

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. 8

THE OLD PATHS

By *RICK MARTIN*

Through time man has departed from God’s ways. The Israelites, God’s people, continually departed from God’s teachings and had to repent and restore God’s ways. They faced judgment after judgment for perverting the ways of God, yet they never seemed to learn. The Bible teaches us that these things were written “for our learning” (Rom. 15:4) and “for our admonition” (1 Cor. 10:11). Therefore, we must learn from their errors and stand fast in the truth of God’s word.

The Israelites were not the only people to ever depart from the truth. Even among first century churches there was apostasy. In Galatians 1:6-9, we read of Paul’s amazement that the churches in Galatia had accepted a perverted gospel so soon after acknowledging the truth. The New Testament is filled with many warnings that apostasy will take place and God’s ways will be departed from.

Today, there is a need to restore the “old paths” of Christianity where the “good way” is found. A quick look at today’s religious world reveals complete chaos. One would be hard-pressed to find two churches in one city that teach the same thing. It is even more difficult to find a church that is like the church described in the first century. When these circumstances exist, something has gone terribly wrong.

The question I want to answer in this article is, how do we restore New Testament Christianity? How do we return to the Old Paths?

First, we must find the pure seed. The Bible has likened the Word of God unto a seed - an incorruptible seed - 1 Pet. 1:23 “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever”. This seed must be planted

in the hearts of men. If the soil is right, it will grow and bear fruit. If the soil is poor, it will not bear fruit. The laws of nature tell us that a seed will bear fruit after its own kind. The pure seed of God’s word will produce true Christians and nothing else. When the seed is perverted, manipulated, and changed, the result is what we have today; hundreds of different flavors of “Christianity”. We have division, sectarianism, and denominationalism! Therefore we must go back to the Old Paths and imitate the first century church in doctrine, worship, organization, labors, and purity. We must find the pure seed and begin planting it. Only then, will we reap pure Christianity!

Second, we must learn to “rightly divide the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). This must be a diligent effort. Many today, depend upon the “preacher” to do the studying and interpreting for them. This is a dangerous practice. The Lord commanded that “we work out our own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil. 2:12). Knowing we all will give answer for ourselves on the Day of Judgment, we cannot leave our salvation in the hands of someone else. We must learn to study God’s Word for ourselves, test the spirits, and prove all things-Acts 17:11 “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.” When we do this, “we are workers that need not be ashamed.” We must all learn as individuals to study our Bibles for ourselves and rightly divide the word of truth.

Third, we must seek Bible authority for all that we say and do. We can know by faith, which comes by hearing the word of God (Rom. 10: 17), that if the Lord Jesus commands us to do something, we must do it. God gave him all authority Matt. 28:18 “And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.”

We can also know by faith that if the apostles did

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Editorial

DO NOT BE DISCOURAGED

By DON L. KING

As Moses spoke to Israel about the promised land, etc., He tried to calm their fears about things unknown to them. Those things had greatly discouraged Israel. In Deuteronomy 1:21 he said, “Behold the Lord thy God hath set the land before thee: go up and possess it, as the Lord God of thy fathers hath said unto thee; fear not, neither be discouraged.” He then reminded them of their complaining and feeling defeated within themselves after they saw some cities over there which they said were “walled to heaven.” They were already defeated within themselves because they simply did not believe they could accomplish what God had told them to do.

We often have been of a similar mindset in modern times. We have likely heard some express the opinion that the church is going to die out, and so we may be wasting time and energy holding meetings and trying to establish new congregations, etc.

We should not allow ourselves to be discouraged when we are about God’s business. Paul wrote in Romans 8:31: “What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?” As long as we know we are doing right, God is for us. Who indeed can be against us?

No doubt the people of God were discouraged when Elijah was taken home to glory. (2 Kings 2) Undoubtedly, they had come to depend on him to lead them in the Lord’s ways. However, Elisha was able to fill his shoes very well. The Scriptures show many examples of the wonderful work of Elisha. 2 Kings 5 relates the familiar incident of Naaman who was cured of leprosy after he followed Elisha’s directions to dip in Jordan seven times. Read on for much more of Elisha’s work. The point is that Israel continued and prospered while Elisha led them. When they digressed, they suffered the correction sent by God. Can we not learn from these examples? (Romans 15:4 says we can). Just because things may seem discouraging at times, we must keep in mind that it has ever been so, but the church remains.

In Acts 12:2 we read of the death of James, an apostle, by order of Herod. James, no doubt, was a great man in the eyes of the church at Jerusalem. Surely, they had

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QUERIST COLUMN

By CLINT DEFRANCE

Question: Does James 3.1 mean that we should not have more than one teacher in each congregation?

Answer: In James 3.1, the warning is technically: “My brethren, let not many of you become teachers...“or “Not many of you should become teachers...” (NIV). It is a warning to individuals rather than an instruction to congregations. The reason James gives for this admonition is that teachers “will receive a stricter judgment” that is, they shall have a harsher expectation for how they use their tongues (and since the tongue is the most unruly and perilous member a man has anyway, only those who have great self-control should “risk” teaching others).

However, this caution does not put a restriction on how many teachers a congregation may have in its number. Paul expected Timothy to develop other teachers in Ephesus (2 Timothy 2.2). Elders are required to be teachers, and there will always be a plurality of them (1 Timothy 3.2). In 1 Corinthians 14.31, the apostle Paul says that “all” may “prophesy”, or teach in the assembly (as time and reason permits) - even multiple men in one assembly, but they must speak one by one (or one at a time, with others quietly listening).

Question: Is a withdrawn from person put out of the local congregation only or the entire community of believers?

Answer: The Bible describes withdrawal of fellowship in the most serious language imaginable. “In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus” (1 Corinthians 5.4-5); “Therefore put away from yourselves the evil person” (1 Corinthians 5.13). If such a one has truly been delivered over to Satan and put away because of his or her evil, how could this be something confined to a local group of Christians? This person has lost fellowship with God and all of God’s people, not because a group has grown tired of or irritated with them and asked them to leave, but because God has demanded their exclusion because of their recalcitrant disobedience to Him.

In Matthew 18.17-20, Jesus says that when a sinning brother is approached in love and implored to repent, even in the presence of witnesses, but refuses, the matter should be brought to the church: “But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.”

Many Bible readers do not realize the connection between verses 18-20 with verse 17 and the previous context. Jesus is saying that when a congregation exercises discipline against a sinning church member according to the teaching of scripture, they are simply binding on earth what God has already bound in heaven; Jesus assures that what the brethren leading this disciplinary action ask will be given to them because it is “in His name” that is, according to His authority; and finally he says “where two or three” (these are the witnesses of verse 16) are gathered together to perform a disciplinary action according to Jesus command, they are not alone – He is present with them. This shows that church discipline is not merely an instrument for brethren to punish each other, but rather it is the earthly manifestation of God’s decree against unrepentant sin among His people. When a congregation practices disciplinary action according to the teaching of Scripture, all of God’s people throughout the world ought to respect it as the will of Heaven.

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THE BODY OF CHRIST

By BARNEY OWENS

The inspired writers used various figures to illustrate the meaning and importance of the church in the eyes of God and the esteem of men. One such figure is "the body," In this piece I will strive to show the body of Christ in a variety of ways hoping that it will give us a better understanding and appreciation of it. First, let us notice Paul's statement in Ephesians chapter one. "(God) hath put all things under his (Christ's) feet, and gave him (Christ) to be the head over all things to the church Which is his (Christ's) body the fullness of him (Christ) that filleth all in all." (V, 22-23). The church is plainly said to be the body of Christ. Therefore when speaking of the church we necessarily are speaking of the body, or, when using the term body we mean the church. There are many other passages that state or infer this fact. With that before you let's proceed to notice:

The church or body of Christ is a physical organization. Generally speaking the world does not view Christ the head of the church in His exalted position and Divine character, I fear it is because the body of Christ is not esteemed as highly as it should be, We see the result in the careless manner that people frequently leave the church as well as the lack of interest that others take in the welfare and prosperity of the church. Generally speaking we estimate the worth and efficiency of a body by its head. A human body may be strong, well organized and healthy, but if its head be idiotic, we attach but little importance to that body. The same is true of organized society; we look to the head for honor and efficiency of the body. What esteem then should we put upon the church as it is declared in sacred writ to be the body of Christ? If that glorious person who "is the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His person-who created and upholds all things by the word of His power" condescended to be the Head of the church and allows Himself to be so regarded, then the body of Christ which is the church is not a little or a downcast affair. To be a member of the church is an exceedingly high position that each member of the body should prize. It is a relationship that the body has to the Head that all the powers of the universe cannot sever. How then we should strive with all our being to maintain the health and well-being of the body? To speak of the greatness of the Head is a reflection of the greatness of the body.

A word of caution to our readers. These things apply to

the church of Christ, the body that He shed His blood for, not just any church or religious organization. Many well-intended persons are members of some church that is not mentioned or taught in the New Testament. Such work and maintenance is a vain effort. Some believe and express that Christ is the head of all the denominations in the world. Such a monstrosity is not only unscriptural it is an illogical contention. One Head-one body is God's will as expressed in the word of truth. Therefore it behooves each of us to acquaint ourselves with the word of God and then seek out the church according to the due order.

The church is a unit because the body can be only one. The first time the word church is used in the New Testament gives emphasis to this truth. Jesus promised the disciples, "upon this rock (the confession Peter had made at V. 15,) I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Mt. 16:18). Jesus never promised to build various churches or many bodies to be the head of, He said "church." No one would say or teach that He meant the church in Jerusalem to the exclusion of other faithful congregations. Rather He had reference to all congregations wearing the same name, worshipping in the same way, with the same organization. The only difference between them was in geographical location. If one visited the church in Jerusalem, then proceeded to a congregation in Antioch or Ephesus he would find them all the same in teaching and in practice. Speaking of himself the Apostle Paul wrote, "For I am the least of the apostles, that I am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God and wasted it." (I Cor. 15:9). There is evidence that Paul did not persecute a single congregation so he was using the term in a general sense to refer to the church wherever faithful disciples were found. "And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities." (Acts 26: 11). The church in the references is used in a general sense of the unit-the unit of which Christ is Head-the body or church of Christ. All congregations then and now of the church of Christ in light of Apostolic teaching compose the church the ONE BODY. It is a small step logically and scripturally to see that each individual congregation is ONE BODY in a particular locality. We read of the church at Corinth and Galatia and Philippi, etc. In addition we have the Lord walking among the churches of Asia. It must be kept in mind that these were not different denominations teaching different doctrines, with peculiar organizations from the others and worshipping in ways not found in Apostolic writ. On the contrary, when there was a difference they were

reproved and threatened that their relation to the Lord would be severed. Therefore even as they were found in a variety of localities they were one unit-ONE BODY under ONE HEAD-Jesus Christ, the Lord.

Each congregation is presented as a body because unity must exist among the members. We have seen that the church is a unit as each congregation is likened to every other congregation - to see one is to see all. Presently we will crawl over the wall of a single congregation to observe the working of each member is so constituted and joined that unity prevails to accomplish all the good possible. When one understands this unity he will have a correct vision of why Christ descended to this earth. Men were divided and sub-divided-Christ's ministry was to break down the walls of discord creating unity in its place. We are not to understand that division ceased because the ever-working Devil knows that the cause of Christ prevails where Christians are united, therefore he kindles the heart of some to promote discord. That does not take away from the Lord's purpose. Hear Him pray with His disciples near, "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 all may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me," (Jn. 17:20-21). How closely knit and precious is the unity between the Father and the Redeemer and how closely are disciples united if and when we resemble that union. That unity can exist only when we conform our very nature to express the nature of the Heavenly Father. "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." (II Pet. 1:4). The unity of Christians is often illustrated in Apostolic teaching by the unity that exists between members of the natural body. Read along with me a few of these passages. "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another." "For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the Same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and everyone members one of another." (Eph. 4:25 & Rom. 12:4-5). If we are able to conceive the nearness of the relation existing between members of our physical body, then this is but a figure of the holy union that should exist among all members of the church, the mystical BODY OF CHRIST. 'But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of

the body unto the edifying of itself in love.'" (Eph. 4:15-16) What a beautiful description this is of the human body, every joint in its place supplying his part to edify other part of the body and all the members are fitly (not unfitly) joined together. The parts composing the joint all adapted to each other; and these are joined together by ligaments that hold the members in a very near relation to one another. Then by the outside membranes they are all compacted together. By each member doing its part, seen or unseen the body increases. In this same way the members of the body of Christ are united. The Lord's plan and will is that each member supplying its place in the body all will "be perfectly joined together in the Same mind and in the Same judgment" (I Cor. 1: 10). Then by the effectual working of every part-of every member, whether preacher, elder, deacon and various members each working in its respective sphere for the general good, the body or church will increase in moral power as it grows.

The Apostle Paul goes to even greater length on the same subject to the brethren in Corinth. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink in that one Spirit, For the body is not one member, but many... if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of thee." (I Cor. 12:12-14 & 19-21). Each member of the church must regard itself mutually dependent on every other member of the body, which results in a bond of peace. Continuing we are informed in verses 25-26. That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same Care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all members rejoice with it." We know that this is the way the natural body is united. If the lady's little finger is honored by wearing a gold ring, her head is likewise honored: and more: all the members of the body partake of that honor. And if the most remote or smallest member of the natural body is pained, all the members of the body sympathize with it. If one member is diseased, the whole body becomes enfeebled. Why should a sound member of the body be deprived of strength by a disease in another member? It is because all the members have the same care one of another. The forces and power of all the members are concentrated at that part of the body attempting to overcome the disease and save the afflicted member.

So should it be with the members of Christ's mystical body. If one member is honored because of devotion to and usefulness in the church, the whole body is honored by having such a worthy member. Therefore no one should be jealous of the influence of another member, nor envious at the success of that member in doing good. "Now ye are the body of Christ and members in particular." (V. 27). It is not the individual good that a particular member may benefit for himself, it is the good of the body that counts.

THE EXISTING UNITY BETWEEN THE BODY AND ITS HEAD

One thing I wish to have you consider is the fact that we have one head of the church, namely Jesus Christ. None doubt or would contend otherwise. Yet the same people who affirm there is but one head will propagate the false idea that this one head is over many bodies or churches. I contend that there is but one head and he is the head of but one church. Furthermore, in all physical bodies, that have life, the head governs the body it is attached to. This being true, in the human body which is referred to in a figure by the Apostle, the head is the seat of judgment and will and by it all the members are controlled. One body-one head-. one will-is Heavens order One body with two heads would be a monster as would be one head with many bodies. No body can act efficiently if the members are governed by different and conflicting wills. This is the secret cause of all the divisions among professed followers of Christ, when too many wills are consulted, too many heads are listened to, and too many lawmakers are in the mix. The adage is true in religion as in physical things "to many cooks spoil the broth." When we acknowledge Christ as head of the body-the church, our wills will be lost in His, as self is crucified with Him by the cross. We bury self in baptism and rise to walk in newness of life "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). Anything done in the body is felt in the head. In our physical body the sympathetic nerves which connect with the head divides itself into thousands of fibers running throughout the body carrying the sensation of the lightest touch of the most remote member to the head in the twinkling of an eye. It is by this means that the head sympathizes with all the members and the member's sympathize with every other member. Likewise, the hurt and joy of each member of the body of Christ (church,) is known and felt by the Lord. It is important that we are aware that all actions are governed by His righteous will, "By the

which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ." (Heb. 10:10).

Barney Owens

SHADOWS OF THE OLD COVENANT

By MELVIN BLALOCK

We have been writing in previous articles concerning the cessation of the Old Covenant and the establishment of the New Covenant. The Old Covenant which was given to Moses and the children of Israel, foreshadowed many great things that were to be realized by the ushering in of the New Covenant. We find that the law was a shadow: In the Epistle to the Hebrews we read ".....since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law; who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things," Heb. 8:4. "For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect," Heb. 10:1. The Apostle wrote to the Colossians, "So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ," Col. 2:16-17. The Sabbath, which was a day of rest, was one of those shadows. The writer of Hebrews reminds us, "For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: 'And God rested on the seventh day from all His works'; and again in this place: 'They shall not enter My rest.' Since therefore it remains that some must enter it, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience," Heb. 4:4-6. The lesson is, that there is a day of rest awaiting God's faithful people.

It is revealed in the New Testament what the Sabbath foreshadowed. We read again in the Hebrew Epistle: " 'Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts.' For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day. There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His," Heb. 4:7-10. "Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it," Heb. 4:1. Today the Christian finds rest for his soul in Christ, Matt. 11:28-30. He is promised eternal rest following death. We read in the Revelation, "Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, Write: 'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.' 'Yes: says the Spirit, 'that they may rest from their

labors, and their works follow them.” Rev. 14:13. The “Sabbath” was a shadow, but the true rest for the people of God is found in Christ. “There remains therefore a rest for the people of God,” Heb. 4:9. An eternal rest awaits those who are in Christ. While we appreciate the shadows, we no longer live in them. The shadows of the Old Covenant have been replaced by the great spiritual blessings that they foreshadowed.

PERILOUS TIMES SHALL COME

By PAUL O. NICHOLS

When Jesus had finished His work on earth He returned to Heaven. In His prayer before leaving, He said to His Father, “I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do” (John 17:4).

This was characteristic of Jesus. He had made it plain that He did not come to do His own will, but to do the will of God, who sent Him. His mission was to seek and to save the lost who were without hope (Luke 19:10). And after giving the apostles their last instructions and assuring them that the Holy Spirit would be sent to remind them of what they had learned from a personal relationship with Him and would reveal all other truth, He took His flight to Glory to be with God, and now sits at His Father’s right hand and is the Mediator between man and God.

The question was posed by Jesus Himself: “Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8).

In this time in which we now live, the days seem to grow ever darker and darker. Paul warned Timothy, “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come” (2 Tim. 3:1). Here, he is not saying in the last dispensation of time (this is the third), but in the last days of time itself, He says “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: from such turn away.” This seems to perfectly describe conditions of the world in which we now live, and the disciples of Christ are advised from them turn away.

Sin of every sort is legalized, and practiced by the masses. Some of which were sins behind closed doors, but are now practiced openly without shame. Listen to what the apostle Paul wrote, “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).

Innocent babes are being slaughtered by the millions every year by heartless doctors; babies not wanted by those indulging in fornication and promiscuous living. One doctor admitted that he slaughtered as many as thirty-six in a single day. The law says it is all right because those in authority passed the law that makes legal this type of murder.

People in large gatherings, including school children, die by disgruntled thrill seekers with assault rifles. Suicide is on the rise among teenagers. Marijuana has been legalized and is now a killer on our highways along with alcohol which was made legal many years ago. Innocent lives are being destroyed because of the imbecilic laws passed by people, many who have no regard for things high nor holy. The apostle Paul, in his last recorded letter, warned Timothy that “evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived” (2 Tim. 3: 13). Warnings inspired by God go unheeded by most. We have been informed, “The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God” (Psa. 9: 17). This is what can be expected when the world refuses to listen when the Bible warns what will happen to nations when they think they can renounce the authority of the Lord. “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good” (Psa.14:1). This sounds like a description of those in authority in the world today. How sad!

We are in the world, but we are not of the world, and we have to be careful that we are not influenced by the world. “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of this world” (1 John 2:16). It is worrisome to see the influence of the world in some of the congregations of the Lord’s church today. The attitude of preachers and many of the leading brethren is more worldly than spiritual, which is reflected in the conduct of the congregations where they meet. Some congregations when having a meeting are so noisy, showing no reverence, talking about worldly things; politics, ball game scores, favorite teams and athletes,

activities after the service, ad infinitum. But “God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him (psa. 89:7). The apostle Paul, said, “Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you” (Phil. 4:9). We, as Christians, should be able to say the same. What about you?

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something or commanded us to do something, we can and must do it. The Lord gave the apostles authority; Matt. 16:19 “And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”; 2 Cor. 10:8 “For though I should boast somewhat more of our authority, which the Lord hath given us for edification, and not for your destruction, I should not be ashamed.”

We have our means of establishing authority for what we do. If we have a direct command, an approved apostolic example, or we can necessarily infer that it was a practice of the first century Christians, we can know by faith it is acceptable for us to do. To do anything else is to act without the Lord’s authority and thereby sin. It is really that simple! We must seek God’s approval for all that we say and do.

Fourth, we must re-establish the pattern for the church set forth in the New Testament. The Bible says, in 2 Timothy 1:13, “Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.” The work, worship, and organization of some churches have become secular and carnal in nature. Instead of saving souls, churches are feeding bellies. Instead of coming together to worship God, churches come together for entertainment and socialization. We must get back to the arrangement the Lord has designated for a local church and accept no substitutes.

Fifth, we must stand fast in the truth—2 Thessalonians 2:15, “Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle.” God’s word offers no compromise. Compromise is the door to apostasy. Compromise of truth involves giving into something other than truth, and it leads to a departing from God’s word. Sadly, compromise of the truth has brought about division.

The five things mentioned in this article are necessary for a return to the “old paths.” May it be our goal to ask for the old paths, where the good way is found. “Thus saith Jehovah, stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way” (Jer. 6:16).

Rick Martin, teacherrmartin@gmail.com

DO NOT BE...continued from page two

learned to depend on him for his teaching, wisdom, advice, and leadership. This event which came about perhaps ten years after the death of Christ, must have been a devastating blow to the church there. Likely, brethren lamented his death for quite some time when they came together or met on the streets of the city. Just think of what this must have meant to them! Yet, God permitted his beheading. We suppose he had completed only a small part of the work which had been assigned to him when his life was suddenly cut off. How strikingly this illustrates that God’s ways are not our ways. (Isaiah 55:8,9) However, Luke writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, used only seven words in Greek, (eleven English) to tell the story. You or I would probably have written several volumes, but the Lord saw differently. This suggests that no one is irreplaceable in the Lord’s work. He will see that the work is done one way or another. This puts us right down where we need to be, doesn’t it?

Probably every congregation and every foreign work could relate difficult times and problems, yet they continue to exist and even thrive. A preacher in the Philippines was apparently murdered by the Communist activists, and his body never recovered, yet the church where he lived and preached continues; and we see his aging widow every time we visit there. Many of our older preachers could tell sad stories of difficult times in their lives, yet they continued to preach. Many gospel meetings were held by great preachers where godly brethren could not afford to pay them more than a very meager amount. Sometimes the pay was garden vegetables, or perhaps a chicken or two. Yet they persisted and preached in spite of hard times, and their work may still be seen today in the form of congregations and preachers trained and encouraged.

“If God be for us, who can be against us?” Yes, who indeed.

Think on these things. —DLK

Our Departed

CASEY - Dorothy Ellen Casey. Born October 20, 1939 & passed away on June 21, 2019. Dorothy was 79 years old when death overtook her suddenly. Dorothy was one of the sweetest, most precious and loving sisters in Christ I have ever known. She was a member of the West Highway 60 Church of Christ in Neosho Missouri. Dorothy was ready to go as she passed to her reward. Dorothy had been baptized earlier in life in a congregation that worshipped differently and she just wanted to know why. After we talked, she asked what she needed to do to get right with God. Then, we gathered the congregation and had prayer that ended with great joy and many tears. Dorothy never turned back from that moment going forward. Brother Derald Boman read the obituary and offered some humorous, but sweet comments. I was honored to speak to her family and all of the visitors, which included her church family. All had come to show respect, showing their love for her and for her family. I chose to read the verses she loved most and to speak on how one makes ready for just such a day. It was very easy to speak about Dorothy's Christian life. Dorothy had made all the necessary changes for living her Christian life. What was interesting to me, was her entire family mentioned how she was indeed a different person once she came into the Church. Everyone heard and reported so many good things about this special woman, mother, friend, neighbor and Christian. We all missed her the moment she left our world to go home. I am sure there is going to be a great homecoming day when we all gather in heaven to be with her and other loved ones. Dorothy had purchased her headstone and it was already in place at the Thompson Grove Cemetery just about two miles from my home near Seneca, MO. She found a cool spot under a shade tree at the head of the cemetery grounds. What an honor it was to know and witness the life of this special woman of God. At the cemetery, brother Lee Owens offered the final reading, prayer and brief comments as we laid her body to rest. Her earthly journey is now complete. This will be her resurrection location when the Lord returns. If this world could know more Dorothy Caseys, what a better place it would be. Everyone loved her. —Roger L. Owens

CURLEY - Kenneth (Bud) Curley was born March 26, 1936 in Vernon, Texas. Kenneth passed from this life in Mabank, TX, June 24, 2019 at the age of 83. He was preceded in death by his parents, Ernest and Oma Curley; His wife, Sandra; daughter-in-law, Tina Curley,

and granddaughter, Caitlynn Curley. He had three sisters and one brother who preceded him in death. He is survived by his four sons, Chase Curley and wife Jo of Frisco, TX; Bud Curley and wife, Angie of Amarillo; Keith Curley of Amarillo; and Chad Curley of Colorado Springs, CO. He is also survived by eight grandchildren. Kenneth was a faithful member of the Phalba Church of Christ at the time of his passing. It was the writer's honor and sad duty to officiate at his service in Mabank, Texas. Many of his Christian brothers and sisters were gathered for his service, as well as many friends from the community. Kenneth was a friendly and generous man. In his Christian life he influenced many people, and is responsible for several obeying the gospel. He was a man who was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ and would seize the opportunity to talk to anyone who would listen. I have known Kenneth for almost fifty years, having baptized him in 1971 following a home Bible study. His conversion really marked the beginning of the work in Amarillo, Texas. He was our first convert in that work. He was baptized late that night following our Bible study, in Lake Meredith which is about thirty miles northeast of Amarillo. Kenneth and I had remained life-long friends. Kenneth was a painter by profession, and a very successful one. I feel compelled to tell everyone that Kenneth helped with the construction and painting of our building that we erected in Amarillo. He helped us when we built the church building in Mineral Wells, TX, and the building we erected in Weatherford, TX. He also came and helped us paint the church building in Cleburne, TX, where we presently worship. Kenneth would bring what paint he had on hand, and help us purchase paint at his cost. He would take off time from his work and come to do our painting for us, never taking any compensation for his services. He was indeed very generous. He is responsible for the conversion of several of his family members. We recently had a conversion at Weatherford, TX, due in large part to his efforts. We are thankful for Kenneth and the privilege of having him as a friend and beloved brother in Christ. He was laid to rest in a beautiful country cemetery by his loving wife, Sandra, who was also a faithful member of the church.

—Melvin Blalock

Field Reports

Don L. King, 1147 Sherry Way, Livermore, CA 94550, July 15, oldpaths@juno.com. Pat and I made it home late last night after an enjoyable meeting at Marietta,

GA. We held our first meeting there in 1979, 40 years ago, and have been back a number of times since then. We have always enjoyed being with these good brethren and this time was no exception. We made our home with Rick and Jane Martin, and were treated royally, as usual. Our profound thanks to them. Rick is a gospel preacher also and was to leave for a meeting shortly after our meeting closed. The congregation showed their hospitality in the form of daily meals among them. We appreciated the good cooperation from area congregations, and even out of State. Several preachers were with us also which we enjoyed; it was wonderful to get to see those we have learned to love through the years. We look forward to beginning at New Salem, near Brookhaven, MS, through the first two Sundays of August. We have always enjoyed being there as well. Next Lord's Day we are to preach at Stockton, CA and we also look forward to that. We enjoyed a few nights of the 4th of July meeting at Springfield, MO and seeing the brethren there. May the Lord bless the work.

Paul O. Nichols, 14217 Rosehill, Overland Park, KS 66221. The Stony Point congregation recently closed a week of preaching by Evang. Bill Ferguson of Broken Arrow, OK. There was one confession. The preaching was done without fear or favor. The lessons were appropriate and beneficial to the congregation and to all outsiders who took advantage of the opportunity to hear the truth. I highly recommend Bill for having developed into a strong proponent of the Word of God. I am the preacher who baptized our brother many years ago and it was good to be with him and his wife once again. We recently were blessed to have two families move to this area from out of state and start meeting with us. One has already become one of our teachers. Our young men in the congregation are regularly taking part in the services, leading singing and reading the scriptures for the teachers in the congregation as well as making talks when they are assigned. All of these things bode for a good future for the congregation when some of us older members are gone. It is encouraging to hear of the good work that is being done by our preachers where they have opportunity to proclaim the Truth in various parts of the world. May the Lord continue to bless all the righteous efforts of these men who are willing to leave home and family to carry the Gospel to a lost and dying world, hoping to help save a few more lost sinners before time runs out. They deserve our prayers and support.

Frank Brancato, 12718 Larkin Drive, Bakersfield, CA 93312, July 13, 2019, email: frankbrancato@sbcglobal.net. Since last reporting, I had the privilege of holding

meetings at the 21st Street congregation in OKC, and also in Ada OK. It was great to be with good friends again, and we pray that lasting good was accomplished. I also enjoyed time spent with Allen Bailey, Joe Hisle, and Carl Johnson. These men work tirelessly for the cause of Christ, and I appreciate all that they do. It was also my privilege working with Brother Ron Courter at the Springfield 4th of July meeting. I have a tremendous amount of respect for Ron, and I benefitted greatly from his wisdom. Special thanks to the Mission Hills Congregation for allowing us to be a part of such a great meeting, and for working so hard behind the scenes. We hope and pray that all were edified and encouraged. The work here in Bakersfield continues to move forward and we are at peace. The congregation is growing, with two more being added to the body of Christ last month. We give God all of the praise, and thank Him for His increase. We also enjoyed having Brother Cullen Smith hold our summer meeting. As expected Cullen did a fantastic job, and it was wonderful having his whole family in our home. If the Lord wills, my upcoming schedule will be as follows: Melba Idaho (July 31st-August 4th), and Fair Oaks CA (November 1-3). May God bless His faithful everywhere!

Terry Studdard, 538 The Wagon Rd., Piedmont, AL 36272, Email: tstuddard75@gmail.com. It has been a while since I have reported. We had a great meeting this spring with Joe Hisle March 10 - 17. We had good turn outs every night with visitors from all the area congregations and our community. We had a meeting at Claiborne Church of Christ in West Monroe, Louisiana June 9-16. We enjoyed good attendance from the home folks as expected but also from all the local congregations. We made our home with Floyd and Holly Harris and their hospitality was beyond compare. It was wonderful to have the opportunity to spend time with them. From there, we had the opportunity to visit Ada, Oklahoma and preach both services on June 30. This was the first time we had opportunity to worship there since the construction of their new building. It is beautiful! But for me the the best part was getting to meet so many of my brethren that I have heard Carl and Joe talk about for so long. From there, we drove on down to the 4th of July meeting at Sulphur, Oklahoma. The best I can remember, the meeting began with a crowd in excess of 150 which grew nightly to over 350 by the last night service. It was so good to see Brother Johnny Elmore able to attend one night. The meeting was co-sponsored by the Healdton, Oklahoma and Sulphur, Oklahoma congregations and directed by Glenn Ballard and his son Aubrey. I cannot say enough about the job this group pulled off to make this one of

the most enjoyable Gospel Meetings ever! Please note my new phone number: 256-913-7498.

Melvin Blalock, 214 Pearl St., Cleburne, TX, July 10, 2019. We have been kept busy in the Lord's work in the North Texas area. We continue to assist the congregations of Cleburne, Weatherford, Mineral Wells, and Duncanville. We write articles for several local papers in North Texas. In addition to this, we also publish the same articles on Facebook. We have begun boosting our circulation of these articles on Facebook to reach more people. It has resulted in quite a bit of response, and some very positive. Brother Ronny Wade was scheduled for our meeting at Weatherford in the month of June but was not able to hold the meeting because of health difficulties. We were all disappointed by this turn of events, but understand and appreciate Ronny's struggles. The Brethren at Weatherford surprised me by asking that I step in and hold the meeting. To say I was a little overwhelmed is an understatement. I made up my mind to give it my best shot. When you realize that I have preached around this area for over forty years, you can understand my concern. The brethren were very gracious and seemed pleased with my efforts. We enjoyed good crowds and good support from surrounding congregations. We have just returned from the Sulphur Fourth of July meeting where we enjoyed some great preaching and singing. The fellowship with so many good brethren and friends was truly enjoyable. We recently had the opportunity to attend Glen Osburn's meeting at McGregor, Texas. It was good to hear Glen preach the gospel as he is so capable of doing. We enjoyed visiting Brother Wayne McKamie, and the good brethren at McGregor. We are thankful to labor among the Lord's people, and humbly solicit your prayers.

Cullen Smith, 706 Terral Island Rd, Farmerville, LA. My home congregation at Strong, Arkansas had Glenn Osburn in January and he did an excellent job. In February, I had the privilege to work with my best friend Frank Brancato at 21st Street for their annual YPM. It was an honor to work with Elias Rodriguez for a gospel meeting at the Park congregation in Farmerville, LA. Brother Elias and Sister Rosita are a special team God uses mightily. Next, I was in Huntsville, Arkansas for special people who were the first people to encourage me to preach. In March I was in Washington, OK. Our hearts go out to the family of Ralph Stephens who passed away shortly after the meeting. Also, please pray earnestly for Bro. David Stephens. I had the honor to work with Bro. Jimmy Cating at the East Texas Camp meeting in Tyler. If you have an opportunity to take your

family, you should. We had good meetings in Moore Oklahoma where Bro. Brent Wilson is now working as well as Houston, TX, and McAlester, OK. These are two places I go every year and you cannot be treated better by the brethren there. I was in Galey, Oklahoma and they had excellent crowds and the members worked diligently to get visitors to worship. There was one baptism as a result of their effort and the power of the gospel. It was great to be with Frank Brancato again in Bakersfield, CA. He works tirelessly for the Church and there were new Christians there since the last time I was there. Next, I was at Oakdale, CA and they have just welcomed my dear friend and brother Jimmy Cating who just moved there to work. Oakdale has had recent growth as a result of diligent work on the member's part bringing their friends to the Lord. Next, I was in Muskogee, OK and this congregation has grown in size, strength, and love for one another year over year. I was just in Kansas City at Pleasant Hill and Neosho, MO and both places enjoyed visitors and the good support from sister congregations. I look forward to meetings in London, KY July 19-21, Temple GA July 24-28, Spfld, MO Oct 2-6, Ardmore, OK Oct 18-20, and Monticello, MS Nov.15-17. If you do not have a copy of Clint DeFrance's new book on the Lord's Supper you really need to secure your copy. Our prayers are with Ronny Wade and Johnny Elmore and every brother and sister with health challenges. We need all of you as long as possible. May God bless the brotherhood.

Darrell Crawford, P.O. Box 1150 Lynn Haven, FL 32444, July 2019, bugz1955@hotmail.com We are endeavoring to enlarge the borders of the Kingdom from here in Panama City, Florida. We are still in recovery mode from the hurricane last October. The entire area is still in bad shape and rebuilding. We still have lots of work to do before we are finished. The building looks nice, having recently been repainted on the inside. Several things will have to be replaced due to water damage and vandalism. Some of the pews and the pulpit etc. We realize things could have been much worse, but the Lord has continued to bless us. Since the hurricane, my wife and I were forced to relocate temporarily to Dothan, AL, about 75 miles from Panama City. We will likely be in Dothan till sometime in November. Until then, we continue to travel back and forth. We have about three people who have been coming from the community, we are studying with them, and believe we are making progress, one lady has expressed an interest in being baptized very soon. May we all stay with the old paths and may the Lord bless His church everywhere.

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WALKS THROUGH THE BIBLE...

THE VOICE OF THE DEVIL

By JERRY DICKINSON

“Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, ‘Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat of every tree of the garden?’ And the woman said to the serpent, ‘We may eat of the trees of the garden, but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat of it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.’ Then the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die.’” (Genesis 3:1-4)

“Has God indeed said?” That is the voice of the devil! It is remarkable and noteworthy that the devil uses a question to tempt Eve. The question is used to create doubt about the goodness and authority of God and His law. This tree is called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and it was in the middle of the Garden of Eden. It was a tree that bore fruit, and it was a sacramental symbol of God’s sovereignty, and thus God said, “You shall not eat of that tree.” That marked their limitation. It dictated God’s sovereignty over Adam and Eve. It was a test of their submission to the Creator who made them and who sustained them.

Enter the devil, “Has God really said?” In other words, surely God would not be so jealously petty to deny you fruit. He goes on to declare, “You shall not surely die, but God knows that by eating the fruit you shall be like God Himself!” Thus he questions God’s goodness and God’s motives. The only reason for the prohibition of the law is to keep you from being free and happy. This is where evil always begins, and that lies at the back of the objection to law; that law limits realization and if we can break away from law we shall be free. This is exactly where we are after all these thousands of years later. Lying at the back of all the devilishness in this darkened world is the voice of the devil.

It is interesting as we have noted that the first time in the Bible we hear the voice of the devil he uses a question to create doubt and disobedience. The second time in the Biblical record where we hear him speak he uses a question again. “Does Job fear God for nothing?” (Job 1:9) This time, apparently, and brazenly, the devil tries to create doubt in the mind of God about Job. God asked Satan, if in all his wandering on the earth, he had considered Job and the fact that he was upright and eschewed evil. Yes, answers Satan, but does Job fear God for no reason? Satan implies that the reason Job is righteous is because God has built a wall of blessing and protection around him so that no trouble or misfortune can get at him. Take down that wall and let Job suffer like other men and he will curse God.

There is no doubt, however, in God’s mind about Job and so Satan is allowed to smite Job with all kinds of problems, including eventually the loss of his wealth, his children, and his own health. Job is shaken down to the depth of his soul and cries out to God in his despair, but his faith in God is unshaken and unmoved. He declares his resolve out of his anguish, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in Him!” Even though confused and bewildered, Job retains his integrity. The devil retreats and we hear his voice no more until Jesus comes, and after His baptism he meets the devil in the wilderness where once again we hear the voice of the devil. Once again Satan uses his old tactic of creating doubt about God’s goodness and sovereignty in the temptation of Jesus. He uses the word “if” over and over. “If you are the Son of God,” he repeats trying to create doubt and disobedience even in Jesus. Jesus, of course, resisted and repelled the devil and the devil fled.

James gives us the key to resisting the voice of the devil. “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” (James 4:7) There are two components to defeating the devil. We must resist the devil it is true, but first we must submit ourselves to God. That means submitting to God’s law. The problem that Adam and Eve had was they could not resist the devil because they had not really submitted to God’s authority. The devil zeroed in on their non-submission, and the result was doubt and disobedience and the fall and all the subsequent sin and devilishness we are still dealing with.

Notice finally the “not in the devil’s tale”! God told Adam and Eve they would surely die if they ate the forbidden fruit. “You shall not surely die!” the devil declares defiantly. Satan is using the same devices and tactics he used to successfully tempt our parents in the garden and as Paul declares, “We are not ignorant of his devices.” Whenever we hear the voice of the devil coming to us through this evil culture in which we live, let us resist as our Savior did by declaring, “It is written.” If we submit ourselves to the Lord and resist the devil, he will surely flee. When the Lord returns the devil will be judged and cast into that place prepared for him and his angels. Then the voice of our adversary the devil will be heard no more. Lord, hasten that day!