

Our purpose is to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints,” and to “prove all things; hold fast that which is good.”

OLD PATHS ADVOCATE

“To continue speaking the truth in love,” “endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace,” “keeping the ordinance as delivered.”

“Thus saith the Lord, ‘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 of your souls.’ (Jer. 6:16) “And they that be of Thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The Repairer of the Breach, The Restorer of Paths to Dwell in.” (Isa. 58:12).

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NO. 4

SALVATION ON A POLE

By *BILLY DICKINSON*

The above title is suggested by the incident recorded in Num. 21:4-9. The children of Israel wandered in the wilderness for 40 years and this incident took place toward the end of that experience. In fact, the time period is thought to be around the 38th year after they had left Egypt. That helps us to understand the frame of mind that the people were in. After requesting permission to pass through Edom, which they were denied, they were forced to go around the land of Edom. Num. 21:4 says, “And they journeyed from mount Hor by the way of the Red sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way.” This is what led the people to speak some harsh words against God and Moses, and they were going to be severely punished for it.

Have you ever heard the expression, the “myth of nostalgia”? This is where someone longs for the “good old days,” but they have a distorted picture in their mind of how things really were. Unfortunately, Israel was often plagued with this malady. Time and again they complained against God, longing to return unto Egypt because they had forgotten how terrible their existence was while in bondage to Pharaoh. Here’s what Num. 21:5 records, “And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loathes this light bread.” This was a terrible indictment against God because they were calling into question His faithfulness and saying that His provisions for them was inadequate.

The point is that they were an unbelieving and ungrateful group of people and God has finally run out of patience with them. That’s when the Bible

says in Num. 21:6, “And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died.” To me, this is horrible to even think about; to be invaded by poisonous snakes that are coming at you from every direction. Please notice that Israel wasn’t attacked by just a few snakes. No, it was a stampede of venomous vipers that lead to the deaths of “much people.” What a horrible and frightening experience that must have been!

Finally, they confess to Moses, “We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee; pray unto the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us.” Moses goes to God on their behalf, but their prayer isn’t answered in the way they were hoping and expecting. Instead of removing the snakes from their midst, God provides them with a means of salvation. Listen to what Num. 21:8 says, “And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole: and it shall come to pass, that everyone that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.” That’s exactly what Moses did! He made a serpent of brass and put it on a “pole.” This refers to a flagstaff or standard that lifted up the brazen serpent so that it could be seen by all the people. We might say that it was their point of contact to God’s deliverance from death. Num. 21:9 assures us, “. . . and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.”

What a story! It is one that invokes terror, amazement, and an appreciation for God’s grace. But did this incident really occur or is it just a Jewish fable? The most definitive answer to that question is found in John 3:14-15, where Jesus said, “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.” Jesus obviously believed in the historical accuracy of this incident, and He is letting us know that there are some great spiritual truths to be learned from it, even teaching us about the

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Editorial

WHAT CAN THE RIGHTEOUS DO?

By DON L. KING

The eleventh Psalm reads in vs 3: “If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?” It is assumed by commentators that this is part of some advice given the Psalmist earlier. Things apparently looked pretty grim and they felt David should simply run and hide. However, this didn’t suit David and he refused to go along with that advice (see verses 4-7) His decision was wise. He was correct in his belief that the Lord would be with him and take care of him.

It is usually a mistake to think the best course of action is to run away when difficult times confront us. This is especially true in spiritual matters. Sometimes problems arise in a congregation and brethren choose to ignore them rather than confront and repair the damage. Sometimes a compromise is agreed upon and then neither side is really happy. When truth is at stake it is never wise to compromise, or ignore the problem. Brethren need to sit down calmly and unite on a decision that is both scriptural and therefore safe. Everyone can be happy with such a resolution as that, because it is the right thing to do.

The Devil has a bag of tricks and deceptions seemingly endless. What to do when we are faced with a situation that seems difficult to decipher? Paul had the answer years ago. He said, “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men.” (1 Corinthians 16:13) This just means to behave as spiritual adults. Too often that is lacking when trouble strikes. To stand fast in the faith means to stand fast in the gospel. (1 Corinthians 15:1,2) So, we have to get to the Bible and see what it says before making serious decisions. If we stand fast in the gospel we are going to stand for all the principles set forth in the New Testament. If we do so, we will arrive at the correct answer. Peter said in 2 Peter 1:3, “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.” It would seem then that if the subject has to do with living the Christian life and going to heaven, the answers are right there in our Bibles.

It is certainly true that we are living in difficult times and it isn’t likely to get better. So many things are available now on which we may focus that will take us away from

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QUERIST COLUMN

By *RONNY F. WADE*

Question: Is the bible scientifically accurate?

Answer: The bible is not a book on material science, however it is scientifically accurate. In fact a close examination of its contents reveal startling scientific facts placed there centuries before they were known to modern scientific minds. Many foes of the bible declare it to be antiquated, out of date and erroneous. Robert Ingersoll once said "the inspiration of the bible depends upon the ignorance of the one who reads it." Unfortunately today there are many who feel the same way. A careful study of the scriptures however reveal the very opposite. For example, Isaiah 40:22 the prophet of God said "It is he that sits upon the circle of the earth." The word circle translates a word that means "a sphere that is round as opposed to something flat, square or rectangular." People for years believed the world was flat, that if you traveled far enough you would just drop off and land who knows where. In fact Columbus thought that. Magellan, however, sailed in order to prove that the earth was spherical in shape, a fact now accepted by the scientific community. Human beings have always been intrigued with the number of stars in the heavens. Various men have ventured a guess as to exactly how many there really are. Some have speculated the number to be from several to one thousand. Today we know the number to be much larger. One astronomer from Cornell University estimated that there were 25 sex trillion stars or in other words they are innumerable. The bible declared in Gen. 15:5 and Jeremiah 33:22 that the stars of the heavens are too numerous to count. How did Moses and Jeremiah know this, long before the telescope was invented? Obviously they had to be inspired by God. Moses long ago told the Israelites in Lev. 17:11-14 that "the life of the flesh is in the blood." He was correct. Life is possible because the blood cells carry oxygen, thanks to the hemoglobin found within those cells. In human red blood cells there are approximately 270,000,000 molecules of hemoglobin per cell, if any less, a person would not have enough residual oxygen to sustain life after an accident that knocks the breath out of them. Today we know that the life of the flesh is literally in the blood. Yet this was unknown even in George Washington's day. He died of blood letting. The doctors in those days would bleed a

person in an attempt to cure them of some illness. The loss of blood eventually led to the loss of life. George might have lived had the doctors known that the "life is in the blood." Another interesting scientific fact comes from Genesis 17:12 where God told Abraham that on the eighth day newborn Hebrew males were to be circumcised. But why the eighth day? In 1935 professor H. Dam proposed the name Vitamin K for the factor in foods that helped prevent hemorrhaging in baby chicks. We know today that Vitamin K is responsible for the production of prothrombin by the liver, and if vitamin K is not at proper levels, there will be a prothrombin deficiency and hemorrhaging may occur. People today who are on blood-thinning medication are advised by their doctors to avoid foods that contain vitamin K because it will lead to blood clotting. However it is only on the 5th-7th day of a newborn male's life that vitamin K begins to be produced (by various bacteria in the intestinal tract) and it is only on the 8th day that the percent of prothrombin actually climbs above 100% of normal. The only day in the entire life of a male that the blood clotting element of prothrombin is above 100% is day eight. How did Moses know this? Obviously God knew and he selected the right day for circumcision. There are many other scientific facts that are revealed in God's Word. They are there by inspiration. God who created the world and life understood the universe and natural law. Had He so chosen He could have produced a scientific text book, instead however he has given us a book to guide us from earth to heaven. Interspersed in this book however are scientific gems that prove beyond doubt that it is indeed a book from God. (Send all questions to Ronny F. Wade P.O. Box 14352 Springfield, MO 65814 or ronnywade36@gmail.com)

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PAGES FROM THE PAST

The following article by Brother Homer A. Gay is from the July 1937 issue of the Old Paths Advocate. When many people think of the Christian life, they think of difficulties and heartaches. These are truly things that we may sometime experience in the Christian life, but in this article Brother Gay reminds us of the beauties that go along with our lives as a Christian. I never knew Brother Gay, but from what I am told by others he exuded a happy attitude. This certainly shows in this article. -Rick Martin

BEAUTIES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Paul says in Gal. 2:20, "I am Crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Too many times in thinking of, and in talking of the Christian life, it is pictured as being only hazardous, hard and galling. But I believe that we should also look at the beautiful side of it. It seemed to be enough for Paul to say that he was "crucified with Christ," and then he exclaims: "CHRIST LIVETH IN ME." In Rom. 8:9, we are told that if any man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of his. And let us remember, too, that Jesus "went about doing good."

The proverb was that "no good thing can come out of Nazareth"; but Jesus came out of Nazareth, and all agree that He was good. While traveling in the swamps of Ark. and La. a few years ago, I noticed growing up out of the mud, mire and filth of the swamp, many beautiful lilies, blooming in their effulgent beauty and sending out a fragrance that was highly noticeable to one just passing by. And then I thought: Jesus is the "Lily of the Valley!" And just as that lily towered above the filth of the swamp, even so our Savior towered above the sin and wickedness of his day. Furthermore, if our "life is hid with Christ in God," and we have the spirit of Christ; even so we as Christians, will rise above the mire and filth of this world; transforming our lives and making them like that of the glorious Son of God.

Go into the slums of the city and find the thug: given wholly to sin and wickedness; just as vile and low as you can imagine; then go to the Christian home and find that highly cultured and refined Christian girl or boy; or maybe, that Godly, sainted mother with her children about her knee; the Bible lying open on the table, (even the decorations on the wall declare that "Christ is the head of this house"). Humble, though that home may

be, as she rocks the cradle of her first born and sings to it for a sweet lullaby: "What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear; what a privilege to carry everything to Him in prayer," and "Rock of ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in thee." I say, just take a look at these two extremes, and you can see what an ennobling influence Christianity will have on a human being! Also, contrast these two characters and you can see the beauties of the Christian life.

I know that there are hardships and persecutions in the path of the Christian; many heartaches and disappointments; but these all come to us in any walk of life. The sinner has these and many other burdens to bear. But the Christian has peace of mind and true happiness which the sinner knows nothing of. When once we see the beautiful rose and smell its fragrance, we forget about the thorns. Even so, the beauties of the Christian life out-shine all the hardships.

One reason that the Christian life is a beautiful life is because it is a busy life. In the service of Christ we are not only to cease to do evil, but we are to learn to do well; break off our sins by righteousness; and take up our cross daily and follow Jesus. We are created in Christ Jesus unto good works, and we are to work while it is day. Good works are those good actions that spring from good motives; are spiritual and have for their object the well-being of mankind. If we fail in these, the object of the Church is not accomplished, and the persons thus neglecting these opportunities become dwarfed and selfish and dead. Good works give life to faith and love. We show our faith by our works.

In the Church of Christ everyone has something to do. Singing, praying, paying, and preaching, all have an influence on the individual, and the Christian hand becomes so transformed and accustomed to doing good, that it is easy and inspiring.

Dreamers are failures! They find nothing to do, or no hands to do with, or no time to devote to good works. They dream of good singing, but never learn to sing themselves. They dream of benevolence, if they had the means, but they never give, because they can't do some big thing. They dream of a happy dying, but never seem to realize that this comes only at the close of a happy life, a life made happy by obedience to the Lord. They are enraptured with visions of heaven, but seem to have lost sight of the realities of life, which transform us and fit us for the never ending eternity with God. They lament and say "If I had been on earth when Jesus was here, I would have ministered to his wants, never realizing that Jesus says in as much as "ye did it to one of the least of my disciples, ye did it unto me." The little things of life are the ones that count.

One certainly has a good start in the Christian life. We are told in I Peter 2:2, "As newborn babes desire the sincere milk of the word that ye may more grow thereby." Thus to the laughing, chuckling, sinless babe on its mother knee, the Christian is compared. We also see more beauty in this life which Jesus said was to be "wise as serpents and harmless as doves." It is of necessity a life of prayer. In Matt. 26:41, Jesus says for us to watch and pray. Let us not forget to pray. In everything we are told to give thanks to God through Christ. What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!

Another beautiful thing of the Christian life is its fearlessness. Jesus could face the howling mob, and tell them "I am he," knowing that they would kill him. The Apostles could face death with pleasure, at the end of a Christian life.

Perfect love casteth out fear. The Christian does not fear the officer, for he is a law-abiding citizen, he does not fear the gallows or the electric chair they are not made for the Christian, but for the lawless. He does not fear death, for it is on the other side of death that we look with longing eyes for our reward.

The obedience of the Christian life is beautiful. We all admire the child that is obedient to its parents. In Heb. 5:9, we are told that Christ became the "author of eternal life to all who obey Him." The Christian shows this obedience in every step of his life. Our life is hid, and the world sees the life of Christ in us. We admire, love, and reverence Him because he was obedient to His Heavenly Father. In obedience to His will, we give God all the glory in the Church, Eph. 3:21. As obedient children, we meet upon the first day of the week to observe the communion service; just as the Lord instituted it Acts 20:7, Heb. 10:25, 1 Cor. 11:24-25, and many other passages, show us that we should do this service to Him as an act of obedience. When we all eat of the one loaf, and drink from the one cup, we show the death of Christ, yes we show that he died for us all, for we are all partakers of that one bread and one cup. We also show to the world, to God and to ourselves that we are all one in Christ. Thus the young and the old, the rich and the poor, the educated and the illiterate, all form a beautiful unity in Christ.

Again, this is a beautiful life, in that it is a life of service to others. In Gal. 5:13, Paul says, "By love serve one another." Christ set the example of service. He went about doing good. He came not to be ministered to but to minister to others. He fed the hungry, healed the sick, bound up the broken heart, and set the captive free. The one who only lives to serve and satisfy self, only, surely is not a Christian, and knows nothing about Christianity.

I'd like to make a little child smile, and brush away a tear for it every day; I'd like to help my neighbor with some of his problems; I want to say or do something each day that will cause the boys and girls around me to want to make their lives more useful and pure; I want to pat the strong middle aged man or woman on the back and encourage them on in their useful lives; I want to lend a strong hand to the aged and tottering old grandma, and grandpa, and make life a little easier for them. I have no desire to put these deeds of love and kindness off until tomorrow: I want to do them today. Every day!

Finally, for all cannot be said; the Christian life is beautiful in its triumph. In 2 Cor. 2:14, Paul says "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of His knowledge by us in every place." The Christian begins his Christian life in triumph, his past sins blotted out, he is now a new creature. Day by day he overcomes bad habits, he rises above sinful practices; becomes master of himself, to where he can overcome temptations. Finally, when the close of life's day comes, he can say, with Paul, "I have fought a good fight, kept the faith, and finished my course, henceforth, the crown of life."

When Christ shall call the sleeping dead to life again and the righteous come forth in their glorified state; then, as the rose that emerges from winter snow and puts forth its leaves, and then the beautiful rose bursts forth in its effulgent beauty; even so it will be for the soul that has triumphed over every foe. They shall walk the gold paved streets of the new Jerusalem; eat of the tree of life; drink of the river of water of life; and rest in the shade of the evergreen trees; and sing with that unnumbered host in heaven's chair and dwell forever there, in full realization of the beauties of the Christian life.

HOMER A. GAY (Radio Speech; May 9, 1937)

EUPHEMISMS

By MICHAEL BOLTON

Colossians 4:6, Titus 2:8, Zephaniah 3:9

Too many Christian's lives are like a game of charades or twenty questions which involves acting out a part and the audience guessing who or what one is acting like. A similar game is played on a daily basis in the lives of many who call themselves followers of Christ. The world, our co-workers, and school-mates often know nothing of us except by the words we speak.

Our language as a Christian either commends or condemns us in God's sight. Our speech reflects His Glory or our shame. And both reflect directly on the church. Remember that Jesus said, Luke 6:45 "the good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth that which is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth that which is evil: for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks." Our speech reflects the light in us if the speech is evil then there is no light.

So the question before us now is: "Are slang words or euphemisms wrong?" In considering how to answer this question let us remember the definition of the word "euphemism" - an inoffensive word or phrase substituted for one considered offensive or hurtful. I am not encouraging Christians to employ politically correct language. Quite the contrary, we can, no WE MUST call things the way they are. But the question is, "in everyday language may we use exclamations such as "darn", "heck," "gosh," or "omg," in text? These are perfect examples for the definition of a euphemism.

Let us understand there are basically two types of speech. There is pure speech and impure speech. Regarding pure speech nothing is off limits for the child of God, ever. Wisdom and love should always be used, (this is usually referenced as "tact") but God's people are free to say whatever is needed.

However, impure speech is NEVER acceptable to God's people. Impure speech takes three general forms. 1. Obscene - speech that is related to sexual conduct in impropriety. 2. Profane - speech that is related to religious speech used improperly, in an irreverent manner. 3. Vulgar - speech that is related to elimination. We should remember and employ, Eph 4:29 "Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. "This is an explicit command to the Christian to not allow impure speech in their vocabulary.

- a. Our speech becomes obscene when we talk about intimate relations improperly. This does not include parents instructing their children, conversation in the private between husband and wife, or counsel to those who may have been abused.
- b. Our speech becomes vulgar when we speak of bathroom talk; the coarse jesting often participated in around the table in polite company is likely not something the Christian who desires pure speech should involve himself in.
- c. Our speech becomes profane when we do three things the scripture speaks of specifically: *curse someone or something - Matt 5:22, **use God's name in vain - Ex 20:7 This principle is still in effect today. God is

God and deserves our constant and complete respect. To use His name carelessly and irreverently often demonstrates a rebellious heart. This does include using His name to swear an oath. (James 5: 12 Matt 23:16-22) ***Utilizing something God has made holy and making it common. - Eph 5:3-7

We need to be aware and careful not to use "nice" words that really mean curse words. Words such as "gosh," "golly," "Jeez," "heck," "dang," and so forth should not be used in our vocabulary.

Prov 4:24-27 Put away from you a deceitful mouth, And put perverse lips far from you. Let your eyes look straight ahead, And your eyelids look right before you. Ponder the path of your feet, and let all your ways be established. Do not turn to the right or the left; Remove your foot from evil.

Prov 8:13 The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; Pride and arrogance and the evil way And the perverse mouth I hate

Prov 15:28 The heart of the righteous studies how to answer, But the mouth of the wicked pours forth evil

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redemptive work of our Savior upon the cross. Let's dig a little deeper into this story and notice some things we learn from it.

THE "BITE" OF SIN

First of all, just as those serpents infused poisonous venom into their victims, we today need deliverance from the poisonous venom of sin. Remember that it was sin (unbelief and ingratitude) that brought about this disastrous circumstance. Likewise, all of us have been "bitten" and poisoned by the bite of sin. Rom. 3:23 affirms that "all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." Sin is like a fiery serpent in that it poisons our soul and brings with it death. Rom. 6:23 says, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Let's talk about this idea that they were "fiery" serpents. Some say to this day there is a large, deadly snake that lives among the rocks and bushes of this region. They

are marked with fiery red spots and wavy stripes. They may look pretty to the eye, but it's almost like nature's way of saying, "Beware. Stay away! You don't want any part of this." Also, it is said that when this kind of snake bites you, the victim feels like he has fire rushing through his veins and he suffers with a great burning sensation. When you stop to think about it, that's the way it is with sin. The devil makes it look as appealing as he can, but the bite is deadly and eventually leads to the eternal fires of hell (Matt. 9:44).

Notice that God did not remove the snakes, but He gave them a means of salvation and deliverance. Likewise, God does not remove from us temptation and the presence of sin, but he has provided us with a means of salvation whereby we can be forgiven and escape the consequences of sin.

TYPE AND ANTITYPE

That brazen serpent on a pole was a type of Jesus Christ. Or perhaps it is more correct to say that it was a type of His redemptive work upon the cross. Remember that Jesus declared, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up." We may wonder about this because we know that the serpent has long been a symbol of the devil himself. When Satan conversed with Eve in the garden of Eden, he appeared to her in the form of a serpent. Also, Rev. 12:9 identifies "that old serpent" as the devil. This brings up the question of how that brazen serpent in the wilderness could have foreshadowed the lifting up of Christ upon the cross.

Let's consider some things that should help us in our understanding about this. To begin with, please observe that it was a replica of the deadly serpent that Moses raised on a pole. "Make thee a fiery serpent," Moses was told, "and set it on a pole." What did that mean? It meant that on that pole was a representation of the very thing that had brought death into their midst. We should see in that a picture of what happened when Jesus was nailed to the cross. Paul wrote in 2 Cor. 5:21, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be the righteousness of God in him." Notice what Paul did not say-- He did not say that Jesus was made to be a "sinner"; neither did he say that Jesus was made to be "sinful." However, Paul did say that He was made to be "sin" for us. That surely means that He became our sin-bearer upon the cross. In His death He bore the

penalty of our sins and died in our stead. As Gal. 3:13 declares, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree."

Also, think about how the cure for their snake bite was another snake (on a pole). In other words, the very thing which brought them death also brought them life. Likewise, the very thing which brought Christ death (the cross) is what brings spiritual life. Jesus promised in John 12:32, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." John went on to explain in verse 33, "This he said, signifying what death he should die." When Jesus was lifted up upon the cross, it was as if He was suspended between heaven and earth, making it possible for Him to reconcile man unto God. That makes it very clear that the sacrifice of Jesus upon the cross is our only hope of salvation.

Another parallel to consider is how there was only one snake (on one standard) that could save the people. Moses was not to raise up twelve snakes on twelve poles for the 12 tribes of Israel. No, there was only one snake, on one pole, for all the people.? Likewise, it is only by the redemptive work of Christ that we can be saved. Since He is the world's only Savior, that's why we must look to Him with trusting faith.

LOOK AND LIVE

In this story we see the look of faith. I am calling this article, "Salvation On A Pole," but surely you realize that the serpent made of brass was not a cure for a snake bite (in and of itself). No, it was actually the power of God that gave them life, but it was faith that gave them access to that power. God's promise was, "And it shall come to pass, that everyone that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live." However, that "look" was motivated by faith! That has to be the case because simply looking at something made of brass will not cure a person of a snake bite or any other malady.

Furthermore, we are not seeing in this story an example of faith only. Consider the words of Jesus in John 3: 14-15, "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life." By using faith in connection with this incident, it is clear that the Lord is talking about an active faith or one that leads to action. Let me illustrate

the point by imagining that an Israelite has just been bitten by one of those fiery serpents. Can you see him in your mind's eye? Picture him there lying on the ground, with his face toward the earth, and he's saying to himself, "I believe in the promise of God." He really believes in his heart that he can look on that brazen serpent and live, but suppose that he never actually does it. Instead of acting upon his faith in obedience to the command of God, he just keeps staring at the ground. Is that Israelite going to be saved by his faith alone? Obviously, the answer to that question is no.

No wonder James 2 :24 says, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." The truth is that people today are not looking to Christ in trusting faith if they are not willing to obey the gospel. Yes, we are justified by faith (Rom. 5:1), but the Bible shows that it is an obedient faith that leads to salvation. Gal. 5:6 states that what avails with God is a "faith which worketh by love." We also read of "the obedience of faith" in Rom. 16:26.

INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY

Each person who was bitten by one of those fiery serpents had to look for himself. This was not something that could be done by proxy, but each Israelite was responsible for his own actions. So it is with the sinner today! Have you obeyed the gospel? Have you done what the Lord requires you to do to be saved? You must believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (John 3:18); you must repent of your sins (Luke 13:3); you must confess that "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:37); you need to be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins (Acts 2:38).

THE URGENT NEED

What will it take for people today to have a sense of urgency about their salvation, bringing them to repentance now? Does God literally have to send snakes into our midst to humble us before Him? Is that the kind of thing that it takes for people to get serious about their relationship with God? Surely not! Instead, it should be the "goodness of God" that lead us to repentance (Rom. 2:4). God's love and grace should provide us with all the motivation we need to live for Him. That love, grace, and mercy is best seen in the lifting up of our Savior upon the cross of Calvary!

EDITORIAL . . . continued from page two

God and the church. Yet, when one really looks at what the Devil offers it is pretty much the same old story that Jesus spoke of in Luke 8:14. "Cares," (things in life that draw us in different directions- Thayer) "Riches," we all know what this is. Many will compromise what they know to be right if they think it will make them a lot of money. Then finally, "pleasures of this life." Here is an interesting thought: These three thorns mentioned by our Lord are in and of themselves harmless. It isn't wrong to care about life and the best way to do this or that. It isn't wrong to make or have money either. We all must have a certain amount of money. It is just a needed commodity in order to get along in life. Neither is it wrong to engage in some form of pleasure as long as it is moral, honest, and upright. However, these things become thorns to us when we allow ourselves to be given to them to the exclusion of spiritual things. Cares, riches, and pleasures of this life. This really needs no explanation because we all know what it means.

What can the righteous do about children who are leaving the church, or have little interest in the church? First of all, that problem may well have begun years earlier when they were not brought to services as they should have been. It may have also been due in part because children seldom saw their parents reading the Bible or in prayer. If they seldom saw it at home, they could have come to the conclusion that the church wasn't terribly important. "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." (Proverbs 22:6) Children have to be trained in the ways of the Lord just as they must be trained to wash their face, brush their teeth, and take a bath, etc. Yes, and they must be trained to attend services at the church also. If they are trained in those things, they learn to love going to services and look forward to it. It may not be too late to begin the training. That is something the righteous can do. In so doing, we can reproduce our own kind and the church can have a bright future. Whatever, we do we must save our children!

The righteous can also strive for unity. Paul wrote: "Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (Ephesians 4:3) Unity can be a difficult thing to maintain unless all really desire it. If we do desire it, we will obey what the apostle wrote in Romans 14:19," Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another." This means we are to pursue those things that create peace. Most of the time, this can be accomplished.

The righteous can also emphasize the spiritual things above the material. What makes the congregation where we worship strong? It isn't the number of members. A large group is nice, and it may indicate strength but it may not. A large group may indicate just the opposite of strength and faithfulness. The contribution could indicate a committed group, but it may not. Liberal denominations often have huge contributions but they certainly are not strong or faithful to the Lord. A nice building is convenient to have but we have all known congregations who were very strong but worshiped in buildings old and outdated. In our past, the strongest congregations often worshiped in rented buildings or even outside at times.

The bottom line would seem to be that what is needed are congregations who are strong in spiritual things. The Lord needs brethren to be faithful and true to the Book. That is what will make us strong and these are just a few things the righteous can do as we live in a wicked world. Think on these things DLK

Announcements

Las Parabras de Jesús (The Parables of Jesus)

We are happy to offer "The Parables of Jesus" book of sermons by J. Wayne McKamie in English and now also in Spanish as "Las Parabras de Jesús"! Making the book available in Spanish has been a goal of Brother Wayne's for quite some time since he has worked among our Spanish speaking brethren for many years. We hope and pray it will be a great blessing to our Spanish speaking brethren! We thank our brethren that assisted in the translation process.

We are offering Brother Wayne's book in three forms: hardback, paperback, and an eBook that can be downloaded and read on electronic devices. The hardback book is \$15 + \$4 shipping in the US and the paperback book is \$7 + \$3 shipping in the US. For additional copies of either, the shipping is \$1. Print book prices are the same for English or Spanish and include all sales and use taxes. To order print books, contact me by email at parables@sbcglobal.net, by phone at 817-598-0463, or by mail at P.O. Box 2634, Weatherford, TX 76086. Please specify the language, type (hardback or paperback), and the quantity. For orders outside of the US shipping cost is expensive and based on the location, so the eBook may be a better choice if you have that capability.

For eBook orders, the cost is \$2.99. The Spanish version is only available on lulu.com. The English version is available on lulu.com, ibookstore.com, amazon.com for Kindle, barnesandnoble.com, and kobobooks.com.

Go to the website to place your order, find and select the eBook "The Parables of Jesus" or "Las Parabras de Jesús", choose your payment option, and download your eBook. Please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Coming soon! "Words of Love" - Radio Sermons, Volume One by J. Wayne McKamie.

In Him, Gary Robinson

Field Reports

REPORT FROM THE PHILIPPINES

Frank Brancato 12718 Larkin Drive, Bakersfield, CA 93312, February 11, 2016, email: frankbrancato@sbcglobal.net. On January 26th Brother Don King and I returned from the Philippines. We are happy again to report that the work in the Philippines is going well, and many are being added to the body of Christ. Our preaching itinerary began on January 10th in Makati City in Manila and 14 were baptized that first service. Later that day, we met with a new congregation in Tay Tay and 4 more were added to the Kingdom. We travelled then to Isabella and spent about a week in that area preaching in Roxas, Illagan, Quirino, and Tabuk and 18 more were baptized. It was especially encouraging to see folks that had obeyed the Gospel two and three years ago still faithful. We then travelled to Ilocos Norte, stopping to preach in Lapogan and Claveria along the way. We stayed in the Ilocos area for two days and preached at 7 congregations and 20 more obeyed the Gospel. As usual our final service in Ilocos was in Gabut and the crowd was the largest that I had seen there. All of the local congregations came and supported the service. The highlight for me was witnessing many baptisms in the beautiful South China Sea. I have also continued to be impressed with the young and enthusiastic preachers in the Ilocos area. These young men are working and learning without any financial support. It shows that the congregations in that area certainly have a bright future, and Brother Dario Estavillo has done a great job training them. On January 17th we travelled to Baguio City and preached in Baguio, Dagupon, and Matulong. On January 20th we began our long trip back to Manila, stopping in Paniqui (Tarlac) along the way. It was encouraging to see the good crowd that assembled there, and 5 more obeyed the Gospel. The total number of baptisms on the Island of Luzon was 70. The next day we flew to the Island of Palawan landing Puerto-Princessa. We were unable

to travel to some of the remote areas that we usually do because of Muslim aggression. We were told that it would not be safe for Americans to leave the highly populated areas, so we had to alter our itinerary. We arrived unannounced one day later than expected and left one day earlier than planned. While we were there, we were able to have a very good study with the local preachers which we pray was edifying and encouraging. The last Lord's Day we were there, three congregations came together for worship and 15 people were baptized into Christ. During our stay in the Philippines, 85 were added to the kingdom, and we give God all of the glory. I am so thankful to be a small part of this great work. I also enjoyed traveling and working with my good friend and partner Don King. This was my 7th trip in the last 10 years and I have grown to love and appreciate this work very much. I also enjoyed traveling and working with Brother Liberto, Brother Edson Danao, and Brother Dario Estavillo. These men were a great help to us and served as translators and companions. Please continue to pray for this great work, and for the faithful everywhere.

Don L. King, 1147 Sherry Way, Livermore, CA 94550, March 15, old_paths@juno.com - The Livermore congregation is presently enjoying the capable preaching of Bruce Roebuck in our meeting. We have already had a number of visitors from the community and appreciate help from Manteca and perhaps other congregations as well. The weather is nice and attendance is expected to increase. The work in the Philippines is continuing to grow and the news from Hawaii is also encouraging. Lord willing, Pat and I plan to be in Hawaii and try to be of help some during the month of May. We very much appreciate Duane and Lori Permenter spending a couple of months with the congregation in Hawaii during February and March and also are grateful that several other preachers plan to spend time in Hawaii during this year as well. We pray the church there has a bright future and we know there is much potential for growth in Honolulu (Waipahu). Things are well with the home church and all appreciate the peace and unity possessed here. We are blessed to have a number of brethren who have a mind to work and preach the gospel wherever we can. Lord bless all in the work.

Bob Johnson 10 Connecticut Ave. Midlothian, TX 76065 March 11, 2016 bobusj@gmail.com The Duncanville congregation rejoices over two new additions in recent weeks. Brother Joe Miller and his dear wife Linda from Dallas have recently taken their

stand for the truth having come out from digression. They had been faithfully watching brother Brett Hickey on Let the Bible Speak television program, and welcomed our visit. Brett accompanied me the first two times, after that brethren Melvin Blalock and our local member Joe King were also instrumental in leading the Millers to accept the truth and make repentance from their past errors having worshiped with the digressive church. At my local bank, I was able to persuade four of the bank tellers to take the Gene Tope six lesson Bible course, and they are doing the lessons and moving right along, praise God! Several others from the Dallas area, all of which have been watching brother Brett are actively taking the course as well. I personally want to commend brother Hickey for his excellent teaching on the program and his labors in following up with these leads and the time, expense, and travel he is willing to give in his endeavors to lead the lost to salvation. How wonderful to serve our God that is "long suffering, and not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

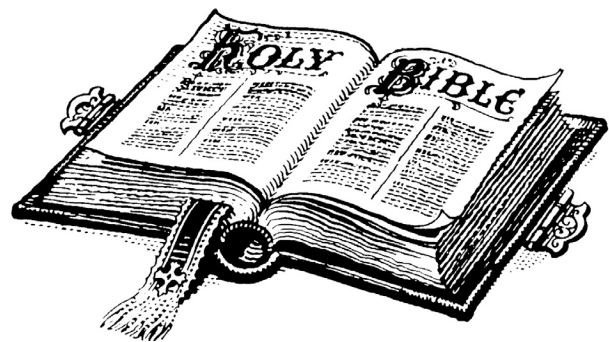
Carl M. Johnson 1400 Northcrest Drive, Ada, OK 74820 cmjthebackpage@gmail.com March 8: We just closed our 40th annual March Meeting and it may have been the very best one yet! The meeting was a homecoming for a lot of folks. We invited Doug Hawkins, Kevin Presley, and Cullen Smith to participate. These three preachers are uniquely connected to the church here in Ada and preached in this meeting several times when they were just beginning their careers. Doug moved to Ada when he was 17 years old, graduating from Ada High School and East Central University. Kevin moved to Ada after graduation from high school in Wichita, Kansas, and lived here for six years while preparing his preaching career. Cullen has never lived in Ada, but his grandmother Marie Menasco and her sister Pauline Rowlett were principally responsible for the beginning of the church in Ada. These two sisters, who had to drive from Ada to Fittstown, Oklahoma for worship on Sundays, brought Homer L. King to Ada in 1939 to conduct a mission meeting and establish a congregation. The church has been here since that time. In addition to the three preachers mentioned above, we also had Austin McConnell, who is now a full-time evangelist working with the Cave City, Arkansas congregation, and Colby and Carter Culbertson, from Brookhaven, Mississippi. I have never heard better preaching or singing in this meeting in its 40 year existence! Our crowd numbered over 300 people on Saturday night. Lord willing, I shall

begin a meeting at the Pleasant Grove congregation near Brazil, Indiana, this coming Lord's Day (Mar. 13-20). Our schedule for the next few months also includes: Huntington, WV (Apr. 27-May 1), Killbuck, OH (May 5-8), Greenville, PA (June 12-19), Marietta, GA (July 10-17), Pleasant View (Springfield), MO (Aug. 21-28), and Broken Arrow, OK (Sept. 14-18). Our next meeting at home is with Kevin Presley (Apr. 10-17). We humbly solicit your continued prayers.

Stan Owens 8432 Cox Rd West Chester, OH 45069-March 7th. I recently held a meeting at the Garretts Creek congregation in Wayne, WV. It was great to stay with long-time friends Wyn and Michelle Baker and their family. They labor diligently in the Cause and the fruits from those labors are showing. I next went to Monticello, MS for a meeting. Crowds were large and neighboring congregations came and it was a welcome sight to renew old friendships and make new ones as well. While there I spoke at the Highway 84 congregation. Brethren Slade Powell and Al Felder labor in these areas and they are doing a wonderful job in working with the community and teaching the next generation. It was a privilege to be able to visit with them once again. I also had the pleasure to speak at the Pleasant View congregation in Springfield, MO and I enjoyed visiting with family and friends there. I am still given the opportunity to be at the Bandy, KY congregation quite often where wonderful brethren Bob and Robbie Barron and many others in that congregation work for the Lord. The brethren there show great examples of leadership and they have an enormous group of young people that are following their example. It is also such an honor to be able to go to the Green Acres Road congregation in London, KY so often. Brother Philip Scott is a determined and diligent worker in that labor. These brethren continue to grow in number and spirituality. It was only just a few years ago there were 9 of us meeting in a home and now they number in the mid 30's. They are a great encouragement. Keep The Faith.

Steven R. Bowen 105 N. Lenard / Red Oak, TX 75154: We are so glad to write today to say that the Lord continues to bless us and His work abundantly -- Really, the Lord has blessed us "exceeding" abundantly, and for that we are so thankful (Ephesians 3:20). It really is amazing how the Lord continues to open doors of opportunity as well as give us the strength and health

necessary to enter those doors to share the gospel. We continue to work, now for the third year, five or more days a month in Little Rock, AR, Deer Park, TX, and Lexington, OK. In all, we are able to share the gospel in at least ten formal home studies each month, including two regular studies with families of new Christians near our home in the Dallas area. There probably is no greater honor given to one who ministers with the gospel than to have Christians or "searchers for truth" to open the doors to their home. It is a "roll your sleeves up" work, for sure, and we are continually thankful for a couple of great old Southern preachers who patterned that Acts 20:20 "house to house" work for us long before we took it on. Some of the studies are with church families who need strengthening and desire to learn more (Matthew 5:6), and other studies are with those who are not yet members of the Lord's church. Since our last visit here, I believe, we have been able to witness two great young men be "baptized into Jesus Christ," as well as one enthusiastic young sister in Christ! In many cases, as I'm sure you well know, the sharing of the gospel even among the Lord's children comes "at such a time as this." One thing I hope we all work and pray toward is not losing members of the church due to discouragement or Satan's attacks (Matthew 13:19). I am convinced that "house to house" work may help save some discouraged or weak loved ones In regard to Acts 20:20, I want to mention too, that one monthly study is the "public" one in Deer Park where we are winding down our survey of the Old Testament the 2nd Friday night of each month. In addition to all of this, we also have been honored to visit and share the gospel in the past few months with the Lord's church in Denton County, TX, Grassy Fort, TN, our old home-place LaGrange, GA, and -- at our home away from home -- with the good brethren at Cleburne, TX. Thank you so much for your prayers in our work and that the gospel in all places will have "free course" (2 Thess. 3:1). God bless! (steven.bowen@redoakisd.org)



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PAUL'S SOLILOQUY

By CARL M. JOHNSON

A soliloquy is a discourse in which a character talks to himself or herself or reveals his or her thoughts in the form of a monologue without addressing a listener (Webster's New College Dictionary 1050).

The first time I ever heard the word "soliloquy" was in connection with the works of William Shakespeare. There is a scene in Shakespeare's famous play "Romeo and Juliet," where Juliet stands on a balcony and says wistfully, "O Romeo, Romeo! Wherefore art thou Romeo?"

The best-known line in another of Shakespeare's plays is a soliloquy in "Hamlet." Hamlet says, "To be, or not to be—that is the question." Most of us are familiar with Hamlet's statement, but we may not know that he is actually wrestling with himself over the prospects of committing suicide. He is pondering what the consequences will be if he remains alive ("to be"), and what will the consequences be if he is not alive ("not to be").

There is an occasion in the apostle Paul's life where he wrestles with the same issue. While in prison in Rome, Paul receives a gift of support from the church in Philippi delivered to him by a brother named Epaphroditus. After receiving the gift, Paul writes a letter of thanks to the Philippians and describes his circumstances. He is under house arrest and chained 24 hours a day to a Roman soldier. The guards are changed every six hours. It is possible his case will be brought before Caesar's court soon where he will be acquitted or he will be executed.

Paul is in excellent spirits, however, and he pleads with the Philippians not to worry about him or grieve for him in either case. He explains that his single purpose in life is to exalt Christ and spread the gospel ("This one thing I do," Phil. 3:13), and he believes that this purpose will be fulfilled whether he lives or dies (Phil. 1:20).

Paul then thinks out loud concerning the consequences of living or dying. In what some expositors call "Paul's soliloquy," he says, "For, to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phi. 1:21). This classic text is often called the "heart of the book of Philippians" (David L. Roper 414).

There is a major difference, however, between Paul's soliloquy and Hamlet's. Hamlet is contemplating death by his own hand while Paul is leaving his life in the hands of God. Furthermore, Hamlet does not like either of his alternatives. He will be miserable if he continues to live in his present circumstances, but he is afraid to die.

By contrast, Paul considers either of his options to be positive and he searches his heart for the one he prefers. Notice his reasoning: "For to me to live is Christ." In other words, "Regardless of what life is to others, to me, it is Christ."

It is said that "life is what we are alive to." The things that excite us and make us happy are life to us. As far as Paul is concerned, Jesus Christ is his "life." Jesus Christ is what excites him and makes him happy! Christ makes possible the forgiveness of sins, daily sustenance, and an eternal inheritance in heaven. All that Paul is and will ever be is due to the grace of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 8:9). In appreciation, therefore, Paul devotes his life to serving Christ and will continue that service as long as he lives.

On the other hand, Paul concludes that "to die is gain." He views death as a "departure" that allows him to lay down heavy burdens in order to rest, and to lay aside shackles in order to be free. He also views death as being "loosed" from the moorings that bind him here, allowing him to set sail on the voyage which ends in the presence of God. Who can fear such a departure? (William Barclay 240-241).

In verse 22, Paul says the choice between living and dying is difficult and he is not sure which he prefers. In verse 23, however, he reveals he does have a preference. He concludes that departing this life would be "far better." It is possible Paul had a firsthand glimpse of how wonderful it is on the other side when he was caught up to the "third heaven" (2 Cor. 12:1-4). Today, we can only imagine.

Warren Wiersbe suggests that Paul's soliloquy in verse 21 is a valuable test for our lives today. Fill in the blanks in Paul's statement: "For, to me, to live is _____ and to die is _____."

If life, to you, is money, then to die is to leave it all behind. If life, to you, is fame, then to die is to be forgotten. If life, to you, is power, then to die is to lose it all. If life, to you, is ANYTHING other than Christ, then to die will not be gain, but it will be everlasting loss. cmjthebackpage@gmail.com