

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

# OLD PATHS ADVOCATE

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

“Thus saith the Lord, ‘stand ye in the ways, and see and ask for the Old Paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest of your souls.’ (Jer. 6:16) “And they that be of Thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The Repairer of the Breach, The Restorer of Paths to Dwell in.” (Isa. 58:12).

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NO. 8

## MAY CHURCHES SCRIPTURALLY COOPERATE?

By *KEVIN W. PRESLEY*

It may seem absurd to even ask if churches may cooperate in the work of the Lord. It is obvious that churches in the first century were familiar with each other and at times assisted saints in other locations or helped in work that immediately benefited a church in another place. When a famine was prophesied about in Judea, the church at Antioch sent relief to the needy saints scattered throughout that area. (Acts 11:27-30) Some years later, a similar need arose in Jerusalem and several churches, at the Apostle Paul’s urging, sent relief to the Jerusalem Christians in their time of need. (Rom 15:25-28) There were also times when Paul was supported by churches far away from the places where he was working at the time. (2 Cor 11:8) Such examples teach us that congregations may indeed financially cooperate in the benevolent and evangelistic work of another church. Does that, however, grant us the authority to do as we see fit in the sending, receiving, oversight, and distribution of such funds? Or do the scriptures furnish us with a pattern and thus restrict this activity? There are several fundamental facts that will help us determine the answer.

### WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

Common misconceptions about the church have led to a great deal of confusion and false teaching in this matter and others. Some assume that the church is a world-wide, tangible organization. Catholicism as well as Protestant Denominationalism view the church in this way. The Roman Catholic Church is obviously governed by a hierarchy of power ending at the Papal throne in Rome. Every Catholic church is part of this religious structure. Many denominations are made up of multiple congregations that form a world-wide religious organization with some structure of leadership and some organized program of work, etc. Some hold annual conventions and/or maintain a headquarters with elected or appointed leaders and congregations that maintain certain requirements are considered a part of the organization as a whole. The New Testament teaches no such arrangement. In some passages, the church is spoken of in the universal sense. (Matt 16:18, Acts 2:47, Eph 3:21, Col 1:18)

When thus used, it is merely a word describing all people who are saved in Christ. The word ‘church’ (Greek - ecclesia) means ‘a calling out’ or ‘assembly’ and refers to those who are called out of the world and into a saved relationship with God. It is a concept or idea, not an organization. Jesus is its only head (Eph 1:22); the apostles and prophets of the first century are its only government on earth (Eph 2:20); and thus, the New Testament is its only creed and charter. It is in error to think of the church of Christ as having any form or organization any larger than any one local church. When the word ‘church’ refers to a visible organization or functioning body, it refers to a local congregation of baptized believers worshipping and working together in their locale and under the oversight of its own local elders. (1 Cor. 1:2) Local churches are only bound together by their mutual faith in Christ Jesus and their obedience to the faith, NOT by any form of organization. The universal church has no government besides Christ and His apostles. The universal church is not assigned any work to perform as a corporate body. All work and organization is assigned only to each local church. This makes each church of Christ (Rom 16:16) independently functioning and governed - or autonomous. Here are a few of the distinctive properties of a local church.

- 1) Only a LOCAL church can be called together for worship and edification (1 Cor 14:23) although Christians from other places may visit that congregation. (Rom 16:2)
- 2) Every church is to have its own overseers. (Acts 14:22-23) Peter told elders to feed and oversee “the flock of God which is AMONG YOU.” (1 Pet 5:1-2)
- 3) Each church is to collect and oversee its own funds (1 Cor 16:1-2)
- 4) Each church determines its own fellowship (Rom 16:1-2, Acts 9:26-28)

Nowhere in these or other scriptures is any organization, human government, or work ascribed to anything larger than or besides a local church. Peter commanded Christians to “love the brotherhood.” (1 Pet 2:17) He referred to the universal church as the ‘brotherhood’, NOT the ‘church hood’. Many have the misconception that the universal church is a collection of local churches. This is incorrect.

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Editorial

FORGIVENESS OF SINS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

By *BENNIE CRYER*

I was somewhat caught offguard this summer when I became aware of some who were espousing the idea that there was actual forgiveness of sins by God during the time The Old Testament was His rule for His people. Some were saying we have been wrong in teaching that the sins of God’s people were “rolled forward” each year and remembered again. I have sat at the feet of some of the great preachers of the past and heard them say time after time that those people’s sins were remembered again each year. One thing I have learned is that when I differ from something these scholars of the past have taught as truth; I had better make doubly sure of my position because they generally had it down right. I promised several that I would study this issue and provide some information about it. This is the purpose of this article and if you differ with my observations in it I would personally appreciate your input.

THE PROBLEM

In the Old Testament there were sacrifices for sins. The writer of Hebrews declared however that it was not possible for the blood of bulls and of goats to take away sins Hebrews 1:4. But in the Old Testament itself it is declared in several places like Exodus 34:6-7 that God would and did forgive sin in the Old Testament. Are these two verses contradicting each other? No. They are simply illustrations of the truth that the forgiveness of sins in the Old Testament was a different kind than the one found in the New Testament that God’s people could embrace and enjoy since the cross.

ZECHARIAH 13:1 14:8

“In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness ... And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea...” This prophecy was fulfilled when Jesus died on the cross, arose from the grave, and ascended into heaven to reign as king. Whatever the “fountain” was it was not available in Zechariah’s day. Since it was to be “for sin” it sets the stage for the idea that there was something not available for sin in his day that would be available when Christ would come. Not only that, the fountain would flow backwards and a part forward symbolized by the “former” and “hinder” seas. In other words, the cleansing power of Christ’s blood would flow backwards to those living under former covenants and forward to cleanse those living under the present covenant to the end of time. If those people received actual forgiveness upon offering a sin offering why

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## QUERIST COLUMN

By *RONNY F. WADE*

**Question:** Would you please explain the meaning of the phrase “let a man examine himself” and “he that drinks unworthily” in 1Corinthians 11:27-29?

**Answer:** The verses in question read as follows: “Whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup.” The word “examine” is from the Greek “dokimazo” meaning to test, or prove. Each person is to test or prove him or herself. I cannot examine you, you cannot examine me. I know my heart, but I do not know your heart. I am out of place if I try to determine what is in your heart. But why am I to examine myself? The answer lies in verse 27. I must not eat and drink the Lord’s Supper unworthily. Unworthily is an adverb of manner and tells how one does something. What is it that I must do when I eat the bread and drink of the cup? Paul says that I must “discern” the Lord’s body. Discerning is a translation of the Greek word diakrino, which means to “judge correctly.” When I partake of the communion without properly realizing that it is a memorial of the body and blood of Christ, and treat it as nothing more than a common meal, I eat and drink damnation to myself. Participating in this observance in a worthy manner has nothing to do with our being “worthy” to participate. I have heard some say “let everyone examine himself to see if we are worthy to participate.” Paul did not say that, nor did he command it. We are to examine or test ourself to make sure that we are discerning the emblems as being representative of the Lord’s body and blood. But what if one partakes and his/her heart or life is not right? Does that affect me? I don’t believe it does. I am responsible for myself, and no one else. Since I am not a mind reader I don’t know what exists in the mind of others. Nor do I always know what might exist in their life. This is undoubtedly the reason Paul tells us to “examine ourselves.”

**Question:** Does James 4:13-17 teach that it is wrong to make plans for the future?

**Answer:** The sin of these verses is not the making of future plans, but rather making them without taking God

into account. The people of these verses were assuming that “tomorrow” they would go into a city, spend a year there, buy, sell, and even make a gain.” Inspiration answers: “how do you know that?” None of us know what will happen tomorrow, first of all because we don’t even know if we will be alive tomorrow. James points out that our life is like a vapor that appears briefly and then is gone. He then tells us that we should say “if the Lord wills” we will do such as mentioned in these verses. I suppose all of us have plans for tomorrow and even into the distant future. It is not wrong to make plans. Jesus taught the advantage of planning in the statements of Luke 14:28 with reference to the man intending to build a tower. Wise people have always planned, the passage in James underscores the truth that the future lies in the hands of God. “If the Lord wills” we will do such and such. This should be a solemn reminder to all of us that our lives are temporary and uncertain. We are here today and gone tomorrow. Thousands have undoubtedly planned to obey God at some point in their future only to fail because death intervened. Felix and Agrippa are prime examples. How many plan to right wrongs they have committed, or reconcile with alienated brethren or friends, “tomorrow?” The list goes on and on. Failing to take God into account has been the downfall of many well-intentioned people. (Send all questions to Ronny F. Wade P.O. Box 14352 Springfield, MO 65814 or ronnywade36@gmail.com)

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### PAGES FROM THE PAST

*The following article comes from the pen of Brother Edwin Morris. It was published in the February 1960 Issue of the Old Paths Advocate. Brother Morris warns that liberalism only leads to more heartache and sorrow. He also shows us that acceptance of those who are liberal only strengthens their position and does nothing to strengthen the truth. - Rick Martin*

#### HAVE NO FELLOWSHIP

By Edwin S. Morris

The Apostle Paul in writing to the Ephesian brethren in Eph. 5:11, penned these words, "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but rather reprove them." Let us notice the meaning of this verse by first noticing the meaning of some of the words.

The word "fellowship" comes from the Greek word defined by Thayer as: "to become a partaker together with others, or to have fellowship with a thing." Wuest says: "to become a partaker together with others. The word refers to a joint-participation between two or more individuals in a common interest and a common activity."

"Unfruitful" --- Thayer says: "without fruit; barren; metaph. not yielding what it ought to yield; contributing nothing to the instruction, improvement, comfort, of others, by litotes pernicious."

"Darkness"--- Strong says: "shadiness, i. e. obscurity." We find in the Scriptures it is often used in contrast to what is light. The darkness being everything that is opposed to light or what is truth.

"Reprove" --- Thayer says: "to convict confute, refute; contextually by conviction to bring to light, to expose."

A line of broad demarcation was to separate the Church from the world; and not only was there to be no participation and no connivance, but there was in addition to be "rebuke." "It was a duty to have nothing to do with the deeds of darkness; but it was a far higher obligation to reprimand them. There was to be, not simply negative separation, but positive rebuke-not by the contrast of their own purity, but by formal and solemn reproof. Not only must the Christian avoid evil; he must expose it. Paul has primary reference here to the sins just listed but certainly no one would deny that the application and teaching would apply to all sins and anything opposed to the teachings of Christ.

Who is in darkness that Paul says have no fellowship with? Let us consider this. First, the alien sinner that has never obeyed Christ is in darkness. In Luke 1:79-"To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death." Again in Acts 26:18, Paul said, "To open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God". Rom. 2:19, "And art

confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness." These who are out of Christ, alien sinners, are in darkness. Paul teaches us that we are not to have any fellowship with them that is in a common activity and interest. Since they teach and practice things contrary to God's will we cannot fellowship them, and not only that, we are to expose them or bring their false teachings and ungodly lives to light. Second, the erring child of God, and those who have once known the way of righteousness and have gone back are in darkness. In 1 Jno. 1:6, "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." 1 Jno. 2:9-11, "He that saith he is in the light and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes." Notice also 2 Pet. 1:9; Rom. 13:11-12. Again Paul teaches us that we are not to have any fellowship with this unfruitful works of darkness, and that we are to expose them. Yet, today we see a modern trend to want to fellowship part of those who are in darkness. When people practice and do those things not found in the Bible, they are in darkness.

There is a trend on the part of a few in our ranks today to want to fellowship some of those who are in digression, such as those who practice the use of the Sunday School, individual cups, wine, instrumental music, etc. The plea is, that "if they are coming toward us we can use them." I would like to pose this question, "Are those who practice these things in light or darkness?" If these practices are not sustained by the Bible, can we fellowship such? If they are not sustained by the Bible, are they sin? If they are sin, we sin when we practice such or bid it Godspeed. If I can call on these whom we believe to be in error without any reconciliation or rectifying of their wrongs, why cannot we call on the alien sinner, also? If we can call on the erring child who is in sin and coming to the truth, why by the same reasoning, cannot we call on the alien sinner who is in sin and coming to the truth? Notice James 5:19-20-"Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall, save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins." Notice that James calls this child of God that erred from the truth "a sinner." Which is worse in the sight of God, the alien, or the erring? Both are sinners. If any difference, I suppose 2 Pet. 2:20-22 gives the answer. Now God has given two laws of pardon; to the alien sinner to hear, believe, repent, be baptized (Matt. 7:24; Mk. 16:16; Luke 13:3; Mk. 16:16). To the erring child of God (Acts 8:22; James 5:16). Until they do we are to have 'no fellowship with them. Now, if I can say that the one who has erred is coming toward us and fellowship him why not, by the same logic, say that the alien who is coming toward us can be fellowshiped?

The word “converteth” means to cause to return change, to bring back. I believe Sunday School, cups, wine, instrumental music, and all other innovations in the worship, are wrong. I oppose them and oppose fellowshiping those who practice such. I cannot conscientiously call on them to take part in the service until they are converted to the truths on the issues. The liberalism today only leads to further heartaches and sorrows. Just look about today and in the past and see where the liberalism finally ends. Some argue, “Oh, if we will be nice to them and let them take part we can win them.” You remember this - they have the same thing in mind. In one place, a brother said this, and the digressives he had been calling on told some they nearly had this brother converted. My own personal experience, when I was with the cups faction, I visited the loyal congregation (at least it was supposed to be), and they called on me to take part when I had given no indication of coming toward them, and that certainly was a hindrance to me. It nearly kept me from seeing the truth. I at once thought if they could call on me, I must be O.K. I knew that if I did change, I could not conscientiously call on those who were still in error. Brethren, the Church of our Lord is not built on man and regardless of whom that man is, and how great a knowledge he might have, he is not indispensable.

Let us unite our forces and stand for the truth that has been defended so successfully over the years and use all our power and might to fight the modern trend of liberalism, digression, etc. Remember this, we can oppose these trends, and still have the great love of God in our heart. Just because we stand pat for the truth does not mean we do not love the souls of men. Our prayer is for unity.

### WHY MEGA-CHURCHES ARE WRONG

By AARON BATTEY

The bigger the number the better. This is the unsung motto of the denominations today. Churches today would leave the impression with their gargantuan assemblies that Jesus said, “Broad is the gate and easy is the way that leads to life, and there are many who go in by it!” But wait, Jesus said, “Narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it,” (Matt. 7:14). Jesus would further proclaim, “Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword,” (Matt. 10:34) indicating that the way is indeed rigorous. This type of teaching would lead to many of his disciples forsaking Him in John 6:66. This is not the portrayal in the modern mega-church era.

Mega-churches are by definition, churches with more than 2,000 people in attendance on an average weekly basis (Bird, 2012). Warren Bird cites the earliest known church to have more than 2,000 members and sustain

that number through the 21st century as the Moody Church of Chicago (2012). Subsequently modern community churches like Life Church may not equal 2,000 in weekly attendance (or maybe they do) but when a police officer is required to safely direct the traffic into and out of the church ... the church is too big. This truth can be understood from reading 1 Thessalonians 2.

1 Thessalonians is a very intimate epistle by Paul to a young church. Perhaps no other epistle by Paul is more positive and uplifting besides the book of Philippians. The church had not been established long, as can be logically deduced from reading the epistle in conjunction with the history of the Thessalonian conversion in Acts 17. Although Paul was only with these brethren and sisters for a short time before being driven out of town by the unbelieving Jews, he says this,

“We (Paul, Silas, and Timothy) were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children. So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us ... as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children,” (1 Thess. 2:7-11).

Paul, Silas, and Timothy’s relationship with these brethren was as personal and intimate as a mother’s care for her children and a father’s love for his children. No greater bond of love can be found than the two used in illustration by Paul. This is how well Paul knew these brethren on an individual basis. Certainly he could not have said these words had the church been 2,000 in attendance every week, even if he had stayed in Thessalonica for years on end. These verses exemplify the Christian unity and closeness required of every congregation.

This bond of unity is impossible when there are so many people in attendance that one cannot remember the names of people, let alone actually know the people. Bigger numbers do not equate to a better church. This is only one of many reasons that mega-churches fail to meet the New Testament church example.

Bird, Warren. (2012). World’s first megachurch? Leadership Network. Retrieved from [http://leadnet.org/worlds\\_first\\_megachurch/](http://leadnet.org/worlds_first_megachurch/)

MAY CHURCHES .... continued from page one

The universal church or brotherhood is made up of Christians who are then joined to a local church where they live. It is critical that we understand this concept. Departures from these patterns and principles is what led to the eventual emergence of Roman Catholicism. Unfortunately, the Protestant Reformation did not restore the original concept or form of the church as it existed in the first century.

A true restoration of primitive Christianity rejects any Romanish effort to centralize the government and work of local churches. Local churches are to independently and autonomously function to edify themselves, evangelize the world, and care for their own needy members.

It may be tempting to consolidate our work thinking that we can make a greater impact if churches would contribute to a centralized organization or perform a large-scale work by several churches working through the leadership of one church. This thinking led to the Missionary Societies of the 1800's that divided the restoration movement. This model proposes that churches may all contribute to a central society which will send out and pay preachers and execute a worldwide work to preach the gospel. The similar 'sponsoring church' arrangement became prevalent in the early 20th century when some proposed the gospel could be preached and the needy assisted more efficiently if many churches funneled support through a designated church which would oversee this large work. The 'Herald of Truth' radio and television program was funded and overseen using this model beginning in the 1950's. The ways of men may appeal to many people because they seem to be more efficient or an expedient way of doing the Lord's work but they are just that: the ways of men and not the ways of God.

#### HOW DID 1ST CENTURY CHURCHES COOPERATE?

This is not to suggest that churches may not scripturally cooperate in benevolence and evangelism, they indeed may. We have New Testament examples of this but each example reveals a method of cooperation that does not violate the independence and autonomy of each local church. 1) Early churches assisted needy saints in another location. In Acts 11:27-30, the church at Antioch sent relief to the famine-stricken churches in Judea. This money was sent by the hands of their own messengers, Paul and Barnabas, and taken to the elders of each Judean church to be distributed to their own members in need. No money was funneled through any church or organization before reaching the church in need. Later, when saints were in need in Jerusalem, Paul told the church at Corinth along with the churches in Galatia to take up a collection and then to send money by the hands of messengers who they chose (today we could use the postal service, etc.) directly to Jerusalem. (Rom 15:25-28, 1 Cor 16:1-3) No church or organization became a central collection and distribution point before the money reached the need in Jerusalem. 2) Churches also contributed to Paul's support while he was on his missionary journeys. Paul said that he 'robbed other churches to do you (Corinth) service.' (2 Cor 11:8) Paul left out of Antioch to go preach the gospel and strengthen churches but there is no

example of any church sending funds to Antioch to support Paul. Every example cited by Paul indicates that their support was sent directly to Paul by the hands of a messenger. (Phil 2:25, 4:10,15-16) Their decision to support Paul was made autonomously and sent directly.

#### EMERGENCY NOT EFFICIENCY

These examples all took place in a time of need or emergency. They were not arrangements set up to more 'efficiently' preach the gospel or care for the needy. The early church evangelized the world without missionary societies, conventions of churches, interchurch alliances, and super-congregational structures or organizations. They did so by each church spreading its own influence as far as it would go. Institutions to help widows, orphans, the poor, etc. were unknown to the churches of scripture. They helped their own as they were able and in time of emergency, other churches communicated relief directly to the saints in need. We also never read where a church took on a massive work and then solicited churches to send them funds to accomplish this work. If this were scriptural, could we come together and decide that a church could oversee evangelism for a large region or even the whole world and churches all send their money to them to let them evangelize? If not, why not? Could we group churches into districts or dioceses and appoint a central church to oversee a great work for that district and other churches fund what is being overseen by that church? If not, why not? Could churches come together and set up a board of people to oversee some wide-reaching work and provide funds for that board to use in accomplishing said work? If not, why not? When we abandon the concept of each church overseeing its own work in reaching, edification, etc., where do you stop?

#### TO NOT THRU

It may be true that a super-church organization or inter-church alliance where churches pool money and all work under a central oversight would be able to have a wide reach and provide for an "expedient" means of preaching the gospel and caring for needy saints but the early church knew of no such arrangements. Paul rather taught that local churches are to be equal to each other, not subordinate or perpetually dependent upon another. (2 Cor 8:13-14) When a church surrenders its funds to another church to oversee and conduct a work on their behalf, they lose control and oversight of that money. They become subordinate to the sponsoring or overseeing church. When I contribute to my local congregation, that money ceases to be mine and I lose control over what becomes of it or what it is used for. It then falls under the oversight of the leaders of the congregation. The same is true when money is sent from one church to another church to spend on their behalf. Earmark it all you want, but ultimately, once it is given to the elders of another church and then pooled with resources from other churches, the

sending church has lost control over that money and the elders at the receiving church ultimately decide its use. This is not scriptural.

The New Testament pattern authorizes a church to directly send RELIEF TO the NEED of another church in time of emergency and it allows a church to send support DIRECTLY TO a preacher but it EXCLUDES the pooling of money from multiple churches under the oversight of another church and then funneling it to a work or relief effort. In all of the above cited cases, churches were acting autonomously and independently. No church became subordinate to another. No church became a centralized eldership and treasury to administer the work of other churches. No intermediate organizations were formed to expedite the work of the church. At no time did one church lose control of its own funds and how they were spent. The same must hold true in any work a congregation undertakes or need that may arise among us today.

If a congregation learns of a preacher in need of support (foreign or domestic) and decides to send to his need, let that congregation directly communicate that support to the receiving preacher (by wire, mail, messenger, etc.). If there is a benevolent need that arises in a church, let churches who wish to relieve the saints in need, send their contributions directly to the churches where the need exists (by wire, mail, messenger, etc.). This is the scriptural way for churches to cooperate while maintaining equality, independence, and autonomy. Other methods pave the way for denominational concepts of the church and ultimately the centralization that “went to seed” in the rise of Roman Catholicism. Preserving the independence and autonomy of each local church prevents the corruption or departure of one church from infecting others. Let us always be sure to do God’s work in God’s own way.

**THE DISTURBING AND THE IRONIC  
DEUTERONOMY 22:5**

*BY DAVID GRIFFIN*

“A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman’s garment, for all who do so are an abomination to the Lord your God.” Deut. 22:5 (NKJV).

Many of us these days have had the experience of perusing the internet or scrolling through Facebook only to encounter things we otherwise would never be looking for. Recently while searching for something of interest, I inadvertently came upon some images of the famous wedding of two women, the comic TV personality Ellen DeGeneres and her partner Portia de Rossi on their wedding day in California in August 2008. For whatever reason I paused to take a closer look,

and after only a momentary survey two impressions leapt out at me. It struck me that the scenes in these photographs contain both something disturbing and something ironic.

First consider the disturbing. Ellen DeGeneres’ partner, Portia de Rossi, is dressed in a wedding gown, which, even though quite immodest in many respects, would be considered by many people today as traditional attire for a bride---at least by modern standards. DeGeneres herself, on the other hand, is dressed in white pants with a white shirt and vest. While looking at these images, I asked myself, “Am I the only person in the world who looks at the photos of this celebrated occasion of unholy matrimony who is struck by the impression that de Rossi is portraying the ‘the bride,’ while DeGeneres is asserting the image of the traditional ‘groom’? Or am I over-analyzing this?” I should add that the respective lengths and styles of hair worn by the two partners only serve to reinforce this image. It strikes me that it is difficult to view these photos and not receive such an impression.

Considering the amount of planning that typically goes into weddings, especially one of such high-profile, then it seems most obvious that among all the decisions involved with planning this event, the choice of garments that day was surely not an afterthought---certainly no mere coincidence! In fact, various sources indicate that the couple employed the services of the famous designer Zac Posen to design their wedding garments. I wonder ... When bringing these specially designed and no doubt expensive garments into being, did the marriage partners and their designer have never a thought or conversation about the contrasting masculine and feminine connotations achieved in their designs? Can it really be that the “bride” and “groom” concept was never part of the discussion, never a part of the planning, not even a thought? At the very least, they had to be aware that their choice of clothing would be interpreted this way by someone out there and moreover that it would be a disturbing presentation to those with traditional sensibilities.

Even though the wedding was described by People magazine online as a time of “romantic moments” and an evening “full of love, laughter, and a few tears,” others of us have every reason to see the wedding and the resulting “marriage” (and others like it) as a mockery of Biblical marriage and the traditional roles of men and women. Those who advocate these kinds of marriages relish to have them portrayed before the public in order that such images will, with time, become less and less disturbing. But for now at least, some of us do still find them disturbing.

But I also said there is something ironic in these images.

Whether or not Ms. DeGeneres actually intended to project an image of the “groom” on her wedding day, the irony is that the clothing which clearly echoes the

groom-like image in the photos would in any other situation these days be considered “women’s attire.” As stated above, the image of two women getting married, one in a wedding gown, the other in pants, shirt, and a vest, points unavoidably (perhaps deliberately) to the traditional picture of “bride and groom.” It also underscores another phenomenon we are being constantly reminded of these days. That is, when a transvestite man wants to dress like a woman, he has no trouble deciding what garment will project the image; the same is true when a woman wants to look like a man. The question is then, does certain apparel, when it appears in a setting that clearly connotes masculinity, lose that connotation when such apparel is worn in other situations? Some would unequivocally answer, “Of course it loses that connotation!” But I for one am not so easily convinced of this, and I would add that if we think it does, it is only because our sensibilities have been blunted by long and widely-accepted custom. There is also plenty of evidence that many others among the people of God still feel the same as I, but they may also feel compelled by the preponderance of more popular practice to retreat into reticence about it.

But consider this. If we are willing to say that the garment in question loses the masculine connotation once detached from the “lesbian wedding,” why cannot a similar logic apply for other garments? Let me explain. It is common these days for people to dress very immodestly in some situations, while in other situations they would be terribly embarrassed to dress that way. For example, many females are perfectly comfortable, even eager, to sport a bikini at the swimming pool, the lake, the beach, or on the backyard tanning cot, but would be perfectly mortified if they had to attend the grocery store in a similar garment. I am assuming, of course, that people in the church can agree there is large inconsistency in this, that the bikini worn in one public situation is just as immodest as in any other public situation. A change of “setting” does not make it modest.

Why then, I ask, should this principle not also hold true when it touches upon gender distinctions in dress? If certain items of clothing when worn by one of the partners in a lesbian wedding immediately evokes notions of masculinity, but in other situations is supposedly devoid of such notions, how is this not as inconsistent as saying that wearing a bikini in public is acceptable, as long as it is only in certain situations? I am absolutely not, of course, advocating wearing bikinis in any public situation. I am, however, simply appealing to the principle of consistency and challenging the notion that just because society adopts certain practices of dress, that members of the body of Christ should “follow the herd” wherever it leads. This is just as true for men as it is for women; it is as true of clothing as of anything else. But I fear that we are indeed wandering in the direction of “the herd” in some of these matters.

As I finish, the thought now occurs to me that what in the beginning of this writing was two things, the disturbing and the ironic, have blended at last into one. Today we find ourselves living in a society where two high-profile women can marry each other among glowing accolades and wide public acceptance. This first thing is itself disturbing enough. But these same two women can also clearly mimic the traditional bride and groom by their wedding garments; yet, if asked, both of them, and a good many others today, would respond that they are both wearing “women’s” clothing. This is how far we have come today. This irony seems to me no less disturbing than the first, especially when I ponder the fact that this skewed and contradictory categorization of clothing is widely accepted without question-and not just among the ungodly. I feel relatively certain that you who read this article will not neglect to “Google” these images the next time you are on the internet. When you do, I am sure most of you will find them disturbing. I just wanted to take a few minutes to make sure you did not overlook the irony.

*FORGIVENESS . . . continued from page two*

would it have been necessary for the blood of Christ to have flowed backwards? The answer is found in the following passages.

ROMANS 3:25-26

“Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” The phrase “sins that are past” refers to all the sins in the Old Testament that God forgave. “Remission” comes from a word, *paresin*, that is used only here in this passage. Thayer, p.488, defines this word as meaning, “pretermision, passing over, letting pass, neglecting, disregarding.” His comment on the same page is, “because God had patiently let pass the sins committed previously (to the expiatory death of Christ), i.e had tolerated, had not punished (and so man’s conception of his holiness was in danger of becoming dim, if not extinct)...“ Webster defines Pretermision as “a passing by; omission.” It comes from a word that literally means “to let go by.” The use of this word suggests that wherever forgiveness of sins is referred to in the Old Testament such as Leviticus 4 that God did not overlook the sins, but He did overlook the kind of punishment these sins demanded. Because the penalty for these sins had not been paid but had simply been “winked” at, or overlooked by God, Satan was able to hold this over each one that sinned even after the person who had sinned died, Hebrews 2:14. The way Jesus “destroyed” or rendered useless the power Satan

had over sinful man was by paying the penalty for sin by the giving of His life. This satisfied, the demands of justice, so far as the sinner was concerned, and God could then be counted just and righteous in overlooking the punishment for those sins committed under the Old Testament. This overlooking of the punishment for sins committed had been done by God since the beginning of sin among those who had been serving Him faithfully. The blood of animals could not meet the demands of justice so far as penalty was concerned, but could cleanse the flesh. Hebrews 9:13-14. Because the penalty was not removed they were reminded of their sins every year. Hebrews 10:3. God remembered them constantly because He knew they had to be eventually paid for, but in the New Testament He can remit sins and, in addition, remove the penalty because of Christ's atoning death. Because of this, an important part of the New Covenant is, "Their sins and iniquities I will remember no more," Hebrews 8: 12. This promise was not valid under the Old Testament so Christ had to come "And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage," Hebrews 2:15. See also 1 Corinthians 15:56.

#### HEBREWS 9:15

"And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance." One of the reasons Christ died was to pay the redemption price necessary because of the transgressions committed under the Old Testament. In other words, until Christ died, those under the former covenant could not enjoy the same blessings of forgiveness and deliverance you and I may embrace today. The price had to be paid in order to escape the penalty of torment. That price was not paid until Jesus died on the cross and arose from His grave. This helps us understand the following verse:

#### HEBREWS 11:39-40

"And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." Hebrews 11 contains some illustrious Old Testament worthies. They received a good report from God, but, even at that, they, though they had died centuries before, could not be made perfect until the Christian age came. Just like we are saved from past sins because of the promise being fulfilled, so, those old saints could not be saved eternally from their sins until it was fulfilled.

The forgiveness of sins recorded in the Old Testament was a different kind of forgiveness than God's people enjoy today. To equate it with forgiveness after Christ came is not proper nor possible. -OPA. Amen! DLK

## Our Departed

SHORT: Dorothy (Bishop) Short was born July 18, 1931, in Young County, Texas, near Newcastle and passed away June 23, 2016, in Oklahoma City, OK, at the age of 84. Seventh of eight children, Dorothy was the daughter of Ray and Flora Lee Bishop. She married Leonard Short March 26, 1949; he preceded her in death in February 2011, after almost 62 years of marriage. Having been baptized into Christ as a young teenager, Dorothy remained faithful until her death. In fact, her faith is her greatest legacy, as she leaves behind two faithful children as well as several grandchildren who are faithful to the Lord. For many years, Dorothy was a member of the congregation on Green Oaks in Arlington, TX, before she moved to the Oklahoma City area in February of this year. Before coming to Green Oaks, she was a member of the Fossil Creek congregation in Fort Worth. Dorothy is sorely missed by all of the Green Oaks church family. When not prevented by failing health, she was present at all church services; and she was there with her unique smile, subtle sense of humor, and pleasant disposition that was so uplifting. Dorothy, indeed, exhibited the kind of pleasant attitude that lifts the spirits of those around her. She is survived by her son, Leo, who is a leader of the Green Oaks congregation, and his wife Toni; and by a daughter, Reba Osburn, wife of Evangelist Glen Osburn; both of whom are members of the Whispering Pines congregation in Tuttle, OK. She is also survived by four grandchildren, four great-grandchildren, one sister (Jean Parker) of Graham, TX, and one brother (Kenneth Bishop) of Lubbock, TX. Being a lifelong friend of Dorothy's, I was honored to be asked to conduct the service along with her son-in-law Glen Osburn—Joe Norton, Mansfield, TX

## Field Report

Billy D. Dickinson, 2850 N. Oakland, Springfield, MO 65803, bddickinson@juno.com, June 16--I'll be leaving tomorrow for a weekend meeting in Pleasant Hill, MO. The last time I was with them was back in 2009, so that adds to the pleasure of being with them again. I'll be staying with Clayton and Joyce McDavitt, dear friends who love the Lord and his church, and I know that I will enjoy their hospitality. So far I have held two meetings this year. Back in March I was with the brethren in Buffalo, MO and we had good attendance during each service. This is where Brad Shockley lives and labors, dividing up his time and efforts between the congregations at Buffalo and Bolivar, and it's always a blessing to be with him. As I've said before, I don't

know anyone who stays busier or works harder than Brad. Also, I held a meeting in April at Texarkana, TX. With outside interest and good cooperation from nearby congregations, it was a joy to preach to people who were eager to listen to the gospel. I want to especially express my appreciation to those who came from Louisiana to be with us, including two preachers-- Cullen Smith of Farmerville and Floyd Harris, JR of West Monroe. This, of course, is where my brother, Jerry, calls home and we always enjoy being able to spend time together. Many thanks to these brethren for the invitation and their hospitality! After this weekend, my meeting schedule involves two more efforts: July 27-31 at Fort Worth, TX (Fossil Creek) & Sept. 14-18 at Fieldstone, MO. Incidentally, I am also scheduled to be one of the speakers at the Texas Labor Day Meeting this year. Since it has been three years since I've attended that great meeting, this old Texan at heart (born in Galena Park and a former Houstonian) is filled with excitement about that. As of yesterday, the 4th of July meeting here in Springfield is only two weeks away. It promises to be a great meeting with brethren and preachers from all over the country. I'm hoping to see many of you there!

Don L. King, 1147 Sherry Way, Livermore, CA 94550, email: old\_paths@juno.com, July 14- Because of a recurring speech problem it was necessary for me to cancel the meeting in Chapel Grove, TN and return home after only three services. We also canceled meetings at Norman, OK and Ozark, MO. I am scheduled to see a specialist this coming Monday for help with the problem, and hope to know something soon. Doctors are confident no stroke has occurred and they believe the problem to be something else. We want to give our heartfelt thanks to Duane and Lori Permenter, old friends, for all of their assistance while we were in TN and for allowing us to ride from the 4th of July meeting to TN for the meeting. We had looked forward to it for a long time but it was just not possible to finish it. It was wonderful to see so many at the 4th of July meeting in Springfield, MO. Lord bless the Brotherhood.

Greg Gay, June 27, 2016. I am home after a meeting at Garrett's Creek, West Virginia. My travels there and back were interesting. It is the only time in memory where my luggage was temporarily lost both directions. The meeting was well attended by the home congregation and surrounding congregations with some outside visitors. Cassie, who has been visiting in the Midwest, drove from Missouri with her dad, Ervin Baker for the week of the meeting. We stayed with my brother-in-law and family, Wyn Baker, who works

with the congregation, and enjoyed their wonderful hospitality. The congregation advertised the meeting with a color 8 1/2 x 11 mailer that cost \$.42 each to print and mail. Wyn filled both sides with information about the meeting and the church. I appreciated seeing Stan Owens one night who made a long trip to attend. I preached for the week on the Ten Commandments and had many interesting discussions regarding the principles. The last Sunday night I also preached at the 5th St. Huntington congregation and enjoyed seeing their new building and old and new friends. We plan to be part of the work in Hawaii on Oahu from July 16 through August 8. We have not been there for a couple of years so we look forward to seeing the local brethren plus all the mainland visitors who can be there during that time. Our work continues with the 64th. St., Sacramento congregation. We recently had our 20th anniversary of working here. 1820 Casterbridge Dr., Roseville, CA 95747 papagreg@aol.com.

Stan Owens 8432 Cox Rd West Chester, OH 45069- June 21. Recently I have been able to hear preaching from Brandon Stephens, Brett Hickey, Rick Martin, Philip Scott, Slade Powell, Greg Gay, and Al Felder. It was a pleasure to hear these brethren proclaim the Truth. It was a privilege to be able to hold the Memorial Day Meeting at the Turlock, CA congregation. While there we made our home with Richard and Glenda DeGough. We really enjoyed visiting with them. On Saturday morning four young men Cole Branch, Lane Branch, Brooks Criswell, and Drew Maudlin spoke. They were well prepared and did a very good job. It was a great meeting and the crowds grew each night. There were quite a few preachers in attendance as well. Richard De Gough, Greg Cordosa, Greg Gay, Don King, Alan Bonifay, Frank Brancato, Roger Boone, and probably others I overlooked. Some of them, and others, drove quite a distance several nights and it was pleasure to rekindle many friendships and also begin new ones. I am still given the opportunity to be at the congregations in Bandy, KY and Green Acres Road in London, KY quite often. They have a "mind to work" and the results bear that out. Keep The Faith.

Kevin Presley, TV Report - Thank you for your continued financial support. The work with "Let the Bible Speak" is continuing to progress and accomplish good for the kingdom. Most recently, a man obeyed the gospel after watching the broadcast in Joplin, MO. The Leawood Village congregation has been airing LTBS with Brett Hickey for several years. In a run-up to a gospel meeting in May, they aired our broadcasts in their

timeslot for about 6 weeks. We advertised the meeting extensively during that time. Larry Geier had been watching the program for a while and attended every service of the meeting. He had no religious background but had been reading the scriptures and watching LTBS. He was baptized during the meeting and has been faithful to attend since. The brethren are continuing to study with him. Other outside visitors also came to the meeting as a result of watching the program. The local churches that air LTBS in their markets also continue to receive regular response. Lord willing, I return to Fort Smith, AR this August for another meeting and we always have a large turnout from the community due to the reach of the program. I look forward to seeing what this year's meeting will bring.

A major part of our effort is reaching out online. Bro. Randy Cantrell helps with this. Our YouTube channel continues to gain subscribers and is reaching around the globe. In May, a 7th Day Adventist man from the African country of Botswana contacted us through Facebook after watching LTBS on YouTube. Bro. Keith Thompson and Bro. Clint De France have recently discussed trying to find an opening to take the gospel to that country. Keith has now made contact with that individual and it is my understanding that Keith hopes to make a trip there in the near future to conduct studies with this man and others.

One of my goals in the near future is to develop a new correspondence course that can be mailed or can be interactively taken online. I am searching for a professional level graphic artist who will be willing to donate some time to helping with this effort. I also hope the program will spread into other markets soon.

Thank you again for your faithful support and for your prayers. Your support is allowing me to devote my fulltime to the program, gospel meeting work, and a continued work with the churches at Dothan and Earlytown, AL. May God bless you in all of your righteous efforts for the cause of Christ.

Jimmy Cating, Waipahu, HI, June 25, 2016 - My family and I count it a great privilege to have been able to briefly participate in the work in Waipahu, HI. Thank you for your generosity in helping with our expenses. We were scheduled to be there June 2-21. After talking with brother Duane Permenter about the work, it was clear that my objectives included encouraging the church, strengthening the brethren through studies on

church leadership, and following up on prospective leads.

The first Sunday together (June 5) we were given a warm welcome by all the members of the church and we had a wonderful day of worship. There were 21 in attendance, including community visitors. I preached on the Cross of Christ, and the Conversion of Saul. My first impression of the brethren there is that they are loving towards others and concerned about doing right. They also seem to be willing to take the initiative. That Sunday evening the brethren had arranged for us to go to the home of sister Lita, who passed away the week before, and conduct a short memorial service with the family. There were 22 people present, we sang a few songs, had prayer, and I was asked to say a few words to the family. Afterwards, the family had food prepared and we had a wonderful time visiting. Sister Lila had 8 children and some of them still live on the island. These might prove to be good prospects in the future. The second Sunday brought more community visitors. I preached on the proper response to God's commands and the dangers of procrastination. During our stay we enjoyed several meals with these loving Christians and we treasure the time we had with them.

Studies were scheduled and conducted with the three men of the congregation (Melvyn, Frank, and Edimar) on how to develop themselves as leaders. We began the J. J. Turner series and they were provided with material for future studies. Edimar invited my wife and I to his home to study with his neighbor, Elsa, who had been attending services for some time and had previously studied with Don King. Brother Melvyn also attended and provided excellent support during the study. We are hopeful and optimistic that Elsa will respond to the gospel soon. A second study with her was scheduled but unfortunately it was needful for us to return home six days early.

As we were about to wrap up our second week, we received the sad news from home that my wife's father, Jerry Harris, had passed away. We appreciate your understanding our need to return home early. We had the opportunity to visit with some of the brethren one last time before returning to Texas on Wednesday (June 15). It is our hope and prayer that our time with the church there was as encouraging to them as it was for my family and me. Again, thank you for supporting our trip, and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

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## THE BACK PAGE...

### SHOULD WE STOP SAYING, "THE BIBLE SAYS SO" AS WE PREACH?

By CARL M. JOHNSON

It is time to stop saying, "the Bible says." At least that's what Andy Stanley says. At Exponential, a church-planting conference attended by 5,000 in late spring (with another 20,000 watching via video), the senior pastor of North Point Community Church in Alpharetta, Georgia, said preachers should instead use phrases like "Paul says" and "Jesus says" when citing Scripture.

Stanley told Christianity Today the main reason for not mentioning the Bible as his source of authority while preaching is "to keep people who are skeptical of the Bible's authority engaged in the sermon." It's a question of evangelism, not theology," he says.

Stanley claims the approach has "helped Christians in our congregation have a greater appreciation for the historicity of the New Testament, that these were actual people who said these things" (CT July 2014).

I have heard of a lot of convoluted, novel ideas proffered by preachers to "engage" our Bible-ignorant culture, but this one may take the cake.

If I understand Stanley correctly he is convinced the Bible's teaching will be more credible if we can show people its words are from real, flesh-and-blood people, such as Jesus, Peter, or Paul. Then, later, when folks have accepted the teachings, we can break the news to them that the teachings actually come from the Bible, which, in turn, makes the Bible more believable.

Am I missing something here?

For many years I have used such phrases as, "Paul says," or "Peter says," when quoting the writings of these inspired men. However, I do not see how using such phrases gives these writings more credibility than using the phrase, "the Bible says." It seems to me that the ONLY reason we should believe anything Peter, Paul, James, or any other apostle or evangelist says is because their sayings are found in the Bible

The word "Bible" is defined as a "book or collection of writings comprising the sacred text of a religion" (Webster's New College Dictionary 106). These writings are called "Scripture," "the Word," "commandments," etc., and Paul says all of them are inspired of God ("God-breathed," 2 Tim. 3:16). The term signifies that the collection of writings of Scripture in the Bible are the result of a certain influence exerted by God upon its authors. It is God speaking through men, just as Jesus promised in Matthew 10:18-19, and John 14:26.

Paul explains further, "But I make it known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Gal. 1 :11-12).

The fact that Scripture was first spoken by actual men does not make it more believable as far as Paul is concerned. He makes it clear up front that what makes it believable is that it comes directly from Jesus Christ. Those same sayings that came from Christ to Paul are now a part of the book of inspired sayings we call the Bible (1 Cor. 2:9-13).

The Bible is God's revelation (Eph. 3:1-9), God's full revelation (Jn. 16:13), God's final revelation (Jude 3), God's authoritative revelation (2 Cor. 5:7; Rom. 10:17), God's all-sufficient revelation (2 Pet. 1:3; 2 Tim. 3:16-17), and God's judgmental revelation. With eternity in the balance we shall stand before Christ and be judged by this book (Jn. 12:48; Rev. 20:12)

No book has weathered as many storms and survived as the Bible. Emperors, kings, power-hungry churchmen, and infidel scholars have howled and raged against the Bible. In both ancient and modern times mobs have burned the Bible in public squares, and soldiers have ransacked homes to find and destroy it. Yet, all opposition has proven futile. Jesus says, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Mt. 24:35). Peter adds, "The word of the Lord endures forever" (1 Pet. 1 :25).

Paul told Timothy to "preach the Word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine (2 Tim. 4:2). Paul says nothing about using slight-of-hand tactics, or the bait-and-switch approach apparently insisted on by Stanley. Paul understood that the Gospel itself is the power to save souls and he was not ashamed of it, nor did he see the need to trick people into believing it by concealing the fact it is found in the Bible (Rom. 1: 16).

When the famous Scottish poet Sir Walter Scott lay on his death-bed, he turned to his son-in-law Lockhart and said, "Give me the book." Whereupon Lockhart surveyed the numerous volumes in Scott's library and asked, "Which book?" Scott responded, "Which book? There is but one book!" The Bible.

Amen, and amen. And I am not ashamed to say, "The Bible says so!" cmjthebackpage@gmail.com