

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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“GOD FORBID”

By *BILLY D. DICKINSON*

There are different ways a person can say “no” that indicate how intense the negative response is. However, when someone says “No-O-O-O!” with authority in their voice, there is no doubt what is being communicated. Likewise, when we understand what “God forbid” represents in the Scriptures, it becomes obvious that we are dealing with a strong expression that is unequivocal in its meaning. Since it was used by Paul ten times in the Book of Romans, it has been called “Paul’s strongest negative interjection.” Notice the various ways it has been translated: “May it never be”/ “absolutely not”/ “by no means”/ “perish the thought”--Vincent says it represents a “feeling of strong aversion” to what is contrary to the truth. Yes, it actually involves a phrase of outrage that drives the point home in a forceful way.

Strangely enough, the name of God is not found in a literal translation of the phrase. It is composed of the Greek words *me* (“never”) and *genoito* (“happen”), bringing up the question of how the idea of God got into the equation. The King James Version, for example, has been criticized in regard to this, but research provides some insight as to why they chose to translate it the way they did. Please consider the following: First, it is an idiom of Biblical Hebrew origin that appears several times in the Old Testament. Look at Josh. 22:29 where men of the tribes of Reuben, Gad and Manasseh declared, “God forbid that we should rebel against the Lord, and turn this day from following the Lord...” Notice how their reasoning had everything to do with their love for God and His will for their lives. Also, after David cut off the skirt of Saul’s robe in a cave, he lamented, “The Lord forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the Lord’s anointed...” (1 Sam. 24:6). David’s dislike for his actions was the result of his respect for God’s

authority. Another example is where the people said to Joshua: “God forbid that we should forsake the Lord to serve other gods” (Josh. 24:16). Please observe how God is in the background when this expression is used.

Second, one source I read argued that this is actually “the language of prayer.” Sure enough, 1 Sam. 12:23 ties those two things together--“God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way.” This demonstrates again that God’s sovereignty and will is at the core of this expression. Finally, since the expression involves a strong utterance to something that should be avoided, the pairing of “God” with “forbid” forms the strongest negation possible in English. Indeed, while it is not a literal translation, it does capture the intended force and intensity of the denial. Undoubtedly, that’s why the KJV renders it the way it does.

THE ABUSE AND MISUSE OF GRACE

In order to drive the point home, let’s focus on Paul’s language in Romans 6: “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” (verses 1-2). Also: “What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid” (verse 15). It’s obvious that Paul was correcting possible misconceptions that some might have after reading the first five chapters of his epistle. Incidentally, W.E. Vine gives this explanation for the expression under consideration: “In Paul’s epistles it is almost entirely used to express the Apostle’s repudiation of an inference which he apprehends may be drawn from his argument.” That necessitates that we back up and summarize what Paul has affirmed so far.

Paul has declared that justification comes by grace through faith and not by the works of the law: “Being

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Editorial

**THINGS TO CONSIDER ABOUT THE
 CHURCH OF CHRIST
 THE UNDENOMINATIONAL CHARACTER OF THE CHURCH**

By DAVID GRIFFIN

Denominationalism is an all-pervasive concept in modern American Christianity. Most everyone who claims to be a Christian also identifies with a denomination. When you inform someone that you are a Christian, invariably they ask, “What denomination are you a member of?” The assumption is that Christianity and denominationalism necessarily go hand in hand.

Broadly speaking, the word “denomination” indicates “a name or designation, especially for a class or group” (American Heritage online dictionary). In the context the Christian religion, it of course refers to the different names by which groups are called, and thus represents the various doctrines or practices that differentiate one group from another. Most of such groups have come into existence as the result of members of a group dividing over some doctrine or practice. In American Christianity, such “dividing” has multiplied exponentially since the founding of the country. Each time such a division takes place, a new group (or groups) is formed, each taking a new name, and thus forming a new “denomination.” Hence, it is safe to say that division is an inherent quality of denominationalism; you can’t have one without the other. But is it true that denominationalism and Christianity necessarily go hand in hand?

It is common to hear people praise this phenomenon. Some say, “It is good that there are so many churches (denominations) so that everyone can find a denomination that suits their preference.” Newspapers used to contain adds in the religious section (maybe some still do) that say, “Attend the Church of Your Choice.” Such a sentiment may be called “Christianity American Style”! In the United States, our economic system enables people to purchase and enjoy almost any variety of product or service. If you don’t like one restaurant, you can go down the road and find one you do like. If you don’t like Fords, you can buy a Chevy. If Levi Jeans doesn’t suit your fancy, you can try Wranglers, or some other brand. This cultural expectation also applies to religious denominations.

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TWO BROTHERS OR THE SNAKE AND THE SASQUATCH

By KYLE A. HAMMONDS

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Part 2: Editor's Note, we continue with the next installment of Brother Kyle Hammonds' article on the Bible and Reconciliation. Part 1 introduced the sources of the conflict between brothers Jacob and Esau.

I have noticed ten (10) brief lessons to share from this story about reconciliation. There are undoubtedly even more things to learn from these two men, but these ten lessons may provide a foundational knowledge of the subject.

Give It Time

The first things which warrant some attention in this story happened well before Jacob and Esau's reunion. In Gen. 27:45, Rebekah gave Jacob good advice by telling him to "stay with [his uncle] for a few days until [his] brother's fury [turned] away." Jacob and Rebekah realized that they could not have a peaceful conversation in the present circumstances, so they needed to wait for a better moment. Therefore, the first thing we can learn about reconciliation is that it's okay to give people some time. If someone needs to cool off, we should be willing to respect that need. Also, if we are the person who needs to cool off, we should try to recognize that and communicate that to others. It's okay to take some time if it helps everyone preserve temperance.

Make a [Non-Threatening] Plan

Jacob probably intended to be away for a few weeks or months, but he ended up being gone for several years. Even after all that time, he was still a bit nervous about encountering Esau. Who wouldn't be? If someone threatens to kill you, that's not something to be taken lightly! In order to help secure a favorable outcome, Jacob designed a plan for his meeting with Esau in Gen. 32:7-8..."So Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed; and he divided the people that were with him, and the flocks and herds and camels, into two companies. And he said, if Esau comes to the one company and attacks it, then the other company which is left will escape." Notice that this plan was explicitly non-threatening: in the worst-case scenario, Jacob had determined to run away rather than fight back and unnecessarily risk the safety of the people around him. Therefore, the second

lesson about reconciliation that I learned from Jacob is to create a non-threatening plan of action. Jacob's plan was committed to words instead of physical violence; as such, he prepared for the worst while still hoping for the best. This can be a fine line to walk, but I think it is wise to have contingencies for worst-case scenarios while still trying to act as if things are going to be okay. This plan ended up working out well - although it looked as if Esau was prepared for a fight (Gen. 32:6), it turned out that Esau didn't actually want to fight at all (Gen. 33:4) A major lesson here is that appearances can be deceiving and our perception of others' motives may or may not be true. We should assume that others have good motives until they prove otherwise. In short: if we want to reconcile with someone, we should have a non-threatening plan of action which assumes the best about the other party.

Be Humble Toward God

Next, as a part of his planning to encounter Esau, Jacob prayed about what would happen in the future. Gen. 32:9-11..."Then Jacob said, 'O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, the Lord who said to me, 'Return to your country and to your family, and I will deal well with you'; I am not worthy of the least all the mercies of all the truth which You have shown Your servant...Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother...for I fear him, lest he come and attack me and the mother with the children.'" The third lesson that I learned from Jacob is to show humility before God. Seeking God's wisdom can be incredibly comforting, and it gives us direction in times when it may be difficult to see a way forward.

Be Humble Toward Other People

After praying to God, Jacob set his plans in motion by sending a messenger out to find Esau and deliver a correspondence. Gen. 32:17-18 "And he commanded the first [servant], saying, "When Esau my brother meets you and asks you, saying, 'To whom do you belong, and where are you going? Whose are these in front of you?' then you shall say, 'They are your servant Jacob's. It is a present sent to my lord Esau; and behold, he also is behind us.'" This passage teaches a fourth lesson, which is to be humble toward other people. Notice Jacob's choice of language, calling himself Esau's servant. Jacob was willing to put his pride aside and speak well of the other person. This choice of language made Jacob vulnerable, because there was no guarantee that Esau would reciprocate this humility. Even so,

Jacob determined to be humble toward Esau regardless of how Esau would treat him. In contemporary circumstances, this may translate into conceding our position or admitting that the other person's point is valid. Ultimately, "winning" or "losing" the argument doesn't matter if we destroy our relationship with the other person.

Peace Offerings Don't Hurt...

Next, Jacob sent a peace offering before the meeting. I do not mean to say that we need to try and buy people's affection, but I do think that this passage demonstrates that peace offerings don't hurt. Gen. 32:13 "So he lodged there that same night, and took what came to his hand as a present for Esau his brother." Even though Jacob gave away material stuff, peace offerings don't necessarily have to be physical possessions. Doing the work of scheduling a meeting to talk with an offended party, setting up a safe place to meet, sending them a card or a kind message, and so forth can go a long way toward establishing good will. We should also remember that peace offerings must be gifts. Similar to the lesson on "humility toward others," this lesson about peace offerings is that they must be freely given without the expectation of reciprocity. If our peace gestures are conditional, that creates new sources of tension; instead, we should be focused on building good will with others. In other words: offerings should be considered gifts or sacrifices rather than currency in an exchange.

Accept Consequences

A sixth lesson from this story is that we must be prepared to accept consequences.

"Putting ourselves out there," being vulnerable, in an attempt to fix things with an offended party will not always work out how we want. Jacob knew that he had wronged his brother, and he was willing to try and reconcile even if it meant that he may get hurt in the process. Gen. 33:2-3 "And [Jacob] put the maidservants and their children in front, Leah and her children behind, and Rachel and Joseph last. Then he crossed over before them and bowed himself to the ground seven times, until he came near to his brother."

Here we learn that Jacob went ahead of both the companies that he had formed - he made himself vulnerable to Esau. If any danger was present then Jacob would be the first to be hurt. He was willing to sacrifice himself for the safety of the company. Although most of us do not regularly experience physical dangers

like Jacob, we might occasionally be at emotional or psychological risk. Jacob teaches us that, while recklessness is not encouraged, we should be willing to take courage and reach out to the other party if there is a chance that we can make peace with them, even if we fear the possibility of unpleasant consequences.

To be continued ...

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

By Edwin S. 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 offenses 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 offenses 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 for 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.”

A CHALLENGE TO OUR SISTERS

By BARNEY OWENS

All are familiar with the parable of the talents taught by the Lord in Matthew 25, I feel sure. Likewise most,

if not all of us, should give more thought and practice to the lesson here taught. At this time I shall endeavor to seek out one avenue which I feel is generally lax among us. Should this be improved it would increase our number, make others of the church grow stronger, glorify the Lord, and of course save many lost souls. I speak of the using of our sisters' talents.

That our sisters do not and may not take a public part in the worship services. is clearly taught in the Word of God, and has been brought to our attention quite well by those who labor among us. However we should give equal time to the things our good sisters can do, and more important must do to save themselves and others (I Tim. 4:16).

Carrying out her domestic duties is looked upon by God as a good work. Care for the home is something necessary to the Christian life, though more often than not little praise is given them for it (Prov. 31:10-31). By this I do not mean only the daily chores as cooking, cleaning, washing and so forth, but the weightier matters which are of a spiritual nature. We are informed that a child trained from his youth will not depart from it, which most assuredly requires home training (Prov. 22:6 and Eph. 6:4). This is a task faithful women have always engaged in according to the inspired record. Observe the following texts: "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus." Again: "When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also" (II Tim. 3:15 and 1:5). It is also quite plain that the Christian lady has a definite duty toward her husband. Because of her love and respect for him she willingly subjects herself to him (Eph. 5:21-25). Due to such influence she can win him to the Lord, if he is not a Christian, ". if any obey not the word," says Peter, "they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives" (I Pet. 3:1). This however, is not done by outward adorning as a worldly woman would attract a man to herself, but by a righteous life before her husband (verses 2-4). The home is to be turned into a chapel for teaching the word of God, by word and actions.

But the home is not the only place the sisters are to teach the divine oracles. Be it remembered, though, this also must be in its nature private. The older sisters are to teach the younger their duties to the Lord, the church, the home, and their fellow-man (Tit. 2:3-5).

The teaching of unbelievers always being in demand, this is a part "in the work" where the sisters may excel, as exemplified by Priscilla's teaching the eloquent Apollos, who in turn contributed an unending amount of good to the Cause. And Priscilla helped start it all! There are many, as myself, who are indebted to sisters in our ranks for teaching us the truth on many matters. Lord bless them to continue. Why not, my sister, set aside a certain day or hours a week to try to teach someone the truth? (Perhaps this would be good advice to some brethren, too.)

This short article would be incomplete without making mention of the good works of which Jesus taught in Matthew 25. The Lord here shows that the "works of praise" or "public works" are not the only things important to His Cause. Equally important are the more common attributes as "feeding the hungry, giving drink to them who thirst, providing lodging to the stranger, supplying clothing for the naked, a visit to the sick, elderly, and others who are shut in, and ministering to those in prison." Simple, yet full of meaning, are these often forgotten tasks, as the Lord said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." May their tribe increase through the years.

It is my hope this will serve as a small tribute to the faithful sisters who have put the Lord first in all things, and as an encouragement to others to do so. "Remember, today is the first day of the rest of your life." —6552 Dimmick Rd., W. Chester, Ohio, OPA 1972

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Edwin Morris (left), Barney Welch (right), 1950's



Howard King (left), Larry Robertson (right), July 1952

MIXED WITH THE WORDS

By AARON BOONE

God has always cared about His people's relationship to the world around them. Because of this there is a balance we are to find between going into the world to

spread the Gospel (Matthew 28:18-20) and recognizing that we are not of this world (John 15:19; 18:36). To illustrate how important, it is to keep oneself unspotted from the world God used the illustration of a baker who left his cake in the oven a little too long, saying that "Ephraim is a cake unturned" (Hosea 7:8). Literally, Ephraim (All of Israel) is a cake that has been burned. Why? Because they had mixed themselves with the world (Hosea 7:8), in their actions, alliances, and their worship (Hosea 5:10;7:8;8:8).

In like manner today, when we become Christians our relationship with the world changes (1Peter 2:9). Israel as burnt cake is given to us as a warning lest we as "The salt of the earth should lose our flavor. Then [being] good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men" (Matthew 5: 13). Yet far too often Christians find themselves walking the line with the world as they mix their Godly light with the darkness of the world. Paul makes this clear in his second letter to the Corinthians saying that our relationship to the world is one that would be an 'Unequally yoked' relationship. Paul anticipates our questioning of this and gives five reasons why. (1) Righteousness has no place with lawlessness. (2) Light doesn't mix with darkness. (3) Christ has no fellowship with Satan. (4) Believers (Christians) have no part with unbelievers. (5) The temple of God doesn't agree with Idols (2 Corinthians 6:14-16).

Points 1,2,3, and 5 are often crystal clear for us, but we sometimes over look point 4. For this reason, God gives us the burnt cake of Israel to illustrate how important our relationships are, they will make us or break us. One writer once said, "show me your friends, and I'll show you your future", and if we today think we can show God our close-knit relationship with the world and expect to have a relationship with Him we have missed the examples set before us by Hosea and the New Testament writers.

GOD FORBID....continued from page one

justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24). Also: "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (Rom. 3:28). Paul here is setting forth

a contrast between two different systems by which men seek justification-- one being a system of law and the other a system of grace. Justification “denotes the act of pronouncing righteous...signifying the establishment of a person as just by acquittal from guilt” [Vine, P. 624]. Paul argues that the Jews could not be justified by the law of Moses because a system of law requires perfect obedience (where its commandments are never violated/ not even one time). “For not the hearers of the law are just before God,” Paul reasons in Rom. 2:13, “but the doers of the law shall be justified.”

THE CURSE OF THE LAW

Jesus was the only one who kept the law perfectly, never once violating its precepts or demands, and that’s why He alone was qualified to redeem man from “the curse of the law” (Gal. 3:13). This is referring to that curse of condemnation that was pronounced on “he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them” (Deut. 27:26). The man who seeks justification by a system of law is described by Paul in this way: “For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith” (Gal. 3:10-11). How does God justify us? Again, going back to Rom. 3:24, Paul’s answer is that it comes through a system of grace: “Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”

The good news of the gospel is that Jesus went to the cross and gave Himself as a sacrifice for our sins and by faith we accept the benefits of His shed blood. Notice how Paul puts it all together for us in Eph. 1:7: “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.” Simply put, God justifies us (declares we are righteous) by forgiving us of our sins. Thank God that we live under a system of grace where we are provided with forgiveness by the blood of our Savior!

WHAT GRACE DOES NOT ALLOW

Was Paul saying or implying that God’s grace is a license to commit sin? Because we are not under the law of Moses (seeking to be justified under that kind of system), should we conclude that faithfulness to the teachings of Christ is not necessary to going to heaven? No, “Perish the thought!”--That’s the very attitude that

Paul was combating. Why? Because it is contrary to what God has revealed in His word. Paul did not want his readers to look upon grace as a free pass to live sinful and lawless lives. Indeed, when preachers present grace as equivalence to spiritual lawlessness, they have taken a great doctrine and turned it into something that is cheap and perverted. Incidentally, there were those in the first century who were “turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness” (Jude 4), meaning they had perverted it into a license for immorality, and Jude says they were under God’s condemnation. That is the result of clinging to a misunderstanding of grace!

One man put it like this: “Grace is no more a license to sin than electricity is a license to execute yourself.” A person, of course, can use electricity in an unprofitable way, but that is not what it’s for. Instead, we use it to bless our lives-- to provide heat in the winter, keep us cool in the summer, illuminate our homes with light, etc. While grace is meant to bring us spiritual life, sin and refusing to abide in Christ’s doctrine (2 John 9) will only separate us from the Lord.

FALSE REASONING

Paul demonstrates in Romans 6 how false reasoning leads to false arguments. Evidently some were asserting that it’s good to sin because it brings more glory to God’s grace, but here is how Paul exposed that fallacious argument (verses 1-2): “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” Brethren, the danger of false reasoning is that it leads to false arguments that lead to false living! Furthermore, some in the early church, just like people today, looked upon grace as a license to sin and to disregard the teachings of Christ and His apostles. Notice Paul’s answer to that in verse 15: “What then? Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.”

What Paul wrote about grace in Romans does not negate the fact that baptism is essential to salvation. After all, Paul affirmed in Rom. 6:3 that we are “baptized into Jesus Christ.” Furthermore, Paul’s epistle to the Romans does not give comfort to those who believe a child of God cannot fall from grace. Bear in mind that this same Paul wrote in Gal. 5:4, “Ye are severed from Christ, ye who would be justified by the law; ye are fallen away from grace” (ASV). Also, never did Paul

give permission to tamper with the divine ordinances of the church! Instead, he commanded brethren to “keep the ordinances as I delivered them to you” (1 Cor. 11:2) and he gave instructions on how to observe the Lord’s supper in a scriptural and acceptable way. Sadly, false reasoning is a dangerous thing that leads souls away from the truth.

THINGS TO CONSIDER...continued from page two

There is, however, an inherent problem in all this...The church that Jesus built is not a denomination. The church described in the New Testament is not a denomination. We know this because Jesus did not condone division. In fact, he prayed for unity. His famous prayer in John 17 reveals His desire for unity. “Holy Father, keep them in Your name, the name which You have given Me, so that they may be one just as We are” (emphasis added). Later, the apostle Paul also urged the Corinthian church, “Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Cor. 1:10, emphasis added). If ever there were a Biblical precedent for ending denominationalism among professing Christians, these passages alone would be it.

However, these passages are not alone. Consider the following ten contrasts between denominationalism and the New Testament church.

1. Denominationalism teaches that there are “many bodies” or “churches,” but Ephesians 4:4 says “there is one body” or church.
2. Denominations are founded by mere ordinary people, but the church of the New Testament was built and founded by Jesus Christ Himself (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2).
3. Denominations have mere human beings, organized bodies, or humanly established headquarters as their heads; the New Testament church has only Christ as its head (Ephesians 1:22-23).
4. Many denominations like to claim, “Sola Scriptura” (the “Bible Only”), but they nevertheless adhere to humanly devised creeds (Westminster Confession, Augsburg Confession, etc.). But the New Testament church must have only the Bible as its “creed”

(Matthew 4:4; 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

5. Denominations by their very nature must take humanly devised names; this is the very meaning of the word “denomination.” The New Testament church, however, takes only the name of Christ (Acts 4:12; 1 Peter 4:16).
6. Denominations involve the practice of following certain individuals and their distinctive doctrines. But in 1 Corinthians 1:10-13, following human beings is condemned.
7. In denominationalism, membership in any given denomination is not necessary for salvation. However, Jesus “is the savior of the body,” the church (Ephesians 5:23); thus, one cannot be saved unless one is a member of the New Testament church.
8. Denominationalism has “many faiths,” depending on the teaching of each denomination. The New Testament teaches that there is “one faith” (Ephesians 4:5).
9. Some denominations practice one form of baptism (“sprinkling”), some another (“affusion” or “pouring”), and still others another form (“immersion”); yet Paul said, “there is one baptism” (Ephesians 4:5).
10. Denominations typically “vote people in” or people “join” a denomination, but in the New Testament, people are “added to the church” by the Lord (Acts 2:47) when they obey the gospel.

Many more contrasts could be noted, but these are sufficient to show that denominationalism is not a Biblical concept, and the New Testament church is not a denomination.

Our Departed

WILDES - Wayne Rene Wildes, age 61, of Summertown, TN passed away Thursday, March 10, 2022, in a tragic automobile accident. He was a native of Bonaire, GA, and resided in Crawford County, GA for 36 years. He was a self-employed carpenter and a member of Chapel Grove Church of Christ. He was preceded in death by his parents, Lacy and Martha Rose Chapman Wildes; two brothers, McKinnon Wildes and Marcus Wildes; and one brother-in-law, Kenny Williams. He is survived by his wife, Lisa Wildes of Summertown, TN; one son, Jesse Wildes (Jennifer) of Summertown, TN; one daughter,

Lacy Ivey of Musella, GA: three grandchildren, Jayton Ivey, Nevaeh Ivey, and Waylan Wildes; four sisters, Carolyn Stewart, Marlene Hill (Johnny), Lacine Williams, and Marlyn Roberson (Benny), all of Bonaire, GA; several nieces and nephews. Wayne was not only a brother in Christ, he was one of my closest personal friends. Wayne accompanied me several times to the annual Preachers' Study held in Oklahoma and Texas. He would brightened the gatherings when he appeared. He was a "people's person" always visiting and getting to know new people, Wayne was the main teacher at the Knoxville, GA congregation for many years. He worked hard on his day--job and then worked hard in the evenings and weekends preparing lessons to teach to the congregation. He worked hard on his lessons often calling me up to ask for insight or to "test his thoughts out" before preaching them. Lacy, Wayne's daughter wrote the following: My Daddy has been saying for years that he is one of the richest men alive [and] he wasn't talking about money...(he was talking about) LOVE. My Daddy lived a happy life with a happy wife [and] many good genuine people by his side every step of the way. He wore many hats but at the top he was [a] God-fearing, hard-working, handyman that could fix just about anything and he loved to talk, sing, play an instrument, fish, etc. but most of all [he spent] time with those that loved him! Wayne and I met when our children were young and our children would grow up together. We would worship together. We had Bible studies together. We sang together. We went camping and fishing together. My kids were as much friends with Wayne as I was and they were all present at his funeral to tell him good-bye. Aaron, Nathan, and I were honored to speak at Wayne's funeral. Wayne's body was laid to rest in the cemetery next to the Chapel Grove church building to await the resurrection of that body when the Lord returns. —George Battey

RICHARDSON - Ruby Nadine Meents Richardson, passed from this life on Wednesday, March 30, 2022. Nadine was born November 26, 1930, daughter of Ralph and Pearl Triplett Meents. She lived her entire life in Laclede County near Lebanon, Missouri. On June 7, 1948, she was united in marriage to Lowell Raymond Richardson. After she and Lowell were married, they made their home on their farm near Lebanon and lovingly raised their family. Nadine was a devoted farmer's wife and homemaker and also worked for Walmart for ten years. She was a longtime member of the Lee's Summit Church of Christ, near Lebanon,

Missouri. Nadine was very active and involved in service to the church. She assisted Lowell in his service as an elder and often hosted preachers and their families during gospel meetings. Nadine grew up in the Lee's Summit church at a time that five evangelists called the church home and was taught at an early age opposition to innovations in worship and deviation from truth. Nadine, even in her fog of dementia at her passing, would not tolerate or participate in any departure from God's word, nor would she miss worship services. She loved the Lord, His church, the truth of His word, and her church family. Her family was always at the center of her life and she greatly enjoyed having time with all of her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Nadine was preceded in death by her parents and Lowell, her husband of sixty-nine years. She is survived by a daughter, Carol Branstetter, and her husband, Frank, of Lebanon, Missouri; two sons, Kurt Richardson, and his wife, Leta, and Kendall Richardson, and his wife, Sara, all of Phillipsburg, Missouri; seven grandchildren, Tyler, Seth, Laura, Allison, Alayna, Sandra, and Vicky; eleven great-grandchildren, Will, Allie, Emma, Luke, McKenzie, Justin, Josh, Jase, Jamie, Travis, and Cody; a brother, Donnie Meents, of Bolivar, Missouri; a sister, Brenda Gardner, of Springfield, Missouri; a sister-in-law, Leia Doing, of Lebanon, Missouri; and several nieces and nephews. It was my honor as her nephew to speak at her funeral. Brother David Griffin assisted me and Brother Mark Triplett led the congregational singing. —Randy Meents

ROWLAND - Lyndell Raye Rowland, age 88, passed away Tuesday, April 6, 2022, at Hinds Hospice in Fresno, CA. Lyndell was born November 16, 1933 to Jack and Flora Stalcup in Bakersfield, CA. Within a few years, her father's work took the family to east Los Angeles where Lyndell grew up and attended school. As a young lady, in the mid 1940's, she was baptized for the remission of her sins and remained a faithful member of the Church of Christ throughout the rest of her life. Between her junior and senior year of high school the family moved to North Hollywood. Following their relocation, Lyndell graduated from Hollywood High School at the Hollywood Bowl in 1951. Following graduation, she was married to Don Rowland November 25, 1954. God blessed this union with three children: Janet (July 21, 1955), Jim (September 30, 1959), and Jackie (July 10, 1963). Lyndell began her working career at Pac Bell, where she worked for about 10 years. In 1981, she went to work for MCA where she worked as an executive

assistant for 16 years. Although often surrounded by the glitz and glamour of Hollywood in her working years, she was never impressed by it. Lyndell's greatest love was for the Lord, His Church, her family, and her friends. Throughout her life, Lyndell loved everyone and everyone loved her. She was an amazing listener. Her calm and loving demeanor invited people to share the burdens of their life with her. This included her family, her closest friends, celebrities calling to speak with her boss at MCA, and complete strangers. For Lyndell, a hurried trip to the grocery store could easily turn into a counseling session on the cereal aisle. She will be deeply missed by all who knew her. The world will be a tougher place to navigate without her friendly smile, her contagious laugh, her calming voice, her inner strength, her gentle hands, her inexhaustible kindness toward others, and her stable wisdom. She was preceded in death by her parents, her brother-in-law Paul Mackey, her sister Gene Mackey, her daughter Janet Trent, and her granddaughter Megan Trent. She is survived by her husband Don Rowland of Clovis, CA, her son Jim Rowland of Sacramento, CA, her daughter Jackie Rowland, of Seattle, WA, her son-in-law Geary Trent of Clovis, her grandson Matt Trent and wife Rachel of Norman, OK, her grandson Andy Trent and wife Rendi of Oakdale, CA, her granddaughter Lori Culver of Clovis, CA, her grandson Cameron Rowland and wife Lindsey of Tuscon, AZ and her grandson Connor Rowland of Eugene, OR, 12 great-grandchildren, and a great number of extended family and friends.

Field Reports

Don L. King, 1147 Sherry Way, Livermore, CA 94550, old_paths@juno.com, April 14. We have enjoyed being at home lately and happy that all is at peace. Last Lord's Day we preached at the Yuba City congregation both services. It had been a couple of years since we were there due to the pandemic situation but things have eased some now and they are getting back to normal it seems. This coming Lord's Day we plan to be at home and then following Lord's Days be at Stockton, Turlock, and Manteca. Shortly after the 4th of July meetings we are to be at Weatherford, TX for a gospel meeting. Later we are to be in meetings at other locations which we will announce as the time draws nearer, Lord willing. In June we look forward to Joe Hisle being with us at Livermore and later Carl Johnson is to hold the Labor

Day meeting for us. Lord willing, we are beginning to emerge from Covid attacks everywhere and can get back to work. Preachers, don't forget the paper this summer as you go from place to place. We need to hear from you with articles and reports. Lord bless the faithful.

Kevin Presley, 108 Mulberry Court, Dothan, AL 36303, April 10, 2022. Our first meeting of the year was with the church in West Monroe, LA. Crowds were exceptionally large with excellent support from area congregations. An enthusiastic and joyful spirit prevailed throughout the weekend. Our television program has been on the air in Monroe for thirteen years and continues to generate much interest in that area. Floyd Harris, Jr. labors with the church here and is doing a good work. It was also a pleasure to be with the Springer Rd. church in Lawrenceburg, TN for a meeting. Nate Bibens is doing a good work here and the church is enjoying a time of growth and vitality. We had numerous community visitors including a man who was eager to study the bible and learn the truth. Area churches also supported the meeting exceptionally well. I am presently in a meeting with the Crestview congregation in Wichita Falls, TX. Mark Bailey now makes this his home and works with the church here. It is always a joy to be with him and cooperate in any work he is engaged in. I love the Crestview church and always look forward to preaching there. They are also airing our television program and it was good to have several visitors who watch each week. This past week, we in Dothan enjoyed the preaching and association of Frank Brancato. He held a wonderful meeting and we were all uplifted and edified by his good preaching. Our television work continues to grow and generate worldwide leads. Several have obeyed the gospel or been restored to the faith over the past year. Of particular note is a man from Turkey who discovered our YouTube channel over the winter. He is a former Anglican priest and presently works among a network of churches in the Middle East, He has found the material of great interest and has been translating our sermons and using them in his teaching among hundreds of people in that part of the world. Clint Defrance graciously agreed to begin studying with this man and finds him to be very sincere and eager to learn. He has not yet obeyed the gospel but the situation looks very promising and if he does, he would likely have tremendous influence among many in that land. Pray that his heart will continue to open to the truth. May God bless the righteous work of His people everywhere and may His kingdom ever increase.

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WALKS THROUGH THE BIBLE...

ROCK CLIMBING - LITTLE IS MUCH WHEN GOD IS IN IT!

By JERRY DICKINSON

“Now it happened one day that Jonathan the son of Saul said to the young man who bore his armor, ‘Come, let us go over to the Philistine garrison that is on the other side.’ But he did not tell his father. Between the passes, by which Jonathan sought to go over to the Philistines’ garrison, there was a sharp rock on one side and a sharp rock on the other side. And the name of one was Bozez, and the name of the other Senah. The front one faced northward opposite Michmash, and the other southward opposite Gibeah. Then Jonathan said to the young man who bore his armor, ‘Come, let us go over to the garrison of these uncircumcised; it may be that the LORD will work for us. For nothing restrains the LORD from saving by many or by few’ (1 Samuel 14:1-6)

My dear friend and fellow preacher, Richard DeGough, called recently and told me how much he enjoys WALKS THROUGH THE BIBLE. I so appreciated his kind words of encouragement. He then told me he had a suggestion for a future article. He had been thinking about the old song, Little Is Much When God Is In It, “You could write an article, he suggested, about how God used little things and little people to accomplish great things.” Richard told me he had been reading through the Bible and had just read about Gideon and the 300 men who defeated the overwhelming forces of the Midianites. He mentioned the rod of Moses, David’s sling shot, and the little maid who waited on Naaman. I told him it was an excellent suggestion and I would work on it. “You are not obligated to use my suggestion,” he told me more than once. I laughingly answered that I knew that, but I loved the suggestion and would come up with an article.

I immediately thought about the daring and risky decision of Jonathan to attack a Philistine garrison with only his young armor bearer by his side. While Saul his father waited and hesitated to attack, Jonathan decided it was time to do something. He did not inform his father Saul of his decision lest he would be forbidden such a reckless assault as he planned. The garrison was stationed on a high plateau and from one direction was unassailable and unapproachable. Well, almost! To get to the garrison you had to go through a pass and climb over two steep vertical rocks. They even had names, Bozez and Senah which meant slippery and thorny. It was such an impossible climb that there were no guards placed at that entrance to the camp. Jonathan rightly decides that if he and his young armor bearer can climb the rocks they will completely surprise the Philistines and take the garrison.

Why would Jonathan take such a seemingly reckless and daring chance? He believed, as he declared, “The LORD can save by many or by few!” One translation renders his words, “The LORD can save with much or with little!” Indeed, Little is much when God is in it. Jonathan and the young man with him climb on their hands and knees over the thorny and slippery rocks and rout the Philistine garrison. Jonathan is proclaimed a hero by everyone, except his jealous father Saul. Saul declares that Jonathan should be executed because he did not follow orders, but the people rise up and let Saul know that Jonathan will not be executed. He is the hero of the hour!

It is very soon after this that Jonathan and David meet. David has likewise shown courageous daring by meeting and killing the Philistine champion Goliath. The young David appears before Saul still holding the head of Goliath. Saul asks him who he is and who his father is. Standing before Saul is his replacement, but David humbly states he is simply a shepherd boy who keeps sheep for his father Jesse in Bethlehem. The Bible says when Jonathan saw and heard David speak, his soul was knit to him. He and David became closer than brothers. I think they saw mirrored in each other similar traits. Both were courageous, almost recklessly so. They were daring and bold, but their courage was based on a deep faith in God. Both believed and declared that the LORD would give them their victories. Little is much when God is in it!

With nothing more than a walking stick Moses plagued Egypt until Pharaoh let the Israelites go. With that staff he parted the Red Sea and brought water from a rock. Little is much if God is in it! With a sling and a stone David took down the Philistine champion. The term, David and Goliath, is iconic and universally used to illustrate that, Little is much if God is in it. The healing of the Syrian general Naaman is one of the greatest stories ever told, but it was a little Israelite slave girl who is the main character. Little is much indeed! And yes, the LORD showed Gideon that it is quality not quantity that makes an army great. “By the 300 that lapped I will save you.” Let us note that God saved Israel, but he did it with a little army of courageous and faithful men. Jonathan and his young servant (I would like to know his name too), the daring rock climbers, won the day. But as Jonathan said, it was the LORD who worked for them and He won the battle. If we, like Jonathan, will go in Jesus name we too will win the crown.

Does the place you’re called to labor seem so small and little known?
It is great if God is in it, and He’ll not forget His own.
Little is much if God is in it, labor not for wealth or fame;
There’s a crown and you can win it, if you’ll go in Jesus name.