

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. 9

GODLY MOTHERS

By *BILLY D. DICKINSON*

The idea of Mother’s Day was first suggested in 1872 by Julia Ward Howe, the author of the stirring song, “The Battle Hymn Of The Republic.” Perhaps that was only fitting because good mothers understand that there are battles which must be fought in life and they know how to fight for what is important. As the poem declares: “The bravest battle that ever was fought, shall I tell you where and when? On the maps of the world you will find it not, it was fought by the mothers of men.” That’s right! It is said that by the time a youngster reaches 18 years of age, the mother has handled some 18,000 hours of child generated housework, dealing with things that would not have been necessary had there been no child. If there is anyone in this life who deserves our honor and respect, surely our mothers do.

This, of course, is a Bible topic and the word of God emphasizes the importance of motherhood to the home. “I will therefore that the younger women marry, “ Paul wrote in 1 Tim. 5:14, “bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully.” This shows that the home is, indeed, the woman’s domain (her main sphere of activity) and this is where she fulfills her destiny. In fact, bearing children is a unique role of the woman and she has that feminine touch which helps to bring order and a sweetness to the home that would be lacking without her presence. Although some are seeking to obliterate all distinctions between the sexes in our society, God created men and women differently. Instead of looking upon that as a criticism or something to be viewed in a negative way, we need to possess an appreciation for those differences and see how they enrich our lives. The truth is that both the woman’s femininity and the man’s masculinity are important, playing a vital role in balancing things out in the home (for the good of children and everyone involved).

One of the most beautiful tributes ever paid to womanhood is found in the last chapter of the Proverbs, where the section begins by affirming that you cannot put a price tag on a mother’s worth. After declaring, “Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies” (Prov. 31:10), we learn in verse 28 that he is referring to both a wife and a mother, whose “children arise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her.” Dear reader, why should a mother’s worth be something that we value so highly? The answer to that question has to do with all the things a mother is and the different areas that motherhood involves. As I deal with this topic from that standpoint, let’s notice the great value of a godly mother...

HER ROLE AS A TEACHER

Mothers need to understand and appreciate that up to a certain point in their child’s life, they are probably the most important and effective teacher the child will ever have! They teach their children lessons that are vital to their very existence here upon this earth, including things like how to eat properly, potty training, the need for good manners, honesty, integrity, morality, modesty, etc. In many ways the mother is the “hub” on which everything else turns, and due to the multifaceted roles she plays in the home, everyone should see her importance. All the members of a family depend upon mother more than they could ever imagine!

It’s really hard to understand the attitude of some women, sometimes even in the church, when you take all of these facts into account. Instead of being content with their God-given role, some long for something more, perhaps wanting to be preachers (public proclaimers of God’s word) or having a “ministry” that operates outside the woman’s Biblical sphere of activity. Do you know what that demonstrates? It shows that some do not fully appreciate how important women and mothers are to the work of the church. One man said that we need to appreciate what he called the “ministry of motherhood.” In other

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Editorial

BETTER THAN THE MIGHTY

By JOE NORTON

Controlling anger is one of the greatest challenges of living the Christian life. Life doesn't always happen as we expect it to nor as we want it to. If it is a situation that stirs an emotion within us, that hurts us personally, or that hurts someone we really care about, we may react without thinking through a situation. When that happens, we exhibit our inner feelings outwardly-and those around us witness our emotions.

Anger is defined as "a strong passion or emotion of displeasure, and usually antagonism, excited by a sense of injury or insult" (Webster's Dictionary). It actually can come upon a person either slowly or suddenly; when it happens suddenly, the person "flies off the handle" as we say colloquially. That is, he does so if he hasn't mastered the art of self-control.

The preacher, Solomon, includes anger as a part of his teaching in Proverbs 16 where he spends a great deal of time giving instruction about self-control, especially about controlling anger, and he uses various figures of speech to get his point across. "He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, And he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city" (Proverbs 16:32).

In this verse, Solomon really outdoes himself by the extreme contrasts he presents between the one who controls his anger and the one who accomplishes mighty feats in battle. The one who exercises self-control and is slow to react in tense situations is greater than the powerful warrior who is able to conquer a city.

The New Testament reiterates Solomon's message about controlling anger in several passages, including those of the Apostle Paul who is quite outspoken about anger. For example, in Galatians 5, where Paul is identifying the works of the flesh, he lists "outbursts of wrath" as one of the sins that will keep a person from inheriting the kingdom of heaven. It is listed along with sexual sins as well as murder and drunkenness (verses 19-21). Such outbursts would be extreme because "wrath" is defined as "anger that boils up suddenly." And, in the opening verses of Ephesians 2, he says the Christians to whom he is writing have been made alive out of their trespasses and sins and that they were children of wrath before their conversion.

In that same epistle, Ephesians 4:21-31, he describes them as those who now know how to behave themselves

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QUERIST COLUMN

By *RONNY F. WADE*

Question: Please explain what is meant by the phrase “if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven” Matthew 18:19.

Answer: This verse is part of a larger context dealing with church discipline. In verse 15 the Lord speaks concerning a brother who sins against another brother. In such cases Jesus makes it plain that it is the duty of the one against whom a sin has been committed to go the sinning brother and tell him his fault “between you and him alone.” Even though this admonition is plain, it is often overlooked and disregarded. Instead of going to the brother who has sinned, often the person goes to anyone, with a sympathizing ear, and tells that person how they have been mistreated or sinned against instead of going to the person guilty of doing wrong. It would surprise all of us how easily many problems could be resolved if we only followed the instructions given by Jesus in this verse. Often minor problems grow into major ones simply because we fail to do what the bible teaches. There are times, however, when a sinning brother is obstinate and refuses to yield when approached. If this is the case, Jesus then instructs that one or two more brethren are to be taken to the sinning brother so that “every word may be established.” It is hoped that in such cases the brother who has sinned will realize his mistake and repent before further action is necessary. If, however, this action fails, then the matter is to be told to the church. The church had not been established at this time, but the instruction given by Jesus is understood to apply when the church became a reality. Those who claim that the four gospels belong under the Law of Moses are wrong in their contention. This instruction proves conclusively that some of the teaching during our Lord’s personal ministry applied directly to the church age, this being only one example. McGarvey correctly remarked “As the Saviour was giving preparatory instruction, he was compelled to thus speak of the church by anticipation before it actually existed.” The person who will not “hear the church” is to be regarded as an outsider i.e. a heathen and publican. The binding and loosing of verse 18 is limited to the context or subject under consideration that is matters of fellowship. The discipline of the church in such

matters, scripturally carried out, should be honored and represents the final word in the matter. In verse 19, the verse in question, the Lord says “again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven.” The meaning cannot be that if two agree (regardless of what it might be) God will hear and answer their prayer. Hence, it must mean, that the persons requesting must be in Christ (John 15:7) and that the request is in keeping with the will of God (John 14:13, 14). Again the context limits the meaning to the matter under consideration and gives a solemnity to the procedure of withdrawal of fellowship. In a general way the passage also underscores the value and power of united prayer scripturally constructed and offered. In the view of this writer the teaching of verse 20 is often misunderstood. Jesus said “where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them.” Well meaning brethren have used this verse to prove that if only two or three disciples gather to worship, the Lord will be with them in that worship. While I believe that two or three people can scripturally meet and worship, that is not the burden of this verse. Contextually, church discipline is still under consideration. Hence Jesus merely affirms that he is in the midst of even two or three who are united in purpose concerning those matters addressed in the previous verses. (Send all questions to Ronny F. Wade P.O. Box 14352 Springfield, MO 65814)

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PAGES FROM THE PAST

The following article from the November 1944 issue of the Old Paths Advocate was written by Brother Fred Kirbo. The world was in the throes of World War 2 and people were discouraged about the terrible things that were happening. As we look around us today there is much discouragement and despair about the condition of the world. Brother Kirbo tells us that even though the world seems to be falling apart the Christian should not be despondent. He tells us that God's people will overcome and one day we will be able to see Heaven in all of its glory. - Rick Martin

A VISION OF VICTORY

Surrounded by the troublesome conditions depicted in the prophetic word, the world stands on the brink of unpatrolled destruction. A fearful gloom, a fatal despondency, has come over many.

Leaders of nations know not what to do. But this is no time for despair for the church of God. The dark trying times through which we are passing were foretold long ages ago in the prophetic word. Now we can see the word being fulfilled. So, instead of becoming depressed and discouraged because of the conditions that are in the world, our faith should be strengthened and our confidence in the word of God increased. We need a courage that will enable us to surmount all the obstacles in the way; a confidence that will hold us steady in the hour of storm.

The apostle John was on the lonely isle of Patmos, banished for the word of God and the truth which he had proclaimed. Doubtless, he would go down to the rocky sea shore and look across the waters to the churches he had left behind. Then a feeling of loneliness would steal over him, and he would long to be with his own again.

One Lord's day morning as he was thus meditating and looking across the blue waters, he doubtless was thinking of the services being held in the churches far way. He wished he might unite with fellow believers in the worship of God. He longed to join in the songs of praise which he knew were ascending to the throne above. But, God had something better for John that morning. The heavens were opened to his view, and

he saw the host of the redeemed in the city above. He heard the songs of praise from the unnumbered throng around the throne of God. Looking he beheld the city of God in all its glory. He saw the street of gold the jasper walls and the pearly gates. He saw the river of life that flows from the throne of God. He saw the wonderful tree of life yielding her fruit every month. He saw the foundations of the walls, garnished with all manner of precious stones.

He looked again and saw the name of Peter engraved upon one of the foundation stones: Again he looked and beheld there were the names of James, Andrew, and Mathew inscribed as with letters of gold. Once more he gazed. Lo, there was his own name engraved upon the wall. He saw it, and was satisfied. What now did it matter to him that his name was on the blacklist of Rome, when he saw it inscribed on the foundation stone of the eternal city? What now did it matter to him that he had been banished to that lonely isle, when he could see the city of God in its entire splendor, and could hear the songs of the redeemed floating down to him from the courts above?

He had seen a better world and this present one had lost all its attraction for him. Its charms were gone. To him all the sufferings he had endured were nothing when compared with the glory that would be his if he were faithful. He had seen a better world, and his trials were but a light affliction. He was satisfied.

The conflict will be severe, but the people of God will be victorious at last. The church of God will finally triumph gloriously. We shall not always march in the wilderness and never get home.

In holy vision John saw the redeemed stand on the sea of glass with the harps of God. He heard them sing the song of VICTORY, even the song of Moses and the Lamb.

We need not become discouraged. We, too, shall see that city in all its glory. We, too, shall see him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His Blood. Then in the ceaseless ages of an unending eternity we shall ascribe honor, praise and glory to the Lamb who saved us and guide us in all our ways. Then we, too, shall be satisfied.
- Fred Kirbo.

MAY I HELP YOU?*By DOUGLAS T. HAWKINS*

We expect to hear this question when we walk into a store, but would we expect to hear it from an enemy? Hardly. An enemy may plot, “how can I hurt you?” We expect an enemy, to curse us, to threaten us, or simply altogether to ignore us. As the Lord’s people, however, we should be learning to do good, even to our enemies. The Lord teaches his disciples a very different way to live, act, and speak for Jesus said “do good to those that hate you and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you.” (Mt.5:44) Admittedly, acting with goodness and kindness after having been mistreated affronts our human nature, but as His people we learn the mantra of “...love your enemies.” (Mt.5:43) This “love” requires us to seek the good of all, even those who are undeserving, for by so doing, we are ... “the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil” (Lk.6:35)

When in law school, I was somewhat surprised to learn that “the law” (for the most part) doesn’t require someone to act or get involved; even in distressed circumstances or extreme conditions. The Law imposes no duty. In 1964 in New York City, an attacker stabbed Kitty Genovese repeatedly for more than what the case called thirty-five “interminable minutes.” Despite her cry for help, more than 38 neighbors looked on, but no one did anything. The 38? The law said “by-standers have no duty to act” and therefore, could not be held liable for any of the events or outcomes. The law doesn’t compel a person to render aid, to get involved, or to help a distressed person. So, through the years, on-lookers have watched the horrors of women being raped, of children drowning, of victims burning, of property being lost, and of crimes being committed. Though the law of the land doesn’t impose a duty to aid to any degree, God’s royal law imposes a duty to aid to some degree. His royal law makes us the “keepers” of others and it seeks the good of all. And whether we know it or not, a man can violate this law and thus, become “guilty of all” (James 2:9,10) James goes on to say, “to him who knows to do good and does it not, to him it is sin.” (Js.4:17)

Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10, after a lawyer (of course it was a lawyer) asked him “...and who is my neighbor?” The lawyer’s question of “who” parsed the law of “thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” (the 2nd great commandment) to refine its scope and narrow its application, but Jesus answered that on the Jericho road, a man fell among thieves and

was robbed, beaten, and left for dead. A priest, and a levite passed by “on the other side.” One “saw” him and the other “looked” on him, but neither wanted “to get involved.” A Samaritan (a man of a despised lower social class) had compassion and stopped, treated his wounds, took him to an inn, and paid for his care, giving the inn keeper the assurance that if more money was owed he would stop by on his way back through and pay any outstanding bills. Jesus then asked, which of the three was a neighbor to him? Even the lawyer could see. Therein, the Lord broadened the application of love, though men may be inclined to narrow it.

In James 2:8 God states His royal law concisely and when a man properly lives it out, this law both restrains evil and renders good. His royal law says, “thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.” Paul said in application of this law, “...love worketh no ill to his neighbor,” (Rom.13:8-10) and also said, “...by love serve one another.” (Gal 5:13,14) If I’ve not hurt someone, that is only half the equation. The other half is have I helped them? If I’ve not done something “to” them, again that is only half the discussion. Have I done anything “for” them? Maybe I didn’t make a matter worse. The question is: did I make it better? Love withholds what would curse, and gives instead what will bless. Because, love “suffereth long” and is “kind.” (I Cor.13:4) Here, then, are two fundamental elements of love that both remits evil and emits good - the elements are patience and kindness. Patience restrains a husband from answering harshly and kindness provides a soft answer instead. These two attributes are probably our greatest weapons for good and God’s war on evil.

It’s far too easy for me to forget these fundamental lessons and so I have to train myself in them on a daily basis because my human nature is to be selfish and see only from my perspective. So I must ask, have I paused to think about personal conflicts from the vantage point of what is my responsibility? Have I taken a private Church matter too public too soon because I’m retaliating? Do I use situations to create conflict and confusion intentionally (by private whispering) to give myself an angle to manipulate and control people? Do I involve myself in affairs not belonging to me thereby making matters worse because I want to increase my stature and gain the favor of men?

We easily see situations from the perspective of what others should do. However, the Lord wants me to see from the perspective of what I must do, whether another does what they are supposed to or not. When we consider the Christian life at this level we are thinking

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words, let's don't overlook the vital role of mothers in teaching their children and instructing them in the ways of the Lord! However, some do because it is something that is done in a private, individual capacity (See 1 Cor. 14:34-35 & 1 Tim. 2: 11-12).

It was Eunice and Lois in the long ago, a mother and grandmother to an evangelist in the early church, who helped their son/grandson to become the great man of faith that he was. Paul wrote to Timothy, "When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also" (2 Tim. 1 :5). These dear women were so totally committed to living for the Lord that Timothy knew the joy of residing in a godly home. Furthermore, by verbal instruction and a true example of righteousness, they instilled in Timothy the same kind of faith that they possessed. Likewise, every mother in the church has that same responsibility today! Take the time and initiative to teach your children about spiritual things-- Tell them the story of Jesus (and other Bible characters), teach them how to pray, instill within them the godly principles of God's word, and teach them that the Lord must come first in their lives. One man put it like this: "Mothers write on the hearts of their children what the rough hand of the world cannot erase." Amen!

HER ROLE AS A NURSE

A nurse is someone who looks after patients with diligent care and is always at the beckoning call of the one in need. Obviously, it takes a dedicated, unselfish person to always be taking care of someone else, even if it means that their own needs must be put on hold for the moment. When you think about it, what an able description of a mother! When a child gets sick, for example, or has been injured in some way, who is the first person they think of and want to run to? Generally speaking, it's mother. Although there is no medicinal value in a kiss or the touch of a gentle hand, somehow mothers have a way of always making it better and taking the pain away.

When the son of the Shunammite woman fell sick in the field, the father said, "Carry him to his mother" (2 Kings 4: 18-20); then the Bible says that "he sat on her knees till noon, and he died." When we think of all the sacrifices our mothers have made on our behalf (seeing to it that we were safe, secure and happy), this is sufficient reason to honor them as we should. One man said that he finally found a Mother's Day card that expressed how he felt: "Now that we have a

mature, adult relationship, there's something I'd like to tell you. You're still the first person I think of when I fall down and get an ouchy."

Godly mothers teach us about who God is, especially in the area of love. God's love is deep and rich, plentiful in mercy and forgiveness, and always seeking our good. The closest thing to that kind of love in this life is probably the love of a mother. After all, godly mothers always seek the best for their children, first and foremost in a spiritual sense, and they are long on mercy and slow to anger. No wonder Abraham Lincoln once said: "No one is poor who has a godly mother."

HER ROLE AS A COUNSELOR

Some of the best advice a young person will ever receive is from a godly mother. While professional counselors are very expensive, her advice is "free" for the asking and, while no parent is infallible in word or deed, she would never knowingly steer you in the wrong direction. Since godly parents are committed to bringing their children up "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4), they will always act in your best interest by pointing you to the Scriptures for guidance. In that sense the words of Solomon are still applicable today: "My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother" (Prov. 1:8). What a blessing it is to be raised by parents who love God's word!

Yes, godly mothers watch out for the souls of their children and will do what they can to provide them with the correction they need in their lives. Napoleon once said: "Let France have great mothers, and France will have great sons." Likewise, with great, God fearing mothers in the church, the church will be strong and stand on solid ground!

MAKE SURE THE PICTURE FITS!

BY STEVEN BOWEN

God, truly, is a God of pictures!

As we study the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit seems to drive that point home continually as we move from one graphic scene to another. Then as we step back and survey these great pictures, we cannot help but be amazed with how beautifully this great Book connects and harmonizes. We see these pictures with the ark, "Jacob's Ladder," the tabernacle, in the lives of great men such as Joseph, Moses, David, and Solomon, and all through the Old Testament writings -- or perhaps we can say, the Old Testament "paintings." While the paintings are beautiful in the Old Testament, as we

study on we see that they take on far great meaning as we arrive to the New. One of those pictures emerges in the transition between the Egyptian period and the Wilderness period. Years after the Israelites cross the Red Sea out of the land of bondage, the Apostle Paul reflects back to that time and draws the New Testament parallel.

“Our fathers,” says the apostle, “were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea” (1 Corinthians 10:1-2). The apostle explains to the Corinthians that the way the Israelites escape from the bondage of Egypt - symbolic of the bondage of sin - is by being baptized in the cloud and in the sea. When you study these scriptures, please note that the Israelites do not escape bondage until after they are baptized in the cloud and sea. In other words, they are not “saved” on the other side of the Red Sea then cross over as a symbol of their salvation. Sadly, that picture is the one the vast majority of preachers and churches draw. But it’s a vastly different one than what the Holy Spirit draws for us in both the Old Testament pictures and New Testament instruction.

The Apostle Paul, of course, confirms the great truth of the efficiency of baptism in the sixth chapter of Romans. He chooses a different picture, but it’s the same truth. He turns to a picture of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. But please note: Whatever the picture, they must all agree. Or as Brother Lynwood said years ago on his sermon on the tabernacle, everything has to “fit.”

Certainly, Paul’s picture of baptism does “fit” with all the others the Holy Spirit by inspiration provides: Salvation and remission of sins come on the “other” side of baptism, not on the dry river bank. Here’s how Paul puts it in that old familiar passage: “Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:3-4). Here’s that beautiful picture men have preached for centuries: Just as Christ died, was buried, and rose again, so are we when we obey the gospel of Jesus Christ: We die to our sins, we are buried in baptism, then we rise from that watery grave to walk a new life (2 Corinthians 5:17). Or as Christ says, simply, “He that believes and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). It is almost as if the Holy Spirit is saying to us that - in case a simple, easy-to-read declaration does not convince a man of the truth -- I will draw you a portfolio of pictures to reiterate the great truth many times over. Some time ago while driving out to Washington, Oklahoma for a late Sunday evening Bible study, I turned on the radio and caught an eloquent preacher from that area preach on Romans 6. I

was surprised because very few preachers I hear on the radio or TV tackle this topic.

I was impressed with the man’s eloquence, and I was more impressed with his teaching. He drew the picture just as the apostle Paul drew it and developed the Lord’s pattern well...until he came to the end. Then at the end, I’m sorry to say, he disturbed the picture by drawing a man-made conclusion. His conclusion was that this death, burial, and resurrection are merely a symbol of a previous salvation. He drew that conclusion on his own, because it’s not the Bible’s. His conclusion did not “fit” with the Romans 6 context nor the rest of the scriptures. Notice the different conclusion the inspired writer draws near the end of Romans 6:

“But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but you have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine” - (that is - the pattern of the DBR of Jesus) - “which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.” Being “then” made free from sin means that we are free from sin after we have fulfilled all elements of that picture. We rise to walk a new life after we have walked down into the water as the eunuch does (Acts 8:38), after we have been “buried with Christ” through baptism, and after we have arisen out of the water, beneficiaries of both the remission of sins and the blessed gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). Of course, these pictures are just visuals of what the Lord teaches directly in both the Mark 16:16 and Acts 2:38 passages as well as many other New Testament scriptures. But there’s another lesson here for all of us. We all need to be careful as we listen or teach on any topic. Let’s make sure we sketch the Bible’s pictures correctly all the way through, staying with the simplicity of the gospel, staying with what’s clear and easy to understand (1 Cor. 2:1-4). If teaching is over your head, perhaps it’s not your fault as a listener: Perhaps we as preachers are not taking the vivid pictures of God’s Word and drawing them in their beauty and simplicity in such a way that everything consistently and smoothly “fits.”

What a great pattern for us to follow in our teaching, that of the Israelites standing on the Egyptian side of the Red Sea! They are not saved from bondage there looking out over the Red Sea, believing that God can save them: No, that picture is inaccurate and incomplete. On that dry river bank they have yet to be “baptized in the cloud and the sea.” But when they go down into the vast gulf of the Red Sea, and cross courageously over to the other side, they are then free from bondage.

How beautiful it is that -- with that scene now complete in biblical history -- the great Artist reaches for His brush and paints for all the world a beautiful and harmonizing picture of truth! (steven.bowen@redoakisd.org).

ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER

By JOHNNY ELMORE

Jesus endured the cross without much support from his disciples. “And they all forsook him and fled” (Mark 14:50). When Paul was on trial before Caesar, he wrote to Timothy: “No man stood with me, but all men forsook me” (2 Tim. 4:16).

This reminds us that mature, love-motivated Christians will remain faithful to their trust without human encouragement. They will stand at their post, if must be, un-helped, unappreciated, and un-thanked. Without men and women of such caliber, the church could not survive.

What about those who are not so mature? In his youth, John Mark left Paul and Barnabas on their first journey. He “went not with them to the work” (Acts 15:38). Paul refused to take him on the next trip, but Barnabas stood by him. Years later, Paul wrote, “Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry” (2 Tim. 4:11). What if Barnabas had not encouraged Mark in the time of his immaturity?

The word “encourage” is not found in the King James Version of the New Testament but the word “exhort” is found, and one of the definitions is “encourage.” Exhortation is listed in Rom. 12:8 as a spiritual gift but it is also a service that makes life more pleasant for everyone. It is a service that could be rendered without inspiration. And it isn’t called for just because someone would fold without it. Jesus wanted it from his disciples at Gethsemane but did not receive it “and there appeared an angel from heaven, strengthening him” (Luke 22:43). Paul yearned for encouragement in his lonely prison cell. Whether we realize it or not, we all need encouragement.

Some of us seem to get more than our share of it while others receive very little. Our teachers are usually told that it was a “wonderful” sermon, even if it wasn’t. And probably they are grateful for that kind of support. I like to think they would do their work faithfully without it. But who knows, for sure?

There are others who are serving, giving, and working faithfully in areas that are essential to our survival. The ladies who prepare the communion, visit, and do other common chores are important. The brethren who mow the lawn, visit, pay the bills, arrange the worship, lead the prayers and the singing are also doing a most needed work. How much encouragement do they get?

Do we dare gamble on their maturity? Even if we can, wouldn’t it be nicer for all of us if we occasionally expressed our gratitude?

And what about those who attend the worship? Hebrews 10:24,25 states, “And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.” Yes, let us exhort and encourage each other in attending worship and in living the Christian life. May God bless all those who encourage, like Barnabas of old, and may their tribe increase.

MAY I HELP YOU? ... continued from page five

in a way that will empower us to do more than simply love those who love us or greet those who greet us as Jesus said in his sermon on the mount. Such a lofty and mature contemplation “as love thy neighbor [and thy brother] as thyself” and “love thy enemy” will help us be “the children of our Father which is in heaven:... [and to be] perfect as our Father which is in heaven is perfect.” (Mt.5:45,48).

Finally, John further admonishes, “let us not love in word and tongue [by what we say] but in deed and truth [by what we do].” (1 John 3:18) We can love in theory [in what we say], but then fail when weary [in what we do] as illustrated by the man “who loved dogs.” He went in front of his house and began pouring a walkway to the street. When nearly finished a dog trounced right through the middle of the wet cement. Since the man was a “dog lover” he overlooked the dog’s inability to recognize wet cement so the man calmly re-smoothed the walkway. Knowing it could happen again, the man placed rope along each side of the walkway. But a few minutes later the dog pounced over the rope and again splashed through the cement. The man’s patience dwindled but he didn’t retaliate; he just chased off the dog with some harsh words. Again, the man smoothed out the concrete and incredibly enough, the dog sneaked behind him and leaped flat-belly into the middle of the walkway. With gritted teeth, the man stormed into the house, snatched his gun, rushed back outside and shot the dog! His neighbor who witnessed the whole thing ran over to his friend and said: “... but, you love dogs!?” The man said, “I do love dogs. But that’s in the abstract. I hate dogs in the concrete.” Well, we may love in the abstract [by words] too, but do we love in the concrete [by action]? Love asks, “how may I help you?”

NATIONS THAT FORGET GOD

By PAUL O. NICHOLS

In this day and time we need to be informed and wise to the promises of God, both good and bad. The apostle Paul says, "Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off" (Rom. 11:22).

We are warned in the scriptures that "in the last days perilous times will come" (2 Tim. 3:1). During our lifetime we have not seen more perilous times than the days in which we now live. "Wars and rumors of wars" is the order of the day. Weapons of mass destruction are a threat to the security of the world. Some nations have atomic weapons and can deliver them to any part of the world for the destruction of their enemies. Diplomacy and sanctions and threats of other nations do not deter the building of arsenals of weapons which can pinpoint and destroy an object thousands of miles away. Immorality of every description is practiced without impunity by people who justify living like animals. Marriage of same sex couples is being pushed to be legal, and law makers of our country practice immoral relations and excuse their conduct to make it acceptable by law. Every year the murder of millions of innocent babies is now justified under the "right circumstances" in our "civilized society". Rape and robbery are everyday occurrences. Human life is cheap and murders of innocent victims fill our newscasts. Child abuse and murders of children by their own parents and others is a common occurrence. Our justice system is in peril and our courts are often controlled by judges who care nothing about what God has to say, but hand down decisions based on human reasoning and laws passed by officials who have no regard for what the Bible teaches, and who ridicule people who do. Prisons cannot be built fast enough to house all the criminals. Prayer and the name of Jesus Christ are forbidden in public schools. Laws are passed to stop the mouths of those who would condemn any kind of sin, and a person can be charged and sent to jail for preaching against something the Bible condemns ("law of antidiscrimination"). However, as far as Christians are concerned, members of the church of Christ, we are not involved in politics and this has nothing to do with politics. It makes no difference who belongs to what or what station in life he may occupy, if the word of God condemns some practice, it is wrong. If a thing is right by the Bible we try to defend it and uphold it. Jude the apostle says, "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered

unto the saints" (Jude 3). And that is an obligation bound by the word of God. We also need to be reminded that "He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the LORD" (Psa.17:15).

True Christians are a peaceful, loving and law abiding people, who are taught by the word of God to submit to the laws of the land; wherever they live. That is, if they are not contrary to the law of God. As said by the apostle Peter, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:28). If rulers and lawmakers demand submission of Christians under any and all circumstances, they need to answer the question asked by Peter and John when the high court of the Jews demanded of them something contrary to the command of Jesus. "But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye" (Acts 4:19). No, God's law has priority.

Christians, the followers of Christ, are a praying people. We believe "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (James 5:16). And also we believe that John revealed the truth when he wrote, "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him" (1 John 5:14). One of the things we are told to pray for are those who have the rule over us. The apostle John says, "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior" (1 Tim. 2:1-3). We must be careful not to be among those who "despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities" (Jude verse 8). Civil government is of God; "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation" (Rom. 13:1, 2). "They are ministers of God ... " (verse 4). That is, according to the divine plan of civil government. But we still have to remember to "obey God rather than men" if it contradicts the word of God (Acts 5:28).

The whole world is in spiritual and economic peril today because of the corruption of people who have dealt dishonestly with their fellow men. "For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Tim. 6:10). We are on the brink of disaster, and the love of money is at the root of it all. Greed is at the bottom of the problem. Infidelity, doubt and disbelief; disregard for things high

and holy has turned the world upside down. People are losing their jobs, homes are being lost, pensions have been destroyed, and in general the future is uncertain. Churches are closing their doors because they have over-spent, and attendance is down. Fun and games and entertainment in the guise of religion motivated them, with total disregard for a “thus saith the Lord”. And many persons who formerly were church goers, decided they did not need God in their lives. Now look at the mess we are in. But didn’t the word of God warn, “The wicked shall be turned into hell, and the nations that forget God”? Think about it! Maybe now if we have any sense at all we will be more inclined to let God have a say about things we need to hear. A solution to the problem was given in the Bible long ago: “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land (2 Chron. 7:14).

BETTER THAN continued from page two

in Christ. They have put off the “old man” and have put on the “new man.” And he instructs them as “new men,” “Be angry, and do not sin.” So, Paul indicates that negative emotions may arise within us, but we should immediately allow self control to take over. He further teaches that we should rid ourselves of those negative emotions immediately: “do not let the sun go down on your wrath.” If we don’t follow this instruction, we might allow our anger to develop into bitterness, a serious spiritual problem.

Paul’s mirrors his teaching to the Ephesians when he tells the Colossians they have been raised together with Christ, so they should put away “anger, wrath, malice” (Colossians 3). James gives an additional perspective when he teaches that every person is to be “slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God” (James 1:19).

One of the most difficult lessons we have to learn in life is to think before we act or speak, even in emotional situations. A person who achieves this degree of self control always wins.

The message is crystal clear: anger is a part of the human emotion, but a Christian must control his anger. And he must not let it remain in his heart to fester and produce emotions that lead to bitterness and other sins. As well, when we can exhibit self-control in tense situations, we demonstrate to others the spirit and attitude that God so desires in His people. Solomon says that a person who can do so is “better than the mighty.”

Field Report

Carl M Johnson - 1400 Northcrest Drive, Ada, OK 74820 cmjthebackpage@gmail.com Aug. 10: We are thrilled here at home by the recent baptisms of Lindsay and Keeli Kessinger. Lindsay is the wife of brother Steve Kessinger and Keeli is their college-graduate daughter. Steve and Lindsay also have a college-aged son, Carter, who was baptized a few years ago. The circle is now complete in that family. Steve is the grandson of the late Clarence Kessinger, a friend of the late Homer L. King, and a preacher for many years. I participated in Moore, Oklahoma’s annual summer study a couple of weeks ago. It was well-attended and I thought the study was productive. I also preached at Moore that Lord’s Day morning and evening. One soul responded to the invitation. We had a good meeting in Marietta, GA last month. We had some visitors from the community and a number of friends from area congregations in attendance. Virtually the entire congregation from Piedmont, Alabama, attended the meeting at some point during the week. We were happy to see them all, but very disturbed to learn of Aaron Studdard’s being diagnosed with a type of lymphoma. Aaron remains in our constant prayers. One highlight of the week was the birth of Lauren and Matt Martin’s son, Noah Ryan Martin. All three of them were at worship on the last Lord’s Day morning. Johnny Elmore preached for us twice last Lord’s Day. He did an excellent job both times. I am scheduled to preach here at home this coming Lord’s Day, next Wednesday night, and then we go to Pleasant View, MO (Springfield) August 21-28. God bless and keep us all.

Bob Johnson - 10 Connecticut Ave., Midlothian, TX 76065, bobusj@gmail.com August 9, 2016. We, of the Duncanville, TX congregation rejoice with the recent baptisms of three precious souls into Christ. My new neighbors, George Thomas, his wife Karen and their son Elijah have filled our hearts with joy upon their obedience to the gospel. Karen was raised in the Muslim faith, but is now a child of the living God. My studies with them will continue as I strive to help them in their spiritual development. All remains peaceful on the home front, for which we are grateful. Lord willing, we are just a few weeks away from the upcoming Texas labor Day Meeting. We appreciate the efforts of the Fossil Creek congregation in Ft. Worth for taking the oversight in this endeavor. Brother Ronny Wade always

does an excellent job in arranging the services and seeing that all runs smoothly. I was privileged to hear brother Ronny in a meeting at Alderson, OK the last weekend in July, the building was filled each evening. As always, Ronny did some great preaching. It was a joy to have fellow preacher Randy Tidmore as our guest speaker this past Lord's Day here in Duncanville. His sermons were most relevant especially for our new converts when he spoke of the Lord's glorious church. We solicit the prayers of the faithful as we continue to reach out in our community, searching for honest hearts that have a desire to learn what they need to do to be saved.

Greg Gay - August 15, 2016. We are home after helping with the work in Hawaii for a few weeks. We had not been to Hawaii for a couple of years so the invitation and opportunity to help the church in Waipahu on the island of Oahu was very special for us. The largest Sunday morning crowd during our stay was 28, counting nine mainland visitors that day. All such visits, especially when the visitors take time to get acquainted after worship, or stay for the potluck and the afternoon service, are very encouraging to the congregation. More importantly, during our time there we had community visitors at most services. All were invited by members reaching out to their circle of friends. The brethren there are very receptive to studies and visits. I appreciate the diligence of the three leaders, Melvin Ventura, Edimar Daguio, and Frank Bedford who ably conduct the worship and attend to the usual needs of the congregation. The congregation is eager for Duane and Laurie Permenter to arrive next year to help continue the great work there. I believe there are many opportunities for the church on Oahu. I hope that growth there can lead to expansion of the work to the other islands of Hawaii in years to come. 916-804-3787 papagreg@aol.com

Don L. King, 1147 Sherry Way, Livermore, CA 94550, old_paths@juno.com, August 15- We recently enjoyed having Matt Trent with us for a weekend meeting at Livermore. Matt did an excellent job and we really enjoyed hearing him. He and I have made several trips to the Philippines together and He certainly was a capable part of the work. May the Lord bless him and the family. I enjoyed teaching once at home recently and experienced no speaking problems. The doctors believe they have come to a possible conclusion

regarding my speech problems and have prescribed a medication that seems to be helping. I have been told the medication may have to be increased somewhat but it seems to be helping to correct the problem. I am thankful for that and hope it may be possible for me to continue preaching in the future, Lord willing. May the Lord bless the Brotherhood.

Rick Martin - 300 Clubview Terrace Woodstock, GA 30189 mmartin@bellsouth.net. We were not able to attend the 4th of July meeting this year due to the anticipated birth of my first grandchild. It is the first time we have missed in a long time. The reports that I have heard say that the meetings were excellent. Little Noah Martin was born on July 12th and he and his parents are doing well.

The church here just closed a meeting with Carl Johnson. Carl did an excellent job and we were happy to have him and Phyllis with us. We have been long time friends. Randy Cantrell and his wife Rhonda were with us last weekend. We enjoyed Randy's teachings and the visit we had. In addition to hearing these men preach, I have recently heard Clint DeFrance and Nathan Battey, two fine young preachers. I was also able to hear some excellent sermons from Doug Hawkins and Ronny Wade. We had our annual singing this past weekend with Kevin Presley. The singing was one of the best ever. It was a pleasure to have Johnny Elmore with us again this year. We also heard two fine sermons from Kevin on Sunday.

Lord willing, I will be with the congregations in Turlock, CA October 19-23 and Monticello, MS November 2-6. Please pray for these efforts.



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THE BACK PAGE...

YOU CAN THRIVE AT EIGHTY-FIVE

By CARL M. JOHNSON

My brother-in-law Vannis Morgan is 85 years old and still works full-time for the Broken Arrow, Oklahoma school system. For many years he has worked in horticulture, grounds-keeping, and maintenance and has been a vital cog in the system. He has won several awards as non-faculty "Employee of the Year," and one year he was offered a vacation cruise after winning the award. He is a living testimony to the fact a person can still thrive at age 85.

He and almost 5 million other Americans, all 85 and older, now make up the fastest growing percentage of all older Americans. According to an estimate by the US Census Bureau, the number of folks 85 years old and older will increase to 8 million by 2020.

An unfortunate, commonly-held stereotype of these folks is that they are no longer a valuable resource to us, and some of the people in this age group use age as an excuse for not continuing to learn, grow, and make positive contributions to those around them.

For 15 years Gary Larson produced a popular cartoon that was syndicated in newspapers all over the country called, "The Far Side." One of his cartoons pictures a dog in a circus balancing on a tightrope high above the hushed crowd. The dog is riding a unicycle, twirling a hula hoop around its waist, balancing a jug on its head, juggling three balls, and gingerly holding a cat in its mouth. The caption reads, "Rex tries to remain focused. Still he cannot shake one nagging thought-he is an old dog and this is a new trick."

The cartoon illustrates the popular stereotype that older people cannot continue to learn, grow, and make positive contributions. Solomon deals with the stereotype in the book of Proverbs and points out that even some of the people in the older age group themselves have bought into the idea. They settle into their later years of life believing they are too old to learn and make contributions. Solomon also makes the observation in Ecclesiastes 4:13, "Better is a poor but wise youth than an old but foolish king, who will no longer take advice." The king is not described as a fool because he is old, but rather because he will no longer open his mind to instruction, admonition, and warning. No one is too old to learn from others (Cf. Prov. 1:5; 9:8-9; 15:31; 19:25; 21:19).

After the long Exodus from Egypt is over and the conquest of Canaan by Israel is virtually complete, Joshua begins dividing the land among the various tribes and subtribes of Israel. Caleb is 85 years old when he steps before Joshua and declares, "Give me this mountain!" (Josh. 14:12) God promises Caleb 45 years earlier that Caleb will inherit the land of Hebron. Now at age 85 Caleb steps forward to claim it. The land is rugged, the communities inside are fortified with large, surrounding walls, and the inhabitants are giants. The task of taking the land will be monumental. You may have expected God to say to Caleb, "You have done a good job. Rest for awhile and I shall use some of these younger guys now." Caleb assures Joshua, however, that he is as strong at 85 as he was at 40, and God uses this octogenarian to seal the deal. Caleb takes the mountain. What an inspiration Caleb is to all of us!

Renaissance genius Leonardo DiVinci said at age 87, "I am still learning."

Gospel music legend Robert S. Arnold was 89 when I first met him. He was witty, funny, and still had a singing voice so beautiful it gave me chills. When he was 92 he sang on national TV with three other singers and they were introduced as the oldest living quartet ever assembled. They brought down the house.

A few years ago, I called a brother on the phone and when he answered he sounded out of breath. He apologized and explained, "I'm in the midst of changing the brake shoes on my car." He was 86 years old at the time. I could go on and on. I know numerous folks, including preachers, church leaders, brothers and sisters from all walks of life who are in their 80s or 90s, and they are still thriving.

Obviously, some folks, through no fault or their own, are limited because of mental or physical disabilities. Government studies show, however, that the vast majority of people 85 years old lead alert and active lives. Sociologists say these Americans are the product of an increasingly high standard of living, a life of good habits, varied activities, education, and advances in medical and health care. Many of the members of this age group have been financially successful too.

So, do not fall for the old ruse that old dogs cannot learn new tricks because you can continue to thrive even at 85!
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