

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).

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NO. 6

SALVATION ASSURED

By Paul O. Nichols



Wouldn't it be wonderful if we could know that the salvation of our souls is secure? Well, in the Bible there are a number of passages that give us such assurance.

To most of us in this day and time, insurance is very important. We insure our cars, we insure the houses in which we live. Many people insure the contents of their homes and add additional insurance if they have expensive jewelry. They carry personal accident insurance policies against injuries sustained by themselves or visitors. And there are those who have large life insurance policies to be sure that after their decease their loved ones will be protected against undue hardship or even bankruptcy. But while taking all these measures, and making all such provisions, which smacks of good business judgment, many make no provision for their afterlife. When life is over and they pay the debt

to nature, no provision has been made for their salvation, and they are lost forever.

Insurance policies that we pay for as we live from day to day have certain conditions and stipulations. If these terms are not met, the policy does not pay. We who buy the insurance do not set the conditions, but we recognize the terms and expect that if something does happen that the insurance company will cover the incident.

We are here for only a little while, but eternity is forever. It makes far more sense to make preparation for eternity when this life is over. Yet, most people think very little about where they are going to live when their time here is up. The word of God informs us, “The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away” (Psalm 90:10). Our sojourn on earth is brief in comparison with the ceaseless ages of eternity, and while we have time we can make preparation for our eternal destiny. “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (Hebrews 9:27). This is what we can be sure of, and like the apostle Peter said, “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dis-

CONTENTS

Vol XCI No. 6



ADVOCATE

Salvation Assured..... 1
 Editorial: Paul O. Nichols..... 3
 Obituary: Paul O. Nichols..... 3
 Paul O. Nichols: Our Paul Harvey..... 4
 Requests for Money..... 5
 The Worship of the Church..... 7
 What if You had been Noah..... 9

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solved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness...” (2 Peter 3:9-11).

While Jesus was here he explained the purpose of His mission. He said, “For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me” (John 6:38). “For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). Jesus died on the cross through excruciating pain and untold agony to save our eternal souls. And the Lord gave us the plan of salvation, and the apostles were sent to inform the world of the glad tidings. The apostle Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 1:21, “For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.” Paul poses the question, “...how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?” (Romans 10:13). So when the Gospel is preached and men obey its terms the Lord gives the promise, “be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Revelation 2:10). There is the assurance of the Lord Himself.

The Romans who had become Christians were told, “...God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you, being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness” (Romans 6:17).

Now that they were saved, were they assured of salvation? The answer is “yes”—conditionally! The apostle Peter said, “And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, but he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall. For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:5-11). Of this we can be assured. Remember, the apostle Paul, shortly before

his execution, said, "There is a crown of righteousness laid up for me, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me on that day, and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (2 Timothy 4:8). Paul was assured of salvation, having met the terms, and we too can have that assurance.

Editorial

PAUL O. NICHOLS

By Don L. King

I was sad to learn of Paul's passing recently. Not many live to be over 100, as he did. As I think about it, I suppose I have known him all of my life. He was a little over 20 years my senior, and was preaching when I was only a boy. We have a picture of our old rock house in MO, and he is sitting on the porch with my parents. I would have been about 2 years of age. I recall a visit to our Missouri home by him and Wilma when I was about 13. We always knew to look for Paul at the 4th of July meetings and looked forward to the evening when he was scheduled to preach.

Paul was a great preacher in his own right. He was one of my favorites, and to say the least, we have lost a very valuable soldier for the Cause of Christ. When Pat and I decided to enter the field of preaching, we called Paul. He lived in Bakersfield at the time. He invited us to come for a visit, which we did. We stayed up late discussing the matter on Saturday night. The next day he graciously invited me to preach in his place. I very much appreciated the opportunity; and from that time, Paul was a constant encouragement in every way. It is hard to believe he is gone.

Through the years, we spent a fair amount of time together in many places. Paul was a pilot and I also became interested. We belonged to a flying club based in Modesto and often flew together. I loved him as a friend as well as a fellow preacher, and always appreciated his steadfastness in doctrine and Christian living.

In 1981 the Philippine work began and we also saw one another there. He and Jim Franklin had been involved in the beginning of that work, as was I, and more than once our paths crossed there. As the Scriptures say, a great man has fallen. We are going to miss him in so many ways.

He was dignified both in and out of the pulpit and didn't appreciate any preacher who wasn't.

Paul and Wilma were also involved in the African work and moved there in about 1952. Later, Gayland Osburn and his family joined them, and that great work continues today. There is something to be said about pioneering a foreign work. Unless one has experienced that task, it is hard to explain. It has so many unseen problems to work out and is often frustrating. However, those families did a great job; and God has blessed that work in wonderful ways.

Finally, for all cannot be said, we send our sincere condolences to all of the family of Paul and Wilma, and look forward to the great reunion day when all will be wonderful for the Lord's people. -DLK

OBITUARY: PAUL O. NICHOLS

By Carl Johnson

Paul Oliver Nichols, son of Henrietta Louise (Oliver) Nichols and Carl Nelson Nichols, Sr., was born on September 5, 1922 in Alamogordo, NM and passed from this life on April 15, 2023 at home in Overland Park, KS at the age of 100 years, 7 months, and 10 days.

Paul was the third of eight children born to Carl and Henrietta Nichols. A few months after Paul was born, the family moved from Alamogordo, NM to El Paso, TX. While living in El Paso, two more children were added to the Nichols family. In December of 1930 during the Great Depression, the Nichols family moved to Hollywood, CA. The Nichols family would reside in California for many years to come, adding three more children to their family.

While in Hollywood, Paul and his siblings took work as actors at the nearby movie studios. For the Nichols kids, acting was a means of providing income to the family as they, like so many, struggled financially during the Great Depression. When Paul was 16 years old, he made the declaration that he wanted to be a preacher. Paul often said, "I used to be in the entertainment business, but I left show business to get into the business of saving souls."

Paul held his first gospel meeting in 1942 at Montebello, CA at the age 19, and continued preaching the gospel for over 80 years. During his tenure as a preacher, he helped spread the gospel of Jesus Christ to all 50 states and 27 different countries, spanning across four continents. During his early preaching career, Paul traveled the United States from coast to coast, preaching wherever he could. In the spring of 1949, he traveled from Ada, OK to preach in Huntington, WV. It was while preaching in Huntington that he met the love of his life, Wilma Jean. Within two weeks of meeting, Wilma and he were engaged. Before they married, Paul warned Wilma that the life of a preacher was difficult, and they may have to endure hardships. Wilma replied, "If you can take it, I can too." On November 28, 1949 they were married. Their marriage lasted over 60 years, ending only when Wilma passed away in 2010.

In 1952, Wilma and he traveled by ship from New York to Nyasaland, Africa (now known as Malawi) where they began mission work in the village of Wendewende. While in Malawi, Paul preached the gospel and converted many souls to Christ. The work Paul started in Malawi over 70 years ago still continues as a result of the efforts of many. From 1952 to today, there have been over 4000 churches of Christ registered with the Malawian government.

In the US, Paul worked with churches in California, Mississippi, Louisiana, Kansas, and more. From 1994 to the end of his life, Paul was the acting evangelist at the Stony Point Church of Christ in Kansas City, KS. Paul's preaching has impacted thousands of people the world over, touching many generations of Christians, and winning countless souls to Christ by his influence.

Paul had many and varied talents in addition to preaching. He was a musician and taught vocal music schools. He hosted religious radio shows. He was an artist, a mechanic, and a carpenter. He was also a pilot and flew his last plane at the age of 98.

Paul leaves behind two daughters, Paulette Moran and her husband Mike of San Diego, CA, and Cheryl Harris and her husband Kevin of Overland Park, KS; three grandchildren, Vanessa

McGarth (Dan), Marcus Moran, and Cameron Harris; two great grandchildren, Liam and Brennan McGarth; two siblings, Betty Middick of Harrisonville, MO, and Richard Nichols and his wife Joy of Springfield, MO; one sister-in-law, Earlene Nichols of Anderson, MO; and countless other family, friends, and Christian brethren.

Paul was preceded in death by his wife, Wilma; his parents; and five siblings, Louise King, Charlie Nichols, Ray Nichols, Nelson Nichols, and Ed Nichols.

My family and the church in Ada had a long association with Paul. He conducted many meetings here and baptized my sister Rosa, my brother Raymond, and several Hisles. He conducted my sister Velda's wedding to George Hill, and he conducted the graveside funeral for my niece Lauren Ann Johnson. The first meeting I ever conducted in California was at Modesto, and I stayed with Paul and Wilma. I found that this man, who was characterized by the plain preaching of sound doctrine, and who's favorite passage was, "Let God be true and every man a liar," to be the consummate gentleman. He was gracious, hospitable, tenderhearted, witty, funny, and emotional. He loved his family and he loved the church. I conducted Wilma's funeral 13 years ago and Paul told me at that time he wanted me to conduct his funeral also. I was greatly honored to fulfill that request on Saturday, April 22 of this year. The Stony Point church building in Kansas City, Kansas was packed with a standing-room-only crowd which included several preachers. The funeral service was also streamed live internationally on YouTube. I received texts from preachers in different parts of the world telling me they had just watched the stream of the funeral service. The church greatly mourns the passing of Paul Nichols because truly, "a prince and a great man has fallen this day in (spiritual) Israel" (2 Samuel 3:38). Carl M. Johnson

PAUL O. NICHOLS: OUR "PAUL HARVEY"

By Billy Dickinson

When Paul Nichols occupied the pulpit to proclaim God's word, everything about him was impressive to behold. This is brought home to me when I reflect on how his voice, style, and presentation were similar to that of the great American radio broadcaster, Paul Harvey. Inci-

dentially, through the years I have heard several brethren note that comparison, constituting an awesome compliment that explains why people enjoyed and benefited from the sermons of Paul O. Nichols. Just like Paul Harvey was once listened to by 24 million people each week, Brother Paul was in great demand to hold Gospel Meetings throughout the brotherhood.

Yes, when I was a young preacher he had a profound influence upon me and the way I tried to present the gospel. While always dignified in his presentation, he preached the truth without fear or favor and did not shun to declare “all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:27).

I heard Brother Paul explain in a sermon that when he first went to Africa he kind of used “kid gloves” in his dealings with them because he thought they might find plainness of speech offensive. However, he began to realize that his preaching was not producing the results he wanted, so he started preaching with plainness of speech like he did in the States. Brother Paul said that they perked up and began to listen with greater interest and this brought about positive results. Then he made the point that if the African brethren can appreciate hard preaching, surely Americans ought to do likewise. I’m sure that some would say that Brother Paul was a hard preacher (in a lot of ways), but there was so much more to his preaching than that. He loved the truth, he loved the church and wanted souls to be saved.

We are the better for our association with him! Indeed, he was our “Paul Harvey”—a man who was a talented preacher of the gospel and who will be greatly missed. I loved him and have the hope of seeing him again on that great reunion day.

REQUESTS FOR MONEY

By Greg Gay

When Covid began ravaging the world in 2020, I began a Facebook group—*God’s Good News from Greg*, where I post sermons about the New Testament church. At that time, I began accepting friendship requests from all over the world so I could invite them to the group to hear the gospel. I have been thrilled with the growth of the group

and the interest in the gospel. It is a great thrill to be one of many who “plant and water” as God gives the increase of precious souls who obey the gospel and of congregations of Christians who commit to correct worship.

Immediately upon accepting friendship requests from around the world, I began receiving requests for money. It was as though I had accepted friendship requests just so I could send money to everyone. I am not alone in receiving requests for money. I know individuals and congregations who receive repeated messages asking for money. Sometimes there is an immediate request for money. Sometimes there is a “get acquainted period” of friendly greetings that evolve into requests, even demands for money.

The reasons given for the requests are many. One recent request was for funds for a church building which had been started but not finished. The pictures accompanying that request showed the construction progress, only a hole that had been dug for the outdoor bathroom. Another request was to send money to buy medicine for a sick dog. I have had requests for money for housing, to start businesses, to pay debt, for education, orphans, Bibles, data, phones, food, medicine, hospital bills, musical instruments, bicycles, motor scooters, automobiles, public address systems, building materials, roads, schools, sponsorship to come to America, and more.

Not all requests for money are via social media from a far-off nation. The requests we get may be close to our home, such as someone holding a cardboard sign on a street corner asking for help. We do not see many cardboard signs where we live now in Oklahoma. They were very common when we lived in California where half of all unsheltered people in the United States live, according to a 2022 estimate from the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Many of us have offered work or to buy meals for the sign holders only to be told all they really want is our money. Stories abound of investigations where street-corner begging is a very lucrative business in various areas of the United States.

It is our decision what to do with our own money. As individuals, we have scriptural principles that guide us. Of course, anything we “have” is the result of God’s blessings in our lives. Whether

little or plenty, all we ever possess in life is a gift from God. “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning” (James 1:17 NKJV).

In the early days of the church, Christians who chose to do so contributed generously to help feed all the new church members from all over the Roman empire who stayed in Jerusalem after their conversion (Acts 2). We do not see Apostolic commands or demands for their money. Instead, we learn from the tragic deaths of Ananias and Sapphira that all giving to help others was, and remains, completely voluntary.

Luke reports the conversation before God struck Ananias dead: “But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. And he kept part of the proceeds, his wife also being aware of it, and brought a certain part and laid it at the apostles’ feet. But Peter said, ‘Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God’” (Acts 5:1-4 NKJV). As Peter said, our money is “our own,” under our own control, to do with as we deem appropriate.

Yet, we are not to be stingy with our blessings from God. “Whoever is generous to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will repay him for his deed” (Proverbs 19:17 ESV). Paul wrote, “Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need” (Ephesians 4:28-29 NKJV). In the early church, sister Dorcas was well known for being kind and generous. “In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (which, when translated, is Dorcas), who was always doing good and helping the poor” (Acts 9:36 NIV). Her generosity was not a one-time act, it was a way of life.

As individuals we may choose to help Christians and non-Christians. We may think our Lord’s Day contribution satisfies all God expects of us in giving. While Lord’s Day giving is commanded of us “as we have been prospered” (1 Corinthians 16, 2 Corinthians 9), it is not all that is ex-

pected. Paul said, “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:10 NKJV).

Galatians 6:10 is not instruction for how a congregation’s leaders are to administer the treasury. That is the subject of another study. Galatians 6:10 is addressed to us as individual Christians as we volunteer to help others. As individuals, we are to be willing to help fellow Christians, but we are also permitted to help those who are not Christians.

Wealthy Christians are given special warnings. “Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life” (1 Timothy 6:17-19 NKJV). The writer of Hebrews said, “And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased” (Hebrews 13:16 NIV).

Anyone who is blessed to live in certain nations, such as in the United States, is wealthy when compared to most who live in the world. The United Nations’ 2022 *Human Development Index* ranks the United States as the 21st nation out of 191 nations in the world. India ranks at 132, Kenya 152, Malawi 169, and Mozambique 185. No matter where we live, and no matter the ranking of any nation, we are to be thankful for our blessings and seek to be content, even in difficult situations. After Paul had received a voluntary gift from the congregation at Philippi he said, “But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity. Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:10-13 NKJV)

Paul instructs us more about being content, “Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain

we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content" (1 Timothy 6:6-8 NKJV). We who preach around the world must be very careful to remember why we are there. We are there to present Christ and the New Testament church. We certainly do not want to destroy anyone's contentment and sense of blessings.

In many parts of the world jobs are difficult to get and keep. Still, if we are physically and mentally able, we are expected to work to provide for ourselves and others. Interestingly, Paul informs us the Apostles had the authority to demand money from congregations. While other Apostles may have exercised that right, Paul never did. He chose to work to provide for his own needs rather than ask for money.

He told the congregation at Thessalonica, "But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you; nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us. For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread" (2 Thessalonians 3:6-12 NKJV). It is a serious matter in any nation when an able-bodied, mentally fit person is "disorderly" and a "busybody," in spending a great deal of their time begging for money from everyone they know online.

While we are to be generous with those who are less fortunate, that does not mean we can be unwise in how we do that. We should never just send money to the person who has worn us down with the volume of their requests and the tone of their demands.

Since all giving in the New Testament is to be voluntary, we have choices of who we help, when, and how much. It is our decision. We may never want to help anyone outside our own family, because of the needs among members of our family. We may want to only help individuals within our congregation, because of the seriousness of those needs. Or we may want to help somewhere, anywhere in the world where there are individuals, Christians or non-Christians, with needs we can help. Before helping anyone, even in our own family, we need to make sure we can verify the need before we send any money anywhere. To be continued. 3816 Tambos Trl., Edmond, OK 73034 916-804-3787 papagreg@aol.com

THINGS TO CONSIDER

THE WORSHIP OF THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

By David Griffin

In modern times, a common view is that it doesn't matter what the church offers to God as worship. Throughout most of the twentieth century, denominational worship was fairly "conservative," at least by today's standards. It used to be that denominational worship services mainly consisted of singing (usually traditional) hymns, accompanied by an organ or piano. Some larger churches with more money and talent had large choirs, accompanied by small orchestral groups; others conducted perhaps had a "band" made up of drums, guitar, piano, etc. After a few hymns, preachers delivered their sermons, at the end of which, they extended an "altar call" during an "invitation song," and the whole service ended with a closing prayer. In those days, the churches of Christ gained the reputation of opposing the use of musical instruments in worship as described above as well as other innovations. They were told that such things do not matter, and that God receives any worship that is offered sincerely.

However, beginning in the late 20th century, as denominations began seeing their memberships wane, many adopted further innovations in the attempt to "draw better crowds." Many of them (including even some churches of Christ), began "expanding" their "worship" practices to include not only choirs and gospel bands, but such things as replicas of Noah's ark and sessions of aerobics exercise to the glory of Jesus! Back in the 90s, a

church flier announced “Roundup Day,” where on the following Sunday the pastor promised to dress up like a cowboy riding his horse and give out free popguns to the children. Another flier declared that an upcoming Sunday would be “Bless Your Pet Sunday” — Just “bring ol’ Fido to church to receive a blessing!”

Over the past twenty-five years, this kind of thing has now morphed into churches offering both “Contemporary” and “Traditional” services. And a whole religious culture has grown up around the concept of “Worship Teams” and “Worship Team Leaders” and “Worship Team Training” and even a “Bachelor’s Degree in Worship Team Leadership,” etc. Now, while I do believe that public teachers and leaders in worship need training to help them conduct the service effectively, something indeed seems to have gone awry in the realm of modern evangelicalism. Accordingly, the more conservative voices are now lamenting such things as “Bethel” and “Hillsong” music movements, which the evangelical John MacArthur roundly condemns as blasphemous (YouTube video, “John MacArthur, Hillsong and Bethel Music”). It seems that the 20th century evangelical refrain that “It doesn’t matter how you worship God” has come back to haunt them in the 21st century!

Even many churches of Christ today have fallen into this trap. However, there are a few of us who still worship according to the New Testament pattern, just like we have for a very long time.

We find essentially five ordinances of divine service that the New Testament church offered in worship to God.

1. They mingled their voices in song to God. In Ephesians 5:19 – “speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.” This passage describes reciprocal action, that is, all the assembled Christians, collectively offering the fruit of their lips to God in song. No solos, choirs, concerts, or instruments of music here.
2. They prayed together. Acts 2:42 – “they continued steadfastly in prayer.” Prayer is always an appropriate activity for Christians whether privately or in public assemblies.

Passages such as Acts 12:12, 1 Corinthians 14:15, and many others show that first century Christians prayed when they assembled for worship.

3. The scriptures were taught. In Acts 11:26 the Bible says that “for a whole year [Barnabas and Paul] assembled with the church and taught a great many people.” Acts 13:1 says there were “many prophets and teachers” in the church at Antioch. And throughout the New Testament, public teaching of the Word of God was an important part of the corporate worship of Christians.
4. The early church also partook of the Lord’s Supper on the first day of the week in memory of the death of Christ. In Acts 20:7 we’re told that “On the first day of the week, the disciples came together to break bread and Paul preached to them.” The language of this passage indicates that weekly observance of the Lord’s Supper was a regular and ongoing practice. Acts 2:42 suggests the same idea when it says that the early disciples “continued steadfastly in...the breaking of bread.”
5. Last, they took a collection. 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 – “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: on the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.” It is important to notice that in no case did the New Testament church make general appeals to the public for money. What Paul describes here is a “free-will offering,” strictly on the part of those who were members of the church. Modern-day deviations from this New Testament practice are a shame to the name of Christ.

If I were Satan, I would want people to think that you cannot have a church today without offering an entire package of entertainment activities. I would want people to mimic pop culture, and worldly practices, and many innovations about which the Bible says nothing. Even though the worldly worship practices we’re described here are hugely successful at drawing crowds, Satan is no doubt very happy indeed!



WALKS THROUGH THE BIBLE...

WHAT IF YOU HAD BEEN NOAH?

by Jerry Dickinson

Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. So the LORD said, 'I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.' But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD" (Genesis 6:5-8).

The description of the world in Noah's day sounds a lot like our own world today. Right? Violence had filled the whole earth, the imagination of man's heart was evil continually, and even the sons of God had corrupted themselves. Three terrible words vividly portray how far gone things were: every, only, continually! Every intent and imagination was evil. Not just some thoughts, but every thought! Not just evil, but only evil! Not just some of the time, but continually! Man's every thought and intent was only evil all the time. So great was this wickedness that God decided to destroy the world with a flood. But, the scripture proclaims, "Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD."

"By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith" (Hebrews 11:7). Noah saved his family and the human race from extinction, and is a perfect example of the righteousness which is by faith. He believed the warning he received from God, he was moved and motivated by reverential fear, and he obeyed the instructions given to him to the letter. That is salvation by faith! Hearing. Believing. Obeying. But, what if you had been Noah?

If you had been Noah would you have accepted the great responsibility of building the ark? I know of many who are not Christians simply because they do not want to be responsible for their actions to anybody – certainly not to God! Many Christians shirk from teaching and serving others. "Let someone else be responsible" is the attitude of too many sons of God even today. Like the priest and the Levite in the parable of the good Samaritan, they pass by on the other side, not wanting to get too involved in the work of helping hurt and wounded souls. Noah was moved with Godly fear to accept a seemingly overwhelming task of building a giant boat to save his family, and the human race from extinction.

If you had been Noah, would you have been satisfied with the pattern for the ark just as God gave it? The Lord was very specific about the dimensions of the boat He wanted Noah to build. Too, it was to be built out of gopher wood. Suppose Noah used the rationale of so many today and decided the specific instructions are not important and decided to substitute pine or oak for gopher wood. Would God have accepted substitutions for His plan? It is the Lord's plan after all. Noah heard God's word, he believed and was motivated by reverential fear to obey precisely. If we fear God and reverence His instructions, we will always follow the pattern He has given and obey precisely!

If you had been Noah, could God have used you as he used Noah? The reason Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD was because, the Bible says, he was an upright and righteous man. Many times we want to be of service but our hands and lives are dirty and stained with sin and God cannot use us. Let us strive to keep our lives pure for the sake of others we could help save. The Lord wants to use you to save your family and friends, but how can you help others if your life is outside of God's grace. Ruth and Boaz, because of the wise and righteous choices they made, became a highway for God to fulfil His plan to bring Jesus into the world as Messiah and Savior. Your choice to live a righteous life becomes an opportunity for God to use you to save others. Did Noah have any inkling (or Boaz and Ruth for that matter) that simply by living a righteous life he was preparing an opportunity for God to save the human race?

If you had been Noah, would you have persevered and held on while waiting for God, in His own good time, to perform His will? Noah worked on the ark (and preached righteousness to his neighbors) for 120 years before the flood finally came upon the world. It is hard to wait 12 years much less 120 years! Noah held on to the promise of salvation for him and his family in spite of the mocking and sneering of an unbelieving world, and in spite of having to wait so long. The world that then was, Peter declares in 2 Peter 3:6, perished in the waters of the flood. A new world appeared to Noah and his family as they exited the ark. The long wait was worth it. Christians have been waiting a long time for the promised return of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is preparing a place for us, and in His own good time He will come to receive us to Himself, that where He is there we may be also. Noah held out and held on! Are you?