

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. 3

JESUS - AN ATHEIST?

By BRAD SHOCKLEY

Jesus-An Atheist? Jesus has been called many things, but an atheist? According to Richard Dawkins, an advocate for the religion of atheism and author of the popular book *The God Delusion*, Jesus would have been. According to a post on *The Blaze*, Dawkins suggests, “Somebody as intelligent as Jesus would have been an atheist if he had known what we know today.” Of course, Dawkins, along with many modern skeptics and atheists, have a distorted view of truth and Jesus Christ. Let us examine why there is no possible way for Jesus to be an atheist.

The Deity of Christ

Jesus never could be an atheist. He is Deity! John, from the beginning of this Gospel, explains the nature of Jesus: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” (Jn. 1:1). In very plain language John shares the foundational truth that the “Word was God.” John 1:14 provides the insight to identify who the “Word” is: “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” Jesus is the Word, therefore, He is God! The entire gospel account penned by John is a defense of the true nature of Jesus and His Deity. Near the conclusion of the Gospel, John states, “But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.” (20:31). John’s argument for truth, including the “I am” statements found in his Gospel, is all based upon the opening verse of his gospel account.

In his commentary on John, Daniel King wrote, “It is the unique contribution of the prologue of the Gospel of John, that it reveals the Word of God not merely as an attribute of God, but as a distinct Person within the Godhead, dwelling with the

Creator before creation began, and acting as the divine agent in creation. John does not say merely that the Word possessed certain divine qualities but that he was partaker of the divine essence. He was himself divine.” Paul Butler adds, “When we understand that Jesus existed eternally in such a state of oneness with the Father, we begin to understand that God was and is always like Jesus Christ (minus His earthly body, of course).”

The Apostle Paul defends the claim in Romans: “Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.” (9:5). In two other passages that are arguably some of the most impressive works of literature, Paul argues for the Deity of Christ-Philippians 2:5-11 and Colossians 1:15-20.

Isaiah, one of the greatest prophets of old, predicted the birth of Jesus, “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isa. 7:14). The fulfillment of this prophecy is revealed in Matthew’s account: “Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.” (1:22-23). Notice carefully the name chosen for the child-Immanuel. Matthew explains it means “God with us.” “Immanuel” is not the personal name of Christ but is descriptive of the character He possesses; His real being. Paul provides more insight in the Colossian epistle. Colossians 2:9 reads, “For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” Clearly, the authors of both Old and New Testaments are united in their teaching regarding the Deity of Jesus.

Jesus-Son of God

Jesus was not merely called the Son of God, He is the Son of God. It is one thing for people to place a title on someone; quite another to embody

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Editorial

I WISH

By: RICK MARTIN

Someone has wisely said that it doesn't cost anything to wish. But, how often do we hear the brethren wishing for this and that. "I wish we could have a meeting; I wish brother so and so would not be so hard in his talks; I wish the preachers would not harp on this or that so much; I wish the preacher would bring his family with him; or, not bring them with him; I wish the preacher would dress neater; I wish the preacher would be more common like the rest of us." Well, now while the others are wishing, suppose that I wish a little.

I wish the brethren would decide when they want their meetings held, let the preacher book this time, and then stay with that time. If it rains or doesn't rain; if someone goes visiting, or whatever happens, just have their meeting at that time. For most of the preachers hold more than one meeting during the year, and if they change the time of your meeting, they usually have to change several others.

I wish if the brethren who don't intend for a preacher to hold their meeting they would tell him about it soon after they ask him to hold it (or, before they ask him) and not wait until a few weeks before the meeting should begin and then call it off. For if they would let the preacher know in time, he can generally hold a meeting somewhere else and save a soul or two.

I wish that all of the members would attend worship every Lord's day (Heb. 10:25). Then, if someone were absent, we would know to go and see about them, and would not be afraid of running in on a domino game, or of finding him trying to make a horse trade.

I wish our brethren would take an interest in singing and try to make it possible to have, at least, one singing school taught in their community every year. If we pay taxes and go to other expenses to have our children taught how to read, etc., then why not go to a little expense to have them taught how to read music?

I wish that we would all be able to sing with the "spirit and with the understanding," and thus "make melody in our heart to the Lord"- (1 Cor. 14; Col. 3:16).

I wish our brethren would advertise their meetings. A lot of times our meetings are half over before some

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QUERIST COLUMN

By Ronny F. Wade

Question: A friend I have been discussing religion with accuses us of focusing too much on sin. He says that Jesus is supposed to be our focus; not sin. Is there any merit to his criticism? What does the Bible teach?

Answer: In Acts 8:35 the Scripture says “Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning at this Scripture preached Jesus to him.” What does it mean to preach Jesus? Obviously, according to the verse that followed, preaching Jesus included preaching baptism. Anyone who would say “we ought to preach Jesus, and not mention baptism would be wrong.” Preaching Jesus includes what Jesus taught. By the same token “focusing on Jesus” means that we focus on what Jesus provided for us in his death as well as what he taught about a variety of subjects. Jesus taught on humility, sincerity, obedience, faithfulness, and a number of other things. When I teach what Jesus taught, I am focusing on Him and His teaching. Jesus also taught about sin. He condemned various actions and thoughts. He condemned a failure on our part to obey His will. Jesus said in John 15:22 “If I had not come and spoken to them they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin.” This verse clearly shows that Jesus condemned those things that were sinful. The person quoted in the question is correct when he says we need to focus on Jesus, however, he misses the point if he concludes doing so excludes the mention and condemnation of sin. Jesus came to save us from our sins. His sacrifice on the cross made it possible for God to forgive us of our sins. Sin separates us from God. To ignore sin and simply rely on Jesus ignores our Lord’s condemnation of those things that are wrong. The question really is “how much is too much? In other words should we focus a “little” on those things that are sinful? Could it be that to focus on sin causes us to be uncomfortable because of our sin? Isn’t that exactly what Jesus did in his teaching while on this earth? He sought to make people uncomfortable with their sin. We should do the same thing.

Question: Would you please address the problem of parents disciplining their children? Especially in situations where one parent disciplines a child and the other parent comforts the child thereby negating what the first parent sought to do?

Answer: In my view when a parent fails to enforce the discipline of the other parent, they set the stage for rebellious children. Over the years I have dealt with thousands of children with discipline problems, many of which were actually caused by parents who disagreed on how or when to discipline the child. If one parent feels that the other has been wrong of unjust in the punishment they administer, they should talk to the other parent in private and resolve the differences between them rather than do so in front of the children. Such behavior creates a situation where the child will run to the disagreeing parent for consolation and any hope of successfully correcting the child is lost. It has been my observation that children who misbehave in church, usually misbehave at home as well. If children are not taught to be quiet, respectful, etc at home they will not so behave in public. It is sad, but many children today are in charge of the home. They “run” the home. Parents yield to them rather than children being subject to the parents. Church services are often disrupted to the point that no one can concentrate on what is being said. Children are commanded to “obey” their parents (Eph. 6:1-2). Fathers are charged to bring their children up in the training and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4). Methods of discipline vary. The scriptures speak of correcting a child by “spanking” or “paddling” them (Prov. 13:24). One can also discipline a child by withdrawal of privileges, or time out. Positive discipline that offers rewards for good behavior is also effective in many situations. The important thing is consistency. Children should be taught respect for God, His word, and worship services early in life. Many times it is not the small child that creates the problem. It is the teenager who talks, passes notes, and in various ways demonstrates a lack of reverence and respect for the assembly. Today many teenagers who should know better spend their time “texting” someone while worship is in progress. In such cases, it is the responsibility of preachers, teachers, church leaders, and all parents to insist on proper conduct as we worship before God. (Send all questions to Ronny F. Wade P.O. Box 14352 Springfield, MO 65814 or ronnywade36@gmail.com)

CANNIBALISM

By MARK GRANT

If there is one practice among a group of people that has always been looked down upon with abhorrence and disgust in every society it is cannibalism. A cannibal is defined by Webster's Dictionary as "A person who eats human flesh or internal organs of other human beings." Yes, that is right! Human beings literally eat other human beings. "Cannibal" comes from the Spanish name for the Carib people. When Christopher Columbus first came to the Caribbean and saw the Carib people practicing Cannibalism, he referred to it as "savage."

Cannibalism is mentioned several times in Scripture; (Lev. 26:29; Deut. 28:53-57; Jer.19:9; Lam. 2:20; 4:10; Ezek. 5:10). But in each case, the practice is regarded as a horrible curse and inhuman act of desperation. Moses and other prophets predicted that, if the Israelites forsook God, they would fall into such awful degradation as to cannibalize their own children. These harrowing prophecies were fulfilled during the siege of Jerusalem and Samaria, one of which was during the reign of King Jehoram (2 Kings 6:28-29). Cannibalism was the physical horror which accompanied the spiritual horror of apostasy.

While the physical act of cannibalism hardly exists in our world anymore, it is sad to see spiritual cannibalism alive and well in our own brotherhood today. The apostle Paul wrote, "For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' But if you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another!" (Gal. 5:13-15; NKJV) When most people think of liberty or freedom, they think of having permission to do things that please them. Such as, some feel a liberty to treat others any old way they want to. True faith in Christ however, does not focus on the flesh, nor does it free us to participate in or flirt with evil, but rather it frees us to love one another and to show that love by serving one another. The Lord has always taught his people to, "love your neighbor as yourself." Yet the very reverse has been happening in our brotherhood. Brothers and Sisters in Christ are backbiting and devouring one another to the detriment of the Lord's church

and to their own shame. Brethren, after worship services displaying a shouting match out in the parking lot. Brothers in Christ coming to fist blows out in the front yard for all to see. Brothers and Sisters lying and making false accusations against their own members. It has even gotten to the point that brethren are bringing up things far in the past, things that other brethren have been forgiven of, and they are threatening to bring it all up and expose things that should never be brought up again. Anyone can look around and see the many things going on throughout the brotherhood; Brethren against Brethren, Sisters against Sisters, congregations against congregations, and all the while Satan laughs in the halls of hell. God has never lead or taught his people to "bite and devour one another" like savages.

Works Of The Flesh

First of all, let me say that there is nothing wrong with Christians disagreeing with one another or passionately defending our beliefs. This is how we learn, how we sharpen and correct our thinking, and how we help others to improve. It was Solomon who wrote, "As iron sharpens iron, So a man sharpens the countenance of his friend' (Pr 27:17). What is of utmost importance is that we learn how to conduct ourselves in the midst of controversies or conflicts when they arise, because unless we do, congregations are doomed to undergo more splits without the real problem (our mistreating each other) ever being addressed. Sadly, this kind of behavior happens all too often. In my lifetime, I, myself, have seen and experienced too many congregations that have gone thru an agonizing spilt. What is most upsetting is not the disagreement but the nasty politics we see that usually accompanies it. We see mean words expressed, the angry attitudes and childish behaviors, the awful displays of pride and selfishness, the backbiting, the minimizing of sin and outright disobedience to God's Word, and the lack of forgiveness or interest in reconciliation.

When conflict arises, our attitudes and behaviors should reflect our new life in Christ with the old man being crucified with its passions and desires (Gal. 5:24). We have a choice to make, either we can walk in the Spirit or fulfill the lust of the flesh. Much of the contentious infighting and unnecessary division that plagues many of our congregations today results from believers acting according to the flesh and not walking by the Spirit. This was true of some of the New Testament churches as well. Recognizing the

potential harm of such behavior Paul, the apostle, addressed the problem in his letters to the churches of Galatia and Corinth. In Galatians chapter five we read, "I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God' (Gal. 5:16-21). The apostle Paul also wrote the Corinthian church, "For I fear lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I wish, and that I shall be found by you such as you do not wish; lest there be contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, backbitings, whisperings, conceits, tumults; lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you, and I shall mourn for many who have sinned before and have not repented of the uncleanness, fornication, and lewdness which they have practiced' (2 Cor. 12:20-21). When are we going to recognize, brethren, that "the works of the flesh" such as pride, anger, jealousy, and selfish ambition, can destroy a church family and its leadership. Is there a righteous way to treat one another when facing disagreements? Has God provided guidance in His word for handling conflict the right way? We can either chose to become a people of principle to follow the specific biblical principles that instruct us in how to deal with conflict or practice "the works of the flesh".

WHAT'S THE SOLUTION?

What is the solution to such biting, devouring, and destroying that is all too common among Christian assemblies today? The answer, Paul says, is by walking in the Spirit. Jesus taught the unique principles of humility, servanthood, forgiveness, and love as Paul wrote, "through love serve one another" (Gal. 5:13). As Christians we can obey these biblical principles in the local congregation so that we are able to work together in unity until Jesus comes again. As the apostles had to address these kinds of matters, they wrote down inspired scriptures that we can study as to how Christian believers are to think, act, and treat one another when conflict arises and how we can

still live in harmony, even when we disagree with one another. That's why the apostle Paul wrote, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-25).

How we treat one another as Brothers and Sisters in Christ proves just how much we truly love God. The apostle John taught, "If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also (1 John 4:20-21). If you want to know just how much a Christian truly loves God, then all you have to see is how well he treats his Brothers and Sisters in Christ and his fellow man. When you see displays of hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, backbitings, whisperings, conceits, tumults; then that Brother or Sister does not love God and is walking in darkness. "He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes"(1 John 2:9-11).

Every congregation is going to have problems and disagreements. But when are we going to acknowledge that Christ has called us to love one another fervently, to be humble servants, to submit one to another, to patiently bear with one another, to speak truthfully, to forgive and reconcile our differences, to have right attitudes toward one another, and to display the fruit of the Spirit at all times and especially during times of conflict. "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with long suffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:1-3). God has always wanted his people to live in a way that would demonstrate his holy character to the unbelieving world (John 17:21-23).

The causes of divisions in the local congregation are many, but ultimately the main reason for a church split is that someone has taken his focus off Jesus Christ and begun to use the local church for his own selfish needs. Pride and selfishness will always be the main cause of dissensions and tumults within the local congregation (Prov. 13:10). If Christians would show forth the fruit of the Spirit who indwells them (Gal. 5:22-23), then there would be no discord and dissension. If Jesus Christ is our main focus in serving Him in love and humility, then there may be disagreement, but the conflicts will be worked out in a loving and appropriate manner. As for me, Brethren, I am thinking about becoming a vegetarian.

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that title. This is precisely how Mark begins his narrative, “The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (1:1). It is no accident such a title is given. It was one that demands respect and reverence, captivates the reader’s attention, and builds expectation.

Perhaps we have overlooked the significance of this statement. To the original audience of Gentiles in Rome this served to introduce Jesus. Perhaps others, only vaguely familiar with the story of the Man, were able to see the true nature of who He is. The story of Jesus builds in this narrative and reaches the climax with the centurion’s confession. The scene pictured at the cross is described in these words: “And when the centurion, which stood over against him, saw that he so cried out, and gave up the ghost, he said, Truly this man was the Son of God.” (Mk. 15:39). The centurion was Rome’s representative on the scene of the events on this monumental day. It has, and will continue to be debated, was this a genuine confession or just a respectful utterance? Lane makes some interesting observations, “By ‘Son of God’ the centurion presumably meant that Jesus was a divine man or deified hero who accepted humiliation and death as an act of obedience to a higher mandate. It can be expected that his words reflect a religious point of view shaped by popular Hellenism. Mark, however, clearly intended his readers to recognize in the exclamation a genuine Christian confession, in the consciousness that these words are true in a higher sense than the centurion understood. In this light the centurion’s words constitute an appropriate

complement to the affirmation of Peter that Jesus is the Messiah in Ch. 8:29 and the triumphant climax to the Gospel in terms of the programmatic confession of Jesus in Ch. 1:1.” Lane further states, “The fact that the truth of Jesus’ person was publicly declared, whether intentionally or unintentionally, by a Roman, was undoubtedly important to the Christians in Rome. In contemporary practice the designation ‘Son of God’ had been arrogated for the Roman ruler, who was worshiped in the state cult. Most effectively, therefore, Mark reports that the centurion proclaimed that the crucified Jesus (and not the emperor) is the Son of God”

Many times Jesus was referred to as the Son of God.

- Demons/Unclean spirits- Mt. 8:29; Mk. 3:11; 5:7; Lk. 4:41
- Those in the boat on the storm tossed water- Mt. 14:33
- Peter’s famous confession- Mt. 16:16
- The Holy Ghost- Lk. 1:35
- John the Baptist- Jn. 1:34
- Nathanael- Jn. 1:49
- Philip- Acts 8:37
- The Devil, in his temptation- Mt. 4:3, 6; Lk. 4:3

In conclusion, for Jesus to be an atheist, it would mean He never existed. That, according to the evidence, would be an irresponsible and impossible claim. There is coming a day in which Dawkins, atheists, and all humanity will realize the nature of Jesus. Paul writes a fitting end to the matter: “That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Phil. 2:10-11).

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I WISH..... continued from page two

of the closest neighbors know that we are having a meeting. It looks to me as if the members of the church should have as much interest in spreading the gospel as Cornelius had (Acts 10).

I wish our brethren would all use the “fruit of the vine” in the communion, for, when intoxicating wine is used, and we smell ones breath, we can’t tell whether he has been to worship or to the saloon.

I wish that the preachers would all preach the same thing in every congregation. Remember Paul says “the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others” (2 Tim. 2:2).

I wish that all the preachers would “bring their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,” for everybody sees what the preacher’s children do, and if they do wrong, it surely is bad, and it hurts the preacher’s influence too.

I wish the brethren would bring their children up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, too, so the preacher’s children would have some good children to associate with, for many times children learn bad habits from other children.

I wish that we would all “follow after the things which make for peace,” (Rom. 14:19), and not be always trying to find something else to disturb the churches. Remember, Jesus said “blessed is the peace-maker.”

I wish you would read this again.

The preceding article was written by Brother Homer A. Gay and appeared in the September 1939 issue of the Old Paths Advocate. Brother Gay passed away in 1958. I was only 5 years old, so I don’t remember him. I have heard many stories about Brother Gay and read many of his writings. I remember when I got a copy of his book, A Good Soldier published by Ronny Wade. He had a sermon in that book titled Horse Sense. I remembered as a young boy going into my room and preaching that sermon over and over again. I am thankful for Brother Gay and other old soldiers of the cross who stood firmly for the truth. With much respect for Brother Gay, I would like to offer my own Wish List.

I wish parents would teach their children that Church is more important than a ball game. Some parents can drive 100’s of miles to take their children to a

ball tournament, but can’t drive 50 miles to take them to a Gospel Meeting.

I wish people would be more considerate of their home congregations. Some people just leave their home congregation willy-nilly with no concern about the number of people who are going to be there to conduct services.

I wish people would get to Church on time. This would help out the man who is making arrangements. He wouldn’t have to wait until the last minute to get the services arranged. It would also cut down on the noise being made during the services and not sound like a herd of cattle stampeding when members come in late.

I wish people would go to the bathroom before services instead of traipsing in and out and disrupting services. Some congregations need an urologist more than a preacher. (I have to give credit for this one to Barney Owens.)

I wish song leaders would choose songs appropriate for the occasion. Don’t lead hard, difficult songs during the Lord’s Day worship. Make sure you have all the parts for the song you are leading.

I wish preachers would be more considerate of people’s time. There is no need to hold people hostage. The people you are preaching to more than likely have to get up and go to work, or they may have children that need to go to school the next day. Remember the mind will only absorb as much as the seat allows it too.

I wish people would dress more appropriately when attending the Church services. You would not go to a meeting with the President dressed inappropriately, why do it when attending a meeting before the King of kings.

I wish some congregations would stop trying to be like Disney World offering fun, food and frolic. If Jesus wasn’t interested in using loaves and fishes to get disciples (John 6:26, John 6:66), why should the Church attempt to do so. The Church has a duty to spread the Gospel. The purpose of the Church is not political, environmental, educational, or social, it is spiritual.

I wish all of us would think about these things.
-Rick Martin 300 Clubview Terrace, Woodstock,GA 30189

THE WORK OF AN EVANGELIST

By Paul O. Nichols

There is a work in the church called “the work of an evangelist” (2 Tim. 4:6). Not every member is required to do this work. The Greek word translated. “evangelist” is “euangelistes” and “means a messenger of good... denotes a preacher of the Gospel” (W. E. Vine). There is also a position in the church which we refer to as the eldership (Tit. 1:5, 6). These two positions have been authorized by God.

The qualifications of one office are not necessarily those of the other. Qualifications for the office of an elder are found in 1 Tim. 3 and Titus 1. One of the qualifications required is that the individual be a family man. An evangelist is not so required. The apostle Paul was not married, and there is no indication that Timothy or Titus were married, but they were active in evangelism. Philip, “the evangelist” (Acts 21:8) was married and had four daughters (Acts 21:8, 9). So an evangelist may either be married or unmarried.

A person can be a local teacher, and not be an evangelist nor an elder. The writer makes it clear in Eph. 4:11. “He gave some evangelists..., some pastors (elders) and teachers.” All evangelists are teachers, but all teachers are neither elders nor evangelists.

The field of evangelism is unlimited (Matt. 13:38). Jesus says “go teach all nations” (Matt. 28:19), and “Go preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark. 16:15). The work of the eldership is distinctly different. It is a position in a local sense. The apostle Peter tells the elders of the church to, “Feed the flock of God which is among you” (1 Pet. 5:2). Also, the apostle Paul tells the elders at Ephesus, “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). The responsibility and their authority is limited to one congregation where they have been appointed, and extends no further.

The work of an evangelist is primarily the preaching of the Gospel. The Greek word translated “work” in 2 Tim. 4:6 is “ergon”, meaning “occupation, labor”. (Not just a sideline.) When Paul was giving his instructions to Timothy, a young evangelist, he said, “Preach the word” (2 Tim. 4:1, 2). Peter said, “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God” (1 Pet. 4:11). Again, the apostle Paul advised Timothy, “Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine... Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them” (1 Tim. 4:13, 15).

Evangelistic work includes, not only the preaching of the Gospel, but other duties as well. It includes “setting in order things that are wanting” (Tit. 1: 5), the ordaining of elders when men qualify (1 Tim. 3:1, 2; Tit. 1: 6); the

training of teachers (2 Tim. 2:2), and the disciplining of unruly members (2 Tim. 4:2-4) - including elders who sin (2 Tim. 5:22). And all of this is to be done without partiality (1 Tim. 5:21).

While an evangelist has been given authority by the Lord, it does not supersede the authority of the eldership. When an evangelist ordains elders, immediately he becomes subject to their authority. The elders represent congregational authority, and the Bible says, “Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine” (1 Tim. 5:17). They are shepherds over the flock. This means an evangelist who is a part of a congregation with elders, is subject to that authority just like all other members. That does not make any less the authority nor the responsibilities of the evangelist. However, the writer of Hebrews says, “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account...” (Heb. 13:17). This submission shows respect for those men who have met the qualifications, and respect for their God given authority. Even so, elders are not to “lord it over God’s heritage” (1 Pet. 5:3).

The apostle Paul taught the Corinthians that “...the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel (be supported)” (1 Cor. 9:14). Again, he said to the church at Philippi, “...ye sent once and again to my necessity” (Phil. 4:16). In his second letter to the Corinthians Paul wrote, “I robbed other churches taking wages of them to do you service” (2 Cor. 11:8).

The financial support of the church makes it possible for the evangelist to scripturally “forbear working” (1 Cor. 9:6), so that he is free to go into all the world and “preach the Gospel to every creature”, and to “teach all nations” (Mark. 1:15, 16; Matt. 28:19, 20). “It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe” (1 Cor. 1:21).

Announcements

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

We have just received word that Brother Benny Cryer has a form of Lymphoma in his stomach and one lung. We encourage everyone reading this to pray for his safe and complete recovery. He is beginning chemo treatments immediately.

If you would like to send him a card, his address is Bennie Cryer 4635 Larkin Rd. Live Oak, CA 95953

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**THE CHURCH IN BOLIVAR, MISSOURI
The church in Bolivar, MO is now meeting
in their new permanent location at
706 N. Briarwood.**

Services are Sunday morning at 10 A.M and Sunday afternoon at 1:30. Wednesday evening at 7:30. For further information you may contact them at 417-893-0948 or www.cocbolivarmo.com



Our Departed

POWELL- George Edward (Ed) Powell was born in Oklahoma on May 23, 1917 and departed this life on December 26, 2012 after 95 years, 7 months, and 4 days. Ed was one of nine children of Sam and Alice Powell. He was proceeded in death by his parents and by siblings Cleveland, Ralph, Lyman, Leo, Edna, and Mable. Ed is survived by his wife of nearly 68 years, Violet, and four children, Alice, Charlene, Edith, and George, plus six grandchildren, nine great grandchildren and one great-great grandchild. Ed's paternal grandmother was Chickasaw and Ed was a citizen of the Chickasaw Nation of Oklahoma. Ed was raised in poverty and lived a very nomadic life in his early years. His father moved the family frequently between coal camps and vegetable and cotton farms in Oklahoma, New Mexico, Colorado, Arkansas, and Texas. Ed could pick 150 pounds of cotton a day when he was eight years old and was only able to attend school to the third grade. The whole family moved to California during the depression in 1933 and eventually settled in the Lodi area working in a dairy. After time in the military in WWII, Ed and Violet married and lived in the Sacramento area. After several jobs, Ed became an aircraft mechanic leading crews to make sure planes were OK to fly. Ed's family was instrumental in helping the church get a foothold in Northern California in Lodi and in Sacramento. Ed became a preacher of the gospel, which was the vocation of his life that meant the most to him. Ed was very active in the church in California, preaching primarily in the Sacramento area at the North Area and 64th. St. congregations. He had a few trips across the country and had wonderful memories of preaching trips to the Midwest. He was also a very active personal worker and helped to convert many with his willingness to study with anyone. Ed was intensely zealous and fearless in his defense of the truth and the purity of the church. I used one of his sermon outlines at the service, "Heaven, A Prepared Place." His notes indicate he preached that sermon from 1955 to 1986. A large crowd gathered at the funeral home to pay their respect and offer condolences to the family. Jimmy Winchester and I spoke words of comfort at the service. - Greg Gay

Field Reports

Roger Owens, Freeman Road Congregation in Neosho Missouri 64850. The year has begun and much to set in order here and in many other locations. First I mention we baptized a man that is a brother to one of our members. Last year we baptized 11 souls into Christ. The

influence of one helped to save the other. Brethren this is how it is supposed to work. It is our goal to repeat or improve on that number Lord willing. The congregation continues to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord. Many issues seem to come forth as you travel and investigate the needs of the church in many places. While most of us that do evangelistic work, holding meetings and work at respective congregations, there is so much more that needs our attention. Congregations want to grow but the laborers are so few. We seem to be doing a better job at converting but I see such a need for teaching within congregations. Leadership needs were what Paul expressed in the new and old congregations to sustain them. (Timothy & Titus, etc) Leadership requires that we be faithful stewards in order to bring the lost to the Lord. Here in Neosho we have started a new through the bible series for our members as a home study help. This is a Bible correspondence course that members can take over the course of one year. I have this available to any who may wish to read the New Testament and review its content as you go. If you want to do the course just let me know and I will send to your home free. The answers are also on the back page so you don't need to send it back but grade your own work. If you take the simple course you will have read and reviewed the New Testament this year or within a year. The work in Casper is still going on and much to get done. The winter weather has hindered my ability to go and be with the church there. I am planning a trip in March and hope to go back during the summer months as well. I continue to receive support from 4 congregations and without their support the work would not be possible. We have the radio, TV, and newspaper work that continue in Casper. We continue to seek any that may have an interest in moving to Casper and help secure that work. Last I mention the pains and sufferings of many over the last few weeks and months. Health issues have troubled many congregations across the brotherhood. Soon spring will arrive and new opportunity to become more involved in needed work. Brethren pray for us as we remember all in our daily prayers. May the spirit of truth and peace remain and abound among our ranks. God Bless. Roger L. Owens 1-417-451-03301

Brett Hickey, 8373 Highway 5 South, Mountain Home, AR, 72653; 870/736-0774; unityseeker@hotmail.com; February 6, 2013 The congregation is at peace and doing well in Mountain Home despite several moving to Missouri; our loss is their gain. We rejoice over a couple who took their stand for the truth with us this fall through the TV program out of Springfield. The neighbor of another member obeyed the gospel and her husband has been attending with her. The NBC station in Springfield has recently boosted the value they give us by agreeing to tape our congregational singing at no charge and by running spots at no charge during prime time programming. During the second week in January, our spot aired during the Golden Globe Awards, the highest rated program on NBC that week. You can access

transcripts, podcasts and HD videos for 180 sermons from the TV program at LetTheBibleSpeak.com. You can receive a free DVD of any of these messages you would like to share with friends, family, or other contacts. We enjoyed the spiritual feast with those from across the country who attended the New Years Eve meeting in Oklahoma City. It was gratifying to get to know brethren I had only met or heard of previously. We relished our first visit with the Piedmont congregation while in the area. Fall meetings with the brethren at Houston and Ozark, MO, Indianapolis, and New Salem (Brookhaven, MS) as well as our January meeting at Green Oaks (Arlington, TX) were uplifting. What a pleasure to be with brethren so assertive in getting the gospel before the lost and erring in their communities. We look forward to being with the following brethren soon: Moore, OK, 3/8-3/10; McGregor, TX, 3/23-3/31; Stockton, CA, 4/17 -4/21. Hope to see some of you there!

Clint De France, 5021 Taft Blvd. #3211, Wichita Falls, TX 76308, January 30. In this report I will briefly recount the events of 2012 and give a prospectus of 2013. Last year was a good and productive year at the congregation here in Wichita Falls. We had 5 baptisms and a family of 4 that took their stand out of digression. This made close to 30 additions to the congregation in the last two years. We have had of course some losses. A few are struggling and a few have fallen away, but over all we have been able to maintain the harvest and it is a great blessing to see such a flock of newborn Christians as they zealously grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. To our great loss and sadness we said good bye last year to one of our dearest members, Brother Morriss Heskett. We miss him always and rejoice to see him again in the resurrection. Last year my meetings took me to congregations in Oklahoma, Missouri, Alabama, Texas, California, Kentucky and Illinois. I wish that I could mention in this report each meeting in detail, but space does not permit. Last June as many know I was blessed to marry Leanne Nelson and she was able to accompany me on all but one of my meetings for the last half of the year. We were received with such warmth and hospitality by all and hope that soon we can see those brethren again. Thank you so much to those who welcomed us into your homes and provided us with meals. I was also able to take a trip to Tanzania, East Africa last April with Mike Criswell. We held several gospel meetings and Bible studies resulting in 6 baptisms if I recall. In the latter part of the year I held a mission meeting in Holliday, TX at the Community Center and we had about 6 visitors from the community. Perhaps some will eventually be interested in continuing Bible study. Late last year I was contacted through the internet by brother Brad Whitley of Wilson, North Carolina who has taken his stand against digression and established a congregation with his family. Keep them in your prayers as they endeavor to build up the church in that locale. It is difficult to capture a year in a paragraph, but this will have to do for

now. All of you who should be mentioned by name for your kindness to me, please pardon me and know that I mention you in my thanks to God. My meeting schedule for this year is full now. I have February 6-10 at Opp, Alabama; the Mid-Missouri Study in Columbia, March 11-15; April 10-14 at Dothan, Alabama; the California Memorial Day Meeting in Turlock, May 22-26; June 2-9 at Columbia, Missouri. I will post the rest of my schedule for the year at a latter date. May the Lord bless and protect those that are His.

Eric J. Stone - 9431 Waipahu, HI 96797. We are very thankful to the Lord that the church in Hawaii is at peace. Looking over all that has happened this past year, it is apparent that we have come a long way. Some are no longer meeting with us, and our group is small, but all of the faithful brethren here have grown spiritually and in brotherly love toward one another. We continue to have visitors about every other week or so, which is always a great encouragement to all of us here. My family is very grateful to be here as we continue to try and make this our home. The boys (Cody-15 and Evan-12) are growing, and not just in size... they have a great amount of zeal to serve the Lord, and have been taking a more active role in church services. Cody has spoken to Tara and me about his desire to be a preacher, and has even asked about maybe traveling with one of our evangelists someday. Nothing could make us happier than this! Our brother Don King came and held a meeting for us in October. We were very happy to have him and sister Pat with us again! His love for the work of the Lord, and especially the congregation here in Hawaii is very touching. We always look forward, with great anticipation, to a time when they may come back for a meeting and a visit. Some of us have recently visited with two local families that have lost loved ones quite tragically. Both were mothers in their early fifties. One had a stroke, and the other was hit by a car while standing on the side of the road. This gave us some opportunities to meet with their families, share the gospel, and sing a little bit. We feel confident that as we continue to plant the seed, the Lord can give the increase. Our mid-week studies have been very edifying for us all. We have already studied, chapter by chapter, the books of Matthew, Romans, and 1st Corinthians, and now we are getting started on 2nd Corinthians. We have also been trying to plan an annual summer meeting. One of our goals is to make sure that those who would like to come will have plenty of time to make plans, and quite a few people have expressed an interest. If this is something your congregation might have an interest in, please let me know. If you are planning to visit Hawaii, please keep in mind that we changed our service times. So, make sure to include the Lord's day services (at 9:30 am & 1:00 pm), and the Wednesday evening service (at 6:00 pm) in your vacation plans. Your continued prayers, love, and support have meant so much to us, and we appreciate it very deeply.

Roy Deering, red1991@hotmail.com, 580-320-3243. Our work with the Galey, Oklahoma congregation continues, as well as our work with several other congregations in and around the area. Once again this past fall we hosted a booth at the annual electric cooperative festival. Although heavy rain cut down on the crowd, we were able to visit with more than one hundred people one on one as they stopped by the booth. We also handed out more than 200 flyers containing information about the Church, as well as flyers promoting gospel meetings at both the Galey and Holdenville, Oklahoma congregations. The Galey congregation hosted a weekend meeting with Allen Bailey in October, the very same weekend we preached a five-day meeting at the Holdenville, Oklahoma congregation. We baptized one new brother into Christ during the Holdenville meeting, and had 24 visitors from the community during the five days of the meeting. Although my health has continued to improve, the doctor in November advised me against any overseas trips until at least June (the anniversary of my cardiac arrest and heart attack). I was forced to miss a trip to Honduras with Tony Melton last summer and had planned to travel to Cambodia in January to support a work of the brethren at the Pacific, Washington congregation. Along with our regular preaching appointments at Galey, Holdenville, Davis and Wynnewood, we have also had the privilege in recent months to preach for the Buffalo, Missouri and Moore, Oklahoma congregations. Meeting the brethren at the Buffalo congregation was an uplifting experience, and watching the growth of the Moore congregation and seeing longtime friends in the Faith has been an encouragement. In addition, we had the honor of hosting the annual Thanksgiving weekend meeting at Field Stone, Missouri, over that holiday weekend. It was a joy to be back with the brethren in that area, and to enjoy the hospitality of Ron and Judy Wood once again. The brethren at Field Stone and the surrounding congregations have such a cooperative and supportive spirit when it comes to the work of the Lord. To end the year, we had the privilege of attending and preaching at the Oklahoma New Years Meeting in OKC. What a wonderful spiritual feast. Locally, we have continued to promote the church at Galey and look forward to our third year working with the congregation. The love for the brethren and for the Church is equaled by the love for the Truth and we pray that the congregation will grow in number in this new year. Many have requested updates on my health, and I appreciate the concern and the prayers for both me and my family. At my November checkup, tests showed that my heart function was up to 45 percent (it was 35 percent in August), and the doctor has taken me off the cholesterol medicine.

Ronny F. Wade, P.O. Box 14352 Springfield, MO 65814 ronnywade36@gmail.com. Our meeting in Moore, OK January 23-27 was a real joy. The crowds were excellent, (110) present on Sunday morning. Several preachers attended which was an encouragement to me and the church there as well. I was privileged to see so many friends of bygone years as well as meet new ones.

The surrounding churches turned out in large numbers to help make the meeting a great success. I made my home with John Strain and his good wife and their hospitality was outstanding. John works with the church as well as teaches school. He is both able and stable in his preaching, firmly standing for what is right. Next we were with the new congregation in Bolivar, MO where Brad Shockley works. The first night the crowd was so large that some had to stand for the entire service. They have a nice building and the future looks bright. The Lord willing we look forward to the following meetings: Hwy. 84 Brookhaven, MS Feb. 13-17, Pleasant Grove, IN March 17-24, Montreal, MO March 27-31, and Blue Springs, KY April 20-23 then April 24-28 at London, Ky. We hope to see many of you at these gospel gatherings. The Lord bless His people.

Don L.King, 1147 Sherry Way, Livermore, CA, 94550, e-mail old_paths@juno.com, February 15.- In January I was happy to go to the Philippines with Brother Frank Brancato. We spent three weeks traveling and preaching among a number of congregations. See Frank's report elsewhere for details. It was my happy privilege to return again to preach at a congregation in Palawan that took their stand for the Truth during last year's trip. They requested that I speak again regarding the communion and all seemed satisfied. We thank the Lord for honest hearts. After we returned home Brethren Eduardo Danao, his son Edson, and Brother Libertino were to make a trip into Mindanao and spend about a month visiting the congregations everywhere and helping them as needed. When we get their report we will be happy to share the news with all of you. We assume they are still there. We sent Brother Libertino, a faithful gospel preacher, whose value is known far and wide, into Mindanao a number of years ago to evangelize that island since he was originally from there and speaks their languages. The Midland Texas congregation agreed to support him as well as watch over the work there. At the time he moved it was a completely new area and no work had been done on that island as far as we know. Now there are a number of faithful congregations and the work is still growing. The Philippines remains one of the most fruitful works anywhere and we thank the Lord for the souls who have been saved there. I want to say just a word of thanks to those who faithfully send donations to the paper from time to time. You know who you are and so does the Lord. Please understand how much your help is needed and appreciated. Quite a number receive the paper online in foreign lands and that has been made possible by your generous donations. Foreign preachers often use the articles as seed for sermons which they preach everywhere. May the Lord continue to bless His work everywhere.



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THE BACK PAGE...

SAVED AT WHAT POINT?

By CARL M. JOHNSON

A couple of years ago two young men from our local university visited our worship services. One of the young men had visited previously and the other one was visiting for the first time. They listened carefully to the teaching and at the conclusion of my lesson I offered the invitation, explaining the conditions of salvation, while writing the initials of the conditions on the board ("HBRCB"). As I finished, the two boys looked at each other, grinned, and nodded.

I was puzzled by their behavior, but later I arranged home studies with each of them and learned what was so amusing to them at the time. One of the boys said, "Dan warned me this church always explains salvation as a process involving several steps, and that salvation is not complete until the final step of baptism is completed." He added, "I have always believed God saves sinners instantaneously at the point of belief and that salvation is not a gradual process that can be itemized and worked through systematically by the believer. God is sovereign and He does not need our help to save us." He concluded, "When you closed your lesson, I looked over at Dan and nodded that he had described you accurately."

The young man had been reared with the Calvinistic view that the sovereignty of God is completely and solely responsible for the salvation of sinners at the moment of belief and that there is no other response necessary from the sinner.

Proponents of the faith-only belief have denied for years that baptism is essential to salvation. They argue that baptism requires action on the part of the sinner and that if it is necessary in order to be saved, he would be saved by his own works and not by the sovereign power of God.

The faith-only proponents have a real problem with the condition of repentance, however (Acts 2:28; 3:19; 17:30). If repentance is viewed as a necessity for salvation, requiring action on the part of persons who repent, then repentance would be a work-as-is baptism.

The faith-only proponents try to circumvent this problem with Paul's words in 2 Timothy 2:24, where Paul prays that God will give repentance to his enemies. Paul is obviously hoping God will orchestrate circumstances in the lives of his enemies in some way that would bring them to their senses and cause them to change their minds (repent) about Paul. Paul's words clearly indicate, however, that the choice for changing one's mind (repentance) must be made by the sinner and not God.

The faith-only people argue, however, that Paul is teaching that God can choose to break through the hardness of the sinner's heart and give him what he can never achieve on his own-repentance for the sins he has committed. They argue further that this repentance is given by God to the sinner at the moment of belief.

By such reasoning, faith-only folks can neatly tie up their position that salvation is an act of the sovereign God without any response necessary from the sinner at the moment of belief.

There are many problems with such a doctrine. Where does "godly sorrow" that leads to repentance fit into the equation (2 Cor. 7:10)? Furthermore, if faith and repentance occur simultaneously at the moment of belief, what becomes of confession? Confession is clearly necessary for salvation (Rom. 10:9-10). Does God also provide it for the sinner?

It becomes evident even from a cursory reading of the conditions of salvation in the Great Commission (Mt. 28:18-20; Mk 16:15-16), the conversion cases listed in Acts, and the essentials of conversion listed in the Pauline epistles, that conversion is the result of a process that begins with faith and completes with baptism.

Compare the process of becoming united with Christ to the process by which couples are united in marriage. At what point in the marriage process does the marriage union actually occur? When the couple says their vows? When they exchange rings? When they are pronounced husband and wife? When the certificate is signed? When the couple is joined sexually? Normally, these are all components of getting married in most Western cultures. Becoming husband and wife is a process. During that process, there is culmination in several senses: legal, public, ceremonial, and physical. Nevertheless, most people usually regard sexual consummation as the completion of the total process—at least in a legal sense. It is so important that in its absence, there can be an annulment, a judgment that a supposed marriage was void from the beginning.

In a similar way, conversion is a process. Faith, repentance, confession, and baptism are all important elements in that process. Unless a sinner becomes a penitent, confessing, baptized believer, there is no conversion. Faith has chronological priority, because the process begins with it. Baptism, however, is the culmination of the process. It is the point at which new converts are translated into Christ (Gal. 3:27; Rom. 6:3-4). Without this culminating step the conversion is annulled. cmjthebackpage@gmail.com