

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).

VOL. XC

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NO. 5

IN MEMORY OF BENNIE T. CRYER 1931-2018

GOD’S PLAN FOR DEALING WITH TROUBLE MAKERS IN THE CHURCH (PART 2)

1 CORINTHIANS 4:18-21

By *BENNIE CRYER*

18 Now some are puffed up, as though I would not come to you .

19 But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord will, and will know, not the speech of them which are puffed up, but the power.

20 For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power.

21 What will ye? shall I come unto you with a rod, or in love, and in the spirit of meekness?

The apostle Paul lived, preached, and practiced the way Christ, the builder of the church, wanted each church member to conduct their own lives and maintain the necessary relationships that would permit the world to see that they were correctly letting their light shine. He had taught them “be ye followers of me.” Later on in this epistle, he exhorted them “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ” 1 Corinthians 11:1 . Though he had been an example to them some thought that since he might not come but was sending Timothy in his place they could continue their divisive way and get by with it. Every breach within the body of Christ must be dealt with in the correct way and time or it will encourage the transgressors to get the idea that they are bigger and more influential than they really are. I have listened to members who, with tears in their eyes and with aches still in their hearts, that, though decades had passed, were still so troubled in mind and spirit they hesitated to talk about it. They had watched as their church leaders would bow down to digressive pressure and lose the buildings they were meeting in and lose friends and even loved ones to innovative pressures exerted by those who thought the Church that Christ built ought to modernize to keep in touch with the world . We are not without such “puffed up” or arrogant members in this 21st Century nor, thankfully, are we without faithful church members and preachers who fight against such things.

I am sure that because of the time the Corinthians lived and the culture they had grown up in there were some mighty and eloquent speakers among their members that loved to flout their abilities before each gathering. Paul was going to come back to Corinth and would show them that eloquence is not enough. Timothy was going to spearhead this effort to keep the church pure. Paul was starting early to deal with this problem. He is manifesting how much confidence he has in Timothy and Erastus and their ability to teach the ways of Paul and carry on and protect the work of the Lord that the apostle had begun there. We have and must keep on having such faithful and trustworthy men today. These two gospel preachers knew what Paul taught “in every church.”

Preaching the word was such an important part in correcting the wayward church teachers and members that Christ told the apostles he would be with them. They believed him. “And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen.” Mark 16 :20

When Paul would appear upon the scene he was going to know, not their speech delivered in great eloquence, but the “power” of their speech. Could they back up what they taught with miracles and could they show how their teachings made the members more Christ like. We know we cannot perform miracles but we had better make sure that our lessons given in the pulpit and our example in life is causing those who want to go to heaven to grow in knowledge and spiritual strength. This will make strong churches.

The last verse (21) teaches that each preacher, teacher, and member must decide how they want to be dealt with when they sin. These at Corinth had to decide when Paul finally did arrive would they have already repented. If so, Paul would deal with them tenderly as a father would with his own child or would he deal with them with a rod, a spiritual rod. I would imagine that some of them maintained their arrogant attitude. According to 2 Corinthians 7:11, “For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it

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Editorial

TRIBUTE TO BENNIE CRYER

By RONNY F. WADE

It was my privilege to know and associate with Bennie for over sixty-seven years. We first met when I was fifteen and he was nineteen. I was living in Ft. Worth, and he in San Angelo, Texas. Our early association consisted of visits back and forth between our home towns and the opportunity to be together during various gospel meetings. In 1952 we held our first meeting together at Crossroads, a small community just outside the town of Glen Rose, Texas. The meeting place consisted of a brush arbor where people gathered each night for the church service. During the day we traveled the dusty roads of the area inviting people to the meeting. Crowds were good with visitors coming night after night to share in the service. We made our home with an elderly couple who lived just down the road from the meeting place. Bennie and I occupied a small room just large enough for the bed where we slept. In fact we had to push and tug just to get into the room, then jump into the bed. The hot July nights were barely bearable but we made it. During the last few days of the meeting Ledford James a friend of ours from the San Antonio area came and stayed for two days. I'm still not sure how all three of us got into that room and then in the bed. Those were great days and I remember them with great delight. From Crossroads we both traveled on and off with Ervin Waters. Often Ervin would send one of us to begin a meeting while he closed the one where we were at the time or leave us there to close that one while he went ahead to begin another one. We both profited greatly from our travels with Ervin. As we aged Bennie and I both married and went our separate ways preaching the gospel. From time to time in the intervening years our roads would cross and we would relive the past with great fun and laughter. Bennie was a good student of the scriptures. He was dedicated to what he believed the truth to be and would not forsake it for the world. A few months ago while in a meeting at Livermore, CA brother Weldon Ofill took me to see Bennie. While neither of us knew this would be our last meeting in this world, we both knew neither of us had very long to stay here. We had a great visit. Like two old men who often live in the past we relived old times. We laughed and talked about events long since forgotten. It was a great day. I now look forward to another great day when the redeemed of all ages are gathered home on fairer fields and in brighter climes, where together we can sing the song of Moses and the Lamb by and by. I hope someday to see Bennie again, until then may God bless his family and all those who grieve his departure.

TRIBUTE TO BENNIE T. CRYER

By DON L. KING

My association and friendship with Bennie Cryer goes back farther than I really remember because I have known him all of my life. However, we began a friendship soon after I began preaching full time. I recall having the good fortune to share a room with him more than once during preachers studies probably during the 1970s and eighties, perhaps even later than that. We enjoyed being together and sharing stories of the old preachers we both remembered, and especially discussing Bible subjects. Through the years we have remained in contact and continued a friendship lasting until his death. After Jerry Cutter moved to Australia, Bennie agreed to go to the Philippines with me. That would have been about 1985 and we perhaps made something like a dozen trips together to the Philippines as well as going to Malaysia and Hawaii to assist the works in those places. He learned to love those works and the brethren loved him.

Bennie was a great fellow with which to travel. He had a wonderful Bible knowledge, and we studied many hours together every day as we drove from place to place preaching in the Philippines. The main thing I recall is that whether or not we agreed about a given subject, (we usually did) we talked about it calmly and neither of us ever became angry with the other. He was very even tempered, reasonable, and loved the truth more than merely proving a point about which we may have disagreed. I can tell you that not every preacher is easy to disagree with. His calm attitudes developed within me a deep respect for him as a gospel preacher and friend. It was a privilege to travel both with Bennie and Jerry Cutter in those early years. I stayed in both of their homes; and had it not been for them I would never have learned many things about working in foreign fields. We worked together in Malaysia, Hawaii, the Philippines and several places in the USA as well. Bennie was a valued editor of the Old Paths Advocate, writing often over the many years he served. In fact, in this special issue we are publishing an article sent to us shortly before he passed away. He loved the paper, believed it served an important purpose in our Brotherhood and wanted it to do well.

Bennie possessed an ability to adapt in a unique manner to certain situations which were often impossible to

anticipate. To mention one example of many: he and I were once preaching in the Philippines, holding a gospel meeting. After the service we had opened the floor to brethren to ask questions. A preacher associated with the cups brethren was present and asked about the old sanitation argument where the assertion is made that the use of one cup in the communion, like the Lord used, is unsanitary. After a brief discussion Bennie turned to me and said: "Don, how long have you been a member of the church?" I answered that it was something like 40 years (at that time). He turned back to the audience and said, "See there, one cup won't hurt you, look how big and fat Don is!" The audience laughed, of course, but the point he had just made was powerful and impossible to refute or question. I was as healthy as the proverbial horse. That ended that discussion quickly and we moved on to other matters.

His preaching to foreign audiences was very effective because it was easily understood. He didn't preach to impress anyone with his rhetoric or beauty of the English language. Rather, he preached to touch their hearts with the saving gospel of Jesus Christ. I loved and appreciated him and hate to think of going on without him. Paul spoke so powerfully in 2 Timothy 4:5-8: "But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing." Paul also charged Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:3 to "...endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ." Bennie did this: I never once heard him complain about conditions anywhere, no matter how difficult they were, and sometimes they were difficult. His comment would perhaps be that it would surely be good to get home to "Sister Jo." He was the consummate gospel preacher. He loved "Sister Jo" and was always anxious to go home to her and the children. The Lord's church has suffered a heavy loss, for as King David said when Abner was killed, "...Know ye not that there is a prince and a great man fallen this day Israel?"



TRIBUTE TO BENNIE CRYER

By ALAN BONIFAY

Long ago King David said of Abner, “. . . a prince and a great man has fallen this day in Israel.” Bennie T. Cryer was truly a great man in the Israel of God and his calm knowledgeable leadership will be sorely missed. I would give a great deal to be able to be there with all of you, to say goodbye to Ben.

I first met Bennie in 1967, 51 years ago-- appropriately enough at the preachers' study in Wichita Falls, Texas. Two years later I heard him preach about the Lord's Supper, this time in Waco, Texas. But it was not until April of 1974 that we became fast friends and he became a cherished mentor of mine. I traveled with him to meetings in West Virginia, and later that year Bennie booked me a tour of the churches in California. It was during that time, at age 22, that I became an “adopted” son in his family, spending many wonderful hours in his company and enjoying many delicious meals at Joann's table. (Also, no doubt, being a source of annoyance to teenaged Jeff and Calisse!) Since then Bennie and I have had many adventures in serving Christ and countless discussions of the meaning and application of God's Word.

Among the many things I admired about him, from the beginning and at the top of the list was the wonderful marriage of Bennie and Joann. They were faithfully and lovingly married for over 60 years. Joann, Bennie loved you with all his heart. I have heard him tell young brides, “Your husband should be your hero.” Bennie was certainly your hero. You always looked out for his best interest in every way. And in his battle against cancer and this last series of problems, no one--no one--could have received more patient and loving care than Bennie received from you.

Over the years, I watched Bennie's family grow and change. I saw him portray the best kind of father, who dearly loved and steadily guided his children. As grandchildren came along, they were a source of so much pride and joy to him. Jeff, he so admired your banking skills and your family. You were a blessing to him in these last days. Calisse, you were the apple of his eye! True to form, you also dropped everything to serve your beloved dad in his last battles.

Bennie was a life-long learner, and never stopped studying God's Word. In his 60's he began to study

Greek. He wrote an excellent commentary on Galatians. To the very end of his days he continued to write new sermons and to preach them when he was able.

Bennie was passionately committed to the work of an evangelist. He moved to Yuba City in the late 50's and built up one of the largest churches in our fellowship, complete with an ordained eldership of five men. All the while he was holding gospel meetings across America. In 1964 he and Jerry Cutter moved to Malawi to reorganize the work there, and it thrives today. In the early 80's Bennie and Joann moved to Zambia to begin the work there. At home once more, he labored with the elders to build up the church in Stockton, California. He labored in mission work in India, Malaysia, Singapore, and the Philippines. His last years were spent in loving and faithful work with the church in Olivehurst.

It boggles the mind to reflect on how much Bennie accomplished, with the Lord's help, because of his love of preaching and sharing the gospel!

On many occasions, brethren from all over the world sought his advice and assistance in settling church problems. And there was a time when little happened in the church in California without his valued input. His unruffled, calm, reasoned approach; his fair-minded listening; and his willingness to make the hard decisions were respected by all. He seldom spoke sharply, but he was a man whose words were thoughtful and worthy, and the wise were carefully attentive when he did speak.

Through the years I always knew I could count on Bennie's friendship and advice. I remember that we had a long-running debate on the meaning of Romans 5:12-21. For years he took the view of R.L. Whiteside and I took that of J.W. McGarvey. One of the thrills of my life was when he read the draft of a presentation I was preparing on that same passage, and I later found he'd written in the margin, “This is pretty good!” Another lasting memory from my young days happened in Oklahoma City after the winter preacher's study. We were there for the Sunday evening service, and one of the elders came to me in the lobby and asked 23-year-old me to preach. I demurred, apologizing that I had no sermon with me. Bennie overheard this exchange and he said--pretty sharply!-- “Boy, don't let that ever happen again!” I haven't, and I've shared that story when I encourage young men to always have a “wallet” sermon.

Bennie, you were a great teacher and counselor--one of my dearest and best--and a loyal and beloved friend to

Tonya and me. You will forever be “Uncle Bennie” to our children. I will always love you and treasure the memories. I will miss you down here and look forward to meeting you again around the glory-circled throne of God. Until then, my friend!

--Alan, written from Binga, Zimbabwe, April 11th

TRIBUTE TO BENNIE CRYER

By RON COURTER

“The word of Bennie’s spirit shedding his outer tent and being guided by angelic host to its long-desired port of hope brought a wave of ambivalence over us. There was the garment of sackcloth that comes from the separation death underlines, while at the same time the sash of hope that maketh not ashamed that puts the garment into proper order (we sorrow, but not without hope). Bennie and I did not have the extended opportunity of interaction due to place and time, that so many benefited from due to their opportunity to be associated with a pillar of the kingdom. Yet, this never severed the common bond we enjoyed. To the contrary, our limited time with Bennie was always edification to us. First, always reasonable discussions on the word, as we sorted through our understanding realizing Bennie’s reflections would always be bible anchored, mature and wed with a kind, but firm spiritual disposition. When our thoughts turned to the leisure activities that God’s creative hands permitted us to enjoy we had pleasant interchange over the experiences nature allowed us to enjoy by the providential hand. The annual bible studies were always an opportunity to get a brief visit with Bennie and we looked forward to it. We missed him in recent years so much at those studies due to his fragility of body, because his presentation would always be thoughtful, bible provoking and our friendly visit would always be uplifting. I have never forgotten at the study when he spoke on heaven and brought tears to cheeks sometimes too often dry. While the fullness of heaven still awaits the last day, we are flush with confidence he now enjoys a greater perspective. We shall not forget and cannot forget years ago setting with Bennie in a poorly lighted area in Africa struggling with a decision we desired not to make but had to be made for the welfare of the church. The memory of setting at a meal prepared by JoAnn in their home with Bennie, JoAnn, Barbara and Alan though years ago brings consolation and hope for another meal. The years of lengthy service with an uncompromised faith made him a mentor of

many, doing what he could do for the kingdom at home and abroad when he had opportunity to do so. One never asks for more from a faithful servant. May Bennie’s family wrap themselves in the ‘for real consolation’ that is promised to those that have overcome through the blood of the Lamb, faithfulness to the testimony of the word and losing their life for the sake of the gospel while they sojourned this dusty clime.” Ron Courter

MEMORIES OF BENNIE CRYER

By WAYNE FUSSELL

The first time I met Bennie Cryer, Johnny Elmore and I were traveling with Billy Jack Ivey. We stayed with Bennie’s parents in San Angelo, TX. I was only 17 and Bennie was 20. (That’s the first time I ever drank goat’s milk. Brother Cryer had milk goats.) I was amazed to learn at that time that Bennie had graduated from High School when he was only 16. That impressed this young aspiring preacher from Oklahoma. I had never known at that time of someone smart enough to graduate so early. I have learned through the years that truly he was a brilliant man and a credit to our brotherhood as a gospel preacher.

Our paths have crossed often through the years. It was always a pleasure to be with him. He had a wonderful personality and a delightful sense of humor. Bennie could see the funny side of life, and he let you know it. He once told me during a preacher’s study that I was the “slickest sleeper” he had ever seen. He said that I could sit right straight up and sleep without dropping my head. I told him he should have been looking at the speaker and not me.

Once I was holding a meeting at Chapel Grove, TN and staying in the home of Leo and Bernice Burns. Bernice asked me what I ate for breakfast, and I said that cereal would be sufficient. A day or two later, Bennie called, and Bernice told him what I said. He said, “Put that preacher on the phone!” He said to me, “You are messing up a good thing. I just tell that woman what to cook me for breakfast when I’m there, and she does it. You are ruining the “men-oo” (that’s the way he said it). Such a great sense of humor.

I will never forget holding a meeting at Chapel Grove, TN with Bennie in the audience. For some reason I got sick one night and had to leave the pulpit to go outside and throw up. After that happened a couple of times, I

asked him to preach. He just extended the invitation! It was a short service.

A few years ago, I corresponded by “instant message” with Bennie. His replies were not so instant. I would wait and wait for his replies. While he was a brilliant man in so many ways, I don’t think he was a great typist. I think it took a while for him to begin using a computer. One young preacher who studied under Bennie made the statement that they had to “kick him into the 20th Century”. I think he did better in the 21st Century.

Bennie conducted a meeting for Midway church in Shreveport many years ago. I will never forget the good teaching he did. He challenged the church at that time to ordain elders. He told us to set a goal of five years and prepare to have elders in that length of time. We set our goal, and it would have come to pass, but one of the prospective elders left the church, one said he could not be an elder with one child, and the third lost the desire. But it was not all in vain. We followed Bennie’s plan in later years and ordained two fine men to be elders of the church. His teaching was fruitful.

Bennie made a statement during that meeting that I have never forgotten, and I have repeated it often. He said that our digressive brethren not only want individual cups because of sanitation, they want them for speed. He said that he was thankful that it took a long time to observe the Supper with one cup – it gives us more time to think about the Lord. How beautiful is the thought! My friend Bennie taught us a great lesson.

Bennie is a lover of truth. He was disturbed by the departure from the truth by many. I was appointed one year to give my view about Acts 20:20 at the preacher’s study. Before I gave my talk, a call came from Bennie. He wanted to know how I was going to approach the subject. He was so relieved when I told him my view.

When I was living in Las Vegas, NV, I corresponded with Bennie quite often. At that time he was working with the church at Yuba City, CA. Through the efforts of this hard-working preacher and those he motivated, one of the largest churches in California was built.

What a loss to our brotherhood is the passing of this great man of God! He joins so many of my good friends who started out to preach in the 50s. There were about 40 of us who started out at that time. Time is catching up with all of us. I pray that the young men who are taking our places will continue to stand for the truth

like Bennie did. We say “goodby” to our dear brother, but we will see him again. He lived for the Lord and His church. He walked with God. The last time I saw him he was walking with God. I must conclude that He is “with the Lord” now.

Wayne Fussell, 6126 Land O’ Trees, Shreveport, LA 71119 wfussell1@comcast.net

IN MEMORY OF BENNIE CRYER

By JERRY CUTTER

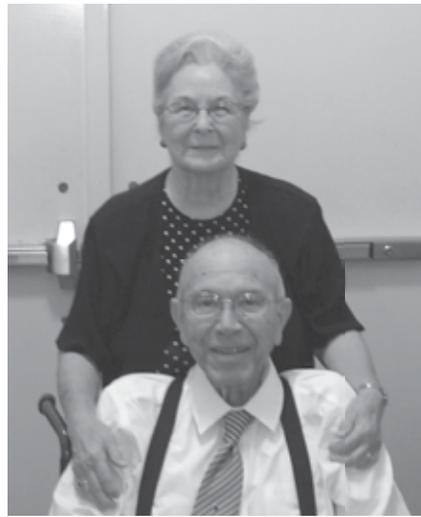
I have been asked to write a few words for the OPA about my old and trusted friend, Bennie Cryer. Bennie and I were born in the same year (1931), and we began preaching at about the same time. Bennie and his wife, Joann, with their children, Jeffrey and Calisse, and my family all lived in Malawi, Africa, at the same time, or from 1965 through 1966. In that part of the world, Bennie and Joann also lived in Zambia, a neighboring country to Malawi. Bennie worked with Don King in the Philippines, and in Malaysia and India with me.

Bennie and I met at the Sulphur Camp Meeting in 1950. Later, in the same year, I spent time in Lawrenceburg, TN, during their big annual meeting there. James Orten also lived near Lawrenceburg, as well as Joann, Bennie’s future wife. So we all got acquainted. As it happened, beginning 14 years later, we all lived and worked together in Malawi (formerly Nyasaland), Africa, binding ties that lasted forever.

As the years went along, the foreign work began to develop. First, in the early 1950s Paul Nichols and his wife went to Nyasaland and worked for the church. (As for the church itself, it was established in about 1907 by a brother and his family who migrated in from South Africa.) After the Nichols returned to the U. S. in the early 1950s, they then again returned to Nyasaland with the Gayland Osburn family and remained until the late 1950s. They did a good work.

At the Sulphur meeting in 1963, the African work was discussed. As a result, James Orten and I decided to go to Nyasaland (Malawi) to see if there were still a work that could be done in Africa. In early 1964, James and I went together and assessed the work. It was not possible for James to live abroad with his family at that time. However, I was able to go to Malawi with my family in 1964 and we lived there until December of

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1966. It was during that time that Benny Cryer and his family and my family lived together in Malawi (Malawi became independent from the British on July 6, 1964), and we worked together until my time to stay ended in December of 1966. During that time, we all became very close friends, as one may imagine.

When it is all said and done, and in my estimation, Bennie Cryer did more to build a foundation for the church work in Malawi than anyone else who has ever lived there.

Space will not permit me to reveal all that Bennie did for the church in Malawi and Zambia. But in Malawi, it was Bennie Cryer who found the land that the house and church building set on today. The property is located less than a half mile from downtown Blantyre. The families and preachers who go to Malawi now have a home to go to when they arrive in the country. Bennie designed and oversaw much of the construction now found on the property. At the same time the construction was going on, Bennie was also doing his part of the work of the church in the bush. It was at that time that Brother Roy Lee Criswell and his family replaced me in Malawi and was Bennie's co-worker.

Also, when I was working with Bennie, he found a motorized caravan that was good for living in while one stayed in the bush. With the caravan, he and I would take turns with the studies in the bush, and be gone from our homes for about a week at a time. With the caravan, we were able to be reasonably comfortable away from home.

In many of the nations in which we preachers work, there is physical danger from diseases, mosquitos, snakes, and robbers. While living in Zambia (just north of Malawi), one night Bennie and the African brethren came in from the bush late, and Bennie was attacked by robbers. They cut his seat belt and tried to pull him out of his vehicle. In the melee, Bennie was stabbed, but fortunately the knife hit his arm and not his heart or body. The robbers ran when Bennie reached for a jack handle. Bennie told me that he thought that the robbers were thinking it might be a gun that he was reaching for. The preachers who go to the various places around the world are often in danger zones. Bennie was always willing to endure whatever came his way without complaining. Simply, he found it a joy to do the Lord's work, as I think is also true with all preachers. I know it was a joy for me to be with Bennie Cryer as his co-worker in Malawi.

I will miss him and all who knew him will also as well. He was a very strong and wise elder and preacher in the church, studious, kind and humble. May the Lord bless his family. -Jerry Cutter.

BENNIE CRYER

By CARL M. JOHNSON

Bennie had a wonderful Bible knowledge. He was very well-versed on about any Bible subject you might want to discuss. In addition to his regular preaching duties at home and abroad, he was a regular participant at the annual preacher studies for many years, and he wrote a commentary on Paul's letter to the Galatians that is included in the Contending for the Faith commentary series. As Bennie grew older he never stopped his studies of the Scriptures. When Leonardo DiVinci was 85 he said try to learn something new every day. Bennie reminds me of that statement. Whether he was running references in his Thompson Chain Reference Bible or studying the Greek language in order to dissect Bible texts more efficiently, he never stopped trying to enlarge his understanding of God's Word.

Bennie had an amazing ability to get along with all kinds of people—including difficult people. Whether he was in foreign fields or here at home his humility and sense of fair play allowed him to navigate the stormy waters of hostilities among brethren and remain respected by most of the parties involved.

He also had a great sense of humor. He and JoAnn were very hospitable and loved to invite company into their home for meals and to swap stories. He and I had a longstanding, good-natured rivalry over Texas and Oklahoma college football. I am a lifelong OU fan, but Bennie was from San Angelo, Texas, and was a devout Longhorns fan. One year I was watching TV in the home of Ray Grider in the tiny hamlet of Climax Springs, Missouri (population of 87), as the Longhorns pummeled the Sooners. I sat there thinking how fortunate I was that no Texas fans could possibly know my whereabouts and call and razz me about the loss. Suddenly, the phone rang. Ray answered and said, "Carl, it's for you." I took the phone and a snickering voice said, "Carl, this is Bennie Cryer. Howard King and I are sitting here at Granville Mahurin's house in Stockton (California) and we were just wondering if you are watching any television!" I could hear Howard and Granville laughing in the background.

I got even with him a couple of years later after OU thrashed Texas on national TV. I began a meeting at Stockton, but Bennie was in Africa at the time. Howard

and I ate dinner at Granville's house one night and we laughed about Bennie's earlier phone call to me. I said, "You know, if Bennie wasn't in Africa I would call and razz him about OU's recent win." Howard spoke up and said, "If you will make the call I will pay for it!" We made the call. Even though the Longhorns had lost, I think he was thrilled to hear from us.

I loved Bennie. I believe I am a better person for having known him and I shall miss him very much.

BENNIE T. CRYER
A DEAR FRIEND AND BROTHER
By GREG GAY

In my growing up years, as we visited with preachers during meetings and read OPA Field Reports, we kept up on the lives of many of our gospel preachers. Because of that, I knew Bennie Cryer long before we met, and Bennie and Joann knew my family as well.

I found it interesting that my dad, Sonny Gay, and Bennie once preached during the same service. Tommy Shaw, then of Commodore, PA, reported in the August 1949 issue of the OPA on the men who took part in a Young Men's service at Sulphur: "One session of the camp meeting at Sulphur, Okla., was given over to the young men who are beginning to preach or who contemplate becoming either preachers, song leaders, or leaders in the public work of the church. 19 young men from seven states took part in this meeting. Brother Lynwood Smith again conducted this meeting in a credible manner, reading as a text: "A lad is here" (Jno. 6:9). Following are the names of the boys who led songs: Richard DeGough, Wayne DeGough, Winston Middick, Eddie Nichols, Riley Phillips, William Russell, C. A. Smith, Don Smith, Billy Joe Tait, and Clifford Thomason. Speakers were: Theston Branch, Benny Cryer, Ben Frentrup, Homer Gay, Jr., Miles King, James Orten, Howard Roberson, Larry Robertson, and Thomas Shaw.

Just a few years later, 20-year-old Bennie Cryer announced in the March 1952 issue of the OPA that he was starting to preach full-time. His field report included: "January 15, I resigned my position at the bank in San Angelo and began to devote full time to the ministry of the Word. Since arriving in Calif. I have preached one or more times at Porterville, Waterford, Glendora and Compton. When Brother Ervin Waters left the meeting at Arvin, Calif., to go to Washington, D. C., I preached the last seven nights in his place. Then because of his prolonged absence I held the entire ten-day meeting at Lodi with one restoration. The crowds

were splendid in both meetings. I am assisting Brother Waters in the meeting at Montebello this week."

Bennie's preaching travels took him from coast to coast conducting meetings and staying in short works that were from 1 to six months long. His travels are reflected in his many field reports. A chronological record I hastily compiled of his works took him to: San Angelo, TX, Odessa, TX, Chapel Grove, TN, Fresno, CA, Denver, CO, Richmond, CA, Sanger, CA, Waco, TX, Odessa, TX, St. Albans, WV, Odessa, TX, and Midland, TX, followed by Yuba City in September 1958. When we visited with Joann about those days, she mentioned the Yuba City work was only supposed to be for six months. These works were in addition to many gospel meetings that Bennie held and other meetings and debates that he visited all over the country. Many of Bennie's early travels were with his then brother-in-law, Ervin Waters who introduced him everywhere and encouraged him greatly in his preaching.

Twenty years later in 1978 is when I believe we first met Bennie and Joann when Cassie and I moved with our three youngsters from Springfield, MO to Redding, CA. Whenever opportunity arose we travelled to Yuba City, the closest sister congregation, about an hour and a half south of Redding. It was also where Bennie and his family had lived and worked since 1958, except for a three-year stint in Africa from 1965 to 1968.

Within a very short time, Bennie was someone I would call without hesitation to discuss any part of the work of the church whether looking for opportunities for evangelism or for help in solving problems.

I was always amazed at how welcoming Bennie was when I would call, as if he had been hoping I would call just so we could catch up on things. I always felt like I had a dear friend in Bennie, and he never disappointed me in that presumption.

I recall a time in Redding when Bennie was there to hold us a meeting. Several of us were around the table discussing a Bible topic and Bennie would ask one of us to read a verse. Once that verse was read, Bennie would wait till the conversation had moved in a direction he liked, then he would ask someone else to read another verse of his choosing. Before much time had passed, Bennie had led us through the scriptures without ever saying a word about what he thought. He only wanted us to hear what God had to say on our subject. Such was the mark of a great man of God, in my estimation. He did not have to build himself up to help others.

Bennie and Joann went back to Africa from 1985 to 1987 to work with the church in Zambia. It was during that work that Bennie was attacked in his vehicle and

stabbed 8 times in an attempted robbery. In Bennie's flailing around, he managed to knock the knife out of his attacker's hand. Joann brought that knife to show me when we were visiting about the funeral. The brethren, fearing Bennie had died in the attack, were amazed that he left early the next morning to deliver grape juice to some congregations. Once back in the states, Bennie and Joanne worked with the church in Stockton till October 1999 and then returned to the Yuba City area to work with the church at Olivehurst where they remained till his death.

In 1984 Bennie became one of the editors of the OPA. Don King's editorial in the May issue of the OPA included the announcement: "You will notice three new names have been added as staff members. Brethren Johnny Elmore, Bennie Cryer and Barney Owens have agreed to go on as "Contributing Editors" Their jobs will be to help us expand the quality of Biblical material offered each month. Their writings will appear on a more regular basis than before. We appreciate their willingness to help, and we have confidence in them as gospel preachers and writers. None of these men are strangers to us, being respected throughout the entire brotherhood as godly and talented men. We thank God for them and all such men..."

Bennie's first OPA article was in the July 1955 issue about Redemption. And his second was in June 1956 on, "Be Ye Filled with the Spirit." His writings were many over the years and always reflected his careful, thoughtful analysis of the scriptures with practical application for all.

Bennie was one of those rare individuals who was a positive motivator without being insincere. His assessments of individuals were always optimistic, just a bit better than reality, as if sensing the possibility in all for great service to God. I always wanted to live up to how he saw me, to live up to the ideal he presented.

Bennie was not a complainer, no matter how dark the situation may have seemed that he was enduring in church work or personal health. He never gave up his faith and his faithfulness to God even though some he loved dearly made the choice to turn their back on the faith.

In 1959 he wrote an article on zeal for the February issue of Proclaimer of Truth. He wrote: In Isaiah. 62:1 the prophet said, "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth." By a free use of type and anti-type we might paraphrase this verse in this manner without doing any injustice to its meaning. "For the church's sake will I not hold my peace, and

for heaven's sake I will not rest until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth." Let us all manifest the spirit of this verse of a very beautiful song. "And if I were dying. With just one word to say, I'd speak it for Jesus, Then breathe my life away."

I believe that is the life Bennie lived: doing his best to speak for Jesus, for the love of God, for the love of the church, and for the love of all that they might be among God's faithful. 5109 Chicago Ave., Fair Oaks, CA 95628 gregorypgay@gmail.com

BENNIE CRYER, PREACHER OF THE GOSPEL

By JOHNNY ELMORE

I received word this week that Bennie Cryer has departed this life bound for glory. It made me sad to know that. I first met Bennie when we were both about seventeen years of age at the 4th of July meeting at Sulphur, OK. That was back in the 1940s when the meeting was actually a camp meeting. Bennie had a pallet on the ground near where his sister, Jean, and his brother-in-law, Ervin Waters had their tent. Two or three others and I made our beds near that place after dark only to realize the next morning that we were almost in the path that led to the door of the women's comfort station at the park. It was enjoyable to get to know Bennie and to watch his progress in becoming a gospel preacher. It was also my good pleasure to get to visit with him at his home while he still lived with his parents in San Angelo, TX. There was a tall hill near his home and Jack Ivey, Wayne Fussell and I persuaded Bennie to walk with us to that hill. Bennie warned us that things were farther away than they appeared in West Texas but he agreed to go with us, and as it turned out, it was an exhausting trip. Bennie was an agreeable soul who could work with others. He has worked amiably with several congregations and has proven to be a true yoke-fellow in foreign fields of labor. He was not only an effective preacher of the gospel and personal worker, but also an accomplished writer, as evidenced by his many fine articles in the Old Paths Advocate. I regret that I did not have more interaction with Bennie because of the distance between us but I know that he was "ready to every good work," and that he was able to pursue "a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" (1 Tim. 3:2). And now, with his labors all finished, he joins the long train of gospel preachers who have been called to what we trust is eternal reward. Very soon, some of us will meet again on fairer fields, in a land across which never a shadow falls and no sorrow comes. Until then, I pray God's blessings upon those loved ones he leaves behind. Let us "sorrow not, even as others which have no hope" (1 Thes. 4:13).

IN MEMORY OF continued from page one

wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.”
-OPA

**WHAT A TREASURE BENNIE CRYER HAS
BEEN TO MY LIFE**

By P. DUANE PERMENTER

The first year I moved to Zambia in 2003, the local brethren constantly were comparing my work to others who had lived in Zambia. One of the brethren came to me to share a piece of history concerning Bennie’s work in Zambia in the middle 1980’s. (The work I did was compared to Bennie’s labor most.)

Upon our Brother’s arrival the work in Zambia was in turmoil. The cups and classes brethren had been worshipping in Zambia with one cup and one bread until the 1970’s. Since the work’s inception in 1908, this had not changed. Shortly before Bennie’s move the brethren at Kaunda Square and Chelston refused the individual trays, and this is what got us involved.

Shortly after Brother Cryer’s arrival, brethren from Chalonga church of Christ had a big meeting to introduce the new American evangelist. I am not sure how many church leaders were present; however, I understand that the house was overflowing. The Zambian’s all spoke in Chichewa for over an hour and finally gave Brother Cryer the floor. The Zambian brethren had spent an hour putting Brother Cryer down as a trouble maker and thought they had done it in secret.

Brother Cryer stood to the occasion with great zeal and spoke every word in Chichewa. (He was one of the few of us who learned an African language.) They had no idea that he was understanding them the whole time. In fact, Brother Peter Musanji who is one of the few still living that witnessed this event said; “When brother Cryer began to speak you could have heard a pin drop. Our Zambian brethren were shocked that he had understood everything. This brother affirmed that Brother Cryer never looked back from that day and moved the work forward. Brother Peter Mushanji said that he believed the plot against Brother Cryer’s life started from the events of that day. Several months later, Brother Cryer was stabbed nine times and survived. One of the major reasons I loved Bennie so much is; because, like Paul of old he bore the marks of the Lord Jesus. I cannot express in words how much it is an honor to know that Bennie considered me one of his sons in the faith. God bless JoAnn and the family is

my earnest prayer. Heaven’s gleam glows brighter each day. pdpermenter@outlook.com

Field Reports

Kevin W. Presley, 108 Mulberry Court, Dothan, AL 36303, April 11, 2018 - Our television work continues to bear fruit for the Lord’s glory. In March, a married couple who has been watching the program on their local station attended Sunday worship at Miami, OK. That very service, they responded to the invitation and obeyed the gospel. They have proven to be zealous to learn and grow in the Lord. We also continue to receive good response in the other markets where LTBS is aired as well as online. Our recent meeting at New Salem, MS was a pleasure. We enjoyed good crowds and encouragement from all of the surrounding congregations. Bro. Austin Maddox is a young preacher who has recently moved there from Indiana to work with the congregation. He oversees the correspondence for our television program there and is doing a good job. Austin has a bright future in the Lord’s work. It was great to be in Birmingham to hold the annual spring meeting. This meeting was particularly encouraging to me because we had community visitors at almost every service all week. Over the weekend, people came from surrounding states, as is usually the case at this meeting, which made for a full building, an air of excitement, and wonderful singing. I began a meeting last night at Fieldstone, MO with a full building from Houston, Mountain Grove, West Plains, and perhaps others in attendance. I’m looking forward to the remainder of the week, the Lord willing. I begin next week in Miami, OK and then to the annual homecoming meeting in Napoleon, AL in May. We’re looking forward to hearing Jimmy Cating at Dothan in a few weeks. May God bless the work of the kingdom wherever you are.

A Note Of Thanks

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all who have written, called and prayed for me during my recent illness. Your interest and concern is greatly appreciated. At this writing I am much better. I am currently under the care of Doctors at the Siteman Cancer Center in St. Louis, MO. and am scheduled to begin chemo-therapy treatment this week. The doctors are of the opinion that the treatment will allow me to return to my regular schedule of activity. The Lord willing I hope to resume my meeting schedule within the next month. Please continue to remember me when you pray. A special thanks to Jimmy Smith and Richard Bunner for their assistance and help.

Ronny Wade

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WALKS THROUGH THE BIBLE...

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

By JERRY DICKINSON

Charles Hutchinson Gabriel was born on the Iowa prairie in 1856 and died in 1932. His father taught singing schools throughout that part of the country and young Charles loved travelling with his father and loved singing. He was a musical prodigy and told his mother one time he intended to write songs that would make people love Jesus. His mother replied, very wisely I think, that she would rather have him do that than be President of the United States. Charles Gabriel grew up to write between 7000 and 8000 songs, many of which we still sing today. Among his many hymns are: Brighten The Corner Where You Are, Send The Light, God Is Calling The Prodigal, I Stand Amazed In The Presence, All Things Are Ready, Come To The Feast, and many others. One of his songs which is not as widely known is entitled, As A Volunteer. The lyrics sound out a challenge as relevant today as ever.

A call for loyal soldiers comes to one and all
Soldiers for the conflict, will you heed the call?
Will you answer quickly, with a ready cheer?
Will you be enlisted as a volunteer?
A volunteer for Jesus, A soldier true!
Others have enlisted, why not you?
Jesus is the Captain, we will never fear,
Will you be enlisted as a volunteer?

As I travel around the country brethren sometimes ask, "Jerry, what is the greatest need in the church today?" I think our greatest need is volunteers! From time to time I have brethren ask if I know of a young man who would like to move and work full time with the church, and I have to answer too often that I do not. We need some young men to volunteer to dedicate their lives to preaching the gospel! We need volunteers! We also need young women who will volunteer to go with these young men and help them in the great work of evangelizing the world. Rebekah was one of the greatest women in the Old Testament precisely because she was a volunteer.

After Sarah's death Abraham sent his faithful servant to Padanaram to find a wife for the grief stricken Isaac. This servant prayed that the Lord would lead him to the right girl and asked for a sign, which God granted. When Rebekah agreed to give water to the servants and even the animals of Abraham, the servant knew she was God's choice. Abraham's servant explained all this to Rebekah's family and then declared he was ready to take her back with him immediately. Naturally her mother and brother Laban said give us at least 10 days to make a decision but the servant said it is now or never. They finally called in Rebekah, who could not have been more than a teenager, and asked her, "Will you go with this man?" Remarkably she said, "Yes, I will go!" (Genesis 24:58) Think for a moment about her decision. She volunteers to marry a man she has never seen before. She volunteers to leave home and go across the wilderness to live in a foreign country and to never see her parents again. She volunteers to live in a tent the rest of her life! How do we explain her answer? Well, first of all a close study of the life of Rebekah shows her to be adventurous, outgoing, and strong willed. Isaac is reticent, passive, and easy going, but Rebekah is ambitious and active in seeking what she perceives to be in the best interests of her favorite son Jacob. Rebekah and Isaac are complete opposites and, because of their different personalities, trouble in the family follows. Rebekah even conspires with Jacob to deceive Isaac and gain the birthright. Rebekah is decisive and a risk taker!

But there is a deeper motivation in Rebekah's decision to leave home and marry Isaac. She believes it is God's will for her life. She listened to the story told by Abraham's servant and she believed that God had providentially chosen her to be the wife of Isaac, and thus be in the line that would eventually bring the Messiah into the world. She volunteered because she wanted to serve the Lord. She is indeed one of the greatest women of all time!

Last summer while in Kansas City Paul Nichols told how as a young preacher he volunteered to go to Africa in answer to an urgent call for help on that continent. Immediately his young wife Wilma volunteered to go with him. Paul and Wilma were the first of our brotherhood to become missionaries to Africa. I appreciate Paul for volunteering, but I also appreciate Wilma for volunteering to go with him. May the Lord raise up more men, and more women, who will volunteer with a ready cheer to go wherever the Lord needs workers!

I'll go where you want me to go, dear Lord, Over mountain, or plain, or sea;
I'll say what you want me to say, dear Lord, I'll be what you want me to be.