

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. 6

FROM SHEEP TO SHEPHERDS

BY RICK MARTIN

We are aware that there is a great need for men to fill leadership positions in the church. In this article, I would like to mention three traits that will help men move from sheep to Shepherds and fill these leadership positions.

First, we see that God needs leaders and elders who will exhort. Teaching the Word involves exhortation. As the apostle Paul was giving instructions to the young preacher he stated, “exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:2). Paul also instructed Titus in the same manner by saying, “These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority” (Tit. 2:15).

The apostles recognized this need of exhortation of brethren. In writing to the Thessalonian brethren, Paul stated, “Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more” (1 Thess. 4:1).

Brethren needed to be encouraged to live the Christian life, to “walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called” (Eph. 4:1). Often brethren are weak and struggling in their walk as Christians, and other Christians need to give them encouragement and to do so with patience. Jude wrote to exhort brethren to contend for the Faith (Jude 3). “Contend” is an intensive contest as a combatant and Jude intensifies it by adding earnestly. God knew that brethren would need to be encouraged to enter the fight and continue in that fight to destroy all false doctrine.

This exhortation is needed today because so many have put down their sword (of the Spirit which is the Word of God); (Eph. 6:17). Instead of using the sword, they

preach peace when there is no peace (Jer. 6:14).

Second, God needs men who will teach the truth and not what men want to hear. It is the duty of preachers and elders to teach God’s Word. Paul told Timothy to preach the word (2 Tim. 4:1-4).

The people of Jeremiah’s day were engaged in all types of wickedness and sin, but they wanted the prophets to tell them “Peace, peace” or everything is all right and tell them what they wanted to hear instead of what they needed to hear.

We also live in a wicked and sinful society and like Israel of old, people have a desire to be told “Peace, peace.” However, preachers and shepherds have the responsibility of teaching God’s message. There is an obligation to “reprove, rebuke, exhort.”

A great deal of teaching involves saying things that some do not want to hear. Since they do not want to hear it and since it reproves and rebukes them, they are often offended by what is taught. After Jesus condemned the Pharisees for making the Word of God of none effect by their tradition, Matthew tells us that the Pharisees were offended (Matt. 15:10-14). They were offended by Jesus telling them the truth. It was what they needed to hear, but they did not like the message.

When Jesus taught the people some hard sayings; John tells us: “From that time many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him” (Matt. 16:21). Instead of conforming their desires and will to the Will of God, many of the hearers got upset and left to continue in their wicked ways.

The intent of being a shepherd or leader is not to win friends but to convict men of sin and show how they might be saved from their sins.

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Editorial

LONG HAIR IN I CORINTHIANS 11:2-16

By DON L. KING

In the years I have been preaching the gospel from place to place, it has been obvious that some sisters do not appreciate the Bible teaching about their hair. From my boyhood I recall hearing preachers speak of certain places where the sisters kept their hair cut. We suppose that may have happened in part because some just didn't understand what the Bible said. Perhaps others may not have had a conscience about disobeying. It has always been the case; in any event, that some cut their hair. Many would say, "I know I shouldn't do it but I want to." In other words, they cut their hair but admitted it was wrong. In later years, however, as the world around us has become more brazenly decadent some have cut their hair and said "Yes, I cut my hair and it is all right. I have not disobeyed God." It hasn't helped the Cause of Christ, either, that now it is so easy to simply get on the Internet and teach a false doctrine. There was a time that it was much more difficult to find a platform from which to teach. There was only the Old Paths Advocate as far as a brotherhood paper was concerned. There were few congregations that produced any sort of bulletin and if one were to teach a false doctrine from the pulpit he would be quickly challenged and rebuked.

Now, people can just use the world of technology and spew their error right into our homes. Amazingly, this is affecting people. Why is it so easy to convince people of a false doctrine, something we have always been opposed to, when it is so difficult to convince them of the truth? Paul must have been feeling the same when he wrote the Galatians. "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1 :6, 8). As Paul wrote to the brethren in Thessalonica he warned about the danger of believing a lie (see 2 Thessalonians 2:11, 12). When J.W. McGarvey commented about the danger of believing a lie he pointed out that God has made us so that we can finally believe what we really want to believe. So, a person who really wants to believe that a Christian sister may lawfully cut her hair

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TWO BROTHERS OR THE SNAKE AND THE SASQUATCH

By KYLE A. HAMMONDS

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Part 3: Editor's Note: We continue with the last installment of Brother Kyle Hammonds' article on the Bible and Reconciliation. Part 1 introduced the sources of the conflict between brothers Jacob and Esau. Part 2 shared some lessons all can learn from conflict and steps to consider for reconciliation. Part three shares the final lessons and suggestions for how we may reconcile any conflicts we encounter. Greg Gay

Accept the Generosity of Others

The reconciliation of these brothers was a two-way street: Jacob's peace offering would have meant very little if Esau didn't choose to accept it. Gen. 33: 8-11 "Then Esau said, "What do you mean by all this company which I met?" And [Jacob] said, "These are to find favor in the sight of my lord". "But Esau said, "I have enough, my brother; keep what you have for yourself." And Jacob said, "No, please, if I have now found favor in your sight, then receive my present from my hand ... " [Then in verse 11 ... "So [Jacob] urged [Esau], and [Esau] took [the gift]."

Sometimes I think folks get caught up in this very unusual, contemporary, Americanized form of humility in which we reject things from other people. I understand that the subject of charity is complicated, but that is not what was happening with Jacob and Esau. Each brother had more than enough stuff; they were each wealthy in their own right. Jacob was giving a gift as an apology. If someone offers you a small gift for peace, you should (in normal circumstances) accept that gift in order to indicate an acceptance of their apology.

Imagine someone had slighted you and then, later, they come back to you and ask:

"Can I buy you a cup of coffee?"

Maybe you say, "I appreciate the offer, but you don't need to buy me anything."

"It's okay- I want to do it. Let's go get some coffee."

"Listen, I don't mind going with you, but you really don't need to get me something."

"It's fine - it's my way of saying I'm sorry."

... If you keep resisting this person's offer, the situation

is going to get more and more awkward. You may actually offend the other person or make them think that you aren't open to forgiving them. There may be extenuating circumstances which aren't covered in this general rule; but typically, if someone wants to make a small gesture to make amends with you, you should accept their gesture in order to facilitate peace-making.

Reciprocate Good for Good

An eighth lesson that I learned from these brothers is to reciprocate good for good. If someone tries to reconcile with you, then you should treat that as a blessing.

Gen. 33: 15 "And Esau said, 'Now let me leave you some of the people who are with me ... "' Esau recognized that his brother was trying to do right by him, and he offered Jacob something in return. As a reminder, peace offerings do not have to be material. .. and returning good for good doesn't necessarily equate to an exchange of gifts. For example: If someone reaches out to try and spend time with you, the reciprocal action would be to clear out time in your schedule to spend with them. There is no exchange of goods in this example, but there is a sense of reciprocity. These brothers teach us that we should return good to those who do good to us. Maybe this point seems obvious or intuitive, but I think it serves as an important reminder that we should not take our friends (including the people in our family) for granted.

Move On

Another lesson from these brothers - and one that I believe to be of great importance - is to let go of the problem after you have made amends. Gen. 33: 16 - 17 "So Esau returned that day on his way to Seir. And Jacob journeyed to Succoth, built himself a house, and made booths for his livestock ..." The brothers went their separate ways and didn't seek vengeance against each other from that point forward. The simple lesson of this passage is that, after each party has expressed the spirit of reconciliation ... move on. Do not hold a grudge against people for things that are in the past. Maybe you've heard Christians say things like, "We shouldn't hang out with that person because they did [thing X, Y, or Z]"

... And someone will say, "Yeah, but I think they made a confession about that." "Sure, but they still had a

problem that proves they're sort of a weak Christian. We need to have strong friends. It's best to just let them do their own thing. I can forgive them, but I don't think we should forget about what kind of person they are ... "Brothers and sisters: that's the kind of thing that makes people leave the Church. If we don't really (practically) forgive people for their past sins, they become stuck in a kind of social limbo without any way out. If someone does something wrong, and then they try to make it right. ... don't hold that against them. Move on and let things heal.

Be Grateful for Reconciliation

The tenth and final lesson that I will pull from this story is to be grateful when reconciliation occurs. I've seen people who desperately want to reconcile with others, but they are unable because the other party cannot let go of their grudge. In Gen. 33: 19- 20, when Jacob finally made it to Canaan, he built an altar to the Lord. Jacob was thankful that the Lord had allowed he and his brother to safely make amends. This is a wonderful end for this story because it reminds us to cherish when good things happen and thank God for them. Remembering the good can help us overcome difficulty in the future. Jacob literally built an altar which served as a reminder of God's mighty ability to repair even the most broken of bonds. More amazingly, God gave His son as a means of reconciling humankind to Him. What should we be willing to do to reconcile and remember what a blessing reconciliation can be?

THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST VERSUS THE KINGDOMS OF THIS WORLD

By MORRIS LYNWOOD SMITH

"My kingdom is not of this world," declared Jesus to Pilate, the Roman procurator. What did he mean? When he spoke these words, he implied that there were certain kinds of kingdoms existing different from the one that he would establish. Thus, we see one great division existing; the kingdom of Christ, composed of all the redeemed of the earth, and the kingdoms of this world, composed of all the earthly governments in existence. In what way is the kingdom of Christ versus the kingdoms

of this world?

The fact that these separate kingdoms stand for and uphold different principles is proof that they are at variance. But, to prove that these kingdoms are antagonistic it will be necessary to notice the difference between them. First, let us notice,

The Kingdoms of This World

The kingdoms of this world are owned by the devil. I mean by this that every civil government upon the earth is the property of Satan. In Luke 4:5 we read, "And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, showed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, And the devil said unto him, all this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it." But there are those who, in an effort to disprove this, say that the devil lied. They deny the verity of the devil's words, "these are delivered unto me." But we notice that Jesus did not contend with the devil as to the ownership. Jesus admitted that the devil owned these kingdoms by implication. Had the devil been lying, the Savior surely would have reprovved him for that. But the only thing the Savior did was to resist the devil by putting him behind him. But again if these kingdoms belonged to the Lord as some contend, why would the Scriptures have said "The devil tempted him"? Could the devil tempt Christ with something that already belonged to him? The devil knew of Christ's mission in the world; he knew that he had come to establish a kingdom that would be antagonistic to his own kingdoms. So, in order to keep the kingdom of Christ from being established in the world, the devil offered Christ these worldly kingdoms. Did Christ take them? No. Thus we see that civil powers did not and have not found favor in the eyes of the Lord. For these kingdoms were not the kind for the Prince of Peace. They were "of this world." The one that Christ was to establish was "not of this world." Thus, the reason for Christ's refusal is obvious. Some still, in an effort to prove that these kingdoms are of God, ask the question, "How can these powers be of the devil and still be ordained of God"? Just as God used Pharaoh, who was a servant of the devil, to do certain things that would have been a sin for Moses to have done, so God ordains or appoints (not forces) worldly kingdoms to do things that would be a sin for members of the kingdom of Christ to do. God

wants certain things accomplished and, since it would be wrong for the subjects of his kingdom to do them, he uses these worldly kingdoms that are already under condemnation to do this work. Because the Scriptures say, "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof," some say that human governments belong to God. It is true that the earth, and everything that the Lord created, belongs to him. But be it remembered that the Lord did not create human governments. They were founded by man in rebellion to God (Gen. 10: 10). So, when they were founded, because of their rebellion, they were turned over to the devil just as is every rebellious and disobedient person. In Luke 4:5, the devil there tells us that these powers were "delivered" unto him.

Another noticeable feature concerning this kingdom is that one of the greatest extremes known to mankind is used to describe it. That extreme is darkness. Throughout the Scriptures the term "darkness" is used to describe civil powers. I know of nothing that describes its base, ungodly and low principles any plainer than this term. In Luke 22:53, when the civil powers came with lanterns and torches, swords, and spears to seize the Son of God, Jesus said, "This is your hour, and the power of darkness." Also, in Eph. 6: 12, they are spoken of as the "darkness of this world." How could they be pictured otherwise when they are upheld by the bloody sword and force is their nature. Greed, lust, hatred, warfare, bloodshed, envy, strife, rebellion and the disregard for the rights of others reign supreme within their vast domains. But now, let us consider, -

The Kingdom of Christ

What a contrast! It is just like emerging from a dark and dismal dungeon and walking into the illuminating rays of the noonday's sun. For the opposite extreme, which is light, is used to describe this kingdom. And as light differs from darkness, so does the kingdom of Christ differ from the kingdoms of this world. In Col. 1: 12, 13, this kingdom is described by light. How beautifully it is described! For in the kingdom of Christ there is love, peace, forgiveness, long suffering, gentleness, kindness and the tenderest regards for the rights of a brother.

What about the King of this kingdom? Ah! He is "the Messiah," the "Prince of peace," the gentle "Lamb of God." For he it was who bought it with his own precious

blood (Acts 20: 28). All of the greatest heroes of earthly kingdoms conquered by their life; he by his death. They built kingdoms and founded empires by the shedding of the blood of others; but he, by the shedding of his blood for others, established this kingdom of light. It is no wonder that Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world." We can see that these kingdoms are separate and distinct powers. They do not and cannot mix. There stands, as it were, a line between these powers that has been placed by the hand of God. The citizens of the kingdom of Christ are forbidden participating in the affairs of the kingdoms of this world. But an invitation stands to those who are in the kingdom of darkness to forsake the kingdom of darkness and its ways and obtain entrance into the kingdom of our Lord, the beautiful Mount Zion. And by doing this they become "new creatures" (2 Cor. 5:17). There is a warfare existing between these kingdoms. The forces of each kingdom are on the battle ground. In Eph. 6:12. Paul says, "We (members of the kingdom of Christ), wrestle not against flesh and blood; but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Thus, we see that the war is on and the battle forces are in array. We shall trace some who have left these kingdoms of darkness and have come into the kingdom of Christ. In Col. 1: 12, 13, we read, "Giving thanks unto the Father which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." Here we see that some have left the kingdoms of darkness and have become members of the kingdom of Christ. What was required of them? In Rom. 13: 12, Paul speaks thus: "Let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light." And again. "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Eph. 5:11). So, we see, after we leave the kingdoms of darkness and come into the kingdom of Christ, we are commanded to "cast off the works of darkness and have no fellowship with them." Then, according to the foregoing, there are many things done in the kingdoms of the world that we Christians cannot do. We have a few questions of paramount importance that we shall ask and answer according to the word of the Lord.

May Christians Engage in Carnal Warfare?

You will notice the question is not, may sinners or worldly nations engage in carnal warfare, but may Christians, those who have left these kingdoms of darkness and have come into the kingdom of light? Carnal means “fleshly” (Webster). Eph. 6: 12, “We wrestle not against flesh and blood.” According to this the members of Christ’s kingdom are forbidden such. Again, 2 Cor. 10:3, 4, “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds).” Jesus also made the statement, “My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence” (John 18:36). We see that Christ’s kingdom was not of this world because it possessed certain peculiarities, one of these being the fact that Christ did not authorize or allow his followers to use the carnal sword. We do have an account of Christ’s rebuking one of his followers for using the sword. In Luke 22: 36, before the disciples entered the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus commanded them to sell their purses and buy a sword. In John 18:11, He teaches a lesson with it. After the overzealous Peter smote Malchus, servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear, Christ rebuked him sharply, “Put up thy sword into the sheath” (John 18:11). “For all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword” (Matt. 26:52). So when Jesus sheathed the sword of Peter, he sheathed the sword of every one of his followers. Thus, we conclude that if Christ would not tolerate one of his followers fighting to protect him, he would not allow his followers to fight to uphold a wicked, immoral and ungodly government.

In Isa. 2:2-4 we have a prophecy of the kingdom of Christ. Isaiah, while enthralled in prophetic ecstasy, saw the kingdom of God established and towering far above the mountains (worldly kingdoms). Many people came to the house of the Lord, were taught of his ways, and walked in his paths. The Lord judged among many of the nations and rebuked many people. What were the results? What did he rebuke them for? “They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more” (Isa. 2:4). When one becomes a citizen of Christ’s kingdom, he is to “learn war no more.” Some contend that the kingdom Isaiah saw has never been established. Those who so contend put themselves in the class with those who are looking for a future kingdom.

- To be continued next month.

COMPLETE DEVOTION TO CHRIST

By TREVOR CALBERT

Mark chapter 14 is one of the longest chapters in the New Testament and includes several events from the last few days of Jesus’ life. Recorded there are His observance of the Passover with His disciples, the institution of the Lord’s supper, Jesus’ memorable prayer in the garden of Gethsemane, His arrest and trial before the Sanhedrin council, and the denial of Peter - one of His “faithful three” apostles.

The chapter begins with the Jewish leaders’ plot to kill the Messiah - a plan which quickly begins to materialize a few verses later when Judas agrees to betray Jesus. But nestled in between the plotting of verses one and two and the betrayal in verses 10 and 11 we find one of the most beautiful examples of reverence and honor for God in all the Bible. Conversely, it is also, perhaps, one of the most underappreciated stories in the life of our Lord.

In verses three through nine we read of a woman who takes a jar of oil and anoints the head of Jesus. We find from John’s gospel account that she also anoints Jesus’ feet with the oil and wipes them with her hair (John 12:3). John provides us with the woman’s identity - she is Mary of Bethany, the sister of Martha and Lazarus.

The gospel according to Luke is the only account that does not record this event; however, Luke does provide us with a very important view into Mary’s heart. In chapter 10 beginning at verse 38 we read a simple, yet profound story in which Mary sat at Jesus’ feet and listened intently to His every word. Meanwhile, Mary’s sister Martha was busy serving Jesus and the other guests who had gathered at their house. Martha was resentful that she was having to work alone, but Jesus quickly made her aware that Mary had wisely chosen to prioritize listening to His teachings. Mary blocked out everyone and everything else around her and focused solely on Jesus.

Keep this image of Mary in mind as we return to Mark 14 and the anointing at Bethany. Mary’s jar was made of alabaster - a white colored type of gypsum. It was often used in the ancient world to make things such as vases and statues and was considered an expensive material.

What was even more remarkable about the jar Mary owned was its contents. It was filled with spikenard oil, a substance derived from a plant (*Nardostachys jatamansi*) found mainly in the Himalayas. It was very valuable, and Judas Iscariot estimates its worth was “greater than 300 denarii” (John 12:5) -roughly a year’s wages for the common laborer. So, we see that both the jar and its contents were very costly.

Interestingly, the most precious characteristic of this item was not its monetary value. In Jesus’ day this type of oil-filled jar was mainly reserved for two purposes: 1. As a dowry for marriage or, 2. As an anointing oil for one’s death. Additionally, it could have possibly been in a family for a couple of generations. Mary may have very well looked upon this jar at various points throughout her life and dreamed of her wedding day when she would have the opportunity to present it to her husband and his family.

With this knowledge in mind, we can view her sacrifice of the jar with even greater appreciation and amazement. When she broke the flask and emptied it of its contents, she was literally pouring out her future on Jesus Christ. She risked being socially disapproved of and ridiculed for “this waste” as the disciples referred to it (Matthew 26:8). However, there was no hesitation on Mary’s part. Her mind was closed off to the thoughts and opinions of others and she focused squarely on providing this act of reverence and honor to her Lord. She didn’t know if she would have the chance to anoint Jesus for burial after His death, so she seizes what she thinks could be her only opportunity and anoints Him while He is still alive.

Jesus responded to the disciples’ criticism of Mary in Mark 14:8 by saying, “She has done what she could.” This may seem like an insignificant phrase to us but essentially what Jesus said was, “she has done everything she could.” She sacrificed her most treasured possession, as well as her future, in order to provide a single act of service to Jesus. That is why He said, “Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her” (Mark 14:9).

The application for us is simple, yet what is simple is often difficult to emulate. The reason why we struggle to do what Mary did is because we succumb to the

various distractions of our busy lives. It may be our jobs, hobbies, or temptations that prevent us from rendering our greatest service to God. Perhaps we are afraid of what others might say if we were to fully devote ourselves to Him. Regardless of our excuses; however, we need to have the perspective that Mary did - an unwavering focus on Jesus Christ. We should strive to offer up our lives in complete devotion to Him. After all, there is no sacrifice that we can make that will ever be too great for God. Let us follow Mary’s example and give our heavenly Father everything so that it may be said of each of us in the end, “Well done, good and faithful servant. You’ve done what you could.”

FROM SHEEP TO continued from page one

Third, God needs men who will confront false teachers. Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, warned of false teachers (Mat. 7:15). Likewise, the apostle John warned of False Teachers (1 John 4:1). Throughout New Testament history there have always been false teachers.

It seems today we are inundated with false prophets teaching every imaginable doctrine and some that would never have been imagined. What false teachers do is to lead souls away from God with the result being their eternal damnation. Peter mentions this in (2 Pet. 2:1-2).

Elders and leaders have a specific responsibility when it comes to false teachers. In giving the qualifications for elders, Paul stated: “Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake.” (Tit. 1:9-11).

Since it is the obligation of elders to “watch for your souls” (Heb. 13:17) and to shepherd the flock of God (1 Pet. 5:2) which includes feeding them the proper food (Acts 20:28); they must make sure that those false teachers are exposed, and their mouths stopped.

In this article I have given you three traits that should

be found in the type of leaders that God needs. In conclusion I like to mention one type of man that God does not need.

God does not need men who become fence-setters in their old age. Older men need to continue to teach and affirm the truths of God as they did in their younger days. Titus 2:1-2 “But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine: That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience.” This is how Paul begins his advice to various demographics in the church. What is somewhat surprising, is Paul’s command for older men to be “sound in faith” vs 2. We typically think of men who have been Christians for a long time as being least at risk of being “unsound in faith.” We have this stereotype that older Christians are usually the strongest Christians.

If older men are to be “sound in faith,” they must know what they believe with conviction; their faith must be grounded in Scripture. Aged Christians should be bulwarks of the faith.

We are all aware of older men who were once adamant in their opposition to divorce, adultery, unauthorized worship, immodest clothing, and such things. But as they advanced in age—many times as their children got entangled in some of these sins—they became soft.

It is disheartening to younger Christians when the convictions of those they admire begin to deteriorate. My plea to older Christian men and my prayer for myself is to remain “sound in faith.” May all men who desire to be leaders and shepherds in the Lord’s church, “hold the pattern of sound words” (2 Tim. 1:13), because the sheep need a shepherd, if the church is to withstand the storms of time.

WISE DECISIONS

By CARTER STEPHENS

There is a story of a young man who decided that he wanted to earn a college degree. He was accepted at a prestigious University and began his studies. But the night before one of his exams, this young man was invited to a party, and he skipped preparing for the test. Days later, a paper was due. Instead of working on his assignment, the young man went on a camping trip with

friends. Mid-term studying was put off due to a canoe trip. And rather than study for finals, he went on a date with his girlfriend. As you can imagine, this young man flunked out of college. The young man had made a great decision in life: To go to college. But he failed in the goal because of a series of small unwise decisions.

In a similar way, the same is true for us today. Our goal is to make Heaven our eternal home, but many fail in that goal not because of a single unwise decision. Rather people generally lose their faith because of a series of small unwise decisions just like that college student. At the same time, people do not become stronger in the Lord because of a single big decision. Rather, one becomes stronger in the Lord because they make a series of seemingly small but very wise decisions.

Making wise choices is something the Bible talks a great deal about. The word wise or wisdom appears 197 times in the Bible, 35 of which are in the NT. But rather than read all these verses, the conclusion we can reach is that the Bible is rich in offering us advice on how to make wise decisions. You know we can know if we are wise according to the Bible or not. Just like how you can know what sickness you have based on your symptoms, you can know if you are Biblically wise based on symptoms as well. Here are some of the symptoms of wisdom:

We can make the small yet wise decision to watch our words. It is estimated that a talkative person speaks over 100,000 words every day. Words have the power to strengthen us spiritually, encourage us to live faithfully, or even to correct us. But words also have the power to destroy souls, damage relationships, and ruin congregations. Prov. 10:19 -In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, But he who restrains his lips is wise.

Prov. 21:23 -Whoever guards his mouth and tongue keeps his soul from troubles.

James 3:2 -For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body.

We can make the small yet wise decision to listen to counsel. Every one of us needs some advice and coaching from time to time. We find ourselves in situations where we need to seek the counsel of

someone with more experience, age, and our spiritual elder. Prov. 13:10-By pride comes nothing but strife, but with the well-advised is wisdom.

We can make the small yet wise decision to be humble. How many of life's problems are generated because we think too highly of ourselves and our own opinions, and we begin to think we are better than others around us. Luke 9:48 "Whoever receives this child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. For he who is least among you all is the one who is great." The mind of humility is also taught in Phil. 2:5-7.

We can make the small yet wise decision to live the life of a New Testament Christian. If we truly are wise from the Bible's standards, then it will be evident from the lives we live. James 3:13 -James asks the question that we are considering and then says: Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. Eph. 5:15-16 -See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. 1 Peter 2:12-13 -If you are wise, you will understand that you represent Christ and the Church to the world wherever you go, and that people are watching you, the way you act, the way you dress, the way you talk, your attitude, everything about you.

Solomon, the very man who asked God for that great gift, after all of his worldly experiences and in all his wisdom stated in Eccl. 12:13 -Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man's all.

These are only a few of the symptoms of true wisdom, but there are indeed many more, as James tells us: James 3:17-But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.

If you want to reach Heaven as your goal, remember, a person does not fall away from the Lord generally in one giant step. Rather they fall away by making a series of unwise decisions. If we want to know if we are wise, let us investigate the Bible and see for ourselves.

REVERENCE

I sat in church on Sunday morn
 The members talked so loud.
 And showed so little reverence
 As any worldly crowd.
 Again, I sat in that same church
 But all was quiet now,
 For in a casket up in front
 Lay one with pallid brow.
 And when I thought How strange it is
 That we so oft accord
 More reverence to a man that's dead
 Than to our living God.
 If we could see with mortal eye
 Bright angels there each day
 Our words would cease and all would hear
 What Jesus had to say.
 It has been said that, "fools rush in
 Where angels fear to tread."
 We say we come to worship God
 But visit friends instead.
 Oh, why not show more reverence in this
 God's house of prayer
 And try to act as Christians should
 When we assemble there.

-Selected

MERCY

The quality of mercy is not strained;
 It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
 Upon the place beneath. It is twice blest;
 It blesseth him that gives and him that takes:
 'Tis mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes
 The throned monarch better than his crown:
 His scepter shows the force of temporal power,
 The attribute to awe and majesty,
 Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;
 But mercy is above this sceptered sway;
 It is enthroned in the hearts of kings,
 It is an attribute to God himself;
 And earthly power doth then show likest God's
 When mercy seasons justice.

- William Shakespeare

LONG HAIR

...continued from page two

can finally manage it. He can reinforce that so many times in his mind that he finally believes the lie. Once that happens, no amount of logic, Bible study, grammar, etc. can move him. He is hooked.

In 1 Corinthians 11 :2, 16 Paul deals with the subject of which we speak. He sets up the headship in verse 3 where he shows the order of authority from God to Christ, Christ to man, and man to woman. My understanding of this subject is that it all rests upon the subject of (a) authority (b) recognition of authority and (c) the sign or token signifying recognition of authority, the woman must be in subjection to the authority under which she has been placed. When she recognizes it, she is to have her hair as a sign of her subjection to that authority.

In verse 14 Paul mentions “nature itself” as a corroborating witness. This he could not have done unless hair was the subject all along. Hair is produced by “nature itself”. Paul shows that “nature itself” teaches us that it is a “shame” (sin) for a man to have long hair. The word “hair” in verse 14 as well as the first time it is used in verse 15 is from a verb in Greek. Thayer tells us the word is “Komaō” (page 354) and that it means: “To let the hair grow, have long hair” (Various other lexicographers give similar meanings). We affirm that this word means Paul is issuing a command the man must not have long hair. In verse 15 the first time the word “hair” appears the same Greek verb is again used. The woman is commanded to “let her hair grow” (“Long hair” in KJV). Can she cut it? No, she cannot cut it and let it grow at the same time. He then says that if she lets her hair grow it is a “glory” to her. “Glory” is from the Greek “DOXA” which means: “to call forth praise to her.” So, a Christian woman’s growing hair calls for praise to her; but why? Because, says Paul, her “hair” (this time from the Greek noun KOMBE which Thayer says denotes the hair as an ornament) is given her “for” (Greek “AVTI” meaning instead of, in place of; Thayer, page 49) a covering. The word “covering” here is from a word in the original, which means a veil or covering.

There can simply be no argument as to the meaning of verse 15. The covering is simply a woman’s grown hair. How does she have growing, or grown, hair? She refrains from altering it in any way and allows nature to decide the length. There is nothing to be gained from the useless argument that a woman’s hair grows all the time, therefore, even if she cuts it she has growing hair.

With a little simple translation one can understand the meaning of verse 15 plainly. Paul said that if a woman lets her hair grow, it calls forth praise to her because her grown hair, which becomes an ornament to her, is given

her instead of a veil or covering.

Someone objects, “Paul didn’t say I couldn’t cut or trim my hair.” Look at this again: What the Christian woman wants, and in fact must have to be pleasing in God’s sight, is “hair” (Komee, noun for ornamental hair). She must have the ornamental hair because that is given to her INSTEAD of a veil or covering. So how does she get that ornamental hair? BY LETTING IT GROW AND IN NO OTHER WAY! Paul shows that one noun is given in the place of the other, i.e.: hair instead of a veil or covering. In order to arrive at that, she must first obey the directive in the verb form of hair, which is “komo” to let the hair grow, have long hair.

Folks that is what the Bible teaches. The man must not have long hair. That is, he must not allow his hair to grow unhindered. On the other hand, the woman must have long hair. She must let her hair grow unhindered. Paul isn’t dealing in inches or feet here. He is saying the woman must allow nature to decide the length of her hair, while the man must not do so, he must alter the length of his hair.

Why is all this so necessary? Because it affects our prayers and teaching. See verses 4 and 5. Brethren, anything that has such an important effect is certainly worth our being careful to obey!

The story was once told of an older sister who excused her cut hair by saying that as she got older she trimmed it because she didn’t want to look like an old lady. Someone remarked that when she cut it off she looked more like an old man.

Think on these things.

Field Reports

Don L. King, 1147 Sherry Way, Livermore, CA 94550, May 14, old paths@juno.com We are grateful for good health and nice weather at home. The church is at peace and that is a blessing. We are presently preaching at various congregations nearby. We have been at Turlock: Yuba City; Stockton: home; and are to be at Manteca tomorrow, Lord willing. Later, back to Turlock again. We look forward to being once again at Weatherford, TX for a meeting soon after the 4th of July and had

intended to attend part of the Springfield, MO 4th of July meeting but very high airline prices may have changed our minds about that. The high costs of fuel are obviously hurting the airlines as well as those on the highways. We also look forward to meetings at New Salem; MS, Nashville; TN, McAlester; OK, Fieldstone, MO, and Oakdale, CA. We'll publish the dates as the times draw nearer. At Livermore, we look forward to Joe Hisle being here in June, Lord willing. Preachers, we need your articles and reports.

May 2022 David Griffin

The Lord continues to bless us here at the Lee's Summit congregation, near Lebanon, MO. At the time of this writing, we are happy to be able to announce that we are beginning a weekend meeting tonight (Fri, May 13) with Austin Maddox of Columbia, MO. We are going to have refreshments tonight after the Friday evening service, and we are planning a "pot-luck" dinner on Sunday after morning service. It is a thrill to have such events as this. I am convinced more and more that our churches need such times of association. We're going to die on the vine without it! I've always known this, but the past couple of years has only solidified it in my mind. Brother Maddox is a young preacher who originates from Indiana, but currently resides at Columbia, MO (about an hour and forty minutes from Lebanon), where he is working with the congregation there. We look forward to the preaching, the association, and the bonding of Christian hearts that is sure to result! May God bless all His people!

Greg Gay, 3816 Tambos Trl, Edmond, OK 73034, papagreg@aol.com, 916-804-3787. May 8, 2022
I attended the MidMo study at Columbia, MO in March. I appreciate all the presentations, the wonderful meals and visits with everyone, and the hospitality of Bill and Karen Smith. Bill took Brian Elliott and me out for a bit of fishing one morning. I was so inspired I got my license when I got home. I was honored to be asked to preach there the Lord's Day after the study. Karen's mother, Alfreda Wade and Bart Shaw's mother, Betty Harris came for part of the week which made the visit even more delightful. The sermons from the study will be on Christian Landmark's YouTube channel. We were in California in April for a grandson's wedding. While there I also conducted the funeral for Lyndell Rowland, a dear friend of many years. The obituary in last month's paper was read at her service to a standing room only

crowd at the Clovis, CA building. Ivan Costa led the congregational singing and grandsons Matt and Andy Trent opened and closed the service with beautiful prayers. While in California we enjoyed visiting with many plus we were at 64th St. in Sacramento for a Sunday and at Fair Oaks for a mid-week service. After paying \$5-6 per gallon for gas in California, Oklahoma prices looked very good when we got home although still much higher than when we moved here three years ago. Our April closed with a meeting at Fossil Creek in Ft. Worth, TX. We enjoyed staying with Brian and Lianne Elliott and kept busy with invitations for visits/ meals in homes and at restaurants. There are many young families there with lots of babies in the audience every service. That was great to see! I appreciate the many who came from surrounding congregations, including Jonathan Edwards and family. My weekly online studies include brethren from Southern and Northern India. Lord willing, Alan Bonifay and I will go to Northern India in June to encourage a new congregation that began there in November. I appreciate the generosity of the Fieldstone and Pleasant View, Missouri congregations to pay my expenses for the trip. My work from home still includes posting recorded sermons online on my Facebook group, God's Good News from Greg. Interest in the sermons varies from topic to topic but continues to be excellent from the group's members around the world. A recent fun project for me is a new Facebook page, Church of Christ Gospel Meetings, where I post meeting flyers and listings of meetings from all over the country. Please email, text, or message me with gospel meeting information to me to be included. Our work continues with the Piedmont, OK congregation. We have had some recent community visitors plus increased attendance from members who live in the area. We are thankful for all who have chosen to be with us and have room for more!

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WALKS THROUGH THE BIBLE...

DEATH IS RUDE!

By JERRY DICKINSON

“Now King David was old, advanced in years; and they put covers on him, but he could not get warm. Now the days of David drew near that he should die, and he charged Solomon, his son, saying, ‘I go the way of all the earth; be strong, therefore, and prove yourself a man. And keep the charge of the LORD your God: to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His judgements, His testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn; that the LORD may fulfill His Word which He spoke concerning me, saying, If your sons take heed to their way, to walk before Me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, He said you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.’” (1 Kings 1:1; 2:1-4)

ALL EYES ON A DEATHBED! Interestingly, the Bible says David was old even though he was only 70 years old. Now, that may seem old to some of our younger readers, but I am 72 and 70 does not seem as old to me as it used to. (Lol) The record also declares that David was advanced or well stricken in years. David had lived a difficult and hard life. He was hunted and hounded by Saul, hiding in caves and in mountain strongholds for years. He had been engaged throughout his life in battles with Israel’s many surrounding enemies; and of course even enemies within Israel itself, including a civil war led by his own son Absalom. Add to that all the problems and vicissitudes in his family as a result of his own sin, and David was indeed an old man at the age of 70. He was worn out!

BORDERLINE BETWEEN TIME AND ETERNITY! David realizes he is about to pass from this life, and in typical poetic language he tells Solomon, “I go the way of all the earth!” Death is the ultimate destination for all humanity. Death is rude, however. That is, death comes for all men, but not as expected, or when expected. We often pray for a “peaceful hour in which to die”, but death is rude and does not care if we are at peace or not when its icy fingers decide to take us away. Death simply put does not care. Death is rude! It is the great equalizer. John saw the dead “small and great” stand before God in Revelation 20. Death comes to all men. Note some things death does not care about.

1. YOUR PLANS: The rich farmer in Jesus’s parable in Luke 12 had great plans for the future. He told himself to take it easy for he had many goods laid up for many years, but God said, “You fool; tonight your soul will be required of you.” The farmer had plans for tomorrow, but God said, “Tonight!” Death comes in spite of our plans. Death is rude!

2. YOUR AGE: David was a worn out old man of 70, but death comes at all ages. The daughter of Jairus was only 12, and he came begging for Jesus to come lay his hand on her. She was his only daughter and much too young, but death is rude. The Shulamite woman, in her grief, exclaimed to Elisha, “Did I ask for a son?” What she seemed to be saying was, “If you knew my boy would die at such a young age, why did you promise me a son?” How rude, that death would snatch her son from her bosom and leave her brokenhearted.

3. EVEN IF YOU WANT TO DIE: Perhaps most strangely of all, death does not care if you want to die. Paul said he was in a strait, wanting to die and be with the Lord, but he realized it was better for him to remain and be with the brethren for the present time. Paul wanted to die? Yes, Paul, like David, had suffered extreme persecution and deprivation and was worn out physically. You can get to the point where death is a release, certainly to a Christian who believes he will depart and be with the Lord. But, death does not always come even if we wish for it. How agonizing to watch loved ones who are in constant pain who would welcome death but it does not come. Even more, perhaps, to watch those whose bodies are more or less well, but the mind and memory is gone. Where is death, that welcome release? Richard Barton, a member of our congregation here in Texarkana heard me preach that Death Is Rude, and he wrote a poem he titled Death Is Rude. Following is a portion of that poem.

She’s frail and barely can walk; her mind is sharp and she wants to talk.

She pleads come down and take me home; I’m still here but my body is gone.

Don’t you know I’m ready for home? Death O Death, why do you linger so long?

The pain is real and you hear my cry; why don’t you just let me die?

Some want to stay and some want to go, but death you’re so rude and you say no!

Have you ever been treated rudely? I know you have, and how the rude words of a coworker or supervisor beat us down. Even more, the rude words of a dear friend, or even a brother in Christ, devastate us. How awesome to be able to confide in a friend who will soothe our wounded ego and help us overcome rude words and behavior. Death is the ultimate rude enemy. But, we have a friend in Jesus! In fact, He will destroy death at His coming - the last enemy we are told. What a friend we have in Jesus, all our griefs and pains to bear. Yes death is rude, but our Friend will be with us as we, like David, go the way of all the earth.

Praise the Lord!