

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. 10

ADORNING THE DOCTRINE (TITUS 2:10-12)

BY J. WAYNE MCKAMIE

The Apostle Paul commissioned the evangelist Titus to set in order the Lord’s church on the isle of Crete, an incredibly corrupt place. I would like for us to concentrate on Titus 2, where Paul is telling him what he will speak and what he will do on Crete. It is important that we understand what was to happen on that isle, for whatever was to happen there, is to happen in any place where the Lord’s people are. The whole second chapter of Titus is a call for godly, consecrated living from God’s people.

Paul gave us a tremendous task in this passage. He said, “teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lust, we should live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present world (2:12),” and that we should “adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things” (2:10). We are to furnish, ornament and adorn the doctrine of almighty God. That is our purpose. That is the plan of God, that by living changed lives, we will be able to change other people with the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is not an easy job and I do not propose it to be.

THE BEAUTY OF THE DOCTRINE

First of all, I know that the doctrine of Jesus Christ is beautiful. I know it because Paul said, “How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace and bring glad tidings of good things” (Rom. 10:15). That is not because of who they are, but because of that which they preach. It is the preacher’s association with what he preaches that makes his feet beautiful. It is the doctrine that is beautiful, glorious, wonderful, and perfect that came to us from heaven, not the preacher.

The doctrine of Christ is beautiful and lovely within itself and is to be put on by people like us, as well as those Creteans of so long ago, as a garment. We are to furnish and ornament this doctrine for the world. Our conduct is to be a perpetual comment on Christ’s doctrine and His religion. Our lives are to be a constant exemplification of the truth and power of the gospel. If

this is not what it is saying, then I just do not understand the import of words at all. This is exactly what he wants us to do. Day by day we are to let the world know who we are and where we stand. God is glorified in obedient people.

THE ADORNING OF THE DOCTRINE

In Romans 1, the apostle spoke of a people, who when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God. They became vain in their imagination, their foolish heart was darkened. They professed themselves to be wise, but they became fools. They changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into corruptible ways of corruptible man (cf. Rom. 1:21-23),

The responsibility is two-fold: to know God and to glorify Him as God. It is not enough to know God. We must also glorify Him as God. Everyone adorns himself in some fashion daily, Paul is saying, I want you to “adorn the doctrine of God your Savior.” Now, how are we going to adorn the doctrine of God? I understand the responsibility. I understand the language. But, how are we going to accomplish that within our lives? I think that the main thing was to teach those who had been redeemed, those who had named the name of Jesus Christ, that they would furnish and adorn the gospel by the conduct of their daily lives.

WE ADORN IT BY DENYING UNGODLINESS

In verse twelve Paul says, “teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly.” May I point out that we are not discussing the world. He said, ‘teaching us.’ That is God’s people. This does not mean that we deny those things exist. How foolish it is for a person to take the stance that nothing evil is going on in the world. That is not what Paul is saying, The apostle is saying that evil is very much with us and no person that is rational is going to deny this. Evil is present, and Paul is saying that the grace of God teaches us that we deny ungodliness (those things that are unlike God), and worldly lust, and that we live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world.

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Editorial

“AT EASE IN ZION”

By DON L. KING

“Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria, which are named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came!” (Amos 6:1)

We are all aware that spiritual things should receive our very first and best attention. Not only this, but spiritual things need to receive our continuous attention. We must constantly be on alert lest other less important matters capture our affection. Jesus said, “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.” (Matthew 6:33) It is so easy to become distracted and allow things of the world to become more important than they have a right to be. No wonder Jesus warned Peter to “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” (Matthew 26:41) Peter had become too sure of himself, too confident of his strength, and the Lord knew he was headed for a fall.

In these troubled times chaos is all around us. The world is in turmoil, our own nation is troubled, to say the least. This can also affect the church, and it has in many places. With reference to the great flood Luke warns us of that time when “They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all.” (Luke 17:27)

Can it be that we also are too preoccupied with things of the world at the present time? There is little doubt this is true. From politics to sports events, we are well informed and ready to carry on a conversation about many topics. There was a time when church members were also well informed about spiritual matters, and our visits with each other usually concerned the Bible. Sunday afternoons were often spent studying and visiting about scriptural matters concerning the church. That seems to have lessened in the last several years and that is sad. Now, we are busy with many things in the world. Some church members are seemingly forgetful that this life is fleeting, death is looming over all of us; and the most important thing is the church and our spiritual health and welfare. We have, by and large, become more worldly every year, or so it appears. The church seems to fall farther and farther behind in our daily thoughts. Gospel meetings now must be planned around our vacation plans rather than the other way

around. If not, some will simply go away and leave the church in the lurch. Interest in singing has also lost its luster for many. As a young man we recall when brethren kept songbooks handy at home and enjoyed singing the songs of the church rather than watching television. In fact, there were areas where nearly all the members read music and could sing new songs readily. As a result, our singing at church services was better then. Now, as Amos 6:1 indicates, we don't seem to anticipate any evil or disturbance as a result of our thoughtless mundane living. A ball game, or some other sporting event will easily take precedence over Wednesday night services, Sunday evening services; and if someone openly questions it, they are looked at as though they are out of touch.

Could it be that some of us are "at ease in Zion?" Without doubt we are. One writer defined being at ease in Zion as "Lazy Christians." We believe he is very close to the truth. The church member who is at ease sits down very contentedly on his mere church membership and mistakes earth and its pleasures for heaven. Christianity is not "ease." Christianity is labor. Christianity is spiritual activity. It is a daily struggle against sin. Some obviously take the church too lightly. They are "at ease." We had better wake up folks! The recent easy living times have not been good for us.

The pandemic that is presently among us made it difficult for some congregations to worship more than Lord's Day morning. Some were also forced to move their place of worship to a more private and unseen location. It has been difficult, no question about it. However, God blessed us with the speedy development of a vaccine that works very well. Many of us, including this writer, are now fully vaccinated. We are moving forward and we thank the Lord for that. Still, some congregations have not gone back to their former schedule of services. We certainly don't know their specific reasons and some may be doing what is best. However, the church will certainly be stronger when we are together often. If not, it is easy to allow personal pleasures to take the place of worship. It is more comfortable to be at "ease." Then, we seek reasons to delay going back to our former schedule of worship.

"At ease in Zion?" It comes upon us gradually. Like Israel of old we think disaster is far away, and we are strong enough that nothing can move us. That is a serious mistake. Our prosperity, our easy manner of life, lulls us into a false tranquility. We can become deceived in our hearts and not realize until too late how foolish we have been. When that happens churches sometimes have to close their doors and vanish away. By the way, we are seeing that take place now.

Many examples could have been cited to show that some are at ease in Zion. Our poor attendance at services, lack of interest in good preaching at meetings, the rampant worldliness among so many now, etc., is shocking. In perusing Facebook, we see worldliness once unheard of among us. It is time to wake up brethren! Judgment is sure and it is coming someday. As Isaiah said in 21:11: "Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night?" Think on these things. —DLK

ADORNING THE....continued from page one

WE ADORN IT BY LIVING IT

The man who said, "I'd rather see a sermon than hear one anyday, I'd rather that someone would walk with me than merely point the way," had a good point. We really do not have a great deal of appreciation for those who just stand and point the way and say, "There's the way you really ought to go." "There's what you ought to do." What we want to see is somebody living those things and leading us in the ways of truth.

In Philippians 1:27, the Apostle Paul said, "Only let your conversation be as it becomes the gospel of Christ." Now notice the similarity to our title. He said, "let your conversation become the gospel of Christ." Paul is one of those exclusive writers. He said, "only" let your life be as it becomes the gospel. I get the distinct impression that we have some control over that. I can decide to live a life that will become the gospel of Christ, or I can decide that I will not. But he said "only." Only let your conversation, that is, your way of living, become the gospel of Jesus Christ. In 2 Peter 3:10, Peter is discussing the doctrine of last things. He says, "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens shall pass away with great noise and the elements shall melt with fervent heat." There is not anything more awesome to think about than this. He says, "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" The word "conversation" again means "manner of living." Only live in that way.

WE ADORN IT BY EXEMPLIFYING IT

In I Timothy 4:12, Paul said to the young man Timothy, "Let no man despise thy youth, but be thou an example of the believers. " I like that. Think about what is happening. Timothy is going out from the body of believers to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul is not saying to him. "Timothy I want you to say to the preacher, "I want you to be an example of the body of believers from which you came." Evidently they were

of such caliber, that he could say to anyone going out, you be like them. That is our goal, to be that kind of people.

THE RESPONSIBILITY GIVEN TO TITUS

Titus 2 reveals the tremendous task of the evangelist. He faced a people who were characterized as “always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies” (1:12). Can you imagine the responsibility that man bore? How would you like to be dropped on the isle of Crete, with this responsibility laid on your shoulders? That was a tremendous task and it reminds us that we do not have a monopoly on evil and ungodliness in the world today.

Paul tells him, in effect, “You are going to find a deplorable situation over there on that island. They profess that they know God, but in works they deny Him. What you are going to hear over there are people who are going to sing, ‘Oh how I love Jesus.’ They profess to be great people of God, but ‘in their works, they deny all they say.’ You need to deal with that. What you are going to find over there, are people that are ‘unto every good work, reprobate.’ Nevertheless, ‘you speak the things that become sound doctrine.’” Paul expects to have a totally different person in Titus, than what he has out there on Crete.

Paul’s instructions included, “rebuke them sharply, and do not give heed to Jewish fables and the commandments of men that turn from the truth.” He said, “unto the pure, all things are pure, but unto those that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure.” He said, “but speak thou the things that become sound doctrine.”

“The aged men, teach them to be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, charity and patience.” Then he told Titus to preach to the women. “The aged women likewise that they be in behavior as becometh holiness, that they may teach the young women to be sober and to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discrete, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.” “Young men likewise exhort to be soberminded” and “in everything show yourself a pattern of good works.”

What is he saying? We can respond by living in an ungodly way. We can cause the very truth that we once obeyed to be blasphemed. It is important that they turn their lives around. Paul does not leave anything uncovered, does he? “In everything you show yourself a pattern of good works. In doctrine, you show uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, you have a sound speech that cannot be condemned, that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed; having no evil thing to say of you.”

Then he said, “Talk to the servants.” You see, there were some servants that had responded to the gospel, and they need to be taught some things. “Exhort them to be obedient to their own masters and to please them well in all things, not answering again, not purloining (engaging in petty thievery).” You see the problems that existed in that place? He said, “not purloining, but showing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things. For the grace of God that bringeth salvation has appeared to all men. Teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lust, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.” Titus, that is your job. What a tremendous task was laid on his shoulders.

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHURCH

The message that Titus preached on the isle of Crete so long ago, still needs to be preached in America today. There is not a spot on this globe that does not need to hear this message. When we go contrary to the doctrine of Jesus Christ and do not adorn it, we rather do harm to it.

The world has always judged an institution by its members. Suppose you ask me about some particular doctrine of a religious group. I may not know a great deal about that doctrine, but I find myself drawing some conclusions because of some person that I have known who was a member of that organization. Now, whether we should or should not do that is not the question. The fact is that if we have known someone who was a part of that organization, we draw conclusions about the organization. This should not alarm those of us who are the people of God. I rather think that if we were living the lives that God would have us to live, we would rejoice in that fact. The world has always judged an institution by its members, and is judging the Lord’s church by our lives.

In Matthew 5 is the familiar passage where Jesus said, “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt have lost its savor, it is good for nothing.” How could He more vividly say that you have become salt, but if the salt loses its saltiness it is good for nothing? He puts us in our place, does He not? He also said, “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid.” What a beautiful people He expects us to be!

In 2 Corinthians 4:3-4, the Bible says, “But if our gospel be hid...” How deplorable! “If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost. In whom the God of this world hath blinded the eyes of them that believe not, lest the glorious light of the gospel of Christ should shine unto them.”

In John 3:19 Jesus said, "This is the condemnation..." Now we are always hearing somebody say, "Here's the problem." Jesus said, "Here's the problem." This is the condemnation, that light has come into the world and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." That's the problem. We need to accept that fact. Light has come into the world. If light had not come it would be a different thing. But "the Son of righteousness has risen with healing in his wings" (Mal 4:2).

In Ephesians 5:13 Paul said, "All things that are reformed are made manifest by light, for whatsoever doth make manifest is light." Jesus said, "You are the light of the world." How are we going to be the light of the world? Mr. Campbell once said, "I am but a speck upon a speck sailing through illimitable space." How true. That is where we are. We are but a speck upon a speck sailing through illimitable space. How can we be the light of the world? We cannot by ourselves. But with our Lord, we can be the light of the world. He insists upon it. He demands it.

In Hebrews 1:1-2, the Bible says, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son." He goes on to say, "He is the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person" (v. 3). Jesus is the light of the world. "Then spake Jesus unto them, I am the light of the world. He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (Jn. 8:12). The world should have seen the Son rise. Malachi said, "Unto them that fear Him, shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in His wings" (Mal. 4:2). The Son shall only rise through us as God's people. This is what Paul is saying to Titus, and to us.

We are not going to be the light of the world by ourselves. I do not have any hope of that. But I do believe that we reflect He who is the light of the world. Yet sometimes the smut of sin covers our lives till our reflectors do not reflect anything. It does not matter that Jesus Christ is the light of the world, nor that He walked the shores of Galilee, opened blind eyes, unstopped deaf ears, and did all those wonderful things. That does not matter, if we do not reflect His glory to the world.

In Ephesians 5:25-27, Paul said, "Husbands, love your wives." He commands it. "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for it that He might sanctify it and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church." What the Lord wants is a glorious church. What kind of church do you want? What kind

of church do we want all over this country? What kind of church do you want your children to attend? What kind of church do you want your children's children to be a part of?

You spend your life thinking about your sons and daughters, wanting to teach them the way of righteousness. Deuteronomy 4 teaches that you should teach these things to your sons and your sons's sons. You want them to see the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ? It must come through our lives.

PROBLEMS CONFRONTING THE CHURCH

Living a Christian life has never been easy. I do not think that it was easy on the isle of Crete. I will guarantee it was not easy for Titus who had the responsibility of setting in order the things that were wanting and turning them around. It has never been easy to live a Christian life and it is not getting any easier. Great changes have occurred in our world, even during my lifetime. We are more in contact with the world than we have ever been. At least sixty percent of our women are now in the work force. All of us are touching the world more than we ever have in our lives, and conversely, the world is touching us more than it ever has.

We have come to a time when we need to listen to Titus very carefully. I fear what we are learning. We are learning to get along, which means, we are learning to stay silent and stay out of trouble. We are basically taking a defensive position and in doing so, we are about to give up as soldiers of the cross. The big lie goes unchallenged, The dirty joke is tolerated more that it ever has been in our lives. Have you noticed that low language is popular in high places? It is endorsed now even by some of our legislators. It flows from the pen of our editors. You can pick up the newspaper and see all of these things. Immorality has graduated from secret practice to public show, and if you do not believe that, sit down and watch television for half an hour, You will find it very difficult to proceed through a half hour without coming to believe it. Society openly advocates lust and licentiousness. The alternative lifestyle is not very alternative any more. It is with us.

Too often, we get jolting reminders of what is happening in this world of ours. The prodigal son does not have to leave home anymore. He can stay home and be a prodigal son, If indeed he goes into the far country and gets into the hog pen of sin, we just advocate building bigger and better hog pens and call them "home." This is not news to you, but we need to stop and think about what is happening in our world and our reaction to it.

I do not think that God's people are launching headlong

into sin. I think we still try to avoid evil, but we really do not seem to oppose it as we once did, We are getting used to it. We are getting conditioned by it, and that is frightening. The church militant is becoming the church muzzled. The Christian life - and I deplore this - the Christian life is being looked upon today as a refuge for the weak, instead of an army for the strong.

THE RESPONSE OF THE CHURCH

What is our response? What should be our response? I see three things at least, that we can do. First, we can conform to the world and just let it roll on by. Second, we might flee from it. Finally, and hopefully, we can stand and speak the truth in love. Now I think we have to make a decision. I think the world is going to force us to make a decision. You are going to have to decide, as a Christian individual, what you are going to do. You are going to have to decide as a family, what you are going to be and what you are going to do as a family. You are going to have to decide as a congregation what you are going to do and what your response to this world and its evil will be. Let us talk about these three options facing us.

SHOULD THE CHURCH CONFORM?

First, I suggest to you that to conform to this world is suicide. It is absolute suicide for you, for your children, for your grandchildren and for your congregation. To conform is the easiest things to do. It is not too painful, because it happens ever so slowly, We mistake a stretching of our conscience for a broadening of our minds.

Sometime ago, I saw a study that was done during World War II, about men who were placed in concentration camps during the war and the various types of prisons and camps existing then. They were discussing in particular those who were placed in solitary confinement, in dungeons, Such prisoners very seldom, if ever, saw the light of day. In reference to this study, one of the things that caught my attention was, that men who were imprisoned so long in that kind of darkness, often fancied the day was dawning. In their tormented minds, day after day after day, not knowing night from day, they would occasionally decide that day was dawning, that the light was coining, although there was no light at all.

The absolute horror of that, is that we can get so used to the darkness, that we think it is getting brighter. We can get to the place where we are not offended by anything, and say that there is no harm to things that are absolutely questionable. We are going through a desensitization process we are being desensitized by this world in which we live.

There are some things that we do not have a right to get used to. Let me mention a few. You do not have a right to get used to brutality. We are being fed a big dose of it. We do not have any right to get used to violence and the irrational. We are being fed that every day as well. There was a time when sin shocked us. But the brainwashing goes on, until what once amazed us, now amuses us. We now laugh at shady jokes, we allow profanity to be funneled into our very laps, and we are going along with it. Remember, we are not here to learn how to live in the dark. That is not why we are here. God never placed us here and said, "I want you to learn how to live in the dark." He wants us to be people of light, and He said, "only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel." In fact, in Ephesians 5:11, Paul said, "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them." We need to listen to Ephesians 5:11 and take heed.

SHOULD THE CHURCH FLEE?

The second thing I suggested that we could do, is to flee, But I do not believe this is in His plan at all. As God describes the Christian soldier and the armor of God is given (Eph. 6;2 Cor. 10:2 Tim, 2), not once is any armor given for our backs. We have all kinds of armor on the front, which teaches that soldiers of the cross need to advance over the fields of sin. Yet, He never prescribed one piece of armor for our backs, God does not intend that we flee, neither does He intend that we become a recluse.

When I was a very young preacher, I was in Missouri in a meeting. A brother asked, "Would you go to see a monastery?" I supposed that I would, and I remember we had to walk across a rope catwalk stretched between two mountains in order to get there, Once we reached that monastery, we met one man who was over seventy years of age, who never had been been out of that place. His concept was that we should leave this world and form a commune somewhere, dedicating ourselves to God and living as a recluse. That is not what this Book is saying to us at all. The Scriptures say, "Go ye into all the world..." (Mk. 16:15). You cannot do that in a monastery. We are to reach out to all the world, and the world spoken of is the people in it.

In John 17, Jesus prayed, "I do not pray that they shall be taken out of the world, but to be kept from the evil that is in the world" (v. 15), One of the greatest concepts of Christianity is that we are in the world, but not of it. That is one of your greatest blessings and yet also one of your greatest problems, is it not? We wrestle with that. Now if you do not wrestle with that - I suspect you are not thinking about it. We are in the world. We live in it. We make a living in it. We function in it. We educate

our children in it. All of these things have to happen, and yet at the same time, “you are not of it.” It is not easy to maintain our equilibrium.

Let us return to Matthew 5 for a moment. Jesus said, “You are the salt of the earth” (v. 13). That is an interesting statement because salt preserves; tastes and stings. The virtue of salt is not that it is salt, but in the effect it has when it is used. So it is not enough to say that we are the salt of the earth, It is our effect that we have as salt, as we deal with this world in which we live. We need to be poured into the stream of life, to have an effect on people in the world. Salt works only when it is used.

Further, Jesus said, “You are the light of the world” (Mt. 5:14). You know, that is our business. Every once in awhile in the business that I just left, I would hear the teachers talking about one of those days when the kids were not there, and they would be saying how nice the day was. It was quiet around there and things were calm and someone commented that this would be a great business if it were not for children. But that is our business. You do not have a school business without children. We need to remember that we are in the light business. Jesus said, “You are the light of the world.” That is our business. If we do not like being looked at, and if we do not like being the light of the world, then we are in the wrong business, because that is exactly who we are and what we are about.

We will always be a reproof to darkness, as Paul said, “Whatsoever doth make manifest, is light” (Eph. 5:13). When you walk through the woods and kick over one of those rotting logs, little black beetles run off in all directions. They are sensitive to the light. They do not like light, and they scurry off to find another place of darkness. You have already observed, that when you walk through this world and kick over a few rotting logs, whether it be in the church or out of it, that people do not like it. But I submit to you, that we need to have the light shining in. We need to turn on the light! We are so afraid of being offensive, that we are not effective. We must deal with that concept. We are turning our lights down low. Oh, we are not going to turn them out, but we will turn our lights down so low!

I do not believe that the early Christians dimmed their lights to match the times. I do not see that in this Book. Whether they were in a dungeon or on the streets of Jerusalem, or in the catacombs of Rome, they let their lights shine, Oh, it cost them! It costs to turn on the lights. You do not pay a dark bill do you? You have to pay a light bill! You get the dark free.

SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE

The third response to our world that I suggested was to stand and speak of the truth in love. In Philippians 2:15-16, Paul said that we are to be “blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life.” Perhaps no verse in the Bible better sums up all we are to be and do than does this verse.

You will notice in Titus 1:3 that the apostle declared that He “hath in due time manifested his world through preaching which is committed unto me by the commandment of God our Saviour” (1:3). Paul also said, “the things that thou hast heard of me...the same commit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2). God intends His word to be preached and transmitted from generation to generation. It is through the preaching of His Word that His will is accomplished and there is no greater privilege or responsibility known to man. We must speak the truth to the lost and be sure that our lives exemplify the message we preach. May God help us to adorn the doctrine. We can never do more; God forbid that we should do less! — 1921 McKamie Rd., McGregor, TX 76657. March 1997

Bonds of Matrimony

CULBERTSON - ANTHONY

As a golden sunset shed its soft glow upon a rural south Mississippi scene, Bro. Carter Culbertson and Sis. Alex Anthony were united in holy matrimony on the evening of May 15, 2021. A large company of family, brethren, and friends attended the ceremony marking the establishment of this Christian home. The couple attends the Hillcrest congregation in Brookhaven, MS and are making their home in Lincoln County. I have known Carter all his life and have the deepest love for him and his family. He is an upstanding young leader in the congregation and able proclaimer of the gospel. Alex was baptized into Christ a few years ago and is a wonderful young lady with a pure heart and a love for the Lord. It has been a joy to get to know her. Their home will be a blessing to the church at Hillcrest and the brotherhood. It was my great honor to officiate the wedding. - Kevin W. Presley

HUGHES - CLARK

On the afternoon of June 26, 2021, a large gathering of family, brethren in Christ, and friends from all over the community came together in Andalusia, AL to witness the sacred exchange of vows between Bro. Landon Hughes and Sis. Emma Clark. It was a beautiful

ceremony with some of the most wonderful singing I have ever heard at such an occasion by a chorus of our young people from around the country. Landon was born during the first gospel meeting I conducted in south Alabama some 25 years ago. He is an outstanding young man of impeccable character with a sincere heart devoted to the service of Christ. Emma was converted to Christ a few years ago and has won the hearts of all who know her. She is a sweet, caring, and godly young lady who is fully dedicated to doing Christ's will. They will be a modern Aquilla and Priscilla in the work of the church in south Alabama and wherever they may go. They have established their home in Opp, AL where Landon serves as one of the congregation's leaders. May God bless their new abode. It was my privilege to perform the ceremony. - Kevin W. Presley

Our Departed

COSBY - Austina "Tina" Imogene Cosby was born August 3, 1948 in Frederick, Oklahoma to Austin and Ola Faye Anderson Fraley. She died August 17, 2021 at an Oklahoma City hospital. Tina was recovering from surgery to remove a bone spur from her neck and seemed to be doing well. On Monday afternoon on August 16th, however, she fell unconscious with bleeding on the brain and died the next morning. Survivors include her husband of 55 years, Roger; two sons, Keith Cosby and wife Bridget and Darin Cosby and wife Angela; and four grandchildren, Abby, Jackson, Colton, and Paige. She was preceded in death by her parents; three brothers, Terry Cobb, Arnold Fraley and Norman Fraley; and two sisters, Dorothy Wearmouth and Judy Jones. I first met Tina when she was a senior at Vanoss High School and I was a senior at Ada High School. She was dating Roger, a college student, and I was dating Phyllis, who was also a college student. Roger and Tina married later that year and Phyllis and I married the next year. We became fast friends and spent a lot of time together as newly-weds and when our children were young. Roger obeyed the Gospel after they married and became my brother in Christ, but he has also been like a biological brother for over 50 years. In fact, my two older brothers and I often refer to Roger as "our brother from another mother." Tina was highly intelligent. She was co-Valedictorian of her graduating class and she was successful in business as a Centurion dealer for Hunter Douglas Window Dressings. She was a good cook, had a beautiful smile, and a great sense of humor. She had a razor-sharp wit and could be hilarious. She loved verbal repartee. Roger, of course, was usually the target of her acerbic wit, and he was the perfect foil. They were hospitable and kept numerous preachers in their home during gospel meetings. They formed close friendships

with Johnny Elmore, Don King, Barney Owens, and many others. Our greatest consolation is that she died as a faithful Christian. I was honored to assist Cullen Smith in the funeral service before a packed house, made up of brethren and many people from the community. —Carl M. Johnson

WILSON - Muriel Arliene Wilson passed from this life at home with her loving husband Rod at her side on August 28, 2021. She was born on December 11, 1935 in Empire, California to the late Ralph and Gladys Bradley. She was also preceded in death by two brothers, Alvo and Vaun. She is survived by her husband Rod and two sons, Doug and David. Muriel's friendship with Gale England (Garrison) helped her to learn of the Church and around 70 years ago Muriel was baptized into Christ. She never wavered in her faithfulness, thus her stability and wonderful example shined the light of Christ before everyone with whom she came in contact. While attending Ceres High School she met Rod but it wasn't until a couple of years later during a gospel meeting at the Ceres Church of Christ in December 1955 that their relationship began to grow. Rod saw Muriel sitting alone and seized the opportunity to sit by her. They dated for a couple of months, became engaged and married just six months later on June 23, 1956. Rod and Muriel celebrated their 65th anniversary earlier this year other than a short stint candling eggs, Muriel was a homemaker. Her culinary skills and hospitality were very well known. Whether someone in need that Rod brought home or a visitor at worship, she was always ready and willing to heed the teaching of Hebrews 13:2 "Do not forget to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares". Rod and Muriel rarely did not have members of the church in their home for Sunday lunch. Muriel was the picture of "given to hospitality" Romans 12:13, Muriel loved gardening. Her back yard was filled with a variety of colorful plants and flowers. She enjoyed the outdoors, especially camping. Another hobby she liked was going to estate and yard sales. Muriel would often pick up a good deal and pass the item on to a brother or sister in the church who needed that special thing. Again, Muriel always thinking of others. It was said by Greg Branch during her memorial "So many younger and older sisters have expressed to me "how much Muriel meant to them because of her wisdom and her willingness to speak straight without being offensive. I am reminded of the Apostle Paul's words in Titus Chapter 2:3-5 - "The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; that they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God

be not blasphemed". And then, there were the older ladies. The older ladies who needed help, who needed care, who wanted to pass from this life with dignity, but they needed help, Muriel was eager to help. How many older folks did Muriel care for? Too many to count. As one person said, Muriel was "Hospice before there was Hospice". Muriel in so many ways reminds us of the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31. Muriel just made everyone around her better. Finally, there was a touching tradition carried out each year when Rod would give Muriel a single red rose on their anniversary. The last time earlier this year when she was in the hospital. Even so that red rose in her room sparked interest from the nurses, which opened the door for Rod and Muriel to talk with them about Christ and His church. As Muriel's memorial was conducted, a single red rose on her casket was appropriate. So was the fitting poem Rod wrote which was read during the service...

The Master's Bouquet

The gardener gathered his flowers with care
Searched for them diligently from far and near
Only some would do, so he searched for the best
It took a special one to stand the test
There was room in the vase for one more flower
So he looked down from his lofty tower
And picked from the many a beautiful red rose
Into his vase to be placed in repose
The Master took it with care from the flower bed
Put it in its place gently, this pretty rose so red
There to reside for ever and a day
She takes her place in the Master's bouquet
Many were gathered at Burwood Cemetery in Escalon,
California on a beautiful day in the beginning of
September to remember Muriel and commit her body
to the ground where it awaits the resurrection. It was
this writer's privilege to conduct the service with
Greg Branch. Ivan Costa led the gathering in song in
between the prayers and words of tribute, comfort and
encouragement that we spoke. --Greg Cardosa

GRANT - James Grant of the Wallace Stone congregation near Edinburgh, Scotland (Great Britain), passed from this life August 7 of this year at the age of 92. He was born March 30, 1929, in Borrowstounness, Scotland. James died after a long battle with cancer. He is survived by his wife Isa. James (known as Jimmy in his native country) was known by many in the church in the U.S. because he and Isa made three trips to this country many years ago. They visited churches in many parts of this country, and James preached just about from coast to coast. His Scottish accent always fascinated less traveled Americans at that time, and his unique, jovial personality sparked the interest of Christians wherever he went. As American Christians began to travel more, they arranged to worship with

the Wallace Stone congregation where James was the mainstay for most of his adult life. Having obeyed the Lord in baptism at the age of 23 (September 8, 1952), James began a lifelong devotion to the Lord and servant for the Cause of Christ-in fact, he was a self-supporting preacher for almost sixty years. When he was 26, he married Isabella (Isa) Dougall, the daughter of a well-known preacher in Scotland. She was 18. To their union, three sons were born: Charles, David, and James. Charles died of cancer in 2006 at the age of 48. Besides Isa, surviving are his two remaining sons, two granddaughters, and four great grandchildren. James' funeral service was conducted by Ian Davidson. One of James' main contacts with American churches was James Orten, who traveled many times to Britain and who helped arrange for the Grants to visit churches here. At one point, James and Isa were slated to go to Malawi (formerly Nyasaland) to work among churches there; but because of a government clamp down, his Visa was withdrawn just before they were scheduled to leave. He continued to maintain an interest in the Malawi work as well as in the mission work Britain had going in Ghana. With his passing, the church in Britain lost a dedicated soldier of the cross. Personal Note: It was my privilege to have been associated with James for many years. I visited in their home in Scotland more than once as well as worshiping with them at Wallace Stone, and JoAnn and I had the honor of having James and Isa in our home on one of their visits to the U.S. Their visit with us happened to be during one of the annual Texas Labor Day Meetings, and what a visit it was. I don't know who was more excited: James and Isa at the thrill at being present at the big meeting or those attending the meeting getting to interact with them. In either case, it was an encouraging time for all. May the Lord continue to bless Isa with good health in her declining years.-Joe Norton

Field Reports

Don L. King, 1147 Sherry Way, Livermore, CA 94550, old_paths@juno.com, September 14, 2021. Recently, we have preached about three times at home and twice at Stockton. I love to preach and am thankful the Lord has allowed me to continue. Brethren, the world and nation are in turmoil. Let it not be so with us. We are thankful all is peaceful with us in Livermore. We also need to always be aware that our Lord expects us to do our best whatever the circumstances are. Preachers, please remember the paper needs your reports and articles. We wish all of you would bless us with regular reports. Brethren enjoy and benefit from knowing your work and encouraging news. That is good for all of us to read. Try to have them to us by the 12th of the month,

please. God bless our Brotherhood.

Carl M. Johnson, 1400 Northcrest Dr., Ada, OK 74820, carlmj33@gmail.com, Sept. 7. Phyllis and I attended the 2021 Texas Labor Day Meeting hosted by the Fossil Creek congregation last weekend and enjoyed it very much. I preached on Saturday night along with Greg Gay and Joe Norton. I also preached Lord's Day morning at the Grapevine congregation. They had a full house, including visitors from the Labor Day Meeting and we had a wonderful day. I am scheduled to preach on Lord's Day here at home both services and then we go to the Odom congregation, near Dora, Missouri to begin a meeting September 15-19. We had a family of three take their stand with us from digression last Lord's Day. We welcome Jerome, Tonya, and Pearl King into the congregation. They are excited to find us and we are excited to have them! Cullen Smith will be with us in a meeting October 10-17, and I am scheduled to be in Lodi, California, November 4-7. Thank you for your many prayers on our behalf this year. May God continue to bless us all.

Greg Gay, 3816 Tambos Trl, Edmond, OK 73034, papagreg@aol.com, 916-804-3787, September 10, 2021. We enjoyed our gospel meeting with the Fieldstone, MO congregation in August. They worship eighteen miles from the nearest town in a stone covered building that is on top of a ridge with one of the most beautiful views the Ozarks offers. I was told the brethren picked the stones from the surrounding fields for the construction. Also, that my grandfather, Homer Gay, preached there at least 80 years ago. Our comfortable home for the meeting was with Ron and Judy Wood. We enjoyed our visits with them and with all in the congregation. Fieldstone is one of the more active congregations among us to help preach the gospel at home and around the world. Ron is an unsung hero of the faith who has traveled with our preachers many times to many nations to help in the work. I appreciate all the visitors who came from near and far including preaching brethren Richard Bunner from Springfield, MO and Todd Richardson from Houston, MO. Our next stop was the Texas Labor Day meeting, capably hosted by the Fossil Creek congregation, coordinated by Kevin Presley. This was our second time to be at that great meeting since moving to these parts. We enjoyed visiting with new and old friends. I was honored to be one of the speakers and appreciated hearing all the other preachers. Our work continues at the growing West View congregation in Piedmont, OK. New families moving to our area are making us their home congregation and studies are starting with friends of members. We are delighted to be part of the work! I appreciate the calls I am getting for meetings. Lord willing, our next meeting is in Galey, OK, followed by a visit to Kauai, Hawaii

with island hops for worship in Waipahu on Oahu, then on to Ozark, MO in October to preach on the theme of the eldership. We are looking forward to seeing all who can attend.

David Griffin, Lee's Summit Congregation (Lebanon, MO), October 2021. Since my last report, things have been going well here in Southwest Missouri. The churches at both Lee's Summit (west of Lebanon, MO) and Montreal (north of Lebanon) have been doing well and are at peace. I have the privilege of maintaining a working relationship with both these churches and preach at both on a regular basis. It is exciting to see people so committed to the Lord and his church. Moreover, in early August, I preached a meeting at the Oakwood congregation in Edmond, OK. It was a privilege to be with these brothers and sister and see firsthand their zeal of the gospel and the love for one another. We had one confession. They also asked me to conduct a "teachers' session" on Saturday morning. The turnout was exceptional, and the brothers all participated enthusiastically. It was a pleasure. Lord willing, we look forward to a meeting coming up at Lee's Summit Oct 20-24 with brother Jimmy Cating. God bless all in His service! David Griffin

Irvin Barnes, 3218 East Farm Road 88, Springfield, MO 65803, irvinbarns@aol.com, September 10, 2021. Greg Gay held a weeks meeting here in August. Greg has made a good preacher! His preaching exhibited a life time of Bible study. Greg's lessons were well delivered, valuable, and timely. Interest was good in spite of the continued confusion over Covid. The last Lord's day morning of the meeting we had 15 individuals attend the morning service who were not members of the church. We were glad Greg's wife, Cassie was able to be with Greg. Cassie's lifestyle is in every way that of a Godly woman, a wonderful example to all who know her. Having Greg and Cassie here resurrected wonderful memories of the good times spent many years ago in the homes of their parents, Sonny & Maxine Gay and Ervin and Mary Baker, during meetings I held at Lee's Summit and Houston, Mo. During those times, Greg, Kent May and Howard Meents were in college in Springfield. The 3 of them showed up frequently in meetings in southern Mo. They always gave the services a good boost, especially in the song leading! What a joy after all these years to have them together again during our meeting with Greg. Most of all, how wonderful that they have spent, and are spending their lives, in the kingdom in devout service to Christ. At Pleasant View, we have 2 young men, Eli Bingham and Peyton Rice, who are taking their place on the list with the older teachers. I believe both of them will become well qualified gospel preachers. We have 3 more brothers who will soon begin studies about public teaching. We also hope to qualify

more elders and deacons in the coming months. Please pray fervently for congregations in South America, India, and the Philippines who are suffering from the Covid pandemic.

Melvin Blalock, 214 Pearl St., Cleburne, TX 76031, melvinblalock@sbcglobal.net, Sept. 10. The year of 2021 has been a year of blessings; and also a time of difficulty and sadness. While Gospel meetings have been limited due to Covid, we have been able to enjoy a few good meetings. The church at Weatherford was blessed to have a good meeting with Brother Don King in July. My wife and I were able to attend every service, with the exception of the Lord's Day when we were at our home congregation in Cleburne. At the meeting there was a seat noticeably empty. Brother Weldon Couch, one of our church leaders at Weatherford passed away from the Covid virus about a month earlier. This was a great loss to the Weatherford congregation. I had a very close relationship with this good man, having baptized him and his family nearly thirty years ago following a home Bible study. Many others in the Weatherford congregation have had Covid, but thankfully have survived. My wife, Alberta had to have a kidney removed due to cancer in the month of July. We are thankful for the many prayers that were said for her. She seems to be recovering well. Her other kidney appears to be healthy. We enjoyed a meeting with Brother Greg Gay in Cleburne during the month of June. We enjoyed good crowds and great preaching. The church in Cleburne continues to do well. We are blessed with good song leaders and several talented teachers. We are also blessed to have many young people from young children to teenagers. The annual Labor Day meeting just concluded at Grapevine under the oversight of the Fossil Creek congregation. In spite of fears about Covid, the crowds were good. Brother Kevin Presley did a great job in conducting the meeting. The singing, preaching and fellowship were wonderful. I have had the privilege of preaching at San Angelo and McGregor, Texas recently. I had hoped to spend Sunday afternoon with Brother Wayne McKamie, as I usually do at McGregor, but he was ill and unable to attend. We continue to pray for this great old soldier in his declining years. I enjoyed the hospitality of the home of Billy and Pam Wilson, and visiting with several from the McGregor congregation. I continue to assist the following congregations in the North Texas area; Cleburne, Weatherford, Mineral Wells, and Duncanville. I am kept busy writing articles for several local newspapers, as well as Facebook on a weekly basis. We have gained a substantial readership over the past couple of years for which we are thankful. We ask for your continued prayers in our work for the Lord.

Stan Owens, 8432 Cox Rd West Chester, OH 45069, September 12th. At the end of July, I was in Earlytown, AL for a series of meetings. It is always good to be in that area and be around those that have known me since I was born. One night the air conditioner was out. The nostalgia of the way meetings used to be without it wore off pretty quick as we realized how spoiled we are. We had great support from the surrounding congregations and even from Georgia, and it was greatly appreciated. I was next at the Chestnut Ridge congregation in Mount Vernon, KY. This congregation has deep roots of where the Owens family came from and it is always a great privilege to be in that area. It is always great to spend extra time around Brother Ova Baker, who labors there with Brother Dale McNew. He is a tireless worker in the Kingdom. The crowds were excellent and the support from the surrounding congregations was great, as always. There is also a great number of young people in that area that are working to grow their talents in the Lord. It was a pleasure to meet some of the young men for breakfast one morning to visit with and encourage them to learn from the wisdom of the "hoary heads" that are in that area. Sunday afternoon in that area, I had the pleasure of speaking at the Bandy, Ky congregation where Brother Rob Barron labors. It is always such a privilege to be around him and the Brethren there. They have been a tremendous encouragement to me over the years. I next went to Mountain Grove, MO. It was the first time being there that I did not stay with Brother Lyle and Sister Velma Harrison. Their passing certainly left a hollow place in that congregation. It was difficult to look over and not see them in the audience. It was good to visit with Brother Wayne and Sister Frances Sutherland and see them make it to the meeting as much as they did. They are in poor health but their efforts are a great encouragement to the area. Ralph Strunk is now having to do everything in the worship and his efforts do not go unnoticed. It is a difficult thing, as most of us know, when death takes away so many that take part in the worship. I also enjoyed getting to visit with Brother Todd Richardson. He works very hard laboring in the surrounding communities and he is a pleasure to be around. During the meeting, a family from the community came, and on Sunday afternoon the mother informed us she had been a member of the Church that had digressed from Scriptural worship and she had left about 30 years ago. She made a confession and wanted to rededicate her life, and we were glad to assist in that. We hope her family will soon follow suit. We are very thankful for the increase from God. Here at home, we continue to have correspondence courses mailed out in order to try to plant and water that Seed. I look forward to the Fall meeting schedule. Keep The Faith.

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WALKS THROUGH THE BIBLE. . .

SIGHING AND COMPLAINING RIFFRAFF

By JERRY DICKINSON

“Now when the people complained, it displeased the LORD; for the LORD heard it, and His anger was aroused. So the fire of the LORD consumed some in the outskirts of the camp. Then the people cried out to Moses, and when Moses prayed to the LORD, the fire was quenched. So he called the name of the place Taberah, because the fire of the LORD had burned them. Now the mixed multitude who were among them yielded to intense cravings; so the children of Israel also wept again and said, ‘Who will give us meat to eat? We remember the fish which we ate freely in Egypt, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic; but now our whole being is dried up; there is nothing at all except this manna before our eyes!’” (Numbers 11:1-6)

According to Exodus 12:38 when the children of Israel made their exodus out of Egypt a “mixed multitude” went out with them. The Hebrew word “ereb” used here literally means a collection or a mob of different persons. In Numbers 11:4 another Hebrew word is used, “asaphsoph” which is similar in meaning but more literally could be translated, a great rabble. Some scholars even suggest it is similar to our word riffraff. Rabble and riffraff are words that refer to a motley group of people who are disorganized and tend to cause trouble. Who were these people? Why did they leave Egypt and go out into the wilderness with the children of Israel?

Some of them may have been slaves themselves from other nations conquered by the Egyptians and they saw a chance to be free by joining the Israelites as they exited Egypt. Others may have been disaffected Egyptians who were of the lower classes and saw no future for themselves in Egypt, and decided to take their chances with the fleeing Israelites. No doubt many of them were children of mixed marriages between Egyptians and Israelites and they had to decide to stay in Egypt with their Egyptian fathers (if they would acknowledge them) or leave with their Israelite mothers. A mixed multitude went out with them, or as one translation renders it, “A great rabble went out with them.” This great rabble, or riffraff, was to be a source of trouble along the way.

After being at Mount Sinai for almost a year they start out for the Promised Land with joyful songs of praise but three days into the wilderness journey (only three days?) they begin to complain. Interestingly, the word complain here is more literally constantly sighing. They sighed and sighed and murmured against Moses and of course the Lord. They were tired. Tired of the journey (after three days?). They were tired of the manna God had so graciously provided for them, with all its nutrition, and for which they did not have to work. They remembered the fish and all the wonderful condiments they ate in Egypt and the Bible says they had an intense craving for fish and garlic. “Our whole being is dried up!” they complained and they actually wept. Alas! Sometimes I fear we are no better. It has been a couple of hours since we last ate and we exclaim, “I am about to starve to death! If I don’t get something to eat I may pass out!” Really?

Take note, however, that the source of the sighing and complaining comes from that mixed multitude. Only three days into the journey and this rabble and riffraff start complaining and the whole camp is infected. The problem with the mixed multitude is they have a mixed loyalty. They did not want to stay in Egypt, but they do not want to be out in the wilderness either. They did not like the life they had back in Egypt but now that they see the hardship and deprivation of the long journey to Canaan they think maybe it was not so bad in Egypt after all. They are not all in! They have not committed themselves to the leadership of Moses - or the LORD for that matter. Too, they really do not know who they are. “Are we Egyptians or Israelites?” is the question they are asking themselves in this desolate wilderness. They are halfhearted, half committed, and half baked! Having such a rabble and riffraff is a recipe for disaster. A burning fire from the LORD sweeps through the camp and only the intercession of Moses stops it. If there is one thing that stirs up God’s anger it is complaining. We have been warned!

We have a mixed multitude among us today! Right? There are those in our congregations who are not all in. Their loyalty is divided. They are not satisfied in the world so they become members of the church, but when the journey gets difficult they are not satisfied and begin to complain and sigh about what the church preaches and practices. Egypt was not so bad after all! The denominations have a lot going for them and they have an intense craving to be like the megachurches they read about on Facebook. Their cravings and sighing’s infect the church and soon everyone is sighing. They are like the riffraff who followed Israel into the wilderness -they really do not know who they are. “Am I a member of the church of Christ, or am I an independent free thinking spiritualist?”

I have written previously about a woman asking me awhile back if I was a “one cupper” and my reply to her was that I do believe we must use one cup in the Lord’s Supper, and I am not offended by the term “one cupper.” Problems arise when we have those among us who do not know who or what they are. I think some do not know if they are one cuppers or not. They accept and use one cup, but they are not convicted and committed, and when the journey gets rough they complain and even abandon the Bible pattern. Beware of the mixed multitude. Be watchful of those whose loyalty, to Jesus and his Word, is halfhearted. The mixed multitude in our midst is a recipe for disaster. We have been warned!