

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. 2

GIVE ATTENDANCE TO READING

By WAYNE FUSSELL

Back in 1999, James Orten urged me to go with him and a group of Christians to Israel. I had never traveled outside of the United States and had no desire to do so. But James could be persuasive. I finally told him that I would go if I could “be right by his warm side all the way”. He agreed and even gave up his private room as the tour guide and roomed with me all the way. How glad I am that he persuaded me! That trip to the “Holy Land” will always be the highlight of my life. Places came to life in my mind that had only been words on the pages of God’s word. It had a tremendous impact on my life. I recommend it to everyone - to walk where Jesus walked.

On that trip, he and I had many discussions. One of our discussions had to do with a daily reading of God’s word. He said he began reading through the Bible during one of his long stays in Africa. It was evident to me that he had stayed with his discipline to read every day. Regardless of what we were doing on our trip, he made it a point to read every morning. At the time of his death, James had read through the Bible dozens of times. I asked him one day what effect his reading had on him. He replied that one effect was that he had become more conservative in his approach to Christianity. He saw in his reading that God expects us to obey His word, and no deviation from it is acceptable.

When Paul wrote to Timothy in 1 Timothy 4:13, he admonished the young evangelist, “Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine”. Many commentators think that this speaks of the public reading of the word of God in the church assemblies. This might be so. We know that the early church didn’t have access to the word of God as we do today. They often had to depend on hearing it read in the church assembly. I think it is a good practice today that portions of the Bible be

read in the assemblies of the church. However, I also agree with Barnes when he writes, “The word here used may refer either to public or to private reading”. Paul wanted Timothy to be a reader of God’s word, and he wants the same for us.

With the encouragement of James Orten, I began reading through the Bible, and I challenged the members of the congregation in Shreveport to do the same thing. And I am glad to say that many of them continue to do so to this day. I have made a practice of writing a question on each day’s reading and handing it out to them each month. To answer the question, they have to read. For almost two decades now, we have pursued this worthy task. At first, we read through the entire Bible in a year. A couple of times, we read through the New Testament several times in a year. One year, we read through the Bible chronologically. At present, we are reading through the Bible in two years, which encourages spending more time in studying and meditating on each portion we read. Whatever method you use, it is important to read daily.

John the revelator began his great book with the words, “Blessed is he who reads ... “ (Revelation 1 :3). He, of course, was talking about the great book he was writing, but we could say the same thing about any book of the Bible. There is a blessing in reading The Book! One blessing to James Orten was a greater appreciation for the authority of God and His word. A blessing to you and me is to learn something of the mind of God - His will for our lives. The Bible, as someone has said, is the mind of God in human language. As we read and re-read His word, we are amazed at what we learn each time. Truths “jump off the page” that we had overlooked the time before. The Bible is inexhaustible. You don’t master it, it masters you.

I am afraid that oftentimes we use the Bible like a textbook. We go to it with a concordance to find passages

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Editorial

RECEIVE HIM NOT

By RONNY WADE

NOTE: I had already written an editorial for this issue of Old Paths Advocate but I came across this article written by Ronny in May of 1963. It is excellent and still so relevant that I decided to substitute it for my editorial. Brethren, we must be different from the world if we expect to convert the world. If not, we will simply blend in with the denominations and not even be noticed. Please, read this with care. May God hasten the day when all preach in this manner. The next issue will be dedicated to the memory of Ronny Wade. Many of you have been invited to write a brief tribute and we hope you will do so. I also hope the family will see that we have a few good pictures for the special issue. May the Lord bless us all. —DLK

The basis for our study is 2 Jno., verse 10: “If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed:” Such is the divine admonition regarding the false teacher.

Presently, many are engaged in an effort to unite divided brethren. Their task is a great one, and no less commendable. However, the methods being used by many are not so commendable. Fellowship and its allied subjects are of current interest to many. The idea is being advanced that we should forget our differences, love one another, and, most of all have fellowship. We should, they say, forget our opinions and all get along in peace and harmony. Of course, anything that does not suit them is “your opinion,” and according to them should be forgotten; to me, however, it is not all that easy.

The Bible plan for unity is a simple one. Christ is head of the Church (Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22-23). We are all members of that Church (Rom. 12:4; 1 Cor. 12:12). Since Christ is head, He possesses supreme authority in matters of doctrine. Whatever He commands, we, His subjects, must believe and practice. The only way for the members of the body to be united is for them all to be united with the head (Christ). When we all unite with Christ and His doctrine, we will automatically be united with each other.

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QUERIST COLUMN

By CLINT DEFRANCE

Question 1 - If we consider these verses: Matt 26:53; Ps 91:11; Heb 1:14, can a Christian pray angels for their help?

Answer: The passages referenced by the querist read as follows -

“Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?” (Matthew 26.53)

“For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways” (Psalm 91.11).

“Are they [angels -CED] not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?” (Hebrews 1.14)

The above scriptures demonstrate Christ’s sovereignty over the angels, that God dispatched angels to serve Him, that angels were always available to serve Him during His ministry; the passage in Hebrews adds that God “sends forth” angels to minister on behalf of Christians even today. These passages, and many others besides, show that angels are God’s agents of providence. However, there is nothing in these passages, nor in any others, which indicate that it is appropriate, acceptable, or efficacious to pray to angels directly. Jesus taught us to pray to “Our Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 6.9). When we pray to God in Jesus name, we can be sure that as a father hears his children and does all within his power to provide for their needs, so our Heavenly Father will hear us and use all the might of His holy angels (according to His will and wisdom) for our good. James assured the persecuted Christians of his time that their cries had “reached the ears of the Lord of the Armies” (James 5.4). This expression referred to the legions of angels in heaven and implies that God would command them in some way for the good of the believers on earth. However, we do not detect this assistance in any sensory fashion. This is a good we receive by faith in the revelation of God’s word.

Question 2 - What is the meaning of the number 40 in the eyes of God?

Answer: That certain numbers have symbolic meaning in ancient writings (both Biblical and extra-Biblical) is virtually undisputed by scholars. However, the precise method for determining or identifying that meaning is the subject of virtually unending dispute. There are some numbers the meaning of which is generally agreed upon. There are seven days in a week, therefore seven carries a connotation of completeness and finality. Ten seems always to carry the idea of completeness, or a representation of a totality. Twelve seems always to be associated with government and authority-although some simply call it the number representing God’s chosen or elected people. The number forty appears many times in the Bible. The rains of the flood fell 40 days and 40 nights; Moses spent 40 days on the mountain receiving the words of the covenant from God; Israel wandered 40 years in the wilderness; Jonah declared, “Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown!”; Jesus fasted 40 days in the wilderness before being tempted by the Devil; He appeared for 40 days between His resurrection and ascension into heaven. All of these seem to have one common thread -they were periods of probation, testing, or trial. Therefore, it is reasonable to associate the number forty with that sort of concept when it appears in an evidently symbolic context. — OPA

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IN REALITY...*By DAVID GRIFFIN*

The expression “in reality” is so common we never stop to analyze its meaning. Vocabulary.com defines it this way: “used to imply that one would expect the fact to be the opposite of that *“stated”*” (italics mine, dg). It therefore underscores a contradiction between one thing and another. Collinsdictionary.com says, “you can use ‘in reality’ to introduce a statement about the *real nature* of something, when it contrasts with something incorrect that has just been described” (italics mine, dg). Here’s an example: “People who seem standoffish are in reality often simply nervous.” In other words, we might think standoffish people are “stuck-up” or conceited. In reality, some people are just uncomfortable around others—not conceited at all they’re just nervous. Here’s another. “He pretends to be busy, but in reality he has very little to do.” This person seems to be something he is not, and our expression underscores the contradiction between the image he portrays and the reality behind the image.

I notice some members of the church use the NIV Study Bible; I see it from time to time in the pews where they sit. This study Bible is primarily the work of evangelical scholars. It contains, of course, the New International Version translation of both the Old and New Testaments, along with several informative maps, charts, and illustrations. But its primary feature is the explanatory notes (or commentary) that appears at the bottom of each page throughout. This commentary is necessarily brief, is generally balanced, and provides a great deal of useful, general information. However, like any other such work, it has its flaws. I caution any member of the church who uses the NIV Study Bible or any other commentary, for that matter, to use it with some reserve. Its statements about history, geography, timelines, etc. are generally sound and quite helpful, but when dealing with doctrine, the notes should not be accepted uncritically.

A case in point is I Peter 3:21. The NIV text reads thus: “... and this water [of Noah’s flood] symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God” (brackets mine, dg).

The commentary at the bottom of the page attempts to deal with the words “now saves you also.” Note the

expression “in reality.”

“now saves you also. In reality, believers are saved by what baptism symbolizes—Christ’s death and resurrection. The symbol and the reality are so closely related that the symbol is sometimes used to refer to the reality.”

On reading these comments the first time, I found the words “in reality” more than a little jarring. Like most people, I had used the expression all of my life in the sense described above—“to introduce a statement about the real nature of something, when it contrasts with something incorrect that has just been described.” In this case, what has just been described is that “baptism now saves you” (per the apostle). The commentator then states what he perceives to be “the real nature” of the case—“In reality, believers are saved by what baptism symbolizes—Christ’s death and resurrection.”

The commentator, like so many of the evangelicals, treats baptism and Christ’s redemptive work as mutually exclusive when it comes to salvation. In other words, if you are saved by the death and resurrection of Christ then it cannot be true that, at the same time, you are saved by baptism. “In reality,” Peter cannot mean what he says. And if we’re saved by baptism, says the evangelical, then Christ’s redemptive work is made of no effect, and thus the sinner may boast in his or her salvation.

Ironically, the NIV translation repeats the concept that “baptism now saves you” in a separate sentence at the end of the verse: “It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” (The Study Bible commentary does not reference this sentence.) In this sentence “it” refers to baptism in the previous sentence. The preposition “by,” in the phrase “by the resurrection of Jesus Christ,” indicates that the resurrection is the grand fact that lends baptism its efficacy in salvation. Hence, the two (baptism and Christ’s death and resurrection) are inextricably connected, despite the efforts of many commentators to sever the two. It behooves those who want to honor God to remember the great principle expressed elsewhere in the Bible under another topic—“what God has joined together, let not man separate”!

However, the comments on I Peter 3:21 persist in the effort to separate what inspiration has joined together, as follows. I repeat: “The symbol [baptism] and the reality [Christ’s death and resurrection] are so closely related that the symbol is sometimes used to refer to the reality”

(brackets mine, dg). By stressing “symbol vs reality” (a construct of his own creation), the commentator aims to diminish the significance of baptism, while seeming to honor baptism as a viable Bible topic. He is grappling with the dilemma of attempting to divorce two things the scriptures have clearly married. In doing so, he inexplicably uses the word “sometimes.” I repeat again: “The symbol [baptism] is sometimes used to refer to the reality [Christ’s death and resurrection].” I ask: “Sometimes”? From where does this “sometimes” originate? Or where does baptism after the Great Commission not refer to the death and resurrection of Christ? By what sophisticated exegesis of the baptism passages does one find it to refer to the death and resurrection only “sometimes”? It may well be true that in evangelical parlance baptism “sometimes” refers to the death and resurrection of Christ, but in New Testament usage, never may the two be separated!

The New Testament throughout teaches that sinners obey the gospel (i.e. become saved from sin) by complying with the following God-ordained conditions. They must have faith in Christ, which includes the idea of “trust” (John 8:24), repent of past sins (Lk 13:5; Acts 17:30), confess faith in Christ (Rom. 10: 10), and be immersed in water for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16; Gal 3:27, etc.). Because evangelicals do not believe the New Testament’s doctrine on baptism, they are forced to the kind of linguistic and logical gymnastics exhibited in the NIV Study Bible commentary. Peter’s plain statement, in their view, “baptism now saves you” simply cannot mean what it says. Hence, “the reality” must be something else!

I realize some readers may consider my analysis “nit-picky” or even a little harsh. However, when an immensely popular work like the NIV Study Bible, quotes scripture followed by comments that begin with the words, “in reality,” I think at the very least they deserve some careful critique. These comments have the not-so-subtle effect of dismissing the clear import of Peter’s statement in the minds of millions of readers. In meaning, these comments essentially change one letter in the inspired statement. The letter “w” in “now” becomes the letter “t” in “not”! Instead of, “baptism... now saves you” the meaning becomes, “in reality, baptism does not save you; rather, it is the death and resurrection of Christ that saves you.” This, of course, is stating it more bluntly than the commentator does, but it is clearly the commentator’s meaning! And it is clearly the meaning that millions of readers will take from it. Published comments that lead to such a conclusion

should be wholly rejected and exposed as false.

“Test all things; hold fast what is good”-1 Thessalonians 5:21.

MECHANICAL MUSIC AND CHOIRS

By MELVIN BLALOCK

In previous articles which we have published in area newspapers, we have written concerning the differences between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. With Jesus’ death on the cross the Old Covenant came to an end and He ushered in His New Covenant. We are told in the Epistle to the Hebrews that He is the mediator of a better covenant, Heb. 8:6, and that the Old Covenant has been made obsolete and is ready to vanish away, Heb. 8:13. Hence, we do not look to the Old Covenant for our authority in religious practices and worship today. We do not offer animal sacrifices, or burn incense as was typical of the previous covenant. We do not keep specified feast days, such as the Passover, which was a significant observance for the children of Israel. Today, we do not keep the Sabbath as a day of rest, which was required under the previous covenant. The Sabbath, and other ordinances of the law were nailed to the cross, Col. 2:14. God’s people, who are under the new covenant, gather for worship on the Lord’s Day, to break bread, i.e. observe the Lord’s Supper, Acts 20:7. There are many obvious differences between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant, and that even extends to the difference in music. It is evident that both mechanical instruments and choirs were utilized under the previous covenant. This is shown by the following scripture: “Then David spoke to the leaders of the Levites to appoint their brethren to be the singers accompanied by instruments of music, stringed instruments, harps, and cymbals, by raising the voice with resounding joy,” 1 Chron. 15:16-17. They were to select their choir from among the Levites, and in the following verses, the individuals are named who would make up the choir, 1 Chron. 15:17-21. If we looked to the Old Covenant for our authority in religious practices, what more would we need? We, however do not live under that covenant, and have no more authority for choirs and mechanical instruments than the practice of burning incense. The New Covenant is as silent as a tomb about both. There are those scriptures found in our New Testaments that clearly forbid both. We read in the Epistle to the Ephesians, “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody

in your heart to the Lord,” Eph. 5:19. Instruments do not speak. Worshipers speak when they sing. The command is to sing and not play. The melody is to be made in the heart and not on a mechanical instrument. The other prominent New Testament passage is Col. 3:16, where the Apostle Paul writes, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.” In the New Testament worship we cannot employ a choir to do the singing for us, when we are plainly commanded, “Teaching and admonishing one another in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.” Our singing in Christian worship is clearly congregational in nature. It is unaccompanied by a mechanical instrument. If this command included an instrument, it would seemingly be necessary for everyone to play an instrument to carry out the command. In conclusion, we would like to notice some quotes from times past by noted denominational preachers. The following is a quote from Presbyterian, John Calvin in his commentary of the book of Psalms, Vol. 1, p. 539: “Musical instruments in celebrating the praises of God would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting of lamps, and the restoration of the other shadows of the law. The Papist, therefore, have foolishly borrowed this, as well as many other things from the Jews.....” Adam Clarke in his Commentary on Amos 6:5 wrote, “Music, as a science, I esteem and admire: but instruments of music in the house of God I abominate and abhor. This is the abuse of music; and here I register my protest against all such corruptions in the worship of the Author of Christianity.” Furthermore Clarke wrote, “.....John Wesley, who was a lover of music, and an elegant poet, when asked his opinion of instruments of music being introduced into the chapels of the Methodists said, in his terse and powerful manner, ‘I have no objection to instruments of music in our chapels, provided they are neither HEARD nor SEEN.’ I say the same, though I think the expense of purchase had better be spared.” When one searches the New Testament, as well as church history it becomes obvious that music of the first century church was purely a capella. The definition of a capella is particularly interesting. I am quoting from Webster’s New World College Diet., Fourth Ed., p. 8: “Music sung without instrumental accompaniment [Ital., in chapel style]” The word chapel is a reference to the sanctuary, or place for worship. This indicates by definition that original church music was without musical instruments. The use of choirs, as well as mechanical instruments of music are foreign to New Testament worship.

GIVE ATTENDANCE....continued from page one

on various subjects. And that’s okay, but we must not “cherry pick” truths, as one fellow remarked to me recently. We must read the Bible to get “the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth”. Paul declared that he had preached the “whole counsel of God” to the people of his day (Acts 20:27). When we read through the Bible we don’t miss any truth God wants us to know. We get each truth in its proper context. (So much error today is due to folks taking scriptures out of context. For instance, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved...” (Acts 16:31), taken out of context, promotes the doctrine of salvation by faith only. The context shows that obedience was necessary.) When we read through the Bible on a daily basis, we get the “big picture”.

And so, the advice of this old preacher is that you read through the Bible. Read it every day. Read it slowly, meditatively, prayerfully. Read it looking for God to speak to you through His word. One lady said that she would read a portion of God’s word each day and then try to put into practice what she had read. What a great attitude! A dear friend of mine, who passed away this year, would arise every morning at 4:00 o’clock to read and answer the questions. He was so taken with reading the Bible that he constantly talked about it and urged others to read. He often would ask other members of the church, “Have you answered your questions yet?” He motivated many to continue reading.

Some commentators make a point of saying that Paul simply said, “Give attention to reading.” We know he was especially interested in Timothy reading the word of God. It is also a good thing to read such things as the commentaries our brethren have written, books of sermons, and other good godly literature by faithful Christians. When my wife and I first married, she complained to Lynwood Smith that I kept my “nose in a book” all the time. He quickly said, “Leave him alone, that’s how he gets material to preach.” I am always glad to see brethren subscribe to gospel papers like the Old Paths Advocate and Christian’s Expositor. It pleases me to visit homes and see books by our brethren displayed in bookcases and open on coffee tables. It lets me know that folks are reading the right kind of literature. They are “giving attention to reading” the right things.

Years ago, a fellow called me from the “Hosanna”

organization. He asked me to challenge our congregation with a sermon entitled “Faith Comes By Hearing”. I did what he asked and suggested folks buy tapes of the New Testament sold by his company at a very reasonable price. Fifty-one sets were ordered. I told the folks that if they would listen to the reading of the New Testament 36 minutes a day they would listen to the entire New Testament in a month. The folks did it, and some thanked me for helping them occupy their time profitably as they made their commute to work each day. Others were just pleased that they could fill their minds with God’s word in such a convenient way. Today, we have even more convenient ways to listen to and read the Bible.

When I was a teenager, New Testaments were distributed to every student in my school. (Sadly, they won’t allow that today.) On the fly leaf of that Testament were written these profound words: “The Bible contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers. Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true, and its decisions are immutable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you, food to support you, and comfort to cheer you. It is the traveler’s map, the pilgrim’s staff, the pilot’s compass, the soldier’s sword and the Christian’s charter. Here too, Heaven is opened and the gates of Hell disclosed. Christ is its grand subject, our good its design, and the glory of God its end. It should fill the memory, rule the heart and guide the feet. Read it slowly, frequently and prayerfully. It is a mine of wealth, a paradise of glory, and a river of pleasure. It is given you in life, will be opened at the judgment, and be remembered forever. It involves the highest responsibility, rewards the greatest labor, and will condemn all who trifle with its sacred contents.” How true are those words! Why would anyone not be eager to read the greatest book ever written every day? “Blessed is he who reads...” — Wfusselll@comcast.net

RECEIVE HIM NOT...continued from page two

But the question now arises: “What happens to one who goes beyond the doctrine of Christ, or teaches things contrary to the truth which tend to strife and division?” Many will answer, “We are all brothers regardless of what we teach and practice, so do not get alarmed.” Others say, “We must be spiritually minded about this,

and be careful lest we hurt someone’s feelings. But now we ask, “What does the Bible say?” There are three facts that are evident from 2 Jno. 10; they are: 1. Any teacher or preacher who comes into the presence of true disciples with a foreign doctrine is to be 2. Rejected, 3. And greetings withheld.

Before anyone “jumps the gun,” I am well aware that contextually the doctrine under consideration is “that Jesus is come in the flesh,” and I am also aware that the statement “doctrine of Christ” includes much more than this one principle of it. Most commentators will bear me out when I say that a person who taught any false doctrine (i.e., something not a part of the doctrine of Christ) was to be reprovved and rejected.

Notice, brethren, the Bible says, “receive him not.” Someone is to be refused. Many would have you believe today that no one is to be refused, regardless of what he teaches or believes. As long as he is a member of the Body of Christ (and many are not even this strict), they say he should be received and heard. But, the Word of God is to be guarded, and those who teach it watched. Those with local congregational authority are responsible for seeing that the truth is expounded from the pulpit. Anyone who comes by or in and teaches a false doctrine is to be warned, and unless he repents, rejected. If you want trouble, brethren, invite the digressives in. Have fellowship with them. Let me warn you; you are playing with fire. When the enemy has sowed his seed, and the church is divided, then you will see the fruits of such liberalism.

Brethren, I want unity as much as any man alive. I sincerely wish there was not one division in the Church. However, I am not willing to go beyond that which is written in order to achieve a false unity. I have never believed that brethren had to agree one hundred per cent on every subject in order to get along. Sure, there are differences of opinion along many lines, but this does not mean we should divide or fall out with each other. However, when divine principles are involved coupled with our obedience to them, we cannot cast them aside and say, “It makes no difference,” because it does.

In a feeble effort to justify “the fellowship-every-thing-everybody craze” many go to the church at Corinth as an example. If I were looking for such an example, I certainly, would not go there, for if ever a congregation received divine disapproval this one did. The division that existed there was condemned. They were advised

to withdraw from the fornicator. The false doctrine of the resurrection was refuted by Paul. You can be sure that if false teaching regarding any subject mentioned by Paul continued, something would have been done. "What?" you ask. Read 2 Jno. verse 10. Remember, too, brethren, this same Paul advised in Rom. 16:17: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them." Somebody is to be marked and avoided, and Paul tells who.

This statement caught my eye recently, "But the most sickening thing of all is to hear some fanatical "hobby-rider" blaring out over the ether about the factional warfare in the church, while pretending to be pleading for the unity of all Christians." I suppose, according to this writer, I would be a "hobby rider" because I oppose cups in the communion and classes in the teaching. Furthermore, because I refuse to drop my "hobby," he says that I foster the "party spirit." The strange thing to me is that when he contends for his belief, he is neither a "hobby rider" nor guilty of the "party spirit." This business of fellowship with many is a one-way street and they who walk the devious way expect the conscientious to make all the concessions. Beware!

TRANSFERRED IN A FIGURE

By IRVIN BARNES

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

The purpose of this short article is to explain what is meant by the statement these things I have transferred in a figure to myself and to Appollos. The explanation of the above verse cannot be understood without going all the way back to 1 Cor. 1:10-16.

"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you; my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul;

and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? Or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gains; Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other."

Recently, when one of our services of the congregation was dismissed, the entire body of Christians broke forth in conversation, folks greeting one another, visiting and talking. Smiles and happiness was the order of the day. I remarked to one of the sisters, "We are quite the noisy bunch aren't we?" She replied, "Yes, and I love it! I think its wonderful!"

I have held meetings in congregations where such was not the case. Perhaps the first night of the meeting, when services were dismissed, there was little visiting. The assembly would break up into an uncomfortable atmosphere. Some of the members would leave abruptly. Huddles would form, some in the foyer, some outside on the parking area. It was easy to see that the congregation was not at peace!

The congregation at Corinth was in a frightening and pitiful state of confusion and division. They, along with any other congregation, that finds itself in such a fix is in grave danger in various ways. First, it is sinful and wrong for such an atmosphere to exist. Paul said as much, when he commanded them to "speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you."

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

Gal. 5:15 says, "But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another."

Not only did the church at Corinth face the wrath of God against them because they violated the command to be one, but they also faced the possibility of the church becoming non-existent as a result of them biting and devouring one another. Without repentance, the church faced an awful and tragic downfall.

What was the problem that Paul was here addressing? At first reading it would seem that the church was divided into factions with each faction lining up with

one particular person against another faction that was following a different leader. It would seem that some were following Paul, others Cephas, and some were claiming Christ as their leader. This, however, was not the problem. The factions were actually choosing up sides behind local members or leaders. Those in one group were “puffed up for one against another.” 1 Cor.4:6.

The reason we know this to be true is because of Paul’s statement, “These things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and Appollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another,” 1 Cor 4:6. Paul could have named the leaders of the factions at Corinth. However, to keep matters from getting even worse, in his illustration he transferred the matter to himself and Appollos.

It is not uncommon for various age groups, and those with other things in common to seek out each other’s company. Paul said as much in verse 7, when he asked, “For who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive?” Problems arise when one of these groups speaks against another group with of an air of superiority and competition. Let every member of the Lord’s church realize that “taking up for one, against another,” is sinful and can lead a congregation into a state of condemnation and spiritual ruin. irvinbarns@aol.com

Field Reports

Don L. King, 1147 Sherry Way, Livermore, CA 94550, old_paths@juno.com, January 7. Since last report it has been our privilege to preach twice at each of the following: Livermore, CA; Bakersfield, CA; and Stockton, CA. We look forward to our trip to the Philippines with Frank Brancato January 15 through February 5. We pray for a successful trip. Our hearts are very sad at the passing of our old friend and yoke-fellow Ronny Wade. Though I was expecting it, and tried to be prepared, it came as a very sad shock. Ronny and I have worked together on the Old Paths Advocate for nearly 44 years and his passing leaves a huge vacancy in my heart and the paper that can perhaps never be filled. In all those years, we never spoke a harsh word to each other. He loved the paper and preaching, as do I, and usually published a couple of issues or more when I was

overseas. He never once complained about hard work and sometimes got out of a sick bed, if necessary, to get the job done on time. What a loss we have suffered! May the Lord be with Alfreda and family at this sad time. The next issue after this one will be dedicated to Ronny’s memory. Brethren who would like to write a tribute to him next month are invited to do so. We will try to have a few pictures also and ask the family to send those to us, please. We suggest about two paragraphs or so. Let’s keep it brief in order to allow as many as possible to participate. Please, have your writing to me no later than February 12 so the copy can be sent to the printer by the 15th. Don’t forget to renew your subscription on time. Lord bless us all and may we leave no stone unturned in the Master’s work for 2020.

Paul O. Nichols, 14217 Rosehill, Overland Park, KS 66221, pon.wjn.ks@juno.com, January 8. By the providence of the Lord we have lived through another year, and are on the threshold of a new one, the year 2020. It is amazing to think that the Lord has allowed the world to continue for so long, and that we still have time to look forward to things we can do for the Cause of Christ. Things don’t look as bright for the church as they did a few years ago. There are members who have vacillated, and disappointed us by showing spiritual weakness which we did not recognize before. The doctrine of Christ needs to be emphasized. “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son” (2 John 2:9). The word of God does not change with the passing of time, and the doctrine of Christ is the very foundation of Truth that saves. It is sad that we are losing our older preachers who have fought for the Truth of the Lord all of their adult lives. Ronny Wade just passed away this week, and it was just a few days ago we had to bid farewell to Johnny Elmore, and just before that it was Barney Owens, and not long ago it was Benny Cryer. Remember, Jesus said, “I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work” (John 9:4). Brethren, let us do what we can for the Cause of Christ now while we still have time. May the Lord bless all of our righteous efforts where ever we are.

Carl M. Johnson, 1400 Northcrest Dr., Ada, OK 74820, carlmj@cableone.net, Jan. 11, 2020. Phyllis and I just attended Ronny Wade’s funeral in Springfield, MO. In spite of the harsh weather of winter storm Isaiah the funeral chapel was packed. Folks from every quadrant

of the country battled torrential rain, flash flooding, and tornado warnings on Friday, and freezing rain and heavy snow on Saturday morning, the morning of the funeral. Kevin Presley and Randy Cantrell did an excellent job officiating the service. The loving tributes Kevin read from Ronny's children and grandchildren were a highlight of the service. They provided rare insight into Ronny's character and personality that many folks did not know. God bless them all. Since my last report we attended the Oklahoma New Year's Meeting. We were blessed by the preaching, singing, and fellowship of the thousand people who attended. I preached at home on Wednesday night when we got home from the meeting and had the honor of baptizing a young man and assisting another to be restored. What a wonderful way to begin the New Year! May God bless us all in 2020.

Terry L. Studdard, 538 The Wagon Road, Piedmont, Alabama 36272, (256) 913-7498, email: tstuddard75@gmail.com. I hope this finds everyone safe and well in the new year. It won't be long until spring and, Lord Willing, things will pick up. We had a wonderful time at the Alabama New Year's Meeting again this year! We are in debt to the Dothan congregation and the other local congregations who work so hard to make this gathering of the Lord's people so special! Clint and Kevin did remarkable jobs in keeping the meeting organized and moving at a crisp pace. The singing was beautiful and expertly led. The preaching was exceptional and the theme, "From Sheep to Shepherds" was fully covered. The reunion with cherished brothers and sisters in Christ from far and wide was its own kind of special blessing that will only be surpassed when we all meet together on grander shores and in fairer climes. If you are not providentially hindered and miss one of the big New Year's Meetings held across the country, you have certainly shortchanged yourself of a great blessing. While we were there, news arrived from home that our oldest granddaughter, Emma Cooper [(16) (Amanda's daughter)] had been rushed by ambulance to the hospital with blood clots in both legs and lungs. Clint directed the assembly in a special prayer for her. We learned the next day that the same had taken place at the Oklahoma New Year's Meeting. Our family thanks everyone involved and we are glad to report that she is now back at home and on the road to recovery. God answers prayers! We left for Michigan January 3 to assist Angie's long time friend with a medical issue. While here, we had the wonderful opportunity to spend the first Lord's Day of 2020 with the Waterford congregation. I was honored to be asked to speak both

services. It is such a privilege to stand before a group that pays such careful attention to what is said. It was good to see Ron and Barbara Courter again and we were able to spend lunch and the time between services with Aaron and Kathy Willis. All in all, it was a great day. This morning, we were deeply saddened to learn of Ronny Wade's passing during the night. His life of service to The Church is most impressive. He leaves a void among God's people that will be hard to fill. Our thoughts and prayers are with Alfreda and the family at this time. May The Lord bless you and keep you and make His face to shine upon you in the days that lie ahead.

Wayne Fussell, 6126 Land O' Trees, Shreveport, LA wfussell@comcast.net. The church in Shreveport, LA is doing well. We continue to strive to stay with God's word in all we do. I look forward to the New Year with optimism. It will be my privilege to preach for the congregation in Temple, GA March 5-8. My next meeting will be at Flintville, TN May 21-24. I thank the Lord I am still able to preach His word. I am saddened today by hearing of the death of my good friend Ronny Wade. Ronny and I began preaching at the same time. I have many precious memories. This is a great loss to our brotherhood. May God bless you all.

P. Duane Permenter, 94-371 Ikepono St, Waipahu, HI 96797, Jan 6. I got home from Zambia about three weeks ago and all is going well in that place. I was able to visit several brethren from different places and preached around as well. We saw one person be baptized into the name of Jesus Christ. Mirriam Chulu and her son came home with me and will be starting school on Jan 13. Mirriam is the oldest child we raised while living in Zambia. The church in Waipahu continues well. I am studying twice weekly with Brother Tangke and I also am training the three men who help to lead the church. Laurie told me that all of them did super while I was gone. It seems like they improve every month and we give all glory to God. We still meet with 23 every Sunday morning and evening. The work with the Chuukese is still very promising. We ask you to pray for us in this effort. Emmanuel and Mirriam have fit right in with the church. We send out greetings to all! God bless the faithful.

Billy D. Dickinson, 2850 N. Oakland, Springfield, MO 65803, bddickinson@juno.com, Jan. 7. As I write this field report, my heart is heavy with the news that our dear brother, Ronny Wade, passed away early this

morning. Not only was he a great preacher among us, but he was also a close, personal friend. One of the benefits of living in the Springfield area has been the opportunity for Judy and I to spend some quality time with Ronny and Alfreda over the past 22 years. We shall miss him, but his godly influence, writings, debates and evangelistic efforts will continue to aid and encourage us in the years ahead! I ended the old year by making a trip to Texas, staying with my sister, Marilyn Bowen, for a couple of days in Red Oak. I was glad to spend some time with her and one day we visited our parents' recent grave site together. Also, while in the area I visited with Melvin Blalock and Bob Johnson, two more close friends of mine, and I preached for the congregation at Weatherford that Wednesday night. Many thanks to Melvin for helping to set up the appointment and driving me to Weatherford! My trip took me next to Houston, staying with my sister, Carolyn Keele, and I participated in the "homecoming meeting" hosted by the Fairbanks congregation. What a wonderful opportunity this was to go home, renew old acquaintances and be with brethren who encouraged me when I first started preaching. I am indebted to Randy Ballard (the preacher who labors with them) and the whole congregation for their hospitality and all they did to make this a memorable experience. As 2020 unfolds, I am looking forward to my monthly appointments of preaching at Bolivar (3rd Wednesday night) and Montreal (4th Wednesday night), as well as working with the Jamesville congregation. When my meeting schedule finally kicks in, I will list them in a later report. May the Lord bless His kingdom everywhere in the upcoming year!

Rick Martin, teachermartin@gmail.com. We are now in the year 2020 and it is our prayer that the church and each of us will grow spiritually. The year 2019 was not kind to the church, with the passing of Barney Owens and Johnny Elmore; then this morning comes the sad news of the death of Ronny Wade. These were great men of God who stood in the gap and each of us as men should step up and work to fill their place. The congregation here at Marietta continues to sponsor the "Let the Bible Speak" TV program with Kevin Presley. We have several who are enrolled in the correspondence course. We recently lost one of our teachers, Jeff Broxson moved to North Carolina, because of work. We will miss him, but he has promised he will be a frequent visitor. Lord willing, I will be in Grapevine, TX February 15-19. If you are in the area, please come and visit with us. We solicit your prayers in this effort. We recently attended the Alabama New Year's Meeting.

This is always a highlight of our year. We appreciate the work of the Dothan congregation, Clint DeFrance, and Kevin Presley in this effort. Pray for the church everywhere.

Keith Thomson, 55 King Jarrah Cl., Jarrahdale W.A. 6124, Australia, +61-497-070-353. Dear brethren, as the year is drawing to a close I would like to take this opportunity to thank all who have helped me in my work both here in Australia and also in Tanzania. The Lord has been so very good to us over the last 12 months. He has kept us healthy and happy. He has given us all the things we need to live in this world, but most important of all He has shared with us all His wonderful spiritual blessings. The work in Armadale continues on very well. The brethren are strong, faithful and at peace with one another. The focus of the congregation here is very much on evangelism. In the last 12 months we have had 2 very good gospel meetings, bringing out first Clint DeFrance in April and then we brought out Nathan Battey and his wife Savannah. We were very impressed with the work that these young preachers did while they were with us - all were greatly edified by their teaching, both from the pulpit and in home situations. We had visitors come and we are still following up with them. Not only is the focus of the Armadale church on local evangelism, but we have also been working in a community about 2 hours drive to the southeast. We were invited to go and study with people down there in April when Clint was with us. Since then we have had one baptism and many studies. All of the Armadale leaders have been down there and met with a lot of people and I travel down each Tuesday to conduct home visits and studies and then to hold a larger study at the community centre in the afternoon. Most of the people we are working with are from the Aboriginal community and their interest is very encouraging. The Armadale church is also involved in the work in Tanzania. I traveled there 2 times in the last 12 months and on my last visit I traveled with both Troy Robinson, a faithful member from the Armadale congregation. This focus on evangelism is evident in the attitude of the congregation. People are thinking about what they can do for the cause of Christ. Through our joint efforts they are seeing real progress which not only encourages them to do more, it builds them up in their sacred faith. I look forward to the next 12 months continuing in the Lord's service. I feel very good about the direction that the Lord's work in Australia is going. Thank you once again for helping through your financial support, your prayers and your words of encouragement.

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WALKS THROUGH THE BIBLE...

TWELVE WELLS AND SEVENTY PALM TREES

By JERRY DICKINSON

“So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea; then they went out into the Wilderness of Shur. And they went three days into the wilderness and found no water. Now when they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they were bitter. Therefore the name of it was called Marah. And the people complained against Moses saying, ‘What shall we drink?’ So he cried out to the Lord, and the Lord showed him a tree. When he cast it into the waters, the waters were made sweet. There He made a statute and an ordinance for them, and there He tested them, and said, ‘If you diligently heed the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the Lord who heals you.’ Then they came to Elim, where there were twelve wells of water and seventy palm trees; so they camped there by the waters.” (Exodus 15:22-27)

My New Year wish for all who read this column is that you are able to camp this year by the 12 wells of water and 70 palm trees! This wonderful incident in Exodus is a picture of life. The children of Israel have just walked through the Red Sea on dry ground, and from the other side they watched the Egyptians drown as they tried to follow. The Lord had gloriously saved them and brought them out of bondage. Now they stand on the other side of the Sea and rejoice in ultimate freedom. They even break out in song of praise and thanksgiving to the Lord.

“I will sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously!
The horse and its rider He has thrown into the Sea!
The Lord is my strength and song, And He has become my salvation;
He is my God, and I will praise Him; He is my father’s God and I will praise Him.

It appears to the Israelites no doubt that all their troubles are over and from now on there will be smooth sailing and perfect happiness. But, alas, they leave the Red Sea and Egypt behind and march into the wilderness. What they have forgotten, or never really quite understood, is that to get ultimately to the Land of Canaan they have to walk through a perilous and formidable wilderness with many challenges and obstacles. They were not ready for the wilderness journey. They had just sung about the greatness and power of the Lord but how their attitude changed in three short days!

They reach a place called Marah (bitter) and they quickly discover that the reason for the name Marah is the waters are bitter -so bitter they cannot drink. How quickly singing turns into complaining! “What are we to drink?” Which is as much as if to say, “Where is the Lord who brought us to this place? Has he abandoned us already?” In response, the Lord shows Moses a tree and when Moses casts it into the water the water becomes sweet and they are all able to drink. The Bible says God tested them there. The test was to see if they would remain faithful and keep his commandments regardless of circumstances. We must remain faithful to the Lord in good times and challenging times. If we do He will save and bless. After this test, they move on and finally reach a place called Elim where there were 12 wells of sweet water and 70 palm trees for refreshing shade and there they set up camp and stayed awhile before resuming their journey toward Canaan.

What a picture this is of our journey through this life! We confess our faith in Jesus and are baptized, having our sins washed away and rising to walk a new life in our Lord. It appears that all our troubles are over and it is smooth sailing from this point on as we follow Jesus and start our journey toward our ultimate goal - Heaven. But, as we all know from experience, we are soon (very soon) confronted with challenges, problems, and temptations on our trek. We often are as discouraged as the children of Israel and cry out, “Where is the Lord who saved and redeemed me? Has He abandoned me so soon?” He is still there, of course, as he was for Israel, and He still makes the bitter waters sweet. It is interesting and significant that God told Moses to cast a tree into the waters to make them sweet. I do not know what kind of a tree that was, but surely that tree was a foreshadowing of the tree upon which our Savior died. Jesus bore the curse for us when he was hung upon a tree and His death forever makes bitter waters sweet.

Many, if not all of us, have had to drink bitter water in the year 2019. But, we are now entering a new year! Let us remind ourselves that this world is not our final destination. We are on a journey to the Heavenly Canaan and there are many stops along the way where the water is bitter. Jesus, however, can make even the bitterest of problems on our journey sweet because of what he accomplished on the cross and with His help we can make it through. The final and ultimate destination for us is Heaven! Thankfully, however, as we make our trek toward our goal there are not only times of bitterness but also times of refreshment and joyous peace. Every now and then we get to camp in Elim, where the water is sweet and the shade trees protects us from the heat. My wish for you, dear brethren, is that you get to camp this year in the place where there are 12 wells and 70 palm trees!