

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. 7

PANDEMIC OF SIN

By *BILLY D. DICKINSON*

“Pandemic” is a word that most everyone is now using in everyday conversation and, speaking for myself, the word itself has an ominous ring to it. An “epidemic” is bad enough, referring to an outbreak of contagious disease that spreads rapidly over a wide geographic area, but a pandemic takes it to an even higher level of concern. Since the coronavirus has spread from China to over 150 other countries, the entire world looks upon this as a great crisis. Indeed, special measures are being taken across the globe to minimize the number of those who get sick and, in some cases, possibly die.

A GLOBAL PROBLEM

However, there is another kind of “disease” that is even more destructive than the coronavirus! It is a spiritual sickness that leads to eternal ruin, but many people don’t seem to be all that concerned about it. I’m talking about the “pandemic of sin” that is evident everywhere we look! Indeed, the corrupting nature of sin in the world can be labeled as a pandemic because of two factors: First, it is a worldwide problem that can be found in all countries on every continent. “For all have sinned,” Paul affirmed in Rom. 3:23, “and come short of the glory of God.” John, the apostle, also made the observation that “the whole world lieth in the evil one” (1 John 5:19/ASV). Yes, all men are in need of the Savior because it is only through Him that we are delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God’s dear Son (Col. 1:13).

PESTILENCE OF SIN

Second, the Bible does compare sin to a disease in both the Old and New Testaments. That’s why we often use language like “sin-sick soul” or make statements to the effect that we are living in a “sin-sick world.” When

Isaiah, for example, rebuked God’s people as a “sinful nation” (Isa. 1:4), he then illustrated their corruption by comparing it to a sick and diseased body. Not only did he say that “the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint” (verse 5), but from there he used language more unpleasant to the senses: “From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment” (verse 6). Yes, sin is a pestilence that renders us spiritually “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1), but in Christ we enjoy reconciliation with God and have hope of escaping the “second death” of eternal condemnation (Rev. 20:14-15).

JESUS HAS THE REMEDY

Let us now turn to the New Testament and see how Jesus pictured Himself as the “Great Physician” who came to heal us of the malady of sin: “They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance” (Matt. 9:12-13). Also, 1 Pet. 2:24 explains that Christ “bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.” Incidentally, W.E. Vine listed this passage as an example of where figurative language is used to refer to “spiritual healing” (P. 543). The good news of the gospel is that Jesus can cleanse us of our sins by His precious blood and make us “meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work” (2 Tim. 2:21). There is no doubt that Jesus has the power to “heal all our soul’s diseases” (as the old hymn puts it), but the sinner must feel a sense of urgency about his need for salvation. “And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16)

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Editorial

THE CROSS

By DON L. KING

On the south coast of China and on a hill overlooking the harbor of Macao, many years ago it is said that some Portuguese settlers built a large cathedral. Later, it was destroyed by a great storm except for a single front wall. That wall stood tall and firm for many generations. At the very top of the wall was a huge bronze cross. When Sir John Bowring was shipwrecked near there in 1825, he said he was finally able to catch just a bare glimpse of the front of the old church and his eye fastened on the cross. As it happened, just below the ruins was a place where by careful maneuvering he was able to land himself and the piece of wreckage to which he was clinging. At last, he was safe. Later, he wrote these words:

“In the cross of Christ I glory,
Towering O’er the wrecks of time;
All the light of sacred story,
Gathers round its head sublime.”

In these troubled times in which we are living, surely, we need to catch a glimpse of our Savior’s cross! I speak not of the physical cross, but for what it stands for every believer. Pray tell what else can bring a sense of safety and comfort today? What else can possibly match it as a central theme of our preaching among a sin-sick world? Wherever our eyes fall today, we see chaos, lawlessness, rioting, looting, killing, fear, and hypocrisy. People are afraid of the Covid 19 virus, and well we should be, but there just seems to be problems on every side. Look at the cross! Oh, what a relief! The very opposite of much we see today. It has been said that God’s greatest achievement was not in the creation of the world, as amazing and wonderful as it is, but in the cross of Christ! For there we see spiritual healing, wonderful forgiveness, hope of heaven for all who obey the truth, establishment of the church, and everything for which we long and hope. We love to think of all the cross provides: A hope of heaven and the blessings of being there forever. What could be better to preach to those who are money mad? Or to those who know only

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QUERIST COLUMN

BY CLINT DEFRANCE

Question: Please explain the meaning of Genesis 3.16.

Answer: "To the woman He said: 'I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.'" These words constitute God's curse against Eve for her sin in the Garden of Eden. They describe some of the devastating consequences of sin that have continued to plague all of humanity - especially womankind in this case. The first two clauses refer to the physical and emotional pains now associated with childbirth. Though childbirth is always regarded as a blessing in the Bible, it now comes through great struggle and danger. It is possible that both the mother and the child will die in the process. The child may be born with grave deformities or illness. The mother may endure life long physical trauma as a result of complications in her pregnancy. Only through this risk and trial can the human race be propagated and multiplied.

The second clause refers to struggles and conflicts over leadership within the home. This may easily be missed by modern readers. Some interpret: "Your desire shall be for your husband" as a command for sexual desire or perhaps for a desire to please him. However, the word is negative, especially when used in contrast with the verb translated "rule." Consider, for example, Genesis 4.7: "If you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it." Man's struggle for sin is illustrated with a wild animal (representing the devil) crouching at the door, waiting for an opportunity to pounce and consume its prey. Its "desire" - literally its hunger to destroy and devour - is toward the person. But the person must fight the beast and put it down and subjugate it. He must "rule" over it. God says this language of conflict and struggle will characterize the home in the sin cursed earth. Even in Christian homes the submission that reflects the union of Christ and His church will not come easily.

Question: If a congregation has an explosive fight just before the assembly begins, is it acceptable for some to refuse to worship?

Answer: This is a very difficult situation, but Jesus spoke directly to this issue. "Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (Matthew 5.23). The heart of the Christian system is reconciliation. If Christians are divided with hate and

bitterness, their actions of worship and praise to God become detestable and blasphemous imitations of worship - God dishonoring shams because of hypocrisy. Were it still God's method of operation, He would consume those congregations with fire or strike them dead where they stood or sat (Acts 5.1-11). We must never be satisfied with a pretense of worship that hides a hate-filled and broken relationship in the body. This author has seen circumstances where a congregation had the sort of "explosive fight" described in the question. A man called the assembly to order and those who were willing plowed forward only to resume the brawl when amen was said. It was reminiscent of the sad story of a preacher who served in the American Civil War. He reported that on the Lord's Day, soldiers from both sides would meet together in a barn. He would preach and wait on the Lord's Table. After they shared the loaf and cup they would march out into the yard to kill one another! Surely this is merely a radical example of the same evil. It would be better to postpone the start of worship and to spend time in prayer than to make a show of it.

However, this idea must be balanced with Jesus' next words: "Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny" (Matthew 5.25-25). The purpose for the delay in other important duties is to quickly and efficiently work out a reconciliation. Reconciliation always costs something; to forgive quickly means to forego any expectation of justice in the moment. However, Jesus warns that the one who holds a grudge until his or her demands are all met ends up paying more in the end! Essentially, Jesus is simply charging us to behave with maturity and love toward one another and to follow His example of selflessness in the interest of God's kingdom.

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LEADERSHIP - CASTING CALM OR CHAOS?

BY GREG GAY

The concept of reaping what we sow is a biblical truth delivered by Paul to our brethren at Galatia. The New King James translation has the heading, “Be Generous and Do Good” for this section of scripture: “Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches. Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:6-10).

This basic truth is as ancient as seed itself, which dates to the third day of God’s creation. “Then God said, “Let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed, and the fruit tree that yields fruit according to its kind, whose seed is in itself, on the earth”; and it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, the herb that yields seed according to its kind, and the tree that yields fruit, whose seed is in itself according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. So the evening and the morning were the third day” (Genesis 1:11-13).

A similar adage surfaced in business some years ago, “All organizations are perfectly designed to get the results they get” (Usually attributed to W. Edwards Deming but likely from others <https://quotes.deming.org/>).

As we look at the Bible’s description of the church, it is perfectly designed for perfect results. “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church” (Ephesians 5:25-29).

Passages like these remind us, when evidence is lacking that a congregation is “glorious,” but is instead beset with spiritual spots and wrinkles, it is not the fault of the maker and designer. While each member contributes to the collective calm or chaos of a congregation, the quality of a congregation begins with the leadership.

The Leadership of each congregation is charged with representing Christ in their own lives, demonstrating the love of God and care for all souls to the glory and praise of God.

Leaders are charged with encouraging all to follow Christ, including having the strength of character sufficient to exercise guidance ranging from gentle suggestions up to and including withdrawal of fellowship where needed to keep the congregation on the correct path of being a glorious church.

It may seem like continual bickering in a congregation is such a small thing it can be ignored completely but that is not likely to ever produce peace and productivity. Paul wrote directly to two women at Philippi who were not getting along, “I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord” (Philippians 4:2).

To “be in the Lord,” is a reminder to always prefer and follow God’s truths, rather than our own opinions. To be in the Lord is also a reminder to not make laws where God has not made laws and to keep our opinions in matters of indifference to ourselves. Paul reminds us all, “Who are you to judge another’s servant? (Romans 13:4). Well-meaning brethren can take a biblical concept and squeeze it so hard no one can ever meet their standards, or well-meaning brethren can teach that truth can never really be found, so every error is welcome in the congregation. Neither is correct. We are reminded we do not have the right to either add to or take from the word of God (Revelation 22:18-19).

The concept of “be of the same mind” from Philippians 4:2 is essential in the church. It is “the ideal” we should work hard to achieve. Paul writes, “I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with long suffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:1-3).

The word “endeavoring” is defined by Louw and Nida, “to do one’s best, to make every effort to, to try as hard as possible.” The same word is used in Romans 12:8, “he who leads, with diligence.” On that passage Louw and Nida comment, “whoever has authority must work hard.”

Any leader who cannot be defined as “endeavoring,” showing he is willing to do his best and is able and willing to work hard for the congregation, is not a leader and should not be identified as one. Put another way, lazy men who only want the recognition of leadership but are not willing to do the work have no business leading in the Lord’s church.

There is to be a group of men in each congregation who are easily recognized as the leadership. This is intended to only be those who are spiritually mature. It does not include still wet-behind-the-ears boys who have little or no scriptural knowledge even though they may possess great enthusiasm. Neither does it include older men who have no scriptural knowledge even if they are successful businessmen who contribute liberally and demand the right to make all financial decisions for the congregation.

When men were selected to go from Jerusalem to Antioch regarding the circumcision issue, those selected are defined as “leading men among the brethren.” Barnes describes them as “men of influence, experience, and authority in the church.” Each congregation needs their own group of “leading men” from whom elders, deacons, teachers, and evangelists are chosen and who conduct the affairs of the congregation responsibly with spiritual maturity. Calling every male member in the congregation a leader because he can throw up a hand to be counted during a business meeting vote is not a fulfillment of having “leading men” who guide the congregation.

When congregational disagreements rise to the level of those Paul addressed at Corinth, the congregation was in crisis and did not realize the seriousness of their problems. The household of Chloe did, however, and reached out for help to Paul (1 Corinthians 1:11). Even had Corinth been at peace with all their errors, they still needed correction to be considered faithful. A congregation steeped in error who is at peace is not really at peace, because there is no peace without

allegiance to God’s will (Jeremiah 6:14).

Any time a congregation is confronted with a crisis, whether of a spiritual nature or of the type experienced with the pandemic that has spread around the world, the congregation’s leadership is tested. Even great leadership is strained in times like we have had, but soon recovers to ably carry on their work. Poor leadership, on the other hand, will be especially exposed in times like these because of the chaos and fractures that become apparent in the congregation. These fractures will likely continue to fester into additional problems.

At Corinth, Paul faced the issue of fractured leadership head-on as the first issue addressed. While that may not mean it was the most important issue at Corinth, it does remind us the congregation could not heal and function properly till that issue was addressed and resolved.

After reminding them they possessed an abundance of miraculous spiritual gifts, (which meant they were without excuse for the problems they were having), he writes: “Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe’s household, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you says, “I am of Paul,” or “I am of Apollos,” or “I am of Cephas,” or “I am of Christ.” Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? (1 Corinthians 1:10-13).

In Chapter 3 Paul tells them the result of their leadership: “And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? For when one says, “I am of Paul,” and another, “I am of Apollos,” are you not carnal? (1 Corinthians 3:1-4).

Later, Paul reveals he and Apollos were not actually the subjects of the division at Corinth. Evidently the congregation was divided into factions who were

following different Corinthian leaders. “Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other. For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it? (1 Corinthians 4:6-7).

The seed from God in the parable of the sower is the word of God (Luke 8:11). We know that seed is perfect. How do we know that the correct seed is being cast by a congregation’s leaders as they go forth to sow in their privilege of leading God’s people? We can tell by the harvest, since we reap what we sow, and since we are perfectly organized for the results we achieve.

If we look at our congregation and are disappointed in what is being harvested, let us have the courage to look first at ourselves, before turning our attention to another’s splinters (Matthew 7:3). 3816 Tambos Trl, Edmond, OK 73034 papagreg@aol.com

EVANGELISM PART 2

BY DUANE PERMENTER

Last article we ended with the work done by Barnabas and Saul in the city of Antioch. Acts 11 :27-30, “And in these days prophets came from Jerusalem to Antioch. 28 Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. 29 Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. 30 This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.” (NKJV)

Antioch Had Learned the Blessing of Giving

Amazingly, these people were so trained that when there was a physical need somewhere else, they were ready to help with that need. In fact, it clearly states that the church collected and sent money by the hands of Barnabas and Saul to the elders at Jerusalem, so they could distribute as was needed. Notice also, other prophets came from Jerusalem and helped in stabilizing

and maturing the work at Antioch. According to Acts 12:25 upon completing their mission in Jerusalem they returned to Antioch for an extended time.

While teaching the church at Antioch, included in the training was for them to be self supporting and willing to help others. Oftentimes today, we encourage people to depend on us. This may not be intentional; however, it has occurred. For instance, rather than look among themselves for help we have taught people to look to America. We have even provided grape juice for them to worship rather than teaching them to raise their own grapes to make the juice. I know we only intend good; nevertheless, much of the time money corrupts the work rather than promoting it. No one intends to start a welfare state in the church; although, sometimes in a foreign work we have done that even if it was unintentional. Let us carefully think and separate from emotions as hard as that is before we spend money to better people in a developing country. Our goal is not to lift people materially up, but to encourage and promote spirituality.

The Holy Spirit

Now, the record states that the Holy Spirit informs the church that they needed to send out Barnabas and Saul to other places. (Acts 13: 1-3) We often call a preacher in today rather than sending him out. When we call a preacher in, we need to have a plan in place before we call him. The local church oversees their own work yet, we normally have no plan in writing so that all concerned will know what to expect. Even the preacher should be involved in the planning that all are going to commit to. Like Antioch the Holy Spirit gave us a pattern of work. We may need to call a preacher for a time to assist and help us; however, there should come a time when we can send him somewhere, he may be needed. We need to set goals and look to the future of the church. Not just where we live, but even to other places as well. Every generation has the great commission to fulfill as best we can. (Matthew 28:18-20; 2 Timothy 2:2)

No Elders at Antioch

This church has existed for a few years, yet they do not have elders. The indication seems to be the teachers laid hands on Barnabas and Saul before they went out. Please do not misunderstand me elders are the precedent set forth in the Scriptures. However, if we do not have men who are qualified then we cannot have a

scriptural eldership until such time that we have men who meet the qualifications. Several congregations in the New Testament do not have elders and the reason is because they did not have men who qualified. The goal should always be to train and teach leadership to such a time that we have men who qualify for this good work. In fact, men who qualify are doing the work before the church recognizes them.

Barnabas and Saul Sailed to Cyprus

These men got on a ship at Seleucia and sailed to Cyprus immediately upon arriving they started preaching the word of God. This was the home of Barnabas according to Acts 4:36. It is probable that Barnabas had many friends and family members, and this was one of the best places for them to start. Obviously, congregations were established on the island and there were probably members already from Jerusalem who were part of the dispersion. Luke tells us that as a helper Mark was with them on the journey. The record does not tell us much about what was involved in the work specifically on Cyprus except that they preached in all the Jewish synagogues and met with a certain Jew who was a sorcerer and false prophet. Listen to the amazing event: “Acts 13:9-12; Then Saul, who also is called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him 10 and said, “O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord? 11 And now, indeed, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time. “And immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand. 12 Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had been done, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord. (NKJV)

Miracles and Spiritual Gifts

Clearly, the power of the Holy Spirit raised the preaching to a level that it could not have reached in the first Century without that power. Since there was no written New Testament to confirm what was being said, the miracles supplied that need until the written text was complete. It is also interesting that at this point it is no longer Barnabas and Saul. Saul is known as Paul and he now is the leader of the band in the name of Christ. Paul’s power and ability set him apart from all others in the team at this point. It has always been encouraging to me to see how Barnabas handles this with spiritual

maturity. It might be surprising how much could be done in the kingdom if we did not concern ourselves with who gets the credit.

Remember, it is not too long that Paul and his company spend on the island although we do not know exactly. He came to an area where there were probably already congregations that they could encourage and help along with new work. They did not leave the congregations alone for Paul must have laid hands on many to impart spiritual gifts. Today, we must take the responsibility of developing and maturing any group we start or become involved in until they have the ability and the maturity to do what is right. If we start a church and leave it too soon, that is analogous to leaving a newborn to starve.

Lynwood sometimes said when a preacher left a congregation he had been laboring with, it was worse off when he left than when he arrived. Listen friends, if this happens the preacher did not do his job. This point is not just to those who are supported. Any leader in a congregation has the responsibility of rearing up others to take his place in his absence. Far too many times when a local leader dies the church dies too. Planting and promoting the church into future generations is far more involved than we seem to understand. More ahead...

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THE NATURE OF SIN

Before someone will feel a sense of urgency about obeying the gospel, they must first have an understanding about the destructive nature of sin and how terrible it really is. With that in mind, let’s notice how John gave a definition that is clear and precise: “Every one that doeth sin doeth also lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness” (1 John 3:4/ASV). Since sin is an act of lawlessness, that means a sinner is someone who shows contempt for God’s law! That’s why it is such a terrible thing, probably a more serious crime than we sometimes realize, because sin tramples underfoot God’s holy standard of righteousness. In others words, it represents a rebellious attitude where we show a disregard for God’s honor, holiness and authority. God’s word places us under certain obligations, demanding that we stay within the confines of its precepts and mandates, and

we are guilty of sin when we fail to live up to what God requires of us.

The word translated “lawlessness” in 1 John 3:4 [Greek-anomia] is the same word translated “iniquity” in Matt. 7:23. Thayer says it involves “the condition of one without law, either because ignorant of it, or because violating it” (P. 48). When Jesus said, “And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” we must conclude that these people were condemned because they were a lawless people. However, there is no indication that they were guilty of immorality, drunkenness or any of the sins that characterize the most ungodly. In fact, they were religious folks who thought they were pleasing to the Lord: “Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works?” (Matt. 7:21-22)

Yes, they were religious people (confessing faith in Christ enough to say, “Lord, Lord”), but they were denounced. They claimed to oppose the enemies of Christ and even did what they considered to be many wonderful works, but the Lord indicated that they never had His approval. What was the problem? Dear reader, we must conclude that to be guilty of lawlessness not only refers to the performance of wicked deeds, but also to the attempt of trying to serve God in ways that are not according to His expressed will. That has to be the case because the things mentioned (prophesying, casting out demons and good works) are not in and of themselves wicked deeds. No, Jesus had in mind those who endeavor to serve God in an unauthorized manner and, in so doing, they show a disregard for the law of God.

THE WAGES OF SIN

Let’s all pray fervently that the coronavirus will soon be behind us and we can all get back to some normalcy in our lives. Think of the mass hysteria it has created here in America and around the world. However, the greatest threat facing humanity today has to do with the disease of sin and how souls are headed for eternity in an unprepared condition. So many are fearful of contracting a virus that could lead to physical death, but too many are unconcerned that the “wages” which sin gives to its slaves is eternal death (Rom. 6:23).

Remember the word of Jesus: “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt. 10:28).



THE CROSS...continued from page two

the pleasures of the world? This old world promises nothing beyond our eventual death. The cross promises eternal benefits. What better to preach to those who are downtrodden and broken hearted? Nothing can help them better than the cross. Therein are answers to problems they have always had to bear. That’s right, only the cross, and all it means, can suffice. When Paul came to Corinth, a sin-sick city where every sin was found, he preached the cross. Within that wicked city was great wealth, culture, world famous education, paganism, flagrant lasciviousness and pleasure. Yet, Christ and the cross was his sermon.

In Acts 18, we read of his coming to Corinth. In verse 5 we hear as he “testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ.” Sometime later as he wrote the First Corinthian letter, he reminded them of his preaching. Listen: “And I brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.” (1 Corinthians 2: 1,2) Wouldn’t it be wonderful if after an audience hears one of us preach, they went home and marveled at the cross? Brethren, we need that kind of preaching!

I once read about two denominational preachers who were to “try out” at a certain “church.” The first one was quite an orator. All were impressed with his great education and talents. As they left the building many said, “What a preacher!” The second to try out preached the cross. That day, as they left the building they said, “What a Savior!”

Scholarship is wonderful and appreciated, it certainly has its place. However, preaching such as Paul and others did thrill and motivate-1 audiences even in this modern world. Let me repeat, “we need that kind of preaching.” Think on these things. -DLK

Announcements

WANTED: Back Issues of Old Paths Advocate

The following issues of the Old Paths Advocate are what I'd like to acquire to complete my collections:

Any issue prior to 1941

Entire year of 2018

January thru May 2019

If you have these issues and would be willing to part with them I'll be glad to reimburse you for the papers and the shipping. Bill J Ferguson, PO Box 140524, Broken Arrow, OK 74014.

Our Departed

OESTMANN, ART - On a cold night, January 28, 1933 a young farmer in the small German community of Avery, Oklahoma saddled his horse and rode to a neighbor's home to ask her to assist his wife in childbirth. That night, Arthur Fredrick Oestmann was born to Arthur Diedrich Oestmann and Ida Wolff Oestmann. He went to be with his Heavenly Father early Sunday morning, April 12, 2020, in Brookhaven, Mississippi. Art, or Junior as he was known to his family there, remained on the family farm learning the value of work, family and faith until graduating from Cushing High School in 1951. He then attended Oklahoma State University (Oklahoma A M at the time) graduating in 1955 with a degree in geology. His love of geology and the oil business started as a teenager when he first watched seismic crews working near his home. He began his working career with Humble Oil in Houston in 1955. Humble immediately sent their new geophysicist to work on a seismic crew based out of Hattiesburg, Mississippi. While working there he met a beautiful southern belle from Brookhaven, Mississippi named Nan Lea. They were married December 9, 1956 with Lynwood Smith officiating. They began their life together in New Orleans, then moved to Midland, Texas in 1958. The Lord blessed them with 63 years together. In June of 2019 Art completed 64 years of going to work every day. All who knew him in his work life admired

him not only for his geologic skill, but especially for his honesty and integrity. He served and volunteered in numerous civic and professional organizations and everyone he met became his friend. Art loved the Church. He became a member of Westway Church of Christ in Midland in 1962, when he obeyed the Gospel after Bro. Ervin Waters patiently explained the truth. He immediately became active in the Church and through it he faithfully served the Lord and others in many capacities over the years. Bro. Wayne McKamie ordained him as an Elder in 1990 and he served in that role until his death, almost 30 years later. He faithfully lead the Midland congregation and fostered strong loving ties in his Church family. He was known throughout the Church of Christ as a kind and gentle man, an encourager who loved the Lord and loved others. Art loved his family and went to great efforts throughout his life to spend time with them and form strong family relationships. His greatest joys centered on his family especially his grandchildren and great grandchildren. Art and Nan were blessed with two children who survive him, Michael Oestmann and wife Cathy of Midland, and Melissa Lea Oestmann of Norman, Oklahoma. In addition to his adoring wife Nan, he is also survived by their four granddaughters; Laura and husband Travis Bow, Reno, NV, Elizabeth and husband Derek Nichols, Edmond, OK, Melissa and husband Tyler Garner, Norman, OK, and Hallie and husband Austin Wilson, Warr Acres, OK. Art was thrilled to know and love six great grandchildren, and was anxious to welcome number seven to the family later this year. He is also survived by his sister Nelda and husband Willard Johnston of Tulsa, OK and a large number of nieces, nephews and cousins and their families. He was preceded in death by his parents, his brother Melvin Oestmann and his wife Dorothy, a nephew, Jeffrey Johnston, and his sister in law Betty Johnston. Art simply lived his life as a Christian. We look forward to being with him again in a better land. He will be greatly missed by his family, his Church family and his many friends and associates. A graveside service to celebrate Art's life and to honor God was held at New Salem Church of Christ near Brookhaven, Mississippi on April 16. Members of New Salem and Hillcrest Churches of Christ sang beautifully from across the cemetery. Art's children and grandchildren provided the scriptures that I shared at the service. Our family extends our gratitude for all the prayers and encouragement we have received from our brothers and sisters in Christ. —Mike Oestmann.

Field Reports

Don L. King, 1147 Sherry Way, Livermore, CA 94550, old_paths@juno.com, June 12. The church here is doing as well as can be expected under the virus threat. We meet regularly on Lord's Day and pray for the day to soon arrive when this will be in the past. However, we thank God none of us have become sick. We had to cancel our Summer meeting with Joe Hisle which we had all looked forward to. Lord willing, it can be rescheduled soon. If all goes well, I am to preach at Stockton this coming Lord's Day and at Livermore soon after. Our meeting at Neosho, Mo was, like so many, canceled and rebooked for 2023. We understand and believe it was likely for the best. I recently spent a few days in Reno, NV where most things are now open. It was a wonderful experience to be able to get a haircut. Amazing how ordinary things become such a treat. Preachers, we still need your reports and articles. We realize you are not holding meetings as normal, but let us hear how the church where you live is doing. We are so appreciative that many have renewed their subscriptions to this paper and a number have subscribed for the very first time. Our thanks to all who support the paper in any way. We believe the OPA provides a useful purpose today. May the Lord bless the efforts of the righteous.

Paul O. Nichols, 14217 Rosehill, Overland Park, KS 66221, pon.wjn.ks@juno.com, The church in this state is under restriction and limitation just as are others, but the Stony Point congregation continues to be faithful in the discharge of our duties. We have had to make adjustments as others have under the orders of the authorities, and yet not violate the word of God. We may not all agree with the decisions of all others, but we recognize and respect the autonomy of each congregation to make its own arrangements, as long as they are right and in harmony with the Scriptures. Our brethren here have made arrangements to even have a TV setup for Wednesday evening, so that we can study the scriptures together, using the cameras on our computers. It is not a church service, so the women can participate, as do the men. It is not in violation of the Scriptures or restrictions imposed by Civil Authority. We are thankful that so far, none of our members at Stony Point have been sick from the terrible virus which has claimed the lives of so many innocent victims, including members of the church. We need to thank God and continue to pray for one another. I was saddened from the passing of

another of our older fellow Gospel preachers, Roy Lee Criswell. I had the honor and privilege of baptizing him in 1947 in an old cow pond along with sixteen others during a meeting at Washington, OK. Soon afterwards he told me he wanted to be a preacher. He fulfilled that ambition and went humbly about his work for the Lord, which took him far and wide. Roy, was humble and sought no worldly glory; his work was for the Lord. He was married to a fine Christian girl who made a true preacher's wife, assisting him and even spending time with their family in Nyasaland (now Malawi), Africa to help further the Cause of Christ. He officiated at my father's funeral. Mike Criswell, is his son and is a well known preacher throughout the brotherhood.

Wayne Fussell, 6126 Land O' Trees, Shreveport, LA, 71119, June 13, 2020, Wfussell@comcast.net. My meeting in Temple, GA in March was great. The brethren there are so enthusiastic about the Lord and His word. Our crowds were good. We had visitors from the community as well as from sister congregations. Byron Spinks from here accompanied me, and was a great asset to the meeting. I enjoyed the presence of preachers, including Ricky Martin and Teny Studdard. My meeting in Flintville, TN had to be postponed because of the pandemic. The church here in Shreveport is doing well. We only had to meet away from the building one Sunday. Law enforcement has been kind to us. I know this is not so in other places. What would Paul tell us to do in these times? He would tell us what he told a troubled church in the first century, "Rejoice in the Lord. And again I say, rejoice!" It's not easy, but it's excellent. God bless you all. "Little children, love one another."

Carl M. Johnson, 1400 Northcrest Drive, Ada, OK 74820, carlmj@cablone.net, June 2, 2020. Phyllis and I are leaving for Greenville, PA next week to conduct our first meeting of the year. We look forward to seeing the Greenville brethren and hope others may be able to attend. The effects of the current pandemic have not been as bad in the Greenville area as they have been in some of the larger metropolitan areas, but we still plan to exercise as much caution as possible. The virus has been relatively mild in our county in Oklahoma as well. Over the past three months we have had only 13 cases of the virus reported, 10 have fully recovered, and only 2 deaths. Our hearts were broken when longtime, treasured friends Art Oestmann of Midland, TX and Betty Jean Johnston of Brookhaven, MS died from the virus. Betty's brother Wallace Lea of Joplin, MO

narrowly escaped death, but has recovered and is now home. The church here at home has done extremely well during the pandemic crisis. I am uncertain at the moment whether or not meetings on my schedule for July and the rest of the year will be canceled, so check with the respective congregations if you are planning to attend. The schedule includes: Temple, GA (July 19-26), Dothan, AL (July 29-Aug. 2), Joplin, MO (Leawood Village Sept. 16-20), Wichita Falls, TX (Sept. 23-27), Columbia, MO (Oct. 7-11), Lodi, CA (Oct.?), Longwood, FL (Nov. 12-15). May God bless and keep us all.

Michael Bolton, 2105 Diamond Head Way, West Richland, WA 99353. We are thankful indeed for the great blessings of God. While the world is in chaos, our love for the brethren grows stronger, and it is great to see the church shining during times of crisis. Since I last wrote I have made a trip to Kenmore to study and work with the brethren there. Two months ago, they baptized a couple that I had only worked with online. I needed to meet them. Nick and Liza Arista are wonderful additions to the congregation in Kenmore. I was privileged to officiate Nick and Liza's ceremony, now two families who previously had not heard the gospel see it lived in transformed and transforming lives. I average 4 online personal studies each week. This is beside recording two podcasts and writing a lesson for each Lord's Day. I stay quite busy. We are thankful for each person who has gone to LIVE LIKE JESUS and listened. I am happy to work with other brethren in this endeavor. The YouTube channel is doing well. If you haven't yet, please go to THE CHRISTIAN MESSENGER and check it out. I am currently in the middle of a two-part study on suffering on LIVE LIKE JESUS. And I am writing lessons to consider conversions in Acts for THE CHRISTIAN MESSENGER. This will be a ten-lesson study, there will be plenty meat left for others works. Please pray for us.

Roger L. Owens, PO Box 239 Neosho, MO. 64850, 417-766-8969, rowens 700@yahoo.com. It's a wonderful day to the brotherhood. The first five months of this 2020 year have been filled with great news and good things for God's people. I haven't had time to get all worked up about coronavirus. The things of God are for me much more important and necessary to spend my time involved in. Souls are seeking the Lord and all the ills in this world must not hinder our reaching out to them. Yes, it concerns me to know many are ill and

some very much so. I pray for them day and night. But I deeply confess my greater concern is to save the lost at all cost. I want you to know that since January 1 to date we have received 30 inquiries about the TV Program Let the Bible Speak. This is just the ones I know of. Some of the requests are being sent directly to other congregations.

FIRST, we now have new TV Programs in Klamath Falls Oregon, Billings Montana @ Midnight, Sioux Falls S. Dakota, the current Casper Wyoming location and program airing in Colorado, Nebraska, Utah & Idaho. I have received inquiry from all these states. It is beginning to show great signs of growth in most of these areas. If we could get men stationed in Cheyenne & Casper Wyoming there is great potential. Also, I will be in Montana during the month of June and we have three individuals already asking great questions. We are sowing the golden grain of the truth and people are beginning to respond.

SECOND, I must note the fact that many of our brethren men and women of the cause have now traveled toward home. It leaves us empty. But I know they would say to me and others don't stop what you are doing. They knew and gave their lives for the cause. I wonder what less can we give and expect any more than God home eternal for all his children?

THIRD, I am starting a new ZOOM study program with those who seek answers from far away. This is a great tool to show and demonstrate how much we all love the word and are willing to share it around the world from our own house. Please pray for me as I move forward in this new path of learning and administrating to others. FOURTH, I am also complete with my new Through the Bible study planner. This program will help new converts, older members, new potential individuals & so many more. I am hopeful to be through the 4 Gospels by mid-July.

I am ever thankful to all the congregations that have and are supporters of this effort. Some of you have been with me from the start some 8 plus years now. The first four years were very difficult. But we never lost sight of the goal. The cost was great but the Lord continued to bless me and so I was able to keep the work going. Brother Ronny Wade encouraged me ever so much when he told me to stay the course for it was a noble one. He and other men that have gone on encouraged me to spend and be spent. I love them. I want to take my hat off to brother Bill Ferguson who was a needed and honored pilgrim with me in tears and laughter he who oft keep my strength from leaving.

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WALKS THROUGH THE BIBLE...

THE ROAD TO EN DOR

By JERRY DICKINSON

“And when Saul inquired of the Lord, the Lord did not answer him, either by dreams or by Urim or by prophets. Then Saul said to his servants, ‘Find me a woman who is a medium, that I may go to her and inquire of her.’ And his servants said, ‘In fact, there is a woman who is a medium at En Dor.’ Now the woman had a fattened calf in the house and hastened to kill it. And she took flour and kneaded it, and baked unleavened bread from it. So she brought it before Saul and his servants, and they ate. Then they rose and went away in the night.” (I Samuel 27:6-7; 24-25)

Saul had totally rejected the Lord and, therefore, the Lord had totally rejected him. The Lord had even sent, the Bible says, a distressing spirit to trouble him. Apparently, the spirit was not on him continuously, but would come on him from time to time whenever he would be overcome with jealousy and hatred for David or anyone else who he thought might be conspiring against him. Under the influence of his own paranoia and the distressing spirit he tried twice to pin David to a wall with his spear. One time he even threw his spear at his own son Jonathan! He reached an ultimate low when he had Doeg (a sneak and a snitch who lied about the priest inquiring of the Lord for David at the tabernacle at Nob) murder 85 priests. In his paranoia he accused even them of being on David’s side. He then had his soldiers murder the families of the priests who lived in Nob. Men, women, children, and even babies in the city were put to the sword. For some reason even the animals were slaughtered.

When one priest escaped and fled to David’s hiding place and stronghold he gave David the sad and sordid news. “I knew that day, when Doeg the Edomite was there, that he would surely tell Saul. I have caused the death of all the persons of your father’s house.” (I Samuel 22:22) David had lied to Ahimelech the priest and had eaten the showbread. Both acts were wrong. We can understand what David did but cannot excuse it. He was alone, on the run, and terribly afraid. When you are lonely and forsaken you become desperate and do things you will later regret. Instead of relying wholly on God, David relied on his wits and deceived Ahimelech who gave him showbread to eat (contrary to the Law) and the sword of Goliath that had been kept at the Tabernacle.

When David heard about the slaughter of the priests and the citizens of Nob he realized the consequence of his duplicity. David laments, “I have caused the death of all the persons in your father’s house!” David did not commit the murders. Saul ordered the barbaric slaughter but David understood what we all need to understand. There are consequences to our words and actions. David’s lie and deception affected more than him. Ahimelech and 84 other priests were slaughtered because of Saul’s insane jealousy and paranoia, but David’s actions precipitated and led to the mass murder. Let us be careful lest we cause others to suffer because of our sin.

Even in this sordid event, however, we see the clear difference between David and Saul, and we understand why God rejected the latter and chose the former to be King over His people. David’s heart and conscience trouble him, but Saul’s heart is hardened and his conscience is dead. David turns to the Lord for guidance and solace, but Saul turns to a witch! The Philistines once again have amassed a great army and Saul is terrified. He tries to get a message from the Lord (whom he has rejected and Who has rejected him) and Heaven is silent. Finally his servants find a medium and he resorts there. This is a strange and enigmatic encounter. The woman, of course, is a fake and when Samuel appears she cries out and is more afraid than Saul. Obviously, she did not (and could not) raise up Samuel. The Lord allowed Samuel to give Saul this last message prophesying his death and the defeat of Israel in the ensuing battle. After the seance ends the witch cooks a meal for Saul and his servants. They eat her meal then go out into the night. The next day, on Mount Gilboa, Saul commits suicide.

The book of I Samuel begins with the birth of Samuel and ends with the suicide of Saul. Samuel presents Saul to the people as their new king, and the people yell, “Long live the king!” Saul forsakes the Lord and rebels and ends up eating his last meal with a witch before killing himself! Beware of the road to En Dor! It is a road often traveled by those who abandon God’s way and end up with a hardened heart and dead conscience.

Oh, the road to En Dor is the oldest road

And the craziest road of all!

Straight it runs to the Witch’s abode,

As it did in the days of Saul,

And nothing has changed of the sorrow in store

For such as go down on the road to En Dor! (Rudyard Kipling)