

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

OLD PATHS ADVOCATE

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

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

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NO. 2

NOAH FOUND GRACE

By CLINT DE FRANCE

There is much talk today about the grace of God that is altogether different from any language found in the New Testament. We hear about grace “coming down and overwhelming” and people who are “covered with grace.” This language is really not new at all and finds its roots in the Augustinian concept of grace as some sort of mystical, nebulous force that is imposed on men from heaven in two ways: actual grace, being the supernaturally endowed ability to do good things, and sanctifying grace, being the supernatural power of salvation working in one’s life. The Catholic and early reformation churches, influenced by this thinking, believed that they could contact and receive the “divine power of grace” by certain rituals called “sacraments.” Although this is the widely accepted idea in the religious world, and its jargon has entered the vocabulary of nearly every religious person, with such clichés as, “an outward sign of an inward grace,” the Bible seems to present a very different view of the subject.

Noah Found Grace...

The first mention of grace in the Bible is in Genesis 6:8, “But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.” That simple little verse, when considered in its context teaches us volumes about the subject of the grace of God. The world, relatively young, but mature in malice and evil imagination-had become so depraved as a majority that it caused God to regret having ever created man. In His righteousness He resolved to no longer strive with him, but to send down judgment and wipe him off the face of the earth. However, rather than destroying it in an instant, which would have been both possible and just, God chose to be longsuffering for 120 years and give the world a chance at repentance. (Gen. 6:3; 1 Peter 3:19)

The Bible says Noah “...was a just man, perfect in his generations. Noah walked with God.” (Genesis 6:9b) Noah responded to God’s gracious offer and was able to escape from the deluge. There is nothing in this story that would define the grace of God as mystical divine power, but rather it is clear that the proper definition would be divine favor, and loving kindness. Because of his great love for man, God gave him a chance that he did not deserve to be given.

Now the question we must answer is this: How did Noah go about finding this grace? Well, the first thing we are told about Noah is that he was a just and good hearted man who “walked with God.” As a family leader in the Patriarchal age, we can expect that this carried some very profound meaning.

It seems that Noah actually had moments of conversation with God on a rather frequent basis, as many other Patriarchs did, and in these conversations Noah received instruction on how he and his household might be saved, and trusting in what God told him, the Bible says: “Thus Noah did; according to all that God commanded him, so he did.” (Gen. 6:22) Hebrews 11:7 says: “By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.”

No person could read the story and conclude that Noah saved himself. His salvation, in providence, patience, plan and in power was by the grace of God. God had provided him with the providence, bore with him in patience, instructed him in the plan and purged the world of sin by the outpouring of his power. 1 Peter 3:19-20 shows that God showed this same grace to the whole world of Noah’s day, as Noah preached the message of salvation to the world around him, even while building the ark. The others however, did

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Editorial

DOES THE END JUSTIFY THE MEANS?

BY: *JOHNNY ELMORE*

DECEMBER 1984

There is a philosophy in religion which has been accepted in many churches which claim to belong to Christ. It is the idea that the end justifies the means. In other words, if the result is good, then any means used to accomplish that result is permissible. Basing their approach upon this philosophy, many liberal churches of Christ employ youth ministers, educational directors, and associate ministers.

They appeal to the masses with plays, choruses, dramatic groups, church camps, kitchens, fellowship halls and dinners. They sponsor joy busses, sweetheart banquets, senior citizen ministries, movies, singles ministries, divorce recovery seminars, team sports, youth assemblies, puppet ministries, and many other things foreign and unknown to the New Testament and to the apostolic church. These digressions have occasioned the erection of "family life centers" (translation: gymnasiums) at the cost of thousands of dollars, as liberal churches of Christ vie with the denominations for their share of the crowd. These ventures into the social gospel arena are rightly opposed by the more conservative, digressive churches of Christ.

But the liberal churches have only carried to a ridiculous extreme the philosophy that many of the more conservative churches advocate - that is, the philosophy that the end justifies the means. Many years ago some of our brethren began to contend that if the thing we do is right, then it is right to do it in any way. If it is right to send out missionaries, then we are right in devising any means we please to send them out, from pooling money in a central fund to having pie suppers, cake walks and rummage sales to raise money. If it is right to teach the Bible, then any way we teach it is right. In came simultaneous classes and women teachers. One brother made the argument to me that "eighty-five per cent of our members have come from the classes." (I always thought that the gospel of Christ made converts). If it is right to observe the communion, then it is right to employ any means which will make it swifter, more beautiful, and above all, more sanitary.

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THE QUERIST COLUMN

By RONNY F. WADE

Question: Can a church dedicate an infant? Some support this act by citing Luke 2:22 and 1 Samuel 1:20-28. Do these scriptures justify the practice?

Answer: No, I do not believe a church is authorized to dedicate infants. The two passages used to justify the practice need to be analyzed in order to determine their meaning. First Luke 2:22 “Now when the days of her purification according to the Law of Moses were completed, they brought Him to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord.” According to Lev. 12:1-5 Purification took place on the fortieth day after the birth in the case of males and eighty days in the case of females. Until it was performed the mother of the new born was not permitted to go to the temple, take part in any public service, or even leave her house. It would appear that even the members of the family were considered ceremonially unclean, because they came in daily contact with her. According to Lev. 15:16-30 it was a bodily issue that rendered her unclean. When God slew the firstborn of Egypt, He spared the firstborn of Israel. Because of this all the firstborn of Israel were regarded as belonging to the Lord Ex. 12:29-30, and 13:2. The firstborn male child of each family had to be redeemed with money Ex. 13:11-15; Num. 18:15-16. The redemption money for a male was five shekels of the sanctuary Lev. 27:6. Hence the reference here to presenting Jesus to the Lord is a reference to the Old Testament scriptures that deal with the redemption of the first born in a family. The passage in 1 Samuel refers to the vow that Hannah made to give her son to the Lord. When the child was weaned she took him to Eli and left him there. He was placed under the vow of a Nazarite, and later became a Judge and prophet in Israel. Neither of the above passages have any bearing whatsoever on the church dedicating children to God today. There is not one iota of scripture that justifies such a practice. In many denominational bodies infants and small children are sprinkled or dedicated. Such exercises are usually associated in some way with the notion that children are born in sin, hence the need to christen them. First of all infants and small children are not sinners. Sin is

the result of disobedience to bible commands and instructions. Since infants have committed no sin, it is impossible to baptize them for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). Dedicating children is supposed to indicate that these young ones now belong to the Lord in some special way. The truth is they already belonged to the Lord in a very special way. They were pure and clean, with no sin in their lives. Another equally ridiculous practice that is growing in popularity in denominational circles is the dedication of pets or animals. Some religious bodies announce a day and time for people to bring their dogs and cats to the gathering and the preacher will pronounce a blessing on them i.e. dedicate them to the Lord. Such is unheard of in the New Testament. Anyone who encourages or practices the dedication of infants through some type of church action is advocating something about which the New Testament says nothing. Dave Miller in his book “Piloting The Strait” references some liberal churches of Christ that have started encouraging the practice of dedicating babies. This only reminds us of how far some have wandered away from the scriptures. Don’t be surprised if you hear of some group trying the same thing among us. The days of giving scripture for what we preach and practice seem to be slowly but surely slipping away. Where will it all end? God only knows. Send all questions to Ronny F. Wade, P.O. Box 800337 LaGrange. GA 30240 or rfwade@charter.net

“THE MESSAGE”

By: BILLY D. DICKINSON

The Apostle John had a message for dying humanity, according to I John 1:5, and it was a message that is found in the life and person of the Lord Jesus Christ. In fact, the epistle begins by saying, “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life” (1 John 1:1). Please observe that John begins by presenting a life- a life which appeared in history in the form of a person (who was touched, seen, and heard). We have the assurance here that Jesus was not the figment of their imagination, but the Son of God actually came to this earth and lived among men. After all, John also declared in John 1:14, “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”

When you stop to think about it, a man's life can sometimes take on a single message, showing who the person was and what he stood for. Take the life of Adolf Hitler, for example, and the point is easily illustrated. His life proclaims a dark and dismal message that demonstrates how hatred, pride, and a thirst for power lead to frightening things and eventual destruction. On the other hand, the life of Christ stands in great contrast to someone like Hitler. When we understand who the Lord is and what His life was all about, there is a message that emerges: "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). How wonderful it is to know that we don't have to guess at what the message is! Indeed, John tells us what the message consists of, proclaiming at least three truths that we need to have a proper understanding of. Let's notice "the message" that is revealed by the apostle in these verses.

NO DARKNESS IN GOD

Notice again what John wrote: "This then is the message... God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. "This is a great and comforting message that takes us in several directions.

First of all, it is the very foundation of what is affirmed in the following verses, and it is what our Savior's life and teaching were all about. Also, the message is not simply that God provides us with light, but God is light! In other words, this is His very nature (the essence of who He is) and He is the source of all true light. To drive the point home, John states it both positively and negatively- "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all."

What does all of this mean? It means that what light is on a physical plane, God is to us on every level of human experience. If we want to know who God is, understanding His character and nature, we need to simply observe what light is. What a powerful truth this is to ascertain! God can do for us in a spiritual sense what light does for us in our earthly existence. The question that needs to be answered is: What does light do? It reveals, making it possible to see things clearly. Jesus said in Luke 11:34 that "when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness. "If the eye is defective, not being able to take in light and produce vision, the result is darkness to the body. Likewise, many people today dwell in spiritual darkness, all because they have rejected Christ and His doctrine. After all, He is that "true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into

the world" (John 1:9). That's why John said that this is the message which we have "heard of him," meaning that Jesus reveals the Father unto us (John 1:18), and the truth to live by is what we find in the person and teaching of Jesus Christ (John 14:6).

Light is something that energizes. Perhaps that is its most dramatic quality- it quickens, activates, and imparts life. You can see it every morning when the sun rises and wakes up a slumbering world, as birds begin to sing and animals hunt for food, and nature itself is invigorated. This is what God does for us when we allow Him to penetrate our darkened hearts with His light! Jesus declared in John 8:12, "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. "The Lord makes it clear that light and life are inseparable, helping us to understand why this truth is the foundation for what follows next.

MERE CLAIMS ARE NOT ENOUGH

John continues: "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth" (1 John. 1:6). There must not be a contradiction between what we claim and how we actually live. Since God is light, if we claim to have fellowship with God while walking in darkness, John says we are not speaking the truth! Fellowship indicates communion with God, as those who are acceptable in His sight, and our spirit is in harmony with His. But how can such be the case if we are walking in "darkness" (the very thing that is contrary to God's character and will)?

As John used the expression in the above passage, what does it mean to "walk in darkness?" When we notice how he used the term, the answer becomes obvious. First, in this very context John placed emphasis upon the truth: "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth" (1 John 1:6). 1 John 3:19 talks about being "of the truth, "as those who "keep his commandments" (verse 22). Surely to walk in the "light" (the opposite of darkness) involves the idea of walking according to God's revealed truth!

Also, darkness refers to unrighteousness, meaning that it can be manifested in how we live. "He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in the darkness, even until now" (1 John 2:9). Hatred, which is a work of the flesh (Gal. 5:20), belongs to the darkness. This would be true of everything that belongs to a worldly way of life (1 John 2:15-17). So, if we claim to have fellowship with God

while walking in religious error (2 John 9) or while living an unrighteous life, we are not speaking the truth. Just because someone claims to know God does not necessarily mean they do! We must “keep his commandments” and be one that “keepeth his word” (1 John 2:3-6).

FELLOWSHIP WITH EACH OTHER

John continues: “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” (1 John 1:7). “Fellowship” denotes communion and partnership, indicating that we are at harmony with each other, and that enables us to be involved in mutual assistance. Please observe that the little word “if” at the beginning of the statement shows this is a conditional thing. Rom. 16:17 says, “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. “It is sad when that must be done, but those who disturb the church with unscriptural practices and false doctrine bring it upon themselves.

GOSSIP

BY: ROBERT WAYNE KORNEGAY

When I was a child in school, one of my favorite games to play was called “Gossip”. Today I think they call it “Telephone”. My classroom was set up with the students’ desks in straight rows, usually four across and about seven or eight deep. The game was played when the teacher would hand a written sentence to the first person in each row and they would turn and whisper the sentence to the person in back of them. That person would turn and whisper the sentence to the one in back of them, and so on, until it got to the last person of the row. Then the last person would write down the sentence and read it to the class. It never failed that the sentence was no where close to the original given by the teacher. Usually a simple sentence like “Billy was driving his white truck with a red chicken in the back” came out with the chicken driving a red truck and Billy riding in the back.

It was a fun game and always made us laugh. I was always amazed at how things got so distorted as it passed from one person to the next. It is no wonder why Paul wrote “Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.” Col. 2:8 Of course traditions are custom and practices from the past which are

passed on as accepted standards of behavior for the present. Jesus criticized the Pharisees for slavishly following their traditions and making them more authoritative than the Scripture in Matt 15:2 and Mark 7:3

One very important subject that I am very concerned with today is the subject of evolution. Evolution is taught in our schools as fact, yet when the Father of evolution, Charles Darwin first wrote his book “Origin of the Species” he stated that evolution was only a theory at the time and that future discoveries would prove the theory true. Today professors are claiming it factual, debating it at our universities, in the newspapers, in the textbooks, even in the courts. To see it written today and compare it to where it came from, one has to wonder if there are discoveries that we are unaware of that prove this “theory” or are the media and “educated” people just playing a game of gossip with us?

This past September 2010, my wife, daughter, and I took a trip to London, England, and Paris, France. This was a gift to my daughter for a graduation/18th birthday present. After I realized that we were really going, I started thinking of places I wanted to visit and what I really wanted to see. Since the theory of evolution had been on my mind, I decided to find Charles Darwin’s grave and see for myself the evidence that proves his theory.

Well, to make a long story short, there was no evidence. We visited several museums and looked at several displays of how man was supposed to evolve. I even went to Westminster Abbey and visited the grave of Charles Darwin. It was quite interesting to me that he was allowed to be buried in the Abby even though his theory of evolution is in strict contrast to those of us who believe in a creator. That is another subject to be talked about at another time.

After visiting the museums and seeing the displays, all of them, without exception, stated that it could have been possible for man to evolve from the monkey. Never once did they state it as a fact. Each one stated that it could have been. Please, dear readers, do not miss what I am trying to say. Never once did the “evidence” claim evolution as a fact. Not one display. Yet, today after the theory has been told over and over and handed down through the years, it is now reported as fact. No new discoveries to prove this damnable theory. I think it would be quite comical if it wasn’t so harmful to society. It seems like some are playing

gossip with us about evolution. My father always told me that some of my relatives may have hung from a tree by their neck, but none of them ever hung from a tree by their tales.

Dear readers, never has there been a more appropriate time to heed the words of Paul. "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." Col. 2:8



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not have the faith and obedience to lay hold on it.

The Grace of Christ

This old story prepares us very well to approach the subject of the grace of God through Christ that is taught in the New Testament. The Bible says, "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast." (Eph. 2:8-9) This is exactly how Noah was saved. By faithful obedience, not by plans of his own design or of his own strength, he claimed the gracious gift of salvation from God, and according to Paul that is basically the same way we find salvation today.

1 Peter 3:19-21

The Apostle Peter taught that not only was the salvation of Noah like the salvation of men today, but it was in fact divinely orchestrated, as an action prophecy, or a type, pointing forward to the work of Christ and His gospel: "For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine long suffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. There is also an antitype which now saves us-baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God),

through the resurrection of Jesus Christ..." (1 Peter 3:18-21)

In this passage the Apostle Peter shows us how the grace of Christ (His sacrificial death on the cross) is able to save men's souls.

Let's notice as the providence, the patience, the plan and the power are unfolded. First, he shows that in the days of Noah grace was shown to the wicked antediluvians, now spirits in prison (Hades), by the preaching of righteousness that Noah gave through the inspiration of the Spirit. This is the providence. It would have been righteous for God to punish the ancient world for their sin without providing any way of redemption, and the same is true today. The foundation of any hope of salvation is the graciousness of God. "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich." (2 Cor. 8:9) By the sacrifice of Christ, and the gospel message preached, man is given a way of escape from the penalty of his guilt. But the grace of God does not stop at the provision, it continues into the patience of God in giving men an opportunity to respond.

Peter says of the ancient world, "the Divine long suffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared..." This too is an essential feature of the Grace of Christ as God is "long suffering toward us... not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9) Next Peter carries us to the plan, now watch this - the plan is a part of the grace of God! "while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water." Examine the passage. The antecedent of "in which" is the ark. The ark was where the eight souls survived and were saved by following in faith the plan of God. (Hebrews 11:7) In like manner there is a plan given to men today. Those who hear the message of Christ's Gospel, and in faith accept it unto obedience, repent of their sins, confess the divine sonship of Christ and are baptized in water for the remission of sins. (Rom. 10:17; Luke 13:3; Matthew 10:32; Acts 2:38)

That is the plan for man to follow, but the plan is efficacious because of and by the power of God. Notice, "in which a few, that is eight souls, were saved through water." Here the salvation of Noah and his

family is not attributed only to the ark but also to the flood! Pay close attention. If Noah and his family had built the ark correctly and trusted in God and entered into it, that alone would not have saved them from the wrath of God toward the evil and sin of the world. The wickedness had to be taken away in order for the family of Noah to be truly saved. That is precisely what the flood did! It washed the world clean of all unrighteousness and gave a new life to those who had obeyed God.

Peter writes that this same thing occurs in our obedience to the Gospel when we are baptized. While a mere dipping in water would normally profit us nothing, baptism as obedience to the gospel is given power by the resurrection of Jesus Christ so that it is not merely an outward cleansing, but an inward cleansing. (Acts 22:16; Col. 2:12) As the flood waters did to the ancient world, in baptism our souls are washed from all sin by the blood of Christ. This is what it means to be saved by the grace of God. For someone to suggest that salvation by grace would exclude baptism or any other act of obedience shows a fundamental misunderstanding of what grace is. Not some ethereal force, but the goodness and favor of a loving God for his creation, man.

“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works.” (Titus 2:11-15)



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Moses, A Negative Example

The Bible has given us a notable example of the folly of this philosophy in the case of Moses. When the children of Israel were encamped at Kadesh, there was no water. With irate voices, the people confronted Moses and “chode” with him (Ex. 20:3). God spoke to Moses and commanded him to take the rod, and speak to the rock before their eyes, and he promised that water would come forth. Moses took the rod,

gathered the people together and said to the rebellious crowd, “Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?” He smote the rock twice, and water came out abundantly.

Now it does not take a scholar to see that Moses not only did something that God didn’t tell him to do (smiting the rock) but he also spoke as if he were entirely responsible for the water, thus detracting from the glory of God. But wasn’t the end good? Yes, water came out abundantly. Was God pleased? No. God said to Moses, “Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them” (Ex. 20:12). Moses paid dearly for departing from God’s way.

The apostle Paul said, “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we, through patience and comfort of the scriptures, might have hope” (Rom. 15:4). And after emphasizing the value of the “things written aforetime,” he said: “Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because or the grace that is given to me of God, that I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost” (Rom. 15:15, 16). This passage settles the fact, beyond fear of successful contradiction, that no offering in the work or worship of the church is acceptable to God unless it is “sanctified by the Holy Ghost,” that is, authorized by the Holy Spirit in the New Testament. There is absolutely no standard by which we may measure the acceptance of our service, worship, praise or prayers with God, except by the rule he has given us - the New Testament.

Stand Fast In The Faith

I appeal to all faithful brethren to “stand fast in the faith” (I Cor. 16:13). The term, “the faith,” is used metonymically to stand for “that which is believed.” Paul gave this the highest priority, saying near the end of life, “I have kept the faith” (II Tim. 4:7). Our object is not to attract the largest crowds at all costs. Our object is to keep the faith, and to lay hold on eternal life. Let those who are most interested in numbers follow the fads of the times, but let us keep the church free from Satan’s philosophy.

I appeal to our conservative-minded brethren, who can see the folly of this philosophy, as it applies to church-supported colleges, societies, and orphan homes, but who have a blind spot when it comes to Sunday schools, individual cups and other innovations to realize that when the Bible way is abandoned, it is only a short step to denominationalism. Let us continue to examine every word of doctrine, every method of work, and every item of practice to see that it goes not beyond our rule - the New Testament.

1 CORINTHIANS COMMENTARY, ARTICLE 2

BY: BENNIE CRYER

1 Corinthians 1:4, I thank my God always on your behalf; for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ. The first part of this verse is in a tense that indicates Paul was in the habit of constantly thanking God concerning them on account of the grace of God given them. The grace of God does not refer necessarily to their salvation for Paul mentions that in v2. It seems rather to refer to the spiritual gifts given them through the laying on of the apostles hands when he started the work in Corinth. These they received in abundance so that it could be said of them, So that ye come behind in no gift, v7. Besides, spiritual gifts are the subject of the next few verses. Paul is complimenting the Corinthians in this section of his epistle to them. The Holy Spirit must have thought this was a good way to begin this letter to them. Have you ever had anyone praise you? Remember how good it made you feel? However, sometimes people praise you (tell some of the good things about you) because they have in mind correcting you about some deficiency in your life. That is a good way to train children. Some at Corinth were acting like babes in Christ, 3:1. Paul has in mind correcting many errors in the church at Corinth so he wants to tell them some good things about their work in Christ. In chapters 12-14 he corrects many errors in their abuse of these spiritual gifts. Keep in mind 2 Corinthians 10:6 where he informed them that he had a readiness to revenge all disobedience. A lesson we must keep in mind today. But for now he praises them. These gifts came by the authority of Jesus Christ.

1:5. That in every thing ye are enriched by him,

in all utterance, and in all knowledge. Every thing involves those things that have to do with the spiritual gifts imparted to them. Enriched indicates that the Lord had even made their usefulness have more value or strength in their use of the spiritual gifts. This is much like some of our bread is made with enriched wheat flour, that is, the flour has certain vitamins and minerals added to it to make it more nourishing and beneficial to the consumer. It was possible for the ones given spiritual gifts to neglect them or even ignore their teachings. In 2 Timothy 1:6 this same writer instructed the young evangelist with these words: Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. Stir up meant to kindle afresh or keep in full flame, (Vine's). Thus, the spiritual gifts were compared to fire and were capable of growing dim or dying out through neglect. Utterance means all doctrine and knowledge refers to understanding all of the doctrine. While we do not have these supernatural spiritual gifts today we do have natural talents and gifts. We must never neglect them but continually enrich them so our usefulness in the church can be increased.

1:6. Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you. The testimony of Christ is the gospel of Christ. Note how the two terms are used interchangeably in 2 Timothy 1:8: Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God. When Paul came to Corinth and began the work there he preached the gospel to them and confirmed its validity with miracles. This was in agreement with the Lord's plan. Mark 16:20, And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen. Hebrews 2:3-4 teaches the same thing. How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him. God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will? Those in Corinth that received the gifts of the Spirit were now able to confirm their messages as truth from God even as the apostle had confirmed his message to them at the beginning of the work there.

1:7. So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for

the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ: The church at Corinth had been supplied with all of the spiritual gifts. There were no churches that had received more. 2 Corinthians 8:7; 12:13. They had been truly blessed. Though they had all of the spiritual gifts collectively they were not able to determine when the Lord would return. They served him eagerly waiting for him to come back. Mark 13:32, But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father. It is foolish for religionist to set a specific time for the Lord to return. Jesus, angels, and men did not know the time. It is more foolish for men to live dissolute lives thinking they can out guess God as to when our Lord shall return. Anticipating the Lord's return is a good way to promote spiritual growth which the Corinthians needed and which we need in this 21st Century.

1:8. Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. Confirm means to make firm, to establish. A person building a fence must make sure the posts are made firm. He does this by tamping material of some sort into the post's hole until it holds solid. God provides all things that pertain to life and godliness so that we might appear blameless (which means without any sin we can be accused of because we have been forgiven) before Christ on the judgment day. Through his grace he favored his people with the things necessary for their successful appearance before Christ as judge. We must not forget what Paul implies here but states in Philippians 2:12, 15 where he writes, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling... That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God... We must do our part.

1:9. God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord Faithful indicates we can trust God to do his part. He is trustworthy. By him they had been called. 2 Thessalonians 2:14. Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. God's calling man to salvation is through the gospel. When the Corinthians obeyed the gospel they had answered God's call and were now in the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord where they should have unity. But they were not one with each other as we learn from the next few verses. Nine times the name of Jesus Christ

is used in these introductory verses. No doubt he is doing this because they had started following men instead of Jesus Christ. Let us also remember that the writer praises them for their spiritual gifts but he does not praise them for their virtues. At the beginning of this epistle the Corinthian church is not a paradigm for us to use as an example as to how a church should be today.

Announcements

Remembering Brother Virgilio Danao

I want to express my feelings and remembrances of this good brother and fellow preacher who has paid the debt to nature and is no longer with us. He now rests from his labors, but his works do follow him (Rev. 14:12). He was a quiet leader among men, conscientious and sincere, and a true example of the believers. And he contended earnestly for the Faith once delivered by the Apostles.

I remember when I first became acquainted with this good man and more than once enjoyed his hospitality and that of his good wife. It was in January, 1987 on a trip to India where Brother Jim Franklin and I had been invited. We made a special effort to go by the Philippines to meet Brother Danao and to study with him. At the time of our visit none of our brethren from the States had ever met him face to face. We sent him a cablegram and when we arrived in Manila he was at the airport to meet us. We secured a hotel room which accommodated the three of us. That night we studied issues which divided us and those on which we agreed.

The next day we flew to Isabela and in the Danao home we studied with several other preachers. We found them to be some of the most honest men we have ever had the opportunity to study with. At the time they were using instrumental music, cups, and Sunday School, and also used women to lead public prayer. After our studies we asked them what they were going to do about these things. Without hesitation they said they were going to give up these unscriptural practices and they were going to teach their people, and Brother Danao asked for prayer.

We were so thrilled with the good news, we fired Don King a cablegram to share that information. He was planning his first trip the following March,

and when he arrived, he found them worshipping scripturally. Since that time he and others have made many more trips to encourage that work, which has proved to be one of the great works in the world today.

Jim and I have been in the Danao home several times both in the Philippines and in Hawaii. And Wilma and I had them in our home here in the States. They were wonderful guests and highly respected. Brother Danao will be sorely missed in the home and in the work of the Lord. - Paul O. Nichols

NOTE OF THANKS

To you, my brothers and sisters in Christ, for every e-mail, card, phone call and prayer you sent during my surgery and recovery, I thank and love you for your concern. In Christian Love - Griffin Lowery

To the brotherhood: Many, many thanks to all of God's saints for the prayers cards, and e-mails. You are special people. I am feeling better. Please continue your prayers. May God continue to bless each and everyone. Wayne Lindsey and family.

Field Reports

Niles S. Stein II, December 22 -- We have traveled all over Zambia these previous months visiting churches and holding meetings.- At one gospel meeting there were a total of 27 responses. Brother Don and Patricia King came to visit the work, and traveled with us to the October Copperbelt gospel meeting. It was such a joy to have them in Zambia, and Don gave many edifying sermons. The singing at the Copperbelt meeting was wonderful and the preaching was very encouraging. The love for Christ is a huge part of Zambian culture. Christians ride their bikes or walk many miles to support meetings. People also come from surrounding communities to attend. The church of Christ in Chamba Valley is now officially registered with the government. Many hours have been spent along with months of processing to get this completed. Please pray for all overseas work and keep us all in your prayers. God Bless. Nilesgmc@gmail.com

Billy D. Dickinson, 2850 N. Oakland, Springfield, MO 65803, bddickinson@juno.com, Jan. 3- At this writing we are only three days into 2011, so I want

to wish everyone a happy new year! My prayer is that it will prove to be a prosperous one for the Lord's cause. While visiting my dad and mom for several days in Texas, we all worshiped with the Sand Grove congregation on the Sunday of Dec. 26. My father, William Dickinson, had a monthly appointment with them until his health hindered him from making the three-hour trip. It had been a while since dad and mom had been to Sand Grove, making it a happy reunion, and I'm so glad that we were able to renew old acquaintances. I, of course, enjoyed preaching for them. As I made my way home, I traveled through Oklahoma and attended a service of the New Year's meeting on the night of Dec. 28. The Norman congregation was doing a great job hosting the meeting. Also, I want to thank Matt Trent for providing me with a place to stay that night. The work here at Janesville continues and seems to be heading in the right direction. Our Spring meeting will be with Bruce Roebuck on April 20-24. I am looking forward to my first meeting of the year on the dates of Feb. 2-6 in Fort Worth, TX (Fossil Creek). The church in Columbia, MO will have a study on March 14-18, and I have been given the topic of institutionalism. It will be my privilege to participate in that. Let's all work hard in 2011, trying our best to point souls to the Savior of men!

Gregory S. Robbins 1082 Winding Creek Dr, Cedar Hill, TX 75104 stratfordlanecoc.org: Since last report, the congregation of the Lord's people that meets in Duncanville, have had a month of ups and down, our dear brother in Christ Buddy Johnson went to be with the Lord in paradise, we can rest and be assured that on the day of Judgment we will see him again in that great throng. Happier news however, Sharon Bowers obeyed the gospel, indeed angels in heaven are rejoicing over the baptism of this sister in Christ. In the month of January I will be speaking at Deer Park, Texas and Ratliff City, Oklahoma. Keep contending for the faith.

Darrell Crawford 208 E Baldwin Rd Unit S, Panama City, Fl 32405 bugzl955@hotmail.com
We hope everyone had a great new years. We ended the year on a good note, we were able to speak at the Longwood congregation in Orlando, Fl. It was our first time there, we enjoyed being there very much. We very much appreciate their moral and financial support of the work here in Panama City.

We also enjoyed very much the New Year meeting at Dothan, Alabama. It was well attended with great preaching and singing. We appreciate all the hard work that went into the meeting by the brethren at the Dothan cong. and also Bro. Ronny Wade as well as the surrounding congregations. We are doing well here at Panama City, we are still having visitors from the community as well as those visiting the area, and we appreciate these visitors as well. We have some very good leads we are working with and hopefully we can convert these from digression. We have had a few talks with them and they are interested in learning the truth, we feel that they would be great assets to the church. Please pray for the work here that we will exercise wisdom, and that God will indeed give the increase. May you all have a blessed new year, pray that we all stand up for the old paths and may God bless His church everywhere.

Don L. King, 1147 Sherry Way, Livermore, CA 94550, January 3, old_paths@juno.com The annual New Year meeting at Lodi, CA is history. We enjoyed attending and preaching along with others. The church at home is doing well and we preached here yesterday to a good crowd. One young brother confessed wrongs. There has also been one baptism since last report, for which we give the Lord thanks. We are grateful that brethren are responding to the need for the Hawaii work. Lord willing, Brother Eric Stone will move there soon to continue the work Bro Virgilio O. Danao began some years ago. Eric was Bro Danao's choice to continue the work. The church is doing as well as can be expected on their own but they need help as soon as possible. There is still a need for help with Bro Stone's support. If the congregations who have been supporting Bro Danao will switch their support to Bro Stone that need can be filled we believe. Bro Stone plans to work to support himself and family but will need support until a suitable job can be found. That could be as long as a year so keep that in mind if you plan to help support him. Feel free to contact us if you have questions. We are to leave CA this afternoon for the Philippines, Lord willing. In spite of the sadness we feel at the loss of Bro Danao we look forward to a profitable time spent with the brethren and churches there. We thank the Lord for several sound Filipino preachers upon whose shoulders the work now rests. That work has always been done by local brethren and

they have done a wonderful job. No American has ever needed to live among them and this has actually helped the work grow and mature, in our opinion. We pray God's blessings upon the work, not only there but everywhere during this new year. Let us work together in peace and harmony as we endeavor to enlarge the borders of Zion. May God bless us all.

Ronny F. Wade P.O. Box 800337 LaGrange, GA 30240 or rhwade@charter.net January 11- Our meeting at Blue Springs, KY closed with one baptism and six confessions of wrong doing. Crowds were large throughout which made for a very enjoyable week. Next we had the privilege of being at Hartwell, AR for several days in November. We have enjoyed being with these good people in meetings for over thirty years. As usual we made our home with Paul and Wanda Gifford where we were treated with the outstanding hospitality. In December we enjoyed a week-end meeting in Greenville, SC and the Alabama New Year meeting in Dothan. This year we had nineteen states represented with twenty preachers taking part and twelve young men speaking. Crowds were large and the association very rewarding. Currently we are at home here in LaGrange where the work continues among some very dedicated helpful people. Lord willing we go to New Salem near Brookhaven, MS this week for a Wed-Sun meeting. We always enjoy our visits in this area and we look forward to good meeting. In March we are scheduled to be in Hamilton, OH March 12-20 and Athens, AL March 25-27. If you live near either of these why not make plans to meet us there?

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THE BACK PAGE...

LIFE'S ESSENTIALS

BY CARL M. JOHNSON

I received a letter from a dear brother in Christ recently asking about the possibility of miracles existing today. He reasons that if miracles no longer exist, why do we pray to God to heal the sick and give us safety in our travels? He concludes, "I know you say that some answered prayers are the result of 'divine intervention,' but I call them miracles because they seem to involve the suspension of the laws of nature on occasion in order to fulfill God's will."

I believe in prayer. We have Bible precedent for praying for the sick, for those who are traveling, and for many other things. I also believe most definitely that God answers prayer, and sometimes in the most astonishing way. Such providential dealings indicate that God is still working in the world and especially in His kingdom, but they bear no similarity to the miraculous, supernatural wonders of the apostolic age. Those wonders were essential during the infancy of the church for the purpose of confirming the gospel (Mk. 16:20) and for edifying the assembly (1 Cor. 14:26), but they were essential only for a limited period of time and eventually they ceased to exist (1 Cor. 13:8-10).

All that is required to make ordinary events believable is ordinary confirmation. Suppose I told you that I read in the obituaries in the local paper that a certain 85 year-old woman died. That statement would be pretty easy for you to believe. The age of the person and the fact I had read the obituary in the paper would make the testimony very believable. Suppose, however, that I told you I knew someone who is 150 years-old, who is still enjoying unabated health and vigor today? That statement would be more difficult to believe, and I would have to have some very convincing evidence to make it believable. Nevertheless, within the realm of ordinary events, one must have only ordinary evidence to confirm one's testimony as being true.

When it comes to testimony about miraculous events, however, one must have miraculous confirmation to make the testimony believable. The Scriptures point out that is precisely the purpose of the miracles performed by the church in the days of the apostles; they were needed to confirm the preaching about the death, burial, and miraculous resurrection of Christ (Mk. 16:20; Heb. 2:3-4). It follows, therefore, that when the gospel was fully revealed and confirmed, miraculous signs were no longer essential, and they ceased to exist.

Paul makes the above conclusion clear to the Corinthians, who received many miraculous spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 1:7). Upon receiving these gifts, however, the members began to argue over which gift was most important. They were like children playing with toys that would one day disappear. You expect a child to think, understand, and speak like a child; but you also expect the child to mature and start thinking and speaking like an adult. The day comes when he must put away childish things (1 Cor. 13:11).

Paul reprimands the Corinthians for their childish conduct, points out that proper love for one another is much more important than spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12:31-13:1-13), and that spiritual gifts are temporary, lasting only until "that which is perfect is come" (1 Cor. 13:10).

Expositors have debated for years the meaning of the word "perfect." Charismatics argue that the word refers to Christ at the second-coming which will result in our entrance into heaven. They conclude, therefore, that miraculous tongues, prophecies, etc. will continue in the church until that time.

Notice Paul's conclusion in verse 13, however. He explains that when the "perfect" is come, miraculous gifts will vanish away, and the church will be left with "faith, hope, and love." After the second coming of Christ, will we still have faith, hope, and love? No! Faith is defined as "the conviction of those things that are unseen" (Heb. 11:1). But, Christ will be SEEN at His second coming (1 Jn. 3:2). Our faith will end in sight at that point.

Will hope abide with us at Christ's second coming? Again, no! Paul explains in Romans 8:24, "...hope that is seen is not hope: for why does one still hope for what he sees?"

The only one of the three virtues Paul mentions in verse 13 that will abide after the second-coming is love, and that is one of the reasons the apostle says, "The greatest of these is love."

Therefore, the word "perfect" in verse 10 must refer to the fully-revealed, miraculously-confirmed New Testament canon of Scripture. When the perfect law of liberty (Jas. 1:25) was completed, there was no longer a need for miraculous gifts, and the Word itself became all-sufficient as the source of the faith, hope, and love that abides (Rom. 10:17; Heb. 11:1; 1 Cor. 13:1-13). These abiding virtues are the true essentials of life as they provide us something to believe in, something to look forward to, and someone with whom to share it. Who can ask for more than that? carlmj@cablone.net