

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

PLEASE NOTE:

Due to the large amount of material sent to the printers last month, they were not able to use it all. Hence, we are publishing more of it this month along with current material. It seems a shame to ignore the many years of great writings by brethren long gone from this earth considering this generation never had the opportunity to read it. So, as we begin the 89th year we will be publishing some as space allows from time to time. We hope you enjoy and profit by it. Preachers, we will always need your writings and reports. Please, try to have them to us by the 12th of each month. Many found the old reports interesting as well as encouraging. Who knows who may someday read the reports you are sending now? DLK

WHAT IS TRUTH?

By *BILLY D. DICKINSON*

Proof that Jesus was no ordinary man is seen in the trial of our Savior before Pilate, especially when you consider the effect it had upon this Roman governor of Judea. Although Pontius Pilate was a man of great authority, someone who was use to being in charge and setting the agenda, he was no longer in total control of the situation when our Savior stood before him. Like any other politician who has been in a similar circumstance, this was unnerving to Pilate as he became even “more afraid” at one point (John 19:7-8). Standing before him with the authority and confidence of a man who was actually judging Pilate (rather than the other way around), the Lord’s demeanor caused this sixth Roman procurator to sense that there was something different and special about Him!

Interrogating Christ for the purpose of trying to discover why He was arrested, our Lord replied with the calm assurance of a King: “My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence” (John 19 :3 6). After Pilate responded by wanting to

know if Jesus was claiming to be a king, he then heard an answer that shook him to the very foundation of his soul: “Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice” (verse 37). Don’t you get the impression that Pilate didn’t like the way the conversation was going? After all, he is the one who is suppose to have all the answers and who will have the final say on what is or is not true! That’s when Pilate posed this cynical question in verse 38: “What is truth?”

This is still an important question today and one that involves the following crucial issues: (1) Is there such a thing as truth? (2) If so, where can it be found? (3) How can we learn to differentiate between truth and religious error? (4) As dealt with in 1 John 4:16, how can we know if we possess “the spirit of truth” (a disposition favorable toward the truth) or if we possess “the spirit of error” (a disposition friendly to error)? (5) Finally, does it really matter what one believes and teaches for doctrine anyway? Let’s go ahead and answer that last question right now... Yes, it really does make a difference because the Bible is plain in declaring that our relationship to the truth will determine our eternal destiny. “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed,” Jesus promised in John 8:31-32, “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

In order to answer all of the above questions and stress the importance of abiding in the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9), let’s consider some of the characteristics of truth. In other words, we are going to look at some of the distinctive elements that set truth apart from error. If we have an understanding of these things, we will know what to look for and will recognize the truth when we hear it. Incidentally, the so-called “unity in diversity” movement that has led many astray is only plausible when people ignore, deny or reject these distinctive characteristics of God’s word.

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Editorial

OUR BRETHREN

By DON L. KING

In Matthew 5:23-24 Our Lord said: "Therefore if thou bring thy gift before the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift."

The following is from J.W. McGarvey in his commentary of Matthew: "Having forbidden anger and evil speech toward a brother, Jesus here teaches the proper course to be pursued when we have committed an offense, and a brother has something against us. The offender is commanded to go and be reconciled to his brother, by making, of course, the proper amends; and he is to allow no other duty, not even the offering of a gift to God, to take precedence of this duty. If remembrance of the offense is brought to the mind after the gift has been already brought to the altar, the duty of reparation must even then be attended to first. This places on very high ground a duty which is often totally neglected. It shows that no offering which we can make to God is acceptable while we are conscious of an uncompensated wrong to a fellow-man."

It is unfortunate that hard feelings sometimes arise between brethren. However, it has always been a fact of life. Jesus would not have given the teaching if it were not so. The sad part is not so much that it happens, but that it is sometimes allowed to go unrepaired. First of all, it is wrong, but second it often means that a good relationship between two brethren deteriorates and eventually comes to an end. That can even have a damaging effect on the church.

The longer a problem is allowed to continue, the worse it becomes, as a rule. Solomon said, "A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city; and their contentions are like the bars of a castle." The longer things go unrepaired the longer the list becomes in the mind of the offended brother, and finally he has so many hard feelings that it is virtually impossible to erase them and mend the friendship. Jesus said, "...Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 18:3,4)

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AN EVER PRESENT DANGER

By TOMMY SHAW

Our time holds no patent on change. It is true that there have been very rapid changes in the past fifty years in almost every area of endeavor, but the pattern of change and decay has always been evident. Perhaps it was inevitable that the Remedial System, committed into the hands of mortal men surrounded by the changing scenes of time, should be altered by those professing to be its adherents. Even in Paul's day the sinful process had already begun, for he said, "the mystery of iniquity doth already work" (2 Thess. 2:7). Since the reception of the divine arrangement by men, scarcely a single item has escaped revamping by those whose only duties were to hear and obey, not change.

Looking back over the centuries of time since the church was established, history makes clear what transpired. The changes made were introduced by a special group of men who had risen to assume authority in religious matters over the lives of the masses. For men to gain such power it was necessary to lay aside the arrangements given by God for the building up of the church. In the beginning each Christian was a priest, and each priest had his work to do. Paul wrote of the public service in 1 Corinthians 14. He said, "how is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying." In verse 29 he said "Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the others judge." In verse 31 he directs, "For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be comforted." This God-given system, used in the beginning, was designed to edify or build up the church, and we must believe there is no system superior to the God-given one. It was the usurpation of the rights of others, and rebellion to the will of God that produced a special clergy. Instead of speaking one by one for the mutual edification of all, the teaching duties and oversight of individual congregations were assumed by one man. By the year 200 A.D., these men were calling themselves by the title of "priest," and all others were relegated to the position of onlookers in the public worship. It was this corruption of God's plan that culminated in hierarchy of authority that directed the great apostasy. It was the logical conclusion of this special group that if ordinary men could not edify the church, they could not understand the Bible. Hence in 1229 the Council of Toulouse prohibited the laity's possession or reading of the Bible.

The Protestant churches that arose as a result of the

Reformation failed to heed the lessons taught by church history. The newly established churches began to select one talented man to teach the flock. This man became the "pastor" of the congregation. Some churches of Christ have borrowed this practice from the denominations. When we refer to this practice in the Lord's church, we often speak of it as the "modern pastor system" to distinguish it from the pattern set forth in the Scriptures. The Scriptures teach mutual edification; the modern pastor system calls for one man to do all the teaching.

The result of the modern pastor system has been an influx of innovations into the church. It has been the professional clergy that has presumed to change the divine plan! Today, as in the past, the greatest danger confronting the Lord's church is not a single innovation such as the Sunday School, but the elevation of a special group of men whose unscriptural work will slow or stop the study of God's Word by the majority of the members of the body. With the spiritual awareness of the masses thus dulled, it will be but a small task to change the divine plan.

The need for edification in the church is stressed in the Scriptures. Among the many passages speaking of edification is Romans 14:19, which says, "Let us, therefore, follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another." The word edify means properly to build a house; then simply to build, build up, to establish, to confirm. When we talk of edifying the church we are talking of that process whereby its members are built up, established, or confirmed in the Truth. One of the ways Christians are instructed in God's ways is by teaching in the public assembly. The question is, how do the scriptures teach us to proceed with the public instruction of God's people?

Christians are to be all regularly engaged according to the ability of each person in the work and service of the

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church. Notice Romans 12:4-8. “For as in one physical body we have many parts (organs, members) and all of these parts do not have the same function or use, so we, numerous as we are, are one body in Christ the Messiah, and individually we are parts one of another—mutually dependent on one another. Having gifts (faculties, talents, qualities) that differ according to the grace given us, let us use them: (He whose gift is) prophecy, (let him prophesy) according to the proportion of his faith; (He whose gift is) practical service, let him give himself to serving; he who teaches, to his teaching; (He who exhorts, encourages), to his exhortation; he who contributes, let him do it in simplicity and liberality; he who gives aid and superintends, with zeal and singleness of mind; he who does acts of mercy with genuine cheerfulness and joyful eagerness” (Amplified). When every part of the body does its job, the church will be strong. Paul said in Eph. 4 that Christ is the head and “under his control all the different parts of the body fit together, and the whole body is held together by every joint with which it is provided. So when each separate part works as it should, the whole body grows and builds itself up through love” (verse 16, Good News). These passages teach that those members of the body of Christ that are able to build it up in some way, whether by teaching, or by serving others or by giving, or any other capacity, are to work to the development of that body. Those qualified to teach publicly could no more stop teaching, to allow the modern pastor system to operate, than the evangelist can stop preaching, those who serve stop serving, the givers stop giving, or the believers stop believing!

It is sometimes said that the church needs someone with superior talents to do the teaching; local teachers cannot hold the interest of the members or draw outsiders. It would be just as logical to say, “We need someone with superior talents to do the singing. Our local talent is poor, and our singing does not attract outsiders, or for that matter, please the church. Let us organize or hire a choir.” The fact is, we cannot get rid of our duties to God by paying someone else to do them. If so, why can’t we pay someone to go to services in our place if some Sunday morning we decided we would like to go fishing? If we can pay for teaching in our place, we can pay for attending in our place.

Paul felt the church could edify itself. He said in Romans 15:14, “And I myself also am persuaded of you my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.” To the Thessalonians he wrote, “Wherefore comfort yourselves together and edify one another, even as also ye do” (1 Thess. 5:11). The Holy Spirit said the church

could edify itself, and gave arrangements in 1 Cor. 14 to provide for each member with the ability to teach to have an opportunity to teach. These directions given by the Spirit do not depend upon each man having the same ability as every other man. That is to say, some men have more ability to teach than others; but in spite of that fact, the man with less ability is not to be denied the opportunity to teach. Every program that prohibits the body of Christ from developing the ability of its members, or that denies every man in the congregation who has the ability to teach the opportunity to teach, is contrary to the New Testament. Such a practice infringes on the rights of those Christians who are entitled to serve in the teaching service. Paul said “Everyone of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation” (1 Cor. 14:26). Notice everyone who had a gift or talent made a contribution to the edification of the church. “For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted” (1 Cor. 14:31). The modern pastor system undermines God’s rule over the church. Since there is no authority in God’s word for such a practice, the congregation that follows such an arrangement destroys God’s government just as surely as the addition of Sunday school, individual cups, instrumental music, women preachers, or a host of other digressions are in rebellion to the divine rule.

It is sometimes argued that no Bible passage says how long a man may stay in a certain place. A preacher could live a lifetime in some of our large cities and not completely cover the area. But the question does not revolve around how long a man lives in one place. What is important is what he does while he is there. Is he doing the work of an evangelist, or is he a modern pastor?

There is in all of the New Testament no command or example to justify the modern pastor system. There are plenty of passages that teach that talented men should participate in edifying the body of Christ. Faithful Christians should desire nothing more than to expedite the working of God’s system. Nothing can be better. — Ava, Mo.

THE FELLOWSHIP QUESTION

By *BENNIE T. CRYER*

I suppose one of the most explosive subjects in the brotherhood at this time is the fellowship question. Every now and then I hear charges hurled at some particular person or group involving them in activities not compatible with our present acceptance or rejection

of things and persons. Some of these charges are justified. Some of them spring from either a lack of information or misinformation. It is evident that some comes from minds blinded by prejudice,

That the saints are not to have fellowship with those who walk in the kingdom of darkness is beyond controversy and this article is not concerned with that subject. Neither is it the purpose of this writing to determine the kind of life a person is to live in order to enjoy intimate communion with other saints, We are presently concerned with the aspect of fellowship as it is related to doctrine, and some of the dangers that exist because of digressive brethren who, under the pretense of seeking unity, are trying to lead away disciples after them.

In Rom. 16:17-19, Paul gives us the discipline necessary in such instances, More important though, he gives us the correct attitude to maintain to avoid being carried away by false teachers. "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple. For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore in your behalf : but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil."

MARK (SKOPEO) THEM

Our first attitude toward such persons is watchfulness. This is implied by the use of the word 'mark' that means, "To look at, behold, watch, contemplate," and is used metaphorically to mean "direct one's attention to, anyone." This involves more than mere observance or scrutiny on our part. It has in it the idea of directing our attention to a thing in order to get it or perform our duty towards it. This is shown by the use of the word in Phil. 3:17, "Brethren, be followers together of me and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an example." He advises us to observe those who walked after the apostles so as to follow in their ways. They were to 'mark' or look at their lives, determine if they are following the apostles, and if they were they were to follow them. So in Rom. 16:17, they were admonished to look at certain teachers, with a view to determining if whether or not their doctrine was wholesome, and if not they were avoid them.

This lays the responsibility upon each member of the church to be a 'marker' or a 'watcher' of those that teach. There are some who are more interested in serving their own desires instead of the Lord's, They

are able to deceive the 'simple' by complimentary and kind words. Now, this word 'simple' does not mean a simple minded person or an imbecile. It describes a sane, healthy, and normal mind, but a mind with the wrong attitude. It comes from 'akakos' and is defined as "fearing no evil from others, distrusting no one." Has not the truth of this verse been demonstrated time and time again? A man comes into a congregation claiming to be a preacher or teacher. His words seem good and his speeches fair and because of this we forget to be 'watchers'; we trust him implicitly, and suddenly we do look and find we are involved in a division. ('Simple' here means unsuspecting. We cannot afford to not suspect teachers of the word of God regardless of how honest and sincere they may seem. This seems to be involved in Acts 17:11, when Paul and Silas went to Berea and preached. The Bereans "received the word with all readiness of mind and searched the scriptures daily whether those things were so." These people were suspicious of the apostle Paul to the extent that they investigated the scriptures themselves and did not blindly follow him.

It is interesting to observe that the word "simple" in verse 19 is from a different word in the original, and therefore has a different meaning than the same English word in verse 18. Here the word is from "akeraios" and literally means unmixed or with absence of foreign mixture. Here it is used of the mind that it be without admixture of evil.

AVOID (EKKLINO) THEM

Our second attitude toward such persons involves our relationship with them. There must not only be 'watchfulness' on our part but 'separation' also. Avoid here means to turn away from or to turn aside. The very fact that they were to turn away from them shows that previously there was fellowship. They were members of the church. The doctrine that fellowship is to exist between all believers who have been baptized for the remission of sins is erroneous, There are members_ that we are required to turn away from.

How complete is this separation to be? By studying other verses where the same word 'ekklino' is used we can determine the extent of the separation. For instance in Rom. 3:12, the word is used to describe "both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin;"..."They are all GONE OUT OF THE WAY." Just as the Gentiles had left the path of rectitude, so we must avoid or leave those members described in Rom. 16:17, Again in I Pet. 3:11 it is made clearer how complete this separation is to be. "Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace and ensue it." Here 'eschew' comes from the same

word translated 'avoid' in Rom. 16:17 It means that we are to turn away from evil. Now, how ever complete our turning away from evil is to be as a Christian, that is how completely we are to turn away from those who cause offenses and occasions of stumbling.

(Definitions from Thayer's Greek English Lexicon and Vine's Expository Dictionary.)

TEN THINGS I WANT MY CHILDREN TO KNOW

By DAVID MACKAY

The Christian Family - Guest Article

Editor's Note: Brother David Mackey of the Covina, CA congregation, son of the late preacher Paul Mackey, was a recent guest speaker at 64th St. in Sacramento and where his son Kevin and wife Haley call home. I was honored to be there that day and asked David for a copy of his sermon to share with O.P.A. readers. —Greg Gay

The Apostle Paul placed before every father a great challenge when he wrote these compelling words: "And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:4).

I have been blessed by having a father and mother who labored diligently to instill in me spiritual guidance. The most important things that they left my brothers and me are not houses, money, or worldly possessions; but an unyielding, unwavering, unquestioning faith in God. I could never hope to ask for anything more.

Solomon offered this advice: "My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother: Bind them continually upon thine heart and tie them about thy neck. When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee. For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life" (Proverbs 6:20-23).

There are things every parent wants their children to know. I am no exception. Here are ten things I want my children to know:

1. God is most important in their lives: "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33). I believe this to be the foundational principle of a happy life. A faith centered life will bring peace and happiness. God, the church, righteous living and a balanced life of service to God and others will delight them and their whole family in youth as well as old age.

More than anything else I want them to personally welcome and accept the things of God: His leading, His tests, His reproofs, His will, His wisdom. I really do fear that many of our young people and young families have lost sight of what the most important things are in life.

An unknown author once said, "We are shaped and fashioned by what we love." Jesus said, "And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment" (Mark 12:30).

I want my children to know that the most important thing in their life is to love God. This will shape the ultimate outcome of their life.

It will shape their relationship to their friends, their spouses, and their co-workers, but most important, it will shape how they view themselves. After stating this was the first commandment, Jesus pointed out the second: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Mark 12:31). Learning to love God and put God first will indeed shape our lives to be productive, prayerful and peaceful.

I do not want God and the church to be an after-thought in my children's lives. I want them to know nothing is more loved by God than His church. I can love what God loves by loving the Church. I can honor what God honors by honoring the Church. I can serve what God has saved, by serving the Church. Before myself, before my job, before my family, before my pleasure, God is first.

2. Family is important: Family activities strengthen the emotional and spiritual well-being of children and adults. I want them to know that I love their mother. And that while I certainly have not been the "role model" husband or father - the fact of my frailties or failures does not diminish the truth of what I say.

I want them to know that marriage is for life and divorce is not the option God chooses to fix problems in a marriage. The Lord placed the divine viewpoint on this problem when He said, "Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives; but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery"

(Matthew 19:6-9).

We live in a world of throw away families and throw away marriages. I want my children to know that their mother and I made a promise to God. We must honor that promise. That means that we must endure the difficult times. Marriage is for life and is a constant learning and growing relationship.

I also want my children to know that I loved my wife's parents as she loved my mother. Dad had passed away before Teresa met him. Yet, she knows my Dad. She has been told about my Dad by my mother, by me, my family, and all who knew him. We are all part of an extended family. I valued her parents as I valued my own parent.

After the Lord and the Church, nothing in this world is more important than family. I want my children's families to be their highest earthly priority.

3. Integrity is essential: "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold" (Proverbs 22: 1). Keeping one's word and maintaining respect for truth are traits I want my children to continue to honor and develop. I want them to keep their promises even if it hurts. They will never buy integrity. Integrity will be a product of delivering on their word. Respect is always given to men of integrity. One man wrote, "Watch your thoughts; they become words. Watch your words; they become actions. Watch your actions; they become habits. Watch your habits; they become character. Watch your character; it becomes your destiny."

I want my children to speak the truth, even when it is painful. Abraham Lincoln said, "I am nothing, but truth is everything." Jesus said, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). This is the truth that will allow them to stand upon their convictions. I want them to be known as men and women who, when they say, "Yes," they mean "Yes," and when they say, "No," they mean "No." Integrity means that we are known for being honest in our dealings with family, with brethren, with neighbors, in business, and where our life's path may lead.

An author wrote, "Resolved: never to do anything which I should be afraid to do if it were the last hour of my life." I want my children to know that men and women of integrity live with few regrets and die with dignity and respect.

(To be continued)

WHAT IS TRUTH....continued from page one

TRUTH IS ABSOLUTE

There are many who are shocked and offended by the above affirmation, but this is a characteristic of the truth found in Christ. By "absolute," it is meant that we are dealing with something that is definite and precise; it is tangible in that we can know what the truth is and what it is not. However, some argue that there is no such thing as "absolute truth" (especially in religious matters) because it all depends on your point of view. Unfortunately, a large percentage of Americans even reject the notion that there are absolute moral truths. No wonder our country is on a downward path and spiraling out of control in some places! The Book of Judges ends with this sad commentary: "In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (21:25). Dearly beloved, isn't that a perfect description of worldly people today? Yes, and saddest of all, it also describes Catholicism, denominationalism and liberal-minded brethren in the churches of Christ.

Although people may try to convince themselves otherwise, even when it comes to morality, they do recognize that there is a standard by which we judge right from wrong. A philosophy professor, for example, began each new term by asking his class: "Do you believe it can be shown that there are absolute values like justice?" The free-thinking students would argue that everything is relative and no single law can be applied universally. Before the end of the semester, the professor devoted one class period to debate the issue, but here is what he would say at the end of the session: "Regardless of what you think, I want you to know that absolute values can be demonstrated. And if you don't accept what I say, I'll flunk you!" This prompted an angry student to jump up and say, "That's not fair!" Then the professor insisted: "You just proved my point. You've appealed to a higher standard of fairness." Did you catch that? Even those students had a standard for right and wrong that they held to in an uncompromising way.

So it is with the believer in Jesus! We believe that truth is found in Christ and His word (John 14:6; John 17:17). That's why we do our best to abide in His doctrine without addition, subtraction or substitution.

TRUTH IS NO RESPECTER OF PERSONS

Think about this statement: "We believe things because they are true; they are not true because we believe them." That's right! Truth is the truth regardless of who believes it or denies it, meaning that ignorance does not negate the truth, and it is unaffected by the opinions of

uninspired men. While many deceive themselves into thinking that “ignorance is bliss,” what we don’t know really can hurt us. A small child, for example, may be ignorant of the law of gravity, but we know what will happen if that child walks off the side of a mountain. Likewise, here is the standard that will be used on the day of judgment: “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:48). No, we will not be judged by what we think it says, but by what Christ actually taught.

God’s word is no respecter of persons! It will either justify or condemn us. It will not play favorites, reproving and reprimanding us when necessary, because it is that “mirror of the soul” described in James 1:23-24. Indeed, a mirror doesn’t lie, but always gives a true reflection-- and if we don’t like what we see when we look into the scriptures, the problem lies with us. In other words, we are the ones who must change because the truth is unbiased and will not change for us.

TRUTH IS CONSISTENT

This important characteristic is a helpful tool that enables us to detect false teaching when we hear it. Remember this: Truth never contradicts truth! Whenever you hear a man preach a doctrine that is full of contradictions-- where the scriptures are forced to contradict themselves or the preacher even contradicts himself, you must conclude that something is wrong with his doctrine! As strange as it may sound, heretical teaching is not only contradictory to the word of God, but it is often contradictory to itself because the false teacher has the problem of remaining consistent.

Let’s notice a few examples: (1) “Faith only”-- Supposedly this is all one has to do to be saved, but then they turn right around and say you must repent in order to be saved. How inconsistent! Also, after preaching that one is saved by faith without any further acts of obedience, they want you to pray the “sinner’s prayer” with them. Which is it? Are we saved by faith alone or must we pray in order to be forgiven? Incidentally, can one pray an acceptable prayer without faith? When a preacher affirms that you are saved at the very moment you believe, but then he wants you to pray a prayer for forgiveness, you know that something is wrong.

(2) “Baptism is unessential to salvation”-- This is what they teach, but at the same time they concede that baptism is essential to obedience (Acts 10:48)! However, doesn’t Heb. 5:9 teach that obedience is essential to salvation? If not, then no commands are necessary to be saved-- again negating the need to repent (Acts 17:30). (3) “All

authority is generic”--This involves the idea that as long as something is not specifically condemned in the scriptures, it is allowable. After all, some claim there is no specific pattern that must be followed in regard to the worship and work of the church. If that is true, let them explain how and why they oppose practices like the following-- sprinkling for baptism, infant baptism, “holy water,” burning incense, etc. The truth is that they themselves reject certain practices because they either violate what is specified in the scriptures or they’re simply not authorized as a part of God’s expressed will. “Oh consistency, where art thou?”

TRUTH IS UNCHANGED BY TIME

Yes, the creeds of men often change. Opinions, personal likes and dislikes change with the times, but not the Lord’s “everlasting gospel” (Rev. 14:6)! What was true in the days of the apostles is still true today (Gal. 1 :8)- God’s attitude has not changed in regard to morality, worship, how to be saved, etc. What will we do with the truth? Let’s resolve to believe it and obey it!

OUR BRETHREN....continued from page two

Certainly, Jesus does not want us to act like children in the church. Sadly, that may happen at times, but His point was that we should be as forgiving as children. They may become very upset with a playmate but are soon past it and playing happily again. I still remember a story that two brethren became enemies and refused to have anything to do with each other. Eventually, one of them became very ill and was not expected to live very long. At the urging of his brethren the other agreed to go to him and make amends but said, “I’ll make this right with him but if he gets well, he had better look out.” Very sad isn’t it, but many of us have known of similar situations.

Brother Rick Martin posted the following: “Be careful what you say and be careful what you do. Because while you are busy trying to destroy someone’s character, it really says a lot about you.”

Human nature prompts us to sometimes imagine the worst about someone who has offended us. Zechariah 7:10 says, “...let none of you imagine evil against your brother in his heart.” It is said by wise men that if a friend relates something about me that is inaccurate, I will perhaps dismiss it as a simple mistake because I like him. However, if the story is told by a person I don’t like, I am more likely to believe he lied. Where is the problem? It is myself! I imagined evil against a friend or a brother.

There are entirely too many problems among brethren that are never resolved. It is so simple to fix a problem when it first occurs. A friendly, and heartfelt, apology is perhaps all that has to be said or done. It is then forgotten and in the past. More than once preachers have been called upon to help brethren settle differences; and by the time the opposing parties have dredged up all of the past offences that have been kept in their hearts perhaps for years, it is next to impossible to solve the problem. If we can just be big enough to cut off the past and begin anew with honest and sincere forgiving, we can settle virtually any personal grievances. There is no shame in honestly saying "I'm sorry." A truly big man will always take the high road.

Think on these things. —DLK

Announcement

To Whom It May Concern:

I cannot take part in military service in any form, directly or indirectly, in combatant or noncombatant service. Below are listed some of the reasons:

1. My duty and obligation to God is superior to all other obligations (Acts 5:29; Matt. 23:37).
2. My God in the Bible forbids that I engage in carnal warfare in the following references: "Put up again thy sword ... for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." (Matt. 26:52); "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal" (II Cor. 10: 3-4); "Turn the other cheek" (Matt. 5:39); "Recompense to no man evil for evil" (Rom. 12:17).
3. To enter any military service, combatant or noncombatant, I would be compelled to "swear" (take an oath), but the Bible forbids that I do so. "Swear not at all" (Matt. 5:34).
4. To enter any military service I would be compelled to be yoked with unbelievers, which is forbidden. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers" (II Cor. 6:14).
5. To be in any branch of the military service in any way, I would be a part of an organization and would therefore have fellowship in the service, but such is prohibited. "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Eph. 5:11).
6. To serve in the military service in any way, I would be deprived of obeying the command to assemble on the Lord's Day to worship God in the Bible way, at least part of the time, hence would disobey God. (Heb. 10:25; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2).

Therefore, I cannot conscientiously engage in carnal warfare in any form or branch, and for the above reasons, I ask that my name be listed in support of the above principles.

Kordell Dorman
2111 Highway 79 South
Wichita Falls, TX 76308

Field Reports

Roger L. Owens, PO Box 239, Neosho, MO 64850 - The new year is upon us. Last year I spent a great deal of my time working leads in the Pacific Northwest USA. The congregation in Gering Nebraska has suffered much sickness. One of the members has cancer, one has moved to Texas, and two others are suffering with multiple health issues. Mark Whitaker and his wife have relocated and no longer in Gering as of the new year. I will be there on January 17th to consider what needs to be done. I then plan to go to Sioux Falls South Dakota where we have 9 individuals that have or are taking the Bible correspondence course. The congregation in Riverton Wyoming is doing well under the leadership of Matt Usery. The congregation in Casper is no longer meeting due to covid-19 issues. Much more is planned for this year. If you would like to receive a full report please let me know and I will send. The work in Oregon, Wyoming, Montana, Idaho, South Dakota and Nebraska continue. I have around 150 individuals that I communicate with monthly. Pray for us and may God bless all that have supported our work with the TV Programs.

Don L. King, 1147 Sherry Way, Livermore, CA 94550, January 14, 2021, old paths@juno.com - For the first time in forty years, I am not in the Philippines. Due to the virus pandemic, it is not possible. For many years while I was gone, Ronny Wade put the paper together for me during January and often February as well. I miss him and what he did for the Cause. However, we must carry on as best we can. It is a little lonely not being in the Philippines in January. I miss being with the brethren there. I report with joy that in spite of the COVID-19 virus and the lockdown they are under, they report many baptisms! Travel is restricted for them but we hear of a new congregation established. The Gospel is still producing Christians. To God be the glory. We pray that we may make more trips in the future, Lord willing. The church at home is still intact, at peace, and looking forward. Don't be deceived brethren, the devil is not under any lockdown. He is still active and after all of us. Our prayer is that 2021 may be productive for the Cause of Christ. May God bless the church!

Thomas Stiner, Lecontes Mills, Pa., Dec. 22 - Brother Ervin Waters closed meeting, December 4, with some very good preaching. I am sure we all learned something more about living for the Lord. Brethren from Flemington, Lovejoy, East Ridge, and Industry, Pa., visited our meetings, and we were glad to have them. Our next meeting will be in May, 1952, conducted by Bro. Nelson Nichols.

Grady L. Harris, Box 224, Capella, Calif., Dec. 18 - Bro. Clem, Sisters Jackson and Larson, and I are meeting for worship in a Labor Camp at Ukiah, Calif. We would like to get a permanent congregation started here, and we desire the help and prayers of others. We invite all coming this way to meet with us. Too, if you know of any living near us, will you please write us. We sometimes go to Graton for worship.

K. G. Wilks, Breckenridge, Tex., Box 902, Apr. 11 - We are building a new meeting house on the farm to market road running east from Woodson, and hope to be meeting in it in a few weeks. Our services will begin about 10:30 each Lord's day. You may make a note of this in your church directory. All the faithful will be welcome to meet with us when you are passing through. This congregation is not the result of the Miller-Hathaway debate, but rather this new congregation resulted in that debate. We have the respect of the community after much stormy competition.

Ellis McCabe, Noel, Mo., March 12 - As we travel and see countless places where there is no faithful congregation we wonder who is at fault. Is it because the preacher refuses to go where Christ is not named or because the brethren refuse to support the preachers that they may do the work of an evangelist? The Lord's work is going ahead here in Southwest Mo. Pray for us.

I.P. Stockton, Thompsons, Tex., March 12 - Bro. Morris has just closed a meeting for us, supported by the Midland congregation. Much good was accomplished. Several have taken a firm stand for the true worship. There is much to be done in the Gulf coast area. If you would like to move here and find employment, and help in this work, you may write me concerning working conditions, etc. I am in favor of the query department in OPA.

Virgil Ash, 509 Franklin, Windson, Mo., Feb. 21 - I visited the church in Kansas City last Lord's day and heard Bro. Hogland from the Lebanon congregation give a lesson. I gave a lesson that night. Feb. 24, I plan to be with the Sweetwater congregation. I also plan to visit Seymour, Houston, Ben Davis, and Springfield

congregations in the near future. I hope to devote my entire time to preaching God's word. Pray for me and mine.

Wilson Thompson, Box 45, Piney View, W. Va., March - Warden church has had good attendance this winter. Feb. 3, Bro. Corson of Pa., preached morning and evening for us. Bro. Miller is to hold our meeting in June. I have just received a copy of Porter-Waters debate. After reading it anyone should be able to see that the cups and S. S. brethren do not have the evidence. We ask the prayers of all the faithful in Christ Jesus.

Jeter E. Whigham, Kinston, Ala., Sept. 30, 1933 - Bro. J. D. Phillips has just closed two meetings near here; viz, at Bethel and at Lowery congregations. One was added at Bethel and three at Lowery. There was a good hearing at both places, and much good in addition to the baptisms was accomplished. He did not mince words in teaching the church to come out of the sleepy, lax condition into which it had drifted. The whole countryside turned out to hear his masterful presentation of the Word. He is a talented teacher, which is evidence of much study, and application to the Word. Certainly the brotherhood is making a great mistake in not supporting him in the great work they are doing. Such men should not be forced to "leave the Word of God to serve tables" when the laborers are so few. They should be able to devote their whole time to sowing the seed. I had the good pleasure of hearing Bro. Phillips in three sermons at Lowery and of having him and his good wife a week with us at Montgomery, Ala. It was a pleasure to meet his sterling little wife of a few weeks.

Gayland L. Osburn, 3240 Madera Ave., Los Angeles, Calif., April 16 - It has been three months since I have written to the OPA, and since my last report I have done most of my work in and around Los Angeles. I have given lessons, teaching with others, nine times, and preaching once at Los Angeles, and two confessed their faults. I enjoyed hearing Bro. Gay preach at Arvin in Jan. also at Glendora in Jan., at Compton, and at Pomona April 2-7. Jan. 25-26, Bro. Gay and I, debated the cups question with Brethren R. S. Moore and Vance Carruth, at Glendora, the first night, and with Brethren Moore and Stout at Bellflower the second night. I assisted with the teaching at Montalvo, Jan. 28, and preached at San Bernardino, Feb. 4 and March 25. I enjoyed hearing Bro. Billy Orten preach at Compton and at Pixley. On the morning of Feb. 18, I assisted with the teaching at Montebello. I have helped with the teaching at Compton four times since my last report.. I preached at Orange four times and assisted with the teaching there on the morning of March 11 and twice April 15. I assisted with the teaching at Glendora once

and preached once. I enjoyed hearing Nelson Nichols at Pixley, March 3. March 4, I preached twice at Arvin. I attended the debate, between Bro. Chester King and Bro. Peter Wilson, at Craton, March 5-8. I gave a number of talks, with others, at Pomona, and April 1, I preached there twice. I preached twice at National City, April 8. I have enjoyed attending singing at Arvin, Compton, Los Angeles, Glendora, and National City. Brethren, we must in the end give an account of our deeds to God.

James Russell, 755 Orange, Fresno, Calif., May 16 - I was called to Stockton to help in finishing the meeting begun by our beloved Jim Stewart when he was called to Texas on account of sickness. There was a very good crowd and interest was tops. Brother Jno. Reynolds preached the last few sermons there. There have been several restorations at Fresno lately and one baptism. Bro. Jesse French preached at Fresno recently and we are very happy to report that he is showing great improvement in his delivery and he is studying hard, preparing himself for the ministry. I was at Montebello (late in arriving) and spoke after Brother Stone and one was restored, May 8. I was with the congregation at Corcoran May 11. **THE WORK WILL CONTINUE TO GROW IF WE ALL GROW WITH IT.**

R. B. Roden, 505 N. Marshall (Midwest City), Okla. City, Okla., May 20 - The church on 1836 N. W. 7th. St., Okla. City, is enjoying the good preaching by Brother Homer L. King in a series of meetings. We have had 13 confessions of faults, and the crowds each night have been large in spite of the stormy weather. The singing is wonderful, and we appreciate the help Brethren Nelson Nichols and Lynwood Smith are rendering in the singing. Bro. Tommy Shaw is with Bro. King in this meeting. May God bless the young preachers who are willing to give their lives and time to the Lord's cause. Brother Don McCord is an example of what the young preachers can do for the cause of Christ in Oklahoma. I enjoyed a good singing with the Carter church, during Bro. Paul Nichols' meeting, the third Sunday in April. Bro. Homer Gay, too, was there.

Amos E. Doud, 2501 Englewood. Ave. Yakima, Wash., Nov. 15 - We enjoyed the recent visit by Bro. Virgil Ash. He gave us a good lesson on the communion service. We are now engaged in a meeting which started Nov. 13, with Bro. Homer L. King doing the preaching assisted by Bro. C. H. Lee. We are having good attendance and much interest with almost a full house last night. We wish to invite any one passing through Yakima to stop and visit the church and especially to come and worship with us. We meet each Lord's day at 10:30 and each Lord's day evening at 7:30. The church is located at

608 N. 25th Ave. We want the brethren to know they are always welcome in our home. Please pray for us that we may always be faithful to the Lord.

M. Lynwood Smith, Healdton, Okla., May 19 - Since my last report to the OPA, I have preached at the City, Washington, Healdton, and Sentinel. Recently, Bro. C. C. Kessinger and I continued the meeting at Ada for another week, after a week by Bro. Ervin Waters, as he could stay no longer. Two confessed faults. I have assisted in the radio program over station KLPR, Okla. City, and I began the meeting for Bro. King here, as he was delayed a day due to the death of his sister in Mo. Two confessed faults. I have been enjoying Bro. King's sermons, as he is doing some of the best preaching I ever heard, and the crowds have been wonderful. The Lord willing, I shall be in a meeting at Davis, Okla., July 15 to 24. Brethren, who may be taking a vacation at that time, may attend this meeting while camping in the park at Sulphur, or elsewhere nearby.

Homer A. Gay, 218 N. Jackson, Lebanon, Mo., Feb. 15th. - Leaving home Jan. 29th., I went to McKinney, Texas where I met with and preached for the faithful church over Lord's day and night, the 30th. Then on to Dallas for the discussion with J. L. Hines on the Class question (reported by others). I surely did appreciate the help and encouragement of my brethren in the discussion. My preaching brethren--both old and young alike, stood by me faithfully. Brother King was my very efficient moderator. After the discussion I went to Temple, Texas for a few nights, then to White Hall, then to Ramsey church, near DeLeon, Tex. and on to Wichita Falls. Then into Oklahoma for five sermons at the Carter church, near Davidson, with four confessions of faults; then to Sentinel where I am at this writing having preached to a nice crowd here last night. I am to preach here two more nights and then go to Oklahoma City over Lord's day, the 20th, then to Ada for two nights, McAlester for one night and then home. I have surely enjoyed all of these visits and the discussion even tho the weather has been extremely cold part of the time and the roads almost impassable we have had pretty good hearings at most of the places and all of the brethren have surely been good to me. Space forbids me mentioning all of the good visits that I have had with my brethren on this trip, and the kindness they have shown me in their homes, for all of which I am very thankful. Let us work while it is day "for the night soon cometh."

Count your assets. If you have a clear conscience and a good liver, if you have three good friends and a happy home, if your heart has kept its youth and your soul its honesty—then You are one of life's millionaires—Sunshine

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**WALKS THROUGH
THE BIBLE...**

**“I HAVE SEEN YOUR TEARS”
(AND PUT THEM IN MY LACHRYMATORY)**

By JERRY DICKINSON

“And it happened, before Isaiah had gone out into the middle court, that the word of the LORD came to him, saying, ‘Return and tell Hezekiah the leader of My people, Thus says the LORD, the God of David your father: I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; surely I will heal you.’ (2 Kings 20:4-5) “You number my wanderings; Put my tears in your bottle; Are they not written in Your book? When I cry out to You, Then my enemies turn back; this I know because God is for me. In God I have put my trust; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?” (Psalm 56:8-11) “And God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.” (Revelation 21 :4)

The first time the word tears occurs in the Bible record is in the story of Hezekiah in 2 Kings 20:5. Isaiah informs the King that he is going to die and he needs to set his house in order. Hezekiah is only 39 years old, and has been a good King, loyal and faithful to the Lord. He greets the news of his imminent death as many of us would with great anxiety and distress. He turns his face to the wall and prays, weeping and wailing. He does not want to die. He pleads with the Lord while shedding bitter, briny tears. The Lord is moved with compassion toward this loyal servant and sends Isaiah back with the remarkable message. “I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears.” Not only did God hear his prayer- He saw his tears! Oh, how overwhelmingly comforting to know that God sees your tears. Can we imagine how reassuring those words were to poor Hezekiah? “I have seen your tears.”

However, maybe even more remarkable are the words of David in Psalm 56:8. God not only sees our tears, he collects them and keeps them! He puts them in a lachrymatory. A lachrymatory is a bottle or jar that ancient people used for collecting and preserving tears. They have been found in Roman tombs and it is believed that from ancient times people would put their tears in bottles or even water skins and bury them with their loved ones to show how much they were loved. During the civil war wives would collect their tears in bottles and save them while husbands were away from home fighting. Obviously, in David’s day this was a common practice and in poetic and figurative language he tells us God collects the tears of his faithful children when He sees them in distress. He sees our tears and collects them in a bottle. Oh, how sweet and assuring to know God has collected and preserved my tears in His lachrymatory !

I am thinking now as I write these words of many of you, my dear brothers and sisters, who have shed profuse and intense tears in the year 2020 because of the loss of dear precious loved ones due to the pandemic. The Lord has heard your prayers, He has seen your tears. More than that he has collected them in His bottle. But why would God collect and keep our tears? I would suggest those tears are precious to Him and He keeps them as a memorial of how much He loves us. We are speaking now, as David did, in poetic and figurative terms, but let us rejoice and relish the fact that our Father loves us so much he treasures even our tears. Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus. Why? Not because Lazarus was dead- he predicted his death, and knew he was about to bring him back to life. No, Jesus wept when he saw the tears of Martha and Mary. He saw their tears and was so moved emotionally that he did not just sigh or shed a few tears. He wept! My, how overwhelmingly reassuring it is to know Jesus sees your tears and he treasures them! He sees our tears and feels our pain - Praise His Name!

John Bunyan wrote, “God preserves our tears in a bottle, so that he can wipe them away.” The last mention of tears in the Bible is Revelation 21:4. In Heaven He will wipe all the tears away. God has seen our tears. He keeps them in His bottle. He will wipe them all away at last.

Awesome!

Think of the tears this world has shed,

Think of the tears the eyes made red,

Think of the sorrows, trials and care,

Think of the Cross He had to bear.

Oh, what will it be friend, tell me I pray,

If the grim and dark angel should call you today. Would it be tears, tears, tears, through eternity,

Or all wiped away as His blest face you see?