Paul is speaking of Christians who will be lost. He says they have neglected that great salvation, and, thus, let that salvation slip or drift away. Later he says, “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Heb. 3:12).

Peter speaks of individuals who have escaped the pollutions of this world, but they have again been entangled in those pollutions; they were Christians but have gone back into the world. They knew the way of righteousness but apostatized from it (2 Pet. 2:20-22). When

this happens, it is worse than if they had never known the gospel. Just earlier, Peter mentions children who will be cursed because they have forsaken the right way and have gone astray (2 Pet. 2:14-15).

James teaches that one can err from the truth so that another needs to convert him from his error in order that his sins might be hid and save his soul from death, (a spiritual death or separation from God) (Jam. 5:19-20).

In the first three chapters of Revelation, John teaches us that it is possible for people and whole congregations to apostatize. In this, we must be careful, for there might be in congregations that have apostatized, individuals who are remaining faithful to God (i.e., the church in Sardis). But, the fact of apostasy is abundantly clear. In noticing and realizing the possibility of apostasy, we do not mean to suggest that we must go into apostasy, but only that we can. It is possible for Christians to remain faithful to God to the salvation of their souls. Since it is possible to apostatize, we should study the way to apostasy so that we might not fall.

SPIRITUAL IGNORANCE

This is the main cause of apostasy. In the Old Testament, the Israelite nation is an example of apostasy (cf., 1 Cor. 10:1-12). During the midst of this apostasy, notice what is said concerning the reason.

My people are destroyed for **lack of knowledge**: because thou hast **rejected knowledge**, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children (Hos. 4:6).

In this base they could have known, but they did not have a sufficient desire to know. They had rejected God's Word. The priests, scribes, elders, parents, and others were to see that the Scriptures were read, studied, and learned; but they were not doing what God required of them. They did not have a hungering and thirsting after righteousness (Mat. 5:6). As a result, God rejected them and they were destroyed.

The conditions in the New Testament time were no better. In Matthew 22, Jesus debated the Sadducees, an apostate group, who posed an almost impossible situation. In verse 29, Jesus in His response, says, "Ye do err, **not knowing the scriptures**, nor the power

of God.” The reason they were an apostate group was because they did not know the Scriptures. Had they known the Scriptures, they would not have been apostates.

Our God has always wanted His people to be spiritually wise. Jesus said, “It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me” (John 6:45). The religion of our Lord is a teaching religion, because He wants man to be spiritually wise and not ignorant. We see the expression of this in Matthew 28:18-20.

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, 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 always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

The Lord is with us or not with us based upon our teaching and baptizing others.

In Ephesians 4:11-16, Paul says we have, among others, teachers for the edifying of the body of Christ, so that everyone can come to the unity of the faith and knowledge of Christ. If we are ignorant of God’s Word then we will be tossed to and fro and deceived by doctrines of all sorts. When we do not know the Scriptures, we go into apostasy. In Hebrews 5:12-14, Paul condemns them for not being taught nor receiving the teaching that was available.

Notice what Peter writes in 2 Peter 1:2-11:

Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling

and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Peter says that through knowledge we have the grace of God, have the life offered by God, will not fall (apostatize), and will bear fruit. It is through knowledge that the Christian will live up to the responsibility that God has given. The word Peter uses for knowledge is “epignosis,” made up of “epi” which means upon and “gnosis” meaning to know, thus upon knowledge. It signifies an ever growing, developing, maturing, active knowledge that comes through study. The learning of what God would have us to know brings us these things to our lives. It is an application of that which God has revealed to us in our lives on a day-by-day basis.

We have developed a false sense of spirituality in the church today that is based upon programs, or promotional means. We think we are really doing something. But, this is not so; the only way to have spirituality is to have the knowledge Peter discusses.

It is no wonder that Paul would tell Timothy, “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). The word “study” was translated from the Greek word “spoudazo” which means to do something with all possible haste. We are to study and apply the Scriptures so that we might be approved before God. That Scripture has been given to us by God for teaching (the Scriptures), for reproof, for correction of that which is wrong, and for instructing us in the right way. It has been given unto us to make us a complete man of God ready at all times to all good works (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Upon this basis, Paul would tell 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 Tim. 2:2). You teach others who will be able to teach others what you have learned from me. The religion of our Lord appeals to the mind of man saying to know and understand what God’s will is (Eph. 5:17)

What we see in the Lord’s church today is spiritual ignorance. In fact, many, if not most, of the members of the church do not have a true desire to study and learn God’s Word. How many are regular in attendance in our Bible studies (whether on Sunday morning, or

Wednesday night)? Why do people not attend? They do not care about learning God's Word. Of those who are regular in attendance, how many regularly read the Scriptures? It used to be common to ask how many were daily Bible readers, but we quit. Is it because we were embarrassed as to how few there were? But, the Scriptures say we must study, not just read; how many do such? We used to be known as a Bible-reading, Bible-toting, Bible-quoting people, but not any more. As a result many have departed from God's way. The basic reason for apostasy is spiritual ignorance. All the other reasons we mention will be embraced in spiritual ignorance.

UNCONSCIOUS DRIFTING

Apostasy never hits us full face; it does not come to us boldly. It comes over a long period of time, almost unperceived. What happens is that we drift away from the truth. "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip" (Heb. 2:1). The Greek word is "pararreo" which literally means to flow past. The A.S.V. expresses it as, "lest haply we drift away from them." It is much like putting out an anchor and over time that anchor slips so that we slowly drift from where we started. We are to anchor our lives in the great salvation, and in Jesus Christ (cf., Heb. 6:19). and not allow any drifting away from our mooring (God's Word).

Since brother Gilmore will be speaking on this subject, I will not develop it fully, but allow me to make mention of some things. When the church was first established the apostles began teaching that there would be an apostasy that would come (2 The. 2:2-3). In looking at Acts 20:28-31, Paul says that the apostasy would come from within the eldership. Yet, this apostasy did not come overnight: it took over a hundred years to develop. It began as a very small matter; one of the elders taking charge in a congregation so that things could run more smoothly. The others then started looking to this one for the lead, then this one came to be known as the bishop with others being elders. Then these bishops started vying for power with others, the one winning out becoming the archbishop, and finally, we arrived at the papacy. If those who started this could have transported themselves

ahead in time to see the papacy, they never would have allowed even this to start. But, it came slowly.

About one hundred years ago, we had a split over instrumental music and a group of people split from us starting the denomination called the “Christian Church.” It began long before the split by bringing the instrument into the building for weddings and funerals, after which they would remove it. After a while they simply left it there, without its use. Over time, people became accustomed to the instrument. Then, they brought it into the Bible class, and then into the assembly. It was a slow drifting; if those who allowed its use in weddings and funerals had seen what would happen, they would not have allowed it to start, but they probably would not have believed it if someone had told them what would happen.

The recreation craze that is now going around started in the same way. Several years ago, there was an effort to “keep our young people” and “do something for our young people.” What the church is to do is to teach them the gospel of Jesus Christ. But, because of this plea, an effort was placed for different sporting events. As a result, different teams were formed, separate and apart from the church, but attaching themselves to the church by calling it the “church of Christ team.” Within a matter of years, they started writing these teams into the budget, then started the building of gymnasiums we see today. They slowly drifted into it and into apostasy. It should have been stopped before it had a chance to begin so that they could not drift. Let us not allow the barriers to erode so that we, over time, go into apostasy.

COMPROMISE

About one hundred years ago, our brethren compromised on the use of instruments of music in worship to God. They claimed that it was such a small thing. They reasoned that they saw no harm in it. It was not long until a division came into the ranks of the church of our Lord. Those who left us (1 John 2:19) had let the barriers down in this “small thing” thus leaving the truth. But, when you let the boundary down in one area there is literally no stopping it. They had to let it down in all areas so that the floodgates were opened to where they now allow everything. There is literally no stopping place. At this time

you see no semblance between them and the church of our Lord as is outlined in the New Testament. They have agreed that they are nothing more than a denomination, allowing women preachers, and anything else that might come along. This all started over their lack of respect for the Scriptures in the area of singing praises to God.

It truly amazes me that today we now have people in our brotherhood that are desirous of fellowshiping those digressives. They have planned “summits” and “unity meetings” and then tell us they are not seeking unity but only want to gain a better understanding of each other. HOGWASH! The “Christian Church” wants to get us to compromise concerning the instrument of music, and sad to say, many have and more will unless it is stopped. We must ever hold the line against the innovations of men.

There are others who are compromising in the area of divorce and remarriage. God has given one, and only one, reason for divorce and remarriage. That is found in Matthew 19:9, and is for the cause of fornication. Brother James Woodroof said that he came up with his false doctrine because of the situation of the people in unscriptural remarriages. What he did was compromise the truth of the gospel. As much as we might love those in that sad situation, we cannot change (compromise) God’s Word for them. What we must do is teach them that Word and teach them to bring their lives in harmony with that Word.

The only safe path is a strict adherence to the teachings of the Bible. This is the only way to remain true and faithful to the Lord and receive His plaudits and eternal salvation in heaven. We must accept that Word without addition, subtraction, and without substitution of any kind (Gal. 1:6-9; 2 John 9-11; Rev. 22:18-19). We cannot deviate from or alter that Word even in the smallest detail, but accept it exactly as it has been given. Compromise in one area will only lead to compromise in other realms. Therefore, let us not compromise in the smallest detail.

MAKING LAWS NOT MADE BY GOD

This finds its basis in Matthew 15:1-9. First the Pharisees attacked Jesus and His disciples for not keeping the traditions of the elders. The word “tradition” means that which has been handed down; and

is used both in a good way, in reference to that handed down by God, and in an evil way, that handed down by man. The specific charge is the disciples did not wash their hands before eating food. Most, if not all, would agree that this practice is good and hygienic. There is nothing inherently evil in the practice. But, the Jews had made a religious law, and attached a religious significance in relation to this practice. When we attach a religious significance to something that God has not designated in a religious way, then it is making a law that God has not made, and brings about apostasy. Jesus' response to this attack is "Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?" (Mat. 15:3). He then continues in verse 9 to say, "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." In adding to the Word of God, the Pharisees were setting aside God's Word. We must keep God's law exactly as He has given it. When we add to God's Word by our traditions then we negate God's Word, and our worship is vain. In reality, the laws of men then become more important than the Word of God, and we have made ourselves God.

While we generally apply this to the denominational world, and it should be, yet we need to be on guard that we do not do the same. Let us note a few examples that we would all do well to watch. Do we set up a ritualistic order of our worship service? Understand that God has commanded what is to be done in our worship to Him (sing, pray, partake of the Lord's Supper, study, and give). I am speaking not of what we do but the order in which we do them. For example, some places have the Lord's Supper after the sermon, and when they go to a place where they have it before the sermon they are disturbed by it. What if we had the contribution before we had the communion service? Many would believe that it would be unscriptural. I have an article in my file where a preacher says that it is sinful to have a prayer prior to the contribution. Later he retracted this but the point is, how many others still believe it? There are others who think that it is sinful not to have a prayer before the contribution. What if this Sunday morning at the close of the sermon we did not sing an invitation song? No doubt many would speak of the liberalism that would be apparent (while there is a great deal of liberalism in the

church, this would not prove it) and say that this was sinful. Many preachers jokingly speak of the “scriptural order” of services, but how many unlearned people have made it a law. I am not encouraging change necessarily in that which I say for we are to do things decently and in order (1 Cor. 14:40). But, there is a danger of our making laws where God has not made one.

We need to beware in other areas as well, not just in our worship assemblies. Some have made laws in the hiring of preachers (they must have such and such degree). Some have made laws above what God made in the qualifications for the eldership and deaconry. Let us not make laws that God has not made. This is how the creeds and manuals came into being in the first place. This has divided the Lord’s church in the past, but more than that, it will separate us from God. It is a road to apostasy.

FOLLOWING MEN

The church at Corinth had divisions within the body of Christ. This division came primarily from following men. Paul writes the first Corinthian letter to correct this, along with other problems. He deals with this problem in the first four chapters of the letter. He writes, “Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?” (1 Cor. 1:12-13). Again he brings this out,

For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? (1 Cor. 3:3-4).

Their problem was that they had put certain individuals on a pedestal. Thus, toward the close of this section, Paul says,

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 Cor. 4:6).

We are to think of men in a proper way. We are not to think too highly of one person over another.

This seems to be a common human failing. More and more people today take what their preacher says unreservedly. In talking with friends and neighbors we hear Christians say, “My preacher says...” Many times a preacher will move into a new work yet cannot do anything because the members of that congregation have “preacheritis” to such an extent that they reject anything that the preacher might try to do or say. Sometimes this is seen with elders. A certain elder within the eldership has such respect (as they all should) that he is elevated to a higher level than all the others, thus making a pope out of him. This leads to apostasy.

Allow me to mention an area that preachers need to be careful about, lest we leave the impression we are following men. So often, especially in the area of divorce and remarriage, we are prone to say that I take brother Warren’s view, or I take brother Bales,’ or Woodroof s view, etc. What we need to do is to take the Bible view and only the Bible view. Let us not be accused of elevating man as if that man were infallible.

We need to recognize that man is not equipped to guide us religiously. “O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself. it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jer. 10:23). Also, Solomon tells us in Proverbs 14:12 that the ways of man are the ways of death. The way is not within man but Christ.

We are warned time and time again in the Scriptures concerning false teachers. When we unreservedly follow man, we are candidates for being devoured by those wolves. We must study the Scriptures and not follow after man. “These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11). The Word of God is the only light to acceptance with God and to heaven.

CONCLUSION

The possibility of apostasy is a very real and ever present danger. Some have apostatized in the past and some are presently going into apostasy. When we know Satan’s devices to get us to apostatize, then we can arm ourselves for the fight. Let us “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” (1 Tim. 6:12). By knowing the Lord’s truth and following it, and it only, we will reap eternal life.

THE HOPE OF THE CROSS

Roger Jackson



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INTRODUCTION

“The hope of glory” in this passage is the same as the cross of Christ, for our hope lies in the cross. The crucified Christ is the central theme of the Bible. Everything you read from Genesis to Revelation centers around the fact that Jesus would be crucified on a Roman cross. The central event in the life of Christ was His death upon that cross and His subsequent resurrection. There is no wonder that the Bible places such great emphasis upon the deed as is exemplified in 1 Corinthians 1:18-21, as it is written:

For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness: but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? 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.

To the unbelieving world the preaching of the cross and the attendant resurrection was foolishness. The idea of such a glorious conqueror being crucified on a cross defied the imagination of human wisdom. However, Paul declared, “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his

judgments, and his ways past finding out” (Rom. 11:33). Even Isaiah reminded us that God does not think as we do (Isa. 55:8-9). It is no wonder that Paul continues the thought begun in 1 Corinthians 1:18 in chapter 2:1-2:

And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

Gospel preachers speak of “standing behind the cross and preaching Christ.” In Galatians 6:14, this is exactly what Paul meant when he said, “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world.” The only glorying Paul did was in the cross and in the suffering he endured as a faithful servant. He was willing to endure because of the crown that such cross-bearing would bring. This is a contrast that we must all keep in mind. There is a cross and there is a crown, but for those who would carry their cross in this life there is the realization that it is a joy and a privilege because of the greatness of the crown that awaits us when we have gone the last mile of the way. “For our conversation is in heaven from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ” (Phi. 3:20).

No doubt Satan thought that he had won a great victory when Jesus was nailed to the cross. However, the means that he employed to defeat the Christ became a symbol of victory. We do not hang a cross around our necks, and we do not put one on the lawn of our property or even make the “sign of the cross” when we worship. But that cross brings to our minds the sacrifice of the one who was hanged on it and our worship is directed to God through Him.

In response to Peter’s confession Jesus stated, “And I say also unto thee that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; **and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it**” (Mat. 16:18—Emphasis added, RJ). In this affirmation Jesus was not saying that the church would be indestructible. There are other passages that clearly teach this great truth, but this is not one of them. Daniel 2:44 is one of those passages. The Lord was saying that the time would come when He would be crucified and go into the spirit world called

“Hades” in apparent defeat. However, he is making the promise that that realm could not hold Him and prevent His establishing (building) His church. It was in reference to this singular victory that Peter addressed his inspired remarks in Acts 2:22-34. Although the Jews had rendered the guilty verdict that sent Him to the cross and to the grave, God reversed the verdict that had crucified the Son of God when He raised Him from the dead (Acts 3:12-15; Rom. 1:4). He sat Him at His own right hand (Heb. 1:3). He was raised to reign and began to do so in A.D. 33. We do not await the earthly rule and reign of the premillennial perversion, which implies He is doing neither now, which defies everything inspiration said in Acts 2 and 3, to say the least. The means of this present exaltation was the cross. It was not an accident, but the execution of the Divine will. The cross accomplished what it was designed to do, and we may determine the extent of the hope (the hope it gives) by our contemplation of its design.

THE HOPE OF THE CROSS IS THE CONVICTION OF SINNERS

The idea of the conviction of sinners is a nebulous subject for most religious persons. This is because they have been taught that conviction is a convulsion. The subject must be struck down in a moment of unexpected and irresistible experience coming under what is called “conviction.” This is not the conviction of which the Bible speaks. In the Bible we learn that every sinner is convicted by its message. It tells us that each of us shares, in a measure, the guilt of the cross when we live in sin. In order for us to understand the enormity of that conviction and its guilt, God chose not to give His Son for us in Eden or its shadow. He took a long time for us to come to understand the exceeding sinfulness of sin so that we could better appreciate the gift of His Son. In Genesis 3:15 the record states, “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” Most conservative scholars recognize this to be a messianic passage which refers to the cross. I know that the law of Moses served to define sin and to convict men of it. The problem was that once it defined sin it did not provide for its forgiveness in the fullest extent. It was just that frus-

tration that Paul experienced as he wrote Romans 7. However, in Isaiah 53 the light of release began to glow with the promise of Divine intervention:

Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he openeth not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken. And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit found in his mouth. Yet, it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities. Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sins of many, and made intercession for the transgressors (Isa. 53:1-12).

In the New Testament in just a few words, what Isaiah had said in these twelve short verses is summarized in Inspiration's declaration through Paul, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Cor. 5:21). When we look back at that vicarious suffering and death upon that cross, surely we are convicted in our hearts of the exceeding sinfulness of sin.

THE HOPE OF THE CROSS IS GOD'S JUSTIFICATION TO FORGIVE

God is justified in forgiving us of our sins because Jesus died on the cross. He is a just God by nature. In order for Him to forgive a single sin an adequate price had to be paid for it. We know that we are not able to pay that price. From the time that God said in Genesis 2:17, "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die," we have always understood that the price of sin is the life of the sinner. But God wants to forgive sin and demonstrate His marvelous mercy. He has provided a sacrifice as a substitute. His Son is that substitute, said to be the propitiation or satisfaction for sins (1 John 2:2). This propitiation satisfies the demands of justice. It was not only for the benefit of future generations who would obey the gospel (Rom. 1:16), but was for the benefit of removing the guilt of the former transgressions under the law of Moses and beyond it for all those who lived faithful lives according to the law they were under. Paul addressed this situation in Romans 3:23-26:

For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are passed, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.

The gift on the cross looked both ways. It answered the question, "How can God be just in forgiving man of his sins when man cannot atone for them?" Christ is the answer! The cross brought the hope. This is what Colossians 1:20 is all about. "And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself, by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven."

Now go back to Ephesians 2:14-16 where the same theme is being developed:

For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances;

for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.

The need for that sacrifice is evident from the fact that blood is the requirement of God for forgiveness (Heb. 10:22), and no man's blood but the Son's is worthy. The hope of the cross (the hope that it gives) is the sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the world.

THE HOPE OF THE CROSS IS THE PRICE OF THE CHURCH

The church is the community of the redeemed, but without the cross who could have raised the price to pay for it? It would have been too expensive for any of us or all of us.

The premillennialist would have us to believe that the church is an accident of contingency. They tell us that Jesus came to establish an earthly kingdom, but was unexpectedly rejected by the Jews. Just why they rejected Jesus when He came to do just what they wanted Him to is a mystery they have yet to explain, but we still are assured that such is the case. They proceed to explain that upon determining that they would reject Him, the Saviour began to hide the kingdom in a mystery by the use of parables beginning in Matthew 13. Instead, He gave us the church, which is not the intended kingdom and that the Old Testament has absolutely nothing to say about the church. In their theology, Jesus will come again and the Jews will accept Him and allow Him to set up His kingdom with headquarters in Jerusalem and rule and reign a thousand years upon the throne of David. All of this is supposedly supported by the dispensational partitioning of time in which the world's history can be divided into seven distinct periods, or dispensations, six of which have expired with the seventh (the millennium) yet to come. These seven dispensations, without a shred of proof, are defined in the following manner: (1) Innocence: from the creation to the fall, (2) conscience: from the fall to the flood, (3) government: from the flood to the giving of the promise to Abraham, (4) promise: from the giving of the promise to Abraham to the giving of the law on Sinai, (5) law: from the giving of the law to the work of Christ, (6) grace: from the ministry of Christ to the millennial kingdom, yet future, (7) kingdom: yet future and to span a space of

one thousand years, delineated in Revelation 20:1-7. Our own present dispensation is squeezed in between the sixth and seventh and is an emergency contingency called "The church age."

According to this fanciful fiction this schedule is according to Daniel 7:24-27, but the alarm clock was stopped in Matthew 13 to which we have already alluded. This theory has infested over eighty per cent of the sectarian world and a greater number of our brethren are unprepared to answer it. It is sung about by popular artists and the brethren unawares as they boldly blurt out, "Jesus is coming soon," without the slightest realization that they are singing what they can neither prove from the Bible to be true, nor what they would tolerate from the pulpit if the music were removed and they understood the significance of its false message. If their philosophy were adopted, any and every error sectarianism has ever conceived could be adopted just as long as it is set to music! One man said he didn't care what the song taught, he was going to sing it anyway. Faithful brethren ought to withdraw from him (Rom. 16:17-18), and all others who manifest the same spirit of rebellion.

The error of the heresy can be easily demonstrated in the following points, which are not intended to be a comprehensive refutation of premillennialism, but adequate to refute it nevertheless in its brevity: (1) Jesus Himself applied Daniel 7:24-27 to the destruction of Jerusalem with all the attendant signs of the times and not to the end of the world (Mat. 24:1-15). (2) God's plans for the church and its place in man's redemption extended back into eternity and was no afterthought or contingency (Eph. 3:10-11). (3) Jesus did not give His life for a contingency or substitute (Acts 20:28; Eph. 5:25-27). (4) When a prophecy is given with a time element involved there is no such thing as deferring that prophecy after the time has elapsed. Deuteronomy 18:22 says that such a failure is proof that the one who spoke the prophecy is a false prophet. Since it was God, through Daniel, who spoke Daniel 7:24-27, if it did not come to pass in the first century wherein it was scheduled, it makes God false to His promise and Daniel a false prophet. The Bible knows nothing about a "deferred" prophecy. (5) When Jesus comes again He will not touch the earth with the sole of one of His shoes, but we will be caught up

in the air to meet Him, and the Bible says, “So shall we ever be with the Lord” (1 The. 4:14-17). This absolutely ruins the premillennial position. How are we going to ever be with the Lord? Up in the air! (6) When Jesus comes again it will be the time to deliver the kingdom back to God and not to set it up (1 Cor. 15:23-24). (7) When Jesus comes again it will be the time of the judgment of the world, not the establishment of the kingdom (2 The. 1:7-9). (8) Revelation 20:1-7 says absolutely nothing about an earthly reign of anyone, and does not even involve us but *souls* reigning with Christ in heaven.

THE HOPE OF THE CROSS IS THE POWER OF ENDURANCE

When we look back at the cross we see the greatest human suffering that has ever been endured. The courage of the sinless Saviour serves as a pattern for us. We can overcome because He overcame. This is the contrast between the cross and the crown.

In Luke 14:25-27 we are told that there is a cross for all of us to bear. We must count the cost and we will see that the crown outweighs the cross. No matter how difficult and dismal the way becomes or heavy that cross becomes upon our backs, we know that we can endure because He endured. We bear it gladly because of the crown that awaits at the end of the way.

In Luke 22:39-46 Jesus went to the mount of Olives to pray, but when He returned, three times He found His apostles asleep. Their endurance could not span even a few short minutes. It must have been extremely disconcerting to Him to know that, even in the face of the cross, His most zealous followers could not endure any longer than they did. It would have discouraged a normal man, but He was the Son of God, and soon to be our example of endurance. It certainly told Him that we have an endurance problem. But He still offered up those prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared. “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him” (Heb. 5:7-9). Because He suffered and died, being flesh just like we are, we look back from our cross, call those trials “light afflictions” and ever march

forward toward the crown knowing we can overcome them in just the same way that He endured and overcame while looking to the blessed crown:

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before 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 (Heb. 12:1-2).

To add to that hope of endurance we have this assurance:

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape that ye may be able to bear it (1 Cor. 10:13).

We see the cross and then the crown in Philippians 2:9-11. The way to exaltation is through bearing the cross. We know that we can do it because He did, and His cross was far greater than any of ours. This is the hope that the cross of Christ is designed to give.

THE HOPE OF THE CROSS IS THE CROWN OF LIFE

Some among us have mistakenly supposed that we have that crown of life now while we live. The Bible speaks of it as if it were a present reality in order to give us assurance. In 1 John 5:11 we read, "And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son." This is also the theme of 2 Timothy 4:6-8. Here, Paul clearly states that even in his life he had not received eternal life or the crown:

For I am now ready to be offered and the time of my departure is at hand...Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

Of what day did he speak? The same day delineated in John 6:39-44, the last day. To this Peter adds his inspired testimony in these plain words, "To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you" (1 Pet. 1:4). It is not here in this life that we receive eternal life (the crown) but in heaven. In Revelation 6:9-11 the beautiful scene of the martyred souls attests to the fact

that there may be many trials to go and a long time after our demise, but rest is ours after a while and the crown of life in the end. We know not how dark the way or how long the journey, and we may rest our flesh in the bosom of the earth and our souls in the bosom of Abraham for many years, but the hope of the cross is the crown as surely as Christ died on it and was resurrected.

CONCLUSION

Jesus is coming again! There is no cross in His future. When He came the first time it was in weakness as the babe of Bethlehem. He was taken and judged by mortal men and crucified. When He returns it will be in power to judge those who judged Him and never repented, among so many others (2 The. 1:7-9). It will be the time of the great separation of the sheep from the goats (Mat. 25:31-34). May we always remember that the cross we bear in this life is worth every step of the way that we may finish our course with gladness and hear His blessed invitation, “Well done, good and faithful servant...enter into the joy of thy Lord.”

If I walk in the pathway of duty
If I work till the close of the day,
I shall see the great King in his beauty
When I've gone the last mile of the way.

THE PURITY OF NEW TESTAMENT WORSHIP

Eddie Whitten



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INTRODUCTION

It has often been said that the greatest privilege man has is the privilege of speaking directly to God in prayer. I believe that is in error. I believe the greatest privilege enjoyed by man is to hear God speaking to him through His inspired Word, the Bible. In the words of the Bible we learn about the creation (how man and the universe came into being); the great, unspeakable love of God as He provided all that man needs to live upon the earth. We learn about the Son of God as He came from glory to live among men, teaching man how to live. We learn how He died on the cross, teaching man that death is only the transition from earthly life into eternal life for the obedient and faithful, and providing by His grace the pattern, or blueprint, by which sinful man can be redeemed into glory.

The Bible tells us how we can live before God in such a way as to experience His favor. It is in the study of the Bible (2 Tim. 2:15; Rom. 10:17) that man learns there is a heaven indescribable in its glory (Rev. 21), and that man can go to heaven after he dies (John 14:1-6). The Bible gives us everything we need to know to live beau-

tiful, happy, godly lives on this earth (2 Pet. 1:3) and the perfect prescription for pleasing worship unto God (John 4:24). Man, in his worldly wisdom, chooses sometime to opt for his own pattern of worship. Such departure from God's way results in unacceptable worship (Mat. 7:21-22; 15:8-9).

In the early days of Eden, in the dawn of life, Eve, then Adam, fell victim to the wily evil of Satan. Man chose to follow his own desires and departed from God. As a result of his rebellion toward God, man chose his own course and death became his goal. Driven from the bliss of Eden, Adam and Eve suffered the loss of the beautiful, perfect and plenteous provisions of their loving Father. Today, when intelligent man chooses to follow his own intelligence respecting his relationship to God the Father he, too, forfeits the eternal bliss of heavenly Eden separated forever from God, the only source of peace and favor (Isa. 59:1-2).

THE GOD/MAN RELATIONSHIP

It may be that the hardest "fact of life" for man to acknowledge and accept is that he is not self-sufficient. Man never has been devoid of the presence of God in the world. It is true that he may place himself in circumstances which God does not approve, thus separating himself from God, but even in such circumstances, he does not separate himself from the knowledge, power and control of God (Hab. 2:20). It is completely irrational for man, the created, to presume that he can exercise dominion over the creator. The Bible is replete with sad examples of those who challenged the authority of God and perished.

The Bible tells us of the omnipotence of God. As one looks about him and views his surroundings, what does he see? Does he see great buildings pregnant with hi-tech electronics that control the lives of multitudes? Does he see countless ribbons of concrete traversing the world upon which man speeds in his luxurious automobiles? Does he see the powerful jet planes that have reduced the size of the world and covet their wealth and power? What is it that man sees? Does he see the myriad of medicines that man has produced? Does he see the medical expertise of physicians as they now can, after thousands of years of research and experimentation, replace vital organs in the

human body to prolong life? Does man look about him and see all of his great achievement and wonder in awe at his great power? Or, does he see the omnipotent power of God who, in an instant, by His very breath, spoke the world into being. All of the handiwork of man cannot compare with the delicate beauty of a single rose (Mat. 6:28-29). Can man really see the majesty of the towering mountains; the mystery of the vast seas; the wings of the eagle; the breath of spring; the complex systems comprising the human body, and not recognize and acknowledge the omnipotence of an all-mighty God?

The Psalmist David proclaimed, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork" (Psa. 19:1). Only the most imaginative atheist can gaze into the heavenly kaleidoscope, beat upon his presumptuous breast and proudly proclaim "This all happened by chance!" No, the truth is that God, in the beginning (and not through millions or billions of years of organic evolution), created in those first five days of Genesis 1, everything necessary for the maintenance of human life. Then he fashioned from the dust of the earth his ultimate creation, Man. Of all of the evidences of God's incomparable power, the most complex and convincing of all is that with which we are most familiar: our own bodies! Try as he might, man in all his intelligence, wisdom and technology has not succeeded in creating life from nonlife. The Bible says God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Gen. 2:7). God is omnipotent!

The Bible also tells us of the omniscience of God. Only two passages, among many, will be referenced to substantiate this grand truth. In Ephesians 3, Paul states:

Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be made known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord (Eph. 3:8-11).

It is not just the preaching of the gospel of Christ to the world that declares the "manifold wisdom of God," but the very presence of the church in the world stands as the singular, distinctive, unique, incom-

parable monument to God's wisdom! Think about it: Is there another entity upon the face of the earth that ever existed that can compare to the church? Its purpose is to provide lowly, helpless, hopeless, sinful man a means by which he can be saved. Its preexistence is declared as being in the mind of God since before the foundation of the world. Its predestination is the heavenly portals prepared for the redeemed. No earthly organization has even one of these special, unique attributes. Jeremiah stated that it is "not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23).

The apostle Paul, admonishing the Corinthian brethren for their contentious attitudes which had divided the church, referred to the wisdom of man as compared to that of God. He stated:

For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent. Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? 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. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: but we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:19-24).

Paul merely emphasizes in these verses his next statement in verse 25, "The foolishness of God is wiser than men. To place oneself in the position of challenging the wisdom of God is in itself the height of foolishness. God is an omniscient God!

The Bible also declares the omnipresence of God. On April 12, 1961; the Russian Cosmonaut, Yuri Gagarin, the first human to leave the confines of earth's atmosphere; boastfully informed the world that, as he sped through space, he saw no God. This was evidently intended to be the final word regarding the existence, or the lack thereof, of God. Mr. Gagarin has the same narrow view of God as the majority of mankind. God is Spirit (John 4:24) thus not visible to the mortal eyes of man. God could not be God if His presence was limited in the geographical sense. Those who look for a visible manifestation of Deity fail to grasp the essence of the nature of God. He is not limited to a certain locale, but is everywhere, at-all-times present. It

is hard for mortal man, with finite mind, to comprehend the infinity of God.

The prophet Jonah learned he could not run away from God. Not wishing to obey God's command to go to Nineveh, the Assyrian capital, and preach to it; he boarded a ship going all the way to the farthest reaches of the Mediterranean Sea, to Tarshish in southwestern Spain, to escape from God. We think, "How foolish!" With us that distance is comparatively just a few minutes journey. But to Jonah it was as far as he could go. He soon found that God knew where he was and what he was trying to do. God caused Jonah to be swallowed up by a great fish, a prepared fish, and Jonah states, "I cried by reason of my affliction unto the Lord, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice" (Jon. 2:2). The Psalmist asks, and answers:

Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: If I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me (Psa. 139:7-10).

Inspiration contradicts cosmonaut Gagarin and all the other skeptics, atheists and agnostics who arrogantly assert that there is no God, just because He does not manifest Himself imperically. God is present with us in all facets of life except when we leave His presence through sin (Isa. 59:1-2). Even then we do not escape His knowledge of our departure from Him. May God forbid that we separate ourselves from His omnipresence through our wilful sin.

The Bible teaches that God has all authority. Jesus said, "All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth" (Mat. 28:18—ASV). Yet, it is recognized by our Lord that even He did not have power or authority over, or equal to, His Father in heaven. He acknowledged: "For I spake not from myself; but the Father that hath sent me, he hath given me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak" (John 12:49).

The apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God" (1 Cor. 11:3).

Again, in the beautiful “resurrection” chapter of 1 Corinthians 15, Paul explains:

For, he put all things in subjection under his feet. But when he saith, All things are put in subjection, it is evident that he is excepted who did subject all things unto him. And when all things have been subjected unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subjected to him that did subject all things unto him, that God may be all in all (Cor. 15:27-28).

God sent His Son into the world (John 3:16) and gave Him to be head over all things to the church which is His body (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18), but God, the Father, still reigns overall.

Therefore, in view of God’s omnipotence, His omniscience, His omnipresence and His unsurpassed authority over man; it should be evident to man that he must bow his will to that of the Father, if he is to appropriate to himself the unmerited favor of an all-loving, merciful and forgiving God.

THE WORSHIP OF GOD

In view of the foregoing discussion concerning the proper relationship between God and man, we turn our attention to our proper worship of God. There are many doctrines being propagated throughout the world regarding how man can or should worship God, or perhaps other supposed gods. Many of these doctrines are couched in ignorance of the need for keeping God’s commandments according to the New Testament. Others are the result of the personal desires and understanding of individuals who, for whatever reasons, have chosen to form their own religion, and some follow the age-old superstitions peculiar to their cultures or traditions. Whatever the source of their religious convictions, if they are not in harmony and accord with the inspired (God-breathed) Scriptures, their worship is in vain (Mat. 15:8-9).

God does not allow man to worship any other god and remain in His favor. God, in the giving of the Ten Commandments to Moses, declared:

Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the

earth: thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them (Exo. 20:3-5).

He continued with the reason for this exclusive commandment: “For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.” It is, therefore, very important that we know, understand, and respect the worship of God for what it is and how we can offer our worship to Him acceptably.

To know how to worship God as we ought, we must turn to the pages of His Word. As we open the sacred pages and listen as He speaks, it becomes evident that He has given to us everything we need to worship Him as He desires. Let us note:

First, He has provided the object of worship, God Himself. Three occasions are recorded in the New Testament that support the fact that men are not to be worshipped. Peter was summoned by the Holy Spirit to the house of Cornelius. Cornelius, a Gentile who had found favor in the eyes of God, waited for him. When Peter arrived, Cornelius “fell down at his feet and worshipped him. But Peter took him up, saying, stand up; I myself also am a man” (Acts 10:25-26). Such clear revelation from God should completely destroy the Catholic doctrine of the primacy of Peter and the so-called apostolic succession of men who expect and demand to be worshipped as Peter’s successors as Pope. If they wish to be true followers of their papal progenitor, they would refuse such veneration!

The second and third occasions mentioned involved the apostle John. Twice in the Revelation, John was so overcome with awe that he offered to worship heavenly beings:

And I fell at his feet to worship him. And he said unto me, See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy (Rev. 19:10).

And I John saw these things and heard them. And when I had heard and seen, I fell down to worship before the feet of the angel which shewed me these things. Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God (Rev. 22:8-9).

Thus, on three occasions involving two of the apostles of Jesus, worship was offered either to a man (Peter—Acts 10:25), or a “fel-

lowservant” (Rev. 19:10), or an “angel” (Rev. 22:8), all of which were rejected with the admonition to “worship God.” Also, John recorded the words of Jesus to the woman at Jacob’s well at Sychar in Samaria. The Master said:

But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24).

Jesus confirmed the fact that God alone is to be the object of our worship when He repelled the temptation of Satan in the wilderness. He rebuked the Devil severely, sending him away with withering scorn: “Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (Mat. 4:10).

Second, He has provided the place of worship, the church. God sent His Son to the world saying, “Whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Jesus said He would build His church, and the gates of hell would not prevail against it (Mat. 16:18). In addition, Peter said the Lord “added to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:47) and Paul stated that “Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it...that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:25, 27). The church is the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18), and all spiritual blessings are in Christ (Eph. 1:3). The worship of God is the ultimate of spiritual blessings reserved for His children. Those outside of the body of Christ, the church, do not have the privilege of offering acceptable worship unto the Father, because of the fact they have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God (Rom. 10:1-3).

Therefore, if one is to engage in pure worship he must be a part of the blood-purchased church of our Lord and faithful to His cause.

Third, He has provided the method of worship. In “the method” is meant the “acts” or the parts of the whole of worship. What do we do in worship? We are not left to doubt in this regard. We are to: (1) *Sing.* Christians blending their voices in hymns of praise, psalms and spiritual songs (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16) express profoundly the “fruit of our lips” unto God. James asked and answered in the same breath the

nature of song. He asked, "Is any merry?" and the consequential response, "Let him sing psalms" (Jam. 5:13). Singing is a method of expressing the thoughts and the adoration of heart in every walk of life. With reference to the God of heaven only the oral, vocal, spoken expression of joy, praise, love and honor is sufficient for man's worship. To those who espouse the use of instruments, solos, choirs or quartets, the personal, intimate, stirring exchange of heart with God is absent. No substitute will suffice to produce the fulfillment of worship in song. (2) *Pray*. One of the primary characteristics of Jesus was His constant practice of praying unto God, His Father. He knew the strength He needed to face the trials of life flowed from the throne of God. He taught His disciples to pray (Mat. 6:5-13), and promised that if they prayed in the right way God would reward them (John 16:23). Communication with God through prayer should be an integral part of every Christian's daily life and certainly a part of the worship of God. Paul stated in 1 Corinthians 14:15, "I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also. Prayer is the lifeline of Christianity, and God has decreed that those who worship him are to let their requests be made known unto him (Phi. 4:6). (3) *The Lord's Supper*. Jesus offered Himself as a sacrifice for man (Rom. 5:8). His blood was shed on the cross; His body broken for the sins of man. Jesus knew this was the cup He was to drink (Mat. 26:39). Before His vicarious death, He instituted the memorial of this history-changing event. He broke the bread, symbolic of His body and blessed the cup, symbolic of His blood and gave these emblems to His apostles to eat. He charged them solemnly that as oft as they ate the bread and drank the cup, they were doing so in remembrance of Him until He comes again (Mat. 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:17-19; 1 Cor. 11:23-26). We learn from Acts 20:7 that the "as oft as ye eat it" is the first day of the week, the Lord's Day (Rev. 1:10). The true worshipper of God will commune with His Lord in this memorial service. (4) *Teaching, or preaching*. The preaching of the gospel is a unique privilege reserved for the Christian. One cannot preach the Word in its purity without practicing its principles. As the disciples were charged to "forsake not the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is" (Heb. 10:25), it was for the

purpose of exhortation (v. 24). Paul admonished, in Romans 10:13, that “Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.” But the “calling upon the name of the Lord” required the hearing of the Word of the Lord and that was to be accomplished by preaching (vv. 14-17). It was common practice for Christians to assemble for worship even though to do so could be dangerous (and in some places still is). It was in these assemblies that the “acts” of worship were observed including preaching (Acts 20:7; 2 Tim. 4:2-3; 1 Cor. 1:17-23). The gospel is preached both to the alien sinner to reach his heart with the word unto salvation (2 The. 2:14), and to the Christian for edification (Rom. 1:14-15; Eph. 4:15-16).⁽⁵⁾ *Giving*. Giving of one’s means has always been a practice with God’s people. Since the dawn of history, giving to God the creator has been an act of honor, respect, fear and awe. In recognition of his dependence upon God, and in thanksgiving for God’s limitless bounty, man has acknowledged his adoration in casting into his work the first fruits of his labor. In times past much of man’s giving was in the form of animal sacrifices. Nevertheless, the sacrifice given was his best. Today, our giving is usually in the form of the representation of wealth—our money. Again, even though the gift may be in different form, the commitment motivating the giving of it is still the same: the recognition of God’s love for us and blessings given to us and for the purpose of propagating the Word of God throughout the world (1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 8:7; 9:7). One of the hardest principles to learn in the Christian system, but one of the most rewarding of all blessings is encompassed in what Paul calls “This grace” (2 Cor. 8:7).

Fourth. He has expressed the proper attitude toward worship. Should the Christian view worship as something he is forced to “act out,” or with the attitude of discharging a duty that, once done, he is free to follow his own standard? This form of “worship” is totally foreign to the concept of Christianity. The true Christian will recognize that it is because of God’s love for man that He provided His grace so all men could be saved (Tit. 2:11; Eph. 2:8). Since He provided the “way of escape” (1 Cor. 10:13), He is the one who has the authority to provide the terms of pardon. His commandments are righteousness (Psa. 119:172), and we as His children are expected to

keep them (John 14:15). It is in the keeping of His commandments that we submit ourselves to His righteousness. Paul testified concerning Israel's righteousness in Romans 10:1-3. He said:

Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God.

Those who wish to offer worship unto God that is pure with regard to its object; that is pure with respect to the proper place worship can be offered; that offer worship with purity of method, and whose worship is pure with respect to attitude, are those who can rejoice in the Lord, knowing their labor in the Lord is not in vain (1 Cor. 15:58).

SOME DEPARTURES FROM PURE WORSHIP

A close study of the prophets reveals that man has always been determined to "chart his own course," to follow his own way. When we read 2 Peter 3:9, which says that God "is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance," we cannot grasp the full significance and magnanimity of that statement unless we understand how God's people have always been unfaithful to Him. Through history, the people have rejected God, become oppressed, turned back to God, and then received His blessings. This cycle has repeated itself many times. The careful student will notice that this cycle occurs approximately every forty to forty-five years. Each time, it has been man that has moved away from God. Each time, God has sent His preachers to warn the people of their apostasy. Each time, the people have rejected God's warning and have fallen into "ungetoverable" sin. Yet, each time, God says, "Preach the word; be instant in season, and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:2).

We are seeing one of the segments of the cycle today as many of our beloved brethren are following the hermeneutics of Satan and are moving away from the pure worship that God demands. Seemingly oblivious to the precepts we have preached for so long, that man can offer worship that is not pure, therefore, not acceptable (Mat.

7:21-23); they are offering nothing more than lip-service to God while following their own pernicious ways (Mat. 15:8-9). The warning Paul gave in 2 Timothy 4:3-4, is going unheeded in our time in the church.

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

What are some of the departures from pure worship taking place in the church? There are many—so many that it will not be possible to address them all, but these that we do are so serious; so soul-damning that it is heart-breaking to the faithful and, I am persuaded, to the loving, merciful God of heaven as He watches yet another apostasy devastating His precious church, taking away many souls into eternal perdition. Let us investigate three general categories.

First, there is a departure that is DOCTRINAL in nature. Our brethren have, over the years, debated issues with each other and with non-Christians. Generally, good was derived from such efforts since most of the issues were clearly defined and defended. Today, with the softening attitude toward the verbal inspiration of the scriptures, the subjective view of biblical authority and the pull toward pragmatism in the church; the willingness to recognize, acknowledge and defend positions seems to be absent. Some of the doctrinal problems which affect the pure worship of God are:

(1) *Divorce and Remarriage.* There are at least nine different views in our brotherhood relating to this vital subject ranging all the way from “no cause for remarriage” to “any cause for remarriage.” The Bible is specific, but because of whatever reasons, different views have been proposed through the years until some have even decided that we “can’t be judgmental,” thus allowing the church to accept in full fellowship those who are living in adultery. Brethren in this tragic circumstance are being given false encouragement and assurance that their souls are safe when, in reality, they are in desperate jeopardy. It may be impossible to be emphatic, but it seems odd that when the moral values of this country became more relaxed and perverted, and more people fell victim to divorce without scriptural cause; more members of the church also became participants in this worldly vice. Could it be that when family members or

close friends become involved, it immediately prompts “further study” of the question? Oh, how easy it becomes to be subjective about the objective when loved ones are affected.

(2) *Unity in Diversity*. This expression, in itself, is a contradiction of terms. What is really meant is “union in diversity.” “Unity” carries the connotation of agreement. Webster defines “unity” thusly: “1. State of being one: singleness; ABSENCE OF DIVERSITY [emp. mine, EW]. 2. Concord; harmony; accord; uniformity; as, a unity of sentiment.” Even the secular world knows that “unity” and “diversity” are opposed to each other. You can have one or the other, but not both! Yet, we have brethren who are willing to compromise the blood-bought Lord’s church with man-made organizations that are recognizably not in accord, harmony, or concord with the teaching of the Bible. Some have gone so far as to enter into worship with such, knowing full well that the activities in which they are participating are contrary to the teaching of the Bible (Col. 3:17). The church was established prior to the time of denominationalism by almost six hundred years. Every denomination upon the face of the earth was planted by man. But Jesus said, “Every plant, which my Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up” (Mat. 15:13). Therefore, we may conclude that if every denomination is a product of man, it is not planted by the Father. If it is not planted by the Father, it shall be rooted up. Therefore, every denomination shall be rooted up by the Father. That logical conclusion being true; it is, therefore, impossible for the church which Jesus promised and produced to be in unity with the product of man that disputes and disrupts the true teaching of God’s Word! When the “unity in diversity” movement began, it was to try to “reach out” to others in denominationalism, but has now taken on massive proportions in its quest to unite the church of our Lord with the Christian church denomination. It will be irrefutably impossible to offer pure worship in joint participation with the Independent Christian Church until and unless they repent of the denominational practices and come back to the Lord!

(3) *Christians in Denominations*. The singularity of the church is threatened by this doctrinal departure. The argument is made that one can study his Bible, learn what he needs to do to be saved, have his

denominational preacher baptize him, then continue to worship and serve said denomination. His baptism may be for any number of reasons in lieu of for the remission of sins. In the ACU Lectures of February 1986, Dr. Bill Humble made the statement that if it took such a one even six years to come out of that error, he still would be my brother in error. Such irrational treatment of God's will destroys pure worship.

(4) *The Lord's Supper on days other than the Lord's Day.* The Bible teaches that the disciples gathered together on the first day of the week to break bread (Acts 20:7). It is generally agreed that the "breaking bread" in this passage has reference to the Lord's Supper. This is the pattern, the example of the time and frequency of this memorial, the first day of the week. This was the day on which the disciples met for worship (1 Cor. 16:2; Rev. 1:10; John 20:1). But today man, ignoring the principle of Biblical authority, has desecrated the solemn feast by "celebrating" the sacrifice of our Lord on other days for other purposes. On one particular occasion during a "Conference for Churches in Change," held at the Central Church of Christ building in Irving, Texas, on February 20-22, 1986; the following event took place, according to the Bering Drive Church bulletin, Houston, Texas, Vol. 24, No. 24, in a article by Edward Fudge:

This was a worshipful conference, prayerful in tone. It climaxed in a moving Communion service the final morning. Worshippers filed past the Table for the Bread and Wine, then exchanged silent greetings of handshakes, hugs or smiles as they left the sanctuary.

The conference itself demonstrated both freedom and responsibility. When host minister Jim Carter introduced the *Saturday morning Communion service*, he noted that the day was not a usual one for churches of Christ to celebrate the Lord's Supper. Those whose consciences did not allow them this privilege should abstain, he said, with the full knowledge that they are equally loved and welcomed whether they participate or not. In this manner, persons with *stronger consciences* did not force anything on those whose *consciences were weak*. At the same time, those with weaker consciences did not draw limits for their brothers and sisters who enjoyed a *greater measure of gospel freedom* [emp. mine, EW].

In addition to this glaring and blatant example of departure from pure worship; other incidences have been reported of the taking of the

Lord's Supper on Thursday nights, in order to be free from that obligation on Sunday which would interfere with a long weekend; and on Friday night at a wedding because the bride and groom wanted it then, and the preacher did not object!

(5) *Authority of Elders*. Perhaps one of the more tragic departures from pure worship is the attitude of many toward the God-ordained organization of the church. No thought of the elders being venerated as holy or perfect or anything else of that nature is intended. However, God gave qualifications for men to serve in the capacity of leaders, overseers, shepherds or rulers (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9). There are many who, in today's attitude against authority, find God's plan for church leadership to be repugnant. They are not willing to submit to the authority God has delegated to the eldership. Thus, in their efforts to "take over" the church, they violate the Word of God and wreak havoc in the church. There are few congregations of the Lord's church, since the late 1960s, that have escaped the ravages of rebellion; especially from younger men who feel they are wiser, more mature and progressive than the older men in the church. God chose "elders," (presbuteros, meaning older men) to serve in the awesome office, rather than those whose lives have not been long enough to learn the deeper lessons of responsibility and experience. Hebrews 13:7, 17; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13, enjoin upon the membership of the local congregation to honor, respect and heed the direction of those who have been placed in the only office of delegated authority God saw fit to place in the church. Those who chose to disobey the authority of this office disobey God (Num. 12:1-15; 16:1-35).

(6) *Lack of discipline in the church*. Over and over again, the Old Testament gives examples of God's wrath against the children of disobedience. Too many to mention are accounts of the people of God being disciplined in order to bring them back into His love and care. We should learn from our heritage in the church that we cannot disobey God and remain in His grace. When sin enters the church it needs to be purged out. This is the history of God's relationship with His people. God does not tolerate those who violate His will, today or yesterday, nor will He tomorrow.

These six areas of departure in doctrine illustrate the need to preach the gospel even more pointedly and vigorously than ever before. If we can get back on a doctrinally pure basis with God, then all of these things that affect our pure worship of Him and unto Him can be resolved.

Second, there is a departure that is SOCIAL in nature. This philosophy in the church could very well be the most dangerous threat to the integrity of our worship of God that we have seen since the beginning of the Restoration movement in the very early 1800s. In all of the divisions that have plagued the church in the 19th and 20th centuries, most of them were over matters of doctrine or method. The questions that resulted in division were largely differences in how we understood what the Bible taught. Today, the standard is no longer the Bible, but man's own subjectivity. Bible principles are no longer valid in determining what we do in worship, but what do the people want. The social climate dictates the order of worship, and the study of and adherence to the Bible becomes secondary and unimportant. We shall address only a few specific examples as much similarity exists in all of them.

(1) *Preaching for popularity.* In years past, when the church was growing so rapidly, most of the preaching that was emanating from our pulpits was sharp, pointed, unmistakable. The singularity of the church was explained and emphasized in clarion tones. The people knew, whether they believed it or not, that the church of our Lord was not a denomination; that it was unique; that it was THE church Jesus died for and built. They knew from clear, concise preaching that man was lost and undone in his sin, and without the blood of the cross his soul was doomed to hell. They knew that baptism for the remission of sins is the only way a person may be cleansed from the crimson stain of sin and be added to the Lord's church. They knew the teaching condemning worldliness, that man can be lost even after becoming a Christian if he returns to a worldly and evil life. *The people heard the word preached and much of it was unpopular.* Nevertheless, many honest people studied their Bibles, learned the truth, and more obeyed the gospel during those years than every, with the possible exception of the first century.

Now, the pendulum has swung to the other extreme. The idea now is to “love” everybody into the church by not doing or saying anything that will offend them. Be popular and win their love is the goal of the preacher. We are seeing less Bible study, no discipline at all, no emphasis on the distinctiveness or the singularity of the church, no restrictions on life’s conduct: dress, worldly activities, attendance at filthy movies, drinking, divorce, remarriage. The gospel is no longer the call to faith (2 The. 2:14), but the size and splendor of the building and what they have to offer in the area of “felt needs.”

(2) *Acceptance of non-Christians into full fellowship.* The Lord adds to the church those that are saved (Acts 2:47). The addition of one to the church by the Lord is contingent upon certain conditions. Those conditions are stated in Acts 2:37-38. The record says:

Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Hearing and believing the preaching of Peter is obvious since the Jews there on Pentecost day were “pricked in their hearts.” Peter told them they were to repent. It is evident that not all of the Jews present did so, but verse 41 states that about three thousand of them did. Then Peter made a very significant statement. He said, *every one of you* be baptized *in the name of Jesus for remission of sins*. In this statement, Peter gives three vital aspects concerning admission into the church. He designated who (*everyone of you*) was to be baptized; by what authority (*Jesus Christ*), and why (*for the remission of sins*)! No one has the authority to supercede the plain teaching of Acts 2:38 by saying, in practice, that not everyone needs to be baptized for remission of sins by the authority of Jesus. But *by their own authority*, they are accepting for membership and fellowship those *who have not been baptized*, or who have been baptized in *some denominational church for some reason other than for remission of sins*! Such is a travesty upon the name of the church and upon the name of the Lord who died for it!

(3) *Association with and support of denominational efforts.* Paul stated in Ephesians 5:11 to “have no fellowship with the unfruitful

works of darkness, but rather reprove them.” For many, many years the church suffered (at least to some degree) verbal and social persecution because it would not be aligned with the world or with denominational bodies in community efforts of any kind. To consider cooperating with them in a *religious* effort was abhorrent! But, alas, such is no longer the case. It is a matter of fact, and has been for at least six years, or longer; that some of our preachers, with the consent and blessings of their elders, have been aiding and abetting denominational bodies of the wildest stripes in developing, strengthening and encouraging their growth. This is nothing short of the Christians of the first century helping to capture the lions that would soon destroy them in the Roman arena. Continued alliance with denominations in their endeavors will destroy the church of our Lord in our time if it is not challenged and repelled by faithful preaching and practice!

Again, we refer to the statement of Jesus: “Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up” (Mat. 15:13). It shows a complete lack of understanding of the nature of the church, the sinfulness of denominationalism, the sacredness of the Scripture, the authority of the Bible and the significance of eternity. Those that participate in such activities cannot worship in purity because they either (1) cannot have a pure concept of what the church is, or (2) deliberately refuse to acknowledge God’s will with regard to keeping the church and its worship pure. In either case, they negate the holy and sacred privilege of pure worship.

(4) *The “felt needs” emphasis.* A reflection of the psychology of our time is the “me” emphasis. Commonly referred to as the “me generation,” the focus of priority shifted from the patriotic, sacrificing, helpful attitudes generated during World War II and the succeeding generation, to one more selforiented. Dr. Spock initiated a philosophy of abstinence of discipline in rearing children, and America “bought it.” Undisciplined children grow up to be undisciplined adults. Undisciplined adults are not prone to be guided by the strict discipline demanded by the Word of God. And, since the Word of God teaches the principles of selflessness and service to others, it was in direct opposition to the selfishness and inward focus characteristic of the time.

It is not surprising that, not only in the church, but also in all walks of life, interest turned inward upon self. "What can be done for me," rather than, "what I can do to help others," became the norm. This philosophy has sapped the moral integrity of our nation and has had the same effect on the church. As a result, the attitude of "what can I get out of the church," or "can the church provide for me," has become paramount. The "felt needs" emphasis developed as the main work of the church. Special "ministries" have been formed to meet members educational, medical, physical, emotional, psychological, and marital needs. In addition, recreational facilities have been furnished by the church as a tool of evangelism to attract the people to the church. Now we have gymnasiums with basketball courts, volleyball courts, and aerobic classes. It will take only matter of time before we will have swimming pools, tennis courts, and gymnastic equipment. If not, why not? There can be no scriptural objections to such if there is none now! It is not out of the realm of speculation to anticipate even more extremes. If it is possible to erect multi-million dollar buildings through congregational sacrifice, why would it not be reasonable to expect a halfmillion dollar drive to build a golf course? Sound ridiculous? The rationale is precisely the same as that which has already produced the basketball courts!

The emphasis is, therefore, misdirected as a result of the "felt needs" demands of those who do not have the proper understanding and appreciation of true and pure worship. It is no wonder that we often hear people saying, "I didn't get anything out of the worship service today." It is because they did not put anything *into* the worship.

Instead of trying to meet the "felt needs" of the people by satisfying their material or emotional desires, we need to concentrate on helping the people see their need for the Christ and their obedience to Him. Then their needs will be met as they should be.

Third, there is a departure that is STRUCTURAL in nature. Closely akin to the doctrinal and social problems in the church, there is a problem that has to do with the organizational structure of the church that is resulting in a great departure from pure worship. God has ordained that the church be led and governed in a certain way. He

has charged that Jesus be the “head of the church,” (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18). He has also determined that qualified elders be placed in the role of “shepherding and ruling” the church (Acts 20:28; 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 5:1-3). He has charged that evangelists preach the Word (Rom. 10:15; 2 Tim. 4:2; et al.). He has legislated that members be submissive to the elders (1 The. 5:12; Heb. 13:7, 17). He has admonished that all work harmoniously together so that His body, the church, “may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ” (Eph. 4:15), and for the purpose of the “edifying of itself in love” (Eph. 4:16).

There is gross departure from this God-approved plan fostered upon the church by many today. Some preachers have taken it upon themselves, largely because of the weakness in elderships who allowed it to happen, to ignore or reject the authority of the elders and have assumed “pastoral” authority for themselves. We have spoken on the usurpation of the authority of elders in another section, and this has been a problem in the church for many years. This is stressed to emphasize that the Boston/Crossroad movement is not the source of this specific departure, but it has strongly embraced it and fostered its premise greatly, which leads to the following observation:

The Boston movement has openly and blatantly espoused the concept of evangelistic authority. Kip McKean, its leader and self-appointed Guru, stated that evangelistic authority is a biblical arrangement and those who deny it are ignorant of the Scriptures. Therefore, their (his) “multiplying ministry” must restructure the church in order to salvage a remnant for the purpose of evangelism. Also, the “one-on-one” evangelism is an approved method of teaching in the church. This is the “prayer partner” or discipler/disciple method of teaching and authority. This method eliminates the God-designed and approved structure of the church, which provides elders to be the overseers of the flock, not individual members. In addition, the Boston structure destroys the autonomy of each congregation under its local eldership. In their structure, “Pillar” churches are set up to have charge of a wide geographical area. Under the “Pillar” churches are “Capital City” churches which are responsible to the “Pillar” churches. Under the “Capital City” churches are “Small City”

churches, and under the “Small City” churches are “Country Side” churches. Each one is responsible to those on the next highest rung of the hierarchical ladder all the way up to the Boston church itself which answers to Kip McKean.

This is another tragic departure from biblical organization and is, in itself, a cult not unlike the “Peoples Temple” of Jim Jones, or the hierarchy system of the Roman Catholic church. Thus, those who are caught up in this type of heresy cannot worship according to the true pattern of pure worship, because their allegiance is directed to and controlled by the movement rather than by God through the New Testament.

CONCLUSION

Worship as God has designed it is pure. Pure worship is the most fulfilling, self-satisfying and edifying practice in which man may engage. We have noticed in this lecture: (1) The God/Man relationship; (2) The worship of God, and; (3) Some departures from pure worship.

In our service in the kingdom and our study of God’s Word, we must come to the knowledge of the true meaning of worship and render such worship unto God before we can be pleasing unto Him (Hos. 4:1, 6; Amos 8:11; Mic. 6:6-8; Mal. 1:6-8). These references are examples of those of long ago who departed from God’s order of worship to follow their own desires and were found at variance with God.

We must come to the knowledge and realization that pure worship will meet every need of the people from a spiritual perspective, and will enrich their lives, because it will be approved and acceptable before God, the Father.

May God help us to be ever diligent to desire and practice pure worship unto Him, is our urgent and sincere prayer.

THE PRINCIPLES OF RESTORATION ARE ALWAYS VITAL

M. L. Sexton



Marcus L. Sexton, was born on August 8, 1919, in Tuscaloosa County, Alabama. He finished high school in Kennett, Missouri, and later attended Southeast Missouri State College, Cape Girardeau; Arkansas State College, Jonesboro, Arkansas, and Freed-Hardeman College. He married Charline Lemonds, and they now have four children: Mrs. Jim Linch (Shawn), Dan, Marc, and Elizabeth. Brother Sexton has done full-time work in Millport, Alabama; Pensacola, Florida; Kennett, Missouri; Haynesville, Louisiana; Montgomery, Alabama; Columbus, Mississippi; Lawton, Oklahoma, and several congregations in Fort Worth, Texas. He is now in his fifth year with the East Hills congregation in Fort Worth.

We live in the most enlightened age and are favored with the most advanced technology the world has ever known. In my lifetime we have come from the days of horse-drawn buggies, wagons, and farm machines and from dirt roads to the superhighway system. We have advanced from the Model-T Ford, single-gasoline-engine airplanes, etc., to the most advanced technology in agriculture, health care, travel, and communications. Man's technology has become so sophisticated that with the push of a button he can turn on the radio or television, can start an airplane engine or an atomic submarine, or can destroy life upon the earth. Man, with all of his knowledge and wisdom has never been able and never will be able to create a system that will save the soul of man. God, the Creator of the universe has reserved this system for Himself (Luke 19:10). "Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words shall not pass away" (Mat. 24:35). The gospel is God's power to save (Rom. 1:16; Mark 16:15-16). The Bible contains the first and last word that God ever said about the true apostolic church. It contains all that God ever said about "life and

godliness” (2 Pet. 1:3; 2 Tim. 3:15-17). “To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isa. 8:20). God’s Word is forever settled in heaven (Psa. 119:89). If man adds to, subtracts from, perverts, or goes beyond God’s Word, he will receive the curse of heaven. Please read Deuteronomy 4:2; Revelation 22:18,19; Galatians 1:6, 12; 2 John 9-11.

Jesus taught His apostles for about three years and prepared them for the establishment of the church. He instructed them about the coming of the church and informed them as to how they would know when it came (Mark 9:1; Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:4-8). He also pointed out to them all the events surrounding His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension. He informed them that He would not leave them comfortless but would send them another “Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit” (John 14:16,26). He told them that “the Spirit of truth” would guide them “into all truth” (John 16:1-13). After instructing the apostles in these matters, Jesus went off to pray for them and for all generations to come. To me this is the most heart-rending prayer ever uttered. This is truly the Lord’s prayer. Please read it in John 17. Now listen to a part of that prayer that includes you and me:

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me (John 17:20-21).

These are such beautiful words that they thrill our hearts so much to think that Jesus loved us so much that He would petition His Father in our behalf.

On the other hand, it saddens us to think that down through the centuries man has ignored this plea by Him who died for us. It grieves us even more when we see our own brethren honoring Christ “with their lips” when their hearts are far from Him (Mat. 15:8,9). There is an element in the Lord’s church today that ignorantly or otherwise (it matters not which; the same results are realized) suppress the pure work of the church by coming to us in sheep’s clothing (Mat. 7:15-17). These are the modern-thought people of the day. They are the advanced thinkers and liberals and are liberal to everybody except those who love and hold to the truth. They have concentrated bitter-

ness and show a special talent for bitter sneers, biting sarcasm, and cruel treatment for those who preach the pure gospel. They are very liberal to their brother errorists but have no tolerance to spare for the God-fearing evangelist. They can display warmth instantaneously, and yet continue to walk in craftiness, dishonesty, handling the Word of God deceitfully (2 Cor. 4:2). “Ye shall know them by their fruits” (Mat. 7:16-20). Those of us who love the Lord and the brotherhood must not allow ourselves to succumb to the tactics of the liberal brethren. Our doctrine is not “Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe” Exo. 21:24-25; Mat. 5:38-42). Our doctrine and practice is “Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them” (Mat. 7:12).

GOD’S DIVINE PATTERN

God’s divine pattern is in the New Testament and reveals all that God has ever said about the church and its mission. The church of Christ was established on the first day of Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 2). Jesus is the Head (Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22-23). As the church grew (Acts 8:4) and new congregations were established, each church was independent and had its own elders and deacons (Acts 14:23; Tit. 1:5; Acts 6:1-4; 1 Tim. 3:1-13). The elders were to oversee the local church and the deacons were to serve (Heb. 13:7, 17; Acts 20:28; 1 Tim. 3:1-13).

The evangelist of the first century preached the gospel to every person as he had opportunity (Acts 2:41,42; 8:5-12; Col. 1:23). People were converted to Christ, and new local churches were established and worshipped according to God’s Word (Acts 2:42; 20:1-7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2). The evangelist was to set things in order and appoint elders in every church. This would certainly mean that the preacher was to teach the local church (2 Tim. 2:2) and to help men develop to qualify as elders and deacons (Tit. 1:5-14; 1 Tim. 3:8-15). The evangelist is commanded and charged before God (not man) to preach the Word to the church as well as to the world (1 Tim. 5:17-21). The preacher must remember that he is not the bishop or overseer of the church. He is its minister. He is not the overseer of the elders but their minister and must make full proof of his ministry

(2 Tim. 4:5). He must be an example (1 Tim. 4:12) and have a good report of those both in and out of the church (1 Tim. 3:7; 4:12).

PREACHING THE WORD

The responsibility of the evangelist is to preach the Word. This includes the whole truth. The apostle Paul said to the elders at Ephesus, "For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). We must not preach the Word in bits and pieces but preach it all. The gospel of Christ has been diluted so much in recent years that the pulpits and members have become so vulnerable to false doctrines that our pulpits and pews are full of unconverted people. This includes preachers and elders. They are ever learning and never able to come to a knowledge of the truth (2 Tim. 3:7). We will never be able to restore the Lord's church as it was in the first century until we preach the whole gospel (Gal. 1:6-11) and convict the world of sin (John 16:8); then only will people "obey from the heart that form of doctrine" (Rom. 6:17-23). The preacher must remember that the Word of God is complete and furnishes man unto every good work (2 Tim. 3:16,17). It is the Word of God that is alive and converts the souls of men (Heb. 4:12; Rom. 1:16), and not traditions, philosophy, rudiments of the world, gimmicks, etc. (Col. 2:8; 2 Cor. 4:2-3).

God's law is above any law many may give, and no preacher or elder has any right to put himself above God's law. God's law has been given and is settled in heaven forever (Psa. 119:89). When man turns his ear from God's law, even his prayers will be an abomination (Pro. 28:9; John 9:31). Preachers must preach the Word (2 Tim. 4:1-5), and elders must "feed the flock" (Acts 20:28-32), not as "being lords over God's heritage" (1 Pet. 5:1-3). Elders must not permit false teachers and preachers to come into the church (Heb. 13:7-17). Such people will sow discord and destroy the church. However, they must not use this responsibility as an excuse to exercise the disposition of Diotrophes (2 John 9-10). The preacher must not succumb to the pressure of unscrupulous elders who will not permit the pure gospel to be preached (2 Tim. 4:1-5; Gal. 1:6-11). However, the preacher must be sure that what he is contending for is the faith (Jude 3; Eph. 4:3-6) and not some peculiar dogma of his own liking. Those who

permit themselves to be coerced into compromising false doctrine and sin are not worthy to wear the name of Christ. There are three books of the New Testament written to the preacher. Preachers and elders would do well to study them carefully.

THE GREAT APOSTASY

In spite of the warnings given to the church in the first century (1 Cor. 16:13; 2 The. 2), it was not long until preachers and elders began to be influenced by false teachers, and as a result the Lord's church went off into apostasy. In the beginning the church "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers," (Acts 2:42; 1 The. 1:13). The apostles continued preaching the gospel and pleading with the brethren to preach the Word and earnestly contend for the faith (2 Tim. 4:1-4; Jude 3; Gal. 1:6-11). Man became unhappy with God's plan and developed a system of government of his own. Preachers began preaching error (1 Tim. 4:1-3), and elders began drawing away disciples after them (Acts 20:28-32). They began making a distinction among the terms *presbyter*, *bishop*, and *elder*. They were given various ranks and, according to Dr. Sidney Brown, professor of European history, in his book *Medieval Europe*, pages 22-23, every church was ruled by a single bishop in each local church, hence a one-man rule. It seems that most historians agree with his evaluation.

Constantine, a ruler of the Holy Roman empire, became a member of the apostate church about A.D. 325. and made it the state religion. From that day on, it has been a religio-political organization. In about A.D. 606 there was a man appointed Pope and the church became known as the Roman Catholic Church and was declared infallible by its cardinals in A.D. 1870. The apostasy was a gradual breaking away from the church of Christ until the apostate body known as Roman Catholicism came into existence. They claim to be the true apostolic church and yet there is not one thing peculiar to the Roman Catholic church that can be found in the New Testament. Some of the dogmas are the veneration of Mary, priestly absolution, auricular confession, purgatory, transubstantiation, extreme unction, and the assumption of Mary. Where is the scriptural authority for this? There is none! They receive the Word of God as though it is man's word. The Pope

has been declared infallible and as its head can authorize the church to direct its affairs according to his own interpretation of the Bible. No man has the authority. “Knowing this first that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man” (2 Pet. 1:20-21). It took several centuries for this apostasy to develop as we know it today. “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Heb. 3:12). Man has chosen to disregard *this admonition*.

THE REFORMATION

Since we do not have the time nor space, it is impossible to deal with the entire Reformation with all its related organizations that exist today. However, we will note a few of its leaders and organizations that sprang up.

When John Tetzel of the Catholic church began selling indulgences, Martin Luther preached against it. Even though there were other objectionable doctrines of the Catholic church, this was the one that brought the controversy to a head and brought Luther on October 31, 1517, to nail the ninety-five theses on the Catholic church door at Wittenberg. He was trying desperately to reform the church by taking the Bible from the Catholic church pulpit and giving it back to the people. He succeeded in getting the Bible into the hands of the people but failed in his efforts to reform the Catholic church. He was excommunicated. Martin Luther began teaching total depravity, salvation by faith only, and the direct operation of the Holy Spirit as well as other principles not found in the Bible. His followers crystallized around his teaching and became known as Lutherans—hence the Lutheran church.

John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli, and a host of others were contemporary with Martin Luther but had ideas of their own that attracted a number of followers. Many of those were executed by the Catholic church. John Calvin’s teaching brought into existence the Presbyterian church in A.D. 1535. At about the same time the Episcopal church had its beginning with King Henry VIII as its head. The Baptist and Methodist groups followed, and this process has continued until we have several denominations all teaching different doctrines and yet

claiming to be the Lord's church. Many of those will not accept the Bible as God's final authority in matters of religion.

Many no longer believe in the inerrancy of the scriptures but treat them as though they are man's words. These people would do well to follow the example of the Thessalonians. The apostle Paul wrote them saying,

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe (1 The. 2:13).

THE RESTORATION MOVEMENT

In every generation we must have men to rise up with the knowledge, faith, and courage to proclaim and defend the faith. In the 18th and 19th centuries there were men who analyzed the problem and set out to get the people to drop their human names and man-made creeds and accept the Bible and the Bible only in all matters of faith. Their purpose was not to reform anything but to try to restore the Lord's church as it was in the New Testament. They knew that the only way this could be done was by sowing the seed of the kingdom (Luke 8:4-15; Mat. 13:19). Some of those who stood out in this great movement were James O'Kelley of the Methodist church, Dr. Abner Jones of the Baptist church, Barton W. Stone, Thomas and Alexander Campbell of the Presbyterian church, and a host of others. They dropped their church-affiliated names and man-made creeds and turned to Christ as their spiritual rock and foundation with the Bible as their only creed. They wanted to duplicate the church of the first century in all its teaching and practice. As a result of their work, churches of Christ sprang up all over the country. There was no man-made ecclesiastical organization. They accepted the Word as it is "settled in heaven" (Psa. 119:89). This seed produced churches of like faith wherever it was sown.

It was not long until false doctrine began to creep into some of the churches, and these innovations led many of the churches into apostasy. Instrumental music, the missionary society, and evangelistic rule were some of the first innovations that split the church. There are many today who are sowing discord in the body of Christ by introduc-

ing ideas that have no scriptural authority. They wish to compromise with the world on alcoholic beverages, marriage, and social activities as a substitute for preaching the gospel. They will serve the Lord's supper on a week day, sing during communion (why not sing during prayer?) and fellowship the ungodly and call it love (Rom. 16:18). When Jesus instituted the Lord's supper, those present sang after the communion and not during it (Mat. 26:26-30). They are not pleased with God's system and go about to establish their own. They are changing the "uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man" (Rom. 1:23). They became wise in their own conceit (Rom. 12:16). Solomon said, "there is more hope of a fool" (Pro. 26:12). We must not pervert nor transgress God's Word. If we do, we will receive the curse of God and cannot be of God (Gal. 1:6-11; 2 John 9-10).

LEARNING BY EXAMPLES

Some of the greatest lessons ever learned are learned by example. A child may be told how to write his name, play a musical instrument, swim, etc., but it is very difficult for him without examples. The same is true with adults. We show people how to write or be good mechanics, good sales people, farmers, surgeons, etc. This is also true in the spiritual realm. Luke said, "The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach" (Acts 1:1). They needed to know what Jesus did as well as what He taught. Jesus the master Teacher did not leave us without examples. He gave the apostles an example in humility (John 13:1-17). The apostle Peter points out that Jesus left us an example in regard to what our attitude should be toward sin and suffering, (Please read 1 Peter chapter 2). We are also told to follow the examples of the prophets (Jam. 5:9-10). There are good examples and there are bad examples; we learn by both. The Hebrews hardened their hearts "in the day of temptation in the wilderness" (Heb. 3:8-12) and left us a bad example. We are told not to "fall after the same example of unbelief" (Heb. 4:11). Twenty-three thousand of these people fell in one day. "Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted" (1 Cor. 10:6). See also 1 Corinthians 10:1-12.

We have the same responsibility of setting the proper example as those in Bible days. This responsibility falls upon every Christian (1 The. 1:7). This is especially true of preachers and elders (1 Tim. 4:12; 2 Tim. 2:1-7; 1 Pet. 5:1-3). The apostle Paul said, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Rom. 15:4). There were many good examples left us in the Old Testament. Many of the prophets exemplified great courage and stability in serving the living God. This is also true of many of God's people during that period. However, in spite of the pleas of the prophets, many of God's people yielded to the pressures of the outside world and the unscrupulous ways of the Jews. Let us go back and see if we can learn by the mistakes of some of these people.

LEARNING BY GOING BACK

The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities of that area became so corrupt in sin that God "set them forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire" (Jude 7). We have a similar situation in the world today. The sin of fornication has become so common in our society that it is no longer looked upon as sin in many religious movements today. This has had its influence on the church and many in the Lord's church have fallen victim to this sin. Unless we close our eyes to the facts, we cannot help seeing how this is affecting the lives of many. Homes are broken up; children are abused and left homeless. Many venereal diseases have disrupted and destroyed the lives of many. It is terrible when the guilty have to suffer, but it is a catastrophe when the innocent have to suffer. A good example is the AIDS epidemic. There are those in our society who are trying to get homosexuality accepted as an acceptable way of life. It is in the homosexual community that AIDS began and has spread to the heterosexual community through sexual contact, blood transfusions, etc. Homosexual activity is the lowest form of fornication and is condemned by God's Word (Rom. 1:26-32; Jude 7).

Solomon had a glorious reign, but due to his marriage to 700 idolatrous women and relationships with 300 concubines, it deteriorated into a shambles and disgrace (1 Kin. 11:1-8; Neh. 13:26). After Solomon's death, Rehoboam, his son, became king. There arose

dissension in his kingdom over the heavy burdens that Solomon had placed upon the people. Rehoboam unwisely accepted the advice of the younger men instead of the older men of wisdom and placed heavier burdens on the people. This youth movement placed heavier burdens on the people and finally led to a divided kingdom. Jeroboam, a shrewd politician and “a mighty man of valor” (1 Kin. 11:28), influenced ten of the tribes to accept his leadership. The tribes of Judah and Benjamin, plus the priestly tribe of Levi were all that remained loyal to the house of David (1 Kin. 12:1-31).

Jeroboam officiated as a priest and substituted for the Feast of Tabernacles. “He offered upon the altar which he made...even in the month which he had devised of his own heart” (1 Kin. 12:28-33). He had said to them, “It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt” (1 Kin. 12:28). Jeroboam devised the priests, altars, and calves according to his own liking and not as God had ordained. They were modern-day liberals. Jeroboam was changing God’s old system of worship to a new state of things. He had lived in Egypt and no doubt was influenced by their culture. He had been exposed to the intellectuals. Jeroboam chose his own places of worship instead of going to the house of God in Jerusalem (1 Kin. 12:27; 2 Chr. 3:1). He chose his own objects of worship instead of following God’s prescribed way. He did not learn from the error of Aaron in his sinful act of worship with the “molten calf” (Exo. 32:1-35). Jeroboam violated the second commandment of the Law of Moses and “this thing became a sin” (Exo. 20:4; 1 Kin. 12:30). Jeroboam chose his own times of worship and devised new festivals. He changed the day God gave to the day “he devised of his own heart” (Lev. 23:34; Num. 29:12).

Like Jeroboam, brethren of our time have not learned from the sins of God’s people of the past. Some are not content to follow God’s pattern of the new Testament. God has given us the first day of the week as the day we are to worship Him in the observance of the Lord’s Supper (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1,2; Heb. 10:25; 1 Cor. 10 and 11). This is the day that Jesus was raised from the dead, and as we observe the Lord’s supper on this day we discern His body (1 Cor.

11:23-30). Man is not content with God's simple plan but because of convenience, or some other reason that suits his fancy, he will take it less often than is taught in the Bible or he may want to change and observe it on a weekday. The instrument is another unauthorized innovation brought into the worship (2 John 9-10; Rev. 22:18-19). See also 1 Corinthians 14:15.

Brethren, why can't we leave God's plan alone and be happy simply to worship Him in "spirit and in truth" (John 4:23)? This we will do, "Because the foolishness of God is wiser than man" (1 Cor. 1:25; 3:19). "The way of a fool is right in his own eyes: but he that hearkeneth unto counsel is wise" (Pro. 12:15). God's law and His system do not need fixing. He fixed it in heaven long before you and I were born (Psa. 119:89).

One error leads to another and will multiply many times. God ordained that the priests be of the sons of Levi (Num. 3:10). This did not matter to Jeroboam. He made priests of his own choosing and in this way drew the people away from the right way into the inexcusable sin of idolatry. The young prophet who cried out against the altar in Bethel and caused Jeroboam's hand to dry up and then restored it could not get him to give up his idolatrous ways (1 Kin. 13). God gave His law and system of worship through Moses and charged the people not to make any changes whatsoever (Deu. 4:2; 12:32; Pro. 30:6). Those who set aside Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses. The writer of Hebrews tells us that our punishment will be even greater if we count the blood of the covenant wherewith we were sanctified an unholy thing (Heb. 10:28-29). Jeroboam asked the people to do things that were in direct violation of God's law. Why did they do it? They knew it was wrong to bow down to idols; Jeroboam convinced them that it was more convenient and therefore would be acceptable to God (1 Kin. 12:28). Saul had tried the same principle when he disobeyed God. God told him to "go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not" (1 Sam. 15:1-3).

Saul and the people spared Agag, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good, and would not utterly destroy them, but every thing that was vile and refuse, that they destroyed utterly (1 Sam. 15:9).

Saul reminds me of some of our brethren who say that it is the “spirit of the law” that is important and not the law itself.

They claim that the person who teaches that we must obey God’s law is a legalist. If this is true, then I’m a legalist and proud of it. The true legalist is one who honors the Lord with his lips but his heart is far from Him (Mat. 15:8; Mark 7:6). They are the ones who make the Word of God of none effect through their traditions (Mark 7:3). Samuel rebuked Saul for his actions. (Please read 1 Samuel 15). Samuel asked him why he did not “obey the voice of the Lord.” Saul said, “I have obeyed the voice of the Lord...but the people took the spoil...to sacrifice unto the Lord.” He tried to put the blame on the people. Isn’t this just like some brethren? They “pass the buck.” Please notice Samuel’s reply to Saul:

Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to harken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king.

It was not until God rejected Saul from being king that he confessed his sin (1 Sam. 15:22-25). This is the kind of attitude toward God’s Word that finally led to the downfall of God’s people. Isaiah’s ministry is dated from 745 to 695 B.C. He was a prophet of the Southern Kingdom at a time when the Northern Kingdom was destroyed by the Assyrians. Isaiah is mentioned in the New Testament more than any other prophet. According to tradition, he was executed by Manassah, wicked and cruel king of Judah.

Isaiah in his time pleaded with the people to seek “the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near.” Isaiah said,

The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib; but Israel doth not know...Ah a sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil doers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord (Isa. 1:3-4).

Their thinking was not right (Pro. 23:7). They refused to accept the fact that God’s thoughts and ways were higher than theirs (Isa. 55:6-9).

Isaiah said, “the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint” and that instead of repenting they would “revolt more and more” (Isa. 1:5-6). It was the leaders of the people who caused them to err (Isa. 9:15-16). Our presentday leaders in the Lord’s church should study these examples and take heed lest they be deceived and go about deceiving others (2 Tim. 3:13).

Jeremiah was born about 645 B.C. Tradition says that when Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem in 586 B.C. Jeremiah was eventually forced to escape to Egypt, where he was stoned to death by his enemies. Jeremiah was very sensitive to the chaotic condition of his nation. He loved the people and was saddened deeply because of their attitude toward God. He said, “Let my eyes run down with tears night and day” and again, “Why is my pain perpetual and wound incurable?” (Jer. 14:17; 15:18). When God called for the people to “Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.” BUT THEY SAID, “WE WILL NOT WALK THEREIN” (Jer. 6:16). The people had rejected the law of the Lord time and time again. It seems that they had had every opportunity possible to return to God, but they stubbornly refused and said, “We will not walk therein.” The prophet mourns over the miserable fact of his people. He had laboured so diligently with his countrymen, but it was all in vain. “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved” (Jer. 8:20). What a heart-rending thought! All is past, every opportunity is gone, and we are lost! It seems to me that those of us living today could see the dangers confronting us in the church. There are many statements of warning given in the New Testament in such passages as 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Timothy 4:1-6; Acts 20:28-32; Hebrews 3, etc. Please read and study these Scriptures. Due to the fact that God’s people refused to accept His teaching, they ended up in Babylonian captivity. Jerusalem was destroyed in 606 B.C. and burned to the ground in 586 B.C.

In the year 537, Zerubbable led about 50,000 Jews back to Jerusalem and rebuilt the temple. In 445 B.C. Nehemiah led more Jews back to Jerusalem and rebuilt the walls. Israel had learned her lesson. The Babylonian captivity cured Israel of idolatry.

There are many lessons that we can learn from these examples of history. Among them are as follows:

1. We are not more than one generation from apostasy (2 John 9; Jude 10-13).
2. We must not compromise with sin (Neh. 4:17-18; 6:3).
3. We must fight the good fight (2 Tim. 4:1-7; 1 Tim. 6:12).
4. Unbelievers have no part in the work of God (Neh. 2:20; 2 Cor. 6:14).
5. Ridicule and insults are the tools of Satan (Neh. 1: 1-4:6; Mat. 5:11; 2 Pet. 2:9-16).

Brethren, we must learn from the things written aforetime for our learning (Rom. 15:4). Just as the prophet cried out for a return to “the old paths,” we must return to the strait gate and narrow way and build upon the solid rock which is Christ (Mat. 7:13-14, 24-25). Let us sow the same seed that Jesus and His inspired writers sowed (Luke 8:4-15).

“Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong” (1 Cor. 16:13). See also 1 Corinthians 15:58.

“And now brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified” (Acts 20:32).

LET US FOLLOW THE JERUSALEM PATTERN

George W. DeHoff



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Today I want to talk with you about the pattern which God gave us for His church. Are we following that pattern or have we left the Old Jerusalem pattern?

Jerusalem is one of the most historic and interesting cities in the world. If you say “Jerusalem” any person anywhere in the whole world will have some idea of what you are talking about. This city has been captured by an invading army more times than any other city in the world. More than fifty times an invading army has entered the city, hauled down one flag and run up another. Jerusalem is located midway between Egypt and Syria. In ancient times when the Egyptians were on the road to Assyria they would capture Palestine on the way up and when the Assyrians were enroute to Egypt they fought the people of Palestine on the way down so the city has been destroyed and rebuilt more times than any other city in the world.

Jerusalem was the home of Melchizedek (Gen. 14). Later it was the home of Abraham. One of the most fierce battles over the city was fought in 606 B.C. when Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem and took 18,000 people captive. He took them away to Babylon. Three years later he returned and took 10,000 more Jewish

people to Babylon including Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego—people with whom you are familiar from your study of the Bible.

In 587 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar returned and burned the city to the ground. He took thousands more into captivity. Now all the time these Jews were in captivity they longed to return and rebuild the city of Jerusalem. In the evening they hung their harps on the weeping willow trees, they sat down by the rivers of Babylon and wept because the city of Jerusalem was in ruins. In 538 B.C., Zerubbabel, an outstanding young Jew, brought 50,000 Jews home and succeeded in rebuilding a part of the city. In 516 B.C., he had partly rebuilt the temple—at least the people could go into it to worship.

The story that I want to mention in connection with this lesson is that of Nehemiah and his great work in rebuilding the city. Nehemiah was a very prominent young Jew. He was in Babylonian captivity. He had been trained in the finest schools of the world at that time and was assigned the task of “cupbearer to the king.” He was not merely a butler but an advisor to the king. King Artaxerxes depended on him for counsel and advice. Now Artaxerxes did not like sadness. He gave a decree that no one should come into his presence with a sad countenance.

Now Nehemiah knew the condition of Jerusalem. He knew that the city of his fathers was in ruins and that the worship outlined in the book of God was not being carried out. He was sorry about this. He went into the presence of the king with a sad countenance. The king did not want to destroy Nehemiah so he asked why the sad countenance. Nehemiah said, “Oh king, the city of my fathers is in ruins. There is no place for my people to worship God. That is why I am sad.” Artaxerxes said, “What would you like to do about it?” Nehemiah replied that he would like to go and rebuild the city. Artaxerxes replied, “You may go and rebuild the city, you may set up the walls and restore the place of worship.” He obtained from the king permission to take young men with him to rebuild the city. He got letters authorizing him to pass through the territory between Babylon and Jerusalem and to cut timber and use materials to rebuild the city.

Nehemiah led these people. They drew near to Jerusalem and camped for the night. Nehemiah alone rode on into the city. When he came to the city, he could not even ride into it. He got off his donkey and walked into the city. The moon must have been riding high in the heavens because he

looked out and saw the city in ruins, the streets filled with rubbish and the walls torn down. His heart was moved within him. He wept. He resolved that he would rebuild the city of Jerusalem.

He returned from that midnight visit and the next morning, bright and early, in full and complete control of himself, led the people into the city. He said, "You see the condition of the city. Let us rebuild it."

They got busy and began to rebuild Jerusalem. It was slow going trying to clean up the trash and rebuild the walls. Naturally, the devil and his crowd are always ready to stop any good work. Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem, the Arabian, used the devil's number one weapon against them—ridicule. They said, "See the wall they are building. Even if a fox ran up against it, it would fall." Nehemiah instructed his people to pay no attention to this but to keep on working.

When the enemy was not able to stop the building by ridicule, they asked for a unity meeting. They wanted Nehemiah to stop his work and come down to a meeting in the plains of Ono. Nehemiah refused. He said, "I am doing a great work. Why should the work cease while I leave it and come down to you?" Three times they tried to get this unity meeting but failed. The last time they said, "It is reported that you seek to rebel and are building the city for that purpose." (All of us are acquainted with that old "It is reported" trick.) Nehemiah said, "There is no such report. You have imagined these things in your own heart." People should be willing to stand behind what they say and not merely be repeating gossip. So often today we hear people say, "I have heard," "Everybody is saying "It is reported." Nehemiah said, "We are not coming."

The enemy then decided to fight. Nehemiah had every man take his spear in one hand and his trowel in the other. They worked all around the wall. When an attack was made, the trumpet was blown and everyone ran to the point of attack and repulsed the enemy. When the enemy was gone, they would return to their job of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem.

They did rebuild Jerusalem. They were not stopped by ridicule. They were not stopped by compromise. They were not stopped by fighting. In spite of all these things, they rebuilt Jerusalem because they had a mind to work. When they had finished (except the gates had not been set up on their hinges), Nehemiah called all the people into the street. They read

the law of God for half a day, they confessed their sins for a fourth of a day and they prayed for the rest of the day.

There are some fundamental facts to be noticed about what we have studied. These people did not build a new city they restored the old city. They did not start a new religion. They brought out the old book and read from it. The city was rebuilt, the old religion was restored. The people worshipped God as they had done long ago.

Now that bit of Old Testament history forms the basis for what has happened to spiritual Jerusalem—the New Testament church. Jesus came to the earth to build His church (Mat. 16:18). We read in Hebrews 12:22 that we are not come to a literal mountain but unto Mt. Zion, a spiritual mountain. In Galatians 4:26 Paul said, “The Jerusalem which is from above is free, which is the mother of us all.” He is talking about the new covenant, the New Testament church. In Ephesians 5 the church is called the bride of Christ and in Ephesians 6 the army of the Lord.

The church was established in Jerusalem on Pentecost day of Acts 2. It grew rapidly. The number of the disciples grew and multiplied. Three thousand people were added on the birthday of the church. But not everyone loved the truth. When the church got big, some of the members got lazy. They did not want the gospel preached but they had itching ears and wanted a preacher to scratch them. There is always some preacher who will take up with anything and preach anything. “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils” (1 Tim. 4:1-2). Paul wanted faithful men to “Preach the word, be instant in season, out of season” (2 Tim. 4:2). As time went on men began to add new and strange doctrines not found in God’s Word.

HOLY WATER

In A.D. 120, holy water was put into church buildings so that everyone entering the building could dip his fingers into the water and thus they could tell who was a Christian and who was not. Now you could read the New Testament through without hearing about holy water but it was introduced anyway.

PENANCE

The book of God teaches that sinners are to repent. Alien sinners must repent and be baptized. Christians who sin must repent and pray

to be forgiven (Acts 8:22). Not satisfied with this, penance was invented and introduced into the church.

PURGATORY

The book of God teaches that sinners die and go to hell, that this is eternal punishment, that hell is prepared for the devil and his angels. Men do not like the idea of hell. Time and again, I have had people tell me not to even use the word lest we offend the children! So men invented a place called purgatory where sinners would go for a limited time and be punished. By praying, paying and punishing themselves they could shorten their time in purgatory. Of course, this is ridiculous nonsense since nothing is said in the Bible about purgatory. It is a false doctrine of man.

THE POPE

In the New Testament every congregation is independent. Each congregation selected its own elders, deacons, evangelists and whoever else was needed to carry on the work of the church. There is no such thing in the Bible as one set of elders supervising more than one congregation. That is a false doctrine. But as elders became dictators and wanted more power they finally selected one man to be the pope—the head over all the officials in all the churches. In A.D. 606, for the first time in the history of the world a universal bishop was selected. The pope is simply an overgrown elder. Paul warned the elders that “from among your own selves shall men arise speaking perverse things and draw away many after them” (Acts 20:30).

INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

When the Lord established His church there was singing in the church but never instrumental music. In A.D. 658, for the first time organs began to be introduced into the worship though it was hundreds of years before their use was general.

Since the time of Christ most religious people have worshipped without mechanical instrumental music. Those who want to follow the New Testament will do that now.

INDULGENCES

In 1109, when building St. Peter’s cathedral in Rome, the builders decided they needed more money. Of course, the New Testament teaches for each one to lay by in store as he is prospered and to do this on the

first day of every week (1 Cor. 16:1-2). But a new plan was invented. People were to pay for their sins and they could do so in advance! One not only paid for what he had done, but for what he wanted to do!

AURICULAR CONFESSION

In the Bible sins were confessed to God. Men repented and called on God to forgive them, but in about A.D. 1215, little booths were put into buildings and a priest inside the booth would listen to people confess their sins. If he wanted to do so, he would forgive them!

SPRINKLING FOR BAPTISM

The New Testament teaches that sinners are buried in baptism, baptized into the death of Christ (Rom. 6:3-4). About A.D. 250, “clinical baptism” was introduced but the first law ever made allowing sprinkling instead of baptism was at the Council of Ravenna in 1311. The pope then announced that in the future men could be sprinkled for baptism.

This just gives you a sample of some of the false doctrines introduced. This brought the dark ages when men had no opportunity to hear the old Jerusalem gospel but heard only the doctrines and commandments of men. The Greek Catholic Church (Greek Orthodox Church) fell away from the truth and then later the Western church commonly known as the Roman Catholic Church developed. Men paid no attention to what God had said but to what the people and the pope and the cardinals told them.

MARTIN LUTHER

Things finally reached the breaking point. There was no religious freedom. Spiritual Zion was torn down, the streets were full of debris and trash. Dr. Martin Luther, a very prominent professor at Wittenberg College at Wittenberg, Germany went into the library to read and found a copy of God’s Word. It was in the Latin language and he had never seen one before! He was an ordained priest but had never seen a Bible! He cried out, “Oh God, I would give anything in the world if I could have a copy of this book.”

Tetzel was busy selling indulgences. Luther rebelled. On October 31, 1519, he nailed ninety-five objections to the Catholic church on the door of the church house in Wittenberg. The war was on! Luther, at the Diet of Worms, defended what he had done. Luther was hurried out of the country lest he be put to death. He translated the Bible into the language

of the people which, of course, was the German language. He did a great work in giving the Bible back to the people.

HENRY VIII

Following Luther, all over the world people began to say, “We do not have to pay any attention to the pope and his cardinals.” In 1534 Henry VIII wanted to get another divorce. When the pope would not allow this, because of political reasons, Henry broke away from the Roman Catholic denomination and established the Church of England, the Episcopal Church.

JOHN CALVIN

Following that, there was John Calvin who began to emphasize the sovereignty of God. In 1539, as Calvin thundered out his message, the Presbyterian church was established. Calvin did a great work. He also taught five fundamental errors: (1) Unconditional election, (2) Partial redemption, (3) Total depravity, (4) Irresistible grace, and (5) Final perseverance of the saints. Most error in protestantism comes from Calvinism. Our own people teach many errors which have their basis in Calvinism.

JOHN SMYTHE

Gradually men began to come out of the dark ages. They said, “We are going back to the Bible.” At that time babies were being baptized. A man named John Smythe began to preach that only believers could be scripturally baptized. He still thought sprinkling was baptism but that babies should not be sprinkled. In 1607, John Smythe baptized himself and then got a group of people to meet with him. This was the first Baptist church in the history of the world. It started in 1607.

JOHN WESLEY

John Wesley was a member of the church of England. At that time this church worshipped very much like the “high church” does at the present time—cold, formal, ritualistic. In some of their services they talk old English which sounds about like Chaucer did. John Wesley said, “There ought to be more feeling in our worship. We do not put our hearts into it.” He wrote a book called *The Method of Holy Living*. He began to meet with people and insisted that they pray— just a plain, old-fashioned Methodist prayer meeting. Soon these people no longer met

with the Episcopal church but met separately. This was the beginning of the Methodist church about 1789.

THE HALDANES

Men kept on until over 200 different churches were formed, each one saying, “Come with us.” They spent most of their time fighting each other instead of fighting the devil and trying to uphold the Bible. About 1775, there were the HALDANE brothers in Scotland. One of them was highly educated. The other was not so well-educated but he had gone into business and made a lot of money. They pooled their resources and started a school teaching people that we ought to be non-denominational. They said, “Let us go back to the Bible and teach the naked word of God.” They started a number of churches in Scotland and Ireland as well as some in England.

JAMES O’KELLEY

In 1793, James O’Kelly, a Methodist preacher, in Manakintown, North Carolina began preaching to the people and saying, “Why be divided? Why be fighting one another? Let us unite on the Bible. Let us all be Christians together.” He developed a great following in the Carolinas.

ABNER JONES

About seven years later, in 1800, Dr. Abner Jones, a medical doctor, who was a member of the Baptist church filled in as preacher while the church had no pastor. He said, “The most ridiculous thing on earth is for people to be divided—fussing and arguing with one another over religion.” He started preaching that everybody ought to be Christians and be guided strictly by the Word of God. He did a great work in Vermont and New Hampshire.

BARTON W. STONE

Barton W. Stone, a prominent young Presbyterian preacher born at Port Tobacco, Maryland, was sent to Paris, Kentucky to preach. He was disgusted with the “special election” doctrine of the Presbyterians. He declared that whosoever will might come to the Lord. He led what may have been the world’s greatest revival at Cane Ridge, Kentucky. From 1801 to 1804 he and his associates baptized thousands of people, many of them from middle Tennessee. Barton W. Stone had great influence in leading people back to the Bible.

THE CAMPBELLS

In 1897, Thomas Campbell came to the United States and in 1809, his son, Alexander Campbell, came also. They were both members of the Presbyterian church and had both been sprinkled. In 1812, they decided that they should be baptized for the remission of sins as the New Testament teaches. They found Matthias Luce, a Baptist preacher, who was willing to baptize them on a simple confession of faith in Christ. Neither one was ever a member of the Baptist church. They preached that men ought to be Christians—no more and no less.

They started preaching all over the country that men ought to obey the gospel and be Christians, that they ought to be united like our Lord prayed in John 17. God's children can be united only by standing together on the Bible.

Luke 8:11 tells us that the Word of God is the seed of the kingdom. If we plant wheat seed, we grow wheat, if we plant the Word of God, we make Christians. God's Word does not make anything else except Christians.

We are not seeking to build a new church nor to get people to join our denomination. We are pleading with people to leave all human denominations, to stand on the Word of God and be Christians. The world cannot unite by going to any denomination but we can all be together by standing on God's Word.

1 PETER 5:2— THE RESPONSIBILITY OF ELDERS

Jerry Moffitt



Jerry Moffitt was born in San Antonio, Texas, in 1941. He married Barbara Womack of Murfreesboro, Arkansas, and they have three children, Kim, Charis, and Jeremy. Jerry is a graduate of Preston Road School of Preaching; he has a B.S. and an M.A. from Southwest Texas State University. He is the author of three books, a debater, editor of *Thrust* magazine, and for two years director of the Annual Lectureship/Debates for the Shenandoah congregation in San Antonio. Brother Moffitt has done local work in Texas and Arkansas, was campus minister at Southwest Texas State University, preached for five years at San Marcos, Texas, and was instructor for six years at the Southwest School of Bible Studies, Austin, Texas (which he directed for three years). He has done mission work in Vermont and Michigan. He is presently the local preacher at Sayre, Oklahoma.

GOD'S PLAN

There is no doubt that God has an organization for His church—Christ the Head and the church His body (Eph. 1:22-23). As we study the pages of the New Testament we find no universal organization for the church. The church is organized locally in autonomous congregations. There is, in God's plan, no central organization, no Pope, no presidency, no board of directors. God's plan is simply stated in Philippians 1:1: "Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus that are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons."

That there was to be in each congregation an office of the elders is seen in the fact that the Holy Spirit laid down careful qualifications for them in Scripture (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:6-11). Yet it has always been the case that men have departed from God's plan. This leads us to the following:

A GROWING PROBLEM IN THE CHURCH

In short, the problem is with some elders and their philosophy of their work. Some see the work of elders as that of a successful busi-

nessman, making decisions somewhat like a board of directors, giving particular emphasis to counting noses, making the church grow numerically and financially, and supervising a preacher or preachers who in essence “pastor” the flock.

Some see the success of elders connected intimately with rising numbers in the local congregation. So, many want preaching to be cooled down. Where a preacher delivers that hard, crisp preaching that makes truly strong Christians, the subtle sentiment seems to be, “Let’s rein that in, Glory be, we might run someone off!” Bulging multitudes clamored after Jesus, and He turned, and for all the world, it seemed, He tried to turn them off and run them away with blunt talk of holiness, dedication, suffering, denial, and brutal teaching against false teaching, compromise, and a wicked emphasis on money (Luke 14:26-33; Mark 8:34; Mat. 23:13-36, etc.).

Preachers, in many cases, are no longer gospel preachers, but part of a “pastor system” woefully like the denominations. And in connection with bishops who like it that way, they have gleaned out of their sermons anything hard, distinctive, controversial, and damming. Sin, if ever mentioned at all, is spoken of, with hushed tones, in vague generalities and a cowardly lack of specifics.

One preacher, who had evidently witnessed enough, looked at today’s sermons filled with little pink-tea tidbits of philosophy, and fluffy directions on “how to feel good” and “I’m okay—you’re okay” sermonettes and had frustration enough to call the whole mess of such preaching what it is—“Slop.”

It almost seems like some elders and preachers are engaged in a rebellious conspiracy to forge ahead with a beaten path through the Bible which avoids anything that might not tickle itching ears. And what is offered in the place of burning truth on sin and error? What takes the place of attention to sanctification (John 17:17), work of the Lord (1 Cor. 15:58), and marking of error (Rom. 16:17)? There are fun and games, entertainment, coffee and donuts, ministers of involvement, denominational films, marriage enrichment, parties, birthdays, Christmas caroling, retreats, catered meals, gymnasiums, swimming parties, jogging for Christ, instrumental music, jelly-bean

theater, “Singles Again,” car tune-up days, and as one church did—a dismissing of services on Superbowl Sunday night.

And when young couples come from that or see it everywhere around them, they berate faithful elders, indignantly telling them that “traditional churches” are “NOT MEETING MY NEEDS!” And this writer wants to tell you he doesn’t think it’s funny, but rather serious business that we are raising a generation of youth who crave these “needs” met, and who cannot, in the least bit, stand their toes stepped on by plain, strong, exegetical, expository, and negative preaching. Though numbers rise, it is simply not church growth; IT IS APOSTASY! IT IS REBELLION! IT IS AN ACCUMULATION OF DEAD WOOD! And if something doesn’t happen, I believe the ranks of the Lord’s church are going to be divinely thinned out by the Commander-in-Chief allowing a well-deserved, full-fledged DIGRESSION!

I know of no greater solution to the problem than elders simply recognizing and doing the responsibility of elders. So let us look at some of those responsibilities as they are laid out in God’s Word.

EXERCISE AUTHORITY

If I were Satan, I would do three things; diminish, one way or another, Bible knowledge; corrupt preachers, and attack the authority of elders in the local congregation. I would pile up nomenclature such as “modern-day Diotrephes,” and in every way possible, make elders ashamed to take charge of the flock. Yet notice these passages:

Obey them that have the **rule** over you, and submit to them: for they watch in behalf of your souls (Heb. 13:17).

Tend the flock of God which is among you, **exercising the oversight** (1 Pet. 5:2).

Let the elders that **rule** well be counted worthy of double honor (1 Tim. 5:17).

There is in this lectureship book a manuscript by Roy Deaver on this very subject. So let me merely supply a few quotes from various men which relate more to the rationale of my particular topic, regarding the responsibility of elders.

GOEBEL MUSIC

These men ought to be, yea, they must be, the leaders, the spark plugs, the supervisors, the superintendents and administrators. If a man is an elder, he is to “exercise the oversight” (Greek, *episkopeo*, I Pet. 5:2). In the realm of “the faith,” they must see to it that God’s will be obeyed...I am afraid far too many of our beloved elders today serve by some kind of “arm chair” type theology, or some perhaps, “do not serve” at all.¹

HUGO MCCORD

I. THE BISHOPS. The New Testament employs this word to describe those church officers appointed by the Holy Spirit to exercise the oversight of God’s people (Acts 20:28; Philippians 1:1; 1 Peter 5:2-3). They were forbidden to be lords, and they had to be living examples of what a Christian should be, but they were obligated to take the oversight of the Christian under their care.²

BILL JACKSON

We certainly recognize that in our time the most “explosive” word in connection with the eldership is the word “rule” or “authority.” But the fact remains that no one can possibly understand the eldership as God has ordained it unless he sees the fullness of what is involved in their work. It is our firm conviction that behind so much objection to the eldership today is (1) a rebellious spirit opposed to many of the things of God and/or (2) an ignorance of the office and what is involved in its proper functioning.³

TAKE HEED UNTO YOURSELVES

It is very difficult for anyone to conceive that they are part of a problem as far as God or truth is concerned. The heart of man is “deceitful above all things” (Jer. 17:9), and evil men deceive and *are deceived* (2 Tim. 3:13). But Paul says to us all, “Try your own selves, whether ye are in the faith; prove your own selves. Or know ye not as to your own selves, that Jesus Christ is in you? Unless indeed ye be reprobate” (2 Cor. 13:5). And Paul particularly says to elders, “Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock” (Acts 20:28).

May each elder with courage and love of truth sincerely, with prayer and study of God’s Word, put their work as an elder to the test. Too, the state of the church they oversee is a reflection of an elder’s own labor. Is it sound in faith, or does it exist on the social gospel? Are souls emphasized, or the physical and emotional needs

of men? Do elders bring back the wanderer, or do elders quietly drop their names from the rolls? Take heed to yourselves! But more.

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF SHEPHERDING

Again notice Acts 20:28: “Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood.” In other words, will you let that for which Christ died grow weak, die, or wander away?! The word for “feed” includes but embraces more than merely seeing that the Word of God is taught. The word used is not *BOSKO* which primarily means to nourish or provide food, but *POIMAINO*, “to act as a shepherd.”⁴ Vine says, “The tending (which includes this) consists of other acts, of discipline, authority, restoration, material assistance of individuals...”⁵ Notice:

(but if a man knoweth not how to rule his own house, how shall he **take care** of the church of God?) (1 Tim. 3:5).

Tend the flock of God which is among you (1 Pet. 5:2).

True, we are all under the Chief Shepherd (1 Pet. 5:4), but elders have the grave responsibility of caring for the sheep in the face of anything which threatens them, especially anything which threatens their soul.

I know of no passage of Scripture which gravely deals with a bishop’s deep responsibility to all things which pertain to the flock more than Ezekiel 34:1-6. It ought to make every saint groan with sincere sympathy over the charge committed to the elders. Would that each elder alive today could read these words with a tender, obedient heart:

And the word of Jehovah came unto me, saying, Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, even to the shepherds, Thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Woe unto the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the sheep? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill the fatlings; but ye feed not the sheep. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought back that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with rigor have ye ruled over them. And they were scattered, because there was no shepherd; and they became food to all the beasts of the field, and were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: Yea, my sheep were scattered

upon all the face of the earth; and there was none that did search or seek after them (Eze. 34:1-6).

And of course, God meant it when he said “woe.” He continued: “Thus saith the Lord Jehovah, Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my sheep at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the sheep” (Eze. 34:10). And we find, “Woe to the worthless shepherd that leaveth the flock (Zec. 11:17), and “I will give you shepherds according to my heart, who shall feed you with knowledge and understanding” (Jer. 3:15).

Goebel Music lists, with scripture, seven characteristics of a good shepherd:

1. He knows them (the flock) (John 10:3,27).
2. He is faithful to the flock (John 10:27).
3. He feeds the sheep (Jer. 3:15; Ezek. 34:14; Isa. 40:11).
4. He leads the sheep (John 10:1-5).
5. He provides for the sheep (Psa. 23:1ff).
6. He protects the sheep (John 10:27-30; Psa. 23:5).
7. He unites the sheep (Heb. 13:20,21; 1 Pet. 2:25; John 10:16).⁶

But let us notice more responsibilities of bishops. There always will be overlap when you have discussed shepherding or tending the flock. But some things included in that need special emphasis.

TEACH

In the qualifications of elders we read: “The bishops therefore must be without reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, orderly, given to hospitality, **apt to teach**” (1 Tim. 3:2). We would say he is didactic. The word is *didaktikos* and Vine says it means “skilled in teaching.”⁷ Thayer says, “Apt and skilful in teaching.”⁸ We would not think he has to be the best teacher in the congregation, as far as delivery goes. The emphasis should be on content and the spiritual ability of the elder. Nor does it require that he do his teaching from the pulpit or at the head of some adult class. But it truly involves more than teaching by his example, or by singing, or by merely willing to teach. He must simply, in a class or one-on-one, be able to communicate to others the Word of God, and he must be skillful in doing it.

In Ephesians 4:11 we read, “And he gave some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some **pastors and teachers.**” Actually, in the Greek original, “pastors and teachers” refer to the same man and are grouped together, not separate, as if there were two offices. He is a pastor, a teacher. Campbell says, “As the shepherd and bishop of souls are the same, 1 Pet. 2:25, so are the pastors and teachers, Eph. 4:11, for they are expressed as one class in the original”⁹ Robertson corroborates this saying, “Here Paul groups ‘shepherds and teachers’ together.”¹⁰ Elders may not be great business men, but they are to be men who can use THE BOOK. But further:

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF ADMONISHING

In a definite reference to elders, Paul says, “But we beseech you, brethren, to know them that labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them exceeding highly in love for their work’s sake” (1 The. 5:12-13). The word is not “rebuke” (Greek, *epitimao*), nor is it “convict,” “refute,” “reprove” (Greek, *elencho*). Nor is it “teach” (*didasko*). It is *noutheteo* which meant “to put in mind.” Later it meant “to admonish” or “warn.” Vine says, “The difference between admonish and teach is that the first has the flavor of “warn,” especially regarding things that are wrong.”¹¹ Some elders seem incapable of doing that, just as some preachers avoid warnings in all their sermons. If it “blows our mind” that men see present danger to a couple living in adultery and do not tell them of their danger, imagine how the Lord feels. Certainly it is dangerous to admonish. It brings criticism and draws a lack of understanding from the immature. But that is what being a shepherd is about. The devil is vicious, and elders must be strong, brave, and in every way courageous. The bishop must get into the crux and core of life and warn, mend, bind up. Some of the most frightful words in the Bible are spoken straight at elders: “As they that shall give account” (Heb. 13:17). They must stand up and speak out, and their reward will come one day. And woe to the trembling preacher and unlearned saint who will not step in and support them!

I have more than once seen a sad scene, and to the Lord, I’m sure, an occasion of wrath. Some false brother with a group behind him, or some rebellious preacher whose teaching eats like a gangrene, arises.

Their influence spreads and some weak link or two in the eldership refuses to act, refuses to oppose. It grows worse; a movement to take away the flock grows due to a lack of opposition. These weak elders say, "Let us love them," or "Let us wait," or "We can't do anything." Regarding discipline they stutter, "Let us pray about it, and pray about it, and wait and pray about it, and pray about it and THEN NOT DO IT!" The movement grows and a split is imminent. Faithful elders couldn't get the eldership to act. Finally, when the false preacher or brother has all the support he needs and the eldership is definitely outnumbered, and the base intentions of the group are all too clearly seen, what do the elders who counseled "Peace" then do? They immediately resign! They leave the flock to the mercy of the thief. They leave, also, the few faithful elders the impossible task of saving the sheep.

I tell you, any elder who cannot admonish, who cannot warn the flock, ought to get out of the eldership. He is there for a task, and if he will not do his duty he is a severe hindrance to those who will. But that leads to another responsibility close to the one we have just discussed:

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF BEING A WATCHMAN WHO DEALS WITH CONTROVERSY

Isaiah 62:6 says, "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem; they shall never hold their peace day nor night: Ye that are Jehovah's remembrances, take ye no rest." I know of no other concept which shows the responsibility of an elder more than being a watchman. Again notice Hebrews 13:17:

Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit to them: for **they watch in behalf of your souls**, as they that shall give account; that they may do this with joy, and not with grief: for this were unprofitable for you.

The problem we have today is that many elders are not watchmen. They are naive, and do not know what is going on, nor do they know what threatens the church. Sometimes they say, "We do not have those problems around here, so we do not want visiting preachers to get into them." They say, in effect, "Peace, peace; when there is no peace" (Jer. 6:14). The surest way to have a problem is to ignore it.

Satan will bring it to the brethren, or their children when they move away. Why not warn the brethren? Why not inoculate the flock before the disease comes? Elders are to watch, to warn. It is impossible for a church to be in a brotherhood and not be exposed to the diseases which afflict the brotherhood.

How can elders be watchmen when they hide their eyes in the sand? And what can they watch for? Faithful gospel preachers expend energies combating gross error on marriage and divorce. There is a movement for unity with the Christian church and new compromises with instrumental music. The “authority” of elders is under scathing attack. There are rumblings regarding the inerrancy of the Bible, creation or evolution, grace and law, the nature of worship, the cultism of Crossroadism and the Boston church, movement and the house church movement. The Lord’s supper and the day you take it is under attack, as is alien amenability to the law of Christ. Issues have arisen regarding “grace only,” confession of sins, Pentecostalism, modern versions, and a crippling, bitter struggle with a host of other errors and perversions. There is false doctrine without, and fewer oppose it as it enters the church. And all the while, elders want smooth preaching, noncontroversial doctrine, and certainly no negative preaching. WHERE ARE THE WATCHMEN! We are blessed that some elders not only attend lectureships where these things are discussed, but also establish lectureships where sound doctrine can have an effect in their area. They read sound militant gospel papers and insist on sound preachers to preach for their flock. They urge their preachers to preach a series on “Current Issues” ever so often. THESE MEN ARE WATCHMEN, and they watch on behalf of souls.

Recently this writer was invited by an eldership to meet with them and their four preachers regarding marriage and divorce. It was four preachers against one. But soon, it was evident that it was five elders withstanding four preachers, and they did a wonderful job. I was reminded of what Paul commanded elders:

holding to the faithful word which is according to the teaching, that he may be able to exhort in the sound doctrine, and **to convict the gainsayers**. For there are many unruly men, vain talkers, and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision, **whose mouths must be**

stopped; men who overthrow whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake (Tit. 1:9-11).

They are to be controversialists, convincing the gainsayer. We have seen that the word which we translate "convict" is not a word for mere rebuke. *Elencho* means more than that. It means to "refute" or "confute," to lay the error out plainly for all to see so that the gainsayer (Greek, *antilego*), the contradicter of truth, the opposer of sound doctrine may be ashamed and defeated. In short, elders have to be watchmen who are willing to engage in controversy. But let us look at one more.

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF STEWARDSHIP

We know that a steward, usually of a household, is entrusted with things not his own. The word is *oikonomos*. It is from *oikos*, "a house," and *nemo*, "to arrange."¹² Elders are entrusted with the house of God. We read in Titus 1:7, "for the bishop must be blameless, **as God's steward.**" It is not their house, to do with as they please. They must please the Lord, and one day give account of their stewardship. What sad words are found in Ezekiel 22:30: "And I sought for a man among them, that should build up the wall, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found none."

But, truthfully, we think the Lord has such men today. May their race increase. If it does not, we can lose all of that for which Christ bled.

CONCLUSION

Goebel Music, in his fine book, *Efficient Leadership in the Church*, best sums up the problem and the solution:

Some today, seemingly, are concerned with:

- a. The Three N's—Nickles, Noise, and Numbers.
- b. The Three F's—Fun, Food, and Frolicking.
- c. The Three G's—Games, Gimmicks, and Gadgets, and
- d. The Three C's—Coupons, Coins, and Characters!

In an age of Intellectualism, Sensationalism, Emotionalism, Liberalism, Professionalism, Humanism, Secularism, Materialism, yea, and Gimmickism, I do not know of a greater need than for us to have great men of God, men who are boldly courageous and courageously bold, daring and gallant, dauntless and fearless, unflinching and unblenching, determined and undismayed, valiant, and vigorous, magnetic,

energetic and galvanic, potent and propulsive, effectual, efficient and effective.¹³

Truly we have such men, and may the God, who loves the world, liberally add to the breed.

ENDNOTES

¹Goebel Music, *Efficient Leadership In The Church* (Colleyville, TX: Goebel Music Publications, 1986), p. 16.

²Hugo McCord, "The Challenge to the Authority of the Elders," *The Church-Challenged by Current Issues*, ed. Bill Jackson (Austin, TX: Southwest Publications, 1984), pp. 152-153.

³Bill Jackson, "The Office of Elder: Should It Be A Problem," *Exegetical Studies of Great Bible Themes*, ed. Eddie Whitten (Bedford, TX: Christian Supply Center, 1986), pp. 300-301.

⁴W. E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (McLean, VA: Mac Donald Publishing Company, n.d.), p. 427.

⁵Ibid., p. 428.

⁶Music, pp. 38-40.

⁷Vine, p. 1135.

⁸Joseph Henry Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of The New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970), p. 144.

⁹Alexander Campbell, ed., *The Living Oracles* (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Company, 1974), p. 84. of Appendix.

¹⁰A. T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, 5 vols. (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1931), 4: 537.

¹¹Vine, p. 33.

¹²Ibid., p. 1097.

¹³Music, pp. 84-85.

ARE WE DRIFTING FROM THE KIND OF PREACHING DEMANDED BY THE CROSS?

Harrell Davidson



Harrell Davidson attended Freed-Hardeman College under the tutorship of men such as brother H.A. Dixon, G.K. Wallace, Frank Van Dyke, and W. Claude Hall. He also attended Harding College and the Alabama Christian School of Religion. He is married to the former Carrielyn Spurlock of Evening Shade, Arkansas. This union has been blessed with four children—three boys and one girl. He conducts several gospel meetings each year and has written for many gospel papers and at one time was the editor of *Vigil*. In December, 1987, he spoke on the Manila Bible Lectureship in the Philippines and also on the Third Annual Asian Lectureship in Singapore. From there he preached in a meeting in Taipei, Taiwan.

My sincere thanks is herein expressed to the Bellview elders and brother Bill Cline for the invitation to come and speak on this program. We compliment your line-up of speakers, men who are known for their stand for the truth. Many of us could not speak on many lectureships across the land because of the position we hold regarding the Scriptures. This congregation is also to be commended for its support of this lectureship. This is a good work. A work that is encouraging and uplifting. It is a program that will cause us to grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. We pray that you as a congregation will be benefitted as much as will every speaker for your part in this lectureship.

The subject that has been assigned to me is one of great importance. We believe that the preaching of this day and hour, as a general rule, is not as it should be. Of course, there are many congregations that demand the kind of preaching that is demanded by the Cross. But, this number is getting smaller. Accordingly, many of the bulletins and advertisements that we receive show to what our emphasis has changed. More and more seminars are being conducted within the confines of the Lord's church than we can ever remember before. "How to Cope." "How to Deal With

Stress.” “How to Feel Good About Yourself.” “Motivational Seminar.” On and on the list goes! One can see by the titles of these and others that our emphasis has switched from the Cross to the world. Some of these seminars are teaching things that are contrary to the scriptures. For instance, “How to Feel Good About Yourself,” is teaching one form of Humanism. Brethren, there are times that we must not feel good about ourselves. How can we feel good about ourselves as long as we dwell in sin. We cannot be placated by the pulpit as long as we live in error. But, the seminars are addressing how to feel good about self while living in error. Such ought not to be allowed anywhere in the congregations of our Lord.

Second, many of our training facilities are not turning out men of the Book. In Christian Colleges the number of Bible majors is dropping almost every year. This may not be a reflection of the college, but it is a reflection on the home. Some of our Preacher Training Schools are training men to preach false doctrine in many areas. The question regarding grace and law came from such a school. The marriage, divorce, and remarriage doctrine is presently coming from one such school. Graduate schools are doing no better. Some professors are instructing those men in higher education that the Holy Spirit baptism is for this era of time. Some are teaching that everything we do in life is worship. Brethren, our emphasis has changed and while time and opportunity avails itself to us we must turn around these false teachings and start teaching the truth. The solution to this problem is to preach the Word.

Let us look for a moment at the question, “Why preach the Word?”

I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine (2 Tim. 4:1-2).

“Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel” (1 Cor. 9:14). “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” (1 Cor. 1:21). Everyone of these passages demand that we “preach the word.” No man has ever been charged to preach current events exclusively. Never has the “social gospel” been commanded to be taught from our pulpits. Men have been told to “preach the word.” That ought to take care of the situation for every preacher for all time.

Why is it necessary to preach the Word? The Word is the medium through which the Holy Spirit operates. What was the Spirit to do? “And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment” (John 16:8). How do you think that this is going to be done? The scriptures show us the answer. Look at Acts 2:37: “Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?” Now look at Acts 24:25 and you will get the point. “And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season I will call for thee.” In both of these instances, and every other instance, the Word was spoken by godly men to lost mankind. The Spirit was thus speaking through the medium of the Word to convict men of sin. Man says that Jesus is Lord by the Holy Spirit (cf., 1 Cor. 12:3). Therefore, when a person reads or hears the Word, he can say that Jesus is Lord. The Spirit has then worked through the Word of God. The Holy Spirit bore witness through the Word to faithful men. The Hebrews writer said:

Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us; for after that he had said before, this is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them (Heb. 10:15-16).

“For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Pet. 1:21).

But this shall be the covenant that I make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people (Jer. 31:33).

The Holy Spirit was to bear witness to faithful inspired proclaimers of the Word. They spoke the Word that the Spirit bore witness to and if they would not do this they were unfaithful witnesses.

It is very obvious, and it cannot be refuted successfully, that the Holy Spirit spoke through what John the Apostle wrote to the seven churches of Asia. Revelation 2:7 is typical: “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches: To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.” We must conclude that the only way that the Spirit could do these things was through words. These men spake as the Spirit gave them

utterance. They did not select topics that would “tickle the ears” of their audience.

The weakness of the preaching done today is seen in the fact that many men that preach are doing so without the saving message. When they preach without the saving message they have become no more than talkers. There are thousands of sermons preached every Sunday around the world. There are twice as many preachers today than a few years ago. But, something is wrong with the preaching. Might we suggest that the problem is not in the number preaching, but in the fact that many of them are ignorant of the Word of God. There is more ignorance in the church today than any time previous. We have substituted something else for preaching. Preaching, faithful preaching, must be done in every generation or there will arise another generation that knows not the Lord. Have you ever thought of the fact that the church was seventeen hundred years old before there were Bible classes, called Sunday school? The church was literally kept alive through the pulpit. Words, which are signs of ideas, were spoken from the Bible and men were converted right and left. Today the Word is left on the shelf and we preach what Trueblood or some other philosopher has said. Shame on us for such conduct. Have we gotten to the point that we believe that the power of God is not the gospel? Why, we have congregations that have a dozen or more preachers this day and time and the pulpit is placating the people instead of telling men of their sin and the redemption that is through Christ. We are certainly majoring in minors.

We heard one Texas preacher say that the various preachers where he was the pulpit preacher met once each week. He recalled that they had a “youth minister and a singles minister, a bus minister, an involvement minister, and a tape minister.” He said, “They all answer to me and I answer to the elders.” So we have a preacher over other preachers! Give me one passage for such goings on! What these folk need is one man in that pulpit preaching the Word and the rest will take care of itself. It took care of the matter in New Testament time. Is the Word any less powerful today? The church is kept alive through the pulpit. Sunday School and countless ministers to various groups cannot take the place of an effective pulpit. There is no substitute; there is no other right way. Paul said: “How shall they hear without a preacher?” (Rom. 10:14). When one hears he believes (cf., Rom. 10:17). Beliefs enlarge the soul.

These benefits can only come through faithful gospel preaching. What has happened? Men have forgotten the Cross.

Preachers without the Word have no light. Without light the preacher cannot show the way to heaven. The Word is a light. “Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psa. 119:105). Again, “The entrance of thy word giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple” (Psa. 119:130). We must come to God through the way that is provided (cf., Isa. 35: 8; Heb. 10:22). We come to God through being taught.

No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me (John 6:44-45).

Now, how can a man come to the Father without first being taught? Such cannot happen! Jesus shows the impossibility of such a proposition. Not only must the candidate hear, but he must also learn of the Father. How can you hear and learn of the Father without preaching the Cross? Paul didn't say foolish preaching saved, but that is exactly what we are having in our pulpits across the world today when men lay aside the Book of Books and preach man's wisdom. It is foolishness gone to seed! Man must hear and learn the written Word (cf., Rom. 10: 14). Hence, preaching enables one to come to God; the Word is the light that shows the way.

When a preacher preaches the Word of God he is preaching the seed of the kingdom. “Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God” (Luke 8:11). Now, if there is no seed there is no fruit. This is a law of nature. We operate about 2200 acres of farm land. Unless we plant the seed in a fertile soil bed we have no harvest. Unless the seed of the kingdom is planted in human hearts there likewise will be no harvest. No true harvest, that is! Numbers may come to see a side show and members may swap churches to go to one where there is entertainment instead of gospel preaching, but when such happens, there is not going to be a good harvest. So we must face the reality, if there is no Word there is no Christian.

When a preacher is preaching the words of the Cross he is preaching words that are essential to the new birth. A begetting precedes birth! “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the

word of God which liveth and abideth forever” (1 Pet. 1:23). “For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel” (1 Cor. 4:15). In each case one is begotten through, or by the gospel of the Cross. We then can see how essential faith is to the new birth. “But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster” (Gal. 3:25). The Word is essential for faith to be produced: hence, we cannot have the new birth unless the Word of the Cross is preached.

When a preacher preaches the Cross of Christ he is preaching words that save lost souls. “Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls” (Jam. 1:21). “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Rom. 1:16). We have learned in John 6:44-45 that God saves by drawing through the gospel. Now we see the power that does the drawing, the Word. If the Word is not preached in its entirety then there is no correct coming to the Lord. Man is saved by grace according to Paul in Ephesians 2:8-9, but it is grace that gives us the Word. What does God’s grace do for us? Titus 2:11-12 says that it teaches. “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.” There we have the equation clearly before us. Let us notice it again. The Word of God saves us. We are saved by the drawing power of the gospel. We are saved by the grace of God that comes to us, teaching us. What does His grace teach us? How to live the right kind of lives, righteous lives, if you please. All of this comes through the preaching of the Cross of Christ. Grace cannot save unless there is preaching.

When the preacher preaches the Cross he is preaching Words that will judge us. In Revelation 20:12 the Book of Life is compared with the Word.

And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.

Man’s word will not judge us. The lack of definitive gospel preaching can cause us to be lost and the preacher will answer for such care-

lessness. God's Word will judge us. "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). This ought to make every preacher of the gospel tremble. His is such a tremendous responsibility. Souls of lost men are literally within his grasp. If he is careless with the Word of God he will cause untold hundreds to be lost. Think about it!

THE IDEAL SITUATION

One could turn to Acts 2 or Acts 8 and see the ideal situation. For this study let us notice the familiar story in Acts 8 with the conversion of the eunuch. This lesson begins in Acts 8:26. An angel of the Lord spake unto Philip. The angel did not speak to the one to be converted. The angel would use the same means that all of heaven used in the salvation of lost souls. Every time there has been the human element involved. The angel did nothing in teaching this man how to be saved. The angel told the preacher where to go, but not what to say. The angel did not tell him what to do once he got there. This shows great faith on the part of Philip the preacher. If he was to do God's will he would have to follow the angel's request. So away he goes toward the south unto a way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza. He is told the place to go so this much is settled. Verse 27 says that "he arose and went." A man of Ethiopia who was a eunuch and one who had great authority under Queen Candace, was riding in a chariot. This was a dynasty of Queens of Ethiopia. The eunuch had charge of all her treasure. He was also a religious man for he had been to Jerusalem to worship. He was also a man that wanted to know more regarding the Scriptures.

First, the record shows he was reading the Bible from the book of Isaiah. Now notice verse 29: "Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near and join thyself to this chariot." The Holy Spirit did not tell the eunuch what to do but rather told the preacher what to do. Everyone that is waiting for the Spirit to nudge them or whisper something to them in a dream will wait until death's door is opened unto them for such is not going to happen. God uses men to accomplish the preaching of the gospel of Christ.

It was only at this juncture that Philip knew what to do. The angel had said to go but didn't give him any other details as to what to do once he got to the right place. So the preacher had to be in the right place.

Being there, the Spirit told him what to do. That same idea is conveyed to preachers today. We are told where to go, the world (cf., Mark 16:15) and told what to do once we get there—preach the gospel to every creature (cf., Mark 16:15). Philip, wishing to be obedient, does as the Spirit commands. The Bible says that he ran (v. 30). Philip heard him reading from Isaiah and asked him if he understood what he was reading. Notice that the eunuch had an open book. This represents a marvelous trait regarding this man. He loved to read the Bible. He was not ashamed to ride along and read from the scriptures. A man with an open book is one that can be taught the truth. Verse 31 reveals another great trait about the eunuch. “And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me?” He had an open mind. He also realized that some man should guide him in the study of the Scriptures. Preachers need to realize the seriousness of their responsibility to lead men in a study of the Word of God. Here we have the student in the audience and we fail to “deliver the goods.” We have let God down, we have let ourselves down, but most of all, we have left the sinful man in the audience without the saving message. So the eunuch was not waiting for some miracle to “touch” him before he could be saved. He realized that the message was contained in words.

The place is identified from Isaiah 53 as the place where the student was reading. His question is recorded in verse 34, “Of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself or some other man?” The next verse is so remarkable and germane to our study. Verse 35 says, “Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture and preached unto him Jesus.”

Philip, in preaching Jesus, shows to the eunuch the open way. For Jesus is the way (John 14:1-6). In fact, Christianity is spoken of in the Scriptures as “the way.” In Acts 9:2 Paul desired letters so that if he found any of this **way**... (Emphasis added, HD). In Acts 16:17 it is called the “way of salvation.” In Acts 19:23 there was no small stir about that way. In Acts 24:22 Felix came to a more perfect knowledge of “that **way**.”

We all need to see the open way to the Christ of the Cross. If we fail to hear the saving message we will be lost. What a responsibility we have as preachers of the Word! Verse 36 shows that when they came to a certain water the eunuch asked, “What doth hinder me to be baptized?”

Here we have an open invitation. Aren't we so happy that Christianity is open to all who will obey? It is not a national religion. It is not just for the south or the north nor for just the white man or the black man. There is an open invitation. In Matthew 11:28-30 Jesus said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." The gospel is therefore for all men everywhere in this old world. Here is that open invitation that is sealed with the blood that was shed on the cross for the sins of the world. How in the world can we preach the wisdom of men and not preach the Christ of the Cross?

In verse 37 Philip replies that if he believes with all his heart that Jesus is the Son of God he could then be baptized. The eunuch replied, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." Here we have an open confession. There is nothing hidden when it comes to confessing Christ. It is not something that we are ashamed of and whisper in the blackness of a closet somewhere. Christ is to be confessed before men (Matt. 10:32,33). Paul said, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. 10:9,10). Notice that both Paul and Philip indicated that belief emanated from the heart. The heart of man is what redemption is all about. It is not a saving of the flesh but of the inward man. It is the inward man that must obey the gospel to be saved.

In verse 38 the chariot they were riding in was commanded to come to a halt and they both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch and "he baptized him." Here we have open obedience. He was unashamed and unafraid to obey the Word of God. Men have never had a problem with baptism when they correctly understood the gospel commands. No man has ever fought scriptural commands if he is sincere in his obedience to the Lord. Every faith that I know of save one, the Quakers, requires baptism before you can be completely unified with that particular religious movement. Baptism is not the problem. Heart trouble is the big problem! Spiritual heart trouble!

In verse 39 the eunuch goes on his way rejoicing. Here we find open rejoicing. There is nothing to hide when one obeys the Lord. His baptism

places him in Christ (Gal. 3:27) where every spiritual blessing is found (Eph. 1:3).

We believe that this story in Acts 8 can be repeated, multiplied thousands of times, with the only exception being the angel and the Spirit speaking to the preacher directly. When the “old Jerusalem” gospel is proclaimed, it will have the same results today as then. When are we ever going to learn that more programs of various kinds are not going to save one soul? How many people have “family life centers” baptized into Christ? The power is not in such trappings, but rather in the gospel (Rom. 1:16). If every pulpit in the land would turn to nothing but the Word of God and proclaim it with conviction and power we will see great results. The problem is that we have departed from the kind of preaching that the cross demands. I do not mean literally everyone, but those who have are in the majority. Let us pray for a revival of going back to the Bible for everything we do, and give a “thus saith the Lord” for all we practice.

THE ORGANIZATION AND WORK OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

Wayne Coats



W. Wayne Coats was born and reared in Mississippi. After finishing high school, he enrolled in Freed-Hardeman College. Upon graduation from Freed-Hardeman, the young student enrolled in and graduated from David Lipscomb College. In further pursuit of, and with an insatiable thirst to learn, a Master's Degree was obtained from Middle Tennessee State University. With a Master's Degree in hand, it was back to Nashville and a hard, demanding schedule of studies at the Divinity School at Vanderbilt University. While students at Freed-Hardeman College, Wayne and Elaine Wright met. After a few years of courtship, they were married. Their home has been blessed with four children. Wayne and Elaine reside in Mt. Juliet, Tennessee, where they own and operate Mt. Juliet Funeral

Home, Mt. Juliet Memorial Gardens, and Mt. Juliet Pet Cemetery.

It has not occurred to us until recently that many older preachers have not really understood just what the Bible teaches relative to the organization of the New Testament church. Why have we been so obtuse, dense and distracted on the subject? It is a sad fact that many who stand in the temple praying on a regular basis would change, alter, restructure and completely erase the plan which God purposed and perfected for His church. We can no more change the structure of the church than we can change the New Testament, the mediator of the New Testament, or the Holy Spirit who revealed it. There are some matters which still are unchangeable.

When my God purposed and perfected the church, He needed no help from women or men. We get the shock treatment when reading and hearing of the help and assistance given to God by brethren who have read a few denominational books.

ELDERS ARE OVERSEERS

Almighty God decreed that men with certain qualities and characteristics would serve as shepherds over each individual flock or congregation. I used to think that every ill member of the church accepted this truth, but of course today, with all the wild-eyed and foolish notions among brethren, it is impossible to tell what some church members believe or teach; and truthfully, we believe a portion of them do not really believe anything for certain. Jack Hackworth wrote, "The idea of qualification for the elders is not in the New Testament." If there is such a person as "elder" he is either qualified or unqualified. Can HE be a SHE? Is being a HE a qualification? I've never heard of any other person in any other field of endeavor that could serve in responsible areas without being qualified. Preachers have to have some kind of qualifications in order to write like Hackworth, but apparently elders do not need to be qualified. Such drive! Reuel Lemmons wrote about the qualifications of elders and said, "It is begging the question." Of course, the question has changed for Lemmons so often and apparently he still is trying to field an answer, without knowing what the question really is. At least his changing positions would indicate as much.

Most of us can still read Paul's inspired statement to the Ephesian elders. From Miletus he sent to Ephesus, which was thirty miles distance, and called the elders of the church (Acts 20:17). Earlier, while he was in Ephesus and his preaching had caused an uproar, "Paul called unto him the disciples, and embraced them" (Acts 20:1). Why not call for "the disciples" to make that thirty-mile trip instead of "the elders?" Paul knew what some of our "somewhats" have not yet learned. To him the elders were the overseers. Very plainly 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). How in the name of reason can a shepherd take heed to "all the flock," if the shepherd is just another sheep? Does he not have some sort of responsibility over, beyond and above "all the flock?" The New Testament is not a book of nonsense.

There must be some significance in the phrase “over the which.” When did “*over*” cease to be anything but “*over?*” With all the cavorting upon the part of the pious ones to change “*over*” into “*alongside of,*” the passage still reads “*over* and it still means “*over.*”

Back in grammar school, we were never numbered among the “Whiz Kids,” but practically all of the barefoot boys knew what it meant to throw a ball *over* the old school building. I do not believe we had any smart fellows who wanted to throw the ball down, beside, or alongside of the building.

It looks as if the elders of Ephesus were made “overseers.” I may have great problems as a preacher in understanding the role of the “overseers” in the congregation, but brother, when I quit preaching and get a job as a carpenter, I have no difficulty at all in determining just exactly what and who my “overseer” might be. Of course, the answer lies in the fact that a carpenter’s understanding of the Bible far surpasses the wisdom of a preacher.

It is a generally accepted fact that Solomon was a fairly wise man in his time. Of course, if he lived today, his wisdom would no doubt be eclipsed by the brilliance of many of our modern scholars. Solomon was the kind of fellow who would be involved in building a house for the name of God. In order to accomplish the job,

he set threescore and ten thousand of them to be bearers of burdens, and fourscore thousand to be hewers in the mountain, and three thousand and six hundred **overseers** to set the people a work (2 Chr. 2:18).

Do you suppose those overseers knew they were overseers? Did they not know what to do? Did they qualify, or is that begging the question?

During the time before Hezekiah, idolatry had reigned supreme, but he sought to initiate some needed reforms. The temple needed cleansing and the chambers needed preparing. The people “brought in the offerings and the tithes and the dedicated things faithfully: **over** which Cononiah the Levite was ruler, and Shimei his brother was next” (2 Chr. 31:12). Ten others are listed as “**overseers** under the hand of Cononiah and Shimei his brother, at the commandment of Hezekiah the king, and Azariah the ruler of the house of God” (2 Chr.

31:13). I wonder if all those builders became confused relative to the overseers.

Long years before, when young Joseph was down in Egypt, he found grace in Potiphar's sight, "and he served him: and he made him **overseer** over his house, and all that he had he put into his hand" (Gen. 39:4). He "made him overseer in his house, and over all that he had" (v. 5). How many qualifications did Joseph possess in order to be overseer in Potiphar's house? Did he just go around begging the question?

During the time of Daniel, "It pleased Darius to set **over** the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be **over** the whole kingdom; And **over** these three presidents; of whom Daniel was first" (Dan. 6:1-2) It just has to be left to a few "latter-day saints" to instruct us in the fine art of being an "**overseer**" and being "**set over**" the kingdom.

As overseers, the elders are to rule well (1 Tim. 5:17). They are to take care of the church (1 Tim. 3:5). Years ago when men respected the Word of God, elders were to take "the oversight" (1 Pet. 5:1-2). We have now become too smart for such antiquated arrangements, especially since some of us can now say it in Greek. As shepherds, there was some kind of authority exercised over the flock, and no sane person can deny this.

In his debate with brother N. B. Hardeman, Ben Bogard said that elders ruled only by influence. Comes now the old brushed and scrubbed Ketcherside-Garrett foolishness, with some Methodist Episcopal polishing to the effect that the Evangelist has authority over the Church. It is taught and practiced in Boston, Massachusetts, that the evangelist has great authority over churches and individuals.

In a speech made over in Denver, Kip McKean, who preaches in Boston, said, "Every single person at Boston has a discipleship partner assigned. I will be asked about these in judgment (Heb. 13:17)." That is some kind of revelation indeed! When did the passage apply to Kip as some sort of ruler *over others*? Do the McKean marchers actually submit to his cadence? In a Chicago church bulletin of September 1987, Roger Lamb said, "I owe my soul to Kip McKean." Jim Blough declared, "My attitude toward Kip is this—if I became

exactly like Kip, I will be a whole lot more useful to God. Therefore I humble myself before Kip. I don't argue, I do it." No Catholic could possibly revere one of the "saints"(???) any more than these Boston cultic devotees revere, reverence and respond to McKean. Brethren, this is a flagrant violation of Scripture. First Corinthians 4:6 says,

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.

It should be sobering to think that the truth of my God will be accounted for in the judgment, and every overlord, high priest and sheik with his little kingdom, sanctuary and harem, will be called to account. We respect godly elders, but we do not owe our souls to them.

Kip McKean sits in Boston and oversees Frank Kim in San Francisco. Yes, sir, and it was said by Al Baird (an elder of the Boston church) at the Freed-Hardeman College Forum that, "Kip is discipling Frank Kim in San Francisco. Frank seeks advice from Kip, still seeks direction from Kip." Would Al care to defend this sort of tomfoolery by the Scriptures? How can one preacher sit over and direct another preacher? Why can people be so gullible as to swallow every kind of false doctrine? No man alive can defend the Boston brand of religion which gives authority to the evangelist to exercise control, and of course, no one will even attempt to defend such fermented ignorance in a situation where rational people can be enlightened to such errors.

Notice further! From Berkeley, California, Tom Brown (a Boston intern) wrote in May 1987, "Kip McKean graciously accepted my request to provide long-distance discipleship to my life and ministry." Well, now that's just about like what Pope John Paul provides for all of his children. We challenge anyone to show the difference in principle. Just why would Tom want Kip to provide long-distance discipleship all the way from Boston? If Tom will join the Christian Science cult he can get long-distance discipleship from the followers of Mary Baker Glover Patterson Eddy all the Way from Boston. Mary Baker Glover Patterson Eddy can help Tom just as well as Kip McKean. How much better is the Christian Science system than the Methodist plan promoted by Kip? What does Kip have in Boston that

Tom needs in his “ministry” out in California? What would happen if Tom decided to refuse Kip’s direction and authority from Boston?

On his way to Boston, Kip McKean worked in Charleston, Illinois, with the Heritage Chapel congregation. The church had trouble, was divided, and the scenario was written up in the secular newspaper. According to the *Times Courier* of April 7, 1979, page 2, we learn,

Kip McKean nominated new trustees. One male college student said, “I second the motion.” Another male college student said, “I move the nomination be closed.” College kids said, “Aye.” They took financial control of the church, the building, parking lot and parsonage.

That’s the way to really grow. Where did all those kids leave their brains on that dark and dismal day? Apparently it doesn’t take too many green-horns in order to overthrow the Bible. It is past time for people to see the rascality and rough-shod tactics of *some who claim to be Christians, but who display a pomposity rivalling that of the Roman pope!*

In that Freed-Hardeman College Forum, Al Baird said, “It is becoming clear that evangelists are the ligaments tying the congregations together.” I know not which crystal ball Al may be using in Boston, but he isn’t using the Word of God, for no such tie-ins, tie-ups and tie-downs can be found in the New Testament church. Kip’s Methodism is really spreading over onto his figurehead elders.

We never dreamed that the day would come around for the second time when so many people would be led astray by a developing pope. Such a fiasco happened back in the first century and eventually a full-grown vicar was enthroned. If we are mistaken, we challenge the world to correct us when we say that the Boston hierarchy under Kip McKean is a false system, based upon false premises, propagated by false teachers, and is spawning a new brand of Popery! Wait and see!

Those devotees like to write about the authority of the evangelist as if he had some special power that would set him over and above other church members. How do they prove this point? They talk about Timothy and Titus exercising authority, and they assume, guess and speculate that these two preachers served in some sort of ladder position, with oversight being administered to others beneath them. Yes, Timothy and Titus went at the direction of the inspired apostle. These two men could not read the entire New Testament in order to

obtain directions. At first they had to rely on instructions from an inspired man. But we also know that Timothy was especially endowed with spiritual gifts which would enable him to do the work of an evangelist. Finally, from the inspired man, there came inspired letters which were to be followed by the two young evangelists. They had the “authority” to preach the Word of God, which every gospel preacher has. The authority now resides within the book and not in some pompous evangelist who assumes authority to rule others under him and boss a church.

Timothy and Titus were limited to “speaking sound doctrine” (Tit. 2:1). This would enable their hearers to be “sound in the faith” (Tit. 1:13). The authority of Titus and Timothy was circumscribed by the apostle when he said I “With authority, you speak.” “With authority you exhort.” “With authority you rebuke.” But why do people completely overlook and willfully pass over “*these things?*” Paul did not say for these young preachers to act like Kip McKean and his authoritarian clones. The co-workers of Paul were to “speak *these things,*” by, with, and from the authority which came from the apostle.

Evangelistic authority works well in the Methodist Episcopal Church. Kip saw it in all of its ramifications while he served in the Methodist hierarchy. The devotees of the Boston system are so steeped in fermented ignorance relative to the role of the lordly evangelist, that they apparently never ask or question about the scriptural work of a gospel preacher.

In the Boston bulletin of July 26, 1987, McKean wrote about the effort to start a Boston flock in Atlanta. He said, “However due to opposition from within the congregation [the Atlanta Highlands church—WC] to such biblical principles as the authority of the evangelist. He doesn’t tell us about all that “authority,” but a perverse authority was demonstrated when the Boston evangelist and others moved in and split the (Crossroads) Atlanta Highlands congregation in Atlanta.

After the “Boston Tea Party” moved into Atlanta and began to throw things overboard, a special meeting was held. In a taped speech, Joe Hoffman said,

Al, Sam. Bob Gempel and Rich Mall met with George Hart...was pretty hard on telling George that if *he* met with us...and somehow gave us more power than we should be, that he would be guilty of splitting the church.

What colossal cheek and gall to talk about splitting the church! How many churches have been torn to shreds by these fellows?

What business did Al and Bob have in Atlanta? They are the figureheads and rubber stamps in Boston under Kip. How could these fellows talk about anyone splitting the church? Joe continued,

Al said, "Sam is coming to Boston and Andy Lindo is going to be taking over the ministry here." I asked him if he didn't feel like that, this would be the oversight of another eldership over this one which has long been a concern of mine.

How did Al know so much about the plans for the Atlanta Highlands church? How can Lindo take "over the ministry" of the church? Why would Sam go to Boston? Even a bunch of dummies can figure this out, but no one can find Biblical authority for these sort of things. *Not even a Boston elder!*

Go back again to that Boston bulletin of August 1987, where Brian Scanlon wrote,

Frank and Erica Kim, who have co-directed the work in Paris with the Turnbells for the first year are leaving Paris to go to Berkeley, California, and serve that church as their lead evangelist and women's counselor. Tom and Ann Turnbull...will now solely direct the church as the lead evangelist and women's counselor.

When did we get so brilliant as to see no need of speaking as the oracles of God? What happened to Acts 20:28?

In the Boston bulletin of July 26, 1987, prayers were requested for "Scott and Lynne Green who are directing the church in San Francisco during Tom and Kelly Brown's internship here in Boston." "Also for Andy and Rita Lindo who will be directing the church in Atlanta during the Laing's training in Boston."

We probably will be ignored by the Boston disciples, but in case any of them can generate a little courage, it would be real nice to have them tell us how Lynne, Kelly and Rita can "direct the church." We have a Methodist church in our community with a woman pastor, and Boston is not one whit behind it in their foolishness. Give this cult a

little time and see what develops. I suppose no one will ever try to defend such antics by the Word of God.

The church of the first century was led astray by false teachers and they made great progress by setting aside the scriptural organization and concocting a human system. McKean has become highly successful with his Methodist Episcopal pattern, and the more ignorance people accumulate, the more his system will spread.

ELDERS' OVERSIGHT

In the Boston bulletin of August 16, 1987, Kip McKean wrote,

In June, at the invitation of Tom Brown and the other evangelists of the Berkeley church of Christ, the elders and I sent Scott and Lynne Green to initiate the "rebuilding" of the Berkeley congregation.... Tom and the evangelists asked the Boston leadership to officially direct the work.

Asking for official direction has nothing on earth to do with whether it is scriptural. The devil asked Jesus to jump, and Brown asked the Boston elders to jump. They are to "officially direct the work." It would probably be totally useless to ask those elders anything about the Bible, but we would relish the opportunity, in an arrangement where they could not escape the force of decisive questions. We would ask who gave them authority to be "officials" over the church in Berkeley. We would ask, if they can "officially" be over Berkeley, could they not "officially" be over five, ten, fifty or a thousand churches. We would ask by what authority the Boston leadership can "*direct the work*" in Berkeley. We are not talking about giving financial support. We mean "official direction" just exactly as the Boston leadership is doing, and as they know they are doing. Wonder what has happened to the Bible in Boston and Berkeley? But notice a bit more of Kip's official "Bull" (Bull as decreed by papal order) the evangelists and women's counselors would resign and become interns. Therefore, when they are appointed in the future, they will be recognized in Boston as well as in our church plantings." "I foresee this to help form a uniform standard of recognition throughout the multiplying ministries." *Ahem!* Do you see what I see? Kip's Methodism is really beginning to show. His Episcopal plan is full-blown and the Boston figureheads approve.

Who forces the evangelists and women's counselors to step down to the level of "interns?" Who will appoint them "in the future?" They will be appointed so as to "be recognized in Boston as well as in our church plantings." Kip says, "I foresee..." Do you really have to wonder who the big "eye" is, who will be doing the "seeing?" But Kip says, "...it will help form a uniform standard of recognition throughout the multiplying ministries." Yep, that's right! We learned in studying *Methodist Church Polity* that a pastor couldn't "get a church" unless he conforms to the wishes of the District Superintendent and the Bishop. They have a "uniform standard of recognition." What Kip is really saying and what is obvious to all, except spiritual corpses, is simply the fact that all those interns, counselors, evangelists and clones will be appointed by Boston, directed by Boston, recognized by Boston and it will all be uniform under Boston. Let them come forth and try to deny this? Which New Testament page presents such tripe?

Go back and listen to the tape of that Denver, Colorado, speech of Kip McKean in 1987. He reports the conversation of the young evangelist who said, "I want you and Boston to direct the work here" (in Denver—WC). Well, of course, the request was granted, but could Boston not also direct the work in every other state as well? Of course they can, with the same amount of biblical authority as is exercised in all of their other "official directions." My library contains several copies of the *Methodist Discipline*. Kip's Boston pattern is found in the *Discipline*. It cannot be found in the Bible. We appeal to all right-thinking people to denounce this diabolical system.

There is hardly any argument as forceful as that of a demonstration. Perhaps we could call it Exhibit A, for indeed it proved to be a real exhibition of Boston bulldog tenacity, control, interference, popish arrogance and total disregard for the Word of my God. I am speaking of the Atlanta Highlands fiasco. Would someone right in the middle of the affair know or understand what happened? The Atlanta Highlands church was a Crossroads church which the Boston group moved in and split—the Boston group took about three fourths of the members and started another congregation. The Atlanta Forum was an effort to explain to the remnant of the Atlanta Highlands congrega-

tion what had happened. Listen, please, to the tapes and see what happened when the popes of Boston moved down, took control, split the congregation, moved out and set up a satellite church according to the “uniform” pattern which would be “recognized in Boston.” It doesn’t have to make any sort of sense, or even smack at being scriptural. If the Boston bulldozer comes along, it can tear down, destroy, rape and ravish the bride of Christ in order to have a “uniform” parade. McKean wrote in the Boston bulletin of August 30, 1987, that there would be “pillar churches” in different areas. No doubt, he can find enough ignorant people to serve as “pillar saints” over these pillar churches, but where is any semblance of scriptural authority for such schemes?

When Alvin Jennings wrote *How Christianity Grows In The City*, he dedicated his book to the Boston church. His plan had Boston over any number of little churches. Even small suburban churches could come in and be under the big church, according to this theory. Of course, Alvin could not stop the Boston steam-roller at the city limits. In fact, that system of dictatorship reached all the way to Texas where it eventually resulted in Alvin being withdrawn from. He has since repudiated the “excesses” of Boston. I have tried to get him to renounce the entire hellish program.

A real piece of information turned up in the Boston bulletin of November 1, 1987, wherein Thom Bogle wrote, “Replacing Congregational Autonomy with Congregational Cooperation.” He said,

The traditional idea that each group of disciples in a city is entirely autonomous from other disciples is not found in the Bible and has severely damaged efforts to win the world for Christ. Those with a heritage in the restoration movement have wrongly used the false teaching of “congregational autonomy” to justify disunity and non-cooperation with other brothers.

Can you imagine if one member of your physical family arrived at the dinner table and announced his intentions to be an “autonomous” member of the family?”

We may not be able to help the young intern, but we can show the foolishness of his contentions. Apparently, whatever is printed in the Boston bulletin is to be swallowed whether proof is given or not. Not all of us who read the bulletin are suckers, and therefore we do not

nibble on the Boston bait. Bogle made a baseless assertion, and Biblical proof is painfully lacking. Did he not have any passage with which to prop up his palaver? Had there been one verse, surely he would have cited it. Was there not anything to offer but an assertion? It doesn't take too much thinking to write that autonomy is a traditional idea. Of course, if it is a mere tradition, then an alternate biblical plan is revealed, and we insist that Bogle and his Boston buddies tell us where to find that plan. He didn't tell, but of course many of his readers do not care one whit about the organization of the New Testament church. They much prefer some mixture of Methodist rule.

Remember that Thom says that each group of disciples in a city is not autonomous, and "congregational autonomy" is "false teaching." It would have been real nice if the scribe had just laid down a verse or two from his Bible, but since he didn't, I shall have little if any respect for what he says. What the writer should have done, he failed to do. He should have shown just exactly where and how the Bible teaches that there was a confederation of congregations in the first century. Where is a slight hint of a notion of any sort of plan or conglomerate as envisioned by Bogle? He certainly bungled in his bid to destroy local church autonomy. But he says it is "false teaching." Grant for one second that it is, but wherein is it false? The atheist asserts that it is false to believe in God, but it is much more convenient to assert than to try to offer proof. What passage does "congregational autonomy" violate? If it is false teaching, then at least we should be shown wherein it is false. But Bogle blows his bugle and would replace "congregational autonomy" with "congregational cooperation." This shows how utterly devoid he is in understanding both autonomy and cooperation. Congregations can be entirely autonomous and also cooperate with each other, and there are examples of such in the New Testament. Does a congregation give up its independence when it cooperates? Does cooperation replace autonomy? How absurd to offer such chaff.

Look again at that bright illustration given of the family member at the dinner table. The fellow tried, but miserably failed. His illustration proves not one thing other than the fact that Bogle doesn't know how to use an illustration. He used a family unit at the table, of

which each and all are a part. To fit his system envisioned for the church, he should have several families parallel to several congregations. Just as Bogle has the congregations replacing their autonomy, he would also have the families replacing their autonomy. His illustration is sheer nonsense. When his wife decides to become integrated, assimilated, confederated, and casts aside the autonomous spirit in order to join up with other “husbands,” we wonder if Bogle will change his mind, and will he want to keep his family autonomous? I would reverse my thinking in this area.

In one of those Boston Seminars, Roger Lamb said, “The old traditional idea of autonomy has been shot down and we’re not going to have that sort of thing anymore.” Of course, when “Gashmu saith it,” then all the little Gashmus repeat it. With Bogle it was a “traditional idea” and with Lamb it was also a “traditional idea.” Who do you suppose they have been listening to? Who fired that big shot that shattered the old tradition? It will take more than a few little pop guns from Boston to destroy the autonomy of the local church. We are insistent that some semblance of proof needs to be made by these fellows when they get ready to shoot down the Word of my God. They have listened to so much denominational dogma and sectarian slush, that a complete abandonment of the autonomy of the local church is evident in their scheme of things. Every false plan that has ever been devised was shaped in iniquity and conceived in sin. This is the story of the Crossroads-Boston brain child. Like Rome, they make void the Word of God by their human dogmas and very much like Rome, they dare not march forward and let their falsehood be examined under the searchlight of truth. It is certain that the final judgment will try every man’s work, of what sort it is.

From Eden’s garden until time’s knell shall have been sounded, stiff-necked and stubborn men have and will continue to restructure the order and arrangement of Jehovah. *Woe unto him who dares to be so presumptuous!*

MY OLD CHURCH

Roy Deaver



Roy Deaver was born in Caddo, Texas in 1922. He graduated from Freed-Hardeman College, A.A., Abilene Christian College, B.A., and National Christian University, LL.D., Ph.D., Th.D.

He began preaching in 1940. He did local work for many years. He is the founder and former director of Brown Trail School of Preaching. Founder and former instructor of Fort Worth Christian College. Former instructor and vice-president of Tennessee Bible College. Former instructor of Bellview Preacher Training School, Pensacola, Florida. He is currently an instructor in the Southwest School of Biblical Studies, Austin, Texas. He has held many religious debates and has written for all faithful papers. He edited *Biblical Notes* for many years. He is the assistant editor of the *Firm Foundation*. He currently spends time in writing and meeting work. He is married to the former Wilma Ruth Gibson, and they have three sons.

In Romans 2:16 and 16:25, and in 2 Timothy 2:8, Paul talks about “my gospel.” In 2 Corinthians 4:3, 1 Thessalonians 1:5 and 2 Thessalonians 2:14, he talks about “our gospel.” In 1 Corinthians 3:21-23, he says: “For all things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours; and ye are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s.” In Hebrews 12:23, Inspiration refers to “the church of the firstborn ones [plural] who are enrolled in heaven.”

I recognize that the Christ is the HEAD of the church, and that the church BELONGS to Him. Yet, in the same sense in which Paul talked about “my gospel” I can talk about “my gospel,” and about “my church.” It is in this sense that I make reference to “MY OLD CHURCH.”

I grew up under the preaching and influence of Foy E. Wallace, Sr. and C. M. Pullias, at the old Second and Whaley Streets congregation, in Longview, Texas. The church was my life. I was baptized into Christ at age 11, but for many years before that I had never missed a service of worship. My regular seat was the very corner, second seat, next to the middle aisle, the west end of the east side section, right behind brother John Akin. I never left this seat, with one special

exception. The first time that I took Wilma Ruth with me, about a year and a half before she became my wife, I thought it would be considerate if I sat with her, back about the middle, where she wanted to sit. Before services began, brother Akin missed me, got up, looked around, spotted me, and said: "Roy, come on down here where you belong." So, WE went down there "where I belonged."

During those years, very important years in my preparing to preach the gospel, I heard the finest gospel preaching in the world. Because brother Foy E. Wallace, Jr. often came to Longview to visit his father, I often got to hear him preach. Other great gospel preachers often filled the pulpit and worked in gospel meetings. I will always cherish the memories of brother Floyd Decker, a man who left the Christian Church to devote his life to preaching the pure, ancient gospel; a man who led many of the Christian Church preachers of that day to renounce the instrument, to have proper respect for the authority of the Bible, to repent of their sins, and to preach and to live the pure gospel of Christ.

At a lectureship at Abilene Christian College, we had come together for a morning lecture. A young man of outstanding background and abilities was doing the preaching. I was seated next to brother E. R. Harper. This young preacher was very critical of the church. He was determined to help bring about some changes. He made fun of the old gospel preachers—their lives and their works, and he stressed that we had to get away from their kind of preaching. He continued with his sermon (?), and in view of what had been said, brother Harper leaned over to me and whispered: "At least we knew the difference between the Lord's church and denominationalism; we knew and preached the gospel plan of salvation; and we knew what was wrong with 'social drinking.'"

In the thirties and the forties and the fifties and the sixties the church grew. It is reported that we were the fastest growing religious group in America. We believed and preached and taught the distinctive gospel. We believed and taught that God has but one soul-saving plan for all men, and that to that plan all responsible persons are amenable. We believed and fervently taught that everything we do, in word or in deed, must be done in the name of the Lord. We empha-

sized the importance of having Bible authority, we respected Bible authority, and we spent a lot of time studying and stressing “how God authorizes.” We believed and preached that the church must be PURE: pure in DOCTRINE, pure in WORSHIP, and pure in LIVING. We believed and preached and practiced “church discipline” as the Bible demands. We believed and preached and practiced the importance of personal, individual evangelism—and through faithful, consecrated Christians reached thousands with the gospel.

In general, we had the notion that a congregation should be about two hundred in number. A congregation of about 200 would send a preacher into a new area to establish another church. He would work in that new area for a few years, build that congregation up to about 200 members, and then that congregation would work to establish another congregation. And the church grew.

Then came “merger mania.” Elders, preachers, and the Christians in general decided, somehow, that there would be greater power in larger congregations. A few congregations were determined to be THE BIGGEST in the world. It was often argued that: “It is just as easy for a preacher to preach to a thousand people as it is to preach to fifty people, or to a hundred people, and that if we would build larger congregations, this would release many gospel preachers to go into new areas with the gospel, even to the ‘mission fields.’” But, it did not work that way! Today, those larger congregations, formed by those mergers, have simply added more and more preachers to their program. And, today—some of those congregations which were formed by the merging of three congregations are absolutely no larger than even ONE of the congregations in the original merger. However, some congregations have become bigger and bigger, and now have a tremendous influence over the brotherhood. But, in so many instances, this influence has not been for the good of the Cause of Christ. Many of these BIG congregations “stand for nothing and fall for everything.” They have given up on fighting the devil, and now simply want to get along with everybody.

The common denominator in the present problems plaguing the church of our Lord is the ever-present problem of LIBERALISM. “Liberalism” is a philosophy—the philosophy of NO STANDARD!

Whether we are dealing with religious matters or with political matters, this is the case—the doctrine that there is no real, final, authoritative, objective standard. This is the problem that plagues our world, and this is the problem that plagues the churches of our Lord. The “liberals” among us want to accept everything and everybody—excepting those of us who will not accept everything and everybody. They want to tolerate everything and everybody—excepting those of us who will not tolerate everything and everybody. They want to “love” everything and everybody—excepting those of us who insist upon a “Thus saith the Lord” in what we believe, do, and teach. When men STAND for nothing, they FALL for everything!

There is a large, powerful, well-financed group among us who are determined to bring about a “merger” between Independent Christian Churches and Churches of Christ, or at least to form a coalition of “fellowship.” Their “theme song” is “Unity in Diversity,” and they work hard and constantly to try to change the IMAGE of the church. In fact, they are working to make the church into their OWN IMAGE—an image of their own creation. During the next few minutes I want to try to help you to have a better picture of what they are trying to bring about. I want all of us to see the kind of situation they are trying to produce.

Let me tell you about a sermon preached by PHILETUS. By “Philetus,” in the light of 2 Timothy 2:16-19, I mean: any brother (1) who is not properly, scripturally, concerned about the truth, (2) who has “erred” concerning the truth, (3) who now teaches false doctrine, and (4) who is overthrowing the faith of some. God knows, and faithful brethren know, that we have many Philetuses among us.

Philetus preached his sermon in a large congregation in a Texas metropolitan area. His topic was: “Dealing with Diversity.” He referred to “differences of opinions” in local congregations. He asked the question: “How do we deal with these differences of opinion?” He cited, read carefully, and placed special emphasis upon Romans 14:1-6. He stressed that these verses would have a definite, direct, relationship to the lesson he was about to present. A brother disturbed by the sermon sent me a copy of the tape. It is a perfect illustration of what the liberals among us are trying to accomplish.

He asked: “What attitude should we have toward one another, in spite of these differences?” He declared:

Just because we see things differently is no reason to draw lines and create camps, and promote suspicion of those who differ from us, and report things that have been said out of context, and drive wedges of divisions between the people of God.

As the liberals customarily do, he placed special emphasis upon Romans 14, but tragically failed to apply Romans 14 to situations like those to which Paul himself applied Romans 14.

Philetus’ position is: a congregation, including its elders, ought to be able to tolerate (and at least in some sense, “fellowship”) people who hold different and even conflicting views with regard to the specific items which he discussed (and with regard to at least a dozen others as he indicated, but which he did not discuss). According to Philetus, a congregation could be made up of people as follows: people

1. Some of whom believe that the kingdom of Christ has been established, and that they are now in it, and some of whom believe that the kingdom of Christ **HAS NOT BEEN ESTABLISHED**, and that they are **NOT NOW IN IT**;

2. Some of whom believe that a Christian must give at least ten percent of his income directly to the Lord’s work, and some of whom believe and teach that a Christian is **NOT REQUIRED** to give at least ten percent of his income directly to the Lord’s work, and that it is **SIN** for **ANYBODY** to **INSIST** that a person is **OBLIGATED** to give at least ten percent of his income directly to the Lord’s work;

3. Some of whom believe that faithful attendance in **ALL** the specified services of **EXHORTATION** is demanded by Bible teaching, and some of whom **DO NOT BELIEVE** that faithful attendance in all the specified services of exhortation is demanded by the Bible teaching;

4. Some of whom believe that it is scriptural for one church to help another church to do a job which the other church has undertaken, and some of whom believe that **IT IS SIN** for one church to help another church to do a job which the other church has undertaken;

5. Some of whom believe that it is scriptural for a church of the Lord to send a contribution to a home for orphans, and some of whom

believe and vehemently teach that IT IS SIN for a church of the Lord to send a contribution to a home for orphans;

6. Some of whom believe and teach that it IS SIN to use mechanical instrumental music in Christian worship, and some of whom believe and teach that IT IS IN HARMONY WITH THE SCRIPTURES to use mechanical instrumental music in Christian worship;

7. Some of whom are opposed to the use of women in leadership roles, and some of whom believe and teach that a woman can do anything in the church that a man can do;

8. Some of whom believe that it is SIN for a person to engage in and/or uphold dancing, and some of whom believe that it is perfectly all right for persons to engage in “social” dancing;

9. Some of whom believe that it is scriptural to teach the Bible in simultaneous Bible classes, using women as teachers in some of those Bible classes (for other women and children), and some of whom believe and teach that IT IS SIN for the Bible to be taught in simultaneous Bible classes, and that IT IS SIN for women to be used in ANY of these Bible classes;

10. Some of whom believe that it is in harmony with the Scriptures for brethren to have a common meal together, even in the church building, and some of whom believe that IT IS SIN for brethren to have a common meal together IN THE CHURCH BUILDING;

11. Some of whom believe and teach that the ONLY GROUND for scriptural divorce and remarriage is the ground of fornication (as set out by the Lord in Matthew 19:9), and some of whom believe that fornication IS NOT the only ground for scriptural divorce and remarriage.

And on and on the list could go. What about a congregation made up of some who hold that baptism—to be scriptural—must be “in the name of Christ,” “into the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit,” and “for the remission of sins;” and of some who hold that “baptism is not necessarily immersion,” that “one may be baptized for one of several purposes,” that “a person does not have to understand the purpose for which he is baptized,” that one may be scripturally baptized simply “to obey God.”

What about the denominations? Does not the position of Philetus actually lead to “unity” with and “fellowship” with the denominations? Can ANYBODY, who knows ANYTHING about the New Testament teaching, ACTUALLY BELIEVE that THIS IS THE UNITY FOR WHICH THE LORD PRAYED? the unity which the New Testament DEMANDS? the unity to which Paul (and the Holy Spirit) exhorted?

Any doctrine which pleads for the toleration of a situation which is clearly and obviously contradictory to plain Bible teaching is false doctrine. The doctrine of Philetus is a doctrine which pleads for a situation which is clearly and obviously contradictory to plain Bible teaching. This doctrine is in contradiction to such plain passages as: Romans 16:17-18; 2 Thessalonians 3:6; 1 Corinthians 5; Ephesians 5:11. Therefore, the doctrine of Philetus (as set forth in the taped sermon) is false doctrine.

Any doctrine which completely disregards the plain Bible teaching on congregational disciplining of any brother who walks disorderly is false doctrine. Philetus’ doctrine is a doctrine which completely disregards the plain Bible teaching on congregational disciplining of any brother that walks disorderly. Therefore, Philetus’ doctrine is false doctrine.

Further: any doctrine which seeks to apply the teachings of Romans 14 (which deals with matters of indifference—things right if done, and right if not done)—to matters which DO NOT COME WITHIN THE SCOPE OF INDIFFERENCE is false doctrine. The doctrine of Philetus (as set forth in the taped sermon) DOES seek to apply the teachings of Romans 14 (which deals with matters of indifference—things right if done and right if not done) to matters WHICH DO NOT COME WITHIN THE SCOPE OF INDIFFERENCE. Therefore, the doctrine of Philetus is FALSE DOCTRINE!

Philetus’ position forces the conclusion that purity of doctrine simply is not essential to our salvation. It is the same old “unity-in-diversity” philosophy that God does not demand unity in doctrine. But, the Bible teaching is that the church of the Lord must be PURE: pure in WORSHIP, pure in LIVING, and pure in DOCTRINE. We need to ponder well such passages as: Acts 2:42; Romans 16:17,18;

Jude 3; Titus 1:9 and 2:1; 1 Timothy 4:16—“take heed...to the doctrine.” Any doctrine which forces the conclusion that doctrine is not important is a false doctrine. Philetus’ doctrine is a doctrine which forces the conclusion that doctrine is not important. Philetus’ doctrine is false doctrine.

Because of the influence of “liberal theology” in our midst we are now seeing a NEW KIND OF EVANGELISM (?). The liberals among us have completely rebelled against the idea that God demands obedience to His will. They no longer preach the message of Hebrews 5:8-9, or Romans 6:17, or 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8, or Romans 1:5, or even of Mark 16:15-16. Instead of spending their time trying to get people to become obedient to the faith, these men are trying to convince people that they DO NOT HAVE TO OBEY GOD—THAT GOD IS GOING TO SAVE THEM ANYHOW!

There are brethren among us who think that it is their job to GO TELL MEN

1. That the person in the world is not amenable to the gospel of Christ;

2. That God DOES NOT REALLY DEMAND OBEDIENCE to His will;

3. That the gospel of Christ is not law—that there is NO LAW, NO RULES, NO REGULATIONS;

4. That SINCERITY—a good attitude-IS ALL THAT GOD REQUIRES;

5. That, after all, salvation is WHOLLY A MATTER OF GOD’S GRACE; that men are saved by grace only;

6. That the CHURCH described in the New Testament is NOT DISTINCTIVE, IS NOT EXCLUSIVE, that “THERE ARE SINCERE, KNOWLEDGEABLE, DEVOUT CHRISTIANS IN ALL THE DENOMINATIONS”;

7. That the CHURCH IS SIMPLY ANOTHER DENOMINATION AMONG THE MANY DENOMINATIONS;

8. That the notion of RESTORING SIMPLE NEW TESTAMENT CHRISTIANITY IS A CONCEPT IMPOSSIBLE TO ACHIEVE.

I mentioned earlier that I was baptized into Christ when I was eleven years old. Through the many years it has been my aim, my

determination, “to uphold the right, to oppose the wrong, to edify the saints, to teach, preach, and live the Word of God.” It has been (and is) my determination to “walk in the Old Paths,” turning neither to the right hand nor to the left hand; to stand squarely upon the mountain top of Bible authority—falling off that majestic mountain neither on the side of liberalism nor on the side of anti-ism. Through many great and wonderful years, a dear and beloved friend was Gayle Oler. A few years ago, in a special Sunday afternoon service, brother Oler introduced me. Among other things, he said: “Roy obeyed the gospel when he was eleven years old, and he has never gotten more than 30 feet away from Pentecost!” This was his way of saying that I have not deviated from the ancient gospel. I took it as tremendous compliment.

Brethren, I stand right where I have always stood. I have fought many battles for truth and right, and I will die fighting—as a faithful soldier of Jesus Christ. Thank God for the faithful: faithful gospel preachers, faithful elders, faithful deacons, faithful mommas and dad-dys, faithful young people, faithful Bible teachers, faithful personal workers. Many have departed from the right way. With regard to the Old Paths, many have cried out: “We will not walk therein!” With regard to these, let me say: **I DID NOT LEAVE MY OLD CHURCH —MY OLD CHURCH LEFT ME!**

ARE WE MOVING AWAY FROM THE CERTIFIED GOSPEL?

Ken Willis



Ken Willis attended Freed-Hardeman College and began preaching during his freshman year there. In 1971 he moved to Singapore to work at Four Seas College of Bible and Missions while awaiting visas for going to Malaysia, and taught one semester there. In the Fall of 1971 he moved to Malacca, Malaysia to pioneer a congregation in that ancient city. The church was established there and continues to faithfully “sound forth the word.” In 1973 he moved from Malacca to Kuala Lumpur, the nation’s capitol, to work with the church and also in a Bible training school. In 1974 he started the church in Petaling Jaya, Malaysia. He has preached in the States, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand, Hong Kong, New Zealand, and the Fiji Islands.

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures), concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord; which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead (Rom. 1:1-4).

Through the miracle of His resurrection, Christ was declared to be the Son of God with power. This was good news to a lost, dying world! And this gospel, the good news of Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection (1 Cor. 15:1-3) Paul was privileged to preach. He welcomed and sought out opportunities to do this. “So as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also” (Rom. 1:15).

Just as Christ was declared to be the Son of God with power, such also was the preaching of Paul-with power. When he came to Thessalonica preaching God’s Word, it was not just in “word only, but also in power” (1 The. 1:5). They received his preaching as God’s Word. “For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effec-

tually worketh also in you that believe” (1 The. 2:13). For that very purpose Paul had been called (Acts 9:15-16).

Paul did not receive his training at J.P.T.S. (Jerusalem Preacher Training School), but by “revelation of Jesus Christ” (Gal. 1:12). To these Galatians Paul “certified” that it was God’s gospel (Gal. 1: 11). Thus, he was affirming that it was a certified gospel which he preached.

Webster defines “certify”; “to attest as being true, as represented; to inform with certainty; to guarantee.” The word is illustrated: “A certified check—a check certified to be good by the bank upon which it is drawn,” or “certified mail—first class mail for which proof of delivery is secured.” Thus, the gospel which Paul was ready to “preach at Rome also” was a certified gospel—guaranteed to be God’s Word. He vouched that the gospel he proclaimed had not been received from men, nor from the other apostles. It came by revelation of the Lord just as HE had promised (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13).

Though Paul considered himself unworthy of being an apostle, and felt as “one born out of due time” (1 Cor. 15:8), he had received grace and been “ordained to be an apostle” (2 Tim. 1:11). As one of those apostles, he was given special signs to prove that Christ sent him. Miracles confirmed that his message was indeed a “certified” gospel. To the Corinthians he wrote, “Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds” (2 Cor. 12:12).

PURPOSE OF SIGNS AND MIRACLES

The purpose of “signs, wonders, and mighty deeds” was to confirm the word of the apostles. Christ taught,

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. And these signs shall follow them that believe; in my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover (Mark 16:15-18).

The message concerning Christ’s life, teachings, and resurrection needed initial confirmation that it was from God. The signs of Mark 16:17 certified that the apostles were special messengers of Christ.

“And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following” (Mark 16:20).

On the day of Pentecost the apostles received power from “on high” and began preaching His Word, becoming His witnesses just as He had promised (Acts 1:8). The first sign of the apostles was the speaking “in tongues”—intelligible languages (Acts 2:6, 8, 11). When the citizens came together and heard the preaching of Peter, they became obedient believers (Acts 2:38, 41). “And many wonders and signs were done by the apostles” (v. 43).

The signs of the apostles were many and varied. In Acts 3:1-6 Peter healed a lame man at the temple gate. It resulted in Peter and John being given opportunity to preach to the people (Acts 4:1), and also to being threatened. The people were convinced that a miracle had indeed taken place (4:21-22). “For all men glorified God for that which was done” (v. 21). When Peter and John were let go, they met with the others to report what God had done. The group then prayed: “With all boldness they may speak thy word, by stretching forth thine hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus” (vv. 29-30). In Acts 5:1-10 Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead for their sin of lying. As a result of this miracle, “great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things. And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people” (vv. 11-12). In Acts 9:32-34 Aeneas, who had been bedfast for eight years with palsy, is healed. As a result, “And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to the Lord” (v. 35). At Joppa, Dorcas is raised from the dead by Peter, resulting in “many believed in the Lord” (Acts 9:36-42). On the isle of Paphos, Elymas was struck “blind for a season,” resulting in Sergius Paulus the deputy “believed, being astonished” (Acts 13:6-12). At Ephesus “God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: so that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them” (Acts 19:11-12). At Troas, Eutychus fell asleep at church and fell out a third-story window, whom Paul raised from the dead (Acts 20:9-12). On his perilous voyage to Rome following the

shipwreck Paul was bitten by a poisonous snake without suffering death (Acts 28:3-6). On that same island Paul healed the father of Publius. Following this miracle, “others also, which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed” (Acts 28:9-10). Thus, as had been recorded by Mark, “They went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word by signs that followed” (Mark 16:20). The message of the gospel in the first century was confirmed by the signs that followed.

THE MIRACLES OF MOSES

The miracles of Moses were to prove that God sent him. He knew the children of Israel would not believe that God sent him to deliver them from Egypt’s bondage (Exo. 4:1-2). God changed Moses’ rod into a serpent, and back into a rod. He caused leprosy to come upon Moses’ hand, and He healed him. God said, “If they will not believe the first sign, they will harken to the second” (Exo. 4:8). These signs of Moses in Egypt, including the plagues, convinced Israel (and Pharaoh) that God had sent him.

THE MIRACLES OF CHRIST

The signs of Christ were to prove that God sent Him. “No man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him” (John 3:2) spoke Nicodemus. Though he was moved with compassion to demonstrate His divine mission, His miracles were performed mainly to prove that He had the power to forgive sins (Mat. 9:6), declare His mission, and His Deity (John 3:2; 20:30-31). His miracles can be classified in the following categories:

1. His power over disease (Mat. 8:2-7; 9:1-8).
2. His power over nature (Mat. 8:23-27).
3. His power over the spirit world (Mat. 8:28-34).
4. His power over material things (Mat. 14:16-23), feeding the five thousand with five loaves and two fish.
5. His power over death (John 11:39-44).

Just as the miracles of Moses proved that God sent him, just as the miracles of Jesus proved His divinity and power to forgive sins, so the “signs, miracles, and wonders” done by the apostles certified that God

had sent them to proclaim His gospel. The miracles confirmed the word which they proclaimed (Mark 16:20).

TRUTH NOW CONFIRMED

How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation? which having at the first been spoken through the Lord, **was confirmed** unto us by them that heard; God also bearing them witness, both by signs and wonders, and by manifold powers, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will (Heb. 2:3-4—ASV).

The message of salvation as proclaimed by the apostles was confirmed (past tense) through the signs and wonders.

A thing once confirmed is forever confirmed! If the court proves a man innocent of some charge, it does not have to convene annually and re-confirm the man's innocence. One can simply check the court records. Neither does Moses have to come back and again call forth the plagues for us to believe they were done. Jesus does not have to come back and again perform miracles for us to believe that He is the Son of God. We have the written record to enable us to believe (John 20:30-31). Jesus said if one could not be convinced by the Bible, he would not be convinced even if one arose from the dead (Luke 16:19-31). Thus, miracles fulfilled their purpose in the revelation and confirmation of the truth. We do not need miraculous gifts today!

HOW LONG WERE MIRACLES TO LAST?

Since the design of miracles, signs, and wonders was to confirm the Word (truth), when this was done, they no longer existed—and they were removed. The faith (truth or body of doctrine) has been “once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3—ASV). Since there are no further “deliverances,” there is no place for further confirmations. All confirmatory signs ended with the completion of inspiration in the apostolic age. Paul affirms this in 1 Corinthians 13:8-10:

Love never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall be done away; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall be done away. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away (ASV).

Nine spiritual gifts, all miraculous in nature, were listed in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11. Here in chapter thirteen, three of them are given as representative of all the others. Prophecies (the act of

prophesying), tongues (speaking in tongues), knowledge (supernaturally received), along with all the other miraculous gifts would serve their purpose, then “cease” or “be done away.”

When would that occur? The gifts cease when “that which is perfect is come” came. At that present time, Paul said, “We know in part and we prophesy in part.” Here the apostles were “part by part,” revealing God’s Word as the Holy Spirit guided them into all truth. But the “perfect” is going to come, and when “that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away.” What, then, is the “that which is perfect” which was to come?

It is important to remember that in dealing with this subject, the question is on the significance of the Greek word translated “perfect”—not on the current English word and its usage.

The Greek word is “to teleion,” neuter gender. This clearly evidences the fact that reference is to a “thing,” not a person; and the word means “that which is brought to completion, complete, entire, as opposed to what is partial or limited” (Bagster). Arndt and Gingrich define it as “having attained the end or purpose.”¹

Thus, when the full revelation of truth had been given through inspired men in the apostolic age, the miraculous spiritual gifts would be done away.

Jesus speaks of “the perfect law of liberty” (Jam. 1:25). “Perfect,” literally the “complete” law of liberty. And Paul identifies “the perfect” with the “will of God” (Rom. 12:2). Again, Jude says to “contend earnestly for the faith, once for all delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3).

Miraculous gifts (one of which is tongue speaking), are said to be “in part,” thus in contrast with that which is mature; inferior, therefore to be replaced by “a more excellent way” (I Cor. 12:31); childishness to be laid aside when spiritual manhood is achieved. Thus, the temporal (spiritual gifts) are put in contrast, by the apostle, with the permanent; the partial with the whole; the fragmentary with the complete—the former—spiritual gifts—serving only until the latter—full revelation of truth—has been committed to men. With the death of the last apostle the power to propagate these gifts ended. Henceforth, “the man of God is complete, furnished completely unto every good work” (II Tim. 3:17), by the scriptures, thus needing no supplementary or additional influences to accomplish God’s purpose through him in the earth.²

WHAT ABOUT MIRACLES TODAY?

In spite of the scriptural evidence to the contrary, there are many people who believe that God works miracles today. From March 31 through April 1, 1980, brother Perry Cotham debated Mr. John Hartley in Melbourne, Australia on the continuation of miracles in the church today. Mr. Hartley affirmed that: "The Bible teaches that miracles (such as healing the sick, speaking in tongues, and raising the dead, as done by the power of the Holy Spirit in the early days of the church) continue in the church today." Mr. Hartley represented the "Restored Udenominational Church Of The Lord Jesus Christ." The proposition had been originally affirmed by Mr. Ron Whittington, who agreed to the debate. However, when the date for the debate arrived, he was sick and Mr. Hartley filled his place. This was rather ironic, for as brother Cotham expressed:

You know, when I heard that Mr. Whittington was sick, I happened to think, why didn't they heal him so he could come on and be with us in this discussion? Why send somebody else? Right there, it seems to me, that the very proposition fails, right at the very beginning of the matter.³

It was interesting to hear Mr. Hartley's response to a series of questions pressed by brother Cotham. 1. "Can you perform miracles the apostles performed, like raising the dead, etc.?" Mr. Hartley, "NO, I've never raised the dead and I'm not particularly expected to do so." 2. "Can you speak in tongues?" Mr. Hartley, "No, I have never spoken in tongues myself." 3. "Can you heal the sick?" Mr. Hartley, "No, we can't heal the sick. I believe in the Great Divine Healer." 4. "Can you translate into other languages?" Mr. Hartley, "NO."⁴

Yet Mr. Hartley still avowed that he believed in miracles and that he had heard of numerous instances of miraculous healing.

The famous surgeon, Dr. William A. Nolan, went in search of a miracle. He spent two years investigating the claims of the better known miracle healers. His findings were published in 1974 in his book, HEALING: A DOCTOR IN SEARCH OF A MIRACLE. On the jacket of that book, his search is described:

The best-selling author of *THE MAKING OF A SURGEON* and *A SURGEON'S WORLD* now turns to one of the greatest controversies surrounding medicine today: faith healing and psychic surgery. Thousands of Americans each year flock to Kathryn Kuhlman's faith-healing services, or travel as far as the Philippines to visit psychic surgeons who operate with their bare hands to "cure" anything from arthritis to cancer. Now a practicing member of the medical profession conducts a thorough investigation of this strange world. What are these "miracles" that so many people testify to? Braving ridicule from certain of his colleagues in medicine, Dr. Nolan begins his journey in the hope of finding a true healer. His first encounter is at a Kathryn Kuhlman service where he witnesses some apparently amazing cures: a man gets up from his wheelchair and walks; a woman experiences relief from "lung cancer"; asthmatics breathe freely; and some of those in the audience afflicted with bone and stomach cancer, arthritis and multiple sclerosis believe they are made well again. Traveling to Texas to meet with Norbu Chen, a healer with the support of a foundation backed by prominent citizens, Dr. Nolan hears even more astounding claims, including a story about a doctor who reportedly was cured of severe kidney disease. In a series of interviews with Norbu Chen, Dr. Nolan manages to paint an unforgettable portrait of a faith-healer. His quest then takes him on to the Philippines, where Dr. Nolan is caught up in a bizarre, tropical world that involves the moving story of a little girl's last days. His fascinating investigation of psychic surgeons offers some explanations for the many mysteries that so many people have encountered.⁵

In his research Dr. Nolan reports that he

tracked down twenty-three of the most promising of these leads [of reported healings by various faith-healers—KW]. I called or visited the healer and the patient he or she supposedly cured, and talked or visited with both at some length. It was all to no avail. The cases I encountered resembled, except for minor, irrelevant details, cases I've already described. **THERE WERE NO MIRACLES TO BE FOUND** [emphasis mine—KW]. And so I finally gave up. After doing my very best for eighteen months to find some shred of evidence that somewhere there was someone who had miraculous healing powers, I concluded that no such person existed.⁶

On page 282 Dr. Nolan writes:

Let me repeat: a charismatic individual—a healer—can sometimes influence a patient and cure symptoms or a functional disease by suggestion, with or without laying on of hands. **PHYSICIANS CAN DO THE SAME THING** [emphasis mine—KW]. These cures are not miraculous; they result from corrections made by the patient in the function of his autonomic system.

In Chapter 25 Dr. Nolan discusses organic diseases (e.g. broken bones, congenital deformities, heart attacks, lacerations, etc.). Of these he says:

These are the diseases that healers, even the most charismatic cannot cure. When they attempt to do so—and they fall into this trap, since they know and care nothing of the differences between functional and organic diseases—they tread on very dangerous ground. When healers treat serious organic diseases they are responsible for untold anguish and unhappiness: this happens because they keep patients away from possibly effective and life-saving help. THE HEALERS BECOME KILLERS! [Emphasis mine—KW].

Dr. Nolan further states: “Search the literature, as I have, and you will find NO documented cures by healers of gallstones, heart disease, cancer or any other serious organic disease.”

In the final chapter Dr. Nolan writes:

Two years ago I began looking for a healing miracle. When I started my search I hoped to find some evidence that someone, somewhere, had supernatural powers that he or she could employ to cure those patients we doctors, with all our knowledge and training, must still label “incurable.” As I have said before, I have been UNABLE TO FIND ANY SUCH MIRACLE WORKER [emphasis mine—KW].

His concluding statement:

What I’ve learned, and I hope I’ve been able to communicate something of this feeling, is that we don’t need to seek out miracle workers if we’re ill. TO DO SO IS, IN A WAY, AN INSULT TO GOD [emphasis mine—KW].

Dr. John Wilkinson, in the book *FAITH HEALING: FINGER OF GOD? OR SCIENTIFIC CURIOSITY?* writes about faith-healing:

This form of non-medical healing has been the center of much emotion and unorthodoxy. Its practitioners often make exaggerated claims for its effectiveness, which do not stand up to scientific scrutiny.⁷

DETERMINING CLAIMS

Many people still believe that God works, miracles today.

How could one know the “miracles” of certain groups are of God, while those of other groups are not? By what rule would a “faith-healer” use to establish that his work is authorized of God, while that of an African witchdoctor is not? There have been many groups claiming supernatural power that have had no connection with

Christianity. Healing and miracles have occupied a significant place in pagan religions. Incredible feats have been reported of witchdoctors in Africa. While in Southeast Asia for four years, we witnessed fire-walking rites, and rods piercing cheeks and tongues, without apparent pain or suffering on the part of the devotees. These non-Christian groups can perform just as “astonishingly” as anything offered by the faith-healing advocates of Christianity. Thus, how could one test modern so-called miracles?

A look at some of the characteristics of miracles in the New Testament serve as a test for professed miracles today. 1. They were instantaneous (Mat. 8:3, 14-15; 9:27-30; 12:13, 22; Acts 3:7-9; 9:34; 13:11). 2. Faith was not always necessary on the part of the one on whom the miracles were worked (John 11:39; Acts 13:11-12; 16:18). 3. Not just a few were healed (Mat. 4:24; 8:16; 9:34-35; 14:35-36; Luke 4:40; 9:11). 4. Organic diseases were healed, not just psychosomatic disorders (Mat. 15:30; Luke 17:11-19; 22:50-51; Acts 3:1-5). 5. They were public (Mat. 12:9; Acts 3:16; 4:9). 6. They were complete (Mat. 12:13; Acts 3:16; 4:9). 7. They were recognized by the enemies of Christ as genuine (Mat. 12:13-14, 22; Acts 4:16; 16:18-19). 8. They were not used to make money (Mat. 10:8-10; Acts 3:6). 9. They glorified God (Acts 3:2-13). 10. They were used to support truth (Heb. 2:3-4). 11. People healed didn't always have to be present (Mat. 8:5-13). 12. Some miracles were worked over the protest of the individual (Mat. 8:28; Mark 5:1-17; Luke 4:33-34). 13. The Lord announced no special “healing service.” 14. There were no preliminary screenings of the audience first.

If claims for modern miracles do not conform to these conditions, they do not represent the same power used by Christ and the apostles.

CONCLUSION

God's Word is truth (John 17:17). To believe error about the continuation of supernatural powers beyond the apostolic age is gross error. The Lord acknowledged that many would claim to prophesy in his name, cast out demons, and perform many wonderful works (Mat. 7:21-23). There would arise “false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders” (Mat. 24:24). Paul warned that “servants of Satan would be able to display “power, and signs, and lying wonders”

(2 The. 2:9). He further cautioned that we should not be astonished that such false teachers would appear, “for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light” (2 Cor. 11:14).

Let us not be carried away from the “certified gospel,” but make it known to the whole world for the spiritual healing of the disease of sin.

ENDNOTES

¹Guy N. Woods, *The Spiritual Sword Magazine*, Vol. 5, No. 3 April 1974, p. 14.

²*Ibid.*, p. 14.

³*Perry B. Cotham and John Hartley Debate*, privately published 1980, p. 18.

⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 27-30.

⁵Dr. William A. Nolan, *Healing: A Doctor In Search Of A Miracle*, (New York, NY: Random House, 1974), p. Jacket Cover.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 268.

⁷Dr. Claude A. Frazier, M.D. editor, *Faith Healing: Finger Of God? Or Scientific Curiosity?* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1973), p. 54.

ARE WE MOVING AWAY FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT DOCTRINE ON PRAYER?

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Drifting away from the teachings, or doctrines of God's Word is a constant and eminent danger. In Ephesians 4:14, Paul speaks of being "children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine." The context of this verse shows that the perfect will of God, revealed in the Word of God, is the answer to being "carried about." It is imperative that we constantly examine the Scriptures (Acts 17:11), to insure that we have not drifted away from God's holy will.

The particular subject at hand in this study is, "Are We Moving Away From The New Testament Doctrine On Prayer?" It would be wonderful if we could say, "No" and conclude this discourse at this point; Unfortunately, this is not the case. It is hoped that by the time we are finished, that we will have not just identified a serious problem, but will have examined the Bible answer to the problem.

To be able to as fully investigate this subject as possible in limited time and space, we will divide the study into five parts:

1. Prayer Among Bible People.

2. One Extreme—Pentecostalism.
3. The Other Extreme—A Neo-deism.
4. The Bible and Providence.
5. The New Testament Doctrine of Prayer.

PRAYER AMONG BIBLE PEOPLE

In the early portions of the patriarchal age there is no specific mention of prayer. There is communication with God, as God appears to men, and as angels appear in God's behalf. As God, for example, spoke to Adam and Eve, they communicated with Him directly. Later, Abraham would communicate in a two-way conversation with God concerning Sodom, in Genesis 18. At the end of that chapter the Bible says, "And the Lord went His way, as soon as he had left communing with Abraham: and Abraham returned unto his place" (Gen. 18:33). So, the early recorded communication with God by men was direct, and two-way in its nature.

The first real mention of prayer, that is communicating to God in prayer, is in Genesis 20. Here Abraham has misled Abimelech by telling him that Sarah was his sister, but not telling him that she was his wife. God kept evil from happening between Abimelech and Sarah by talking directly to Abimelech, hearing his response, and then appearing to him in a dream. Verse 7 is significant. It records God speaking to Abimelech, "Now therefore restore the man his wife; for he is a prophet, and he shall PRAY for thee, and thou shalt live." Later in verse 17 the record states, "So Abraham prayed unto God: and God healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his maidservants; and they bare children." It is interesting that Abimelech talked directly to God, but could be saved only by the prayer of the "prophet" Abraham. The significance of prayer begins to be seen with these verses. This prayer was the prayer of one in a special relationship with God. From this point on, prayer would be a special right of those in the most special of relationships with God. Today, of course, that relationship is found in Christ. Prayer, like every other spiritual blessing, is found only in Him (Eph. 1:3).

There is a great deal written about the effect of prayer in the lives of Bible characters, and their attitudes toward prayer. Truly the divine record is full of prayer.

Here we simply wish to note a few examples.

Abraham's Servant: In Genesis 24 Abraham sends his oldest servant back to his homeland to find his son Isaac a wife from among his kinsmen. As the servant arrived near the city he came to a well, and prayed:

O Lord God of my master Abraham, I pray thee, send me good speed this day, and shew kindness unto my master Abraham. Behold I stand here by the well of water; and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water: And let it come to pass, that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give the camels drink also: let the same be she that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master (Gen. 24:12-14).

By the means which he suggested in his prayer the wife was selected. Here the prayer was directly answered. God provided the means for the servant to know His will through this avenue.

Hannah: In 1 Samuel the case of Hannah is recorded. Her husband's other wife had borne children, but Hannah was barren. Her plight caused her so much mental anguish that she was constantly sorrowful, and did not eat properly. Finally, in her desperation, she went to the temple, praying, and vowing that if she were given a son she would give him into God's service. As she prayed so earnestly, Eli the priest saw her and thought she was drunk, because her mouth moved but she made no sound. Her response was, "I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord" (1 Sam. 1:15). True, fervent, effectual prayer is a pouring out of the soul to God. Eli's comforting reply was, "The God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him" (1 Sam. 1:17). It is interesting that after the prayer and conversation with Eli, Hannah no longer sorrowed, but ate again, believing that God would, indeed, answer her prayer. Of course, the Bible relates the birth of Samuel in answer to her prayer. God's answer to Hannah's prayer was NOT miraculous, but was, rather, His working through the processes of nature. This differs from a case, like Sarah's, where she had passed the age of child-bearing, and special provision had to be made for her to have a child. Samuel's birth was accomplished through natural means, to a woman of child-bearing age. But it was still God acting. Eli had

attested that that would be the case. At the birth Hannah said, “For the child I prayed, and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him” (1 Sam. 1:27).

Daniel: One of the great examples of prayer is the case of Daniel. When the threat of death was upon them because Nebuchadnezzar’s dream was not told and interpreted, in Daniel 2, Daniel went to Shadrach, Meshech and Abednego, and asked them to help him pray for mercy from God (Dan. 2:16-18). God then revealed it to Daniel to interpret. Here again is the miraculous answer to prayer.

But Daniel’s attitude toward prayer is of great value to note. In Daniel 6 the enemies of Daniel were “out to get him.” They realized that they could not trap him in most ways, because he was obedient to the laws of the land. However, they concluded, “We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God” (Dan. 6:5).

The enemies of Daniel caused it to be decreed that prayer or any petition made to any one but the king, for 30 days, would be punished by being cast into the lion’s den. They KNEW that Daniel would pray anyway. It is interesting to see Daniel’s attitude when he hears of the decree:

Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforesaid (Dan. 6:10).

One cannot help but wonder, if our religion were made illegal today, how many who profess to be Christians would have no problem with that law. Could the enemies of us, as Christians, “get us,” because they knew that if they made prayer to our God illegal we would pray anyway, even in violation of that law? Daniel’s belief in prayer was that strong.

Jesus: As in every phase of New Testament Christianity, Jesus is our ultimate example in prayer. Time and again the Bible pictures Jesus as recorded in Mark 6:46, “And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray.” In Luke 11:1 the Bible says, “One of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples.” Jesus’ cousin, and forerunner, believed, practiced and taught prayer. Jesus Himself was known to His dis-

ciples as a praying man. Despite His own Deity, Jesus needed to pray to the Father. The entire seventeenth chapter of John is a prayer offered by Jesus to God. And there was, of course, the deep prayer of Jesus in the agony of Gethsemane. The Bible says, “And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Mat. 26:39). Here Jesus displays the overriding attitude that should characterize prayer. That attitude says, “God, what You will is superior to my will, and Your will is what I ultimately want to be done.” The request that Jesus made could not be answered in the manner that He would have liked, but His prayer was successful, because of His attitude.

Many other examples:

- The entire Jerusalem church continued together every day in prayers (Acts 2:42). This was a big part of their growing together in the Lord.
- When persecution arose the early church prayed about it (Acts 4:24-31).
- In Acts 12:5 the record says, “Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.” Their love and concern for each other displayed itself in their prayers for one another.
- Often when Paul separated himself from others they would pray.
- Paul and Silas prayed at midnight in the depths of the prison. No matter where they were they believed in prayer to their God.

The New Testament church of the first century was a prayerful group of people. The Bible is a book of prayer. That is why we must study to make sure that we are practicing what the New Testament teaches, when handled properly, concerning this vital subject.

ONE EXTREME—PENTECOSTALISM

In order to understand the truth about prayer, it is helpful to first of all examine two common errors taught about prayers today. The most prevalent error is that of the Pentecostal idea of prayer. This concept is based upon subjectivism, and the improper handling of the

Word of God. When Paul wrote to the young preacher Timothy, as recorded in 2 Timothy 2:15, he used the expression, translated “rightly dividing the word of truth” (KJV), or “handling aright the word of truth” (ASV). This proper use of the Word of God is the key to understanding the will of God on a given subject. The Pentecostal idea of prayer is based on the misuse of the idea of biblical miracles.

DO YOU BELIEVE IN MIRACLES? Yes! The fact is that a miracle brought the world into being. A miracle allowed Deity to pitch His tent for a while in human form. A miracle called the Soul from Hades to be reunited with the nail-scarred body. John said, “And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written” (John 21:25). The Bible is full of miracles, from verse 1 to the very end. These marvelous acts of God that are supernatural, or above and beyond the capacities of nature, have long ago shown forth the greatness of the power of God. From time to time prayer was involved in these miracles.

The real question: The real question at this point is not do we believe in miracles, but rather do miracles occur today in answer to prayer. We could not possibly take time and space to show the overwhelming evidence that miracles have ceased. Passages such as 1 Corinthians 13:8-13 and Ephesians 4:11-16 show that they were to end at the time that the Word of God was fully revealed. The entirety of 1 Corinthians 14, nearly, shows that what is practiced by Pentecostals today is not biblical in any form, shape or fashion. Beyond that the true miracles of the Bible were:

- (1) Immediate
- (2) Obvious
- (3) Complete

So-called miracles of today meet none of these criteria. The true miracles are recorded for us, and we have no need for miracles today. John, again, said:

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

Whenever we talk about prayer and its results, we cannot interpret it as bringing results that are miraculous in nature, without conflicting with the definite teaching of the Scriptures. In other words, it will not bring results that are supernatural.

The Pentecostal approach has definitely had its impact on the Lord's body. It must be rejected.

THE OTHER EXTREME—NEO-DEISM

The pendulum of the clock swings from one side to the other. So it is with ideas. One extreme tends to breed another, opposite extreme. For many in the church the reaction to the Pentecostal idea of prayer has led them to swing to the opposite extreme and to practically reject the idea of prayer, and its effectiveness.

Deism teaches, in essence, that God "wound the world up," and is letting it run down without interfering in its operation. What has happened in the Lord's body is a "neodeism." It takes the view that when the miracles ceased, God simply removed Himself from the affairs of men totally. This extreme is just as inaccurate as the other extreme. This idea makes prayer no more than an exercise in futility. This is not the biblical view of prayer. The neo-deist teaches that prayer has its only effect in getting us to act upon our own prayers. Again this is not biblical in its nature.

In 1 John 5:14-15, John says:

And the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.

God has not left us alone with no recourse through prayer. He does answer prayer. However, we have already noted that He does not answer it through means of the miraculous. The principle stated in James 5:16 is true, even though the miraculous element of the context is no longer valid. James says, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

THE BIBLE AND PROVIDENCE

One form of the neo-deism is not as extreme, but is still not biblically accurate. It teaches that God does not act in any special

providence today, but that at the beginning He set all that would answer men's prayers in motion. David Lipscomb said:

The idea of a special Providence outside of the general laws of God arises from a failure to see that God's laws are perfect in their operations and meet all possible contingencies that arise to punish or bless without the intervention of special laws or interferences. (*Questions and Answers*, p. 518).

Brother Lipscomb goes on to say that all possible answers to prayer are through the general laws of nature. As I examined this, I picked up a tract by Ray Peters entitled DIVINE PROVIDENCE AND PRAYER. This excellent little tract made many of the same points that we have made. On this particular point of the Deistic point of view, (or neodeistic like brother Lipscomb's comments), brother Peters had this good comment:

God works today through His natural laws, overshadowing or overruling. This does not have to be in a miraculous way. This world is not "governed by God, by the laws of nature," as deism teaches but it is "governed by God, according to the laws of nature." In other words, the laws don't dictate or run God, but God works His natural laws.

The special providence of God is often shown throughout the Bible. One of the great examples of the providence of God is in the book of the Bible that does not mention the name of God, the book of Esther.

Note that in this story there is not one single supernatural, or miraculous element. All of the events that occurred were within the realm of natural happenings. Yet they were brought together to the full and successful conclusion. Those involved were not forced to act as they did. In God's providential dealings He does not MAKE men do as they do. He simply uses their actions to accomplish His ends. The times that Israel was conquered by her enemies were not miraculous occurrences, but God was definitely in control. Daniel said, "To the intent that the living may know that the most high ruleth in the kingdom of men" (Dan. 4:17).

Note also in Esther that providence cannot be positively identified, especially prior to its occurrence. Remember Mordecai's words in Esther 4:14, "And who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?" He knew that it could possibly be that

God had placed her here at this time to save His people. Looking back, we can know that this was indeed the case.

We cannot know exactly how God's providence works, and exactly *how* God answers prayers providentially. We do not know exactly *how* God inspired men, but we know He did. We do not know exactly *how* God placed miraculous power within men (we know he did it by the laying on of the Apostle's hands, but how that was done we do not know). But we do *know* that God did all of these.

In Philippians 4:19, Paul said, "But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." This is only one of many passages that show that God is able to take care of us (Eph. 3:20; 2 Cor. 9:8), and that, if we put our priorities right, He will take care of us (Phi. 4:19; Rom. 8:28).

THE NEW TESTAMENT DOCTRINE OF PRAYER

1. *Prayer Must be with confidence.* Note again 1 John 5:14-15. We see that we must ask in confidence, knowing that God will answer. Obviously, as in Jesus' prayer at Gethsemane, the answer is sometimes "No." But, God will answer. Paul instructed that men were to pray "Without wrath and doubting" (1 Tim. 2:8).

2. *Prayer must be a persistent practice.* "Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1 The. 5:17-18). God expects us to pray. He expects us to have a prayerful attitude. If we are constantly thankful, we can also request those things of God of which we have need.

3. *Prayer must be done properly.* In James 4 the Scriptures list two reasons for the failure of some prayers. (1) Some fail because they are never prayed (v. 2). This could well be the biggest problem for many members of the Lord's body. (2) Some fail because they are improperly motivated (v. 3). The motivation of these prayers is to further friendship with the world (v. 4).

When we pray, and do so with the proper attitude, God does answer prayer.

4. *Prayer will bring true peace.*

Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the

peace of God with passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (Phi. 4:6-7).

Prayer, when practiced, will be a guiding force in our lives. It provides the leavening that makes it possible to face all that life may bring our way.

5. *Prayer avails much.* Again, the context of James 5:16 is a miraculous context. However, just like other valid principles are found in miraculous contexts, (e.g. Let all things be done decently and in order—1 Cor. 14:40), the principle that “the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” is valid. God does answer prayer, though not miraculously, today.

CONCLUSION

If prayer is not properly practiced, in reaction to Pentecostal ideas, then the church cannot be what God will have it to be.

To please God we need: praying members, praying families, praying preachers, praying elders and deacons, and praying congregations.

Let us go back to the New Testament teaching on prayer. Let us teach it and preach it from the pulpit. Let us practice it in our daily lives. Let us become a prayerful people.

I have on video tape an old leper in India. He is reaching his withered hands with wrangled fingers toward the God of Heaven. His touching appeal to his maker needs to become the picture of the Lord’s body bowed down in the despair of a world lost in sin, lifting her voice to her God. *Shall we pray!*

ARE WE MOVING AWAY FROM THE STANDARD FOR STEADFASTNESS TO THE FAITH?

W. D. Jeffcoat



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It is indeed a pleasure to speak on this occasion during the twelfth annual Bellview Lectures. I am grateful to the eldership for the kind invitation, and recognize the responsibility that is mine in addressing 1 Corinthians 15:58 and the question, “Are we moving away from the New Testament’s standard for stedfastness to the faith?”

INTRODUCTION

During the earthly sojourn of the Lord, when He came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples an extremely significant question. The question was not only fraught with great meaning but will continue to be for as long as time endures. The answer has been the topic of more books, the subject of more poetry, and the lyrical thrust for more songs than any other object of discussion. In replying to the Lord’s question, the Apostle Peter not only supplied the answer but likewise a definition to “the like precious faith” which Peter alludes to in 2 Peter 1:1. The Lord questioned, “But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Mat. 16:15-16).

Jesus the Christ, the Son of the living God, the central character of the sacred writings, is prophetically proclaimed in the Old Testament and personally presented in the New Testament. It is, therefore, no wonder that the resurrection, the central fact of the eternal verities, has to do with the Christ. Those who study Romans 13 glean a powerful truth in regard to Christian deportment. Those who investigate Hebrews 11 survey a marvelous treatise on Christian faith. Those who consider 1 Corinthians 13 learn what Christian love will do. Bible students, however, must peruse 1 Corinthians 15 for choice words concerning the glorious resurrection doctrine.

The Apostle Paul begins this wonderful account with the following words:

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he arose again the third day according to the scriptures (1 Cor. 15:1-4).

Paul concludes the chapter in the following words.

But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord (vv. 57-58).

In the opening phrase of verse 58, the term “therefore,” frequently employed by Paul, introduces a conclusion based on foregoing premises. As an adverb of conclusion, in this particular passage it stresses the importance of being “stedfast” and “unmoveable” in view of the reality of the resurrection.

The resurrection teaching did not originate with Paul for the Lord had proclaimed it (John 5:28-29). Peter instructed the Jews of it on that momentous day of Pentecost (Acts 2:22-24). Later Paul asserted it amidst Grecian philosophers in Athens (Acts 17:30-31).

BE YE STEDFAST

In view, therefore, of the awesome fact of the resurrection, Paul, in writing to the Corinthian church, said, “Be ye stedfast, unmoveable!” Please observe that the apostle neither said, “Be not stubborn,

nor obstinate,” but rather, “Be ye stedfast.” He employs the term in a metaphorical sense. In a literal sense the word conveys the idea of, “be seated,” as an audience may be seated before a speaker. In the present figurative usage, however, the term is expressive of moral fixity or stability. Through the annals of time the virtuous characteristic of steadfastness has been appreciated, approved, and applauded.

In the year 1777 a boy was born in the commonwealth of Virginia. As the youngster grew to early manhood he, along with his parents, moved to the commonwealth of Kentucky. Although yet quite young he became known for his exceptional ability as a capable and adept orator or public speaker. Later he became congressman from his state and still later he became Secretary of State of our United States. Later he aspired to the presidency of the nation. On one occasion a bill came before Congress involving one of the states and the servitude of slavery. He was counseled by his political advisors in Washington that if he voted a certain way in regard to the bill, he should never expect to further his political career by becoming president. Without hesitation, Henry Clay turned to his advisors and said, “I had rather be right than president!”

The Lord’s church in our generation is in dire need of those who will sacrifice personal ambition for principle’s sake! Often such requires great courage. Principles, however, which are right and absolutely cannot be wrong must always take precedence over personal ambitions! Confidence breeds steadfastness. When persons have confidence in those under whom they serve, they will most likely be steadfast in their work. What about those who are servants of the Lord? Paul alluded to this confidence in speaking of the Christ in the following words. “for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day” (1 Tim. 1:12). The apostle not only taught but practiced steadfastness because he had confidence in the Lord!

The term “unmoveable” which follows “stedfast” in the Corinthian text serves to reinforce the expression. It is indicative of that which cannot be shifted, and the allusion is to a statue, such as is often seen in cemeteries and parks. The idea is that of being firmly planted or fixed. Paul, no doubt, had this very thought in mind when he wrote to

the Philippian brethren. "I am set for the defence of the gospel" (Phi. 1:16). "Set," from *keimai*, is expressive of being "dug in or entrenched."

In the Fall of 1863 in the terrible war between the states, a battle was being waged in Chattanooga, Tennessee. A Union officer, General George H. Thomas, and his troops were encircled by Confederate forces. From his encampment atop nearby Signal Mountain, Ulysses S. Grant, who at that time was a rather obscure Union general, saw Thomas and his predicament. He immediately stepped to his signal corpsman's tent and had him to wig-wag a flag message to General Thomas' headquarters in the valley below. It consisted of five words in which he asked, "How long can you hold?" Immediately upon receiving the inquiry, General Thomas had his corpsman to wig-wag a flag message back to Grant's headquarters. It also consisted of five words. "We'll stay until we starve!" In a physical sense, this is what steadfastness is about!

Paul expressed the same principle and the things that will follow eternally for steadfast Christians when he wrote to Christians in Galatia. "And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not" (Gal. 6:9).

The powerful statement of Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:58 pronounces that in the face of happiness or adversity God's children are to be steadfast in Christian service! When confronted with health or suffering, saints in Christ are to be steadfast in Christian deportment! In view of joy or grief, the Lord's followers are to be steadfast in demeanor! In the face of optimism or discouragement, prosperity or poverty, the Lord's people are to be steadfast in every Christian endeavor! In fact, when steadfastness is most difficult in the lives of children of God, at that very moment it is most necessary! Such has always been the case and such will always be. There are no exceptions to the same!

BIBLICAL EXAMPLES

The pages of Holy Writ glow with superlative examples of those approved of God for their steadfastness. The great emancipator of Israel, Moses, is cited by the Hebrews writer.

By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of reward (Heb. 11:24-26).

He exhibited confidence in God, and he demonstrated it by steadfastness and resoluteness of character. Esteem invariably engenders steadfastness.

On one occasion Paul, residing with Philip the evangelist in Caesarea Philippi, determined to go to Jerusalem. Several others, including Agabus the prophet of God, were fearful for his life if he made the journey. Paul questioned, "What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 21:13). The apostle not only approved the principle of steadfastness in teaching, but also demonstrated it in practice. He was strong because he was steadfast! Great deeds are always accomplished by those who will not succumb or give in to defeat, but who follow divine directives, come what may!

The Lord, however, affords the premier example of steadfastness. Shortly before He was suspended on Calvary's cross and before having been scourged to the extent that no doubt His back looked like whitecaps on a sea of blood, He cried out to the heavenly Father, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Mat. 26:39). Yea, the Son of God was steadfast in His resolve to do the Father's will!

Pleasing service to God requires that we "hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end" (Heb. 3:14). Steadfastness is a prerequisite to spiritual strength, and spiritual strength is absolutely essential to salvation!

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF TEACHING

Through the centuries, many orders have been given and subsequent events have occurred that have directed the course of history. All such orders, however, pale into significance when compared to that given by the Lord in Matthew 28:18-20. It stresses the impor-

tance of teaching. The sermon on the mount begins with the concept of teaching and closes with the content of teaching. "And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: And he opened his mouth and taught them" (Mat. 5:1-2). Among those things taught were, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Mat. 7:21). How can persons know what to do unless they receive instruction? How can they learn to be stedfast unless they are stedfastly taught? Teaching precedes doing God's will.

Almost 700 years before the Lord came to the earth, Isaiah proclaimed the principle, "Learn to do well" (Isa. 1:17). A number of implications are attached to these words. (1) There is the implication of an acquired characteristic. Persons do not automatically know what they should do, but they must "learn." (2) A teacher is implied, for in order to learn persons must be taught. Although persons may teach themselves as well as be taught by others, this in no way negates the idea that they must be taught in order to learn. (3) The text implies a willingness to learn, for persons will not learn without a disposition to do so. (cf., 1 Pet. 2:2; Jam. 1:21). (4) There is the implication of an activity. Those who learn must not do so merely for the purpose of mental exercise or for the acquisition of knowledge but for the purpose of doing something. (5) A correct doing process is also implied, for persons are to "do well." (6) There is likewise the implication of a source for correct doing. In order to "do well" persons must be instructed from this source, which is, of course, the Word of God.

What will the church be brotherhood-wide ten years from now? The answer to a great degree depends upon the stedfastness of Christians to teach! Paul employed three metaphors indicative of the significance of teaching, namely, an agricultural metaphor, an engineering metaphor, and a military metaphor. "*Rooted* and *built* up in him, and *stablished* in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving" (Col. 2:7).

The only fortress that the church has against human innovations is Bible knowledge! Many brethren have moved away from the New Testament's standard for stedfastness in teaching. When brethren do

not know how to ascertain divine authority, or whether such is even essential, they are without soul-saving knowledge!

EVIDENCES OF DEPARTURE

We are, no doubt, moving away from the New Testament's standard for steadfastness to the faith! The law of rationality is that we are to draw only such conclusions as are warranted by the evidence. What does the evidence suggest? We are languishing in a period in which many brethren are seemingly more interested in sophisticated and intricate promotional ploys in endeavoring to reach persons, than they are in proclaiming the pristine principles of the gospel of Christ! A pure and powerful stance in regard to the gospel is the only hope for accountable beings!

In recent years, various congregations have constructed Family Life Centers for the partial purpose of sponsoring or hosting athletic endeavors, and have attempted their defense by claiming that such involve expediency. Where there is no authority, however, there can be no expedience and there is no authority for the same! Where does the Bible sanction such church-hosted events? Those who would defend such are likely not getting what they need in Bible classes or preaching, or if they are, they are not making the proper application! Some persons are endeavoring to draw a parallel between such facilities and facilities where fellowship meals may be hosted. The Bible does not warrant such an attempt. The church has divine authorization for fellowship meals, but the church does not have the same for the hosting of athletic endeavors. Since the church has divine approval for the former but no specifics are stated in Scripture, (i.e., whether to eat on homemade tables under shade trees adjacent to a parking lot, or in a room provided, etc.), it is a matter of expediency. When an act is authorized, but the means of carrying it out is not stated in the Scriptures, we may select means, *provided* the means which we select are not wrong within themselves.

Those who approach such matters by questioning, "Where has God said we cannot construct such facilities and among other things host athletic events?," have a woeful misapprehension of biblical hermeneutics. Where has God made a law stating that we cannot build

a facility and operate a threeering circus provided no questionable acts or attire is permitted?

The implication of such devotees is that any act forbidden must be specifically enjoined by a scriptural injunction. Such reasoning is erroneous for no positive prohibition is given for many things that are not permissible. The New Testament neither explicitly states that it is sinful to sprinkle infants as a religious service, nor gamble or use heroin.

The church was not designed for, or is it capable of, performing athletic needs (i.e., physical exercise). Such is the responsibility of the home. The church is all-sufficient to do what God intended it to do and the home is all-sufficient to discharge its functions as well. Those who have no better concept of God's Word than to attempt the defense of the church's constructing facilities to be utilized for athletics have moved away from the New Testament's standard for steadfastness to the faith!

The so-called unity in diversity movement of recent years is likewise an indication that brethren have digressed from the faith. The basic barrier to unity is neither the fact that the so-called Christian Church is denominational in character, nor that their concept of church evangelism is corrupt, nor that mechanical instrumental music in worship is unscriptural, for these are only symptoms of the problem. The problem is that of divine authority! Is it essential to walk by faith? How do we ascertain what it means to walk by faith?

There is no principle more clearly stated in the New Testament than that of faith as the grounds of acceptable action in the realm of religion. But faith emanates from the Word of God! Opinions can be formed on very meager evidence or none at all, but no one can exercise faith except that it rests upon the solid foundation of God's Word (Rom. 10:17). This is why Paul said, "For we walk by faith, not by sight" (1 Cor. 5:7). The Christian walk therefore is not to be by what merely *seems* to be right. The writer in Hebrews 11:6 declares, "But without faith it is impossible to please him." The three verses (i.e., Rom. 10:17; 2 Cor. 5:7; Heb. 11:6) add up to the following. (1) No Word of God, no hearing the Word. (2) No hearing the Word, no faith. (3) No faith, no walking by faith. (4) No walking by faith, no

pleasing God! The faithful impartation of Bible truth, and adherence thereto, is a prime prerequisite to being steadfast and unmoveable.

Those who are steadfast in the faith, as sound brethren have stated in recent years, do not believe that a penitent believer can be baptized without knowing why he is being baptized! They do not believe there are Christians in “practically all the denominations known today!” They do not believe that it is sectarian to maintain that only Christians will be saved, and that Christ adds the saved to *His* church! They do not believe the Bible teaches a dual fellowship! They do not believe that the Lord’s people can be in fellowship with the Lord and be in fellowship with those who are out of fellowship with Him! They do not believe that it is arrogant, self-righteous, hateful, or sectarian to state that we, as members of the New Testament church, are the only Christians, for the saved are in the church! They do not believe that there are “sincere, knowledgeable, devout Christians scattered among all the various denominations!” Yes, there are those among us who have moved away from the New Testament’s standard for steadfastness to the faith!

The proliferation of modern so-called versions of the Bible in recent years has likewise in no way helped persons adhere to the New Testament’s standard for steadfastness to the faith. The hue and cry of some persons has been that the King James Version and American Standard Version are too difficult to understand, and particular emphasis has been given to the KJV. There are some difficult passages, but there are many teachings in the Bible in which the truth is not on the surface. For every difficult statement there are also those of similar nature in the others. This is not, however, the issue! For illustration’s sake (although the writer does not believe it), suppose we grant that the KJV is difficult. Would brethren rather have a version that is difficult, or one that is doctrinally unsound? All genuinely concerned brethren would no doubt prefer the former. If such were the case, all that would be necessary is to cite proof for the doctrinal unsoundness of various modern so-called versions. It seems that many brethren today who have discarded the trustworthy KJV and ASV, but formerly upheld the Revised Standard Version as reliable, have turned to the more recent New International Version. It along with other

recent publications, however, leaves much to be desired. As only one of many cases in point, consider the NIV and Colossians 3:16.

Is there a direct statement in the Bible that commands us to teach and admonish one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs in worship? Certainly! The proof-text is Colossians 3:16. It does *not* teach it, however, in the NIV rendering of the text! The command is taken *out* of the text. Such is a gross error! Notice the NIV rendering. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God." The little two-letter word "as," completely annihilates the command of Paul! Not only is the command taken away, but the fact that we teach and admonish one another when we sing! The way it is stated in the NIV the thought is simply, (1) Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and (2) Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. This is indeed a serious matter. It is, in fact, a mutilation of the text!

Of special interest in this verse is the pronoun *heautois*, translated in the KJV, ASV, and also in the NIV, "one another." Grammarians classify this term as a reciprocal, reflexive pronoun. Commenting on this type of word, Dana and Mantey write, "When a plural subject is represented as affected by an interchange of the action signified in the verb, it is called a reciprocal construction." After stating the foregoing, the authors cite both Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16 as examples of the reciprocal pronoun. This is in *Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament*, pp. 131-32. In the true rendering of the text the participles are imperative (i.e., the teaching and admonishing), and are to be done while *assembled, and by singing!* Several years ago the scholarly Guy N. Woods wrote, "In the nature of the case two or more people must be present. Fewer than two people cannot carry out Colossians 3:16; if two, then two thousand, and this is corporate (congregational) action." What is the meaning and significance of this?

Notice that the "one another" clause in the NIV rendering is with the "teaching and admonishing" phrase, and is not with the phrase

that involves singing. This is an extremely terrible blunder! Why? In the NIV rendering (1) congregational singing is *not* commanded, (2) teaching and admonishing when we sing is *not* commanded, and (3) the fact that all are to sing is not commanded! Authority for the above three, which is inherent in this text, is lacking in the NIV rendering of the same! Those who would sanction such a treatise and tolerate such a loose rendering of the text have moved away from the New Testament's standard for steadfastness to the faith whether they realize it or not!

INDOCTRINATION

The Bible principle of reaching people is to teach them! To teach, means to indoctrinate! Observe Nehemiah 8:8. "So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading." The principles referred to by the Old Testament scribe are as applicable today as they were the day they were penned. Teaching involves an exegesis, exposition, or an exposing of the subject matter. The present text suggests the content, style, and motive in teaching. In order for men's labor to not be in vain pertaining to spiritual principles, the content of their teaching must be "the law of God." The law of God concerns His words, His eternal verities, or His divine revelation to man, the Bible. Content in teaching is of utmost importance! It has often been said that one can lead a horse to water, but cannot make him drink. Such is not necessarily true, for if a horse's digestive system is healthy and if enough salt is put in his corn, when he is led to water he will drink! The same principle is true in teaching. If enough content is put into the teaching effort and if a person's digestive system (i.e., disposition or attitude) is proper, he will accept the Word! So far as style is concerned the law of God must be taught "distinctly." The truth must be analyzed and expanded clearly or enlarged as an optometrist does when dilating the pupils of a patient's eyes. Such requires meticulous study on a teacher's part! In the passage under consideration they "gave the sense." To do so is to make the application, show the value, detail the intent, or literally put weight to it. The divine scribe suggests the motive in teaching in stating they "caused them to understand." In so doing, those who were taught acquired a mental perception of the

divine will of God! An interesting observation regarding motives in teaching may be noted from John 1:37. "And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus." The "two disciples," one of whom was Andrew, heard "him" (John the Baptist) speak, and as a result they were desirous of following the Lord. John the Baptist neither spoke nor acted in such way as to cause them to desire to merely follow him, but the Son of God! The church in our day in many instances is in dire need of those who promote "Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2), rather than self!

Stedfastness in the faith requires stedfast teaching! Persons obviously cannot teach that which they do not know. Those who know nothing about something cannot get something out of nothing! James expressed the principle in the phrase, "But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty" (Jam. 1:25). The term "looketh," from *para-kupto*, denotes stooping, bending forward, or leaning over in order to get a better view. It is much stronger than *blepo*, a common word for "look." The idea of scrutinizing or investigating in a minute fashion is inherent in the term. All who would be stedfast, stand in need of a thorough investigation of such texts as Job 23:12 and Psalm 42:1. Stedfast study and teaching present direct challenges to our loyalty, courage, and priorities!

FALSE DOCTRINE

Those among us who will not condemn false doctrine are not upholding the New Testament's standard for stedfastness to the faith! Since the Bible condemns false principles, Christians must not do less! There is a vast difference between pronouncing sentence upon false views that persons hold, and upon the persons themselves. Christians do not err when they plead with persons to accept Bible principles. The Lord will deal with all unrighteous persons in the day of reckoning (John 12:48), but it is a Christian *responsibility* to condemn, not the persons, but rather any and all unrighteousness! Christians therefore have the right and, in fact, even the obligation to judge or make distinctions between that which is right or wrong predicated, of course, on the Word of God! If Christians cannot do this (i.e., judge in this sense) how can we, with God's approval, defend the purity of the truth and the sanctity of the Lord's church

against any false position? On the other hand, if our attitude is wrong, we are wrong, not because of *what* we have said, but because of the *disposition* we have manifested in saying it! The take-it-or-leave-it disposition toward false doctrine that is displayed today in some places is but an indication that some brethren have moved away from the New Testament's standard for steadfastness to the faith!

There are at least four attitudes that persons may display toward false doctrine, namely, indulgence in it, indifference to it, ignorance of it, or indignation toward it. There is something wrong with any child of God who does not exhibit indignation toward any form of false doctrine! To neglect to take a stand pertaining to such matters is to undermine one of the very purposes for which the church exists (1 Tim. 3:15). Should we do less than the psalmist of God? "Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way" (Psa. 119:104). Did Paul manifest an unrighteous disposition toward that which is erroneous? "Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good" (Rom. 12:9). False doctrine cannot save for it ridicules obedience (Rom. 6:17), it deceives (Gal. 6:7-8), it causes damnation (1 The. 1:7-9), and it invariably thrives on the view that what persons believe is unimportant! False doctrine stifles investigation, smothers mental activity (Rom. 12:1-2), removes the premium from truth (John 8:32; 17:17), and contradicts itself by often declaring things both true and untrue at the same time! It likewise is the basis for moral anarchy, disregards divine authority (John 12:48), and exalts sincerity and emotion at the expense of truth (cf., John 14:6).

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The church is not a dynamic force in the world today! Why? Biblical illiteracy is running rampant! Many have lost a sense of responsibility (Mark 16:15; Jude 3), urgency (Heb. 9:27-28), and expectancy (John 5:28-29). The church is a product of debate, for it was born and nurtured in controversy. The gospel of Christ was unpopular in the first century and continues as such today! We need to recognize that we can preach the truth and still lose our souls for not stressing the stringent demands of the gospel!!

The challenge is before us to be steadfast to the faith. False teachers may continue to deny the inspiration, inerrancy, and all-sufficiency of

the Bible, but not without being challenged by loyal soldiers of the cross! False teachers may continue to ridicule the essentiality and mission of the church, the purpose of baptism, and the oneness of the church, but not without being challenged by steadfast saints! False teachers may continue to promote the doctrines of salvation by faith only and the impossibility of apostasy, along with mechanical instrumental music in worship and the view that premillennialism is a Bible doctrine, but not without being challenged by those dedicated to Calvary's cause! Existentialists and pragmatists may continue to sow seeds of doubt, fear, and skepticism in the fertile soil of human mind, but God's faithful husbandmen will dig them up!

Those who would adhere steadfastly to the faith will promote all sound doctrine and expose all error! The steadfast will give total resistance (Rev. 2:10), defending the point of attack and attacking the point of defense! Those who preach in generalities because they are fearful, need to study Revelation 21:8. Any wholesome attitude of men toward sound doctrine has always been and ever will be in direct proportion to their sensitivity toward error!

There are those who are committed to the destruction of Christianity. As with sound doctrine, Christianity's power can be measured in direct proportion to its distinctiveness! If we lose our distinctiveness, we lose our power! If we lose our power, we have no right to exist!

We should be ashamed to be afraid to promote sound doctrine, and should be afraid to be ashamed to suffer any possible ill consequence from its promotion! We *can* and we *must* carry out our responsibility by preserving, defending, and transmitting the truth (1 Tim. 2:2), holding fast the form of sound words (1 Tim. 1:13), keeping faithfully the ordinances of the Christ (1 Cor. 4:2), speaking the things which befit sound doctrine (Tit. 2:1), and exemplifying Christian deportment in every facet of our lives (Phi. 1:27).

Do we *really* love the cause of Christ? When there is a need, we commit ourselves to the defense of that which we *really* love! We must desire concord and spiritual tranquility, but not at the expense of steadfastness to God!

Because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ the Son of the living God, Paul declared, "your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor.

15:58). The Savior was born for our benefit. He walked among men as our example. He died for our sins. He rose triumphantly from the grave for our justification. He is today seated as our mediator on the right hand of the throne of God in heaven. Some glorious day the Lord is coming in the clouds of the heavens to receive the steadfast into His bosom, where they shall be forever privileged to bask their souls in the sunny smile of their Redeemer's love!

Ruth Carruth in collaboration with the late beloved Tillit S. Teddlie wrote, "Swiftly we're turning life's daily pages, swiftly the hours are changing to years, how are we using God's golden moments, shall we reap glory, shall we reap tears?" When we go out into the sable night to meet God, position, power, prominence, and popularity will be meaningless, steadfastness to the blessed Lord and His noble cause will mean everything! "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

May the good Lord help us not to move away from the cross, but to zealously uphold New Testament principles for steadfastness to the faith! "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified."

THE ENEMIES OF THE CROSS

Foy L. Smith



Foy Smith was born in Crowder, Oklahoma, December 9, 1917. He preached his first sermon September 3, 1933. He attended Freed-Hardeman College and the University of Oklahoma. He is married to the former Mabel Catherine Mitchell. Foy began his first work in Springdale, Arkansas in 1939. He has done local work in Oklahoma, Arkansas, Texas and California. In 1962 he preached for the Magnolia Center congregation for fourteen months and then went on the road for seventeen years holding gospel meetings. Foy spends his time writing and has authored fifteen books—his favorite is, “The Days Of Thy Youth.”

It is impossible to live in the world without enemies. We all have them. They seem to be on every hand. We wish it were not so but it is. We will have enemies as long as we tabernacle in this old world. Webster defines an enemy as: “one who is hostile to another...one who seeks to overthrow that to which he is opposed...one who is opposite a friend...a military force.” There are times when we have enemies of whom we are not aware. This makes it all but impossible to seek a reconciliation. If we have enemies we want them to come out and declare themselves—come out and tell us what it is all about. I am sure this is why we often ask the Lord in prayer to bless our enemies, even those whom we know not.

Our text is a dynamic text. It not only tells us that Paul had enemies, it also tells us the effect these estrangements had upon the apostle. Listen to the text:

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 mind earthly things.

It seems in this text that the apostle is talking primarily of those who claimed to be followers of Christ. They, like many today, were traitors to the cause of Christ while parading under the “sign of the

cross” and under the banner of the Lord. This is far worse than opposition from those who made no pretense at being right. The enemy on the inside is always worse than the enemy on the outside. No doubt the apostle was talking about those who had been called by the name of Jesus, and then turned away to become traitors, seeking to destroy in the very name of the One they claimed to follow. There is a gigantic army of such characters all around us today and we have to contend with them and stand against them. If not, then we become traitors to the cross of Christ. Many are enemies in the camp who declare to be friends. With smiling faces and pious countenances they can deceive “the very elect” until some brave soul shows them to be exactly what they are—enemies of the cross of Christ.

Our text tells us what Paul’s personal feelings were concerning these enemies. He did not take a calloused attitude toward them. He did not profess to hate them. He did not act like he was wholly disinterested; no, he admonished them “even weeping.” His eyes were often red from weeping over the errors of these brethren who had become false teachers. There has been a lot of weeping since the very beginning. Surely our first parents must have wept when they had to forfeit the glories and beauties of the Garden of Eden. What about Cain’s tears after he sinned against God by offering the wrong sacrifice? Do you believe he wept? Maybe only when God could see, but surely he must have wept because of the awful price he had to pay. We do not read of the tears of Abraham but you can put it down for sure that his eyes burned with tears when he had to offer his son Isaac. What father would not weep, save some depraved rascal depraved beyond tears? Jeremiah wept until he became known as the “weeping prophet.” David no doubt wept. In fact he declared, “Weeping may endure for a night but joy cometh in the morning” (Psa. 30:5). On and on we can go. All of God’s great people knew how to weep. Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus (John 11:35). He wept as he looked over Jerusalem and predicted her fall (Mat. 23:37). When Paul said goodbye to the elders at Ephesus they all wept together (Acts 20:37), and now the same great man of God weeps over the condition of some who were “enemies of the cross.”

I am sure that some in our brotherhood think that some of us who take a strong, even hard stand against error do not weep. How wrong they are. Paul wept for false teachers he had to rebuke, even calling them by name at times, and we weep; oh, yes, we weep often over brethren who once stood tall and strong for truth but in “these latter days” have all but denied that truth. Some of us have been on lectureships very similar to this one with brethren who delivered powerful lessons, but they would be completely out of place on such a lectureship now. Does it hurt? You better believe it hurts! I have tapes of lessons taped at lectureships like this one. On the other side is the lesson of some brother who preached powerfully but no more. He has denied the very things he said, things that were true then and are true now. Maybe the only strong preaching such a brother will do again will be when such tapes are played. Sad, sad indeed. They have become “enemies of the cross of Christ.”

Perhaps Paul says more than meets the casual eye when he states concerning such brethren, “whose God is their belly.” Would it be amiss to read it “whose God is the church that pays the biggest salary?” Are there mercenaries in our pulpits? Of course there are. A preacher (?) stated from a large pulpit a few years ago, “A church in a large city has offered me sixty thousand dollars a year to move and work with them.” Then he added, “But I have prayed about it and the Lord is leading me to stay here for my fifty-five thousand.” Do you know what this preacher (?) was doing? That was a subtle way to get the deacons involved. Can’t you just hear them as they parlayed and then approached the elders with: “You know, brethren, we can’t afford to lose our preacher.” Of course they didn’t put a question mark behind “preacher” like I have. “We better get busy and meet that offer or we may lose him.” I just “betcha” as some say, that he got his raise to at least sixty thousand and maybe more. Yes, sad to say, some preachers have mighty big “bellies.” They see dollar marks when they should be seeing lost souls. And this does not argue that I am against preachers receiving good, liveable salaries. It just should not be the number one point when negotiations are begun. If such is the case then they are guilty, as Paul says in the text, of “minding earthly things.”

I say again, we all have our enemies. This has been true of God's people all through the ages. In the early day Jehovah was setting before His people blessings and curses, depending on their response to His will. If they were disobedient as they often were, he threatened, "Ye shall have no power to stand before your enemies" (Lev. 26:37). The only time now when we cannot face our enemies and triumph over them is when we are disobedient to the Lord's Word. The picture turns from defeat to victory in this verse: "Thy enemies shall be found liars unto thee, and thou shalt tread upon their high places" (Deu. 33:29). The Lord teaches us to be good to our enemies, feeding them if they are hungry and clothing them if they are naked (Rom. 12:20). I will gladly traverse this nation to help a brother who needs help, even one who has turned his back on the cause we have so long proclaimed. Even brethren whose names we could very easily mention here at this time. I do not want enemies. I hurt when any man is my enemy. But I must be true to the charge delivered and that charge is to preach the gospel and condemn error. I must preach it kindly—in love, never sarcastically. Preach it, for precious souls are at stake.

It is a sad fact that most members of the church today do not know who our enemies are. They know very little about doctrine and about doctrinal differences. In the olden days members of the church almost universally knew what false doctrine was and knew how to meet and expose it. That is not true today. Error can run over the average member and that member will not know what hit him. If he does know, he does not know how to handle it. Talk about handicapped people! Our hearts go out to them for any one of us could be handicapped before any given day is over. A sadder fact is that we have so many handicapped church members. They are crippled and seemingly do not know it. A crippling disease cannot be fought unless we know what that disease is, and liberalism and modernism cannot be fought unless we know what liberalism and modernism are. Christians who do not stand strong in doctrine—in what the church is and what it isn't—are handicapped.

The church has enemies of the cross. There are forces out there with one purpose in mind, that being to destroy the church and its influence. We cannot fight the enemy if we do not know what or who

the enemy is. For the rest of our time we shall address a few of the real live enemies of the cross. There are persons and there are systems that are in existence for the purpose of destroying the church. Christianity, true Christianity is their enemy. We must know what these systems and doctrines are.

COMMUNISM

In years past I spent some time in special services speaking on Communism and its evil intentions, which intentions are still the same—world domination. I had some great meetings and always kept such special meetings apart from my gospel meetings. As hard as I tried to keep the specials on Communism separate from my regular preaching meetings, there would occasionally be some uninformed “expert” who would go out crying, “That’s politics! You ought to keep politics out of the pulpit!” Such ignorance is to be pitied, I suppose. Over all, such meetings were informative and productive of good for most people came to realize that communism is a false religion. Communism has its gods—Lenin, Marx, Engles and others. Its basic principle is the proclamation that there is no God. This puts us into the business of fighting the system. Communism uses Christian principles of dedication, sacrifice, putting the party first always. Communism has its “holy” books, has a “mission” program that spends many billions of dollars each year to spread its propaganda. This evil system says Christianity is “an opiate of the people.” There is no way for the two systems, Christianity and Communism, to co-exist. The world is not big enough for peaceful co-existence as the Communists advocate—from the lips out only. Christianity is designed to take the whole world, not that this will ever happen. Communism is designed and rests on a false foundation with its objective being the taking of the whole world. The Bible teaches that man is a rational being created in the image of the Almighty God (Gen. 1:26). Communism says that “every human being is merely an evolutionary animal without soul, spirit, or continuing life.” This gigantic evil says further, “The United States is an evil empire which enriches itself by robbing, impoverishing, and slaughtering the workers in underdeveloped countries; history has ordained that the Soviet

Union, led by the Communist party, will lead the forces of Communism to world domination.”

If Communism were strictly a political party we would pitch it into the class with our major political parties, but it isn't. I say again, Communism is a false religion and will oppose Christianity in every way possible. Communism is an “enemy of the cross of Christ” and if it ever dominates the world the church will have to go into hiding again just like it did during the dark ages and the reign of Roman Catholicism. Jesus talked about the days when “brother shall deliver up brother unto death, and the father the child: and their children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death” (Mat. 10:21). Jesus is herein preparing his disciples who were to go out and preach, telling some things they could expect. This is also a perfect picture of the workings of Communism. It has happened over and over, children betraying their parents for anything said or done contrary to the party. No, it's not just a political party like ours-it is a false religion and Christianity cannot compatibly co-exist with it.

SOCIALISM

Just down the street from the City of Communism is the Town of Socialism. There is very little difference between the two systems. The definitions of each system are very similar. Socialism eliminates private ownership. Ownership and distribution are by the community rather than by the individuals. When our nation reaches the point where the government does just about everything for the rancher, farmer and others, by subsidizing, paying for improvements, etc., and on the surface being big brother, watch out! The government owns outright over three-fourths of the state of Arizona. It possibly owns that much of New Mexico and other states. Many farmers and ranchers and others are continually asking, “What can the government do for us?” It is sad. Their existence has come to depend just about solely on the government. They cannot live without the government like it is and they cannot live with the government without giving up private ownership in the end. This is a big step toward socialism. It is not funny! It is a struggle to overthrow the principle of private ownership of anything. In America? Yes, in America! In our beloved land? Yes, right here in our beloved land. What can we do about it?

We can just keep on preaching freedom and the right of the individual to own property. And his right to direct his own life without Socialistic interference. Christians can keep on praying. And Christians must come to know again that old principle that we do not get something for nothing.

Is the church getting real close to the Socialistic spirit when the average member whines and cries, asking, “What can the church do for me?” You see, Socialism in its true form doesn’t exalt God, either. It is an “enemy of the cross of Christ.”

ATHEISM, AGNOSTICISM

As far as I am concerned the word “Atheism” is just a refined word—an uptown word—for Infidel. It sounds more intellectual, more sophisticated to say, “I am an Atheist,” than to say, “I am an Infidel.” The latter has a bad ring to it. The former sounds more on the level of learning and scholarship. Webster says an Atheist is “a Godless person.” Now I like this definition. It is correct. The Atheist does not believe in God, therefore is Godless. David describes this enemy of truth when he says, “The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God” (Psa. 14:1). When Jesus warned about calling anyone a fool he meant that we should not unjustly use this title. The Atheist is a big fool and no one would be more quick to call him such than Jesus. David says the Infidel (Atheist) is a fool. I say, Amen, David!

Now the Agnostic has dressed himself up a bit more than the Atheist. The Agnostic says, “I do not say there is no God, I just say that I do not know there is a God.” He is more dangerous than the Infidel. His appeal is great among young people. He half-heartedly tries to save his neck if he gets caught in a tight place. As far as I am concerned, he is as much an Infidel as the one who openly admits that he is. The Agnostic does some of his most destructive work in the classroom, and the classroom cannot do very much arguing back. It is not too shocking any more to hear young people using the very words the Agnostic uses, “We don’t say there is no God, we just say we do not know there is a God.” And how often do church members find themselves going right along whether they know it or not, with this false doctrine? Agnosticism is an “enemy of the cross of Christ.”

DENOMINATIONALISM

Now we get down to where it really disturbs people. A preacher was heard to pray many years ago, and they still pray the same way: “Oh, God, I thank thee that we don’t all have to believe the same way, that we have all these fine denominations and we can choose the one that pleases us best.” What a prayer! Now contrast that with the prayer of Jesus in John 17, in which He prayed agonizingly, “that they may be one” (v. 21). Jesus did not die for a bunch of divisive denominations; He died for His bride, the church. He has but one bride (John 3:29). That bride is His church (Col. 1:18). All the illustrations of the church in the New Testament in one way or another teach the unity of the one body. Paul forcefully declares that “there is one body” (Eph. 4:4). Human denominations were born in division and confusion and they will always be characterized by division and confusion. But the Lord “is not the author of confusion but of peace” (1 Cor. 14:33).

If the Bible be true, there is but one church. This is what the Bible says. Now my “if” does not imply doubt on my part. There is no doubt on my part. I am making a point. A better way to put it is, “Since the Bible is true,” or, “I know the Bible is true.” And since this is an undeniable conclusion, there is but one church. Denominationalism is sinful and wrong. It divides communities. It divides families. It divides the best of friends. I cannot say much good for it. It is wrong. It grieves me for I, like many of you, have many close and dear friends caught up in denominationalism. And many of these friends are more devoted to their churches than we are to the Lord’s church. Their zeal, their interest, their devotion often put ours to shame. And this is a shame! Remember when Jesus commended the unjust steward? He commended him because “the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light” (Luke 16:8). It is sad to see the zeal of those in doctrinal error far outshining the zeal of those who profess to know the Lord and to stand in His ways. Paul commended the zeal of fleshly Israel, bearing them record that “they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge” (Rom. 10:2). In the absence of knowledge, the apostle said they “were going about to establish their own righteousness” and in so doing they were not “submitting themselves to the righteousness of God” (v. 2). This

is just about as perfect a picture of the situation today as we can find. Our brethren have knowledge, not as much as we once did, but more than other religions. But we are a lazy bunch. We do not have the zeal to carry out what we know is the Lord's will for us and the lost world. Knowledge without zeal is dangerous indeed. It is responsible for spiritual indolence and unconcern. To know better and not do better is sin (Jam. 4:17). When we get away from true knowledge then we go off on tangents that lead to false teachings and false worship. Many of the projects being carried on throughout the brotherhood today have to go back to a lack of Bible knowledge and a lack of respect for what the Bible teaches. When we get away from a "thus saith the Lord" we throw ourselves open to many strange winds of doctrines.

On the other hand, zeal without proper Bible knowledge is even more dangerous. Many have the excitement, the energy, the desire to get things done but they do not know what the Bible plan is for the carrying out of the work of the church. With them anything goes as long as it is exciting and dramatic. What God says has very little to do with what they do. There must be a well balanced combination of knowledge and zeal or big trouble ensues.

It is zeal without knowledge that fosters denominationalism. Thus denominationalism is sinful because it is the outgrowth of Bible ignorance. Ignorance destroys. It will destroy nations and it will destroy the church. We find an all-time shocking declaration by the prophet in these words: "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hos. 4:6). Denominationalism is based on ignorance of God's Word and ignorance destroys. Therefore, denominationalism destroys. The church is compared to an army. An army must be united or the battles will be lost. The church is like a true vine. It produces only good fruit—the same fruit—not every imaginable kind on the same vine. The church is a family. Without unity the family is destroyed. Denominationalism violates these and many other great Bible examples. Denominationalism is sinful. It is wrong in the light of what the Bible teaches. It is truly "an enemy of the cross of Christ." There is a text that seemed to have been written especially for preachers. It comes by inspiration through a preacher—awesome and fearful it is:

“Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?” (Gal. 4:16). Many will no longer stand up and preach against man-made churches. It just isn’t very popular to do so. In fact, it is about the most unpopular thing one can do. This is the dilemma in which we find ourselves when we get away from basic preaching and teaching. “Oh, we’ve heard that old stuff all our lives!” someone declares. So what? We have heard a lot of other things all of our lives too, yet they are such a vital part of our lives we dare not quit repeating them. If we cease to preach on baptism or any other important Bible command we will soon have a membership that will put question marks over those commands. It is a sad fact that we often make enemies of our own brethren when we emphasize the same commands that Jesus and the apostles emphasized. It is a tragedy indeed when many of our own become “enemies of the cross of Christ.” LETHARGY

The word “lethargy” is defined as “a state of inaction or indifference, drowsiness, profound sleep, indifference, forgetfulness. Now we can each be touched by these definitions if we are not constantly on the alert. We certainly are affected by a number of them in a physical way. The older we get, the easier it is for us to drop off to sleep at the wrong time, and perhaps are unable to sleep at the right time! I personally thought that the day would never come when I would get sleepy during a church service. Or in front of the television set! Have I had to revise my thinking along these lines! I am thinking of a gospel preacher who encouraged me very much when I was just a boy trying to preach. He was a member of a large family and I have lived to see most of that family go on, including my friend. My friend was brother Will W. Slater. Most of his preaching was done in Oklahoma, Arkansas, Missouri, Texas and another few states not far removed from these states. He composed some of the greatest songs in our song books today, and was an expert in this field. He preached and sang “o’er hill and o’er dale” and some of his best work was under old-fashioned (by today’s standards) brush arbors. He liked to tell about the time when he was preaching and an old brother was fast asleep. Brother Will addressed a brother sitting by the old fellow who was snoring away. “Brother Jim, wake brother Jones up.” “You wake him yourself, brother Slater. You put him to sleep!” Now this is an

old, old story, but always amusing. And brother Will loved to tell it. All of us as preachers have had to put up occasionally with this kind of sleeping. I say again that I get that way myself occasionally. But this is not the kind of sleep I am talking about. I have in mind the sleep of indifference, unconcern, and apathy. Our Lord warned over and over about this kind of sleep. This is truly a “sleep of death.”

We have a very dramatic picture of Jerusalem’s grief over her adversaries in the question, “Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by?” (Lam. 1:12). God’s fierce anger had been turned loose on Jerusalem and those who might have helped just passed on by unperturbed. Maybe they were “too busy” to stop and render help. The Lord’s cause is facing evils on all hands, the greatest of which is the unconcern on the part of those who are supposed to be its friends. How can God’s people be indifferent and unconcerned when not only the salvation of the world is at stake, but their own salvation as well? We are taught to save others and that in so doing we save ourselves.

Our brethren have experimented with all kinds of gimmicks to promote attendance and interest. Nearly all of them have failed, including the biggest gimmick of all—the so-called bus ministry. Am I opposed to using buses to bring people to our services? Of course not. I am, however, opposed to the sensational gimmickry that was a part of the bus ministry. One church started the “bus ministry” and then like parrots just about all the churches had to fall in line. A congregation that did not have a bus ministry was just about unscriptural in the eyes of those who were pushing the buses so hard. This so-called ministry resulted in the “children’s church.” Adults were glad in most cases to sit back and let the children take over. A few of our “high-powered” brethren saw an opportunity to make a batch of money out of the brethren and produced and sold all kinds of trinkets—pins, badges, caps, pencils and pens, even copyrighted the name of the new adventure—JOY BUS! While this was going on, the adults sat back asleep and just about lost the church to this sensational ministry. They were glad for enterprising preachers and “sleepy” adults to take over and run the “show.” It relieved them of responsibility. They could sleep on—take their ease and let the children run the church.

Am I opposed to doing special things for children? Of course not! Nor am I opposed to doing special things, creating new programs to stimulate interest for all ages providing those programs are in keeping with the dignity and purpose of the church. My point should be obvious: while adults slept through the years of some of the ministries, including the bus ministry, things got out of hand all over the country. It almost reached the point where it was, "If you will be baptized, we will take you by McDonalds and buy you a hamburger!" This fizzled out in a few years and one "controversial" editor of a brotherhood paper spoke the truth when he said that most of the buses were now on parking lots with grass growing "clear up to their bellies!"

Amen to this! This is the truth. I held a meeting for a sizable congregation in Arkansas. Their main interest was not in having a great hour in the main auditorium but in getting the sermon over and the dismissal by the time the children's church let out. Did I have my say? Well, most of you know me, don't you? Sleepy brethren—lethargy—oh, what a grievous sin sleeping on the post of duty is! When we do it and all kinds of false doctrines and practices slip in, we become "enemies of the cross of Christ."

We face doctrines tremendous in size because of this spirit of unconcern. The CROSSROADS heresy grows like wildfire while "sound" brethren sleep. The "umbrella of grace" theory allowing us to "do our thing and have our fun occasionally" if we missed out on some of these things when younger, is the product of a sleepy brotherhood. "God will allow you to sin for a season if you just really feel you must drink a little, carouse a little, etc., and His grace will sustain you." What a happy doctrine if true, that is, for those who want to breach moral integrity and have their fling with sin for a season. But is it true? Paul would say HOGWASH! And that's exactly what he says in Romans 6:1-2. The great apostle sounded a warning we would all do well to heed: "Awake to righteousness and sin not; for some have not the knowledge of God: I speak this to your shame" (1 Cor. 15:34). Our brethren, many of them "enemies of Jesus's cross?" Yes, sad to say, 'tis true.

DEATH

What an enemy this monster is! It is an enemy that touches those we love and gets around to touching us before it is through. I hate death! I hate it with all my being! I do not like to even be close to it! What a monster death is! What a sneaking coward death is! It lurks in dark places and waits for its victims. It will not stand and face its victims and fight toe to toe unless it has the advantage. It won't even "give a sucker an even break." When it has all the advantages, it strikes. This is the sign of a coward. I hate death! I do not like cowards and this coward I like least of all. I hate this coward! Death comes and robs us of those we love most—our friends—our associates our very own. Death takes our families—grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, nephews and nieces, brothers and sisters, parents, and it takes those we love most—our beloved children. I hate it! I have seen many of these very ones fall before this slimy, vile monster. I have seen homes robbed of mothers, leaving little children without that tender touch so important in their lives. I have seen children robbed of fathers—the family heads, leaving a sense of helplessness in the home. I have seen precious little ones robbed in one stroke of both father and mother, leaving an almost helpless situation. I have heard their cries and I have seen death lurking in the background laughing gleefully.

Oh, I hate this enemy of all mankind!

The devil is interested in making empty seats. He is in that business. He likes to empty baby cribs, likes to take young people out of the home just as they are beginning to fill out and reach maturity, loves to snatch away husbands and wives...this is his business. Death is his name! I hate him because God hates him. He is sin's author and God says, "Oh, do not this abominable thing which I hate!" (Jer. 44:4).

But, thanks be to God, there will come a time when this enemy since the first parents felt his cruel touch, will be put in his place. He will be destroyed forever! He will be swallowed up in victory! (1 Cor. 15:25). It will be a glorious day when we can hear death rattle overwhelm him. Then everything wrong will be made right. We will have new bodies which he cannot touch. They will be perfect—

perfect like that of the Son of God. We can appreciate the words of a great reformer who said, "The best of all is, God is with us." And Ludwig van Beethoven said, "I shall hear in Heaven." We can live with our enemies until Jesus comes, then we will have to face them no more. Let us just be sure that the Lord is not our enemy (Lam. 22). It is our lifelong duty to defend the cross against its enemies.

FIVE FUNDAMENTAL ERRORS OF CALVINISM

George W. DeHoff

God's people have always been influenced by those around them. Instead of depending on God and His Word, they spend too little time in learning a "Thus saith the Lord" and depending on that Word. Instead, they watch what others are doing, and imitate them. Nearly every error of the denominations finds its way into the Lord's church. Indeed, sometimes when denominationalists have found that something will not work, our brethren are just beginning to take it up!

There are two principal sources of error today—Catholicism and Calvinism. Nearly all the errors which we see in the church today are coming from Calvinism. The seminaries which our "scholars" attend are usually filled with Calvinism and many of the new Bible "translations" are Calvinistic in their "translation." It is not any wonder that our preachers receive this second-handed Calvinism from their teachers and that when they use and recommend "translations" and books saturated with this doctrine, it will be found everywhere.

There are five fundamental errors of Calvinism. We should know every one of them and how to refute them. (1) Election and Foreordination, (2) Limited Atonement, (3) Hereditary Total Depravity, (4) Direct Operation of the Holy Spirit Separate and Apart from the Written Word, and (5) Final Perseverance of the Saints.

(All of these errors are discussed in the *DeHoff-Davis* and the *Woods-Holder Debate*, both of which may be ordered from the Firm Foundation Publishing House.)

ELECTION AND FOREORDINATION

God has never been a respecter of persons. In every nation they that fear God and work righteousness are accepted by Him. The Calvinistic notion is that before man was born God decided whether he would be saved or lost. He "elected" some to be saved and some to be lost. If you are among the elect you will be saved but if you are

one of the non-elect, you will be lost. This false doctrine negates everything the Bible teaches. John 3:16 teaches that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son to die for us. God loves the whole world. Jesus died for all. This gift of salvation depends on our accepting it. “God will judge every man according to his works”—not according to a crooked election conducted before the man was born!

Many of our pioneer preachers called attention to the fact that there are three votes to be cast in this election: God votes for you to be saved, the devil votes for you to be lost and when we get your vote, the decision will be made.

LIMITED ATONEMENT

Closely connected with the election and foreordination doctrine is the doctrine of limited atonement—that Jesus did not die for all but only for the elect. This is so contrary to the teaching of the New Testament that one is amazed that anyone would take up with this false doctrine.

HEREDITARY TOTAL DEPRAVITY

These words cannot be found in the Bible one in a place, let alone all three together! The idea here is that Adam sinned and that all of his offspring—all mankind—thus inherited sin from Adam. Adam did sin and all have suffered the consequence of his sin, but not the guilt of his sin. Even the Old Testament taught that the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, the father shall not bear the iniquity of the son (Eze. 18:20).

Sin is a transgression of the law. That is not something that we inherit but something that we do. Little children are born into the world pure, holy and innocent. Jesus said, “Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven” (Mat. 19:14). He certainly did not mean that God’s kingdom is filled with totally depraved individuals. Our Lord told the disciples that to enter the kingdom they must be converted and become as little children—pure, holy, free from sin (Mat. 18:3). Little children who die are not saved—they are safe. “Safe in the arms of Jesus, Safe on his gentle breast.” When our little ones die, we cannot bring them back but we can go to them. How precious, indeed, is this promise!

DIRECT OPERATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

In the Bible, God's Holy Spirit operated only through His Word. The Holy Spirit guided the apostles into all truth (John 16:13). They wrote that truth for us in the Bible (2 Tim. 3:16). "These things are written, that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God; and that believing you might have life through his name" (John 20:30-31). Faith comes by hearing God's Word (Rom. 10:17). The preaching of our pioneer preachers knocked the mourners bench out of the denominations. Most of them gave it up. No man today knows any truth in religion unless it is in the written Word of God.

Indeed, everything the Bible says that the Holy Spirit does for us on earth, it also says the Word of God does it for us. This simply proves that God's Holy Spirit operates through God's written Word. Saints and sinners depend on this Word for God's message.

The notion that the Holy Spirit is operating in some manner separate and apart from His Word is Calvinism—it is false doctrine. (The famous *Hardeman-Bogard Debate*—now out of print—is one that every Christian should be familiar with.)

FINAL PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

The doctrine that one of God's children cannot be lost regardless of what he does is the most amazing of all false doctrines. More than 2,500 times the book of God warns God's children about being lost, falling away, being rejected. Do these warnings mean nothing? The first religious debate in the history of the world was between God and the devil in the garden of Eden. God told His children that they must not eat the forbidden fruit; that they would die the very day they did. The devil told them they were God's children and it would not hurt them no matter what they did. They obeyed the devil. Sin entered the world. Paul said he was afraid the same thing that happened to Adam and Eve would happen to Christians today (2 Cor. 11:3). The notion that Christ bore all our sins and we have nothing to fear is rank nonsense. Christ will not forgive our sins unless we repent of them. Every alien sinner must do what Peter told them in Acts 2:38. All the teaching about God imputing our sins to Christ is meaningless unless alien sinners will repent and be baptized like the Lord said. When

members of the church—Christians—sin, they must “Repent and pray” to be forgiven (Acts 8:22). We need not attempt to excuse ourselves by saying, “Christ died for me. He bore my sins. God will not impute sin to me.” He will and does unless you repent and pray like He said.

We need sermons on “Can a Child of God Fall From Grace?” The book of God teaches that they certainly can (Gal. 5:4). Example after example may be given from the Bible. “The wages of sin is death... Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?”

These five doctrines of Calvinism are false. They are having great influence in the world today. Members of the church—even our preachers—are being influenced by them. One does not need a degree from college nor a knowledge of “Greek and Latin” to expose them. A simple knowledge of the Bible will do the job.

DEPARTURES FROM THE FAITH ARE MANIFOLD

Ira Y. Rice, Jr.



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That Christians are supposed to strive toward *unity* is just as much a part of the doctrine of Christ as is *faith, repentance, confession* and *baptism*. All of us are familiar with Jesus' prayer that we might all be "one." Not only did He pray for the unity of His immediate apostles, "that they may be one, as we are" (John 17:11), but farther down in that same chapter, in verses 20 through 23, He further prayed,

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them and thou in me that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

Perceiving how *divided* those claiming to be Jesus' disciples have been in recent years, certain naive, perhaps well-meaning, but misguided souls have tried to characterize Christian unity as merely of *spirit* rather than of *doctrine*, citing Paul in Ephesians 4:3, "Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." However, please note that this passage is not referring to the *human* spirit but to

God's *holy* Spirit. In fact, reading on, we see that the very unity under discussion is both *doctrinal* as well as organic and *spiritual*. Read it: "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

Note that *organically* speaking, this passage teaches "one body," "one Spirit," "one Lord" and "one God the Father." *Spiritually* speaking, it refers to "one hope of your calling." Yet, *doctrinally* speaking, it also enjoins "one faith" as well as "one baptism." Hence, to make the "unity" taught by God's holy Spirit, in verse 3, entirely spiritual and not doctrinal is a clear misapplication of verses 4 through 6. Particularly in the matter of faith, if the Holy Spirit did not *mean* "one faith" when He *said* "one faith," then what words should He have used if that is what He *meant*!

FAITH AND DOCTRINE

All through the New Testament we see the *faith* that Jesus taught equated with the *doctrine* that He—and later His apostles—also taught. For example, as He concluded His sermon on the mount, Matthew 7:28-29 shows that "the people were astonished at his [Jesus'] DOCTRINE: for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes."

Even in His prayer for unity, Jesus kept emphasizing repeatedly the *doctrinal* nature of it. Let us look at John 17 again.

In verse 6, note, "they have kept thy WORD."

Verse 8: "For I have given unto them the WORDS which thou gavest me: and they have received them."

Verse 14: "I have given them thy WORD."

Verse 17: "Sanctify them through thy TRUTH: thy WORD is truth."

Verse 19: "I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the TRUTH."

Verse 20: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall BELIEVE [i.e., have FAITH] on me through their WORD."

So we see that the particular *kind* of unity for which Jesus prayed was based on God's WORD. His WORD is His DOCTRINE. Even belief or faith itself was "through their WORD."

The apostle Paul makes repeated reference to the doctrinal nature of the faith. For instance, in Romans 16:17-18, he says:

Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the DOCTRINE which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.

Again, in 1 Corinthians 1:10, note:

Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye ALL speak the SAME THING, and there be NO divisions among you: but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

Again, in 1 Corinthians 4:6, “that ye might learn in us not to THINK... above that which is WRITTEN.”

Yet again, in 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14:

Now we commend 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...And if any man obey not our WORD by this epistle, note that man, and have NO COMPANY with him, that he may be ashamed.

And, of course, the beloved apostle John, in 2 John 9 through 11, left no doubt about it, saying,

Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the DOCTRINE of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the DOCTRINE of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you and bring not this DOCTRINE, receive him not into your house, neither bid him Godspeed: for he that biddeth him Godspeed is partaker of his evil deeds.

DEPARTURES FROM THE FAITH FORETOLD

That there would be departures from the “one faith” of Ephesians 4:5 should come as no surprise. Was it not to the Ephesian elders themselves that Paul warned of such things?

In Acts 20:29-32, to them, he said,

For I know this, that after my departure shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. And 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.

To the Galatians, in 1:6-9, he called attention to the fact that they *already* had departed, saying,

I marvel that ye are so soon REMOVED from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto ANOTHER GOSPEL: which is NOT ANOTHER; but there be some that trouble you, and would PERVERT the gospel of Christ.

But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any OTHER gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any OTHER gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.

Paul's first epistle to the young preacher Timothy is replete with warnings against departures from the faith. In fact, he practically starts out the book with such warnings. In 1 Timothy 1:3, he reminds Timothy that he "besought thee" to remain at Ephesus, "that thou mightest charge some that they teach NO OTHER DOCTRINE." In verses 5 and 6 he speaks of "faith unfeigned: from which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling." And, in verses 19-20, he mentions "some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: of whom is Hymeneus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme."

In 4:1, he says, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall DEPART FROM THE FAITH, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils."

And in 6:2 through 5, after emphasizing "these things teach and exhort," he declares,

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, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself.

MANY DEPARTURES IN NEW TESTAMENT TIMES

Often we hear it lamented how many departures from the faith we seem to be having in the church of the 20th century and we are; however, a careful study of the New Testament reveals that they had their share of such departures in that early day as well.

As early as Acts 15, it is recorded that “certain men which came down from Judea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.” Growing out of the “no small dissension and disputation” concerning this matter, a council was called at Jerusalem among the apostles, elders, and brethren resulting in letters being written by them after this manner:

The apostles and elders and brethren send greeting unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia: Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, Ye must be circumcised, and keep the law: to whom we gave no such commandment: it seemed good unto us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men unto you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have sent therefore Judas and Silas, who shall also tell you the same things by mouth. For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication; from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fair ye well (Acts 15:23-29).

Hardly had they gotten that one error settled, than still other departures arose. For instance, at Corinth, instead of everyone uniting on Christ, they began to divide over men. In 1 Corinthians 1:11-13, Paul said,

For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?

In trying to settle this departure from the faith, going on to chapter 3, verses 3 through 7, Paul put it this way:

For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.

However, following men instead of God was not the Corinthians' only doctrinal error; some of them, too, were *denying the resurrec-*

tion. In 1 Corinthians 15:12, Paul asks, “Now if Christ be preached that he rose from the dead, how say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?” Then he devotes the rest of that chapter to correcting their wrong views on the resurrection.

The Galatian letter shows still other departures from the faith which had to be corrected. In writing to them, Paul discussed the dissimulation at Antioch over circumcision, saying, in Galatians 2:11-15,

But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.

But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?

The Galatians *themselves* were trying to be justified by “the works of the law.” Therefore, it became necessary for Paul to correct them, too, saying, in Galatians 2:16,

a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified.

And again, in Galatians 5:4, he declared, Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.

Whereas some of the Corinthians had erred in denying the resurrection, some at Thessalonica were saying that the day of the Lord was *about* to come! In 2 Thessalonians 2, Paul had to beseech the brethren,

That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself

above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

Farther down, Paul declared that

the mystery of iniquity doth already work: only he who now letteth will let, until he be taken out of the way. And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming: even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

In writing to his beloved “son in the gospel,” Timothy, Paul warned him not to “give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith” (1 Tim. 1:4).

Farther along in that same book (1 Tim. 4:1-3), Paul further warned Timothy,

Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; forbidding to marry and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them that believe and know the truth.

By the time he wrote the book of 2 Timothy, departures from the faith must have been practically wholesale, for Paul urges Timothy, in 1:13ff, to

Hold fast the FORM OF SOUND WORDS, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us. This thou knowest, that ALL THEY WHICH ARE IN ASIA be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.

Some were teaching “profane and vain babblings,” teaching that the resurrection was past already, causing others to lose their faith. In 2 Timothy 2:14-18, Paul said,

Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers...But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; who concerning the

truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.

In the third chapter, after describing certain evil men who should come during the “perilous times” in the “last days,” Paul continues, in 3:6-9,

For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was.

In 2 Timothy 4:10, we read of Demas forsaking Paul; however, his departure does not seem to have been from the faith but over “having loved this present world.” Also, from verses 14 through 16, it is not clear just why Alexander and others forsook Paul, but it says,

Alexander the coppersmith did me much evil: the Lord reward him according to his works: of whom be thou ware also; for he hath greatly withstood our words. At my first answer NO MAN stood with me, but ALL MEN FORSOOK ME: I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge.

From Titus 1:10-14, we see Paul repeating such warnings as he multiplied to Timothy, saying,

For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake. One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies. This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith; not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth.

Not just Paul, but Peter, too, warned of these manifold departures. For instance in 2 Peter 2:1ff, he admonished,

But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.

Many who speak of John as “the beloved apostle”—as if he were just too kind and too loving to deliver such warnings—should read what he said in 1 John 4:1-3:

Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus is come in the flesh is of God; and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of anti-Christ, whereof ye have heard that it should come: and even now already is in the world.

In his *second* epistle, the beloved John *continued* his warning, saying, in 2 John 7-11,

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 anti-Christ. Look to yourselves; that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him Godspeed: for he that biddeh him Godspeed is partaker of his evil deeds.

Even in his *third* epistle, verses 9 and 10, the beloved John was not too kind to write,

I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the pre-eminence among them, receiveth us not. Wherefore, if I come, I will remember his deeds which he doeth, prating against us with malicious words: and not content therewith, neither doth he himself receive the brethren, and forbiddeth them that would, and casteth them out of the church.

This may not have been a “departure from the faith,” but it surely shows the departure from the faith of those who have so misrepresented the loving kindness of the apostle John!

Jude, “the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James,” continues to show the departures which were rampant in New Testament times, saying, in verses 11-13,

Woe unto them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Korah. These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds: trees whose fruit withereth,

without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.

In the Book of Revelation, we have “the beloved John” again, saying to the church at Ephesus (2:4), “thou hast left thy first love.” They had also among them they who practiced the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, but hated their deeds, which, said the angel of the church of Ephesus, “I also hate” (v. 6). Although the church in Pergamos “holdest fast my name, and hast not denied my faith,” yet 2:14-16 tells us,

But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to cast a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

The church at Thyatira had many good things said of it; however, John writes, in 2:20-23,

I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which called herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searcheth the reins and hearts; and I will give unto every one of you according to your works.

DEPARTURES FROM THE FAITH IN MODERN TIMES

If indeed there were so *many* departures from the faith in New Testament times—and I have not cataloged them all—it should come as no particular surprise that we are having such today.

Hardly had the Restoration Movement gotten well under way, from James O’Kelley onward, until false or misguided brethren were trying either to corrupt it or to leave it entirely. One of the earliest of whom we have record was Sidney Rigdon, one of our own brethren, whom many suspect of having helped Joseph Smith to write the Book of Mormon, sometime along in the 1830s. By the 1850s, L. L.

Pinkerton and others not only were going the way of the missionary society, through which the churches were to do world evangelism, but were bringing instrumental music into the worship, as well.

By 1906 and the decades immediately thereafter, so many types of “anti” doctrines arose that J. D. Tant said it looked like the brethren were anti-everything but ante up. He said they wouldn’t “ante up!” It was in this period that such departures arose as “anti-Bible classes,” “anti-women teachers,” “anti-multiple containers” (re: the Lord’s Supper).

In the 1920s, R. H. Boll and others embraced the false doctrine of Premillennialism. By the 1940s, Roy Cogdill and others introduced “anti-inter-congregational cooperation.” By the 1960s, both Modernism and Liberalism arose among the churches, deceiving many. In the late ’60s and early ’70s, in the name of “Campus Evangelism,” false teachers tried leading away possibly a majority of our young Christians into all sorts of liberalistic views as well as Pentecostalism. Growing out of the Campus Evangelism movement, once we had put that down, something called “Campus Advance” took over their 300-college-campus apparatus, via Chuck Lucas and the Crossroads church, in Gainesville, Florida, leading to what is known as “Crossroadism.” More recently, with the rise of Kip McKean and of the Boston church, following the downfall of Lucas, this is becoming known as “Bostonism/Crossroadism,” with its so-called “Multiplying Discipleship Ministries.” Also, in the 1980s, we have had Rubel Shelley, Alan Cloyd, Marvin Phillips, Reuel Lemmons and others seeking to lead away the disciples into fellowship with the Independent Christian Church and instrumental music. Even this very moment, most of the elders at Whites Ferry Road, in West Monroe, Louisiana, are trying to form a *new* missionary society under the heading of *International Christian Ministries, Inc.* And there is reason to suspect that the *World Christian Broadcasting Corporation*, now set up and operating (with approximately 85% jazz music) out of Alaska, also is just another “departure from the faith,” (i.e., another missionary society).

CONCLUSION

Brethren, it is not the purpose of this address today just to be crying, “wolf, wolf.” To cry “wolf” when there is no wolf would be less than useless. However, from our study of the history of such “departures from the faith” in New Testament times, we surely can see that such are, to say the least, not impossible or even improbable. The history of Christianity, almost from the very beginning, has been filled to overflowing with perverse men arising seeking to lead away the disciples after false teachings and false ways. Wherefore, as the apostle Paul told the Ephesian elders, at Miletus—now so long ago—let us heed his heart-felt admonition that we “watch, and remember that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.”

THE BOOK OF GALATIANS

Winfred Clark



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One finds Paul coming straight to the point as he begins this epistle. There is no time wasted as he comes to deal with a situation that is proving to be very perilous for the churches in the region of Galatia.

Some men were moving among God's people with ideas that were foreign to the truth of the gospel. Such should not and must not be tolerated.

The apostleship of Paul was coming under attack. They thought if they could discredit Paul then they could discredit what Paul taught. After all, Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles and he had not taught those folks that they would need to keep the law of Moses. Such would not set well with the Judaizing teachers. This becomes the point of conflict, or at least, one of the major points of conflict. Paul would let the churches know that he had given up the law as a means of justification and surely he would not bind it upon Gentiles.

As we come to look at the book of Galatians, we will divide it into three parts or sections. We will be able to see the following:

I. AN APOSTOLIC DEFENSE.

This will involve chapters one and two.

II. APPALLING DEFICIENCIES.

This will involve chapters three and four.

III. APPARENT DUTIES.

This will involve a study of chapters five and six.

APOSTOLIC DEFENSE

Personal Defense

Chapter One

One does not read beyond the first verse before he is aware that Paul is defending his apostleship. He speaks quickly in verses 1-5 of the origin of his apostleship. He is one sent without human intervention or human invention.

He expresses deep concern because of their quick departure from the gospel that had been preached and that which they had also received.

Then he comes to defend in particular his apostleship. His arguments will be quite pointed and plain. He argues from the standpoint of the:

1. *Revelation He Received* (vv. 11-12). Paul accounts for the gospel he preaches in these verses and he will trace such to its source. That is as it should be, for then they can know of a certainty that the gospel which he preaches is indeed from Heaven.

He says it was an independent revelation. It is not after man, that is, it is not of human origin. That which was revealed to him was not of human invention.

That which Paul preached did not come of human education. You will note that he says, "Neither was I taught it" (Gal. 1:12). Truly, that which was revealed to him was an independent revelation.

One might also add that such was an individual revelation. Notice the number of times Paul will point out the individuality of the gospel which he received.

So Paul says a part of the proof for his apostleship rests upon the revelation of the gospel which he received.

2. *Reputation He Acquired* (vv. 13-15). Paul says plainly that they knew of his past conduct. He was in the past a zealous Pharisee as he persecuted the church. He was dedicated to the promotion and protection of the traditions of the elders. This, Paul says, was a well-known fact.

But he does not dwell on the past alone. Paul moves to the present (vv. 15-16). In these verses he is no longer a persecutor but is now rather a preacher. In fact, he now preaches to promote the very thing he once sought to destroy.

How could you account for such a change if he was not an apostle as he claimed to be?

3. *Restrictions He Faced* (vv. 16-24). Paul hastens to show that those who claimed that he taught only what he had been told by others were wrong. There are at least three areas of proof presented by Paul which could counter any claim that he was a second-hand apostle.

First, he said there is the time element. Take a look at the phrase “immediately,” which is to say, at that time. There was that space of three years spent in Arabia and then a trip to Jerusalem where he spends fifteen days with Peter. That wouldn’t give him enough time to completely learn all that he was preaching. Thus, the time element cannot be ignored.

Second, there is the matter of truth. Notice Paul’s language. “Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not” (Gal. 1:20). This is almost the equal of a court affirmation. One cannot ignore the truth element.

Third, there is the territorial element. Paul said he didn’t spend his time in Jerusalem but rather in Syria and Cilicia. In fact, he says the folks in the churches of Judea did not know him except by reputation. All they knew of him was what they heard and that was that he now preached what he once persecuted.

Paul’s argument is that if one looks at the time element and the territorial element, he will know he is telling the truth.

So his personal defense is based upon the revelation he received, the reputation he had, and the restrictions he faced. Any who are honest in their investigation of these matters must be able to see that these are strong arguments of his defense.

Public Defense **Chapter Two**

Paul moves the clock forward fourteen years after his first trip to Jerusalem. This one is recorded in Acts 15 where the question of circumcision has arisen (Acts 15:1-4). Now the matter moves into the

public arena. It is being carried to Jerusalem and that discussion is a matter of record. One needs to note also that Paul was not alone on this journey. He carried with him a man respected by the church in Jerusalem by the name of Barnabas. Remember, this is the same man that had been sent out from Jerusalem. Remember, he had no trouble with the Gentile converts when he went to Antioch (Acts 11:23-26). Remember, he was with Paul as they preached to Gentiles on that first journey (Acts 13-14).

Paul also brought Titus who evidently was a Gentile but he was not forced to be circumcised. So Titus becomes a test case at Jerusalem.

What then is his defense in this chapter? Again, I believe we can see it is at least threefold.

One, Paul would say look at the recognition we received. Such is described in chapter two, verses one through ten. Yes, there were those present who opposed what Paul taught but nobody gave it to them. Those who were present had nothing new for Paul for, after all, he had received the same gospel as theirs from the same source. There was nothing found in the gospel Peter preached that was superior to the gospel Paul was preaching. They received the support and endorsement of men like James, Peter, and John. They even encouraged Paul to go to the Gentiles remembering the poor. So Paul's argument in defense of the gospel without the law is that the apostles at Jerusalem endorse it.

Two, Paul moves from the recognition they received from the apostles to the rebuke of an apostle (vv. 11-12). But one needs to ask why would Paul rebuke an apostle. Surely the conduct of an apostle would be far-reaching. In this case, Peter had made it a practice to eat with Gentiles until some Jewish brethren showed up. Then he refused to do so. His refusal seems to have led to others also refusing to eat with them. Even Barnabas is caught up with the matter. So you are, in principle, back where you were before Jesus died on the cross to break down the wall that was between Jew and Gentile. Again, barriers are being set up. Such would divide brethren and such calls for a public rebuke.

Paul is showing that even where an apostle is wrong on this question such should be corrected. Paul was well aware that the Jew/Gentile question was no small matter. Paul saw within this “the truth of the gospel” at stake. So he would not stand aside and watch all that the gospel produces to be destroyed. He would not stand by and allow Jews to make Gentiles act like Jews, nor for that matter would he want Gentiles to make Jews act like Gentiles. He wants all to act as those who are one in Christ, since they are all justified by the gospel and not by the law of Moses.

Third, Paul comes to speak of his relationship to the law of Moses. This he does in verses 18-24. Paul points out the fact that if he goes back to the law, he only makes himself a sinner, for under it nobody is justified. Paul said he died to the law. That is, he made a clean break with the law of Moses and turned to Christ. Isn't this exactly the picture that is painted of Paul in Acts 9 while in Damascus? There he gave up the law and obeyed the gospel and it is then Christ began to live in him. No, such doesn't frustrate grace, for Christ's death is the means by which we are saved by grace.

Thus, we come to see Paul's personal and public defense of his apostleship and thus of the gospel which he preached.

APPALLING DEFICIENCIES

Deficiencies Underscored

Chapter Three

One doesn't read this chapter without seeing how far short and how inconsistent these brethren are. They had allowed themselves to come under bad influences and in so doing they were being led astray.

There are numerous lessons in this chapter, but we will confine ourselves to three.

It is obvious that these folks are not thinking properly about some things. They are called foolish in a very short space. They are not using their minds as they ought to. It is Paul's aim to correct these deficiencies to help them think correctly in three areas or relative to three subjects.

One is the subject of the Spirit (vv. 1-5). No doubt, when Paul asks “received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing

of faith?" he has in mind the work he did among them in preaching the gospel. As Paul imparted to them spiritual gifts, they would have evidence that God endorsed what Paul had preached. One is well aware Paul had not preached justification by the law.

Paul says you began in the Spirit (Gal. 3:3). That is equal to their having become God's children by the teaching of the Spirit through Paul. It would be inconsistent to try and become mature through the law of Moses. So this deficiency could be helped if their thinking was corrected concerning the Spirit.

Second, there are the Scriptures. Paul's appeal is to the Scriptures as he deals with the subject of justification.

See in Galatians 3:6-9 what the Scriptures declare about the matter of justification. Notice that Paul draws from the justification of Abraham who predates the law. Abraham's justification was by faith and so was theirs. They are said to be "of faith" (vv. 7, 9) and thus not of the law of Moses. These are the ones who are blessed with faithful Abraham. They must realize that such does not come through the law.

But God does not argue alone from what the Scriptures declared but also from what the scriptures denied (vv. 10-14). Doesn't He let us know that if they seek shelter under the law of Moses they are under a curse? Surely He does and goes on to say "No man is justified by the law for the just shall live by faith."

There is no need for these or others going back to the law of Moses for we have been redeemed from such. The Gentiles could receive blessings through Christ and thus through the gospel Paul preached.

It is evident that a proper understanding could correct this deficiency.

Again, Paul sets before us what the scripture describes (vv. 16-25). In these verses we are shown the exact place of the promise God made to Abraham, the law and the gospel. Here Paul describes God's plan and it was to save all, including Gentiles, through the promise He made to Abraham. That promise was that Christ would come, and He did, and the law which was a parent, thus would then no longer be needed. So his conclusion is that we are no longer under the law.

Yes, if they saw what the Scriptures declared, denied, and described, they would be able to deal with some of their appalling deficiencies.

Third, Paul moves to the point of sonship (vv. 26-29). He speaks not only of the fact of sonship but also as to the how of sonship. Note in these verses Paul's declaration concerning who they are. They are said to be children of God, and he tells how they become such. Notice it is by "the faith" in Christ, that is, by the gospel and not by the law. They are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise God made to Abraham. That ought to be enough to satisfy Jews and Gentiles.

Deficiencies Understood **Chapter Four**

Paul is trying in every chapter to help these good folks. He wants them to have a clear understanding of the subject of justification. They had been led to believe it came by the law of Moses but he wants them to know such is not the case. If they could understand where they have gone wrong they can correct the matter. Paul wants them to understand clearly where they are falling short and this will surely help them to overcome these deficiencies.

First, chapter 4:1-7. Herein they will see what they are. He uses an illustration of a servant and a son. Under the law they were as servants but herein he plainly declares that they are no longer servants but now they are sons. Being a son, one is an heir of God and that is made possible through Christ, not the law of Moses.

Second, chapter 4:8-20. Herein they will be able to see and to understand where they were. They had moved from the bondage of idolatry. They were slaves to idols (4:8). Now they are allowing themselves to be placed under the law of Moses by the Judaizing teachers. In so doing, they are giving up their liberty in Christ and returning to bondage, though it is another form.

Paul shows this to be true by the fact they observe days, months, and times and years. This was true of the law of Moses (4:10-11).

Third, Paul wants them to understand what they ought to be (Gal. 4:21-31). Herein, he describes the allegory of Sarah and Hagar, Isaac and Ishmael. The contrast is between bondage and freedom. These

are not to be confused nor are they to be joined together. The bond-woman and the freewoman cannot be joined neither can the gospel and the law of Moses. So Paul is saying that these brethren ought to see themselves as free through the promise and not by the law of Moses.

So they can overcome these appalling deficiencies if they understand what they are, what they were, and what they can be.

APPARENT DEMANDS

Concerning Liberty and Love

Chapter Five

One is quick to notice that Paul begins chapter five with the word “therefore” (Gal. 5: 1). In view of all that stands before them, there are some duties faced by those to whom he wrote. To help these, he will speak of at least three areas relative to liberty.

One thing is that liberty is to be maintained. He calls upon these folks to stand fast in liberty. They are to maintain the position they have reached (Gal. 5:1-10). There is the peril they face if they allow themselves to be carried away from the gospel. They will fall from grace, so their freedom in Christ is to be protected.

Second, they are warned not to misuse their liberty (Gal. 5:11-15). It is entirely possible for one to misuse his freedom which he enjoys and act as if this gives a license to do what he wants to. Not so, says Paul. We are not at liberty to use liberty as a license to do wrong.

Third, they are to see that love is manifested in all that they do (Gal. 5:14-26). This will be done as they walk in the Spirit, which means they walk according to his teaching. This, in turn, will produce in their lives the fruit of the Spirit. This will, in turn, assure that the works of the flesh will not be present in their lives.

Demands Concerning Law and Life

Chapter Six

There is no doubt about law being present in this chapter and neither is there any doubt about a certain kind of life being present. What, then, are the demands concerning law and life?

First, there must be the right attitude toward the law. It must be recognized as the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2). Such is seen as a rule (Gal.

6:16). Even though they are not under the law of Moses, they still are under the law or rule of Christ and the right attitude must be taken toward such.

Second, there must be the right application of that law for, after all, it does indeed apply. It will affect one's approach and also his action. Paul doesn't leave the matter in doubt but spells out some areas where such application is demanded.

The restoration of a brother becomes a case in point (Gal. 6:1-2). There is no question as to whether this is to be done. There is no question but that it be done in the proper fashion.

There is also the matter of support for the teacher (Gal. 6:6-10). The law of Christ applies in this case and I must see my giving as sowing to the Spirit. I must see it as doing good (Gal. 6:10).

As I respect the law and apply such to life in the right and proper way, I will give.

Surely one does not read these chapters without becoming aware of demands that are made upon our lives by the law of Christ.

So Paul makes his defense, points out some deficiencies, and sets forth some demands, if met, that would enable those at Galatia to live rich and full lives under the law of Christ.

ARE WE MOVING AWAY FROM THE PREACHING OF THE CROSS?

Jimmy Clark



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The first letter to the church at Corinth dealt with some very serious problems. It is interesting to note that Paul began dealing with the problems by focusing the attention of the readers upon the cross of Christ. Paul knew that there were people who would neither understand nor appreciate the cross of Christ; yet he said, “For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2). Paul wrote previous to the preceding verse, “But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Gentiles foolishness” (1 Cor. 1:23). It is vital today that all who preach realize the importance and hence the necessity of doing just as Paul did when it came to preaching the cross of Christ. All must realize that the cross of Christ, when preached properly, will not be popular with some. This does not mean that preaching the cross of Christ should be done in an unkind manner, but that the true meaning of the cross of Christ strikes at the very hearts of men. When Peter preached on the day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2, the text states, “Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart” (Acts 2:37). Paul wrote,

(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:4-5).

Preaching the cross of Christ involves a price to be paid, both by the preacher and the listener. This material will discuss matters that involve fundamental elements of preaching the cross of Christ. Drifting takes place when these elements are neglected or abandoned. The preaching of years past focused so closely upon such details that the clear ring of the gospel was heard throughout the length and breadth of the land. May this material be written and read with the hope that such distinctiveness thrive and abound until this world ends.

First of all, there are some prerequisites that are essential in preaching the cross of Christ. When preachers, or even those who listen to preachers, drift from these prerequisites, then the cause of Christ suffers.

The first prerequisite for preaching the cross of Christ is the Scriptures. Man would never have an accurate knowledge of the cross of Christ and its meaning without the Scriptures. Whenever preaching drifts from the Scriptures, whether the subject be the cross of Christ or concerning some other spiritual matter, one is moving away from God's plan and toward another. There are various references in the New Testament that give emphasis to the fact that preaching the cross of Christ must be according to the Scriptures.

Jesus stated to the apostles,

And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms concerning me. Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures. And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem (Luke 24:44-47).

It is vital that one notice the connection between Jesus' emphasis on the Scriptures as they related to Him, and especially to the cross, and that such is the heart of what was and is to be preached. There would be no remission of sins without the cross of Christ. Repentance would

be of none effect without the cross of Christ. The Old Testament had the cross of Christ as a major theme. If one read the Old Testament without seeing the suffering Christ, then one missed the true meaning of the Old Testament's message of redemption.

Luke gives some great insight to the preaching of Paul in the book of Acts.

And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, and three sabbath days reasoned with them out of the scriptures, Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; and that this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ (Acts 17:2-3).

Note some of the details in these passages as they relate to preaching the cross of Christ. Luke gives the emphasis that Paul's manner was to do the very things emphasized in these verses everywhere he went.

Note from verse two that Paul's preaching was reasoning. The word "reasoning" in this passage literally means to speak through something. This denotes the fact that Paul was using something to convey the vital thoughts of his message. What was Paul using to bring about the fundamental truths? The answer is seen in the phrase "out of the scriptures." Paul was not quoting what this scholar or that counsellor said about Christ and the cross. Paul was using the Scriptures as the basis of his words. If an inspired apostle reasoned out of the Scriptures, what should uninspired preachers today do? To drift from such a fundamental element is to endanger the souls of many. Acceptable faith is founded only on divine revelation, as it is written, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17).

Notice again, as Luke states that Paul's reasoning was opening and alleging. The word "opening" means to open thoroughly so as to give the sense of the Scripture. A good example of this is seen in Luke 24. Jesus was with the two men who were on the road to Emmaus. These two men were talking about the events that had transpired in the recent days concerning Jesus (Luke 24:19-24). When Jesus saw that these men were having difficulty believing, the text states,

Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all

the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself (Luke 24:25-27).

The word “expounded” means that Jesus unfolded the meaning of what was written. After Jesus departed from these two men, notice the statement that they made. “And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?” (Luke 24:32). Therefore, when Paul opened as he reasoned out of the Scriptures, he was explaining the meaning of the Scriptures.

Notice again the word “alleging.” To some the word alleging is a dishonorable term. There is a sense in which this word means to assert something without proof or evidence. This is not the meaning in Acts 17:3. The evidence was the Scriptures and the alleging was out of the Scriptures. The word “alleging” in this passage means to place something alongside of another. When one takes various passages in their true contexts, showing the common thread that runs throughout the Bible on a given subject, then he is doing what the word “alleging” denotes. Such shows the harmony and unity of the Bible. Paul would take the Scriptures from the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms and put them side by side to show God’s great plan of redemption as it was centered in Jesus Christ. This is what preaching is all about. The greatness of preaching is seen in the greatness of the Scriptures, which reveal the greatness of God and His Son. Preaching without the Scriptures is to preach an empty sermon. Notice Paul’s words toward the close of the first Corinthian letter concerning the cross and the Scriptures.

For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures (1 Cor. 15:3-4).

It is no wonder that Paul charged Timothy, “Preach the word” (2 Tim. 4:2).

A second prerequisite for preaching the cross of Christ is study. One cannot preach what one does not know. One cannot lift men to heights of greatness with the cross of Christ who does not understand himself the greatness of the cross. Preachers may have the Scriptures in their hands, but no good is done unless the written word is in the

minds of the messengers. Even in the days of inspired men, Paul told Timothy, “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). Again, Paul wrote,

But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 3:14-15).

Again, Paul wrote to Timothy, “If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained” (1 Tim. 4:6). Paul continued to encourage Timothy to study when he said, “Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine” (1 Tim. 4:13). “Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all” (1 Tim. 4:15). Timothy was a young preacher facing the difficulties of that day with future difficulties lying before him (1 Tim. 4:1ff; 2 Tim. 3:1ff). His life was to be filled with the knowledge of the Lord. Such could not take place without study of the Scriptures.

Here is an area that preachers years ago knew to be fundamental to the success of their work. People sitting in the pews were men and women of the book. If the preacher did not focus his message upon the book, the people in the pews knew it and acknowledged it. It was not uncommon for preachers to deliver sermons filled with Scriptures and those Scriptures be properly linked together in their proper contexts. Preachers knew the book. They spent much time with it. The progress of the cause of Christ in their days was greatly due to the fact that the Bible was the meat delivered to feed hungry souls. Studying involved paying a price that they were more than willing to pay. Preachers must realize, as those did in times past, that they are accountable for their work and that their work cannot be done effectively without proper study. Just as there is no substitute for the Scriptures, there is no substitute for the study of the Scriptures.

A third prerequisite for preaching the cross of Christ is self-examination. It is foolish for preachers to study the Scriptures strictly to see how they apply to the listeners of their sermons. The Scriptures

must be studied first in view of personal responsibilities and needs, and then for the responsibilities and needs of others. This principle is seen in Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount as recorded by Matthew. "And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?" (Mat. 7:3). Before any preacher can help people with the message of the cross of Christ, he must first apply it to himself. The scribes and Pharisees of the days of Jesus' earthly ministry manifested such an attitude of self-righteousness in their teaching.

Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do: but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers (Mat. 23:1-4).

Paul wrote to the Roman congregation concerning such teachers.

Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, and knowest his will and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law; And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law. Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makes thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? (Rom. 2:17-23).

Self-righteousness did not die with the scribes and the Pharisees. Such is a problem of humanity, especially with religious people. Paul was at one time a Pharisee who manifested such an attitude. The apostle Paul learned that such an attitude was contrary to the will of God. "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway" (1 Cor. 9:27). When Paul addressed the divided situation in the church at Corinth, and gave the solution to the problem by referring to the Lord's Supper as an argument for their being united both in the assembly and outside of the assembly, he gave specific

attention to self-examination. “But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup” (1 Cor. 11:28). The Lord’s Supper is a memorial of the cross of Christ. Every first day of the week in the taking of the Lord’s Supper is a reminder for every Christian (thus including the preacher) to examine himself in view of the body and blood of Jesus Christ which was given for all. It is no wonder that Paul told Timothy, “Take heed to thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee” (1 Tim. 4:16).

Now that the prerequisites have been set forth, one should move to the power of preaching the cross of Christ. It would be foolish to talk about the power of preaching the cross before emphasizing the Scriptures because the Scriptures reveal that power.

So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. 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 (Rom. 1:15-16).

Ignorance of the Scriptures leaves one helpless in preaching.

When examining the Scriptures, one notices passages that reveal the drawing power of the cross. There is no motivational power in preaching greater than that of the cross of Christ. Jesus said, “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die” (John 12:32-33). Here is an area where preaching can easily drift away. There have been many things used to appeal to the masses in the quest for large numbers and large contributions. When large numbers and large contributions become ends in themselves, then the preaching will get further and further away from the truth. Paul told Timothy,

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

Peter wrote,

But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious

ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of (2 Pet. 2:1-2).

Humanity measures success in terms of numbers, where God measures success in terms of His Word and compliance with it. The cross of Christ in its simplicity is God's only motivational power to truly convert the world. The fact that many consider the simple preaching of the cross as the only motivational power to convert the world as foolishness only magnifies the truth of the passage which says, "Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?" (1 Cor. 1:20). Notice some things which the Scriptures reveal about the cross of Christ which identifies the power of preaching it.

First, there is power in preaching the cross of Christ because of its relationship to Christ. There have been many people crucified on crosses throughout history. There were even two crucified with Jesus on that fateful day, but no cross compares to the cross of Christ because of who was on it. When sin entered into the world, the hope of humanity from Adam onward centered and still abides in the one who died on Calvary.

The Old Testament foretold of one who was coming to suffer for sin.

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel (Gen. 3:15).

And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son. And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovajireh: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen (Gen. 22:13-14).

Jesus said concerning Abraham, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad" (John 8:56). The passover lamb was slain, and the blood put upon the lintel and the two side posts that those inside might live. Paul wrote, "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. 5:7). The blood of the sin offering was carried into the most holy place and sprinkled

before the mercy seat (Lev. 16:14) to make atonement. The point behind that day of atonement is revealed in the New Testament.

Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people: The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation. But Christ being come an high priest of good thing to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us (Heb. 9:6-12).

David wrote in the Psalms, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me” (Psa. 22:1)? “All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, he trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him” (Psa. 22:7-8). “For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet” (Psa. 22:16). “They have parted my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture” (Psa. 22:18). One has only to look at the accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John to see these things fulfilled. Isaiah prophesied,

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken (Isa. 53:7-8).

When the Ethiopian eunuch was reading these passages, the text states,

And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus (Acts 8:34-35).

The prophet Zechariah foretold,

And I will pour upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn (Zec. 12:10).

John wrote, “But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water” (John 19:34). This, John states, was in fulfillment of Zechariah’s prophecy (John 19:37). Again, Zechariah foretold,

Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones (Zec. 13:7).

Matthew records Jesus saying that such is fulfilled in the crucifixion (Mat. 26:31). All the centuries of God’s plan described in the Old Testament Scriptures pointed to the event that took place on the occasion of Jesus’ trial and crucifixion. The fact that all the prophecies in their minutest of details were completely fulfilled as the Scriptures foretold is overwhelming evidence that the cross of Christ magnifies the trustworthiness of God’s Word. Preaching the cross of Christ as it fulfilled prophecy many years ago is powerful preaching. Truly, the relationship of Jesus Christ to that cross is powerful.

A second element that magnifies the power of preaching the cross of Christ is the fact that the cross is a revelation of love. “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” (John 3:16). “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” (Rom. 8:32). “But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us” (Eph. 2:4). “And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God” (Eph. 3:19). “And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-

smelling savour” (Eph. 5:2). “In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:9-10). John begins the book of Revelation with the emphasis of the cross revealing true love.

And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood (Rev. 1:5).

With these as somewhat of a summary of the cross as a revelation of love in the New Testament, notice some particulars about the cross that show the unparalleled quality of divine love.

There is the particular fact in the cross that this demonstration of love was unmerited. John makes the specific point of this fact. “We love him, because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19). God did not wait for man to do something so that God would then love mankind to the extent of the cross. If God had waited for such a demonstration on man’s part, the crucifixion of Christ would never have taken place. Paul points out in the Roman letter that man was and is without anything to offer God in order that God reward him with such a blessing. “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 3:23-24). There is power in preaching the grace of God that was manifested in the cross of Christ.

Another particular of the cross that reveals divine love is that Christ suffered voluntarily. It was not the case that Jesus was forced to leave heaven and come to the earth to die. Jesus Christ came and offered Himself willingly knowing that men would despise Him.

Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father (John 10:17-18).

“And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phi. 2:8). The fullest extent of unselfishness is seen in the cross of Christ. His

voluntary act of love is the motivation for man's voluntary acts of love.

A third element that magnifies the power of preaching the cross of Christ is the redemption that comes from the blood which flowed from it. To some people the cross of Christ is just another man who died by crucifixion. The Scriptures reveal that the reason for the cross of Christ was not because Jesus without thinking about the ugliness of sin. Satan has deceived mankind in believing that sin has value and beauty. The cross of Christ reveals the true picture of what sin brings, though Jesus did no sin.

One must realize when preaching the cross of Christ that one must preach another cross: one's own. "Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Mat. 16:24). Paul said, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. 6:14). Paul understood that Jesus was not the only one who was to die. Paul knew that self must die to sin. "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. 5:24). "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin" (Rom. 6:6). The first step in preaching the cross of Christ is to call men and women away from sin in view of the cross. Sin was clearly preached against in times past. One drifts from the true purpose of the cross when sin is not exposed.

Second, preaching the cross of Christ is calling people to salvation. One does not desire to be saved who does not believe he is lost. When one sees the horrors of sin in the cross, he is then ready to see the hope of heaven in the cross. The price has been paid and man has access to the blood through obedience.

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life (Rom. 6:3-4).

Paul wrote to the Thessalonians concerning their hope of heaven, “Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 The. 2:14). Paul wrote to Timothy,

Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God; Who 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 Tim. 1:8-10).

One does not have a difficult time persuading one who sees sin and its results to see salvation and its rewards.

Third, preaching the cross of Christ is calling people to service. This is the real emphasis of Romans 6.

But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness (Rom. 6:17-18).

Paul spoke concerning himself,

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me (Gal. 2:20).

One is saved to serve, not to sit. When one examines the general thrust of preaching today compared to the preaching of years past, one can see a clear distinction. Not only has the ugliness of sin been lacking in the preaching of today but also the urgency of service is lacking in comparison to that of years past. When people were called out of sin to salvation, they were also called by the distinctive pleas of the gospel to be servants in the kingdom. The undenominational quality of the church and one’s loyalty to it was not questioned. Today, people drift away from the church and service in the kingdom of God thinking that they have been saved from sin and the church is optional. If one thinks he needs it, then he takes advantage of it. If he thinks he is fine without the church, then he spends his time in other avenues. He may not become immoral, but he thinks as long as he lives a moral life, then the church can do without him and he, without the church.

Such is common thinking among many people today. The necessity of being a faithful member of the church was a clear sound cried from pulpits when the cross of Christ was preached. Paul said to the Ephesian elders, "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). Again, Paul wrote, "For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the Saviour of the body" (Eph. 5:23). Christ and His church go together. One cannot have one without the other. Such is being ignored today in many pulpits.

One must not let the attitudes and actions of those round about to discourage the simple preaching of the cross of Christ. Preachers, and even those who are in the pews, must focus their hearts and lives upon the work set before them. Scriptures are vital to the success of the cause of Christ in this generation, as well as in any other. The power of the cross when seen in relation to the Lord, as a revelation of love, and as the source of redemption, persuades men to apply the grace of God through obedience of faith. That power is greatly magnified when there is the exposing of sin, the exclaiming of salvation, and the exhorting to service. Paul moved the Corinthian church, saying,

For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again (2 Cor. 5:14-15).

May the love of Christ constrain all to preach the cross of Christ without addition, subtraction, or substitution.

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THE PRESENT UNITY (UNION) MOVEMENT

H. A. (Buster) Dobbs



H. A. (Buster) Dobbs was born and reared in Houston, Texas. He was educated in the public school system of Houston, the University of Houston and South Texas College of Law. Buster is married to Martha DeWoody Dobbs; three children have been born to this union and Martha and Buster have eight grandchildren. He has spent his entire preaching career in Houston. He is currently co-owner and associate editor of the *Firm Foundation* and is giving full time to speaking at lectureships, gospel meetings, writing, and working with congregations that have special needs.

Several meetings have occurred between certain members of the church of Christ and some members of the Independent Christian Church in an attempt to bring the two groups close enough together to cooperate with and fellowship each other.

To begin with, unity is not only highly desirable, but is a command of God. All who profess to respect and follow Jesus are under a divine injunction to be like-minded in spiritual matters. This is not an optional thing, but is a positive divine decree. To wit:

Now I beseech you, brethren, through 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 perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment (1 Cor. 1:10).

Paul clearly requires believers to be united in what they teach. Paul's instruction on unity has all of the tender attraction of an earnest plea and all of the authority of a mandate.

He begins by saying, I beseech you, brethren. To beseech is to earnestly request, to beg, to implore, to plead, to make supplication. The apostle is lifting up a tearful voice to earnestly entreat the saints at Corinth, and, of course, the saved of all ages, to be one in their teaching.

He speaks, however, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. To do anything in the name of another is to do that thing at his bidding, at his appointment, with his power and by his authority. And so the statement of Paul becomes a solemn demand, having behind it the sanction of heaven itself.

The apostle absolutely prohibits division. With pleading tones, he injects the fiat of the Almighty for saints on earth to speak the same thing, and to have the same mind, and for no division to exist among them. Elsewhere the same inspired teacher lists “factions, divisions, parties” along with “works of the flesh” and observes “that they who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven” (Gal. 5:19-21).

It is sobering to consider that “division” is listed right along with such things as “fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousies, and wraths.” To put factions in the same catalogue with the most repulsive and degrading sins that have ever polluted the human race vividly demonstrates what a vile thing it is for God’s children to be torn by strife and dissension. How it must stab the bleeding heart of Jesus for His avowed disciples to teach conflicting and inharmonious things.

Just as unity among the followers of Jesus causes the world to believe on Him (John 17:20-21), so does doctrinal division cause the world to blaspheme His name.

Paul, I remind you, is talking about doctrinal purity. He is talking about what we speak, that is, what we teach. And he says that there is to be a perfect unity of instruction to the world. He requires the saved to be of the same mind and the same judgment in their teaching (speaking), and for no disagreement to exist between them.

Is this possible? Does God demand of us what we are incapable of doing? Is the Word of truth so unclear that sincere people cannot understand it alike? I submit as axiomatic that we may misunderstand the Bible and differ with each other endlessly, but when we understand it there will be no differences among us.

When the Old Law was given, Moses said to the tribes of Israel,

For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not too hard for thee, neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it down to

us, and make us to hear it that we may do it? Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and make us to hear it, that we may do it? But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it (Deu. 30:11-14).

The commands of God are hidden neither in heaven nor far away beyond the sea, but they are nigh. Whatever God demands of us in order to our eternal happiness is made as clear as the noon day sun. His law for our life is simple and easy to be understood, if we maintain a simplicity toward Christ (2 Cor. 11:3). Please note that the simplicity is in us and not in Christ. We are to maintain the simple, trusting attitude of a little child, and then we will know of the teaching (John 7:17).

It is when we become arrogant in our boasted knowledge and imagine ourselves to be wiser than God that His law seems to be beyond our reach. It is when we seek for self-justification that His commands appear to us to be far away beyond the sea.

Think of how easy and plain is the plan of salvation (hear, believe, repent, confess, immersion in order to obtain the remission of sins); consider how clear are the rules of the Bible concerning the worship of the church (sing, pray, give, commune, study); the mission and work of the church on earth is written large upon the inspired page; every person in the church knows the morality that is demanded of Him.

There are, of course, some deep and difficult things in the Word of God, but these things are not in the area of commands. The commands are obvious. The obstruction is not in the revealed Word but in stubborn human hearts.

UNITED WE STAND

God tells us to be united in doctrine. Well, then, we must do it. But what if a false prophet infuses false teaching? What happens when, “from among your own selves” men arise “speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them?”

In the first place, we must watch (elders, especially, are told to watch). Every disciple has an obligation to be vigilant in believing not

every spirit, but proving the spirits, whether they are of God (1John 4:1; Acts 20:31).

We must watch without becoming watchdogs and howling at every shadowy thing in the night. Our earnest desire to protect and defend truth must not be perverted into a mania of unreasonable, suspicion and hysteria of wild accusations. That kind of psychosis must not be found among those who have been clothed in their right mind by the power and grace of the Christ.

Still in all, the fear of radical and unbalanced accusers must not lead us to forsake the walls and refuse to stand our watch. The command of the sacred Scriptures is “Watch ye!” The price of truth, like the price of liberty, is eternal vigilance.

Paul went into Galatia and preached the unsearchable riches of Christ. “The churches of Galatia” were the result of his faithful preaching. He pressed on in his great work of carrying the saving message to the Gentiles.

After his departure, false teachers came to Galatia and injected heresy into the churches of Galatia. Paul protested in these words,

I marvel that ye are so quickly removing from him that called you in the grace of Christ unto a different gospel; which is not another gospel: only there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ (Gal. 1:6-7).

The apostle clearly says that those who teach a “different” gospel are troublers of the church and guilty of perverting the gospel of Christ. He administers a rebuke, “If any man preach unto you any gospel other than that which ye received, let him be anathema” (Gal. 1:8-9). Anathema! Accursed of God! Devoted to destruction! Stronger language of condemnation could not have been used. The apostle was out of patience with these perverters of truth and resoundingly denounces them. He had these same Judaizers in mind when he wrote, “Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the concision” (Phi. 3:2).

Now, the question is, who caused the division?

1. Did Paul cause it when he preached the gospel in Galatia at the first?
2. Did the Judaizers cause it when they injected a perverted gospel?

3. Did Paul produce the division when he corrected the false teachers and condemned them?

If Paul had displayed an “irenic” instead of a “militant” spirit toward the false prophets, the division might have been avoided. Why was Paul so hardheaded? After all, these false teachers were his brothers? They, too, had obeyed the gospel. They were in the family of God. They were sincere.

The same apostle who wrote,

Now I beseech you, brethren, through 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 perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

took a hard-line position against the false teachers and their false doctrine. He wrote of them, “Ye are severed from Christ...ye are fallen away from grace” (Gal. 5:4). He could not and did not fellowship perverters of the gospel.

But did this produce division? The answer is yes and no. It was absolutely necessary for Paul to identify the false teachers and denounce their perverted gospel in order to preserve the pure gospel and maintain unity among believers. When he took a strong position against those who taught untruth, he created a cleavage between them and all who stood for the truth. But, at the same time and by the same act, he preserved the unity of those who were determined to cling to the truth.

The command “that there be no divisions among you” indisputably requires an uncompromising stand against the introduction of anything that is contrary to sound doctrine. The rejection of false teachers creates a kind of division, but it is a division for the sake of unity and for the purpose of preventing division.

The way—only way—to preserve unity and avoid division is to recognize and cast out false prophets. The teacher of error who is willing to learn should be encouraged, in all patience, to accept truth and abandon his error. But false teachers who will not be corrected must be withstood “with no small dissension” (Acts 15:2).

A LESSON FROM HISTORY

When faithful men, in modern times, began to hold high the teaching of the New Testament and earnestly plead for a return to the ancient order, the initial result was electrifying. The clearheaded appeal to search sacred Scriptures and discover exactly and precisely what God requires of men on earth and, then, to do exactly and precisely that—nothing more and nothing less—was magnetic and thrilling.

The pioneer restorers were men who knew that the Bible is authentic. They were not ignorant men. They knew about the destructive critics who were attempting to cast doubt upon the Bible and kill its influence. They knew, too, of the insincere motives of these God haters and the pitiful poverty of their arguments against His Word.

Darwin's evolutionary hypothesis (guess) seemed to sweep through the scientific community. Protestant theologians, strongly influenced by Kant and Hegel, were eager to desert Biblical authority. The Bible was torn to shreds. The unsupported view that a lost document, "Q," was the source for most of the Gospels was accepted. The "tales of Jesus" were scoffed at and denied. The Word of God was held up to ridicule. Moses was rejected as the inspired author of the first five books of the Old Testament. The second coming of Christ, final judgment, heaven, hell, and every doctrine of the New Testament were abandoned. Jesus as the Son of God and Himself very God, and the only Savior of mankind, was not accepted. All miracles of the Bible were rejected. The church became a fraternal organization with certain social benefits.

The critics of God and His Word haughtily described their cause as "the enlightenment" and thereby branded as benighted all who disagreed.

The restoration fathers well understood the assertions of the God defamers (Campbell, for instance, debated Owens) and, weighing the evidence, came down on the side of belief in both God and the Bible. McGarvey was well acquainted with the attacks on the Bible by the self-proclaimed intellectuals of his day and gave decisive answers.

His articles, under the title, *Biblical Criticism*, championed the cause of faith and laid bare the weakness of the arguments of the skeptic.

The urgent call to return to the old paths and walk therein had its effect in the modern world and multitudes turned back to God by obeying His Word. The living hope in a living Christ burned brightly in the hearts of the saved and gave great power to their enthusiastic presentation of eternal truth.

The “intellectuals” of “the enlightenment” secured a place in the leading universities of the world and soon left the impression that all dissenters were hopelessly ignorant. Some of those in the great restoration movement were influenced and gave themselves over to the forces of evil.

For the most part, Christian soldiers, bravely holding high the banner of truth, were marching onward during much of the nineteenth century. The voices of unbelievers within the ranks of the restorers were feeble and little listened to. However, toward the end of the century, the influence of the doubters began to be felt. The credibility and sufficiency of the Bible was called in question.

Instrumental music was innovated into the worship of the church and extracongregational bodies were seeking for dominance over the churches. The tendency to exalt man and demote God was also being felt. God was represented as a tyrant and man was His victim. The loud voice of God demanding obedience and submission was resented and rejected. It was the battle of the garden of Eden once again.

Murch claims three distinct groups developed within the restoration plea. He may be right, but his labeling of them is incorrect. The three groups were: those who staunchly stood for faith in the Bible and made no apology for their loyalty to God; those who openly denied the authenticity and reliability of the Bible and were embarrassed by the God of the Bible; and those in the middle who were trying to ride with a foot on either horse. Murch calls them “the rightist, the leftist, and the centrist,” but they are more properly, “the believers, the unbelievers, and the compromisers.”

A national “convention” was created and sought to be the medium through which all the churches of the restoration could work together in evangelism and missionary enterprise.

Tolbert Fanning and William Lipscomb established the *Gospel Advocate* and announced, in February, 1857, "We regard the church of Christ as the only divinely authorized Bible, Missionary and Temperance Society on earth."

The struggle went on for fifty years. The unbelievers and their sympathizers gained greater and greater control of the convention. Finally, in 1906, J. W. Shepherd and others requested the United States to report the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the churches of Christ as separate religious entities in its census of America.

As early as 1911 the reception of the unimmersed into the churches was being advocated by the apostates.

Murch says,

Conservatives were slow to see what was happening...Some were naive enough to be taken in by the liberal propaganda. Most of them trusted in a false security...the basic issues of the educational controversy were not allowed to appear, and when evangelicals raised them they were branded as troublemakers bent on destroying the peace of the brotherhood.

The Christian Church, through its International Convention, and the American Christian Missionary Society, kept pushing open membership and centralization of authority, looking always to the time when the entire group could be folded into the arms of the National and World Council of Churches.

In October of 1927, the North American Christian Convention met in Indianapolis for the first time. Murch says, "The gathering proposed was to be a mass meeting of believers which would cause the enemies of truth and righteousness to take notice."

Now the Christian Church had two conventions. The liberals among them had the International Convention, which had control of most agencies, societies and schools; and the "irenics" had the North American Convention, which professed "to honor the scriptures as the only ground for the unity of followers of Christ."

The International Convention, meeting in Denver, in 1959, passed a resolution calling for restructure. Under the plan, the International Convention is the central authoritative denominational body. The state societies, under the International Convention, are associations of

churches with all essential denominational controls at the state level. The local churches were told to adopt new characters and constitutions which recognize the superior extra-congregational authority of state and national bodies.

In October, 1987, in Louisville, Kentucky, the International Convention (now “The General Assembly Of The Christian Church”) did the following:

1. Deferred a resolution concerning salvation in Jesus Christ for additional study. Richard Bowman, minister of the First Christian Church in Decatur, Illinois, wanted the convention to affirm the basic truth that “Jesus Christ is the only Savior,” but failed because, as Walter Bingham stated, “such a resolution might damage interfaith and ecumenical relationships.”
2. Overwhelmingly defeated a resolution stating that “homosexuality is one of the sins listed in the Bible and is an unacceptable lifestyle of Christian.”
3. Defeated an anti-abortion resolution.
4. Defeated a resolution to protest human rights violations by the Soviet Union in Afghanistan.
5. Passed a request for the United States to normalize relations with communist Vietnam, i.e., lift the trade embargo.

HAVE THEY LEARNED ANYTHING?

Under the leadership of Don DeWelt, the Independent Christian Church has made overtures to the churches of Christ, in hope of producing a merger, or, at least, a fellowship in which the two groups tolerate each other.

Several meetings have taken place, but very little has resulted. The promoters feel that unity cannot be realized by contending for a platform that requires conformity to all the conditions of inspired scripture; consequently, they hold to the idea that their dream of merger must be approached by successive steps, rather than by one step which will cover everything that ought to be considered. They think it well to emphasize the points of agreement rather than the points of disagreement. They think the points of disagreement will disappear entirely if the points of agreement are sufficiently advertised. They push the idea that a great many things can be done in common, and it is believed that while this is being done, the bodies

will become acquainted with one another, and will learn to love one another and this will bring about the union they seek.

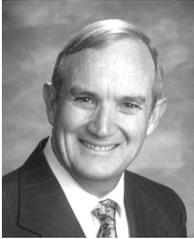
Independent Christian Church preachers rightly say that because of their support of instrumental music in the worship of the church, they could not oppose such things as women elders, infant baptism, incense in worship, counting beads as an aid to prayer, holy water and a long list of other items that are not commanded in God's Word, but that are likewise not forbidden (including restructuring the church into a denomination in order to join the World Council of Churches). If the mechanical instrument of music is to be used in worship on the grounds that the New Testament does not specifically prohibit it, then these other things would also have to be allowed.

It really comes down to the fact that the only real basis for unity is to stand uncompromisingly for doing exactly what the Bible tells us to do in exactly the way the Bible tells us to do it, even if we must stand alone. The only way division can be avoided is to follow the New Testament example and cast out those who innovate unauthorized practices.

Now I beseech you, brethren, through 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 perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment [Paul, the apostle].

ARE WE MOVING AWAY FROM THE DISCIPLINE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT?

Curtis Cates



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INTRODUCTION

In a study of the theme “The Cross of Christ—Are We Moving Away from the Cross?” the question naturally arises, Are we moving from the discipline of the cross? Church discipline is a very integral part of maintaining the purity and distinctiveness of New Testament practice.

The early church fought against sin. Sin had severed man’s relationship with God in the Garden (Gen. 3); it had separated every accountable person from God (Isa. 59:1-2); and it had been the cause of Christ’s loving sacrifice (Heb. 2:9; 9:28). The church was composed of Christians, those who had been baptized, upon the penitent confession of the deity of Christ, for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38, 41). They were saints, having come out of and renounced the world (1 Cor. 1:2; 6:17-18). The Lord’s kingdom was known for its having declared war on sin; sin in the Jerusalem church was exposed and deposed (Acts 5:1-14); the people magnified the apostles, “and be-

lievers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.” Sin was condemned, and the church refused to compromise.

Further, the early church had the same mission as that which brought Christ to earth—“to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). Thus, they pleaded for people to renounce sin and not to live any longer therein (Luke 13:3; Acts 3:19; Rom. 5:20-6:4). They did not teach a “grace” which whitewashed sin and simply draped a cloak of “righteousness” over a person still leprous with transgression but rather the grace of God. The Christian is redeemed “from all iniquity,” not *in* all iniquity (Tit. 1:14).

For the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us, to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world (Tit. 1:11-12).

“Having therefore these promises, beloved, let us **cleanse ourselves from all defilements of flesh and spirit**, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Cor. 7:1).

Still further, the church had elders who exercised oversight as shepherds of the flock. They were responsible to lead, to rule, to protect, to feed the flock. And, they did just that. (See Acts 14:23; 20:28-32; Phi. 1:1; Tit. 1:5-13; Heb. 13:7, 17; 1 The. 5:12,13; 1 Pet. 5:1-4; 1 Tim. 5:17). Elders were and are placed in authority by divine decree.

DISCIPLINE IS ESSENTIAL

For the present and eternal welfare of God’s people, He requires Christians to live an orderly life. God is a God of order and system.

This is the end of the matter; all hath been heard: Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every work into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil (Ecc. 12:13-14).

God demands obedience; therefore, when Adam and Eve (Gen. 2:17; 3:1-19), Cain (Gen. 4:1-15), the world at the flood (Gen. 6), Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10), Moses and Aaron (Num. 20), Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5), et al., transgressed God’s law, each was disciplined. Unfortunately, many of God’s children still become wilfully and impenitently disorderly. Thus, Paul wrote,

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 they received of us (2 The. 3:6).

It does not surprise man that discipline is necessary. It is essential: 1. in the government (Rom. 13:1-7), 2. in the armed services, 3. in the schools, 4. in the work place, 5. in the home (Pro. 22:6; Deu. 21:18-21; Pro. 23:13; Eph. 6:1-4, et al.), as well as in the body of Christ. “And he put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all” (Eph. 1:22-23). Inasmuch as a healthy body demands the ability to throw off disease and the severing from the body that malignant growth which would threaten its very life; the spiritual body of Christ, the healthy church will not tolerate in its very bosom that wilful, malignant, and impenitent sin which would destroy it. Just as the physical body must be saved from death even at the cost of a hand, or a foot, or some other precious member, the body of Christ must, as a last resort, “put away the wicked man from among yourselves” (1 Cor. 5:13).

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP IS TO BE MAINTAINED

Fellowship with God and with other Christians is a precious privilege of God’s faithful people. “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42). How came Christians to have this fellowship?

that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you also, that ye also may have fellowship with us: yea, and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.... If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in the darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sins (1 John 1:3, 6-7).

The word fellowship (*koinonia*) means communion, joint participation, intimacy, partnership, mutual sharing, etc. None is a part of the unity of Christians who violate God’s boundaries of fellowship. Note: only God has the right and authority to set those boundaries; the demands, and constraints, as well as the great blessings and responsibilities of fellowship, are stated in His law (Mat. 28:18; Tit. 2:10-15;

2 John 9-11; 2 Tim. 4:3). Since neither God nor Christ can have fellowship with darkness, evil, false doctrine, worldliness, sectarianism, the Christian cannot have fellowship with such. Paul warned with force the Corinthian brethren,

Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of demons: ye cannot partake of the table of the Lord, and of the table of demons. Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he? (1 Cor. 10:22-23).

There must be “no schism in the body” (1 Cor. 12:25),.

Just as the sinner is separated from God and just as God cannot fellowship sin (Isa. 59:2), the alien sinner must be cleansed by the blood of Christ upon being scripturally baptized into Christ and contacting His cleansing blood (Eph. 1:7; Col. 1:13,14; Rom. 6:3,4; Rev. 1:5). He is at that point reconciled to God in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17-19) and is in fellowship with God and with the faithful saints. This fellowship is broken when one goes back into sin; the impenitent child of God, one unwilling to persist in walking in the light, one unwilling to confess his sins (1 John 1:7-10), cannot maintain fellowship with God. God no longer fellowships him. The apostle Peter describes this terrible state in vivid terms (2 Pet. 2:20-22). In that context, false teachers are mentioned as having contributed to such destruction, those teaching destructive heresies. The fellowship of the erring can be restored (1 John 1:9; Acts 8:18-24), but often it is not. This calls for stronger measures.

WHAT IS DISCIPLINE?

Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary defines discipline as “instruction; training that corrects, molds, or perfects the mental faculties or moral character; punishment.” Paul wrote that “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable...for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). The ASV margin for “instruction” is “discipline,” *paideian*. Discipline is that by which the person is trained, is taught to live a godly life, is corrected, and is encouraged to rectify mistakes in his life. Of course, withdrawal is the final step in which discipline is exercised, when all other efforts have failed to restore the erring.

Discipline is designed to instruct, to correct, and to punish, or chastise. It is the responsibility of elders to feed and tend the flock (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2), as noted earlier. This is involved in their oversight and watching for the souls of the flock (Heb. 13:17; 1 Tim. 5:17), for they must give account. The church is to esteem them highly and submit to their oversight, counting them worthy of honor (1 The. 5:12-13; Heb. 13:17; 1 Tim. 5:17; Heb. 13:7). To refuse thus to respect God's organization is to undermine God's order and to bring about confusion and anarchy. Christians are also to encourage and exhort one another (Heb. 3:12-13; 10: 24-25); this is instructive discipline.

Sometimes brethren err from the truth and must be corrected. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted (Gal. 6:1).

Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins (Jam. 5:19-20).

If a brother (or sister) persists in his wickedness and/or rebellion and thereby jeopardizes his own soul and the purity and order of the church (1 Cor. 5:6), then further corrective discipline, penalizing and punitive in its nature, must be exercised. "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned: and turn away from them" (Rom. 16:17). "Withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which they received of us" (2 The. 3:6). "Put away the wicked man from among yourselves" (1 Cor. 5:13). Church discipline is not optional.

WHAT IS THE SCRIPTURAL PURPOSE OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE?

The motive and purpose of church discipline must be *scriptural*. One, simply to make someone suffer is the wrong motive. This is involved, just as it is involved when a surgeon necessarily removes a diseased part of the body or tumor or when a parent chastises a child (Heb. 12:11, 5-6). God does not chastise His children just to make

them suffer but to yield “peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby, even the fruit of righteousness” (Heb. 12:11).

Two, to demonstrate vindictiveness is the wrong motive. The church must always act out of the spirit of love for one’s soul and remember that vengeance belongs only to God (Rom. 12:19).

Three, to assume the position of condemning a person to eternal punishment is not the church’s prerogative. God handles the area of where a person spends eternity.

Four, to count the disciplined brother as an enemy is clearly condemned.

And, if any man obeyeth not our word by this epistle, note that man, that ye have no company with him, to the end that he may be ashamed. And yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother (2 The. 3:14-15).

What is the scriptural purpose for withdrawing fellowship? First, it is to save the one who is thus disciplined. This is certainly different from the attitude of acting out of hatred, little concerned about the soul of the offender. Paul wrote, “deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (1 Cor. 5:5). Hopefully, he will become “ashamed” of his sin and rebellion, and repent (2 The. 3:14). Paul was saddened that he had to make the Corinthians sorrow when he rebuked them severely for their transgressions, in love of course, but he was later able to rejoice because the rebuke led them to be “made sorry unto repentance” (2 Cor. 7:9). The right kind of spirit will repent when thus rebuked, as Peter did when Christ rebuked him on several occasions. A lesser spirit will not. The one thus disciplined should appreciate the concern thus demonstrated, just as he would appreciate the efforts of the physician trying to save him from the ravages of cancer.

Second, withdrawing fellowship maintains the purity of the church. Just as penitent believers are fit subjects for baptism (entrance into the kingdom), abandoning their lives of homosexuality, adultery, idolatry, et al. (1 Cor. 6:9-11; Eph. 2:1-3), so likewise must the church’s purity be maintained. Those returning to such lives of wickedness and corruption must be separated from the body. Paul charged, “Purge out the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump.” Why, Paul? “Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole

lump?” (1 Cor. 5:6-7). Worldliness is truly a tremendous problem from which elders must protect their flock. For elders to allow some members to sin in blatant disregard for and wilful rebellion against God’s laws of decency, moral purity, and doctrinal purity is to abdicate their highest charge and to place the congregation under their oversight in imminent jeopardy. No wonder the elders must be ever vigilant, for their sheep can be caught up in a greater tide of worldliness than they ever realize on their own. No wonder the members should respect very highly those great men who watch after their souls!

Third, discipline puts the other members on notice that the wilful persistence in sin will not be tolerated. “Them that sin reprove in the sight of all, that the rest also may be in fear” (1 Tim. 5:20). Is this not true in the home, that when a child sees his brother disciplined for a certain misbehavior, he is thereby more reluctant to participate in the same activity? When sin is exposed and lovingly opposed, others will be reticent to engage therein. What if sin had been tolerated (which was not possible, because of God’s nature) in heaven. for a time when Satan and his angels rebelled? Would the hand of righteousness have been weakened?

Fourth, church discipline informs the world that the church does not tolerate worldliness and ungodliness. The reader will recall that the Jerusalem church was “magnified” as a result of the discipline of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1-14), and “believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.” Away with the manmade, Satan-inspired figment of imagination that God’s way does not work! Some still make void the Word of God by their traditions (Mat. 15:6).

Five, withdrawing from the disorderly is a demonstration of love. Paul rebuked the church at Corinth for their lack of love for the brethren. “And ye are puffed up, and **did not rather mourn**, that he that had done this deed might be taken away from among you” (1 Cor. 5:2). Their lack of love is also demonstrated in their allowing some brethren to do without whereas others were full (1 Cor. 10, 11). Such made scriptural partaking of the Lord’s Supper impossible (1 Cor. 11:20—ASV). But someone objects; “Withdrawing is un-

loving!” But, is parental discipline unloving? Is God’s chastening unloving? One should be very slow to charge God’s law thus! The question is, How much do we love the soul of our brother?

WHAT DOES CHURCH DISCIPLINE INVOLVE?

One must distinguish between sins of private nature, between individuals, and those of a public nature. In Matthew 18:15-17, the Lord speaks of private sins.

And if thy brother sin against thee, go, show him his fault between thee and him **alone**: if he hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he hear thee not, take with thee one or two more, that at the mouth of two witnesses or three every word may be established. And if he refuse to hear them, **tell it to the church**: and if he refuse to hear the church also, let him be unto thee as the Gentile and the publican.

The goal is to rectify the matter in private so it will not need to be brought before the elders of the church, for these are personal matters. Christ said also about such matters,

If therefore thou art offering thy gift at the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift (Mat. 5:23-24).

In a real sense, one cannot properly worship God until these matters are corrected; it is a matter of urgency, of eternal import.

False teachers at times attempt to escape the exposure of their false doctrine by a misapplication of Matthew 18:15-17, averring that one must privately go to them before they can refute that doctrine publicly. Such perversion is convenient for the false teacher, and would put faithful brethren and the cause of truth at a marked disadvantage, but such is poor exegesis. The devil rejoices when brethren fall for such heretical teaching. Besides, whom did the false teacher consult before his public proclamation? Did Paul go privately to the false teachers in Corinth before exposing them, or Christ to the Pharisees?

When a personal matter becomes a public matter, as per Matthew 18:15-17, then it must be handled by the church as any other public sin. And, if withdrawal is necessary, it must include the whole church.

It is always hoped that the sinner(s) can be restored and that the last step in discipline, withdrawal of fellowship, can be avoided.

Brethren are to admonish them (Tit. 3:10; Gal. 6:1; Jam. 5:19-20). Love demands that brethren pray for, instruct, and plead for the sinner to repent. Sometimes brethren are disfellowshipped without their knowledge; “A factious man [an heretick—KJV] after a first and second admonition refuse [reject], knowing that such a one is perverted and sinneth, being self-condemned” (Tit. 3:10-11).

However, when a person must be disfellowshipped, the whole church is to “mark [identify and watch out for] them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned: and turn away from them” (Rom. 16:17). The church is to “note that man, that ye have no company with him” (2 The. 3:13); “with such a one no, not to eat” (1 Cor. 5:11). Fellowship with the brethren should be highly prized; to lose it is a grievous blow to the Christian. If removing the fellowship of faithful brethren will not bring the wayward to repentance, the person is far gone; it is their final hope. Those brethren who fail to honor and be a part of the withdrawal process and who persist in fellowshiping the excluded brother, violate God’s law and encourage the sinner to persist in his rebellion and transgression. They war against the soul of the very one they seek to befriend, whether they be a brother or another congregation who take the withdrawn brother into their fold.

In order for the congregation as a whole to be informed and cooperate in the action, public announcement should be made of the attempts to reconcile the brother. The members should be enlisted in an attempt to restore the erring; if these are unsuccessful within a several week period, the formal withdrawal must be announced, with discretion; and under some circumstances, letters should be written to nearby elders where the disfellowshipped party may try to place membership. In the case of public false teachers, notification may need to be more broad. In the day of numerous court actions, elders must use wisdom in these areas; nonetheless, we must obey God rather than man (Acts 4:18-20).

Since the various congregations make up the body of Christ, God makes the congregations responsible for cooperating one with another in the area of discipline, as in other areas. One congregation is morally bound to honor the withdrawal of another—a fact not stressed enough

in recent years. Does God permit other congregations to keep company with an excluded brother whereas local brethren may not? (1 Cor. 5:9-11). Is this consistent? Is the golden rule practiced when this happens? Would those receiving congregations appreciate it when *their* excluded members are freely, unquestionably accepted into fellowship of sister congregations? (Mat. 7:12). Such would lead to congregations living to themselves—and DYING to themselves. Are churches “their fellow keepers?” Is it right for one church to try to undo the good done by another in trying to restore a lost brother? Is it right for one church to do away with the power of another church to fulfil their responsibility, as God commands? Is it right for one church to undo the actions of another when they fulfil the command to “deliver such a one to Satan” so he will repent? If such is right in one church, that is, to accept one disfellowshipped by order of the Holy Spirit, in another, then the Holy Spirit is divided against Himself. If not, why not? Which congregation is honoring the Head of the church, Christ? The excluding church, or the fellowshiping church? Does the church fellowshiping the excluded member continue to fulfil the command to treat the brother as “a heathen man and a publican?” Is it right to treat him as if nothing had transpired? Does this help build unity among brethren; is this what constitutes loving the brotherhood? Is it right for the receiving church to shut up God’s grace toward the man, by essentially confirming him in his sin instead of encouraging him to repent? Is it not parallel to one parent appeasing a disobedient child whereas the other parent chastens him?

Certainly, congregations can and should investigate the circumstances, even, if need be, talking with the elders of the withdrawing church. Congregations can make mistakes just as individuals and can act unjustly. However, the above is describing when brethren have acted scripturally, as seems generally the case.

FROM WHOM IS THE CHURCH TO WITHDRAW?

The Bible is clear concerning those brethren from whom the church is to withdraw. As noted earlier, in the first place, the church should withdraw from a brother who will not correct a private sin, as per Matthew 18:15-17. In the second place, those who walk disorderly, not in step with the divine rule, and who are of a spirit of insub-

ordination (2 The. 3:6ff) should be disfellowshipped. In the third place, those who are immoral should be disfellowshipped (1 Cor. 5:1-13). In the fourth place, any public sin, or sin which is known, of which a child of God will not repent, is cause for disfellowship. In the fifth place, false teachers are to be disfellowshipped (Rom. 16:17-18; Tit. 3:10-11). Thyatira was severely rebuked by Christ for allowing immoral and false brethren to continue in her fellowship (Rev. 2:20-23). He praised the church at Ephesus for hating the works of false teachers, which God also hated: they tried the false teachers, exposed them, and disfellowshipped and marked them (Rev. 2:2-6). Elders must not operate a haven for ravening wolves, who are set upon devouring the flock of God! In the sixth place, those who sow discord among brethren must be disfellowshipped (Pro. 6:16, 19).

CAN A CONGREGATION REFUSE FELLOWSHIP TO ANOTHER CONGREGATION?

In a time of liberalism, worldliness, and compromise with error, this question is critical. The following points need to be considered in answering this query. In the first place, God's people cannot, must not fellowship world religions, Catholicism, denominationalism, or sectarianism. In the second place, the church must beware of false teachers and prophets (Col. 2:8, 20-23; 1 John 4:1). "Have *no fellowship* with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them," Paul commanded (Eph. 5:3-11). He refused "to give place in the way of subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you" (Gal. 2:5). Is it commanded for the local congregation not to have communion with the unclean, the defiled, the wicked, the dark, in the local congregation but yet permissible to fellowship other congregations which condone and/or teach the same (2 Cor. 6:14-7:1)? Can faithful congregations fellowship apostate churches?

In the third place, can churches depart from the faith? Can they cease their communion with God and Christ (1 John 1:3-10; 3:23-24); can they cease walking in the light; can they cease loving Jesus and abandon the truth (Rev. 2:4-5)? Can they bid God speed to false teachers (2 John 9-11); can they pervert the gospel and become anathema (Gal. 1:6-9)? Can congregations become partakers of their

evil deeds by supporting and fellowshiping such other congregations (Rom. 1:32)? In the fourth place, churches are commanded to “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3). Faithful saints and congregations are in fellowship with the faithful everywhere; they “Love the brotherhood” (1 Pet. 2:17). They partake in the “common salvation” (Jude 3). They salute one another (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:19; Rom. 16:1ff). Is that fellowship to be maintained with apostate congregations? Indeed not! Brethren cannot maintain fellowship with those who no longer partake of the “common salvation” but rather partake of evil and false doctrine (Rom. 16:17-18; 1 Tim. 6:3-10; 1 Cor. 15:33; 2 John 9-11).

In the fifth place, churches can harbor and defend the wicked and the false teacher, in clear violation of Scripture. Note the attitude of God toward those who hide their eyes from the wicked man; He sets His face against them and cuts them off (Lev. 20:1-5). In the sixth place, to mark or withhold fellowship from a church is not to violate local autonomy. *Rather*, to attempt to deny a congregation’s right to do so would be to violate its autonomy and to cause it to transgress Paul’s command in 2 Thessalonians 3:6, “every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which they received of us.” Can people in a local congregation have fellowship with an apostate congregation, whereas it would be wrong to fellowship the same worldliness and false doctrine in the local church? Does God have a double standard? Is the command to, “mark **them** that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned: and turn away from them” (Rom. 16:17), confined to the local congregation. Indeed, a church can refuse fellowship to another church; it violates the local autonomy of neither the disfellowshipped nor the disfellowshipping church.

Now, what are some practical considerations? One, the elders must discharge their responsibility of watching over and protecting their flock, whether from internal threats or from outside threats issuing forth from influences and teachings from other congregations (Acts 20:28). Two, the leaven of error can spread not only from member to member but also from congregation to congregation (1 Cor. 5). Three, marking a congregation may very well awaken members of the

marked congregation of the false teaching and/ or worldliness condoned therein (of which they may have been unaware) and move them to stand for the truth and to attempt to reform the church. It might very well save some of the members from destruction, and possibly, save the congregation. If the people are desiring to stand and wanting to do right, it will put them on notice that either the congregation needs to repent or they must (after finding out that they cannot help the situation) place membership elsewhere, disassociating themselves from the marked church. Four, the longer the delay in acting, the less likely the reformation.

Brethren must not forget that love for the truth of God, for the purity of the church, and for the brethren, as well as discretion and care, should characterize every act of discipline. Care must be given to being sure of facts and attitudes before this final step is taken.

WHAT IF THE SINNER REPENTS?

The brother who has been disfellowshipped and who repents is to be received back with open arms. Like the prodigal son, he was dead and is alive again (Luke 15:24). The withdrawn-from brother who had his father's wife (1 Cor. 5) repented. What was Paul's command?

Sufficient to such a one is this punishment which was inflicted by the many [he had been disfellowshipped by the whole church]; so that contrariwise ye should rather forgive him and comfort him, lest by any means such a one should be swallowed up with his overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you to **confirm your love** toward him (2 Cor. 2:6-8).

CONCLUSION

Alexander Campbell wrote, "Good discipline is as essential to the moral health, peace, and prosperity of the church of Christ, as good doctrine. Without it no society can long subsist" (*Millennial Harbinger*—Extra, 1835). J. W. McGarvey said,

When shall the rigid discipline which God established in the beginning [of the church, Acts 5:1-11] be seen on earth once more? Let the shepherds of the flock give answer, as they remember that they must give account to God concerning the souls committed to their care (*New Commentary on Acts*, 1892, p. 90).

THE AUTHORITY OF ELDERS

Roy Deaver

AN OLD TESTAMENT ILLUSTRATION

During the time of Israel's wandering, and after the apostasy at Kadesh, there was a great rebellion against the authority and position of Moses and Aaron. This rebellion was led by Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, who were joined by 250 other men—men of distinction. The record of this rebellion is found in Numbers 16:1-35, and the following quotations are taken from *The Berkeley Version*.

Korah, Dathan, and Abiram

enlisted 250 men of Israel, who were leaders in the assembly, national representatives and men of distinction and jointly they revolted against Moses and Aaron, they said to them, "You assume too much authority. This entire community—yes, everyone of them—is dedicated, for the Lord is present with them. Why should you elevate yourselves above the Lord's people?" (vv. 1-3).

When Moses heard this, he fell on his face. Then he said to Korah and all his company, "Tomorrow morning the Lord will make clear who belongs to Him, who is dedicated, and He will allow that one to approach Him. Korah and all his company, you do this: get yourselves censers. Tomorrow in the Lord's presence place hot coals on them along with incense. He whom the Lord selects shall be the dedicated one. You descendants of Levi are the ones who are assuming too much" (vv. 4-7).

Moses continued: "It is against the Lord that you and your entire company have assembled" (v. 1).

Then Moses sent a summons to Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab. "We will not come up," they answered. "Is it such a trivial matter that you have brought us up from a land flowing with milk and honey to kill us in the wilderness, that you should also set up yourself as a dictator over us?" (vv. 12-13).

Moses further directed Korah, "Tomorrow you and your entire company present yourselves before the Lord; you, they, and Aaron. Each man is to take his censer, and having put the incense upon it, each one shall present his censer before the Lord, 250 censers, both you and Aaron, each one with his censer" (vv. 16-17).

So each man took his censer and, having laced hot coals on them, along with incense, they stationed themselves at the door of the tent of meeting along with Moses and Aaron. No sooner had Korah assembled the entire community against them at the door of the meeting tent, than the glory of the Lord appeared to the entire gathering. The Lord addressed Moses and Aaron: “Separate yourselves from this gathering; for I will destroy them in a moment” (vv. 18-21).

but Dathan and Abiram came out and stood at the door of their tents along with their wives, sons and little ones. “By this,” declared Moses, “you shall understand that the Lord has commissioned me to carry out all these activities, that I do not act on my own impulse” (vv. 27-28).

As soon as he had finished speaking all these things, the ground split open beneath them, and having opened its mouth, it swallowed them and their families, all the men who had sided with Korah, and all their goods (vv. 31-32).

Moreover, a fire proceeded from the Lord, which consumed the 250 men who had offered the incense (v. 35).

Here is a vivid Old Testament incident involving rebellion against God’s delegated authority, and a clear illustration of what God thinks of any such rebellion. The rebels charged: “You assume too much authority,” verse 3. They restated the charge: “that you should also set up yourself as a dictator over us,” verse 13. Their argument was: “This entire community—yes, everyone of them—is dedicated” verse 3. Moses said: “You...are the ones who are assuming too much,” verse 2. He declared, “You are opposing the Lord,” verse 11. commissioned me,” verse 28. He stressed: “I do not act on my own impulse,” verse 28. Moses further said: “The Lord will make clear who has authority” (cf., v. 5) and “The Lord will make clear who has rebelled against Him,” verse 30. The ground opened beneath Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, and their families. They were buried alive, verses 31-32. Fire went out from the Lord and destroyed the 250 men who had joined with Korah, Dathan, and Abiram.

Thus, we have a simple, clear, forceful, and *unforgettable demonstration* of God’s attitude toward those who rebel against His delegated authority, and “whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning” (Rom. 15:4).

THERE ARE MODERN REBELLIONS

It sometimes comes as a surprise to Christians to learn that in our day, there is a similar rebellion against God's delegated authority. There are men (some of them gospel preachers) who are enthusiastically propounding the doctrine that elders of the local congregation have no authority.

From 1960 to the present time, this writer has been called upon many times to try to assist congregations seriously troubled by this doctrine. We know of other congregations where—because the preacher taught this doctrine—elderships have been removed and havoc has been wrought in the congregation. I have heard these modern rebels make the same charges made against Moses: “You take too much upon you; you assume too much authority; you have made yourselves dictators over us.” I have heard these rebels offer the same explanation the ancient rebels offered: “Every member of this congregation has the same right, the same authority.” These misguided brethren have insisted: (1) that elders have no more authority than any other member of the congregation; (2) that elders cannot make definite assignments relating to the congregation; (3) that elders cannot have meetings of “elders only” to discuss matters pertaining to the church; (4) that elders cannot make decisions that affect the congregation without first consulting the entire congregation.

BASIC ERRORS

A foundation error in this doctrine is a misunderstanding of Matthew 20:26 and Matthew 28:18. With reference to Matthew 28:18, it is argued that the Lord said that He had *all authority*, and that, therefore, *nobody else could have any!* Particular attention is generally directed to the word *exousia* (authority), and it has been insisted that only the Lord has *exousia*. This view fails to recognize: (1) that since the Lord has *all authority*, He therefore has the authority to delegate authority; and (2) that *exousia* is a *general* term. With reference to Matthew 20:26, it is argued that the Lord was discussing *exousia*, and that the Lord said, “It shall not be so among you.” It is concluded that there would be no authority (no *exousia*) among the Lord's followers.

It is important that we understand what the Lord was actually teaching in Matthew 20:26. The context includes verses 20-28. There are two words particularly important so far as concerns the present study: *katakuriuousin*, and *katexousiadzousin* (v. 25). The Lord said that the rulers of the Gentiles “lord it over them,” and that their great ones “exercise authority” over them. Then, out of this background the Lord said: “not so shall it be among you.” If, when the Lord made this statement, He meant that there could be no *exousia* among His followers, then the apostle Paul could not have possessed *exousia*. But, Paul *did* possess *exousia* (2 Cor. 10:8; 13:10). Obviously, therefore, the Lord did not mean that there would be no authority exercised among His followers. The Lord simply stressed that *greatness* according to *Gentile standards* was according to *position* and *authority*, but “that it shall not be so among you”—that is, such would not be the standard of greatness among the Lord’s followers. The Lord then set forth the *true standard of true greatness*: that greatness is in proportion to service rendered (verses 26-27). It should be pointed out that true greatness and *exousia* are not mutually exclusive, for both the Lord and Paul were truly great, yet each possessed *exousia*.

Numerous attempts have been made to try to prove that there is something peculiar in the word *exousia*—something which would limit the significance of the Word to the Lord Himself. However, *no such limitation can be placed upon this word*. Attention is here directed to a number of passages using the word *exousia* (authority) and that to which the word relates. (1) In Matthew 28:18, the Lord affirmed His *exousia*. (2) In Matthew 8:9, the word refers to military power. (3) In Mark 6:7, the word relates to the Twelve. (4) In Mark 13:34, it relates to the Lord’s servants. (5) In Luke 4:6, Acts 26:18, and Colossians 1:13, it is seen that Satan has *exousia*. (6) In Luke 12:5 and Acts 1:7, it relates to God. (7) In Romans 13 and in 1 Peter 3:22, the word relates to civil authorities. (8) In John 1:12, it relates to believers. (9) In John 19:10-11, it relates to Pilate. (10) In Acts 5:4, it relates to Ananias and Sapphira. (11) In Acts 9:14 and 26:10,12, it relates to Paul the persecutor. (12) In 1 Corinthians 7:4, the word is used in reference to husband and wife. (13) In 1 Corinthians 6:12, it

relates to expediencies. (14) In 1 Corinthians 8:9, it relates to personal liberty. (15) In 2 Corinthians 10:8; 2 Corinthians 13:10, and 2 Thessalonians 3:9, it relates to Paul the apostle. (16) In Revelation 2:26, it relates to those who overcome. (17) In Revelation 6:8, it relates to Death and Hades. (18) In Revelation 13:2, it relates to the beast. (19) In Revelation 22:14, it relates to those who wash their robes. Clearly, the word *exousia* cannot be restricted to the authority which only the Lord can have.

Furthermore, in Mark 1:27 it is said with authority he commanded even the unclean spirits, and they obey him.” “Authority” here is the word *exousia*; “obey” is the word *hupakouo*. The *hupakouo* is the response to the *exousia*. But, in Ephesians 6:1, children are instructed to “obey” (*hupakouo*) their parents. Hence, even parents possess *exousia*. In Mark 1:27 the “commandeth” is the Greek *epitasso*. But, in Titus 2:15 an evangelist is instructed to “reprove with all authority [commandment, *epitasso*]. Hence, even an evangelist possesses *exousia*. This does not mean (as some claim) that he has di-evangelistic control and oversight.”

Furthermore, in Revelation 2:26-27 the Lord promises to the overcoming one, “to him I will give authority [*exousia*] over the nations: and he shall rule [*poimaino*] them with a rod of iron.” The “rule” (*poimaino*) grows out of the “authority” (*exousia*). *Exousia* is the cause; *poimaino* is the effect. Where there is this effect, there is also this cause. Where there is that which is involved in *poimaino*, there is that which is involved in *exousia*. But, elders are to “feed” (*poimaino*) the church (Acts 20:28) and they are to “tend” the flock (1 Pet. 5:2). Therefore, elders possess *exousia*. Again, in Matthew 27:2, 11, 21, 27 Pilate is called “the governor.” In John 19:10-11 “the governor” affirmed his “power.” The word “governor” is the translation of *hageomai*, the word “power” is the translation of *exousia*. Where there is that involved in *hageomai*, there is that involved in *exousia*. *Exousia* is the authority by which the governing is done. But, elders are obligated to “rule” (*hageomai*) (Heb. 13:17). Clearly, therefore, elders have *exousia*.

It must be obvious that *exousia* is a general word, and that there are different levels and kinds of authority.

NEW TESTAMENT PASSAGES

In Acts 20:28-31 Paul says:

Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood. I know that after my departing grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Wherefore watch ye, remembering that by the space of three years I ceased not to admonish every one night and day with tears.

These remarks were addressed to elders (v. 17). According to this reading, elders are bishops (overseers). “Bishop” and “overseer” are the translation of the Greek term *episcopos*. *Episcopos* means “overseer, a man charged with the duty of seeing that things done by others are done rightly...” (Thayer, p. 243). Let it be noted that according to this lexical definition that: (1) there are things to be done by others; (2) these things to be done by others are to be done rightly; (3) an “overseer” is obligated to see to it that these things done by others are done rightly; (4) an “overseer” has the duty of seeing that the things done by others are done rightly.

The opposers contradict this lexical definition and its significance. They deny that there is any authority in the term *episcopos*. Also, may we note that according to this reading, elders are to “feed” the church. “Feed” is the Greek word *poimaino*. This word means: to feed, to tend, to rule, to govern, to shepherd, to manage, to direct. Yet, the opposers say there is no authority in the word “feed.” Further, according to this reading, elders are to “watch.” This is from the Greek word *gragoreo*, which includes the thoughts of watchfulness, giving strict attention to, being cautious, being active. Elders are God’s watchmen. They are guardians of the flock. But the opposers say these watchmen have no authority!

In 1 Timothy 3:4-5, Paul says regarding an elder: “one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (but if a man knoweth not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?” It is clear that an elder must “rule” his own house well. “Rule” is the Greek word *proistami*. This means to be over, to superintend, to preside over. We raise the question: is

there any authority in this word as applied to the father in his home? “Ruling” well his own house is a qualifying factor in “taking care” of the church. Obviously, “taking care” of the church involves “ruling” well. Elders are required to “rule” (1 Tim. 5:17; 1 The. 5:12). An elder’s children are to be in subjection to his rule. “Subjection” is the Greek *hupotoga*, which means “subordination.” This word clearly implies the authority inherent in the word “rule.” But, the opposers say there is no authority in “ruling” and in “taking care of” the church.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 the Record says: “But we beseech you, brethren, to know them that labor among you, and over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them exceeding highly in love for their work’s sake.” According to this reading, elders are “over you in the Lord.” “Over you” is the translation of the Greek *proistami*, which means: to be over, to superintend, to preside over. It is the same word translated “rule” in 1 Timothy 3:4-5 and in 1 Timothy 5:17. Obviously, there is authority involved in being “over you.” But, the opposers say there is no authority in this “rule” or in this “oversight.”

In 1 Peter 5:1-4 Peter says:

The elders therefore among you I exhort, who am a fellowelder, and a witness of the suffering of Christ, who am also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Tend the flock of God which is among you, exercising the oversight, not of constraint, but willingly, according to the will of God; nor yet for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as lording it over the charge allotted to you, but making yourselves ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall be manifested, ye shall receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away.

According to this reading, elders are to “tend” or “feed” the flock. This is the Greek word *poimaino*, which means to feed, to tend, to rule, to govern, to shepherd, to manage, to direct. The opposers say there is no authority in the word *poimaino*. According to this reading, the elders are to “exercise the oversight” over the flock. This is the Greek *episkopeo*, which means to function as an *episcopos*, which means “overseer, a man charged with the duty of seeing that things to be done by others are done rightly. But, the opposers say there is no authority in this word. According to this reading, elders are not to be as “lords over God’s heritage” (KJV). Elders are not to be as dic-

tators. But, the fact that they are not to be dictators does not mean that there is no authority in an eldership. Decisions affecting the congregation are theirs to make, and they may not shift this sacred responsibility. According to this reading, elders must be “examples” or “ensamples.” Their lives must be exemplary. They have specific qualifications to meet. The fact that they are to be examples does not cancel out their authority as “overseers.” The rebels have insisted long and loud that elders do not have authority—that they are to serve as examples—this and nothing more! We hasten to note that if the fact that elders are to be “examples” (the Greek *tupos*) means they have no authority as “overseers,” then the fact that Paul was an “example” (the Greek *tupos*, Phi. 3:17) means that Paul, as an apostle, had no authority! We stress that “example” does not cancel out or preclude authority.

In Hebrews 13:17, the Record says:

Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit to them; for they watch in behalf of your souls, as they that shall give account; that they may do this with joy, and not with grief. for this were unprofitable for you.

According to this reading, elders are to “rule.” “Rule” here is the Greek word *hageomai*, which means: to lead, to preside, to govern, to rule, to be a chief officer. In Matthew 27:2, 11, 21, 28, Pilate is called “the governor.” In Acts 7:10, Stephen refers to the fact that Joseph was made “governor over Egypt.” In these instances the word “governor” is from the original *hageomai*. Imagine: a governor with no authority! Yet, the opposers say there is no authority in this word. According to Hebrews 13:17, Christians are to “obey” these rulers. “Obey” is the Greek word *peitho*, which means to yield, to assent, to obey, to follow. It certainly involves the thought of being persuaded by. The opposers have emphatically declared that this word means “to persuade,” and that there is no authority in the word. They fail to understand that *persuasion does not preclude authority*. This is the very same word used in James 3:3, where James says that, “We put bridles into the horses’ mouths that they may **obey** us.” This obedience does not preclude the authority of the rider. Hebrews 13:17 in the *Amplified Version* reads as follows:

Obey your spiritual leaders and submit to them—continually recognizing their authority over you; for they are constantly keeping watch over your souls and guarding your spiritual welfare, as men who will have to render an account (of their trust).

The *Phillips' Translation* has:

Obey your rulers and recognize their authority. They are like men standing guard over your spiritual good, and they have great responsibility. Try to make their work a pleasure and not a burden—by so doing you will help not only them but yourselves.

Yet, the opposers insist that this obedience does not mean that elders have authority. In fact, these opposers are not interested in “obeying” the elders, and they are determined that elders have no authority—regardless of what the New Testament teaches! According to Hebrews 13:17, Christians are to “submit” to the elders. This is the Greek word *hupēiko*, which means: to yield, to give way, to be submissive. This very submission grows out of realization of and respect for the authority which God has placed in an eldership.

In Titus 1:7, Paul says: “For the bishop must be blameless, as God’s steward.” An elder, therefore, is “God’s steward.” “Steward” is the Greek word *oikonomos*, which is *oikos* (house) plus *nemo* (I distribute). So, the word means “administrator of God’s house.” This word refers to one who is a manager, a superintendent, an overseer. Obviously, there is authority in administering.

THE NATURE OF THEIR AUTHORITY

From these verses, we are forced to the conclusion that elders do have authority. They do not have the same kind of authority that the Lord has, and no one would so contend, but, they do have authority. They have no right to conduct themselves in a dictatorial fashion, but they do have authority. Let it be kept in mind that the authority is in the *eldership*, not in one elder. In functioning as elders, let those who constitute that eldership keep in mind that “All of us have got more sense than *any* of us.” This is God’s arrangement, the divine plan. Let us be determined to respect it.

What about the realm of their authority? the area in which they make decisions? Elders are to oversee, rule, shepherd the flock. Their duties inherently involve the authority necessary in accomplishing that

which is enjoined. Elders do not have authority to *make laws* in the sense that God makes laws. There is *original* authority, and there is *delegated* authority. Elders do not have *original* authority. They do have that authority which God, through His Word, has given them. Every obligation involves an element of expediency, human judgment. Relative to the expediency involved in a congregation's obligations, elders have the authority. God established the obligation. The obligation has an element of expediency. Within this area of expediency, in carrying out God's will as it relates to the congregation, elders have the authority.

CONCLUSION

I have in my files articles which contain the following statements: (1) "Jesus claims all authority and we know that outside him is no authority." (2) "Where then is the authority for the elders, as elders, to have a judgment and inflict it upon anyone?" (3) "It is a traditional concept and trend in the brotherhood today to give the elder a position and power which the word of God does not authorize." (4) "...none of these terms is a word expressing inherent authority. They are, rather words indicating management, direction, and responsibility. They are definitely not the words the Greek writer would use to express power and/ or authority." "The word *proistami* means to be head of, to manage, or to direct—it means direction and prominence, but not authority." (5) "All of these words as expressions of the exercise of power are vague and ambiguous. They do not indicate raw authority or power on the part of the bishop or obedience in the real sense on the part of the saint. It is significant that there is an absence of power or raw authority." (6) "The elders are never said to have authority (*exousia*) or power (*dunamis*) over the church." (7) "The words for the attitude of the members toward elders are those of deference and/ or submission to their experienced leading, and not of obedience."

Brethren, this is a doctrine as contrary to the plain teaching of the Bible as a doctrine could possibly be. It has caused (and continues to cause) trouble among the churches.

Let elders of the churches beware. Let them investigate as they ought. Let them deal properly with the false teacher. And, we fer-

vently pray that the false teachers will genuinely repent, and will make efforts to correct the havoc that has been wrought!

ARE WE MOVING AWAY FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT CONCEPT OF RESPECT FOR THE BIBLE?

H. A. (Buster) Dobbs

The chief priests and elders of the people demanded to know by what power Jesus did the things He did and taught the things He taught. He is credited in the New Testament with having taught with authority and not as the scribes and Pharisees. His authoritative teaching offended Jewish rulers and they demanded an explanation.

It is common for people in our time to scoff at what they call “authoritative religion.” Such religion is said to do injury because it keeps people from feeling good about themselves.

If by “authoritative religion” the overbearing and disdainful attitude of officials in the Roman Catholic church is meant (or other similar type human power systems), then it ought to be rebuked. If men assuming authority not assigned to them in the sacred Scriptures is “authoritative religion,” then “authoritative religion” is sinful.

Still and all, some folks who decry what they call “authoritative religion” appear to disparage authority of any kind whatsoever. They want a religion of convenience and accommodation. They want to be told nothing and to have nothing required of them. They want license to do whatever pleases them and will not put up with any system that makes demands of them, or accuses them. They do not want to hear of commands or judgment. They will do their own will; and they tolerate only those who approve and applaud whatever they may choose to do.

The most effective way to dispatch any call to duty and reminder of legitimate authority is to label it “authoritative religion” or “legalism.” The modern mind is so conditioned that when these hated words are heard the mob begins to pick up stones.

We ought to be impatient with pretenders and popes, but we ought not to wildly denounce all authority and rebel against all rule. There is such a thing as benevolent domination.

PROPER AUTHORITY

All power inheres in God. There is no primary authority apart from God. “God hath spoken once; twice have I heard this; that power belongeth to God” (Psa. 62:11). In the opening chapter of the Bible, we are told of how God created all things. The splendor of the creation of all things attests to the majesty of God.

Creation took place in a moment and as the result of the spoken word, i.e., “God said, Let there be light: and there was light” (Gen. 1:3). It was not that God said, Let there be light; and light came several aeons later. God gave the command and the result was immediate.

“And God said, Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together in one place, and let the dry land appear: and it was so” (Gen. 1:9). God commanded, and, presto, the separation between land and water occurred. In that same moment God, in the exercise of His illimitable power, brought forth “grass, herbs yielding seed, and fruit-trees bearing fruit after their kind.”

Fish and fowl were created in the same way. It was not that God took long years in designing and laboriously producing the varied life of sea and sky, but it was done quickly, on the fifth day of creation (Gen. 1:20-23).

“And God said, Let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind, cattle, and creeping things, and beasts of the earth after their kind, and it was so” (Gen. 1:20). On the same day God created the living creatures that walk or crawl upon dry land, He also made man. This, too, was done in a jiffy. “And God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them...And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day” (Gen. 1:27).

Bible writers point to the infinite power and authority of the living God, by calling to mind how the whole creation sprang into full perfection by an immediate act of creative might. Listen to some of the

inspired statements of honor and praise, ascribed to the matchless Maker of all things.

By the Word of Jehovah were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth. He gathered the waters of the sea together as a heap: He layeth up the deeps in store houses. Let all the earth fear Jehovah: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him (Psa. 33:6-8).

Ah Lord Jehovah! behold, thou hast made the heavens and the earth by thy great power and by thine outstretched arm; there is nothing too hard for thee (Jer. 32:17).

Worthy art thou, our Lord and our God, to receive the glory and honor and the power: for thou didst create all things, and because of thy will they were, and were created (Rev. 4:11).

For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his everlasting power and divinity (Rom. 1:20).

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language; Their voice is not heard (Psa. 19:1-3).

The Holy Spirit, through these human instruments, points to the creation of the present order to prove the greatness of God. We are told that because of creation we are to stand in awe of Jehovah, and be impressed with His great, everlasting power and divinity and gratefully acknowledge that He is worthy to receive glory and honor and power. Creation was a spectacular event that describes the fullness of God's authority.

Because of His creative might and unlimited knowledge, all authority belongs to God. The holy Scriptures reveal God to us as light and love and truth and energy. He is infinite in wisdom, power, holiness, justice and goodness.

There are two kinds of authority—original authority and delegated authority. All original authority resides in God. God alone possesses such authority. All delegated authority derives from Him in whom original authority inheres.

God has delegated authority to the civil magistrate and appointed him to be a minister of God for good to them that do well, and an avenger of wrath to them that do evil (Rom. 13:1-7); God has

delegated authority to the father in the home and constituted him as the head of the family (Eph. 5:22-24); God has delegated authority to bishops in the church (1 Pet. 5:2; Heb. 13:17).

To recognize the primary, original, inherent authority of God is to admit the authority of those to whom God has delegated power. To refuse to respect the delegated power is to dishonor God because such refusal denies His fundamental authority. This is axiomatic and needs no more than a simple pronouncement.

LESSONS FROM SINAI

Jehovah brought the children of Jacob out of the “iron furnace” of Egypt “by trials, by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by an outstretched arm, and by great terrors,” and brought them to Mount Sinai where a law was given and a nation was born.

When the law of Moses was given to the nation of Israel, God stamped indelibly upon the minds of the people His greatness and His authority. Moses was told to prepare the nation and bring them to the foot of the Sinai, but to warn them not to touch the mount, for “If even a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned.” God revealed His power to them in a vivid display.

And it came to pass on the third day, when it was morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of a trumpet exceeding loud; and all the people that were in the camp trembled. And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount. And mount Sinai, the whole of it, smoked, because Jehovah descended upon it in fire; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. And when the voice of the trumpet waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice (Exo. 19:16-19).

These words Jehovah spake unto all your assembly in the mount out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness, with a great voice: and he added no more. And he wrote them upon two tables of stone, and gave them unto me. And it came to pass when ye heard the voice out of the midst of the darkness, while the mountain was burning with fire, that ye came near unto me, even all the head of the tribes, and your elders; and ye said, Behold, Jehovah our God hath shown us his glory and his greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire: we have seen this day that God doth

Speak with man and he liveth. Now therefore why should we die? for this great fire will consume us: if we hear the voice of Jehovah our God any more, then we shall die. For who is there of all flesh, that hath heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as we have, and lived? Go thou near, and hear all that Jehovah our God shall say: and speak thou unto us all that Jehovah our God shall speak unto thee; and we will hear it, and do it (Deu. 5:22-27).

Out of the fire and darkness and lightnings and thunders and trembling earth and rending rocks and the sound of a trumpet, the awful voice of the Almighty was heard speaking ten terrible words. The purpose was to impress upon the people the absolute authority of the very words of very God. The people were filled with the fear of the Lord and they said, “we will hear it (God’s law), and do it.”

Moses, in his swan song, said to the people,

And now, Israel, what doth Jehovah thy God require of thee, but to fear Jehovah thy God, to walk in his ways, and to love him, and to serve Jehovah thy God with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of Jehovah, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good? (Deu. 10:12).

In the giving of the Old Covenant, God warned the people to avoid (1) doing whatsoever is right in your own eyes (Deu. 12:8) and (2) trying to be like the people around them; he urged them to (1) do that which is right in the eyes of Jehovah and (2) to love Jehovah and keep His laws (Deu. 11:13).

Moses also warned the people of the fearful consequences of disobedience.

But if it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of Jehovah thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day, that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee. Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field. Cursed shall be thy basket and thy kneading-trough. Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, the increase of thy cattle, and the young of thy flock. Cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and cursed shalt thou be when thou goest out. Jehovah will send upon thee cursing, discomfiture, and rebuke, in all that thou puttest thy hand unto to do, until thou be destroyed, and until thou perish quickly (Deu. 28:15-20).

Just as God is honored when men keep His law, so is He insulted when men fail to recognize the sanctity of His revealed Word and therefore disobey or disregard it. It is no small thing when people of earth trample under foot the holy law of a righteous God. Such sacrilege will inevitably receive its just recompense of reward. The punishment may be long delayed, because God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance, but, “though the wheels of God grind slowly, they grind exceedingly small.”

THE LAW OF CHRIST

The New Testament is called “the royal law of love” and “the law of liberty” and “the law of the spirit of life in Christ” and “the law of surpassing glory.” It is a law, and possesses all of the rigidity of law, but it provides life and liberty; it provokes love and therefore surpasses all other laws in glory.

The surpassing glory of the law of the spirit of life in Christ consists in the fact that it is a law of super-abounding grace. When, in contemplation of our own wicked inclinations and evil performance, we cry out, with Paul, “Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?” The clarion answer is,

I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord... There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death (Rom. 7:24-8:2).

Paul is clearly not saying that the law of the spirit of life in Christ made him free from all law. He is saying that the law of the spirit of life made him free from the law of his flesh, which produces sin and death, and being made free from one law, he became amenable to another law—the law that gave him such freedom.

We rejoice in a law that features grace, because without the unbounded mercy and undeserved favor of Jehovah, we would be hopeless. To emphasize the free gifts of God in Christ Jesus is only natural for those who have tasted of the good Word of God and the powers of the age to come.

It is, however, a tragic mistake to suppose that because of grace, obedience is unnecessary, or that grace will gloss over and excuse the

unrepentant, or that grace justifies disregard of divine oracles. Grace does not, somehow, nullify law.

The coming of the law of grace, truth, love and liberty does not mean that commands are not to be obeyed and statutes are not to be observed. Throughout the New Covenant we are warned against taking lightly divine ordinances.

Jesus, in the sermon on the mount, tells us that the wise man builds the house of his life upon the solid rock by “hearing these words of mine and doing them” and that the foolish man builds upon unstable sand because “he heareth these words of mine and doeth them not” and great will be the fall of his house (Mat. 7:27).

Jesus also tells us, in that same great basic lesson, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven” (Mat. 7:21).

In the model prayer, Jesus taught His disciples to say, “Thy will be done, as in heaven, so on earth” (Mat. 6:10). How is the will of God done in heaven? In that same way, the will of God should be done upon earth. Not half-hearted, indifferent, slipshod, sporadic obedience, but wholehearted, sincere, diligent and uninterrupted obedience.

“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deluding your own selves” (Jam. 1:22). He who excuses the doing of the Word, and thereby belittles both the Word and the God who gave it, plays a cruel trick upon himself and perhaps upon others. He is self-deluded!

The writer of the book of Hebrews (the real author of the book is, of course, God) points back to the giving of the law at Sinai and of how God did indeed vouchsafe to the people a demonstration of divine might, in order to impress upon them the need for absolute obedience to His Word, and wrote,

For ye are not come unto a mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, and unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that no word more should be spoken unto them; for they could not endure that which was enjoined, If even a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned; and so fearful was the appearance, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake: but ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels, to the general

assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better than that of Abel. See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not when they refused him that warned them on earth, much more shall not we escape who turn away from him that warneth from heaven: whose voice then shook the earth: but now hath he promised, saying, Yet once more will I make to tremble not the earth only, but also the heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that have been made, that those things which are not shaken may remain. Wherefore receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us have grace, whereby we may offer service well-pleasing to God with reverence and awe: for our God is a consuming fire (Heb. 12:18-29).

The lesson is unmistakable. If God required strict obedience to the precepts of the Old Law, much more will He expect careful adherence to the requirements of the New Law.

The importance of keeping the fiery law of Sinai was enforced by a smoking, trembling mount, and by the sound of a trumpet, and by the very voice of God. The importance of keeping the New Law is enforced by the earnest pleading of love, as seen in the very dying form of one who suffered at Calvary for us all.

In both covenants, the Great Lawgiver reveals and exerts a benevolent domination.

To spurn that tender overture is to bring down upon our heads the terrible wrath of our God, who is a consuming fire. This old earth will tremble yet once more, and not the earth only, but the heavens also, and that final trembling will signify the end of the present order. God is going to give us another demonstration of His might, but it will be far more awesome than anything that has gone before. More awesome than the thick darkness of shaking Sinai; more awesome than the grandeur of creation.

to you that are afflicted rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus: who shall suffer punishment, even eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to

be marvelled at in all them that believed (because our testimony unto you was believed) in that day (2 The. 1:7-10).

CONCLUSION

The authority of God, and the sanctity of His law, must be recognized. It is foolish for a person on earth to look to the starry host of heaven and admit the everlasting power and divinity of God as seen in His created universe, and then speak disparagingly of the law that came from His hand and the commands that issue from His mouth.

The one hundred seventy-six verses of the one hundred nineteenth Psalm are a beautiful, moving expression of the greatness of every word of God and the urgent necessity to faithfully keep His law, commandments and ordinances.

It defies understanding how the mere creatures of His hand could be so thoughtless as to foster the flimsy and feeble notion that God, the Creator, is not to be completely obeyed.

Obedience brings blessings. When we submit to the law of the Lord and rejoice to do His will, we receive a profound inner calm—a tranquility of soul. God does not command us to do anything because He wants to make us miserable, but He issues His rules so, that in the keeping of them, we may find happiness and peace. Even in the giving of the Old Law, God said to the people, through Moses; I am doing this for your good. “Observe to do, that it may be well with thee” (Deu. 6:3).

God keeps His eye upon the earth and observes the behavior of the people of the earth. He is concerned about how His children deal with false teachers and whether they are faithful to His Word. The church at Ephesus was praised because they could not “bear evil men” and, trying some teachers, found them to be false (Rev. 2:2); the church at Pergamum was rebuked for tolerating false teachers (Rev. 2:14); some of the people in the church at Thyatira were condemned for suffering the teaching of the woman Jezebel (Rev. 2:20); the church at Sardis was told to remember what they had heard (Rev. 3:3); the church at Philadelphia was congratulated for keeping the word of patience (Rev. 3:10).

The Old Law was enforced. When the people kept the law and obeyed the commands, they were blessed; when they forgot God and neglected His law and disobeyed His ordinances, they were brought to grief. The Old Testament is replete with instances of people refusing the voice of God and being punished for their perfidy. The great flood; Sodom and Gomorrah; The Amalekites; Saul the son of Kish; Shalmaneser and the Assyrians coming down upon Israel; The Babylonian captivity; the man who picked up sticks unlawfully on the Sabbath; Nadab and Abihu, the rebellious sons of Aaron; Korah and his company. In instance after instance, in the Old Testament, God reveals that disobedience bring harsh punishment and obedience brings joy and peace.

Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply we drift away from them. For if the word spoken through angels proved stedfast, and transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation? which having at the first been spoken through the Lord, was confirmed unto us by them that heard; God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders, and by manifold powers, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will (Heb. 2:1-4).

“I MARVEL THAT YE ARE SO SOON REMOVED”

William S. Cline



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In the very beginning of the book of Galatians, the apostle Paul raises the issue of the threatening apostasy of the churches of Galatia. It was Paul's usual manner to commend before he began to condemn, but that is not the pattern he followed here. In the place where commendations were usually found, Paul thundered forth his indignant astonishment at a fully developed and continuing apostasy which was among those he had converted in Galatia. In the introduction to Galatians, there were no words of personal salutation, no expressions of thankfulness. Instead of the usual, "I thank my God," we find, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed."

Paul was shocked that those who had been converted by his preaching were "quickly" or easily being moved from the gospel by those who would "trouble" them and "pervert the gospel of Christ." A fatal cancer threatened the very vitals of the churches of Galatia. To be kind and understanding would be a fatal mistake. Apostasy had to be met head-on. The apostle, not from men, nor by means of men, but from Christ and God, spoke with the power of Christ and God. His words have a conquering ring to them, and the churches of Galatia would hear his words and abide by them, unless they intended to

cease being churches of the Lord. The words they read from the apostle's pen were the words of a man who was a slave to Christ, a slave who knew only obedience to his heavenly Master, and was not concerned that his words be pleasing to men.

Paul wrote:

I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed (Gal. 1:6-9).

The tone of this section is tense and dramatic. Paul is not swept away by passion. He writes with perfect self-control. He knows the weight of his words. Every statement is deliberate and straight to the point. He is completely informed on the situation and intends to do all within his power to correct the problem before it goes any further. Thus, he meets the problem with an incisiveness that truly demonstrates the sharpness and cutting quality of his ability to argue for the right and against the wrong.

REACTION TO APOSTASY, GALATIANS 1:6

In verse six, we have the inspired apostle's reaction to the apostasy of the Galatian churches.

First, Paul was **AMAZED AT WHEN** the apostasy took place. He used the word "amazed" or "marvel," which notes with emphasis his reaction to the action of the Galatian Christians. The change which was taking place in Galatia was utterly inconceivable to the apostle's mind. The truth of the gospel had clearly been set forth before the Galatians. Their reception of the truth had been hearty indeed, and Paul's own personal influence over them had been very strong. In the face of those facts, the change that was being made in Galatia seemed like some unaccountable fascination. I believe it is in perfect harmony with this thinking that in chapter 3, verse 1, Paul would write, "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?"

Paul was “amazed” that the Galatian Christians had “SO SOON REMOVED from him that called” them. With regard to the verb that is used, two things need to be stated. One, it is in the middle voice, which stresses this moving away was something done for which they personally were responsible. Second, it is in the present tense, which teaches the apostasy was something that was in progress at the time of writing but still had not reached the worst results which were possible. The verb is just that which would be used to describe a political revolution in its early stages, when there is the serious risk of allegiance being transferred from one government to another. Thus, this word is employed by the inspired apostle with great exactness to show the attitude of the Galatian Christians.

The fact that the people had “so quickly” moved caused Paul great astonishment. Had his information not been so complete and reliable, he would not have believed that such departure was possible. Paul had given the Galatians credit for more solidity and fidelity than they were demonstrating. He expected them to be “steadfast and unmovable,” as he did the Corinthians (1 Cor. 15:58); however, they had proven by their actions that they were neither.

“Steadfast” means to remain firm, strong in the faith. It carries with it the idea of unshakable conviction. When people have the character of steadfastness, they have the ability to “stick to it” even when there is much and varied opposition. There always will be adversaries and many times such adversaries are strong; therefore, to be steadfast in the face of such opposition requires strength on the part of the Christian (see 1 Cor. 16:13; Gal. 5:1; 2 Tim. 2:1-2; Eph. 6:10).

One who is steadfast, unshakable in conviction, never finds himself halting between two opinions (1 Kin. 18:21). The children of Israel were in a state of indecision. They did not know who to serve, either Baal or Jehovah, and Elijah showed them just how pitiful their condition was. Such position of mind cannot be a part of one who is steadfast in the kingdom.

Christians, who are steadfast, are people who understand the necessity to be STRICT in doctrine (2 Tim. 2:5). Paul wrote, “And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive

lawfully." Men understand this principle in the normal execution of life. For example, if a man, playing in a football game, is running the football toward the end zone and steps out of bounds on the twenty yard line, all men accept and understand that the ball, at the very moment the runner stepped out of bounds, ceases to be in play; and even though the runner goes on and crosses the goal line, a touchdown is not granted because he stepped out of bounds before crossing into the end zone. That is a part of the rules of football, and no man has ever argued that a referee was "too strict" when he called a play dead when the runner stepped out of bounds. Men may argue whether the runner stepped out of bounds or not, but once the fact is established that he did step out of bounds, the consequences of that are accepted.

On the other hand, things are quite different in religion. When men violate the simple teachings of the Bible and someone stresses that God's Word must be abided by, otherwise there is "sin in the camp" (Just like the rules of football must be abided by, so must the rules of God be abided by. Remember Achan?); one can hear the cry from every hill and hollow that such thinking is just "too strict." These are the people who do not stand very strong for very long. Their minds are easily troubled and their allegiance is easily diverted. Thus, instead of being "steadfast and unmovable" they are "quickly removed" from one doctrine to another, even if it means being moved from the doctrine of God to the doctrine of men. Their stability is more like that of children than adults and reminds us of Paul's comments in Ephesians 4:14, "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive."

"Unmovable" carries the idea of not deviating, nor permitting one's self to be drawn away from faithfulness to God. As in "steadfast," this word also carries the idea of faithfulness against opposition. The idea is stressed in this word that one must be unmovable in the faith, not turning aid no allowing others to turn us. When problems come and brethren move away from the Lord, someone is in the troubling business. This was true in Galatia and it is true today, anywhere one finds brethren being disturbed.

Second, Paul was AMAZED AT WHERE the apostasy took the people. The apostasy took the Galatian Christians away from the gospel of Christ to “another” gospel, which in truth was a gospel perverted by the teachings of men. The false teachers, who were troubling the minds of the Galatians, were insisting on: (1) Fleshly ceremonies (3:1, 3); (2) The observance of days (4:10); (3) Circumcision (5:2); and (4) Other observances of the Law of Moses (5:4). They were moving to a modified and perverted gospel, which was not a good news message of salvation, but rather a system devised by men, which made service and worship vain and placed the people under the condemnation of God (compare Mat. 15:7-14). There is no such thing as two gospels, each of which can be presented to man, giving man a choice of which to follow. Such is a complete impossibility and is absurd on the very face of it. This is clearly taught in verse 7.

In a vivid play on words, in the Greek, Paul ironically states that the people of Galatia had turned “unto another (*heteros*) gospel; which is not another (*allos*).” The false teachers in Galatia evidently were calling their teaching a gospel, claiming that it was superior to the gospel Paul had preached when the Galatians had been converted. Paul calls the Judaizing teachers’ teaching a “heteros” gospel—“another of a different kind.” It is not an “allos” gospel—“another of the same kind.” Much of what immediately follows is Paul’s specific reason why this is not another gospel of the kind which they had received in the beginning when he first carried the message of Christ to Galatia. The true gospel is the message of good news, but Paul’s opponents were preaching a gospel of trouble, which instead of being good news to the hearers, was bringing an unsettling of the mind, and was causing them to move away from the pure gospel as it is in Christ Jesus.

REASONS FOR APOSTASY, GALATIANS 1:7

The first reason for apostasy was that false teachers were AGITATING THE MIND. In verse 7, Paul wrote “but there be some that trouble you.” By this agitating or troubling they were stirring up, disturbing, and unsettling the minds of the Galatian Christians, thus

causing them to move away from the gospel of Christ to a so-called gospel which had in it the rules and regulations of men.

Paul had no sympathy for the false teachers who were working among the Christians in Galatia. Among the laws they were requiring the people to keep, in order to be true children of God (according to their false way of thinking), was the law of circumcision. In great sarcasm, Paul referred to these false teachers and their rule to "cut the foreskin" and said, "I would they were even cut off which trouble you" (Gal. 5:12). Some translations more vividly and accurately translate "cut off" as "mutilate themselves." Talk about strong language! Paul would rather the false teachers mutilate themselves than to mutilate the body of Christ with their false teaching.

Let us never forget that there is something in error which recommends it to the curiosity, or pride, or superstition of unstable men. Paul did not have one second of time nor one ounce of consideration for false doctrine; however, those whom he had personally taught were openly receiving error. They had begun to "heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears" (2 Tim. 4:3). The false teachers "by good words and fair speeches" were deceiving "the hearts of the simple" (Rom. 16:18). Their work was like that of the false teachers to whom Paul referred in 2 Corinthians when he wrote, "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" (11:3). Notice Paul's sharp and cutting irony in the next verse,

For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him.

What a shame it is that brethren, who should be stable and secure in the faith, often will become infatuated with false teachers and follow their teaching without ever investigating or comparing it with God's inspired Word.

Another biblical example of troubling the Lord's people is found in Acts 15. The false teachers in Acts 15 were of the same persuasion as were the false teachers in Galatia. Perhaps some of them were even the same people. Notice the results of their work in Antioch. "And certain men, which came down from Judea taught the brethren, and

said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved” (Acts 15:1). Paul and Barnabas had “no small dissension and disputation with them” and it was determined that certain men (Paul and Barnabas included) would go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders to settle the question. An answer was given and circulated to the churches in a letter, but the troubling continued, right on down to and beyond the time Paul wrote to the Galatians some seven or eight years later.

The second reason given for apostasy was the ADULTERATION OF THE GOSPEL. Paul said the intent and desire of the false teachers was to “pervert the gospel of Christ” (1:7). We know what a sexual pervert is, and we have a very negative attitude toward the conduct of such people. This should help us to understand what a doctrinal pervert is, and to likewise have an unfavorable attitude toward his evil conduct.

Even though the false teachers in Galatia might not be ultimately and completely successful, their plan and purpose was thoroughly bad, and they were enjoying some success to the point that they were causing the Galatian Christians to be removed from the gospel of Christ. This kind of conduct on the part of the false teachers is often the result of the cross of Christ no longer being recognized as all-sufficient.

There is, and must ever be, but one gospel. There is not a separate gospel suited to the prejudices or so-called tastes of each sect or denomination. There is but one gospel, and hence church divisions (denominations) result from perversions of the gospel and all such secessions or revolutionary divisions are but the beguiling of Satan, drawing disciples from “the simplicity and purity that is toward Christ” (2 Cor. 11:3).

RESULTS OF APOSTASY, GALATIANS 1:8-9

A natural result of apostasy is CONDEMNATION. Any man who falls away from faithfulness to Christ will be lost in eternity (2 John 9-11; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rev. 2:10). But there is a more severe result stated in our text, directed at the false teachers, who were troubling the Christians in Galatia.

In verses 8 and 9, Paul states emphatically that the result of apostasy is ANATHEMA, or to be ACCURSED of God. So convinced was Paul that there was no other gospel, he invoked the curse of God upon himself, or even upon angels from heaven, if they should "preach any other gospel." No stronger language could have been employed to have stated that the originally communicated gospel was absolutely immutable. This was not careless speech or mere rhetoric. These were the words of the inspired Apostle Paul as he denounced the perverts who were attempting to distort the gospel of Christ.

In our day of increasing tolerance in religion, Paul's dogmatic denunciation may appear to some brethren as somewhat out of place. Certainly it is proper to respect the faith of others, even when we know them to be in error and try to teach them the truth. Also, it is right to support the Constitution of the United States which guarantees that no one suffer religious persecution; but these principles do not mean that all roads lead to heaven. Paul's opposition was not a narrow sectarianism, but was instead a deep and abiding love, loyalty, and concern for the truth of the gospel.

In this passage, Paul supposes an impossibility in order that he might show that it is not possible to make alterations in the gospel of Christ. God would not sanction or accept such alterations. No man could make such changes. Not even an angel from heaven could make the slightest change in the will of Christ. Chrysostom suggested in his writings that the gospel perverters in Galatia claimed for their different teaching the authority of the older apostles, Peter, James, and John, and sees Paul as saying,

Don't tell me of Peter. Don't tell me of James or John. If one of the highest angels were to come, corrupting the truth originally preached by me in Galatia, even he must be rejected. When the truth of God is in question, respect of persons is not admissible.

In this connection, it is interesting that some of the Galatians had at first received Paul as an angel of God (4:14), and perhaps they were now so receiving the gospel perverters he was denouncing.

Upon all false teachers, Paul pours out the anathema of God. In 1 Corinthians 16:22 he wrote, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha." In later years the word anathema came to mean excommunication, but the word had a different

meaning in the first century. Down through the centuries controversy has been busy on the meaning of this word, with some standing very strongly on the fact that it could mean nothing but ecclesiastical excommunication; however, such an interpretation could not be correct, for ecclesiastical excommunication has no application to the angels in heaven. Surely nothing disturbs the proportion of scriptural truth more than the introduction into Bible interpretation the meanings of words which belong to a later age.

Originally, the word anathema had reference to an animal that had been brought to the priest for sacrifice. When the animal was accepted and placed in a stall, to be held for sacrifice, or was laid upon the altar, it was, said to be "anathema." Thus the sacrificial animal was said to be devoted to sacrifice, or destruction, and could not be redeemed or called back. In this sense, Christ was spoken of as being anathema for us, i.e., given over for sacrifice for mankind, and thus the curse of God fell on him.

It is believed that this is the correct sense in which the word anathema is to be understood in this passage. Those who would be so presumptuous as to alter the gospel of Christ are said to be doomed to destruction. The anathema or curse of God is placed upon them. This may be the very light in which Hebrews 6:1-6 is written, where it is stated that it is impossible to renew certain people to repentance. Whatever construction we place on the anathema of God, it must have a serious effect on our conduct, for no man should ever consciously do any thing that would bring him within a million light years of having the anathema of God placed on him.

Let it be noted that the severity of this passage is directed against the Judaizing teachers, not against the Galatians, whom he evidently regards as influenced by others. Thus Paul emphasized: (1) Heresy is a very serious matter. It has power to damn the soul; (2) No man has the right to follow after a doctrine other than the pure doctrine of Christ; and (3) No one is above the gospel. False teachers may have sheltered themselves under the authority of some great men, perhaps the apostles at Jerusalem; but not even an apostle, not even an angel had the authority to change the gospel. There is a disposition that exists among certain brethren today which excuses the errors of

zealous false teachers on the ground that their zeal for God is an evidence of their godliness and acceptability to God. On this basis, they may have even excused the zealous, Judaizing teachers, had they lived in Galatia in the first century.

Several years ago, a preacher came to the city where I was (and still am) living to preach a gospel meeting. In the meeting, he used an illustration in which he talked about a young man named Eric. He said Eric had a conversation with the Lord and the Lord told him to shave his red beard. As the story went, Eric really loved his red beard and wanted to keep it; but to be pleasing to Christ, he did away with the beautiful red beard that meant so much to him.

After the invitation song was over, the local evangelist told the visiting preacher that he was certain there were some people in the audience, especially two preachers, who would not let the service close without something being said about his story about Eric. The visiting preacher did not want to make a correction but after a long discussion, at the insistence of the local preacher, the visiting preacher went back to the pulpit, and said he wanted to make an explanation of something he had said in his sermon. He said that in his "outreach for lost souls," he became so "involved and so zealous" that he sometimes said things that "were not true." With that, he thought he had settled the matter. He did not understand that zeal for God does not allow one to teach or practice error.

We must hold hard to the truth of the gospel if we would not imperil the souls of men or diminish the comforts of believers. We must follow the example of Paul. If anyone in Galatia imagined that to be popular with the people, Paul would trifle with principle, they were dead wrong. Paul gave the people to understand that he would never, to court public praise, violate in the least degree his obligation as a slave of Christ. He was a slave to purity of doctrine and would have all men to be as he was.

This intolerant side of truth actually springs from the sure and solid grasp we have of it. It is inseparable from intense conviction. It is a fact that one of the problems we have in the church today is a tolerance toward change in doctrine, and a desire to extend fellowship to those who do not preach and practice the truth. The true foundation

of such foolishness is not “love for peace and harmony,” as some claim, but rather a weak and wavering conviction with regard to the doctrine of Christ. Weak conviction brings about tolerance toward error. We must always be on guard against such tendencies.

CONCLUSION

In this lesson regarding “SO SOON REMOVED” we have given special attention to the: I. Reaction To Apostasy; II. Reason For Apostasy; and III. Result Of Apostasy. May we learn the great lessons contained in these few verses, and may we have the courage and conviction to make personal application of these sacred principles.

ARE WE MOVING AWAY FROM EMPHASIS ON WORLD EVANGELISM?

Ray Peters



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The writer in Hebrews 2:3 refers to the “great Salvation.” It is great because of the *Saviour*, because of the *Scheme*, and because of the *Scope*. It is truly a marvelous plan of redemption that has been revealed unto mankind. When man sinned in the garden of Eden, God set in motion His plan to “buy mankind back” from the plight that man had put himself into by disobedience (Gen. 3). God’s great “marvelous message for mankind” was couched in the types and shadows in the Old Testament (1 Pet. 1:10; Heb. 10:1). It was the “set course” of the Father in Heaven to stress or emphasize the message that He was the God Almighty and through Him was there deliverance.

The question before us in this discussion is, “Are we moving away from emphasis on world evangelism?” Hebrews 2:1 warns the Jewish Christians in the first century that they were “neglecting” or letting the things of the great salvation “slide away” (Heb. 2:3). Some of the early Christians, because of the influence and pressure of their Jewish peers, were not putting the emphasis on God’s scheme and were about to go back into Judaism. Those who were in this condition were

not teaching others (Heb. 5:12-14) and thus were completely “disregarding” God’s “set course.” How much better off are we than they, if we fail to put the emphasis that our Father did on evangelism in the Great Commission, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15)? The word for “neglect” in Hebrews 2:3 could be translated, “disregard” which means “To treat without proper respect or attentiveness...” (*Webster’s II New Riverside Univ. Dict.*). Even though the intent is not there to disregard or to pay the proper attention, the fact of neglect still can exist. Have we as the Lord’s people failed to put proper emphasis or stress on the carrying the gospel message to the whole world? The word “emphasis” is germane or pertinent to the issue at hand, because it means “special weight or significance.” The issue or question before us is not have we as the Lord’s people done “mission work” or have we done some “world evangelism,” but have we “drifted or slipped in not putting the proper stress or emphasis” on evangelism as God would have it done?

The course of our study and discussion will be to notice the emphasis on world evangelism under the first covenant, then the early New Testament church’s emphasis on evangelism, and finally, our emphasis on evangelism in the twentieth century.

FLESHLY ISRAEL AND THE EMPHASIS ON EVANGELISM

The theme of the Bible is redemption. There is a crimson thread that runs from Genesis to Revelation. After the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden, the Father started unfolding His scheme of redemption. It was His plan to raise up a people whereby the “seed” (Gen. 3:15; Gal. 3:16) or Jesus, the Saviour of the world, would come. God the Father’s “set course” was and is to deliver man from the “wages of sin” (Rom. 6:23). His design in the accomplishing of this task was that of “Evangelism.” To “evangelize” comes from a combination of two words, “*eu*” which means well, and “*aggelos*” or angel, messenger or message. Hence, the word “evangelist” or “evangelize” simply means, “to tell the good message.” The Father in Heaven was to tell the good message, that He was the only God; He was and is the, “El Shaddai of evangelism.” God Almighty, or El Shaddai, in getting His

message to the world, would use “preachers” to first of all, FORM His “evangelizing nation” or people. Secondly, there was a constant EVANGELIZING or preaching to this “chosen people” to remind them of their purpose, and who they were. Thirdly, there was the REFORMING of these people with the captivity and restoration in the land.

First of all, let us look at the FORMING of this “evangelistic nation” and the fact that God used words and events to get the message that He was Jehovah, God Almighty, the Sovereign and only True God. Jehovah is one that loves preaching and loves to preach (1 Cor. 1:18, 21).

On the scene, not too long after the demise of mankind, is a man by the name of Noah, “a preacher of righteousness” (2 Pet. 2:5) Because of the wickedness of the world, God repented that He created the world (Gen. 6:1-4) and was going to destroy it. Yet, the Lord God sends His preacher to warn the people and to get them to repent, and by evangelization God gets His message to the world. Only eight souls heed the message and enter the ark of safety (Gen. 6-9; 1 Pet. 3:20-21). The type and anti-type is well-known in that of baptism, but also the type that “God evangelized the world” for one hundred and twenty years is to be noted. The event of the flood was also God’s message to the world that He was in control and would not tolerate sin.

The next preacher on the scene will be Abram, or Abraham (Gen. 12:1-4). God goes and preaches to Abram to, “Get out of thy country...unto a land that I will show thee.” Right away, God is telling him to be a “world missionary.” Abram gathers up his wife, his nephew, leaves the Ur of Chaldees and heads for the land of Canaan (Gen. 12:5). God revealed to him that he would be a progenitor through which the “seed” would come (Gen. 15:4-5; Rom. 4:18; Gal. 3:16) and a great nation. The Divine record reveals that “he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness” (Gen. 15:6). He answers the question how a person could leave his homeland and go into a strange land and preach. It is to Abram that the Lord appeared and stated, “I am the Almighty God” or “El Shaddai,” changed his name to Abraham, and made a covenant with him (Gen. 17:1-12).

Even the example of Joseph, though often thought about only in the context of providence, must also be thought of in terms of God “providing” a message to the world, that He is “Jehovah” and is in control and only in Him is there salvation or deliverance from “food or spiritual” drought (Gen. 45:5-8).

Moses comes on the scene—one that God “took out of the water” (Gen. 2:10)—to deliver God’s people “through the waters” of the Red Sea from the Egyptians. It is interesting to note, and will be stressed throughout, that it was because of the Father’s “concern and love” for the “world” that He “sent” these preachers, and it was out of love and concern that these preachers went! Also, even if they did not want to go (e.g., Jonah), God still used them to evangelize. Moses, at first, was a reluctant servant (Exo. 4:10-17). He offered up excuses that he was “slow of speech” and was “slow of tongue.” The Scriptures state, “And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses” which makes us stop and ask, “Do you reckon that God becomes “angered” at the petty excuses offered for not going and evangelizing the world today?” God saw in Moses a vessel He could use, but that he needed some refining and training. After the killing of the taskmaster, Moses had fled to the land of Midian (Exo. 2:15). He returns to Jethro and gets his family. Jehovah evangelizes through the plagues He sent and the message was crystal clear “that thou mayest know that there is none like me in all the earth,” and he also stated, “and that my name may be declared throughout the earth” (Exo. 9:14, 16). That is **WORLD EVANGELISM!**

The event of the deliverance of the children of Israel from Egyptian bondage is replete with typology. Even the fact of the bondage is typical of people being in the bondage of sin (Eph. 4:8); the passage through the Red Sea being typical of baptism (1 Cor. 10:1-11); the wanderings in the wilderness a shadow of the trials of the world; and the crossing of Jordan pointing to the entrance into the final rest of Heaven (Heb. 3:17; 4:1, 4-5, 9). These happenings and their message went throughout the world.

Rahab, the harlot, when the two spies came to view the land, spake unto them,

I know that the Lord hath given you the land...For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt...And as soon as we heard these things, our hearts did melt...for the Lord your God, he is God in heaven above, and in the earth beneath (Jos. 2:9-11).

There is the evangelization: “The Lord your God, he is God...!” These happenings were also a means of “converting” or “forming” this people whom God had chosen to be “a special people” (Deu. 7:6). The Lord had redeemed them from the hand of Pharaoh because of His love (Deu. 7:8), and it was with this same love that He would continue to bless them (Deu. 7:13). In shaping fleshly Israel, God implores them to “teach...thy children...talk [of the words of God]... when thou sittest...walkest...liest down...and when thou risest up (Deu. 6:7). God’s Word should ever be upon their mind—a first step in becoming a preacher or teacher of God’s Word, and doing “mission” work.

There was a constant reminding, teaching and evangelizing that God did to the children of Israel. Joshua, before he died, warned them, “Do all that is written in the book of Moses” (Jos. 23:6); “love the Lord your God” (Jos. 23:11); “fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and truth” (Jos. 23:14).

During the period of the Judges, “every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (Jud. 17:6) and went through sin, servitude, sorrowful (repentance), supplication, (prayer), and finally salvation (or deliverance). For a period of approximately three hundred years they “went a whoring after other gods”(Jos. 2:17) and were not God’s special people. In the midst of the fifteen judges there was one by the name of Samuel who also served as a prophet or preacher. He would preach to them to “return unto the Lord with all your heart...and serve him only; and he will deliver you out of the hand of the Philistines” (1 Sam. 7:3). Here was God’s chosen people who were to be an influence to the heathen nations. “Make us a king to judge us like all the nations” (1 Sam. 8:5), was their cry. Isaiah, the Messianic prophet, called the people to “walk in the light of the Lord” (Isa. 2:5). He saw a day in which the “law of the Lord was to go forth from Jerusalem” and this is understood to prophesy in regard to the establishment of

the Lord's church and the going forth of the gospel in New Testament times (Acts 2).

While it is true that the patriarchal dispensation preceded the Mosaic dispensation, and that the Gentiles worshipped under the "Father rule" and the Patriarchal set-up, yet there is an indication that Gentiles came under the Jewish law. In Deuteronomy 15:21 there is listed three categories of people: the Jew, the stranger, and the alien. The "stranger" would be the one who was a Gentile who was circumcised and had limited access to the Temple. The "alien" is the Gentile who has not been circumcised or converted to Judaism. At this time, let us consider the question, "Why did God send Jonah to the Ninevites to preach to them" (Jon. 1:2)? God here again shows His concern and love for "all" people and sends Jonah, a prophet, to warn the people (Jon. 3:2, 4) and showing His "evangelistic spirit." The Jews' attitude shows through in Jonah because he was not really concerned with the Gentiles and would love for God to destroy them. It took a "great fish" to swallow and vomit Jonah out to get him to go. Is that what is needed to get us "to go?" The preaching to the Ninevites and the proselyting of the Gentiles was pointing to the fact that "all nations" were to come under the gospel in New Testament times (Mark 16:15).

God's "special people" continued to go further and further away from God's intended purpose for them to be a "holy nation" (Exo. 16:6). Jehovah raised up the prophets to get the people to repent and turn to the Lord with all their heart. Elijah exclaimed, "How long halt ye between two opinions" (1 Kin. 18:21)? Too many times, the attitude of Ahab was the norm for the kings of the day. When Micaiah was called to prophesy, after the false prophets had told him what he wanted to hear and Jehoshaphat asked if there was another, he exclaimed, "What the Lord saith unto me, that will I speak" (1 Kin. 22:14). Ahab did not like it when Micaiah told him, "I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills" (1 Kin. 22:17), and blurted out, "Did I not tell thee that he would prophesy no good concerning me, but evil?" (1 Kin. 22:18). On and on the efforts went to get the people to return. In 721 B.C. God took the children of Israel, by the Assyrian Army,

into captivity. In 606 B.C., 596 B.C., and 586 B.C. the children of Judah were captured by the Babylonians.

With the captivity was the “reforming” of these “chosen” people. Their idolatrous backs needed to be broken, the leaven needed to be purged that it might be the proper influence in the world and glorify God. Even in captivity there were those that would remain faithful to God, and be “evangelistic.” One of those was Daniel, who would not “defile himself with the king’s meat, nor with the wine which he drank” (Dan. 1:8). God “evangelized” through Daniel in interpreting the dream of Nebuchadnezzar and the meaning of the great image. Daniel pointed out that it was not the wise men, astrologers, and the magicians that had revealed the secrets, but God in Heaven (Dan. 2:27-28). The king of the Babylonians exclaimed, “Of a truth it is, that your God is a God of gods” (Dan. 2:47).

Another example of God evangelizing through His people in captivity is that of Esther and Mordecai. One of the most beautiful statements is that one recorded in Esther 4:14, when Mordecai says to Esther after she is placed in the place of power as queen, “and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” After the events that transpired (reversing of the letters; Haman hanged on the gallows he prepared for Mordecai—Est. 7:10), the Jews rejoiced, but more importantly, “And many of the people of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them” (Est. 8:17). The Babylonians had seen the power of God and believed Him to be El Shaddai and were converted to Judaism. That is “World Evangelism” under the Old Covenant. Just as some wrongly assume that there was no grace or truth under the first covenant, there are some who wrongly assume that there was no “world evangelism” under the same testament. God’s set course is to save the world and He was progressively working His scheme.

THE EARLY CHURCH’S EMPHASIS ON EVANGELISM

As we turn our attention to the New Covenant and its efforts in regard to world evangelism, the example of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ needs to be considered. It has been emphasized that our heavenly Father was “mission-minded” in the first covenant. In the

New Testament there is the continual unfolding of the “determinate counsel and foreknowledge” of the Godhead (Acts 2:23). God the Father, God the Holy Spirit, and God the Logos, worked jointly in the Old Covenant. Now, in bringing about the New Covenant, the work of God the Logos and God the Holy Spirit is more manifest. At the conception of Mary, the angel tells her that the father of the baby will be the Holy Ghost. The Record says, “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee...the babe leaped in her womb and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost (Luke 1:35b, 41b). Philippians 2:5-8 informs us that Jesus “emptied Himself” and that He was “equal with God.” Also, in John 1:1-2, the Word “faces God” and in verse 14, the Word “became” or “was made flesh” informs us of the same. John 3:16 is one of the most beautiful “mission-minded” passages, “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.” Jesus stated, “I must work the works of Him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work” (John 9:4), and His work was, “to seek and save the lost” (Luke 19:10). The miracles He did were all directed to convince people that He was the Son of God,

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

On one occasion, Philip said unto Jesus, “Lord show us the Father.” We would ask the question, “How is it, that there are many members of the church who have been members of the church for quite awhile and still do not know what the work of the church is?” They do not “know the Father” and His work! Jesus informed Philip, “the Father dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works,” and then Jesus told them that if they did not believe His “works,” to believe Him for the very works sake (John 14:8-11). Yes, Jesus our “example” was not only the Master Teacher, but He was also the “Master Missionary” (1 Pet. 2:21). We need to let the “mind of Christ” be in us, in all things and especially in evangelism.

Christ manifested *love* (John 3:16); *compassion* (Mark 6:34); *zeal* (John 2:13-17); *tenderness* (Mat. 23:37); yet, *boldness* or *firmness* (Mat. 19:16-22; John 4:18). While the Jews would travel around

Samaria, Jesus would go right through it, showing that He loved all people. When Jesus taught the Samaritan woman in John 4, He was very forthright with her—He told her the truth about her marital situation (John 4:18). It was shortly after this event His disciples “marvelled that he talked with the woman,” then our Lord stated, “Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already unto harvest” (John 4:35; Mat. 19:37-38). The Scriptures state that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John (John 4:1); His attitude toward mission work was the key to His success.

Our Lord, in giving the Great Commission to His disciples, and to us, was not commanding of them that which He had not done. According to Mark’s account the Lord said, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). Our Lord while on earth put emphasis on world evangelism, and before He ascended back to Heaven, He left the charge to “go into all the world and preach the gospel.” The apostle Paul clearly understood this because he stated, “the hope of the Gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven” (Col. 2:23). He could also declare, “I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:26-27). Truly the apostle Paul was following the example of Christ, and he in turn challenged the church at Corinth to, “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1).

The early New Testament church, though besieged with problems, still put the emphasis on the mission that Jesus gave them. From the very establishment of the church, as is recorded in Acts 2, where three thousand obeyed the gospel, the Lord’s church realized continual growth. Jesus gave to the apostles an outline for the spread of the gospel in Acts 1:8, “Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.” This was the way the preaching went, even though there were “strangers from Rome and proselytes” present on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:10). In Acts 4:4 we are told, “Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of men was about five thousand.” Then in Acts 5:14, the Record says, “And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women”—there was daily teaching and

preaching in the Temple and in the homes (Acts 5:42). Acts 6:7 states, “the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith.” There arose a “great persecution” of the church in Jerusalem and “they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles” (Acts 8:1); thus, keeping with the outline Jesus gave in Acts 1:8. The divine Record gives the efforts of Philip in Samaria in Acts 8:5-40. Cornelius serves as the notice and reminder to Peter and the others that the gospel is to go into the “uttermost parts of the earth”—the Gentiles (Acts 10).

In spite of, and in the face of, persecution, the early New Testament church grew. They kept the charge of the Great Commission and “went everywhere preaching the word” (Acts 8:4). The question naturally arises, “How did the early church grow?” In answer to this question we would start by saying that first, they made a *united effort*. In Acts 2:44 we are told, “And all that believed were together, and had all things common.” Oftentimes, the emphasis in this passage is on the fact they had “all things common,” but notice, “they were together.” It should be noted that they stood together. Today, too many brethren spend too much time fighting one another and working against each other (in the realms of opinion) and too little time building the body of Christ. Even though Proverbs 14:30 says, “envy is the rottenness of the bones,” and Romans 12:16 states, “be of the same mind one toward the other,” jealousy and envy seem to be the fashion of the day. Jealously and envy were in the churches at Galatia. Paul warned, “But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.” Yet, that is just what happens in far too many places, and instead of helping and cooperating, we devour one another.

The early church worked for peace. If murmuring arose, such as the Grecians against the Hebrews in Acts 6:1, they settled it. Paul implored them to, “follow after things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another” (Rom. 14:19). Satan has his devices (2 Cor. 2:11), and one that he uses to keep us from getting the gospel to the world is to get us to fight each other! Brethren, the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3) should rule our hearts (Col. 3:15). The early

church cooperated and so should we. Ecclesiastes 4:12 states, “a three-fold cord is not quickly broken,” and Proverbs 30:27 says, “the locust have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands.” Both of these passages set forth the example of cooperation. We have a King, in fact the “King of Kings” and should band together and preach the gospel. This is the only way we are going to reach the 5-billion-plus souls in this world.

The early New Testament Christians were *steadfast*. The apostle Paul exhorts, “be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58). Unstable members make it impossible to accomplish the Lord’s work. The Ephesians were exhorted, “that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive” (Eph. 4:14). The “to and fro” movement of members seems to be very prevalent. Also, the “taking of the Gospel” is not something that will be done overnight, but we must be steadfast and persevere. It was said of the early church in Jerusalem, “and they continued steadfastly in the apostle’s doctrine” (Acts 2:42). The “apostle’s doctrine,” or teaching, could encompass a lot. The “apostle’s teaching” no doubt included the charge of our Lord to “preach the gospel to the whole world!” It takes strength and spiritual maturity to be steadfast and continuous in the pursuit of taking the gospel to the whole world, and this is the reason why Paul charged, “watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong” (1 Cor. 16:13).

They *believed their message*. The early Christians had enough faith to speak to the lost. It is very clear that they tried to save people and not please them! “For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ” (Gal. 1:10); “for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen, even as they have of the Jews” (1 The. 2:14). They were not afraid. For instance, when Peter and John were threatened not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus, they replied, “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). They were not ashamed of the gospel record (Rom. 1:16). They allowed the Word

of God to “work effectually” in them (1 The. 2:13). It was to these same Thessalonians that Paul said, “For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to Godward is spread abroad” (1 The. 1:8). Therefore, what is needed in the church of our Lord today is a greater belief in the Gospel Message in order to get the gospel “sounded out in every place!”

A fourth characteristic of the early Christians was the fact *they were sacrificial*. The Macedonians “gave beyond their power or ability” (2 Cor. 8:5); they were willing to sell their goods to give to those in need (Acts 2:45). The Philippians supported the apostle Paul time and time again in his preaching efforts; they even sent to him while in prison (Phi. 4:14, 16). As a result of this, he said that they were “holding forth the word of life” (Phi. 2:16). Epaphroditus went to administer to Paul and almost died (Phi. 2:25-27). Paul, the apostles, and others were willing to sacrifice life, labor, and limb for the cause of Christ and the saving of the souls all over the world! I would to God we could catch that spirit of sacrifice, and we can if we will “let the word of Christ dwell in us richly” (Col. 3:16a), and follow the example of Christ and remember His mission (Mat. 28:18). Brethren, sacrificing comes from one who has strong devotion and faith.

Lastly, and as a result of united effort of the church standing together, working for peace, cooperating, being steadfast, believing the message of the gospel, and being sacrificial, *the church was a “candlestick” upholding the light to the world*. This is what Paul said of the church at Philippi, “among whom ye shine as lights in the world” (Phi. 2:15b). Our Lord, in that great discourse on the mount, exhorted, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” He informs us that we are, “the light of the world,” and we are not to hide that light but let it shine (Mat. 5:14-16). The reason for doing the “good works” or “giving of our alms or gifts” (Mat. 6:1) is not to be “seen of men” or to bring glory to ourselves, but to God. The opportunities to get the gospel to the world are manifold (Gal. 6:10) and hence to “glorify God.” In Revelation 2:4, our Lord rebukes the church in

Ephesus, not for immorality or ungodliness, but for the fact they had, “left thy first love.” He calls upon them to “repent and do the first works” (Rev. 2:5). The Ephesians had lost their “intensity,” and had ceased to place the “emphasis” on teaching the world which was put forth at one time. As a result of this, they had stopped being the “light” to the world. Then the Master informs them that unless they repent, He will come and “remove their candlestick.” It would be some visible manifestation to draw attention to what was already the case. The question before us, “Are we moving away from the emphasis on world evangelism?” is really a question of, “Have we lost our intensity in desire for the lost of the whole world?” What is even a sadder question is, “Are there some who have never had that intense desire to see that the gospel is preached to the whole world?”

OUR EMPHASIS ON WORLD EVANGELISM

Let us turn our attention to ourselves and see what emphasis has been placed on taking the gospel to the lost of the world. First of all, we will be dealing mainly with the restoration period in the United States from 1804 forward. The efforts of Barton W. Stone in Cane Ridge are dated from 1804, and Thomas Campbell arrived in 1807, with his son Alexander arriving in 1809. It is realized that the period of 1804 till 1823, or 1832, was a period of formulation of what is known as the Restoration Movement. Also, it must be realized that there was not a missionary sent to foreign soil until 1850. Even then, he was sent by the missionary society that was formed in 1849. In 1850 Dr. William Barclay, a medical doctor, was sent to Jerusalem. In 1880 a brother DeLaunay was sent (not by the missionary society) to Paris, France. Nine years later, in 1889, a brother Azariah Paul, went to Armenia to take the gospel. In the year 1893, brethren Azbill and McCaleb, as well as five others, were missionaries to Japan. Brother George Benson went to China in 1930 as a missionary. In 1955 there was a population of two billion people in Southeast Asia, and we had only two missionaries there; they could have taken a billion people each to preach to and be very busy! Ira and Vada Rice and family went to Singapore and started the work there from scratch.

The number of missionaries began to pick up during the fifties. In 1962 a brother in chapel at David Lipscomb announced that he was

going into the mission field and that he would be the four hundredth missionary from the churches of Christ. The number of missionaries on foreign soil rose to the eight hundreds in 1970. This number is put in proper perspective when it is considered that the Jehovah Witnesses have thousands of missionaries! Our number of missionaries on foreign soil has declined to a meager number of 450. If this number would be stripped of those we would term “liberal” or “anti,” the more realistic number may be closer to 200!

It is understood that there are places in the United States that need to be evangelized, and we would not minimize that for one moment. Yet, it is a fact that we have 96% of our gospel preachers preaching to 5% of the world’s population! Of the 5 billion souls in the world, 3 billion of those are in Southeast Asia. There are 1 billion 200 million souls in Red China alone. Through the efforts of Ira and Vada Rice in Singapore, and the establishment of the Four Seas College, men have been trained and have taken the gospel—undercover—into Red China. Over forty have obeyed the gospel there and a church building has been purchased for them to worship in.

There is also a great need in India. There are 815 dialects in India and we need at least 815 missionaries, but we only have sixteen. On and on, we could cite the needs.

Earlier it was mentioned that we are not suggesting that there is not any world mission work being done. There are many fine congregations and individuals who are doing a lot of work in this area and they are to be commended for this. Yet, the facts reveal that brotherhood-wide, we are not getting the job done! Too often, congregations have lost the right direction and their emphasis is not on being evangelistic whether it be local or abroad. Proof of this is to be found in the budgets of congregations around the brotherhood. How many congregations have fifty-percent, or more, of their budget allotted to mission work? Again there are some, but they are in the minority. Do not get me wrong, a lot of the things allotted for in these church budgets are good, but they are not targeted for the purpose, or course, that our Lord outlined in the Great Commission. Lessons on, “What is the work of the church all about?” need to be preached; pointing out that the work of the church is to “save souls.”

There are three areas where we can accomplish this: Evangelism, Edification, and Benevolence. The “evangelizing” may be from the pulpit or in the highways and byways, but the “good news” must be dispersed. In lessons delivered to the congregation on how to live a Christian life, there should be the view that those listening must be an influence to those who are lost, and, therefore, are to let their “light” shine (Mat. 5:14-16). From the pulpit and in the classroom, we should be gearing our messages toward the theme of being teachers and preachers of God’s Word. This would be in the area of “edification,” or building up the church (Acts 20:32).

Even in the area of “benevolence,” or providing for people’s physical needs (Gal. 6:10), we should use this avenue to teach the lost the truth. Are we to be a “social” institution that is just interested in feeding and clothing people, and then tell them good-bye and not try and tell them how to be “fed and clothed” spiritually? Sure, it is a “good” work and humanitarian to do so, but that is not our main purpose for existing. The local mission can do those things, but they cannot properly tell one how to be saved. We should not be against feeding or clothing those who are in need, but we should be against not using that opportunity to teach them the gospel. Then, if they reject it, at least we have done our part. At least then we are going in the right direction and are on the course that Jesus set for us. This is where our emphasis should be.

CONCLUSION

Our Heavenly Father was, and is, mission-minded. Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, was and is mission-minded (1 Pet. 2:21). The Holy Spirit, who revealed and inspired the writing of the Scriptures, was and is mission-minded. Therefore, those of us who claim to love the Father, follow Jesus, and believe the Scriptures are to be mission-minded! This lesson is not an indictment that is saying that no one has as their main emphasis that of getting the gospel to the whole world. Rather, it is designed to point out that brotherhood-wide, though maybe not intentionally, some have been sidetracked and their main emphasis is not on evangelism. The task before us is a great one, and one that will not be accomplished unless we turn our whole-hearted attention and emphasis toward it. We need to emphasize it in the

home and in the local congregation. We should encourage our children to be missionaries—if they want to be a doctor or nurse, encourage them to be a medical missionary; if they want to be a lawyer, or secretary, encourage them to use their talents in the mission field. We need to have elders to rethink their budgets and to center their attention toward mission work. Wouldn't it be a sad indictment to be heard at the blood-bought institution, by the one who paid the price and is our example (1 Pet. 2:21; 2 Cor. 5:10; Rom. 2:6) that, "You never put the emphasis on the course I set, but you moved away from it!"