

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

YOU NEED THE CHURCH AND THE CHURCH NEEDS YOU

By DAVID GRIFFIN

It is a common point of view that one can be a Christian and go to heaven and have no connection to the church. Many people believe they may serve Lord privately in their own way and never attend an assembly of the church, never participate in cooperate worship to God, never be part of a local congregation, never submit to the leadership and guidance offered by the local congregation. However, the same New Testament that speaks of Jesus’ saving death and our hope of heaven also speaks of the church as integral to that hope; it does not teach salvation to those aloof and detached from the church.

The title of this article states two propositions 1) You need the church, and 2) the church needs you.

1) You need the church.

First, as referenced above, the Bible teaches that we need the church because salvation is in the church. In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul writes, “... Christ is the head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body” (5:23). According to Paul’s letter to the Colossians, the “body...is the church” (1:24). Thus, if Christ is the savior of the body and the body is the church, you need the church to be saved. The Bible nowhere teaches that Jesus is savior of any other group or individual in the New Testament age outside the church. Salvation is our greatest need, and if Christ is the savior of the body, we need to be part of that body through Christ more than we need anything else. If we’re not in the church, we have no promise of salvation! Therefore, you need the church.

his righteousness and all these things will be added to you” (Mt 6:33). In the context of this statement, the kingdom is a metaphor for the church. Thus, Jesus teaches that if we put the church and godly living first in our lives, the Lord by his providence will see to it that we receive all our lesser needs (food, clothing, and shelter). However, if one is not associated with the church, they do not have the kingdom and do not have the promises associated with the kingdom. Therefore, you need the church!

Second, you need the church because, in the church we worship God. The book of Revelation twice offers the imperative, “Worship God!” (19:10, 22:9). Jesus reinforces this precept by referencing Deuteronomy 6:13: “You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve” (Matt. 4:10). Jesus further affirms that “the Father is seeking [true worshippers] to worship Him” (John 4:23). In the next verse, Jesus even declares that we “must worship God in spirit and in truth” (v. 24). The word “must” makes the worship of God mandatory; the Lord does not give us the privilege of “opting out” for something better to our liking.

The Bible teaches that Christians offer worship to God in the church through five ordinances of divine service. 1) Christians sing together (Ephesians 5:19). “In the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee” says the writer of Hebrews (2:12). 2) In 1 Corinthians 14:15, Paul indicates that prayer was part of the worship of church assemblies (see also vs. 16-17; Acts 12:5). 3) A host of passages indicate that Christians receive edification through Bible teaching and preaching in the church assembly (Acts 11:26; 13:1; 1 Cor. 14:29-31). 4) Christians also give to the Lord out of their financial means in the church assembly (1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 8-9). And last, 5) In the assembly, the church partakes of the communion of the body and blood of Christ. Following

Jesus himself said, “Seek first the kingdom of God and

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Editorial

I CHANGE NOT

By DON L. KING

In Malachi 3:6 it is written: “For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.” Malachi had been prophesying concerning the punishment God had in store for those who had strayed so very far from His commandments. God had made promises to His people and was bound to keep His word. God always does what He promises! His past promises were the reason the sons of Jacob (Israel) had not already been consumed or punished. Along with this is an interesting point. God doesn’t change. What He said in the long ago is still true. Sometimes, we change and our changes are often not good for us spiritually. In James 1:17 James wrote: “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.” What are we being told here? Simply that God doesn’t change.

Recently, I reflected in my mind of the many changes we have seen. Things are no longer as they were when we were growing up. During my boyhood, midweek services were well attended by the local members, and even from other congregations and the world. Now, sometimes and in some places, about half of the members come Lord’s Day evening and fewer still on midweek. There have been some changes over the years. Do you recall when our brethren were interested in the singing part of the worship? There was a time when large crowds attended singing. What has happened? Whatever it is, it isn’t like it once was. God hasn’t changed because He does not change. So, the changes must be ours. Yes, we are busier now, perhaps too busy. We scurry here and there in our busy lives and some allow that to crowd out responsibilities to the Lord. Some of us recall when it was rare to hear of church members who attended movies, allowed their children to dance, gambled, or socially used alcohol, to name but a few, but what about now? We once were much more afraid of blending in with the world. Church members would never have thought of escaping a debt through some bankruptcy plan, no matter how legal. When a

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QUERIST COLUMN

By CLINT DEFRANCE

Question: Is it a sin to vote in political elections?

Answer: The Christian's relationship to the Civil Government is a complex issue. Those desiring a deeper and better understanding of what the Bible says on the matter are encouraged to read David Lipscomb's classing and still relevant work: *Civil Government - Its Origin, Mission, and Destiny*. Brother Lipscomb uses the Bible only to explain why church and state, Christian and government operative, are two different entities, and should not co-mingle. In brief: because human civil government was born in rebellion against God's authority (Genesis 10:8-12); because the end result of Christ's work will bring about the destruction of all human civil government (Daniel 2:44-45); because human civil government "bears a sword" (Romans 13:4) and Christians are forbidden to bear a sword (Isaiah 2:2-4; Matthew 26:52; John 18:36); because the apostles consistently refer to the Christian and the government as separate entities (Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-17); and because Jesus has called Christians to higher interests and exhorted us to "let the dead bury the dead" (Matthew 8:22); it is not the place or role of the Christian to become involved in the political process outside the clearly defined parameters of: paying taxes, obeying laws, and praying for the well-being and wisdom of leaders (Romans 13:1-7; 1 Timothy 2:1-2). The Bible is clear in many places that God can and will accomplish His purposes in human governments without any involvement or assistance of righteous human agents (Isaiah 10:5-19).

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MORE THAN A STORY

By JOHNNY ELMORE

After Matthew, also called Levi, left his duties as a tax collector to follow Jesus, he made a feast at his house, and "many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples" (Matthew 9:9, 10). The Pharisees and their scribes, the inveterate enemies of the Christ during his earthly ministry, saw it. They said to the disciples, "Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?" (v. 11). McGarvey states: "The Pharisees classed as 'sinners' all who failed to observe the traditions of the elders, and especially their traditional rules of purification. It was not so much the wickedness of this class as their legal uncleanness that made it wrong to eat with them."

In answer to that question, Jesus replied by saying, "They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:31). And then he added, "But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice" (Matthew 9: 13). Thus Jesus taught that to mercifully help sinners to repent was more precious to God than sacrifice. The parable of the Prodigal Son, as it has been called, is a beautiful story, but it is more than a story. Jesus related it to answer the murmuring of the Pharisees and scribes.

There is no doubt that the Parable of the Prodigal Son is a beautiful story. Richard Trench says that this parable "might be fitly called the pearl and crown of all the parables of Scripture." Although there have been many interpretations of this parable, we should keep in mind that Jesus related it in response to the murmuring of the Pharisees and scribes about his eating with publicans and sinners. But Richard Trench agrees with those who see the two sons as not Jew and Gentile but as penitent sinners and proud sinners. He states that "wherever there are penitent sinners and proud sinners, there the parable is finding its fulfillment."

Although the younger son of the parable made a terrible mistake by leaving his old father and going into the far country, he commends himself to God when he "came to himself" in the hog pen and determined to return to his father with contrition and confession. As a sinner in the far country he is the picture of every

person who goes away from God. McGarvey states that “the humility of his confession indicates that the term ‘riotous living’ means more than merely a reckless expenditure of money. But vile as he was, he trusted that his father’s love was sufficient to do something for him.” The confidence that he had in his father’s love was rewarded for he gave him many sweet assurances of full restoration and forgiveness, saying “this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost and is found.” His condition was serious for as McGarvey states: “The condition of the impenitent sinner is frequently expressed in the Bible under the metaphor of death.” Yes, for Paul spoke of the pre-Christian Gentiles at Ephesus and stated: “And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1).

But if the younger son represents the penitent sinner, the older son represents the proud sinner. Jesus paints both parties “as both faulty and sinful in his sight, and each as being loved despite his faultiness. “But while the story of the elder son had a present and local application to the Pharisees, it is to be taken comprehensively as describing all the self-righteous who murmur at and refuse to take part in the conversion of sinners.”

As the parable ends, there is rejoicing with the penitent sinner basking in the warmth and affection of a forgiving father. On the other hand, the elder brother cannot be happy. As brother McGarvey points out: “In the entreating father Jesus pictures the desire and effort of God then and long afterwards put forth to win the proud, exclusive, self-righteous spirits which filled the Pharisees and other Jews.” The words of McGarvey are so pertinent here: “Here the story ends. We are not told how the elder brother acted, but we may read his history in that of the Jews who refused to rejoice with Jesus in the salvation of sinners. At the next Passover they carried their resentment against him to the point of murder, and some forty years later the inheritance was taken from them. Thus we see that the elder brother was not pacified. He continued to rebel against the father’s will until he himself became the lost son.

The Parable of the Prodigal Son is the third of a series of parables that tells of God’s love for the lost. The first illustrates Christ’s compassion. The lost sheep must be sought even though its value is only one of a hundred. The second, the lost coin, had only the value of one of ten, but it was still a loss for its owner. These two depict the efforts of Christ to save. The third represents the

response of man to the proffers of salvation. But as the figures rise from a sheep and a coin to a man, the values also rise to one of two. As terrible as it is to be lost, it is more terrible to have a way of salvation, and turn away from a loving Father in heaven. In spite of rejection, the loving Son of God still stands with outstretched arms, beckoning hand, and tender voice, and invites sinners to come to him.

THE WORK IN BANGLADESH

By MICHAEL BOLTON

The work in Bangladesh for us is drawing to a close. We have been here three weeks. And we are sad, but happy all at the same time. We have experienced several firsts. Bringing April and Will with me has been a blessing. It is miserable hot and the mosquitoes are fierce. But the landscape is beautiful and the people are wonderful. We love and are loved greatly.

We baptized four yesterday. We spent the night in a tiny village in Northern Bangladesh near Dhobaura. This is where gospel preacher Denish Mankim is from, much of his family is there. I think I am the first American to ever preach the gospel there. Denish has stayed behind to instruct the new Christians.

In all over the last 10 days we have preached 16 times, and in 9 different places. John Gain’s home village of Barisal has called him and asked him to return soon to baptize 6. We pray that they remain strong and safe until John can get there later next week. Peter Baroi’s home village, Banianchor has asked for more studies. And the tiny village we had to take a boat across the river to in Gopalganj has expressed earnest interest. The gospel preachers here will have a difficult time following all these leads. And as new members are added the load will continue to grow in its work. We also preached in Mirpur where Brother Bidhan Baroi is laboring very fervently.

I have been informed that the multi-cup churches here are almost non-existent after this group took its stand for true worship. Khulna preaching school has had only 1 enrollee in the last two years. The documents used to register the church with the government here were greatly falsified. Those documents claim 1000 churches of Christ with a membership of 30,000 people. And an enrollment in the preaching school of 16-20. Not one

church of Christ can be found that meets regularly other than those who love the truth and are correct in their worship. And Khulna preaching school is about to close. It appears that the denominations even only assemble when it is convenient. We teach a gospel that expects faithfulness. And it is being accepted because people are hungry for truth and they want to worship God.

These things beside the pervasive false doctrine taught by the denominations is as always destructive to the Lord's church. We have had to spend time preaching to the non-believer, that we are not here for money. We are not about power or prestige. But rather we are here in the interest of eternity. The acceptance of the gospel seems to be greater when we teach that the Lord's church is not about what someone in a westernized country says, but about what the Bible says. The people are particularly intrigued that they can be "BIBLE CHRISTIANS" without the influence of America. Not that American preachers are unwelcome. But the concept that one can be a "bible christian" without the "leadership" of a foreign organization seemed liberating.

We have taught that the denominations which enslave new believers to a man-made system and destroys their dignity and self-governance, is wrong and anti-biblical. Often with denominational preachers in the audience, and except for Dhobaura always in a denominational meeting house. Dhobaura was open air. But the purpose of the gospel is to restore man's dignity, not to bring electricity, clean water, or provide college. People want these things but their pride and dignity is wrecked when these things are handed to them. The folks in Denish Makim's village are very poor, and they know they are. But they are very clean and dignified. I was impressed with the care that was always taken to clean, clean, clean. My stomach is not ready to handle their well-water solely just yet. But the cleanliness was an attribute that cannot be missed.

For me or anyone else to come in and teach them how to clean like we do in America, or some other western cultural concept would destroy their pride, and spirit. But when I teach about sin, and its impact, and then teach about Jesus and His power to save. And then teach about the Lord's church that it is local and autonomous, then people listened. And were hungry for more. May God help us to be gospel preachers not social servants.

YOU NEED THE continued from page one

the establishment of the church in Acts 2, this ordinance of divine service and the others is consistently found in the assembly of the church (Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:23-26, etc.). The Bible teaches us to follow these worship principles and directives. Without the church, we fail in these duties, and we will be held accountable before God for the failure. Therefore, you need the church!

Third, you need the church because the church provides encouragement and support. It has been said that the Christian institution is a social institution, that God never intended people to live the Christian life alone and separate from the body. Thus, through our connection to the body, we receive spiritual support and encouragement. Paul told the Thessalonian Christians, "comfort one another with these words" (1 Thess. 4:8). He also said, "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another" (Heb. 10:25). It is in the assembly of the church that we receive exhortation to higher living. If we do not have the church, we are missing this blessing, and to the extent that we miss this blessing, our spiritual strength is lacking. Therefore, you need the church!

We could offer many other reasons, but these alone are sufficient to sustain the proposition, "You need the church" as an inalterable New Testament principle

2) The church needs you.

First, the church needs you because you can contribute to her strength and support. It stands to reason that if I can receive encouragement by being a part of the church, then as a part of the church myself, I can also be a source of encouragement to others in the church. Again, Paul wrote to the Thessalonians: "Therefore encourage one another, and build one another up, just as you're also doing" (1 Thess. 5:11). Three verses later, he writes, "Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak" be patient with all" (1 Thess. 5:14). Granted, some of these duties may be best done by the leadership. However, any member of the church can find opportunities to "comfort the fainthearted" or "uphold the weak" in the church. But if I am not associated with the church,

I'm in no position to lend my aid in these efforts. If I have no ties to the church, I will have no knowledge of these needs and will see no opportunity to meet them. Consequently, I miss out on the privilege of serving God in such matters. Therefore, the church needs you!

The church also needs you to be an influence for righteousness to other Christians. Once again, we appeal to the first Thessalonian letter. Paul wrote of their radiant influence, not only among their local congregation, but also of their reputation in areas beyond their local sphere. Because of their dedication and commitment to righteousness, Paul could say: "...you became examples to all in Macedonia and Achaia who believe." Macedonia is the wider region in which the city of Thessalonica rests, and Achaia is the neighboring region to the south containing the famous cities of Athens and Corinth. The fervor and zeal of the Thessalonian church in Paul's day projected their influence far beyond their home town. Paul says the people in these extended areas themselves "declare... how you turned to God from idols to serve the living God, and to wait for his Son from heaven..." (1:9-10). What a great source of strength and encouragement the church at Thessalonica must have been, to have even an apostle of the Lord commend them in this way! By being a part of a local congregation, we too may be such an example. The church needs people like that. Thus, if you are committed to the Lord in this way, the church needs you desperately!

Second, the church needs you in the worship service. When we attend the assembly of the Lord, our physical presence alone is a source of encouragement to others and serves to bolster and strengthen the congregation's efforts in worship and service to God. When we sing out loudly during the song service, mingling our voices with others, it enlivens the singing, swells the praises of Jehovah, and thereby encourages all participants! Paul teaches that when we sing in the assembly, we are "speaking to one another" as well as to the Lord (Eph. 5:19). If I am absent, not only have I missed an opportunity to sing praise to God "in the church" (Reb. 2:12), but I have neglected to be a source of encouragement to others in the assembly. Therefore, the church needs you!

Furthermore, if I can lead songs, lead public prayers, and/or teach the Bible, the church desperately needs me. Congregations everywhere are in desperate need

of men, young or old, who can lead publicly in the worship service. The New Testament scriptures are full of allusions to men who publicly pray (1 Tim 2:1), take leadership roles in the singing (1 Cor. 14:26), or who teach the word of God (1 Cor. 14:12). If I have these abilities or I have the potential to develop them, and I am not part of the church, then I am "burying my talents" and failing the Lord (Mt 25:18). Truly, the church needs you!

In view of these considerations, the two propositions that make up the title of this little article are sustained by an abundance of New Testament truth. If I am not a part of the church, and I want to serve God, I no longer have an option but to become an active part of the New Testament church. I need to believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God (Jn. 8:24), repent of my sins and make a change of life to live for God through Christ (Lk 13:3,5), confess my faith in Jesus as the son of God (Mt 16:16; Acts 8:37), and be immersed in water for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16). Once I have taken these steps, I need to find a local congregation of God's people who have also followed these steps, and that conducts scripturally authorized worship in its assemblies, and "join" them (Acts 9:26). If you have not done so, it is urgent that you make plans to do so today. You need the church, and the church needs you.

I CHANGE NOT continued from page two

debt was owed, it was paid no matter how long it took. Many things may be legal but still wrong in God's sight because He doesn't change. Brethren, if something was ever sinful under the New Testament, it still is! God hasn't changed, we have! The Bible reads as it ever has to all of us. The wicked world around us has seemingly desensitized us to sin. We see things today we once never dreamed would take place and we have gotten used to them. I heard one fellow say that some don't want a God who never changes, but we have Him whether we like it or not. He loves us and doesn't want any of us to be lost (2 Peter 3:9) but when we disobey Him a payday is coming.

However, there are also wonderful benefits to God's unchanging ways. Just look at the plan of salvation. Even in this modern world of wickedness when we obey the gospel we are forgiven of all of our sins. Paul wrote in 2

Corinthians 5:17, “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” We know we get into Christ by baptism (see Galatians 3:27) so we can also be certain that all is new with us when we are baptized. How can we be certain? God doesn’t change. His promises will endure until the end. A favorite passage is found in 1 John 1:7: “But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” What a wonderful comfort to absolutely know that no matter our sin, if we remain in the “light” (the truth) the blood of Christ will cleanse us from all sins. Why is this the case? Because God doesn’t change. He promised it and it is still true. However, make no mistake about it, we are required to walk in the light, or within the truth of His Holy Word. We can not live like the world, talk like the world, dress like the world, and in fact be like the world, and still expect our Father to take care of us.

A woman’s growing hair, which is unaltered, will always be a glory unto her (1 Corinthians 11:15) That promise will always be true, our God does not change. She may, with her growing hair as her covering, pray through Jesus Christ just as the man does (1 Corinthians 11:3) and she can remain free from sin and the glory of the man. (1 Corinthians 11:7). You see, the fact that our Father is an unchanging God provides tremendous blessings for us. His unchanging ways are a great treasure.

Much more could be said, but for now Think on these things. DLK

EDIFYING THE BODY OF CHRIST

EPH. 4:11-12

BY RONNY WADE

To “edify” means “to build up.” Edification is the process of building up someone or something. The scriptures tell us that individual Christians are building blocks or stones which are being used to build a godly house (the church). 1Peter 2:5 “You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” 1Cor. 3:9 “For you are God’s field, God’s building.” Eph. 2:21-22 “in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the

Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.” As Christians we must each be about the task of “building up” the Lord’s church. We are a “building crew” not a “wrecking crew.” We are called to edification, not demolition. Paul writes “Do not tear down the work of God...but pursue the things which build up one another.” Romans 14:19-20. Eph. 4:11-12 “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.” Every Christian should be involved in the work of ministry or service. No such thing as ‘the minister’ of the church. We are all ministers. We are all to contribute to the common good of the body. All Christians are to actively work toward the goal of edifying or building up the church. The question is “HOW”?

Specifically what does God want us to do in building up our brethren in Christ?

What is the New Testament Blueprint for successfully building up one another in the Church?

1. Love One Another. 1Cor. 8:1 “Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies.”

Literally “love builds up.” In Eph. 4:16 Paul says “from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.”

What is your share? Do your actions build or weaken the church? Do you have the proper attitude toward others? Love builds and promotes rather than tears down.

“Love does no wrong to a neighbor” Romans 13:10.

Characteristics of true Love given in 1Cor. 13 show why love builds rather than destroys.

Love suffers long and is kind

Love does not envy, does not parade itself, is not puffed up or arrogant.

Love does not behave rudely

Love does not seek its own way

Is not provoked

Doesn’t think evil

Love does not rejoice in iniquity, but in truth

Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things

Love never fails.

Love is the perfect bond of unity Col. 3:14

Encourage One Another. “Therefore encourage one another, and build up one another, just as you also are doing.” 1Thess. 5:11 The word translated “encourage” is a combination of two words which literally means “to call alongside.” It conveys the idea of taking someone to your side, placing an arm around them, and comforting, cheering, encouraging them in some way. People need to be encouraged for all sorts of reasons. Edification is promoted when we put our arms around another, rather than pushing them away at arm’s length. Edification is also promoted or discouraged by what we say to one another. If what I say to you when I call you to my side is unwholesome, or does not take into account your needs at the moment, then edification is not accomplished. “Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for deification according to the need of the moment that it may give grace to those who hear.” Eph. 4:29. If my words tear down, I am not edifying. I have become a part of the demolition crew, rather than the building crew.

Be A Positive Example To One Another. Paul likens the Christian to living epistles, “known and read by all men” 2Cor. 3:2. We are all observed daily by others, both in and out of the church. Our example impacts others, either positively or negatively.

Whether our brothers and sisters in Christ are edified or not may well depend upon the nature of our example before them. There are some things that are neither right or wrong in and of themselves, but which may, because of the weakness of another, be a cause of stumbling for them. “All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify. Let no one seek his own, but each one the other’s well-being” 1Cor. 10:23-24, 1Cor. 8:9-13 “But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak. For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol’s temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened (literally built up, edified) to eat what has been sacrificed to idols? So this weak brother, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge (example). When you sin against your brothers in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. “Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause him to fall.” If our goal is to edify one another, we will look carefully to our example before

one another. Do we strengthen or weaken others by our examples? If they look and we are not there, what does that say? This principle of bearing with the weaknesses of our fellow brethren for the purpose of edification is seen clearly in Romans 15:1-5 “We then who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good leading to edification.” We all need to be more aware of the fact that our example is often observed and imitated by our brethren. For this reason we must always be careful not to do anything that could destroy rather than build up their faith.

When Needed, Be Firm With One Another.

Paul spoke of the fact that his letters were often called “weighty and strong.”

Even though he did not desire to “terrify” his readers by his letters, nevertheless he spoke in firmness and with authority, “which the Lord gave for building you up and not for destroying you” 2Cor. 10:8-10. In 2Cor. 13:10 he again points out that authority to “use severity” has a place in the church, as long as it is used “for building up and not for tearing down.” When anyone is engaged in an act or is displaying an attitude, that is sinful and destructive to them and to others, it is essential that they be approached so that their destructive attitude may be altered. At times our approach may have to be firm; punishment may be necessary, but these can all be acts of edification if entered into with the proper spirit. However, when we enter such situations in anger, frustration, hatred, or spite then we are tearing down rather than building up. Paul wrote “for though I cause you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it...for you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance...in order that you might not suffer loss.” 2Cor. 7:8-9.

Use Your Abilities For One Another.

1Cor. 14:12 “Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, seek to abound in them for the edification of the church.” In v.26, after listing some of the spiritual gifts exercised in the church at Corinth Paul wrote “let all things be done for edification.” This church did not always come together for the better, but at times gathered “for the worse.” (problems over Lord’s Supper) 1Cor. 11:17 hence the caution that all their actions needed to be with the goal of edification in mind. Our gifts or abilities are not the same as those possessed by the Corinthian brethren. We do not have spiritual gifts as they did. It is with the proper working of each individual member

that the body of Christ is able to build itself up in love. Each of us has a place in the church, a part to play, a place to fill.

We are all unique, we have a place to fill that no one else can. Because of that we must perform our work of service for which God has gifted us and in so doing we render edification for others. "And since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given us, let each exercise them accordingly." Romans 12:6 Eph. 4:16 "from who the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes the growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love."

Speak God's Word To One Another.

After encouraging the Corinthians to "pursue love" and to "desire earnestly spiritual gifts" Paul says that he would really like to see them engaging in prophecy 1Cor. 14:1. This simply means to function as a mouth-piece of God," to be a medium through which His message is proclaimed. Prophecy carries the idea of "forth-telling." One who prophecies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation. One who speaks in a tongue edifies himself; but one who prophesies edifies the church." 1Cor. 14:3-4. Paul warns of the danger of doing anything within the body, even though it may be good in and of itself, if in so doing "the other man is not edified" 1Cor. 14:17.

In 2Cor. 12:19 Paul says that he spent his time "speaking in Christ: and all for your edification, beloved." By speaking forth the good news to one another, we cannot help but build up one another. We must be careful to not forget this when we get in the pulpit. We must edify or build up through our teaching in cooperate worship. If we don't, we fail.

Promote Peace With One Another.

"So then let us pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another" Romans 14:19. In Romans 12:9-17 Paul gives some good practical advice on how to pursue peaceful relations with others, and then concludes with this charge: "If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men" v. 19. When an atmosphere of peace reigns within a congregation, one finds an atmosphere conducive to spiritual and numerical growth. "But if you bite and devour one another, take care lest you be consumed by one another" Gal. 5:15. Once Saul of Tarsus stopped breathing his murderous threats against the disciples of Christ, and aligned himself with the Word of God, "the

church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria enjoyed peace, being built up (edified); and, going on in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it continued to increase" Acts 9:31.

PAGES FROM THE PAST

The following article, by Brother Homer Gay, is from the January 1960 Issue of The Old Paths Advocate. It originally appeared in the June 15, 1921 of The Apostolic Way. In this article Brother Gay writes about the power of the Word of God. He states that the Word is the power to save sinners. -Rick Martin

THE POWER OF THE WORD

"For the word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12).

There are two main ideas about the "word of God." One is that it is a "dead letter," has no life in it, and therefore cannot make alive, or give life; the other is, that the "word of God" is powerful.

I must say, that I have but very little patience with the man of the first idea. Then there is a "middle man" who contends that the word of God is to comfort, strengthen and encourage the child of God, but that it takes more power than the word contains to save lost sinners. That is, that it takes a special work of grace to save sinners.

I have been asked to write some for time benefit of such people. Now, allow me to state my proposition plainly:

The gospel-the word of God-contained in the book we call the Bible, is the power of God to save lost sinners-make Christians of them-and is also the power of God to save such a one finally in Heaven.

First, I want to affirm that God's Word is powerful. The one scripture cited at the heading of this should be enough to satisfy any honest person--"The word of God is quick and powerful," etc.

Paul says again in Heb. 11:3, "Through faith, we

understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God." We see this demonstrated during the creation period. When God wanted anything to come into existence, he says it, and it is so. He said, "Let there be light, and there was light." He said, "Let the dry land appear, and it was so."

Peter says, "By the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water, -But the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store," etc. (2 Pet. 3:5-7). And Jesus says, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away" (Matt. 24:35).

No sane and honest person can stand up in the face of these statements and say the word of God is a "dead letter."

Second, I contend that the gospel-God's word-is the power of God to save-redeem lost sinners. Man fell from a state of safety or fell from his state of purity by: 1st, a preacher-the devil; 2nd, preaching a lie; 3rd, man heard the lie; 4th, believed the lie; 5th, obeyed the lie. Result: a complete journey from saved to lost. Now the lie put man in bondage. Jesus says, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth will make you free." Jon. 8:32.

"It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." 1 Cor. 12:1. There is, first, the preacher; second, instead of a lie he is to preach the gospel-the truth; third, "How shall they believe on him of whom they have not heard." Rom. 10:14. So we hear the truth. We must believe the truth. Mk. 16:16. We obey the truth, "Seeing ye have purified your souls by obeying the truth." I Pet. 1:22.

Now, hearing a lie, believing a lie, and obeying a lie put man below the safety line. Then, if hearing the truth, believing the truth and obeying the truth will not put man back above the safety line a lie has more power than the truth.

The truth is God's word, Jno. 17:17; and we have seen its power. The lie is the devil's-he is a liar from the beginning." So, if the lie has more power than the truth the devil has more power than God.

Jesus says, preach the gospel; he that believes that gospel and is baptized shall be saved. Mk. 16:15, 16. Paul says, "Ye were the servants of sin, but ye have

obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you; being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." Rom. 6:17, 18. Jesus says, "The word of God is the seed:" that seed is sown in the heart of the sinner, and springs up. "Born again"- he becomes a Christian-by the word of God- the seed. I Pet, 1:23.

The sinner has not obeyed the truth Peter says when he obeys that truth his soul is purified. I Pet. 1:22.

God's word, the gospel, commands the lost sinner to believe, Heb. 11:6; repent, Acts 17:30; to be baptized, Acts 10:48. "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have a right to the tree of life and may enter in through the gates into the city." Rev. 22:14.

Surely no one can say that God's word has not power to save lost sinners.

Third, God's word is the power of God to save the Christian in heaven. Jas. 1:21. "Receive with meekness the ingrafted word, which is able to save your souls."

Paul says, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." 2 Tim. 3:16.

No wonder, then, that Paul could exclaim, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation." Rom. 1:16.

God's word is sufficient. It will lead the lost sinner to Christ who saves. It will guide the Christian in the right way.

Announcement

PREACHER AVAILABLE - Brother Jeff Thompson has left the field of education having a desire to return to the preaching field. He is a dedicated Christian with outstanding ability. He is available for preaching appointments and gospel meetings. If your congregation desires his services in any way, please contact him at Jeff Thompson 4367 Co. Rd. 30 Roanoke, AL 36274 or call him at 334-885-6203

Our Departed

MORGAN - Joe Dan Morgan--It is with sadness that we herald the passing of brother Joe Dan Morgan, one of God's faithful servants. His departure came June 25, 2018, being at the time of his passing sixty-seven years of age. He is survived by his faithful wife Kriss, children; Tami Jo Lowery and husband Michael, Mandi Sue Baker and her husband Dustin, Joe Dale Morgan and his wife Holly, his mother Pearl Morgan, One sister Sherry Hullinger and husband Jimmy, one brother Jim and wife Brenda and several grandchildren. Joe Dan was an Elder in the church at Miami, Ok where he was loved and respected by the entire congregation. He was a tireless worker for the Lord and His cause. A very large crowd gathered in Miami for the memorial service testifying of respect people had for him both in and out of the church. A few days before his departure we visited with him in the hospital. He was ready to go should that be the case. A deep desire for the eternal burned deeply in his soul. He left without regret. He was going home. This writer and brother Bill Ferguson (a close friend of the family years, conducted the memorial service.

HOWARD - Jessie Faye Beavers Howard was born May 31, 1922, at Advance, Arkansas. She died June 10, 2018, at the age of 96. Funeral services were conducted June 13, 2018, at the Ball Church of Christ. Jessie was married to James Ervin Howard on August 25, 1940, in Lone Rock, Arkansas. He preceded her in death on March 26, 2004. She is survived by three children, Gayle Barnes and husband Ira, Springfield, MO; Linda Smith and husband Bob, Cuba, MO; and Ronnie Howard, Dora, MO. She is also survived by one daughter-in-law, Marie Howard of Ava, MO, and twelve grandchildren, eighteen great-grandchildren, one great-great-grandchild, and one brother, Carl Beavers and wife Zelda of Pottsville, MO. Preceding her in death are her husband James, son Billy, four infant children, four brothers, Garland, Thurman, Claude, and Herman; and three sisters, Lizzie Beavers White, Cara Mae Teague, and Betty Owen. I first stayed with Jim and Jessie during a gospel meeting at the Adam Congregation, near Dora, Missouri, in October of 1970. I was 22 years old. Their son Billy was 17 and Ronnie was 15, and Jessie treated me as one of her own boys. I bonded that week with the Howard family as the boys and I swam and floated the White River, rode horses, hauled calves, and chopped wood. We had a great meeting, baptizing 6 or 7 people.

I never heard Jessie speak a bad word about anyone. She was always looking for the best in others. She was quiet, hospitable, and had smiling eyes. Most importantly, she was devout. I think she was happiest when she was in the assembly of the Lord's House. All of her children are faithful Christians, and they rise up today and call her blessed (Prov. 31 :28). I was honored to officiate the funeral service. Carl M. Johnson

Field Reports

Ronny Wade, P.O. Box 14352 Springfield, MO 65804 July 16. The annual 4th of July meeting here in Missouri was well attended and provided an opportunity for people from all over the U.S. to associate with one another and enjoy some great gospel preaching. We also hear good things about the meeting in Sulphur, OK and rejoice at its success as well. Those who attend such meetings and bring young people with them are to be commended. The work in our area continues in a positive and successful direction. Gospel meetings are currently going on in almost every direction from Springfield and we are hoping and praying for good results in all of them. Lord willing we will be at the church in Alderson, OK July 26-29, Brookville, FL August 22-26, Hamilton, OH, Sept. 16-23 and London, KY Sept. 26-Oct. 1. Please continue to remember us when you pray.

Johnny Elmore, 419 K SW, Ardmore, OK 73401, johnnyelmore@gmail.com., July 12. I have been a bit remiss in reporting lately, but this year, I spoke at Green Oaks, Arlington, TX February 4, and I filled in for Ronny Wade in a short meeting at Galey, OK March 23-25. I also spoke at Lees Summit, MO April 11-15. I was happy that the meeting was well attended and also to be able to associate with David Griffin and all the members of that fine congregation. I was asked to speak at the evening service, April 15, at Lebanon, MO. For over a year now, I have been asked to speak at Ada, OK on the third Sundays of most months and I have enjoyed being at these places, where we once lived and worked. I thought the 4th of July meeting at Springfield, MO was one of the very best. I now anticipate being at Marietta, GA for the singing August 18. Why not plan to be with us? Also, I look forward to another great Texas Labor Day meeting. We have several good teachers at Ardmore, including Sean McCallister and Lee Grant.

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WALKS THROUGH THE BIBLE...

WHAT WERE YOU THINKING?

By JERRY DICKINSON

“But Moses was angry with the officers of the army who came from the battle, And Moses said to them: Why have you kept all the women alive? Look, these women caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the Lord in the incident of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation.” (Numbers 31:14-16) Balaam tried and failed to put a curse on Israel but finally counseled Balak to have the Moabite and Midianite women seduce the men of Israel to commit fornication and worship their idol gods. This resulted in God punishing the offenders with a terrible plague that killed twenty four thousand men! Balaam no doubt got his reward by this pernicious plan.

The Lord, however, was not going to let this devious and devilish assault against his people go unpunished. God commanded Moses to go to war against Midian and take vengeance on them for “harassing” Israel on their way to the Promised Land. An army of twelve thousand men attacks and kills all the males, but for some reason the women are spared and brought back into the congregation. These were the very women who had caused all the trouble by seducing the men to sin! When Moses sees these women he is angry and in essence asks, “What were you thinking? These are the very women that caused you to sin!” He then commands that these women be put to death for their crimes and in order that the congregation can be free from the contaminating influence of these wicked people.

“What were you thinking?” You have to wonder what they were thinking when they decided to bring these women into their midst. Either they were not thinking at all, or else their thinking was clouded by the beauty and allure of the Midianite women. Paul would later write that evil associations corrupt good morals and Moses knew this principle well. No wonder he was angry and demands to know, “What were you thinking?” This principle is one we need to remember and honor. When we allow into our congregations and fellowship people we know have caused trouble and division in the past we are asking for trouble in the future. Many of the problems in the church today are because false brethren and teacher were allowed into the congregation. We have to ask, “What were you thinking?”

Back in the 1970’s I worked with the church in McAlester, Oklahoma. The church originally met in a town called Stuart a few miles west of McAlester. The church there worshipped with one cup and did not divide into Sunday School classes and followed the Bible pattern in its work and worship. Some people began to meet with them who identified themselves as members of the church of Christ, however these folks had previously worshipped where individual communion cups and Sunday School classes were used. The good brethren at Stuart were concerned about this but the newcomers assured them that even though they saw nothing wrong with cups and classes they would never cause trouble over those issues. They just wanted to worship at Stuart and be a part of the congregation and would not push anyone to violate their conscience. That sounded reasonable and innocuous enough so the leaders of the Stuart congregation took in the newcomers. In view of what eventually happened the question has to be posed, “What were you thinking?”

The newcomers gradually and surreptitiously gained more and more influence, and finally the day came when they announced that they were putting in individual cups and classes. The few families who still held to the Bible pattern were outnumbered but they pleaded for the majority not to change the way the church had always worshipped. These faithful brethren were told you can either accept the changes – or leave! They did. They left their building and started a congregation in McAlester which still worships to this day according to the Bible pattern. By the way, this same scenario occurred all over the country again and again. May the Lord help us to learn from past mistakes. Do not bring into the congregation the very persons who will destroy your congregation. Let us be diligent to safeguard our pulpits and our congregations, especially when we know from past experience what disaster can befall when we allow the wolf into the sheepfold. May our children and grandchildren never have to ask us, “What were you thinking?”