

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).

VOL. LXXXIX

LEBANON, MISSOURI • MAY, 2017

NO. 5

THE CHURCH AT SMYRNA

By *BILLY D. DICKINSON*

“And unto the angel of the church in Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead, and is alive; I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are of the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.” (Rev 2:8-11)

The church in Smyrna was the persecuted church. Indeed, it was a dangerous thing to be a Christian in ancient Smyrna! A city located about 40 miles north of Ephesus and originally founded by Alexander the Great, it has been called “the seat of the Imperial Cult.” While Damascus had her “street called Straight” (Acts 9: 11), Smyrna had her “Golden Street”-- a thoroughfare lined with infamous temples to Apollo, Aphrodite and Zeus. “The Glory of Asia” was noted for its scenic beauty, and while it was a great commercial metropolis that provided many of its inhabitants with affluence, the Lord’s church in that city was facing great opposition.

A LETTER FROM THE LORD

The purpose of the letter was to comfort their troubled minds and to exhort them to remain faithful. Notice how Christ identifies Himself “These things saith the first and last, which was dead, and is alive.” Isa. 44:6 has Jehovah declaring, “I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God.” By using the same language, Christ is affirming that He is God and is referring to His eternal existence. “In the beginning was the Word,” John writes in the prologue of his Gospel, “and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things

were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made.” (John 1:1-3) It is with impressive credentials, and the fact of His resurrection, that Jesus encourages the church at Smyrna. Although they are suffering persecution, it is through their faith in Him, the one who conquered death itself, that they can be victorious. Oh, how they needed this letter from the Lord!

THE LORD KNOWS

Christ acknowledges that He is aware of their afflictions: “I know thy works, and tribulation “ (verse 9). “Tribulation” is a word indicative of pressure-- a burden or pressing down. It must have been a source of great strength to those brethren to realize that the Lord knew of their woeful circumstances! Surely this proves the truthfulness of Peter’s statement in 2 Pet. 2:9, a statement that contains a blessed promise to every Christian: “The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.”

When we today are weighed down with burdens and trials, let us take comfort in the fact that the Lord is watching over us with infinite awareness. The following hymn displays how we should rejoice in serving a Savior who possesses an omniscience that enables Him to hear our faintest cries: “He knows the bitter weary way, the endless strivings day by day, the souls that weep, the souls that pray, He knows, He knows. He knows how hard the fight has been, the clouds that come our lives between, the wounds the world has never seen, He knows, He knows. He knows when faint and worn we sink, how deep the pain, how near the brink, of dark despair, we pause and shrink, He knows, He knows. He knows, O thought so full of bliss! For though on earth our joys we miss, we still can bear if feeling this, He knows, He knows.” Amen!

THE SYNAGOGUE OF SATAN

The Lord also acknowledged that the brethren at Smyrna were living in an area that was a stronghold

continued on page 4

CONTENTS

Vol. LXXXIX No. 5



ADVOCATE

The Church at Smyrna 1
 Editorial 2
 Querist Column 3
 A Successful Spiritual Life 6
 Is Christianity Worth It? 7
 Why Demonic Faith Does Not Save 8
 Pages From The Past 9
 Announcements 10
 Field Reports 10
 THE BACK PAGE 12

PUBLISHER

Don L. King
 1147 Sherry Way, Livermore, CA 94550
 Fax 925-454-8995

ASSISTANT PUBLISHER

Ronny F. Wade
 P.O. Box 14352 Springfield, MO 65814

EDITORIAL STAFF

Bennie Cryer
 Billy Dickinson
 Jerry Dickinson
 Johnny Elmore
 Greg Gay
 Carl Johnson
 Doug Hawkins
 Kevin Presley

OLD PATHS ADVOCATE WEBSITE:

www.oldpathsadvocate.org
 Rick Martin, Website Publisher
 Terry Studdard, Website Asst. Publisher
 Brandon Steward, Webmaster

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Single Subscription One Year \$15.00
 Also On The Internet
 Published Monthly by **Old Paths Advocate**, Lebanon, MO
 A.C. Brockman, 2033 King James, Lebanon, MO 65536
 periodical postage paid at Lebanon, MO 65536
 Send Form 3579 to **Old Paths Advocate**
 1147 Sherry Way, Livermore, CA 94550.

All articles published in **Old Paths Advocate** contain the view of the writer and do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors and publishers. If you have any questions, please direct them to the author listed at the heading of the article.

Editorial

YESTERDAY, TODAY AND TOMORROW

By DON L. KING

We are very fortunate to live in today’s world. While this modern age does have its complications, and it is indeed a wicked world in many ways, yet it brings a life to us that is much easier than 50 years ago. While this is undoubtedly true for almost everyone, it is especially true for gospel preachers. Preaching and traveling is much more convenient for all of us today than in yesteryear I grew up traveling with my father, Homer L. King, who began preaching in 1915. From my birth in 1942, we traveled extensively as he held meetings in many states. In this brief article, we wish to present a picture of what traveling and holding meetings was like from the 1940s to the present time.

Please understand, these thoughts are not in any way to be seen as critical or complaining. We have always been aware of what the apostle Paul wrote to Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:2, 3 “And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also. Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.” Again in 2 Timothy 4:5 a similar command was given by the apostle. “But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.” No preacher should expect things to always be easy and personally agreeable. Sometimes one has to stand up against adversaries as Nathan did against King David in 2 Samuel 12. Many who have preached the gospel for years have experienced difficult things. Most, however, who look back on their experiences do so fondly. Our children, who traveled with us in the late 1960s and on into the early 1980s still talk about having enjoyed the travels, and wishing they could do it just once more.

Our first trip to California from Lebanon, MO was in 1945, about the time W.W. II ended. Our family car was a badly worn 1937 Plymouth that had to be overhauled by Brother Morrow in Southern California once we arrived. At that time tires were usually synthetic, not reliable, and prone to blowout. The speed limit was 35 MPH nationwide, set by the government to preserve fuel as well enable the inferior tires to last longer. I remember hearing about a trip made to California about the same time by my oldest sister, Velma, and her

continued on page 4

QUERIST COLUMN

By *RONNY F. WADE*

Question: Would you please discuss the relationship between the concept of autonomy and “the brotherhood?”

Answer: The word “church” in the New Testament scriptures is used to refer to the church universal as well as the church local. The church universal is not an organic body, but rather a relationship. The church universal contains all the saved on the earth. In the bible, it is compared to a body, with Christ as its head Col. 1:18; Eph.1:22-23., as a family with God as father 1Timothy 3:15, and as a temple in which the Holy Spirit dwells Eph. 2:21-22. On the other hand, the church local is not only a relationship, but also an organic body or organization. This is the only organization Christ has given His church on this earth. In the New Testament we do not read of a “brotherhood of churches.” The universal church is not made up of local congregations, but of saints. Each church is independent of all others. Each church is governed by its duly appointed officers. Since each church is self-governed (autonomous) there is no inter-congregational board that oversees its work. The members of all local churches are taught to “Love the brotherhood” 1Peter 2:17. In 1Peter 5:9 we read “Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by our brotherhood in the world.” The KJV has the word brethren instead of brotherhood, the meaning being that brethren throughout the world were suffering. Loving the brotherhood is to love all the saints in the body of Christ or the church universal. This fact is further emphasized in 1John 5:1 “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.” Does brotherhood in any way abridge autonomy? The answer is no. The fact that we are a brotherhood of Christians does not give us the right to deny or disobey the rules laid down by the Holy Spirit regarding the governmental function of local churches. As we noticed in the article last month autonomy does not grant any local body the right to violate the teaching of the scriptures. No local body, because of its autonomy, has the right to grant membership to someone based on faith only. No local body, because of its autonomy, has the right to add mechanical instruments of music to its worship service. Should a church do either of these I must still love them (the brotherhood) and if I do I will point out their error. The only power that I have over them, however, is the power of influence and persuasion. I can do my best to show them the error of their way, but I cannot make them conform to what I believe the bible teaches. I,

as an individual, do not have the right to remove the candlestick of any church. No local body has the right to remove the candlestick of another local body. That is a matter left up to the Lord. That, however, does not mean that I cannot point out their error, or warn others of their false teaching and practices, in fact I should do that. If, however, they fail to heed my warning and continue in their rebellion or wayward ways, they will have to answer to God for their behavior. Remember the scripture plainly teaches “When I say to the wicked, ‘you shall surely die’ and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand.” Verse 19 teaches that if we issue the warning and the wicked man fails to repent he will be lost but we have delivered our soul. The same principle applies to situations where I as an individual have the opportunity to warn a church on the wrong road, but fail to do so. Those who pat them on the back and encourage them without pointing out their sin, do them a great disfavor. In warning a church of its transgressions I do not in anyway violate their autonomy. The apostle Paul did that all the time. He did not violate the autonomy of any church. The work of an evangelist is in part to do that very thing according to Titus 1:5. Paul told Titus to “set in order the things that were lacking...” None of us have the right to deny any church what the Holy Spirit granted them in the sacred scriptures. But churches who hide behind “autonomy” as a cover for their transgressions and the false doctrine coming from their pulpits, are without excuse.

(Send all questions to Ronny F. Wade P.O. Box 14352 Springfield, MO 65814 or ronnywade36@gmail.com)

SUBSCRIPTIONS:

Please send all subscriptions, questions,
and concerns regarding your subscriptions to:

Matt Martin

1000 Stonecroft Lane
Woodstock, GA 30188
Phone: 770-318-8495
mattsmartin@att.net

CHURCH AT SMYRNA continued from page one

for evil, declaring that “the synagogue of Satan” was in that place (verse 9). While their persecutors claimed to be followers of God, in reality they were followers of the devil, as they railed against the church with false and hurtful accusations. Jesus makes it plain that it was actually Satan, through the lives and deeds of wicked men, who is the source of the persecution: “Behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison” (verse 10).

Here is a principle that we need to understand and appreciate. The devil does his work on earth by using wicked men to spread his lies and do his bidding. Sometimes they are deceived and unconscious enemies of the cross, but the work of the devil is accomplished when men are led by “the spirit of error”-- i.e. a disposition that is friendly to error (1 John 4:6). Likewise, the Lord has His followers who do His will, and it is through them that the gospel is preached and souls are saved. The principle is clearly stated in the writings of Paul: “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works” (2 Cor 11:13-15).

POOR, BUT RICH

After saying that He also knows of their poverty, the Lord turns right around and says, “but thou art rich” (verse 9). How can this be? Surely the Lord’s declaration here flies in the face of the so-called “doctrine of prosperity” that some are preaching today! While it is true that God blesses His people and has promised to provide us with our needs (Phil. 4: 19), it is a false claim that all believers are promised financial prosperity. Yet, some preachers will almost make you feel guilty for not being rich in material things, because they say that it is God’s will for you to be as rich as you want to be.

What are the advocates of this doctrine actually teaching? They are asserting that financial poverty eventually becomes proof of spiritual poverty! According to them, a believer is not rich with money because: (1) He does not understand the “laws of prosperity” (as they define them), or (2) He lacks the faith necessary to practice them. However what Christ says about the church at Smyrna puts things in perspective for us. Many of those who were persecuting the church were living affluent lives while the Christians were poverty-stricken. Yet,

the fact that wicked men enjoy prosperity was not a sign of godliness, and the fact that brethren at Smyrna were poor did not mean that they were lacking in their spiritual lives! Jesus said that they were poor but rich. That means that they were rich in the things that matter most. They were possessors of the “true riches” (Luke 16:11); they were laying up for themselves “treasures in heaven” (Matt. 6:20); they were “rich in faith” (James 2:5) and “in good works” (1 Tim. 6:18).

FAITHFULNESS IS POSSIBLE

The church at Smyrna is living proof that fidelity is possible even when facing great adversity. In fact, not only is it possible, it is something demanded by the Lord: “Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (verse 10). Think about it! The Lord acknowledges their suffering and even says that things are going to get worse. Some were going to be cast into prison, as they would undergo a period of tribulation for “ten days”-- a number that undoubtedly suggests a short period of time. Yet, they are commanded to not be afraid and to remain faithful! The Lord explains that they are being put to the test to decide their ultimate commitment, and their faithfulness unto death is a necessary condition for receiving a crown of life. The translation by Richard Weymouth renders it like this: “Be faithful, even if you have to die for it.”

If Christ expected them to remain faithful during times of persecution, even if it meant becoming martyrs, is less expected of us today? If eternal life was only promised to those who kept the faith at Smyrna, how can people today believe that children of God may live in willful disobedience without losing their heavenly reward? The idea of “once saved, always saved” is not taught in the Scriptures; faithfulness and godly living are necessary to going to heaven. The Lord’s letter to the church at Smyrna is proof of that fact, reminding us that those who live an overcoming life through Christ will “not be hurt of the second death” (verse 11).

YESTERDAY, TODAY continued from page two

husband Clovis Cook, a gospel preacher. In preparation for the trip they bought four new synthetic tires. Before they departed MO, three new tires had blown out; and while they were in a service station trying to buy some used tires to replace the ruined ones, the last remaining new tire went flat. They had to cancel the trip due to a lack of funds. Lynwood Smith was with them and told me the story years later. He finally rode a bus to California.

In those early days gasoline cost about 25 cents a gallon but was considered expensive. A motel could be had for the night for as little as 5 dollars and a hamburger about 40 cents. My father, even in the early 1950s, refused to pay more than 8 dollars a night and would keep looking until he found one he could afford. They budgeted \$100 total to make the trip from MO to California which required about 3 or 4 days of hard driving. It was difficult to make more than 500 miles a day unless one drove long hours; and air conditioned cars, homes, and meeting houses were almost nonexistent. I recall Brother Homer A. Gay had a water cooler on his car window, (passenger side where he usually sat while Suzy drove) which probably helped very little, but I remember wishing we had one. Highways were always two lanes such as the famous Route 66 reaching from Chicago to Los Angeles, and going right through Lebanon, MO near our old home.

Meetings usually lasted a full two weeks, covering three Lord's days, and it was not uncommon for brethren to ask the preacher to stay over and preach a few more sermons if interest seemed promising. The preacher's pay was not likely to be more than \$90 and often considerably less. I have heard of preachers receiving some vegetables or perhaps a chicken to take home in the place of support. Brethren's homes were modest, usually small, and like our church buildings, sometimes did not have indoor plumbing or running water. A pallet on the floor was often made for children to sleep. Young men aspired to preach and preachers were highly respected. Gospel meetings were well attended and an enjoyable time for all. It was usually the biggest thing to occur all year. In the summer, when weather was hot, the services would sometimes be moved outside in hopes of the night air being a bit cooler. Yellow lights (to discourage the bugs) would be strung up for light and the meeting would continue. The children loved that. A story was told that either Brother Gay or Kirbo, depending on who told the story, once swallowed a bug while preaching and said, "Folks, he was a stranger and I took him in." Another story claimed that a preacher, upon swallowing a bug, said "there's one bug that will be late getting home tonight."

Our people loved good sound preaching. Most were poor in physical things but rich in spirituality. They loved the church, the preachers, singing, prayers and the sermons. Brethren usually managed to get along well. One reason was perhaps that folks find it hard to fight someone they truly love and admire. We must remember that Paul said, "Let us therefore follow after the things which

make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another." (Romans 14:15) We undoubtedly would grow more quickly and larger if we were always interested in building up one another (edifying) rather than finding fault and looking for the "mote" in our brother's eye. We are to pursue the things that make for peace!

A highlight of every year was the annual 4th of July camp meeting at Sulphur, OK. I want to say just a word about why that meeting came into being. In the early days, many brethren didn't get to hear preachers unless one came to their congregation for a meeting. They couldn't always go to other places for meetings unless they were close by. They read the Old Paths Advocate to keep up with where the preachers were going, etc. and learned to dearly love the preachers. So, when a camp meeting was proposed it was very appealing and brethren sacrificed to come from several states to sit at the feet of those old preachers and hear them once again. This undoubtedly helped develop our brotherhood into what it became. I know of brethren who borrowed money to attend every year and could hardly wait from one year to the next to go again. At first the meeting moved about from place to place, but in 1947 it came to Sulphur to stay. Brethren came and sometimes camped out at the Platt National Park so they could afford to stay for the whole meeting. As I recall, the Park rented tents for about a dollar a day which was cheaper than motels. Motels were few and difficult to get unless reserved far in advance. Services were morning and evening, and between services brethren could be seen around the park singing gospel songs or just visiting and enjoying being together again. Crowds became large toward the end of the meeting often exceeding 1,000 people. What wonderful singing there was! I have some tape recordings from as early as 1947 of both the preaching and singing. Everyone enjoyed themselves.

Today, travel is comfortable in modern air conditioned cars and planes. Within 24 hours a person can be about anywhere in the world. How fortunate we are. A trip to the Philippines, near 8,000 miles can be accomplished in about 14 hours nonstop. Our gospel meetings are sometimes shorter in length now. Some are only 5 days or less, and not always as well attended due to various reasons. Preachers are sometimes kept in nice comfortable hotels or motels and brethren's nice homes. We are treated very well indeed. Our preachers are often very generously supported for meetings now; however, there are still times when support is inadequate. This is perhaps due to a lack of congregational funds or a failure of brethren to realize what it costs to travel today.

Sometimes brethren in one place may not understand what it costs the preacher to live in his locality, and also what it may have cost him to get to the meeting. Brethren need to consider carefully what they should support the preacher. He may have come a long way to spend and be spent to hold your meeting. Personally, while there have been times of “famine” so to speak, brethren have usually supported us generously and we are thankful. Lynwood Smith once remarked to me that he disliked being around a “gripping preacher” Amen!

If the Lord wills, and allows time to continue, our prayer is that the church will prosper in every way possible. God has granted us inroads to other lands and countries and given a bountiful harvest to the Bride of Christ. Also in our own United States, we now are using many forms of the media including the Internet, television, and the printed page to reach the lost. Our opinion is that we have but scratched the surface in foreign work. We have been privileged to travel to the Philippines for 35 years and have seen wonderful growth there. We now have young men preaching there who have never known anything but the Bible way. God be thanked. Most preachers with whom I have traveled in foreign work have found it exciting, rewarding beyond belief, and say they have never been the same afterward. Most can't wait to return. May God bless the church in the future, and may He bless brethren with an understanding of how important it is to go and preach in all the world.

Think on these things -DLK

A SUCCESSFUL SPIRITUAL LIFE

By PAUL O. NICHOLS

The scriptures tell us that “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). In fact, the apostle Paul makes it even more emphatic when he says, “We have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin” (Rom. 3:9). And the apostle John says If we say that we have not sinned, we make him (God) a liar, and his word is not in us” (1 Jno. 1:10). The reason Jesus came into the world was to “seek and to save that which was lost” (Lk. 19:10). And God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:10).

The Lord has given the plan of salvation and Jesus ratified it with His own blood. All the instructions have been given to us in the Bible for a successful spiritual life. If we “hunger and thirst after righteousness” Jesus promises we shall be “filled” (Matt. 5:6). The apostle

Paul wrote to the church at Colosse, “We ... desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God” (Col. 1:9, 10).

In the first psalm of David he gives a plan for a completely successful spiritual life. Listen “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.” He who would live a successful spiritual life chooses well those with whom he associates, for he knows that “evil communications corrupt good manners” and he is not deceived (I Cor. 15:33). Bad association can influence a person to sin. Good association has a tendency to bring out the best in a person who is trying to live right, especially if the friend is a fellow Christian and is an example of the believers (1 Tim. 4:12).

The successful Christian thinks about the teaching of the Lord. He does not “stand in the way of sinners nor sit in the seat of the scornful.” The righteous man has a desire to know what the Bible teaches, and he seeks to learn the will of God. “He delights in the law of the Lord, and in his law he meditates day and night.” He understands, “as he thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Prov. 23:7). Jesus taught how important right thinking is when He said, “But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man...” (Matt. 15:18-20). Because of the importance of right thinking, the apostle Paul wrote to the Philippians, “Finally brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Phil. 4:8).

“He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season.” The fruit he produces will be “the fruit of the spirit; love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law” (Gal. 5:22, 23). Jesus said, “He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit” Again, “Herein is my

Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.” (John 15:5, 8).

The guarantee of David is that the individual whom he describes in Psalm 1 will prosper. He says, “whatsoever he doeth shall prosper” In contrast, “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy” (Prov. 28: 13) The one described by David and promised that he would prosper is a righteous man, who has proven his worthiness to prosper. He does not cover his sins, but admits when he is wrong, and busies himself in studying the word of God and producing the fruit of the Spirit in his every day affairs.

He is an “example of the believers” (1 Tim. 4:12) and “a pattern of good works, in doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity” (Tit. 2:7). He “seeks first the kingdom of God and his righteousness” (Matt. 6:33). He uses “sound speech, that cannot be condemned” (Tit. 2:8). He lets “no corrupt communication proceed out of his mouth, hut that which is good to the use of edifying” (Eph. 4:29), and he is “ready to give an answer to every man that asks him for the reason of the hope” that is in him (1 Pet. 3:12), and he worships the Lord “in spirit and in truth” (Jno. 4:24, 25). Such an individual lives a successful spiritual life and he will prosper.

IS CHRISTIANITY WORTH IT?

By JOHNNY ELMORE

With increasing frequency, there comes yet another report of a disciple who has left the Lord and the church. Often the excuse given is some disillusionment, some discouragement, some blight (real or imagined), or some attraction of the world. The kingdom of God is not counted of greater value than some momentary pleasure, some honor of men, or some worldly gain. The sadness felt in the hearts of those left behind to forge ahead must be exceeded only by the pain in the heart of the dear Son of God, who watched the rich young ruler depart in the long ago and remarked, “Children, how hard it is for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God” (Mark 11:24). The demand that Jesus made of the rich young ruler seems excessive to many today He said, “Sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come follow me” (Lk 18:22)., The apostles had already made that decision. Peter said, in response to Jesus’ teaching, “Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?” (Matt 19:27).

That’s a legitimate question, isn’t it? Jesus assured Peter that the apostles would “sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matt 19:28). I understand that to be a metaphorical reference to the apostles’ prerogative to speak to all questions of faith and practice in the kingdom. Jesus continued to say that “everyone” who had forsaken material things for his sake would receive “an hundredfold” (Matt 19:29), “in this present time” (Luke 18:30). Can’t you and I honestly say that we have gained far more than we have ever lost for Christ? Do we not have more relatives in Christ (brothers and sisters) than we have ever had to forsake? But even if that were not true, Jesus then mentions the greatest prospect: “And in the world to come life everlasting” (Luke 18:30). What a glorious hope!

HAS CHRISTIANITY FAILED?

It is not uncommon to find plenty of critics who are ready to charge the church and its members with failure. They charge that the church is full of hypocrites and pretenders; that there is a lack of love; that the preachers dominate the churches and the people love to have it so; that there is not enough zeal, or emotion, etc. Has Christianity failed?

No, many pretenses at Christianity have failed, but it is not right to judge all Christians and all preachers by a few anomalies we may have met. It would not be fair to select a scrawny little nubbin from a corn farmer’s crop and show it to all his neighbors and say, ‘This is the kind of corn he raises.’ It would not be right to judge all bankers by one embezzler that you have heard of, or all physicians by one “quack” that you know. Neither is it fair to judge all Christians by one hypocrite, all congregations by one weak group, or all preachers by one unscrupulous charlatan. I personally know many saints who have lived victorious Christian lives. I personally know many congregations that diligently serve God and still have not accepted the innovations that many feel are so necessary. I personally know many preachers who have lived lives of sacrifice --men who have loved Jesus so much that they have turned their backs on fortune and have never looked back. I do not deny that there may have been pretenders along the way in all three categories, but that only proves that there is a genuine article somewhere.

Among the recent criticisms I have read is one that says that the church is declining numerically at a time that it should be growing because of the baby boom. The critic says that if the members of the church were more earnest, exhibited more love, were more broad-minded

(especially), would rely upon grace more, and that if the preachers were not so dogmatic, did not insist upon church attendance and following the pattern so much -- then what? The church would grow? Too bad the critic wasn't around to instruct Jesus when He demanded that his disciples eat his flesh and drink his blood (John 6:53, 54). After all, that hard, dogmatic preaching drove his crowd away John records, "From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him." (John 6:66). That's right! They left and never came back.

The price for being a Christian is high, but it costs much more to be a sinner. Jesus set the price for discipleship at a level above the dearest things of earth. He said, "If any man came to see me, and hate not (love not less) his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26). To walk with Jesus is not easy, if viewed from the perspective of the world, but to walk away from Jesus is more difficult. Solomon said: "The way of transgressors is hard" (Prov 13:15).

WHAT SHALL WE HAVE?

In making sacrifices for Jesus, nothing of real value is lost because they are only those things that would eventually be lost anyway. How tragic and needless to see the treasures of earth slip from our grasp and have nothing whatever in store to take their place. If the teaching of Jesus will cause one person to be saved, then his mission was not a failure, because that which would save one soul would save every soul if the same conditions were met. There was no doubt in Paul's mind when he spoke of the "crown of righteousness" laid up for him, but available to all who "love his appearing" (II Tim 4:7,8). Paul counted as worthless all the things he renounced to preach Christ.

In the year ahead, bright with prospect, let us not be dismayed by the trials and disappointments of life nor confused by the critics and their jangling religious theories. Those who have determined to "walk by faith and not by sight" (II Cor 5:7), are living testimonies that a life with Jesus pays dividends greater by far than the sacrifice required. -OPA

WHY DEMONIC FAITH DOES NOT SAVE

By AARON BATTEY

The denominational world has produced much confusion over the Bible subject of faith. So weakened

by various false doctrines is the subject of faith that many might burst a carotid vessel as they passionately advocate for belief in Christ, yet they know nothing more about faith than what they are misled into by charismatic evangelists. Open the Bible to follow along with this study on faith to discover if you have the same faith as demons.

First impressions can be deceiving This is a common and sage piece of advice most people are familiar with. With this advice in mind, consider the fan favorite method of studying the Bible. That method goes as follows: a person opens their Bible at random, he reads a single verse, "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God (Heb. 10:31)," he closes his Bible, and he determines he does not like the God of the Bible. Another person opens their Bible at random and reads, "For God so loved that world that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16)," he closes his Bible and determines he likes this gracious God of the Bible who requires nothing more than a stated belief in Jesus. This method of Bible study is at the root of misunderstanding the Bible truth on the subject of faith. Faith is more than a feeling. Faith is more than a confession. Faith is more than a demonic acknowledgment that Jesus is the Christ. The faith of demons is the same faith enlisted by so many religious leaders the worldwide.

James 2:19 says, "You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe and tremble." Demons are rational beings, and being rational they could logically deduce that Jesus was the Christ (see Mark 5:6). Demons indeed have faith, but that is not the same as saying that demons have saving faith With this being said, no proclaimed Christian wants to share the faith of demons. There are at least four key components to a saving faith, and demons only have two of those components.

The four components of a saving faith are here listed. First, saving faith requires knowledge. Knowledge is "what" a person believes in. The Ethiopian eunuch asked Philip to baptize him. Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may," (Acts 8:37). The Ethiopian eunuch went on to confess the knowledge he was just taught by Philip, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God," (Acts 8:37). Even demons have knowledge of the Christ. Thus: making this confession did not save the eunuch. Second, saving faith requires mental assent or mental agreement with the knowledge under consideration. The eunuch obviously agreed with

the knowledge of the Christ and so do demons (Mark 5:6 and James 2:19). Third, saving faith includes trust or conviction in the stated knowledge. Hebrews 3:18-19 illustrates the idea of trust that is expressed in saving faith. The writer is in the middle of retelling Israel's disobedience in the wilderness as they journeyed to the rest awaiting them in Canaan when he says the following "And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief" Notice two key words: obey and unbelief When the game is on the line, so to speak, people act on what they truly trust or believe. This brings up the last component of faith. Fourth, saving faith is contingent on obedience. Demons do not obey Christ, and this is why they cannot be saved. Hebrews 3:18-19 should be more than enough to illustrate the point. For volume sake, read also James 2:17-18, "Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, 'You have faith, and I have works.' Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works." This does not contradict other passages of the Bible such as Ephesians 2:8-9 and Romans 4:1-8, rather, it provides clarification on a subject made murky by centuries of false doctrine.

Much, much more could and needs to be said on this subject, but permit these proofs on the subject of faith to be enough for now Consider one last instructive thought: what is the proper name for someone who says they believe something but act as if they do not? The answer is a liar and a hypocrite. 1 John 2:4 says, "He who says, 'I know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" Interestingly enough, Satan (a demon) is the father of lies (John 8:44). Consider why you believe what you believe and do not share the same faith as demons.

PAGES FROM THE PAST

The following article, by Brother Edwin Morris, is from the April 1963 Issue of the Old Paths Advocate. In my childhood, I remember Brother Morris, physically, as an imposing figure, tall and slender. He was an imposing figure, figuratively, as far as the church was concerned also. He didn't mind, you might say, "telling it like it is" In this article Brother Morris tells us that the true test of love for God is following His commandments.
Rick Martin

THIS IS THE LOVE OF GOD

Edwin Morris

We truly believe today that we have the true worship every time we worship God. We believe that in our singing, praying, teaching, in the Lord's Supper and giving that we are carrying these items out in the Bible way. We also believe that we have the true plan of salvation as to what sinners are to do in order to become children of God, in that they are to hear, believe, repent, confess Christ and be-baptized into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. We also believe the Bible teaches that those who are children of God are to continue faithfully in obedience to death in order to inherit eternal life. In the plan of salvation and in the worship, I do not see that we can improve or restore anything as far as carrying out these commands is concerned.

Do not misunderstand me—we may improve ourselves in our spirituality but as to improve in the manner in which these things are done, we cannot. So, what we need to increase is our own spirituality that we may ever be drawn closer and closer to our Lord.

John said in 1 John 5:2-3, "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments and his commandments are not grievous." Our love of God's followers is proof that we love God. Our love to God is the reason why we love His children, and our keeping the commandments of God is the proof that we love Him. Our perception of the existence of love to our brethren is developed on every occasion when we exercise love and obedience toward God. John says this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. It is vain to pretend love to God while we live in opposition to His will.

A person may shed all kinds of tears and he may ever make so many claims that he loves God, but the true test is whether we keep His commandments. Matt. 7: 22 shows that many claim to love God "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?" In this verse many who have prophesied, cast out demons, and wrought other miracles, are represented as seeking admission into heaven, and as urging in proof of their fitness the miraculous powers which they had exercised. The context shows (ver 23) that the exercise of such power is not conclusive proof of acceptance with God.

Today, when there are those who do not keep the commands of God, and we cannot fellowship them because they violate the commands of God, this does not mean that we do not love them or that we have the wrong attitude toward them. I grant that in the past there have been times that the wrong attitude was manifested toward those who are in error, but this does not mean for a minute that we have not been basically right in our position not to partake of their error. In calling for greater love and unity among the children of God, we are not to sacrifice for a minute the truths of the Bible. We can manifest a true spirit of Christ toward those in error and still at the same time let them know of their error and why we cannot fellowship them in that error. Otherwise, there would be no stopping place in accepting error. Paul said 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." James MacKnight in his commentary paraphrases this passage as follows "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them who set up separate assemblies for worship, and who occasion the weak to fall by false doctrine, or by enjoining things indifferent as necessary, contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned from me in this epistle, and avoid them." This is a command from God that those, who cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which we have learned, we are to avoid. If we love God, we will keep this command. Those who have set up separate assemblies by using instruments of music, cups, classes, etc. have introduced things contrary to the doctrine which we have learned. We are to mark them and avoid them. Can we carry out this command and love them? Certainly, we can. We love their souls, but not the evil practices. Some would indicate and leave the impression that just because we cannot accept these modern innovations of man that we have not the love of God in our hearts. We do have the love of God in our hearts, but we cannot embrace error to have fellowship with them. It is our prayer and desire that those in error would forsake these things and accept the Bible and its teachings in these subjects. I believe there are those whom we have taught the truth on these matters who will testify that while they were in error, we visited with them and manifested love and interest in them, and that many times we visited with them several different times before ever talking about these differences. TOO, many times, they have been the ones to first mention our differences. Yes, we can love them, encourage them, teach them and still not be partakers with them in that which is wrong.

Today, it is true that we need greater love among

brethren, but if we strive to do this by sacrificing truth, what, have we profited? We can continue to hold the truth and at the same time have greater love in our hearts to all by removing the carnal nature from our lives. Let all envy: strife, hatred, jealousy, prejudice, selfishness, self-glory be put out of our lives. Replace this with love, and a burning desire to promote and further the cause of Christ. By our living for the Master we can influence many to come to Christ. Let us remember the words of John, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." OPA

Announcement

NEW ADDRESS AND PHONE NUMBER - for Clint De France: 918-703-7824, 2121 S. Columbia Ave., Suite LL2, Tulsa, OK 74114.

Advertisement - I have less than 100 copies of "A Glimpse of Glory: the Sermons and Writings of Ronny F. Wade" available. After this surplus is exhausted there is no plan to reprint. This is a needed resource for teachers, preachers, and anyone with an interest in the truth and the history of the Lord's Church. Subjects covered in sermons and essays include: Sunday Schools, the pattern for the Lord's Supper, the instrumental music Question, the role of women in teaching the Bible, the A.D. 70 theory, and a marvelous verse by verse study of the seven churches of Asia in Revelation, as well as an explanation of the Battle of Armageddon. At the end of the book is a section called "items of interest," containing valuable pictures, flyers, letters, and memoirs concerning the history of the church in America and challenges faced by the brotherhood, such as the war question. Most of these pieces are rare acquisitions from the personal files and collection of brother Wade that can be found no where else. Additionally, the book contains a biography of brother Wade and his personal recollections of debates he has held and the work through television a trail he blazed for our brethren. The book is a beautiful hardback, available for \$15 plus \$5 shipping. Send all checks and shipping information to Clinton De France: 2121 S. Columbia Ave. Suite LL2, Tulsa, OK 74114

Field Reports

Billy D. Dickinson - 2850 N. Oakland, Springfield, MO 65803, bddickinson@juno.com, March 27 - The first quarter of the year has been a busy time for me.

Over the second weekend of January, I was with the 11th Street Acres congregation in Tulsa, OK. This is where Clint DeFrance lives, and it was great to spend some time with him. They are blessed to have such a talented and knowledgeable preacher laboring with them. Also, Judy and I enjoyed staying in the home of Dwight and Caron Smith, old and dear friends whom we have shared many good times with, and we miss seeing them on a regular basis. After living here and being a part of the Jamesville congregation for several years, they moved to Tulsa about three years ago. My next effort took me to the annual study at Columbia, MO, preaching for them on the Sunday of March 12, and then presenting my assigned topic on that following Monday night. A good spirit always prevails at this study and the hospitality was grand. I would like to especially commend Bart Shaw's presentation concerning "Gender Issues and the Bible." It helped me to understand what is going on in our society, as some universities and professors are pushing a transgender view of sexuality, and it's obvious that this is going to become an even greater problem for the church to deal with in the future. Thank you, Bart, for the research and effort you put into this topic! My next meeting will take me to Indianapolis, IN on the dates of April 5-9. Also, I am looking forward to a meeting on June 14-18 in Mountain Home, AR. I've recently heard Brett Hickey and Joe Hisle in meetings of nearby congregations, and the preaching was what I expected it to be-- scriptural and edifying to all in attendance. My prayer is that the Lord will bless all such efforts this year.

Ernesto Abalos - Philippines, Feb 22 - We would like to greet all of our brethren in the USA and wish them a pleasant day. I'm happy in writing this report for all of you in the USA. Our worship here in Abariongan Uneg and Lapogan congregations are doing well. There are two people newly baptized here and that is why I am very thankful. Thank you, my brethren.

Arcenio A. Laman - Philippines, March 21 - Brother King, The work in the Philippines and particularly Mindanao is growing for which we give God praise and glory. We have had some success through the years in private Bible studies and visiting our brethren. Recently, we had our annual preacher's study at Sagring church of Christ held by Brother Rodrigo Aguan. Visitors from a number of places and Luzon came to attend. Brethren Greg Maluga, Roger Rivera and Conrado Libertino brought with them their knowledge concerning the doctrine of Christ. Also attending were gospel preachers from various places in Mindanao. Ten were baptized by

myself in witness of many. We thank all the faithful everywhere who are praying for us as well as sending their support for the work here. May our Heavenly Father bountifully remunerate them all with His love and care. God bless.

Don L. King, 1147 Sherry Way, Livermore, CA 94550, old-Paths@juno.com, April 10, 2017 - It was recently our pleasure to preach both services on Lord's Day at Turlock, CA and several times at home. Lord willing, we are to begin this Wednesday evening at the Fossil Creek congregation in the Dallas Fort Worth area. We have been there a number of times over the years, have good friends there, and always enjoy the meetings. We pray much good will come from our combined efforts. The work in the Philippines continues to do well and the Hawaii work looks promising also. We plan to be with them in May. Let me remind our preachers and editors to send articles and field reports to us now for the paper and we send our sincere thanks to Ronny Wade for his work with the paper the last few months. The church at home is well and looking forward to Joe Hisle being with us very soon for a meeting. A final note: Since we are leaving Wed morning for Texas to hold a meeting, we have to mail the paper a couple of days early. If you send your material later than then it will have to wait until the next issue for publication. Our apologies. Lord bless the faithful.

P. Duane Permenter - Duane_and_laurie@yahoo.com (808) 600-5909 home (808) 221-8903 cell, April 3 - Aloha, from the island of Oahu. The church in the city of Waipahu sends out our warmest greetings. We continue to work and develop the church in this area. We have continued to have visitors from the community every Sunday during the last month. In addition to new visitors, two different women have come every Sunday for over a month. We are praying that God will soon give us the increase. Many of you know by now that my Grandmother Lorene Dougherty passed away since the last report. We appreciate all the kind words and thoughts from our friends as the family gathered around the Oakdale and Riverbank area of California to mourn her passing. She has left a great legacy in the fact that over 70 descendants had obeyed the gospel from her influence. Grandma will continue to live in our hearts and minds. God bless all and we ask for your continued prayers!

OLD PATHS ADVOCATE (USPS 407-560)

If the date near your name and address reads 5-17 your subscription expires with this issue. Please renew promptly. DLK
Send all subscriptions to: Matt Martin @
1000 Stonecroft Ln., Woodstock, GA 30188

THE BACK PAGE...

BRIMSTONE FOR THE BROADMINDED

By CARL M. JOHNSON

The late Charles Colson was a White House counsel to former President Richard M. Nixon. Colson was sent to federal prison because of his participation in the infamous Watergate scandal during Nixon's 1972 reelection campaign. While in prison Colson decided to become a preacher and when he was released he became a leader among "Evangelical Christians." On one occasion he was invited to a fund-raising dinner that included a lot of wealthy socialites and was seated directly across the table from a poised and polished English woman. After they had visited for awhile she observed, "You seem so intelligent; so well-read. You are not one of those who goes around doing hellfire and brimstone preaching are you?" Of course, the obvious inference is that only stupid and ignorant persons would be guilty of that kind of preaching.

When people today hear the expression, "Hell-fire and brimstone preaching," they usually conjure up an image of a man preaching in a tent sometime in the 1920s, sweating profusely, frenetically waving his arms in the air thumping his Bible, while shouting at his listeners to "turn or burn!" Such an image gives the impression that preaching on hell was a cultural fad of that particular time, and that it is not something we can do seriously in this tolerant age. We have been conditioned to believe that it is wrong to judge and condemn any kind of behavior. Consequently, when secular people hear of God's condemning the lost to a fiery hell to be punished forever they dismiss the words as being outdated, intolerant, or ignorant.

However Matthew 10:28 says, "And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." These words were spoken by Jesus Christ, not some tent revival preacher of the 1920s. Jesus believed in hell. He used the word "hell" (gehenna) 11 of the 12 times it is used in the New Testament. To believe in someone is to believe in what He believes and teaches.

Jesus warns us in many of His parables to prepare for the judgment when He shall consign us to either heaven or hell. This thread of teaching runs through the parables of the unrighteous steward (Lk. 16:1-9), the pounds (Lk. 19:11-27), the talents (Mt. 25:14-30), the wheat and the tares (Mt. 13:24-43), the evil servant (Mt. 18:21-35), the marriage of the king's son (Mt. 22:1-14), and the 10 virgins (Mt. 25:1-13). The warning is also found in the story of the rich man and Lazarus (Lk. 16:19-31).

Jesus teaches clearly and repeatedly that all humanity will be separated eternally at judgment into heaven or hell. He concludes, "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment but the righteous into life eternal" (Mt. 25:46).

Still, I encounter people who say they cannot reconcile the idea of hell with a loving God-even if He is holy too. Can a loving God send a sinner to hell? One commentator says this is the wrong question. He argues the right question is, "Can a HOLY God NOT send a sinner to hell?" For him the issue is not whether there is such a place as hell, but rather it revolves around what God is going to do. He argues correctly that a God who can say "No" to His Son in Gethsemane can send a sinner to hell, even though He clearly does not want anyone to go there (1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Pet. 3:9).

So much of our contemporary, feel-good religion has abandoned preaching about the eternal damnation of the unconverted. Religion of this sort teaches a hollow gospel that robs God of His true grace and power. We can appreciate His love and grace properly only if we can see the great need we have of them. After all, Jesus is called our Savior because He came into this world to save us from something! The thing from which He came to save us is eternal damnation in hell. Our salvation in Christ is so wonderful because the alternative is so unspeakably terrible. The doctrines of judgment and hell magnify the astounding brilliance of Jesus' grace and love. The lyrics from John Newton's classic hymn say it well, "Twas grace that taught my heart to fear and grace my fears relieved. How precious did that grace appear The hour I first believed."

On the other hand, if we do not believe in judgment and hell there is no fear of God before our eyes and we see no need of a Savior (Ps. 36:1 Rom. 3:18). We cannot preach, therefore, the saving gospel today without ever mentioning what it is from which sinners need to be saved. Paul says, "Knowing therefore the terror of the lord, we persuade men" (2 Cor 5:11).
cmjthebackpage@gmail.com