

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. 1

FACING THE FACTS

By Billy D. Dickinson

John Adams, second president of the United States, once made this observation: “Facts are stubborn things; and whatever may be our wishes, our inclinations, or the dictates of our passion, they cannot alter the state of facts and evidence.” Indeed, facts are important because knowledge relies heavily upon factual information, assuming that we want our knowledge to be based upon truth and what is real. We have all heard the comic line, “Don’t confuse me with the facts,” but it’s sad when that same attitude often governs people’s behavior in important areas of life. The most important area of all, of course, has to do with our relationship with God.

Too often we develop opinions in religion, but then we are confronted with facts that expose those opinions as false. How do we respond to those facts? Do we accept them and act accordingly or do we ignore them and act as if they don’t exist? In contrast to the comedic line already referred to, we need to have the attitude of Sergeant Joe Friday on the old television show, *Dragnet*. As he investigated a case, he would often say, “Just the facts, Ma’am, just give me the facts.” Incidentally, that’s the kind of presentation that we should demand of our preachers and teachers in the church! We want them to get up and tell us what God has actually said in His word (1 Pet. 4:11) and not deal in speculations and the opinions of men. Since it is by the use of “facts” that God has revealed the truth in the Bible, we are blessed to read for ourselves what Christ actually taught and learn from incidents that really occurred (Rom. 15:4).

While it may be true that learning facts is not always exciting for some people, we must possess factual information on various Bible topics or we will be lacking in our concept of spiritual things. Yet, some deal very little in facts in order to promote what they consider to be more exciting things, hindering them from having the proper basis for a good understanding of God’s will for their lives. However, I don’t want to leave the impression that factual preaching means that it must be lacking in power and persuasion. That is simply not the case! Look at Stephen’s discourse in Acts 7 and the point becomes crystal clear. He gave the Jewish leaders a good history lesson as he spoke of

how their historical past was one of idolatry and rebellion against God repeatedly. All of this factual information allowed Stephen to conclude his speech with a powerful denunciation against the stubborn unbelief of his hearers (verse 51-53). This shows that preaching must be factual, but at the same time it can be preached with power and conviction as people are reproved, rebuked, and exhorted by the word of God.

Please consider this question: How do you react to the facts presented in God’s word (when you read them for yourself or you hear them proclaimed in a sermon)? Do you accept them gladly or do you try to negate them in some way? The truth is that men often deal with the truth in an unfavorable way, causing them to deny what is factually true. Let’s notice how some seek to overthrow Biblical facts.

DISTORTION

Sometimes an attempt is made not to face the facts by distorting the real issue or by slanting things their way. In other words, they are guilty of misrepresenting what the real facts are in the case. A good way to illustrate this is how some have tried to justify instrumental music in the worship of the New Testament church. The false charge has been made against us, “You people don’t believe in music. You think that music is wrong in the church.” One lady actually stated to me several years ago, “I’ll never become a member of the Church of Christ because I like music too much to give it up.” When one recognizes what the real issue is, it’s obvious that such statements as these are a distortion of the facts!

It is an obvious fact that we don’t believe “that music is wrong in the church” because it is often a part of our assemblies and it is also something that we enjoy (in the sense that we find it edifying and uplifting). It is true that we don’t use instrumental music, which is actually the point of the criticism, but that is a far cry from saying that we don’t obey such passages as Eph. 5:19-- “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.” When it comes to the New Testament church, it is vocal music that is specified, hence authorized, every time.

Let’s notice some facts that are undeniable: (1) Secular history attests to the fact that the early church did not sing with instruments of music-- “All our sources deal

continued on page eight

CONTENTS

Vol. LXXXVII No. 1



ADVOCATE

ANNOUNCEMENTS 10

Facing the Facts 1

Concerning Idolatry 2

Querist Column..... 3

Was Jesus Created 4

A Wagging Tongue..... 7

A TRIBUTE TO MY DAD 10

Thank You For This Day 12

FROM THE FIELDS 11

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Editorial

CONCERNING IDOLATRY

By DON L. KING

The subject under consideration from 1 Corinthians 8:1 through 11:1 is idolatry. According to historical accounts, in the sacrificial worship in idolatrous temples, the animal to be offered was taken before the idol for sacrifice. As an item of worship, the person offering the sacrifice would often eat a portion of the meat. Another portion was burned in worship to the idol. This showed fellowship between the worshiper and the idol. This was the common practice, and it was believed that by burning a part of the meat the idol god had consumed some also. Obviously, since the idol could not actually consume any of the meat, it was eventually taken to the market or “shambles” for sale to the public for common use. As a result, anyone who bought meat at the market could be reasonably sure it had been used in idolatrous sacrifices at least part of the time. That was perfectly alright (see 1 Corinthians 10:25). Paul reasoned in 1 Corinthians 10:26 that the earth and everything in it belonged to the Lord anyway. Hence, it could be used with a clear conscience as long as it was done with thanks to the Lord.

The problem was that there were some church members in Corinth who considered themselves strong and others weak. In chapters 8, 9 and 10 Paul discusses the strong/weak issue also. However, remember that these three chapters deal with idolatry in the main. This is no small issue. In fact, Paul said more about idolatry than he did the Lord’s Supper, the so-called “hair question” or a number of other things. Those who considered themselves strong were seemingly trying to convince Paul that it was alright for them to go to the temples of idols and eat the feasts. After all, the idol was really nothing anyway. It was just an image. It wasn’t alive, and it surely was not a real god. So what was the problem with going there and eating the meat? They were not worshiping the idol, they thought. They considered it a trivial matter, and those who objected were weak brethren. I have noticed that even in our own day it is often these who say they are “strong” enough to not be affected by going to worldly places and consider us weak who warn against it. However, Paul commanded: “..flee from idolatry” (1 Corinthians 10-14). He knew it was sin for them to be involved in anyway at all.

We have little problem with brethren wanting to go to the idol’s temple in America. However, there were a

continued on page nine

QUERIST COLUMN

By Ronny F. Wade

Question: Do elders have any authority over the members of the church when they are not in the public assembly?

Answer: Yes, I believe they do. The public assembly of the church is only a part of living the Christian life. The daily conduct of every child of God is of great concern to the elder. When one is born again, they begin a journey that will last until death. It is the duty of elders to guide, protect and lead those under their charge. This might involve, but is not limited to, daily decisions, confrontations with evil and those things that would cause one to go astray. As people journey thru life, they are confronted with situations, the outcome of which may determine where they will spend eternity. An elder is concerned about these matters and the general welfare of the sheep they oversee. To suggest that "it's nobody's business what I do or how I live" is to overlook the fact that elders are given the responsibility of caring for the spiritual welfare of those they lead. When elders "watch for my soul" I should take heed to their advice and instruction. Hebrews 13:17

Question: Should the elders and deacons let the congregation know how the money is being spent?

Answer: Yes, I believe they should. I have heard, more times than I care to remember, some person say "we never know how the money is being spent." Or "we have no idea how much money we have in the treasury, or how we are spending it." In the view of this writer, this should never happen. Either by some written notice that is posted somewhere in the building or by public announcement the members of the congregation deserve to know how the Lord's money is being spent. Ideally a report every month should be available. I can think of a number of good things that come from such a practice. First of all everyone is kept abreast of plans, developments, and goals the congregation has adopted. Secondly, people feel more a part of these activities when they have knowledge of what is taking place. Thirdly it only tends to increase the interest the whole church has in seeing that goals have been set and progress is being made in their direction. The money belongs to the Lord. It is for those purposes set forth in His word. The Lord wants the money spent in carrying out those

goals and purposes set forth in His word. He is not coming back to reward the church that has the largest treasury. 1Cor. 16:1-8; 2Cor. 8:1-24

Question: Should one elder take it upon himself to make changes without consulting the other elders? Should one elder take it upon himself to make decisions by himself without consulting with the other elders?

Answer: The answer to both these questions lies in the fact that the oversight of the church belongs to all who serve as elders, not just one man. If one elder chooses to make decisions without consulting all the other elders, he has, in my opinion not only overstepped his scriptural limits, but has in effect abused his office. No elder should assume or act like a "chief shepherd." To be successful the elders must agree in their work. Discussion and respect will lead to agreement and agreement to action. To bypass or circumvent this procedure will bring only resentment and confusion. Acts 15:6-29 (This second installment is the last in the current set of questions regarding the eldership)

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PLEASE NOTE:

To all who intend to send material to the paper for publication during the months of January and February, keep in mind that in my absence, Brother Ronny Wade will handle the publication until February 15, 2015. After that date, please resume sending to our Livermore address.

You may send material to Ronny c/o ronnywade36@gmail.com or to his mail box at: P.O. Box 14352, Springfield, MO 65814. Our sincere thanks to Ronny for handling this. Preachers, we need your reports and articles. Please try to do more writing for the paper this year. May God bless us all. -DLK

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WAS JESUS CREATED?

By Andrew Richardson

The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, of the “Jehovah’s Witnesses,” teaches that Jesus Christ is a created being; that God first created Him before creating everything else by Him. They say on their website:

“...the Bible plainly states that in his prehuman existence, Jesus was a created spirit being, just as angels were spirit beings created by God. Neither the angels nor Jesus had existed before their creation” (http://www.watchtower.org/e/ti/article_05.htm).

In short, they are flat out wrong. Jesus and God are a united deity. Though the Son is not the Father, and the Father is not the Son (John 6:38; 1 Cor. 11:3; 15:27-28), they are still “one” (Isa. 9:6; John 1:1; 10:30; Phil. 2:6-8; 1 John 5:20), being united in the divine nature. It is in Jesus that the fullness of the “Godhead” (deity and divine nature) dwells (Col. 2:9), and deity has indefinite existence.

In Revelation 22:13, Jesus professes to be the “Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.” “Alpha” and “Omega” are the first and last Greek letters (thus covering the entire alphabet), so Christ is proclaiming to compass all that is, having existed before the creation of “all things” (John 1:3; Col. 1:16-17), and having brought everything into existence. He also is the “end” of all things, because everything reaches its purpose in Him, for Paul declared “all things” were created “for Him” (Col. 1:16). Not only that, He will literally be the “end” of all things when He returns (2 Pet. 3:10; Rev. 21:5). Jesus used this same expression in other instances (Rev. 1:17; 2:8), and so does Jehovah in Isaiah 48:12, saying, “I am he; I am the first, I also am the last” (cf. Isa. 41:4; 44:6). How many of us would approach the idea of Jehovah having a beginning? Yet, Christ assumes the same designation. Like Jehovah, Jesus has always been.

Micah prophesied beforehand, saying, “But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting” (5:2).

This prophecy is applied to Jesus in the New Testament (Matt. 2:6; John 7:42), and beyond

doubt verifies His eternal past, saying He is from “everlasting.”

In a discussion with the Jews, Jesus told them His “day” had been seen by Abraham (John 8:56), but when asked how this was possible, since Jesus, as it seemed, wasn’t old enough to have been seen by Abraham, He replied, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am” (v. 58). Jehovah also identifies Himself as “I am,” and “I am that I am” (Ex. 3:14). It denotes His self-existence, and Jesus claims the same. Jesus and God have neither beginning nor end. They just simply exist of themselves. There is a reason Jesus chose “I am” as opposed to saying, I was. The Jews knew exactly what Christ was saying, and for this reason they prepared to stone Him (v. 59), which they began to do on another occasion when they perceived that He was expressing equality with God (John 10:33).

At the first of John’s gospel it is evident that Jesus had no genesis. As touched on earlier, John explains how Jesus, “the Word,” existed before the start of creation (of anything). He says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (1:1). The beginning of what? All creation! John continues on in the third verse: “All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.” The apostle confirms that everything created (“made”) was created by the Word. After saying “all things,” he proceeds to be more explicit and says nothing was made “without Him,” but if He was made by God, then it is not true that “without Him was not any thing made that was made.” Nothing is excluded. Jesus was not created, otherwise He created Himself. Anything that falls into the “made” category was made by Jesus.

Interestingly, the 1984 edition of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society’s New World Translation attest to the same, which reads: “All things came into existence through him, and apart from him not even one thing came into existence.” “Not one thing!” Yet they turn right around and say there indeed was one thing that came into existence apart from Jesus -Jesus!

Paul, in his letter to the Colossians, reiterates the same: “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, ...all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist” (1:16-17). In an attempt to support their Jesus-creature doctrine, those at the Watchtower Society have polluted

Paul's words in their NWT by adding the word "other" four times with brackets into this passage, saying, "by means of him all [other] things were created in the heavens and upon the earth..." and that"... All [other] things have been created through him and for him. Also, he is before all [other] things and by means of him all [other] things were made to exist..." Yes, they have corrupted the words of the God they profess to serve.

"FIRSTBORN OF ALL CREATION"

What evidence has the Watchtower Society presented to prove the Son of God was created? Consider the following statement from its publication, *What Does the Bible Really Teach*?

"He is called 'the firstborn of all creation,' for he was God's first creation" (2005, p. 41).

The declaration that "firstborn of all creation" means Jesus was created first is nothing more than an assertion. When used in reference to literal birth, the word certainly implies an order in time, being the first to exit the womb, but in the case of Jesus being called the "firstborn," it is more than apparent that the term is not used in such a literal form, just as the term "firstborn from the dead" (Col. 1:18) does not imply literal birth from death, for such is a senseless notion.

In truth, "firstborn" is a title of preeminence. Throughout man's history, as in the Bible, the "firstborn" male was highest in rank among his siblings and had the "birthright" (1 Ch. 5:1; Gen. 29:26; 43:33; 48:18; Deut. 21:1); thus the word "firstborn" became associated with superiority and being the highest of honor. When used in this sense, it no longer has reference to chronology or birth, but rather to rank.

For example, in Psalms 89:27, God says He will make David His "firstborn." How would God make David the "firstborn" if he was already in existence? If he had already been born? In fact, David was the youngest of many sons (1 Sam. 16:11-13). God would make David the "firstborn" by exalting his position in honor while being King. This is exactly what God means, for He qualifies "firstborn" with, "higher than the kings of the earth." The whole context concerns the promotion of David through Jehovah's blessings.

As stated before, Jesus is called the "firstborn from the dead," though He was not the first to be resurrected from death. Lazarus and the ruler's

daughter had previously been raised by Christ (John 11; Mark 5:35-42), and God raised a child back to life in the time of Elijah (1 Kings 17:21-22). Rather it means that among all who have died, Jesus is superior to them all - being the greatest among the dead as well as the living. He is the "Lord both of the dead and living" (Rom. 14:9), so that "in all things he might have the preeminence" (Col. 1:18).

There is an aspect of Jesus resurrection in which He is chronologically first- the first to rise from the dead to never die again (Rev. 1:8), but in this He is spoken of as the "first fruits" (1 Cor. 15:20, 23). "

The Greek language (in which the New Testament was originally written) had a word for "created," as seen throughout the New Testament (Mark 13:19; 1 Cor. 11:9; Eph. 2:10; Eph. 3:9; 1 Tim. 4:3, etc.), but it is not used for Christ.

"THE ONLY BEGOTTEN SON OF GOD"

The Watchtower says:

"There is something else that makes this Son special. He is the 'only-begotten Son.' (John 3:16) This means that Jesus is the only one directly created by God" (2005, p.41).

First they should consider that in Hebrews 11:17, Isaac is called Abraham's "only begotten," but Abraham actually had other children (Gen. 16:4ff). Isaac was the "only begotten" in the sense of having a unique and special relationship to Abraham, being the only son of his marriage with Sarah and the son born of promise (Heb. 11:11). So, a son can be the "only begotten" by means of having an exclusive relation to his father, which Jesus certainly does, sharing the divine nature with God. While all Christians are "sons" of God (Rom. 8:14), they do not have the same kinship with the Father as Jesus, in whom dwells "all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. 2:9). Is there any other "son" of whom that is said? It is also said of Christ: "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God..." (Phil. 2:6) Any other son in the "form of God"? The entire New Testament exhibits their inimitable union. (cf. John 1:1f, 18; 1 Tim. 3:16; Heb. 1:3, etc.)

More importantly, "only begotten" relates to the connection between Jesus and Jehovah after Jesus became flesh:

"And the angel answered and said unto [Mary], The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also

that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35).

The eternal Jesus became flesh, being born of a virgin woman by the Spirit of God, and thus, He is the “Son” of God, being deity in the flesh. Note that John refers to Jesus as the “only begotten” after speaking of Him being “made flesh” (John 1:14), and it is in Him that “God was manifest in the flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16).

To say that Jesus being called the “only begotten” necessarily implies He was created by God is a statement they offer without support, and in fact contradicts a multitude of Biblical testimony.

“THE BEGINNING OF THE CREATION OF GOD”

One of the various appellations self-applied by Jesus in the book of Revelation is “the beginning of the creation of God.” In harmony with the immediate and overall context of the Bible, this is to be understood to mean He was the cause of the creation. Everything began in Him; thus he is “the beginning.” However, the Watchtower presents it as proof that Jesus was the first created:

“... [Jesus] was “the beginning of God’s creation.” (Revelation 3:14, RS, Catholic edition). “Beginning” [Greek, ar•khe’] cannot rightly be interpreted to mean that Jesus was the ‘beginner’ of God’s creation. In his Bible writings, John uses various forms of the Greek word ar•khe’ more than 20 times, and these always have the common meaning of “beginning.” Yes, Jesus was created by God as the beginning of God’s invisible creations” (http://www.watchtower.org/e/ti/article_05.htm).

Actually, John uses the word “beginning” (ar•che) in other instances of Jesus’ self-designations in Revelation, but in chapter twenty-one, Jesus not only calls Himself the “beginning,” but also “the end” (v.6). It doesn’t take long to see the dilemma the Watchtower faces. If “beginning” means first in chronological order of creation, then to be consistent, “end” would mean last in chronological order of creation. Thus, according to their reasoning, Jesus is the first created and the last created, leaving Him as the only created! You and I don’t exist! The error of their doctrine is abundantly manifest. “Beginning and end,” “the Amen” (3:14), “Alpha and Omega” (21:6), and the “Faithful and True Witness (3:14),” are all titles expressing the credentials of Jesus’ deity, and deity is necessarily eternal, both past and future.

The “beginning of the creation of God” of Revelation 3:14 is equivalent to “firstborn of all creation” of Colossians 1:15, and both contexts deal with the superiority of Christ.

PROVERBS 8

In Proverbs chapter eight, wisdom is personified, written as speaking in the first person, and the “witnesses,” as well as others, believe it is meant to be Jesus Himself speaking. In verse twenty-two, some translations speak of wisdom as “created” by Jehovah. The Watchtower says:

“Notice how closely those references to the origin of Jesus correlate with expressions uttered by the figurative “Wisdom” in the Bible book of Proverbs: “Yahweh created me, first-fruits of his fashioning, before the oldest of his works. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills, I came to birth; before he had made the earth, the countryside, and the first elements of the world. Proverbs 8: 12, 22, 25, 26, NJB” (http://www.watchtower.org/e/ti/article_05.htm)

It is not a stretch to say that much in Proverbs alludes to Jesus, but some things must be understood:

1) Sure there are similarities between the language describing wisdom and Jesus’ work as creator; why wouldn’t there be? Jesus and Jehovah used wisdom in creating the universe. Is it not called intelligent design? Jesus, as the creator of all things, used intelligence to design it all. It could very well be the case that Solomon is just personifying wisdom for effect, and it is not necessarily meant to be Jesus. Evidence for this is seen in the fact that wisdom is spoken of in the feminine sense in the first verses (“her voice”; .she standeth”; “she crieth”). Nevertheless, it is sure that the language is very harmonious to that of the Son of God, but again, no doubt it would be, because Jesus is the creator.

2) The word translated as “created” (Hebrew -qanah) is rendered “possessed” in many versions, such as the King James, and this is surely one of its meanings. The word is not always strictly the idea of “creating” or bringing something from nonexistence into existence. The same Hebrew word is found in Jeremiah 32:15, where it says, “Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land.” According to the context, just as Jeremiah bought the field from his cousin Hanameel (v. 7ff), the fields of the lands that had been taken under control by Babylon would be owned again by Israel once they were to take the

lands back into “possession.”

3) Whichever way they want to take it, the Watchtower does not help itself here, because in Proverbs 8:23, “wisdom” is said to have been “set up from everlasting...” (KJV) As Jehovah has never been without wisdom, so He has never been without Jesus.

Ultimately, while Jesus Christ is not a created being, the Jesus of the Watchtower Society is. They have created a different Jesus. Their Jesus is the archangel Michael (Watchtower, April 1, 2010 p. 19). He is neither prayed to nor worshipped (Watchtower, July 15, 1996; November 1, 1964). Doubtless their Jesus is not the real Jesus. The true Jesus is deity, having eternal past and eternal future. Glory and honor to His name, and to the Father through Him.

A WAGGING TONGUE

SUBMITTED BY JIM WINCHESTER

The third chapter of James begins with a warning to those who hold responsible positions in the body of Christ, such as teachers and preachers. We must understand that the apostle is placing importance on the way we speak as well as the truths we teach from God’s word. “My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation” (James 3:1).

After the warning James says, “For in many things we offend all, If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body” (James 3:2). Control of the tongue is one of the most important lessons a Christian needs to learn. Learning to control the tongue is important to all of us, since no one is perfect.

The word “tongue” as used in the scriptures is a figurative expression meaning words uttered. We need to recognize that a tongue may have moral qualities. It is said of the tongue it is “glad,” it can “lie,” and it may “love.” In Job it is said of an evil man that “wickedness be sweet in his mouth, though he hid it under his tongue” (Job 20:12). Isaiah speaks of the tongue as a devouring fire (Isaiah 30:27). The Bible is filled with expressions describing the tongue.

We find in James the third chapter an extensive discussion on the power of the tongue. It is possible that among the Christians, to whom the epistle is written, there was dissension, evil speaking, and arguing. The careless use of their tongues, most likely, was hampering the peace and unity in their congregation and brotherhood. The

apostle warns that since there is no such thing as human infallibility, the tongue is most likely causing them to sin. The tongue is a small thing, he says, but so is the spark which, fanned by winds, can destroy a forest. The tongue is one of the smallest members of the body, but it can become a, “world of iniquity: ...it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell” (James 3:6).

James indicates that control of the tongue is impossible unless the spirit of Christ dwells in us. “..every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison” (James 3:7-8).

The tongue has the potential of blessing and praising God, and of being used in teaching and winning souls to Christ if it is dedicated to uplifting the Lord’s purposes. It can be a fountain sending forth sweet water and words that are “pure .. peaceable, gentle,...full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy” (James 3:17). The wise man, says James, “..will show out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom” (James 3:13).

The tragic thing that James had witnessed among those who called themselves “Christians” was that they were double-tongued. They used their tongues to speak bitterness as well as sweetness, cursing as well as blessings, envy as well as love and strife as well as peace. All the good they had spoken was destroyed by their evil-speaking, and the cause of Christ was suffering. This situation needed to be corrected. Their conduct was not from above, “...but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work” (James 3:15-16).

James provides a solution to their problem. If a man’s heart is right with God his life will be filled with righteousness. If his life is filled with the spirit of Christ his tongue will be under the control of the Lord. When God controls a man’s life, he will control the tongue, and what is not humanly possible will be accomplished. Wisdom from above will mark a man’s speech and his actions will be to glorify God. God’s peacemakers will have their tongue under control.

James mentions that tongue control is profitable to the body, mind and spirit. He calls attention to a bit placed in the horse’s mouth that can bring the animal under the control of man (James 3:3). He also uses the ships helm, though a small object, controlling a large ship. “Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small helm, whithersoever the governor listeth” (James 3:4). The tongue, though it is one of the smallest members of our body, when it becomes God’s instrument, is “able to also to bridle the whole body” (James 3:2).

We need more surrendered tongues in the “Church of Christ” today: tongues that will praise God, tell the wonderful story of salvation in Christ and express the true spirit of the Christian life. As the writer of the book of wisdom puts it, “A word fitly spoken as like apples of gold in pictures of silver” (Pro v. 25:11).

As children, when we were embarrassed or had our feelings hurt, we would try to hide the hurt by saying, “sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” They did hurt and often made us cry. The words of the bully often broke friendships, created hard feelings, promoted anger and brought out the worst in others.

The words we speak reflect our inner man. If a man’s mind is filled with evil thoughts, or a combination of good and evil, his speech will betray him. When the inner man has been changed or transformed there is no need to worry about the tongue. It will reflect the inner man. “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2 Cor. 5:17). If true conversion has taken place in our lives we will reflect the spirit of Christ.

Most people talk too much. Some refer to those people as having a motor mouth. The wagging tongue is not thoughtful, careful or concerned about others. A wagging tongue is often activated when curiosity and imagination are combined with an evil mind.

This is a deadly combination which set the world aflame. Wagging tongues have built mountains out of mole hills. The gossip delights in sharing their thoughts with others, even without knowing if the words are true or untrue. “Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth. As coals are to burning coals, and wood to fire; so is a contentious man to kindle strife. The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly” (Prov. 26:20-22).

There is no congregation or individual that is immune to gossip or misrepresentation. There are those who carelessly or intentionally twist the truth, thus becoming a menace to everyone.

The bible is filled with references to the tongue and its potential for both good and for evil. These truths are timeless and apply today with as much relevance to human conduct as they did in day it was written. Human nature is the same, yesterday, today and forever. The fundamental truth, provided by inspiration, is the same for all ages.

A true Christian cannot be a talebearer or a busybody. Our primary concern is to live according the standards provide by God and do good to all men. If we know evil of others, its is our duty and privilege to restore them to righteousness.

The first step toward controlling our tongue is to make Christ the controlling influence in our lives. Once we have completely surrendered our lives to the Lord He will help us control our tongues.

The teaching of the word of God is so plain and strong in regard to liars and the lying tongue that only a fool would fail to heed it. We need constantly to guard our tongues against the ever present temptation to deal recklessly with the truth. Truth, and only truth, is the guarantee of doing good for God.

Joseph was sold into Egypt as a result of a lie. Are we selling the souls of others by a wagging tongue?



FACING THE FACTScontinued from page one

amply with the vocal music of the church, but they are chary with mention of any other manifestations of musical art”- Music In Western Civilization by Paul Henry Lang! “In the beginning, all Christian musical practices were vocal”- Music In History by Howard McKinney & W.R. Anderson (2) The New Testament shows that their music was always confined to “singing”- Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; Heb. 2:12; Acts 16:25; I Cor. 14:15; James 5:13 (3) When instrumental music was introduced into congregations of the Lord’s church, it caused division among brethren. Using the instrument in church assemblies in the early 1800’s was virtually unknown. In 1860 the practice was introduced in Midway, KY, but it caused great controversy. Their preacher, Lewis Pinkerton, said that this was the only congregation he knew of where the instrument had been successfully introduced. This innovation into the Lord’s church became a constant source of trouble, eventually causing a major division in the body of Christ. That is an undeniable fact!

Facts are stubborn things, and after it is all said and done, nowhere does the New Testament authorize instrumental music in our worship today.

DENIAL

Another attempt to evade the truth is by simply denying the facts and contradicting what the Scriptures plainly reveal. For example, consider how some deny what the Bible says about baptism. I’ve heard some claim that it is not a command of the gospel, while others assert that it is never spoken of as having a connection to salvation. Here are the facts: (1) Baptism is a command of God-- “And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord” (Acts 10:48). Notice that it was not a choice or an option, but a command of the gospel (Mark 16:15-16). (2) Every time baptism is mentioned in regard to salvation, it always comes first and salvation follows (in that order)-Read it for yourself in Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 1 Pet. 3:21; Gal. 3:26-27, et al. (3) Only immersion will suffice- It involves much water (John 3:23), a going down into the water (Acts

8:38), a coming up out of water (Acts 8:39), a burial (Rom. 6:4), and a resurrection (Col. 2:12). Facts are stubborn things! We can deny them, but the word spoken by Christ will judge us in the last day (John 12:48).

GO ON THE ATTACK

When all else fails, some find it necessary to attack the presenter of facts. They can't give scriptural authority for instrumental music, so they engage in name calling and character assassination. Calling brethren "antis" or legalists is a poor substitute for Biblical authority. When they can't answer the arguments that show that baptism is "for (unto) the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38), they make false allegations like we believe in "water salvation" or we teach that one can merit salvation. It shows the weakness of one's position when the messenger is attacked in order to overthrow the "facts" that have been proclaimed.

Facts are stubborn things, especially when they are backed up with a "thus saith the Lord." Let us remember the words of Jesus: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Matt. 24:35).



CONCERNING IDOLATRY continued from page two

number of things that went along with such practice. Revelling and banqueting were usually present at the idol's feasts. That was the idea of having a big party where all eat and drink to excess and no rules are enforced. Some want to be involved in that today, but it is just as wrong now as then. Fornication and other forms of immorality were commonly associated with idol's feasts, so it is small wonder Paul warned against it. Perhaps we do not realize how closely associated some of the common sins of today are with idolatry. Remember, Paul said, "flee from idolatry." (1 Corinthians 10:14) The reason for this is found in verse 7 where he wrote, "neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play."

The eating and drinking was, apparently idolatrous worship. That's what he is talking about in this context. So, the eating of meat here was not just a meal at all, was it? Perhaps it may have been to some of the Corinthian brethren (at least in their own minds) but to others who saw them eat it at the idol's temple, they were in fellowship with the idol and actually worshipping it. So Paul is definitely concerned with what others think of us. Whether we want to admit it or not, the Bible does not allow us to live and eat in a way that leaves the wrong impression or violates the conscience of others. We simply are not allowed to do that. It is wrong for me to publicly go to places and engage in practices that

others are convinced are wrong. We may believe it is permissible. However, if it becomes controversial and the church can be harmed, we must leave it alone. I am not allowed to do anything that compromises my ability or influence to teach another the truth no matter what it is.

In 1 Corinthians 10:15 Paul said, "I speak as to wisemen, judge ye what I say" This is by no means to be understood as a compliment to those Corinthians. They are not really, wise. No one who is really wise will do what they did! In an earlier chapter (chapter 4), he had soundly chastised those in Corinth who considered themselves very learned and wise. They thought they were even greater than Paul and other apostles. This seems to be a sarcasm. In other words, if you are wise, listen to what I say. Then verse 16 he said, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" This verse, though it certainly applies to the Lord's Supper, was not spoken as an explanatory statement. Rather, it was stated as an argument against their idolatrous practice. This is the context. I used to wonder why this verse was found here instead of over in chapter 11 where the Communion is the subject. His point was this: just as the people at the temple of the idol showed their fellowship with the idol by being there and eating the meat in worship, so it was with the Lord's Supper. How could they fail to see the conflict of interest? Could they really have fellowship with the temple of idols (devils) and also the Lord's table? Of course not! Paul is showing that when they went to the temple of idols and sat down to eat the meat there (though they did not believe in the idol and did not consider what they did as worship), they to have fellowship with the ideals represented by the idol. He showed in verse 20 that the Devil was the one really behind it, and he did not want them to have to have fellowship with the devils. In verse 21 he said, "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils." It was not physically impossible for them to do this, for some of the Corinthians were doing that very thing. However, it was morally wrong or sinful. The word "cannot" in this verse, in Greek, is said to mean that it was forbidden. Paul would not that they appear to fellowship both the Lord and the Devil by sitting at both tables and appearing to worship both. Brethren, we had better think about what we do on Saturday night, where we go, and then what we do on Lord's day. Our actions may very well be just as incompatible as what the Corinthians were doing. God forbid that we be so foolish! Think on these things. -DLK

TRIBUTE TO MY DAD

By Allen Bailey



My dad, Alton Bruce Bailey Sr. was born February 10, 1932 and departed this life the evening of October 5, 2014 at age 82. Dad's life was about Family and The Church! He loved the church for which our Lord died. It was his greatest honor and privilege to stand in many pulpits across the brotherhood, preaching from his heart. Nothing that comes

from my pen will do dad justice. He was an awesome man of God who loved working with brothers and sisters across the country. He was busy for many years conducting gospel meetings across the brotherhood. Dad considered it a great privilege to work with the Murphy Avenue Church of Christ in La Grange, Georgia. It was his honor to start preaching from La Grange and eventually serve as Elder with other great men. It is one thing to have a parent who is incapacitated but you can talk to and go visit them. Once your parent dies, it is all over. They now go to receive their reward. You miss them in a unique way, the tone of their voice, the softness of their touch, listening to them express how much they love the church. I assure you, I miss dad in all these ways and many others. Alton Bailey as he was known to most was a nationally known evangelist who preached in some of the largest congregations in the brotherhood in contrast to preaching in a tent to see what response could be raised from an unknown community.

FAMILY – We are so happy to have dad as our father and mother as our mom. They kept the house and family a spiritual safe haven. On a regular basis, nearly daily, we would have supper together and hear about all the events of the day from our siblings and parents. Dad would go outside and play horseshoes, fix our bikes, rake leaves (ugh) and pick up pecans at the same time. Dad also built a one room barber shop in the back of his barn so he could cut our hair and others from the congregation. Dad extensively remodeled the house so upon completion every window and door had been relocated. He made a large room so we could have lots of social gatherings from church and we did. After dad completed this task, he did a variety of construction work on other Christian's homes too. Dad loved doing for others. Dad was one of five siblings. All of which celebrated their 50 wedding anniversaries. This demonstrated the frequent teaching of the sanctity of the home.

NEIGHBORHOOD – If you ever visited dad, on 909 Truitt Avenue, you were probably shocked at who lived on his block. Brother E.H. Miller, dad's father in law, lived three houses down the street. Next to Brother Miller was Brother Angus Shellnut who also served as an elder in LaGrange with dad and granddad. Next to Brother Shellnut was Brother Ivey Thompson who

served as a deacon with the Murphy Avenue Church of Christ approximately 3/4 of a mile from all of these great men of God's homes. With all these great men living so close together, it made it interesting when someone came peddling some man-made religion. It was common for one of the brothers to call and say you have "Mormon Elders" headed your way. Four out of six houses were men who knew their Bibles and were not ashamed of the testimony.

CONGREGATION – Dad went from being a young man who was a regular teacher in the LaGrange congregation to eventually serving as a deacon and years later as an Elder in the congregation. The Murphy Avenue congregation was blessed with men and their families who loved the Lord. The benefits was, we enjoyed the leadership of Elders most of my growing up years within the congregation.

EVANGELISTIC WORK – While dad loved to be at home with his home congregation, he also had a tremendous love for the brotherhood (1 Peter 2:17). It is difficult to be brief in our comments on this section. This work was dad's life. He loved mission meetings, brotherhood meetings, and conducting gospel meetings. He traveled to all 50 states in the union, preaching at most of the congregations across the country. Dad was known for his support for the annual brotherhood meetings whether it be New Year, Fourth of July, or Tennessee Labor Day Meeting, and Preacher's Studies. Dad was a "Peacemaker" (Matthew 5:9). He would be constant in traveling somewhere, often times a distance, to assist individuals, families, or congregation who were having some conflict. As I grew older and began to desire to preach the gospel, dad would occasionally take me with him to one of these outings. He would tell me to "look, listen, and keep quiet". Every time that dad was called to a place he left with a conflict resolved. He did not necessarily enjoy this part of the work, but he was good at it. He would go into a battle ground area and leave with peace and harmony restored. Dad's "work of an evangelist" (2 Timothy 4:5) also had him "earnestly contending for the faith" (Jude 1:3) in public or private settings. He moderated for many of Brother E.H. Miller's debates across the country. He moderated for me in a public discussion soon after I started preaching. Wherever we were in defending the faith, dad would be there to encourage, support, and assist in any way he could. I remember dad and mom along with Uncle Bill and Aunt Hazel drove from Georgia to California to assist in a debate. Brother Clovis Cook moderated this discussion but dad and other preachers assisted us. Dad went to Kansas to attend one of Mark's debates too. Ronny Wade moderated for this debate. Dad defended the faith in private home studies always keeping calm and gentle, but earnestly contended for the faith. I loved to see him at work.

MOM - Mom was so supportive and encouraging in every aspect of dad's life. She worked at the mill in LaGrange for a few years to assist dad in his preaching. A preacher's wife is an amazing life to live. It takes a special woman to be a preacher's wife and mom was that special woman.

They truly made a good team in their work and were known all across the brotherhood. When dad breathed his last breath, mom looked at me and said "Allen, I can't be upset over Alton dying. I have prayed and prayed that God would allow me to live longer than Alton so I could take care of him until he died. God answered my prayers." She turned to dad with a sweet "I love you".

Announcements

Brother Eric Stone and his family have now been in Hawaii over three years. The family consists of Eric and Tara, and three children. They have done a good work for the church and really need medical insurance for the family. (he has insurance through a part-time job but the family has none). They can have insurance for all of them at a cost of \$859.95 per month. With today's rising medical costs, this is a bargain and anyone with children needs insurance! Is there a congregation among us who is willing to pay for this? Please consider this at your earliest opportunity and contact the Stone's at: 94-371 Ikepono Street, Waipahu, HI. -DLK

Our Departed

WILSON- Mildred A. Wilson of Cassville, MO was born on May 20, 1922 in Jenkins, MO and passed away on Nov. 6, 2014 at the age of 92. She was the daughter of Thomas Barry and Martha (Montgomery) Wilson. After the loss of her mother in 1929, being the oldest of four children, she had many responsibilities in caring for the family. The children's aunts and uncles also assisted Sis. Mildred's father in raising the children. She is survived by a nephew, Thomas Wilson of Lincoln, NE; a niece, Diana Voss of Grand Island, NE; three great-nephews and six great-nieces and nephews. At the age of 22 she began teaching in numerous one-room Barry County rural schools, including Jenkins, Cato, Shell Knob, Clay Hill, Cross Hollows, and Seligman. Following the school consolidations, she taught at Southwest for eight years and Exeter for seven years. Even after her retirement from teaching, she tutored students who needed academic help. She did that as a labor of love, expecting nothing in return, because she was the type of person who was all about serving others. Indeed, she was a great woman in the sight of God (Matt. 20:26-27)! She obeyed the gospel in 1944 and faithfully lived for the Lord, attending the Townsend Street congregation in Cassville for many years. She was a source of great strength to that congregation and was one of the most hospitable women that you would ever meet. We commend the spirit of our dear sister unto God, knowing that there will be a glad reunion day for all the righteous dead (1 Thess. 4:13-18), and it is our hope to see her again in the morning of the resurrection. This writer was honored to conduct the service and Roy Lee Criswell spoke at the grave-side. Interment was in the Old Carney Cemetery.-- Billy D. Dickinson

Field Reports

Johnny Elmore, 419 K SW, Ardmore, OK 73401, johnnyelmore@gmail.com December 8 - - I conducted a meeting Oct. 1-5, with the church at Grapevine, TX. Some of the young men of the congregation worked at passing out newsletters and knocking doors before the meeting, which I thought was commendable. We had some good crowds and some excellent singing during the meeting. Then on Oct. 9, Matthew Barnes accompanied me to Earlytown, AL, for a meeting Oct. 10-12, stopping en route to visit Darrell and Diane Smith and other loved ones in Christ in Wesson, MS. It was so good to see our cherished friends in the Earlytown area, but I missed the ones who have gone on to glory. On Oct. 19-22, I conducted a meeting at Harrison, AR. I wondered a little when Jimmie Smith suggested a Sunday through Wednesday meeting but the interest and the crowds were good for each service. On November 8th, my daughter Joni drove me to Joplin, MO for a very good singing at the Leawood congregation and then I spoke the next morning to a full house. It was an enjoyable occasion. On November 16, I spoke morning and afternoon at Ada, OK. During these meetings, I was happy that I could visit with a number of preachers, including Bob Johnson, Nathan Battey, Joe Norton, Kevin Presley, Darrell Crawford, Ronny Wade, Brett Hickey, Jimmie Smith, Joe Hisle and others. The last two years have been very hard for me, experiencing earthly losses that are difficult to bear, but it helps to be around loving, faithful Christians and to be involved in the work of the church.

Don L. King, 1147 Sherry Way, Livermore, CA 94550, December 13, 2014, email old_paths@juno.com if the Lord wills, Pat and I plan to attend the Oklahoma New Year's meeting. It has been many years since I was able to be there and we look forward to it. We've been invited to preach at 21st St. congregation on Lord's Day and later be one of the speakers during the meeting. By the time this is read we will be in the Philippines. We look forward to a profitable trip and pray for much good as a result. The church here is doing well and gaining in number somewhat. We have several capable teachers and all get along well. Our new building is virtually complete and we are waiting only for the parking lot to be completed which has been delayed by the much needed rain we have had. We look forward to a very profitable future in Livermore. You are welcome to visit as often as you wish. The new address is 2020 Research Drive, Livermore, CA. To those who plan to send material to us for publication please keep in mind that Ronny Wade will be doing the paper during January and February. He will publish the February and March issues. Send all material to him at: P.O. Box 14352, Springfield, MO 65814. Pray for a good new year in the Lord's work everywhere.

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THE BACK PAGE...

THANK YOU FOR THIS DAY

By *CARL M. JOHNSON*

When leading prayer during worship services I have tried to be careful not to allow myself to fall into routine patterns of phrasing that become so predictable folks can move their lips with me as I pray. Obviously, there are certain things the Lord requires in every prayer, and the mention of those things may seem repetitious, but it is not necessarily the same thing as the vain repetitions condemned by the Lord in Matthew 6:7.

As I reflect on my own prayers, I notice myself saying at the beginning of nearly every one of them, "We thank you dear Father for this day..." Bible precedent for such thanks is found in Psalm 118:24, "This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it."

The background for Psalm 118 is probably the dedication of the rebuilt walls and gates of Jerusalem by Ezra and Nehemiah after the Jews returned from 70 years of captivity in Babylon.

The work of rebuilding Jerusalem was completed in 444 B.C. in spite of fierce opposition from the Samaritans, the Philistines, and others who ridiculed the Jews and threatened to attack them (Neh. 2:19-20; 4:1-9; 6:1-9). The wall-rebuilding project was completed in 52 days and the report of this remarkable accomplishment astounded the nations (Neh. 6:15-16).

Upon completion of the work the people assembled themselves and read the Word of God, confessed sins, and prayed (Neh. 9:2-3). The words "This is the day which the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it" refer to that wonderful day of worship. This verse amplifies verse 23, that says, "This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes."

The psalmist is saying that the accomplishment of delivering the Jews from their 70-year captivity to repatriate the city of Jerusalem can only be seen as something extraordinary, supernatural, and wonderful-comparable to the Red Sea deliverance in the day of Moses. It was a day created by God. Without God, neither leader nor people would be standing there that day. The leader would be dead or the city taken or its walls not rebuilt or the temple not restored. The consummation of these things was indeed a day of wonder, made possible by God, and deserving of joyful gladness.

While several verses in Psalm 118 point directly to Christ-His triumphal entry into Jerusalem (25-26), His rejection (27), His death and resurrection (17), His exaltation as God's chosen Stone (22-23)-verse 24 hints at the Lord's Day, the day of the Resurrection. It is the new day of the new creation made possible by Christ's atoning work.

Just as the day of consummation came for the rebuilding of Jerusalem, the Resurrection was the day of consummation for Jesus' life. It sealed every word He uttered and every deed He accomplished. The day meant victory over those who despised and rejected Him. It was victory over the weakness and faithlessness of His disciples. The Crucifixion made them cowards, but the Resurrection made them heroes. It was victory over death and the grave. The Lord's Day gives us a bond of union between time and eternity. It has been called the "Porch of Immortality," because it is through that day that we shall enter into the everlasting peace of heaven.

Two thousand years later, we continue to acknowledge the Lord's Day on the first day of each week (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2; Rev. 1:10). It should be a day of joy, not of gloom. It should be a day of rest from manual labor, a token of spiritual peace and blessing, a day of communion with our Lord, and a day of fellowship and association with saints. In a world of toil and sorrow, it is one of the richest blessings God has given to men as it reminds us of an eternal rest where toil and sorrow shall be no more. It is a day the Lord has made, and we rejoice in it and are glad.

Since the beginning of the Creation, however, EVERY day is a new day which has been given to us by God (Gen. 1:5). What a beautiful gift. A new day to behold his creation, to enjoy loved ones in our lives, to praise God at morning, noon, and night. We should rejoice and be glad for all God has done for us, and what He will do through us, as we walk with Him each day.

I have no intention of apologizing, therefore, for repeating in prayers my thanksgiving for each new day, even at the risk of sounding formulaic or repetitious. In fact, as we enter into a new year, I challenge you to resolve to do the same. As each new day comes, acknowledge it as a day the Lord has made and rejoice and be glad in it. cmjthebackpage@gmail.com