

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 ordinances 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 for your souls’ (Jer. 6:16). ‘And they that shall 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’ (Isaiah 58:12).

VOL. XCI

LEBANON, MISSOURI • JULY 2023

NO. 7

AFTER THE MEETING

By Greg Gay

Gospel Meetings can be energizing and exhilarating yet draining and exhausting. Attending every service of a meeting may not mean we stay up much later than usual but the change in our daily routine can get tiring since attending every service of a meeting is like attending a Wednesday night service every night of the week.

A meeting is a very special event. Many times they are scheduled years in advance. Much careful thought goes into a congregation’s decision to have a meeting, when to have it, and who to get to conduct it.

With around 450 congregations in the U.S. and roughly 150 preachers, each preacher would have to hold at least 3 meetings a year for every congregation to have at least one meeting a year. However, not all congregations have meetings and not all preachers conduct meetings.

Many of us are fortunate to live in areas where meetings are common. That allows preachers holding meetings in the area to get acquainted with many brethren who visit one another’s meetings. Some remote congregations’ members are willing to drive long distances to attend gospel meetings. Such sacrifice is commendable. Attending meetings promotes cooperation and unity between preachers and congregations in the Lord’s work and helps us have precious friendships all over the brotherhood.

When the time nears for the meeting, there is much work to do to prepare the building, invite

friends, send out announcements to area congregations, and arrange personal schedules to be able to attend. Some families will also arrange to spend time with the preacher in their home or at a restaurant.

Before you know it, the meeting is over. Then what? What happens after the meeting?

Everyone who has worn themselves out during the meeting needs to recover for a day or two and then the work of the congregation must go on!

That means the sick need prayers, visits, and phone calls. The weak and the strong alike need to be encouraged to faithfulness. Our relationships with neighbors and friends need to be cultivated so we can be a positive influence in their lives. The teachers need to work to prepare their scheduled lessons. Studies need to be prepared and attended and worship needs to be made a priority.

If anyone was baptized during the meeting, they need to be given attention for growth. If there were any confessions the individuals may need further help. And families need to spend time with one another for proper instruction and nurturing in their homes.

The work in a congregation never ends! There is always the need to practice what we preach! James wrote: “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world” (James 1:27). Paul said: “Wherefore comfort yourselves together (encourage one another, NASB) and edify one another, even as also ye do” (1 Thesalonians 5:11). There is no time limit on these

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things.

What can we hope to gain out of a meeting? Since our meetings are for the purpose of preaching the gospel and being edified, hopefully we gain the same things from a meeting we are to gain from the scriptures.

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

The Amplified version, both a translation and commentary, renders the passage: “Every Scripture is God-breathed (given by His inspiration) and profitable for instruction, for reproof and conviction of sin, for correction of error and discipline in obedience, [and] for training in righteousness (in holy living, in conformity to God’s will in thought, purpose, and action), so that the man of God may be complete and proficient, well fitted and thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

After time passes, we may only vaguely remember a meeting with someone. That does not mean the meeting was not a good meeting or that it did not help us in our lives.

Hearing gospel sermons and working toward maturity is much like the process of learning to read. We do not learn to read in one day. We learn a letter at a time, a sound at a time, a word at a time over days, weeks, and months.

Similarly, as Christians, we learn a little at a time over a lifetime. One thing said in a sermon may be just what we need to inch forward. We do not leap into maturity in Christ. It is more like a shuffle as we take baby steps toward being “thoroughly, (or completely) furnished unto all good works.” It is a wonderful journey and meetings can help us with our progress!

I maintain a public Facebook page to list our Gospel Meetings around the country: Church of Christ Gospel Meetings. Feel free to send me any dates and pictures of meeting fliers. I will be glad to post them. 916-804-3787 (calls/texts) pagreg@aol.com

Editorial

SODOM AND GOMORRAH REVISITED

By Carl M. Johnson

Note: I wrote the below article 15 years ago expressing hope that California's passing of Proposition 8 was a sign of great awakening among unsuspecting people to the moral decay taking place about them. However, in 2015 the United States Supreme Court voted 4-3, to declare same-sex marriage legal in all 50 states.

The irony of all of this is that many heterosexual couples do not see the importance of marriage in the modern world. According to a recent Pew Research Center poll, 78% of those ages 18-29 say it is acceptable for an unmarried couple to live together, even though they don't plan to get married—majorities across age groups share this view. Therefore, I repeat the clarion warning I made 15 years ago to put on your spiritual armor!

On May 15, 2008, the justices of California's Supreme Court ruled 4-3 to overturn a state law prohibiting same-sex marriages. I worried at the time about that decision's far-reaching implications. The U.S. Supreme Court has yet to address this issue, but the fact is that California courts have often set national precedent. California is a big and important state in matters of law and society. What happens in California today is likely to happen in other states tomorrow.

I was pleasantly surprised, however, on November 4, 2008, when Californians invalidated the state Supreme Court's decision by passing Proposition 8, a measure that legally bans same-sex marriage in California. Religious blacks and Hispanics are receiving a lot of credit for the passage of the proposition.

Since the passing of the measure, the militant homosexual community has reacted with a shrill fury strikingly reminiscent of the homosexual predators of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:4-10). Some churches whose members openly condemned homosexual marriage have been disrupted during worship services and vandalized. Large-scale protests have been orchestrated by militant homosexuals in urban areas throughout the state.

Boycotts against corporations and organizations that supported the proposition are also being organized.

In December 2008, a slickly produced video called *Proposition 8: The Musical* was placed on the Internet on a site co-founded by Will Ferrell and Adam McKay. The blasphemous video features several well-known movie stars including Jack Black, who portrays Jesus. At one point Black intones that the Bible condemns homosexuality as being blasphemous, but he adds that eating shrimp cocktail is also condemned as blasphemous in Leviticus 11:9-10. The passage refers to the temporary dietary rules within the Law of Moses which prohibited the Israelites from eating shellfish. Of course, all of those dietary rules were done away with along with the rest of the Law of Moses when Christ was nailed to the cross (Colossians 2:14-17). The hoped-for effect of the lyrics, however, is that all viewers will get the impression that both of these prohibitions found in the Bible are absurd. I mean, after all who is going to condemn anyone for eating a shrimp cocktail? Therefore, it is argued that we should not condemn anyone for engaging in homosexual activity.

Another protest was carried out on December 10, 2008, called "Day Without a Gay." According to the Chicago Tribune, homosexuals across the country were urged to skip work on December 10 after calling in "gay." Leaders of the event called for a boycott of all economic activity to highlight the homosexual community's financial power and its dismay over the passing of Proposition 8.

All of the above is just another battle in the continuous war taking place within our culture today. It is a well-known fact that militant homosexuals have been waging a carefully-crafted, decades-old propaganda campaign to redefine our seminal institutions of marriage, family, and God's design for human sexuality. They are led by extreme pressure groups like the so-called Human Rights Campaign (HRC), one of America's most powerful and well-funded political lobbies that has an annual budget of over 50 million dollars.

The militant homosexual agenda is meticulously laid out in a 1989 book titled *After the Ball: How America Will Conquer Its Fear and Hatred of Gays in the 90's*. The authors of the book are two

Harvard educated marketing experts named Marshall Kirk and Hunter Madsen. They devise a three-pronged approach that the homosexual lobby has been putting into place for over a decade called “desensitization, jamming, and conversion.”

“Desensitization” involves flooding the public with continuous “gay-related” advertising in order to glamorize and normalize homosexual conduct. Hollywood and mainstream media continue to make major contributions to this approach.

“Jamming” refers to the public smearing of Christians, traditionalists or anyone who opposes the “gay” agenda. They will not engage you in rational discussion if you disagree with them, they will just attack you by calling you names, such as “homophobe,” “hate monger,” and “bigot.”

“Conversion” refers to the conversion of the average American’s mind, will, and emotions through a steady diet of pro-homosexual propaganda via the media. If you do not think this agenda has been effective, just ask any young person who has watched a lot of television and movies in recent years what he or she thinks about “gays.” You had better brace yourself for the reply.

It is my prayer that California’s move to outlaw homosexual-marriage is not just a temporary bump in the road that leads us inevitably to Sodom and Gomorrah. I hope it is a sign of a great awakening among otherwise unsuspecting people to the moral rot taking place about them. In view of the possibility of such an awakening, we must be prepared to preach the gospel to all those who are in sin, including those caught up in the ungodly practice of homosexuality (Romans 1:26-27, 1 Corinthians 6:9, Leviticus 18:22, Genesis 18:30; 2 Peter 2:6; Jude 7). Put on your spiritual armor. We are engaged in conflict with spiritual wickedness in high places, and there can be no conscientious objectors in this war. *carl-mj33@gmail.com*

Update: On June 26, 2015, the US Supreme Court “legalized” same-sex marriage in the Obergefell vs. Hodges case.

GODLY WOMEN

By Richard DeGough

Within the Church of the Lord are the best women in the world. By this, I mean they are women who are Christians, and there can be no substitute for a Christian life. Godly women possess virtues, and good works that are peculiar only to those that are Christians. Many of these virtues are not to be found in social spheres of the world. The world has a strange conception of beauty in a woman. According to the world, a person must be exceptionally beautiful physically or there is no beauty at all. This can be assumed from the advertisements we are subjected to regarding women. Just consider with me the emphasis the world puts before our women, both young and older, as to what they should be in life.

Women are told to be their own person and to go with the “now generation.” Yes, there are even those worldly slogans about smoking such as—“you’ve come a long way baby.” Women are portrayed with a liquor glass in one hand and a long cigarette in the other as the example of all they should be in life. The false emphasis on beauty, hair style, and make-up is before them every day. Then there are the exercise slogans that tell women they need to get in shape and “thin down”—“I believe in me,” they are told to think. If you do not conform, you do not “measure up” to the standard. I don’t want to be misunderstood. It certainly is not wrong for a Christian woman to take care of herself and look her best, but do not think for a moment that the standard of the world is God’s standard. The Lord does not look on the outward appearance but on the heart. (1 Samuel 16:7). To give outward appearances so high a priority is to say that faith and morality are less important than a *facade*.

Christian women do not have to possess physical beauty to please the Lord. When they commit themselves to living for Him, spiritual beauty radiates from them, coming from a pure heart. Jesus said: “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8). The virtues of Godly women are recorded in Proverbs 31. In this passage a virtuous woman is identified by the godly attributes recorded concerning her. These virtues might not have a place with the modernist, who professes no allegiance to the truth of

God, but they please the Lord and cannot rightly be spoken against by anyone. The record teaches that her “works will praise her” (Proverbs 31:31) and that she can be trusted (v. 11). When she speaks it is with wisdom and kindness (v. 26). Her household need not fear of want, for “she looketh well to the ways of her household” (v. 27). Her children shall call her “blessed,” and her “husband also...he praiseth her” (v. 28). With such characteristics, is it any surprise the Word says, “for her price is far above rubies” (v. 10)?

Godly women will teach their children the word of God, and the results can be the same as when the mother and grandmother of Timothy taught him, making him “wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:15). Those women instilled in him the “unfeigned faith” that dwelt first in them (2 Timothy 1:5). The Christian woman recognizes the strength and importance of influence, so she lives as an example to the believing and the unbelieving husband (1 Peter 3:1-2). Her attire is not centered on the outward altogether, but the inward. The Word says “...even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old times the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands” (1 Peter 3:4-5).

In the church there are mothers who are examples of reverence and obedience to God, and as a result, their children grow up to live with the same dedication to the Lord. We cannot underestimate the lasting power of a good example lived daily before others. In First Samuel chapter one, the record of Hannah is a great one. She was barren but later received a son. The Lord looked on the affliction of Hannah and granted her an answer to her prayer for a son. Why? Because she herself was dedicated, and promised to give her son “unto the Lord all the days of his life.” She literally dedicated Samuel to the service of God before he was born. Samuel became a great prophet of the Lord. Mothers, have you dedicated your children to the Lord, or do you have other plans for them?



HOW TO LEAD “THE MAIN PRAYER”

By David Griffin

The following is a simple and general guide to leading what we commonly call “the main prayer” in a worship service. This little piece was originally written as part of a study guide on how to take part in public worship. I have modified it a little here as an article for the paper. In this little piece, I do offer some criticisms, but my criticisms are intended to be “constructive” not “destructive.” Perhaps the readership of the OPA may find the following thoughts useful—
David Griffin

In most of our services, we have what we commonly call the “Main Prayer.” This conventional label implies something of what that prayer consists of. Because it is the *main* prayer instead of the “opening” or “closing” prayer, the usual expectation is that it will (typically, though not necessarily) be longer than the opening or closing prayers. The reason is, of course, that the main prayer typically contains more detail and addresses a wider array of issues than the opening or closing. And presumably, the brother who opens or closes the service with prayer will direct those prayers to the specific purposes of “opening” or “closing” and leave the wider issues and greater details for the brother to address in the *main* prayer.

Some Preliminaries

First, before beginning the main prayer, it is a good idea to pause for a few seconds to allow everyone (including the preacher) to be ready for the prayer to begin. Since the main prayer often follows immediately after the preacher completes his reading, such a pause allows the preacher to make his way back to his seat. I don’t know how many times I have seen the circumstance (or experienced it myself) where a preacher finishes his reading and before he hardly steps away from the pulpit, the brother immediately starts praying. During the first few seconds of the prayer, the preacher is still making his way to his seat. Now, this, of course, is not a “mortal sin,” but as long as we’re instructing fellas on how to lead the main prayer, it seems fitting to ask them to extend the courtesy of allowing everyone (including the preacher) a few seconds to be ready for the

prayer.

Second, speak up! When people cannot hear you, they cannot join you in prayer. How can anyone “say ‘Amen’ at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say?” (1 Corinthians 14:16). This seems to be a wide-spread problem. Brethren who are asked to participate publicly need to learn to raise their voice above common conversational level. At first, raising the voice can seem a little uncomfortable, but with a little practice it is something we quickly become accustomed to. In these days of electronics, I also advise brothers to go to the microphone. [This suggestion also pertains to all functions of the public worship and not just the main prayer.]

Third, some people seem to think that exorbitantly long prayers indicate strong piety and extra dedication. If you can endure for “the long haul” you must be a truly committed worshiper! However, prayers which are succinct but still make the same point are just as effective (and maybe more so) than prayers that go on for a long time.

What Should the Main Prayer Consist Of?

First, Invocation: An invocation is “a calling upon God.” Prayers should be addressed to the Father (Ephesians 3:14; 5:20; Colossians 1:12). And an invocation could begin something like this: “Our Father who is in heaven...” or “Righteous almighty God and heavenly Father...” or something similar. It is always wise and safe simply to use Biblical examples. Jesus told the disciples to pray like this: “Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name” (Matthew 6:9). Or we have the example of assembled Christians beginning a prayer like this: “Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them” (Acts 4:24). In any case, the wording of a proper invocation is not “set in stone,” but it does need to be reverent and respectful; not flippant or too casual. On one occasion, I heard a brother begin a prayer, “Our Daddy in heaven.” Such an address in a public prayer should be avoided.

On the subject of invocation, as in all prayer, public or private, it is better to avoid the habit of *repetitious* invocation (consider Matthew 6:7). I refer to the practice of repeatedly injecting the vocative expression “righteous God” or “Father,” or “heavenly Father,” or “almighty God” or

something similar over and over in *every* sentence in the prayer. Such a practice becomes monotonous to the worshipers and is unnecessary for an effective prayer. For example, one brother was reported to have said “righteous God” over one hundred times in a five-minute prayer!

Second, Thanksgiving: There is never a time when thankfulness is out of place (Ephesians 5:20). Unlike the opening prayer, which typically involves thanking God for the means and opportunity to assemble, this prayer is an opportunity to express thanks for many of our blessings.

- thanks for the material blessings of life
- thanks for our health
- thanks for our families and loved ones
- thanks for previously answered prayers
- thanks for the privilege of prayer itself
- thanks for the revelation of God’s word
- thanks for the forgiveness of sins
- thanks for the associations of brothers and sisters in Christ
- thanks for fellowship with God
- thanks for the hope of everlasting life
- And most of all, thanks for the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross

On goes the long list of things for which to express our thanks. In one sense, there is *no limit* to the good things we may be thankful for.

Third, Petitions and Requests: Here is a list of things for which we may lay our petitions before God.

- petitions for the sick
- petitions for the bereaved
- petitions for one another
- petitions for the spiritually weak
- petitions for the lost
- petitions for the leaders of the church (teachers, elders, deacons, and preachers)
- petitions for the forgiveness of sins.
- petitions the rulers of the land

Again, there is not end to the things for which we pay petition God!

Fourth, Closing: Since we pray to God through Jesus Christ (Ephesians 5:20), we should make sure to close our prayers with a recognition that we are praying “in Jesus’ name.”—*David Griffin*

Pages from the Past

The following article, by Brother Bennie Cryer, is from the June 1956 issue of the Old Paths Advocate. In this article Benny writes about the necessity of Christians being filled with the Spirit. He emphasizes the idea that Christians should be thankful and how we should be merciful, kind, and longsuffering toward each other. —Rick Martin

“BE YE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT”

By Bennie Cryer, 1956

It is necessary for Christians to be filled with the Spirit. This is taught effectively by Paul in Ephesians 5:18. This is something we obviously obey and not something for which we wait. It is not a mysterious influence sent into our bodies in an inexplicable way, for then it would be impossible to obey it. It is something we can and must do. Paul said: “but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God” (Ephesians 5:18-21). And in the parallel verses: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him” (Colossians 3:16-17).

The apostle uses the imperative mood and he does not leave any doubt as to how to carry out the command. He describes how they are to carry out the command by the use of different participles. Let us study them carefully so that we, too, may be “filled with the Spirit.”

1. “Teaching and Admonishing One Another.” This is mutually edifying one another and is not necessarily confined to the Lord’s Day assemblies. Christians of today have neglected this until in many places saints do little teaching and admonishing out of the regular church assemblies. Yet, this is one of the things we must do in order to be filled with the Spirit.

What does the apostle mean by the words “teach” and “admonish”? W. E. Vine in his *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, p. 31, says: “The difference between ‘admonish’ and ‘teach’ seems to be that, whereas the former has mainly in view the things that are wrong and call for warning, the latter has to do with the impartation of positive truth, cp. Colossians 3:16; they were to let the word of Christ dwell richly in them, so that they might be able (1) to ‘teach and admonish one another’ and (2) to abound in the praises of God. Admonition differs from remonstrance in that the former is warning based on instruction; the latter may be little more than expostulation. For example, though Eli remonstrated with his sons, 1 Samuel 2:24, he failed to admonish them (3:13). Pastors and teachers in the church are thus themselves admonished, i.e., instructed and warned, by the scriptures, 1 Corinthians 10:11, so to minister the Word of God to the saints, that, naming the Name of the Lord, they shall depart from unrighteousness, 2 Timothy 2:19.”

In carrying out this command we must not only expose sin and error with scriptural warnings, but we must also point out the positive side of Christianity. When we learn to do this our hands will be filled, and the church will grow.

2. “Singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord.” This is to be done in “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs.” “Psalms and hymns” evidently have reference to those songs which praise God, or divinity, and His attributes. The original word that is used for “song” by Paul is a general term and may denote any song. So, he places the adjective “spiritual” before it to show that the songs we sing must be based on the things revealed by the Spirit and in harmony with the Scriptures.

3. “Giving thanks always for all things.” I want to emphasize “all things.” When we receive the blessings of life from God we should give thanks for them. Too often in the homes of those who profess to be Christians, the members of the family set down to their daily meals and never thank God for their “daily bread.” If we are “filled with the Spirit” we will give thanks for all things, whether it be for the necessities of life or for those things we obtain above life’s essentials. Paul describes those who are not thankful in the first chapter of Romans. Those people were with-

out excuse because of nature's revelation. God gave them up. Why? "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful" (Romans 1:21). If one is truly "thankful," he is thankful. And only those who thank God are filled with the Spirit.

4. "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God." Jesus was "heard in that he feared" (Hebrews 5:7). This does not mean that Jesus was afraid of God or that we are afraid of our Father as a child is afraid of the dark. This is a reverential fear. Jesus was afraid he would do something that would wound the affection of God. If we are filled with the Spirit this will be our attitude toward our brethren. We do not want to wound the affection of our brethren and thus sever the tie of fellowship. According to Paul we should be afraid that we might do something to our brother or sister that would cause disfellowshipping, and we should continually be on the watch. This part demands longsuffering. How many divisions could be avoided if brethren really had the "fear of God" and would submit themselves one to another. It seems when one of our brethren makes a mistake we want him to make a confession immediately or we will withdraw from him. And if the confession doesn't suit us, we will not accept him. The Lord was longsuffering with us even before we obeyed the gospel while we were still in sin. If the Lord had dealt with us as some of us do each other, I fear none of us would be living today. He would have taken our life immediately when we sinned. The Lord was and is merciful and longsuffering toward us. Let us be merciful, kind, and longsuffering toward each other. Let us be filled with the Spirit.

GRACE

By John Criswell

With withdrawn fist strong Mercy stands
 While Grace extends the fairer hand
 For in the moment beauty rare
 Goodwill from her released to share
 For Mercy holds no power strength
 To rescue sinners from the brink
 But Grace on angel's wings swoops down
 And lifts them up to higher ground!

Field Reports

Carl M. Johnson, 1400 Northcrest Drive, Ada, OK 74820, carlmj33@gmail.com June 12—We just closed a meeting with the Odom congregation, near Dora, Missouri. We have had a long association with the folks at the Odom. I conducted a meeting there in October of 1970, my first year of full-time preaching. Obviously, many from that generation have passed on now, but there are still several members who were there 53 years ago. We had good support from area congregations and it was wonderful to see them all. Several visitors from the community attended as well. I have also conducted meetings at the Stony Point congregation in Kansas City, Kansas, and Killbuck, Ohio. Both groups went out of their way to make Phyllis and me welcome and to accommodate us during the meetings. I am hopeful we accomplished some good things at both places. Lord willing, I shall turn 75 on July 27 (It doesn't seem possible), but I have several meetings scheduled for the remainder of the year, including: Marietta, GA (July 9-16); Portland, OR (Aug. 11-13); Hoyte, TX (Aug. 16-20); Detroit, MI (Sept. 22-24); and Auburn, CA (Oct. 4-8). Jerry Dickinson is scheduled for our fall meeting in Ada (Sept. 10-17). Please continue to remember us in your prayers.

David Griffin, PO Box 1038, Lebanon, MO 65536, June 26—We just closed an eight-day meeting at the Moore congregation in the Oklahoma City area (June 18-25). It was a pleasure to be with the brethren there. We stayed with Brent and Audra Wilson and made some new friendships and renewed some old ones. The church there is committed to the Lord and the preaching of His gospel. Lord willing, we'll be attending the 4th of July meetings beginning later this week (at the time of this writing). We plan to be at the Springfield, MO 4th meeting through the end of the week then head for Sulphur, OK on the weekend. Later in July, we'll be at Oakwood in Edmond, OK (July 19-23), Clovis, CA (August 6-13), New Salem, MS (October 18-22), and Imperial NE (November 8-12). May God bless all His people in His service! Please continue your prayers in our behalf.



WALKS THROUGH THE BIBLE...

\$38 MILLION – A HIGH PRICE TO PAY FOR JUMPING TO CONCLUSIONS

by Jerry Dickinson

“When the people of Ammon saw that they had made themselves repulsive to David, Hanun and the people of Ammon sent a thousand talents of silver to hire for themselves chariots and horsemen from Mesopotamia, from Syria Maacah, and from Zobah. So they hired for themselves thirty-two thousand chariots, with the king of Maacah and his people, who came and camped together from their cities, and came to battle” (1 Chronicles 19:6-7).

David had conquered virtually all the enemies of Israel and had made a name for himself as an unconquerable warrior King (2 Samuel 8:13). Instead of attacking the Ammonites, however, David makes an overture of kindness. When David was on the run from Saul, the Ammonite King Nahash had shown kindness to David, and David was not a man to forget the good deed done when he was in desperate straits. King Nahash has died and his young son Hanun is now king, so David sends ambassadors to comfort him and extends an olive branch of peace and friendship.

But something extraordinary happens. The advisors and leaders of Ammon jump to a wrong conclusion. They ask the young king, “Do you think David really honors your father because he has sent comforters to you?” (2 Samuel 10:3). They convince Hanun that it is a trick and David is deviously spying out the land so he can attack and conquer Ammon. The young king believes their aspersions and then over-reacts to say the least. He has the ambassadors shamed by having half their beards shaved off and half their garments cut off up to their waists. Having insulted and shamed them, he sends them home to David. This, of course, was a shameful and insulting way to treat ambassadors who had come in peace and David was incensed and angrily prepares for war.

Apparently, and amazingly, King Hanun and the princes of Ammon suddenly realize they have made a terrible mistake. They had made themselves repulsive to David the record says. The Hebrew word means “to stink.” They had done a stinkingly rotten thing, and now they faced the wrath of David. Knowing they were no match for Israel’s veteran army, they hired mercenaries from Syria and other nations to help. They paid out 1000 talents of silver which comes to about 100,000 pounds. The price of silver at this writing is \$24 an ounce; therefore, the price of the silver they paid for the chariots and soldiers comes to \$38 million dollars today. Thirty-eight million dollars – a high price to pay for jumping to conclusions! It didn’t do them any good of course because they were thoroughly and totally defeated by David and Israel. They could have avoided war and utter defeat, not to mention the loss of \$38 million, if only they had not jumped to the wrong conclusion. Why do people jump to wrong conclusions?

Projection. Sometimes we project our feelings, guilt, and impure motives on to others. This is what Hanun and the Ammonites did. David was sincere in his offer of kindness, but the Ammonites revealed their dishonest and devious nature by jumping to the conclusion that David was just like them. They were dishonest and devious, so David had to be too. They jumped to a wrong conclusion and paid dearly for it.

Bad Advice. Young King Hanun listened to bad advice. Instead of believing the ambassadors and talking directly with David, he heeded the innuendo and slander to the detriment of himself and his people. Brethren, take heed to everything you hear, especially about other brethren. Don’t jump to conclusions based on hearsay and second hand innuendo. Above all, do not impugn the motives of good brethren before you get all the facts.

Prejudice. It was certainly because of national prejudice that the Ammonites spurned the kind offer of David. How can you ever trust an enemy? According to our interpretation of the motives of others we often reveal the true quality of our own hearts. A suspicious mind tends to paranoia, evil surmising, and disaster. Prejudice leads to spiritual malignancy. Nathaniel could not believe that any good thing (certainly not the Messiah) could come from Nazareth! Thankfully, he heeded the challenge of Philip to “come and see.”

Don’t jump to conclusions! Don’t impugn the motives of others without cause. Ananias jumped to the conclusion that the Lord was somehow mistaken when the Lord told him to go tell Saul of Tarsus what he needed to do to be saved. How often, later on, Ananias must have reflected on his wrong judgment as he witnessed the ministry of the great apostle. Thirty-eight million is a high price to pay for jumping to conclusions! Help me, Lord, to hold my conclusions until I have all the facts. Above all help me to judge others with pure motives. “Judge not that you be not judged!”