

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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## LIVING IN PERILOUS TIMES

By KEVIN W. PRESLEY

As he neared the sunset of his own life, Paul warned the younger Timothy: “This I know also, that in the last days perilous times will come.” (2 Tim 3:1) These would be very dark days for the people of God. The word translated “perilous” is only used one other time in the New Testament in Matthew 8:28 to describe the two demoniacs living among the tombs as “exceeding fierce”. In the following 4 verses, Paul lists approximately twenty forms of wickedness and apostasy that will accompany these days.

Admittedly, it would seem as though Paul had looked ahead in time and watched television news or read the New York Times before placing his quill to parchment to describe such dark and dismaying times. There is no question that his characterizations of the last days are obviously seen in our modern culture. But was Paul specifically talking about our own period of time? Perhaps. The fact is, however, that most of the sins Paul lists are seen in the world in almost any period of time. When has the world been devoid of wickedness? When have sinful men not been proud, covetous, unholy, and without self-control?

There are two things to consider when interpreting this passage. (1) Paul is not talking about what would take place in the world during the last days but rather conditions that would exist within the church. He is not describing the increasing depravity of the culture outside the church but the apostasy that would take place from within it. The surrounding context shows this to be the case. (2) The term “last days” is oft misunderstood. We usually hear people speak of the days immediately preceding the end of time as “the last days.” So-called prophecy preachers and even some within the church warn us that we are surely living in the last days of earth in part, due to Paul’s depiction of the last days here in 2

Timothy 3 and its striking similarity to the state of the world today. It bears repeating though: when have such conditions not existed in the world? Surely, people in ages past have beheld uncertain and calamitous times and speculated that the end must be near. Make no mistake, the end is drawing closer and may be at hand but the last days of which Paul writes do not necessarily point to the end of time. The term “last days” is plainly used in the New Testament to describe the gospel era which began during the last days of the Jewish temple and would be the last dispensation of God’s dealing with man before the end comes. Hebrews 1:2 says that God “hath in THESE LAST DAYS spoken unto us by His Son...” We are not waiting on God to reveal Himself to us through His Son nor is He presently and progressively doing so. He spoke unto us by Jesus when He came in the flesh and was glorified and then revealed unto us by the Holy Spirit through the apostles. The New Testament scriptures penned almost 2000 years ago are the revelation of God which came through His Son. So, the last days even referred to the period of the first century. When the apostles were baptized in the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, it was the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy. Peter thus declared in Acts 2:16-17: “But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass IN THE LAST DAYS, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh... “So, the last days could refer to any period of time within the last dispensation spanning from Pentecost to the threshold of eternity.

Also, Paul is writing specifically to Timothy to challenge and encourage him through these perilous times that were ahead. Timothy is instructed to “turn away” from those who were part of this falling away from the faith. The passage is not written as a barometer to predict the second coming of Christ. It was penned to bolster and equip Timothy to survive such dark days when they came. So, have they come and gone? Could we live through perilous times as Paul described to

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**Editorial**

**A SERIOUS MATTER**

*By DON L. KING*

Every now and then the question arises regarding a congregation desiring to create an opportunity for their women to be more involved in the teaching, etc. Brethren decide to use the Wednesday evening service for such a purpose They reason that they will declare the assembly private and allow women to teach. We want to notice that idea briefly. In the past we have written concerning this matter, but it seems to come up periodically. Allow me to say that I suspect such ideas come from sincere minds the majority of times. I do not charge my brethren with purposely erring from the truth. However, when we err, honestly or otherwise, we do wrong and need to correct the mistake whatever it may be.

What is wrong with such an arrangement? Let's go to the Scriptures for an answer. In 2 Timothy 3:16, 17 the apostle said: "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." Think about this: is there a place in all the Bible which is profitable for doctrine (teaching) or instruction in righteousness that furnishes anything even close to such an idea? Is there even one time we can read where the early church came together and the women taught the Bible, or asked questions, or perhaps led a prayer? A serious Bible student will immediately answer "no." Let's try again: Peter said in 2 Peter 1:3 "According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue." Notice what the apostle said. All things pertaining to life (spiritual or eternal) and godliness (living the Christian life and being godly) are given unto us. Where do these things come from? From our Father, and where may we locate them? In our Bibles. What Peter is telling us is this: If it has to do with going to heaven and pleasing God it is "given us." So we know if it is pleasing to God we can read it somewhere in the scriptures! What if we can't read it? The answer is very simple. We must not allow it.

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## QUERIST COLUMN

By RONNY F. WADE

*The following article by Ronny Wade is from the June 1996 issue of the Old Paths Advocate. Brother Wade answers the question, is it a sin for a Christian to have a tattoo? This question is certainly pertinent today due to the prevalence of tattoos. In today's society, it almost seems there are more people with them, than without them. -Rick Martin*

Question: Is it a sin for a Christian to have a tattoo? (OK)

Answer: In Leviticus 19:28 we read "Ye shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor print any marks upon you: I am the Lord." Again in Chapter 21:5-6 "They shall not make baldness upon their head, neither shall they shave off the corner of their beard, nor make any cuttings in their flesh. They shall be holy unto their God and not profane the name of their God: for the offering of the Lord made by fire, and the bread of their God they do offer: therefore they shall be holy." Deut. 14:1 is a repeat of the same prohibition. In these passages the writer deals with the behavior of the priest and the people when mourning for the dead. It was the custom of some (especially in the East) to make cuts and incisions in their bodies while in a state of mourning. Ellicott comments regarding the making of marks on the body: "This, according to the ancient authorities, was effected by making punctures in the skin to impress certain figures or words, and then filling the cut place with stibium, ink, or some other color. The practice of tattooing prevailed among all nations of antiquity, both among savages and civilized nations." Such a practice, however, was forbidden among the Israelites because their body was created by God, and it was believed that because of this nothing should be done to disfigure that which bore the image of God. (Ellicott) One thing is certain, God wanted them to be holy and different. He did not want them participating in the practices of pagan and unbelieving peoples in this regard. Clarke points out that "it was a very ancient and very general custom to carry marks on the body in honour of the object of their worship." He continues: "Most of the barbarous nations lately discovered have their faces; arms, breasts, etc, curiously carved or tattooed, probably for superstitious purposes." The Pulpit Commentary adds: "to print any marks upon you, that is, tattoo themselves in memory of the dead. All these customs were unbecoming the

dignity of God's people and had been connected with idolatrous practices." To summarize: God did not want his people indulging in the practice of pagans. Some of the practice included cutting, shaving, and tattooing themselves. The reasons for the prohibition included (1) they were the people of God, they were holy, (2) they were not to disfigure the body, which was created by God, and (3) they were to be different from the nations about them. The New Testament does not directly address the subject of our discussion. There is no scripture that says 'thou shalt not get a tattoo,' or, "thou shalt tattoo thy body". In the opinion of this writer no one can make a blanket statement that "to get a tattoo is to sin." That does not mean, however, that such a practice is good, warranted, or always right. The question is much broader than that and must be considered in the light of sound judgement guided and regulated by principles revealed in the Bible. To this end, we offer the following considerations: (1) Our body was created and given us by God. For this reason we need to be careful how we treat it and use it. To place upon it marks or messages that are unbecoming a child of God would be wrong. (2) Tattooing is the "in" thing to do today. The movie stars, sports figures etc. who participate in this practice often do so by tattooing unmentionable parts of their bodies, and then invariably mention them by displaying their marks for all to see. For a Christian to be influenced by such a practice is unfortunate to say the least. Some of the messages and figures I see tattooed on bodies today are shameful and no child of the King would ever wear or display such marks. (3) Every Christian should continually be aware of what and who is influencing them. Young people should ask themselves: "Am I following the world, or Christ, am I being influenced by principles of right or by the popular worldly people of this generation?" (4) I am a Christian. I am different. Just as the Israelites were the "holy people of God" so are we today, His "holy nation", "peculiar people", "chosen generation", if we look like; dress like, and behave like everyone in the world, where is the difference? (5) Another consideration for young and old alike is that once you get a tattoo, it is likely to be there for life. Success in removing one is not very good. Do you want to make a mark on your body that you cannot remove? Are you willing to go through life, bearing that particular word or picture? Something to think about. (6) Finally, parents should teach their children that as God's people we are not of this world (James 4:4; 1 Jno. 2:15-17; Rom. 12:1-2) hence, we should do nothing that would prostitute our holy calling for some symbol of a sinful and changing world. (Send all questions to: Ronny F. Wade, PO. Box 10811, Springfield, Mo. 65808)

## BACK TO THE FRONT-LINE

*By BILLY D. DICKINSON*

1 Kings 15:5 declares that “David did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, and turned not aside from any thing that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.” This shows that when David plotted to have Bathsheba’s husband murdered, in an attempt to cover up his adulterous relationship with her, a stain was left on the record of his life that could not be sugarcoated. Uriah was a soldier in David’s army, but more than that, he was a man who had ably demonstrated his worth on the battlefield.

Bear in mind that he was one of the thirty-seven “mighty men” of David, as those elite group of soldiers are called in 2 Sam. 23, and his name appears at the end of that list (verse 39). Indeed, that fact alone tells us that he was a man of extraordinary valor, leadership and great deeds. In spite of the obvious obstacles that he undoubtedly faced, his story is a compelling one because of what he was able to accomplish. To begin with, he was a Hittite! According to Josh. 9:1, when the Israelites entered Canaan to possess the land, the Hittites took part with the other nations in trying to stop them. Yet, Uriah ends up being a part of David’s army and becomes a red-hot patriot for Israel. Surely the implication is that he had undergone a conversion -- a life-changing decision that led him to place his faith in Jehovah and to turn his back on the false gods of his people.

We don’t know all the details about his life, but we do know that he married a young Jewish maiden by the name of Bathsheba, obviously a woman of great beauty, and in the army he moved up quickly through the ranks to a place of prosperity and promise. His house must have been near the complex where the king himself resided, explaining why David was able to see Bathsheba bathing from the “roof of the king’s house” (2 Sam. 11:2-4), and all of this indicates that he was a man of great worth in David’s army. While he had his faults and imperfections, like all men do, in many ways he was a good example of what every soldier should aspire to be. Ironically, this is the very thing that led to his death.

After discovering that Bathsheba is going to have his child, David calls for Uriah to return home from the war between Israel and Ammon, hoping everyone will assume that the baby is the Hittite’s offspring.

However, the diabolical plan fails when Uriah refuses to cooperate. Although he has permission from the king himself to go home and spend time with his wife, “Uriah slept at the door of the king’s house, with all the servants of his lord, and went not down to his house” (2 Sam. 11:9). When David asks him why he acted in this fashion, he gives an answer that is full of honor, devotion and integrity-- “The ark, and Israel, and Judah, abide in tents; and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord, are encamped in the open fields; shall I then go into mine house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? as thou livest, and as thy soul liveth, I will not do this thing” (2 Sam. 11:11)

David granted Uriah’s request by sending him back to fight with his fellow-soldiers on the front-line, but not as he expected. In a letter written by the king himself, the Hittite delivered unto Joab, the acting general of the army, his own death sentence-- “Set Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retreat from him, that he may be struck down and die” (2 Sam. 11:15/NKJ). What a shameful and dishonorable way for a soldier to die! Instead of being betrayed by his king and commanding officer, he should have been given a medal of honor. Usually such a valiant soldier’s name is inscribed on a monument of some kind in order to keep his memory alive. Well, in a very real sense that’s what the following information amounts to-- “And Jesse begat David the king. And David begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Uriah” (Matt. 1:6/ASV).

Think about it! You cannot read Matthew’s record of the ancestry of Jesus, the Son of God Himself, without finding the name of Uriah and being reminded of his story. All of this points to some important truths and principles that we need to understand and appreciate today. After all, as followers of Christ we are soldiers in the army of the Lord. Since our duty is to “fight the good fight of faith” (1 Tim. 6:12), we must not sit idly by while the battle is raging all around us. Although the warfare we are engaged in is spiritual in nature (2 Cor. 10:3-5), the very things that Uriah was ready to defend still apply in principle today. With that in mind, let’s notice the reasons he gave for wanting to get back to the front-line.

### THE ARK OF THE COVENANT

By bringing up this sacred chest that was so precious to the people of God, Uriah lets us know where his heart was. The ark was overlaid with gold, had two cherubims that sat on the “mercy seat” (the lid) facing each other, and whereon the blood of the yearly atonement was sprinkled by the high priest. All of this came with

a special promise from God: “And thou shalt put the mercy seat above the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. And there I will meet thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubims which are upon the ark of the testimony...” (Ex. 25:21-22) Hence we see in this a representation of God’s presence (abode) with them.

Surely this is why the Israelites took the ark into battle, symbolizing the fact that God was leading the way, because they knew that it was the Lord’s cause for which they were fighting. That was the point that Uriah was making. Knowing that God’s cause and honor was at stake, this devoted soldier was not content to stay away from the fray and take it easy, but was eager to get back to the front-line where he could make a difference. Brethren, what about us today? If we allow the cause of Christ to be besmirched and go undefended, failing to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude, verse 3), what a terrible disservice we are doing to God’s cause and honor.

How can we be satisfied to be on “furlough” (a leave of absence from duty) when we ought to be “fighting” the good fight of faith? Defining the word “fight” in 1 Tim. 6:12, W.E. Vine says that it is used “metaphorically, to contend perseveringly against opposition and temptation” (P. 414). This is the duty of every soldier of Christ.

#### ISRAEL

Of all the many nations that we read about in the Old Testament, Uriah recognized that Israel sustained a unique relationship with God. Since the Lord had chosen them “to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth” (Deut, 7:6), this faithful soldier was proud to take his stand with the people of God. Today we should see in this a representation of the Lord’s church, Christ’s spiritual body of whom He is the Savior (Eph. 5:23), because in Jesus we are no less than “an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s on possession” (1 Pet. 2:91 ASV).

No wonder Satan attacks the church, wanting to destroy its identity and uniqueness, because he hates what the church is all about! He knows that it is destined to take its flight to glory one of these days (1 Cor. 15:24), and its mission is that of saving souls (1 Cor. 1:21). While the influence of the church is suffering in some places because of apathy, worldliness and apostasy, are we

content to be on “furlough” and sit idly by? No, let’s “stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel” (Phil. 1:27).

#### JUDAH

Evidently when Uriah married Bathsheba, he married into the tribe of Judah, so in that sense they stood for family. One of the best reasons for taking our stand on the front-line of serving God and maintaining doctrinal purity has to do with our children and grandchildren, not to mention even future generations that we may never see. As should be obvious to all, the home (as God defines and regulates it) is under attack today by Satan and the world, but every parent should consider this as a “front-line” where we are going to take a stand for what is right.

Taking such a stand cannot involve a compromising of our Bible-based convictions, even in ways that might seem small and insignificant, but we must bring our children up “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). This involves the commitment to not allow anything into our homes that is destructive and detrimental, realizing that there is much truth to the old adage-- “As goes the home, so goes the church.” May the Lord help us to realize how true that is!

#### JOAB & HIS SERVANTS

Uriah ended his statement by saying: “My Lord Joab, and the servants of my lord, are encamped in the open fields.” What was he was trying to convey to David? It was that he felt a personal responsibility to stand alongside Joab (the commander) and his fellow soldiers in the fight, wanting to do his part in battle. Unless this our attitude, realizing that there is something of value that we can bring to the fight, we cannot be a “good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2 Tim. 2:3).

*A SERIOUS MATTER .... continued from page two*

Just because the exact thing may not be specifically mentioned does not give us license to use it. The old preachers used to tell us that the Bible doesn’t say not to use coca cola and doughnuts in the Lord’s Supper, nor does it have to because we are told what God wants. Fruit of the vine in a single cup and a loaf of unleavened bread. Matthew 26, Mark 14, Luke 22, and 1 Corinthians 11. That is what is specified and everything else is therefore forbidden.

The same is true with women teaching. 1 Corinthians 14:34,35 and 1 Timothy 2:11,12 tells us the woman is to learn in silence and is not allowed to teach. In fact, Paul said in 1 Corinthians 14:35 that it is a “shame for women to speak in the church.”

However, someone is quick to point out that the gatherings we are speaking of are not really assemblies of the church because they are private. Let’s investigate that: In 1 Corinthians 14:23 and again in verse 26 we read of the church coming together and in verse 23 Paul says the “whole church” is coming together. Obviously, Paul assumes a coming together of the members of the church for the purpose of spiritual service is an assembly of the church. Thayer, in his lexicon of the New Testament says the following: “ASSEMBLY: Prop (literally) A gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place, an assembly. An assembly of Christians gathered for worship 1 Cor. 14:19-35.” (Pages 195, 196) The point is: when the people are gathered together by the local church for the express purpose of rendering spiritual service you have assembly and the rules given in 1 Corinthians 14, 34, 35, 1 Timothy 2:11,12 regarding women teaching, regulate it. The women must remain silent.

What about such an assembly being private? Every case I have heard about involved advertisement. It may have been in a bulletin put out by the church and free to anyone who wants it upon entering the building, or perhaps even a sign on the side or outside, or both. Such “studies” are usually announced during a service at some point, or on a website done by a church member. A website can be worldwide in its coverage so such gatherings are obviously not private even if the public is not in attendance and again, the women must remain silent. That is what the Bible teaches us.

The bottom line is we have no example, no necessary inference, no direct statement or command to provide a place for the women to teach, ask questions, lead prayers, songs, or any other part of a public service. We need to be satisfied to allow the women to teach where they are allowed and that is in a private, informal gathering such as in their homes with their children, etc. They have a great responsibility to teach where they are allowed to teach but are forbidden to do so in any public capacity. Let us speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent. Think on these things.

## WEEKEND WARRIORS

By RICHARD BUNNER

A number of years ago I visited Bethany, West Virginia where Alexander Campbell resided the greater part of his life. His modest home has been restored and is much the same as it was 150 years ago when he lived there. The school that he started has changed quite a bit in its purpose and focus. The library, however, has a special section containing old Restoration books and memorabilia. In one case I saw an old newspaper clipping of an article from Ripley’s “Believe It Or Not”. The article told how Mr. Campbell had preached all of his life, traveling over much of the eastern portion of the United States, and had never accepted any pay for his services. Mr Campbell had been able to do this because he had married into a wealthy family and was a successful farmer in what was then Virginia.

Alexander Campbell was not opposed to supporting preachers. He clearly understood the teaching of the apostle Paul when he quoted the Scripture from the Law, “You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain;” and then applied it to laborers in the Lord’s vineyard. Campbell, however, had determined that he wanted to preach and not be a burden to the church, much the way the apostle Paul had been during his ministry.

Many of the men who preached the gospel in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries did so under great hardships, They sacrificed being able to make good wages at secular jobs, they were away from their families for extended periods of time, and they exhausted themselves preaching and teaching day and night. The church prospered and grew despite the fact that many of these soldiers of the cross were inadequately supported and neglected by the brethren. For the most part these preachers never complained. They just learned to be content with the meager supply they received looking toward a greater reward at the end of life’s day.

Often times when the apostle Paul labored in an area he felt it necessary to work at some secular job making tents to provide his financial needs (Acts 18:3). Sometimes he also provided for those who were traveling with him (Acts 20:34). During these times he did not take support from the church.

In stark contrast to the apostle Paul and later preachers like Alexander Campbell is the practice today of what I

call “weekend warriors.” A weekend warrior is a brother who sells his sermons to supplement his income. It works like this: brother John Doe develops his public speaking skills until he is a reasonably good orator. He works up one good sermon per month and then he agrees to go “help” two or three sister congregations that are within a Sunday morning driving distance from his home. Once a month he is going to show up at each of these congregations to teach, edify, and exhort with all long suffering, and to demonstrate his skill at explaining the Word of God. The brethren want to keep him coming, so they are going to pay him. He gladly accepts this remuneration because this congregation needs to “learn to support the teaching of the Word”, and because he has put himself out by driving an extra hour that morning getting to the worship. Now his home congregation is not inclined to pay him for his sermon, so he is given an incentive to book as many speaking engagements as he can fit into the month.

John Doe is really not a preacher, nor does he ever intend to become one. He works forty hours per week at a good paying secular job, with excellent health benefits, paid vacation, 401K, stock options, and more. When he is not at his secular job, he is coaching Little League, or playing golf, or working at his hobby out in his shop. Every moment of his life is filled with some activity. If the local congregation is getting together to go house to house, or to prepare literature for a mass mailing, or to visit a nearby nursing home John Doe may or may not be available to participate. He is not able to conduct a Bible study with someone in his community because he is so busy, and he certainly cannot conduct one in the communities where he goes to preach on Sunday because it is just too far to drive on a weeknight. In fact, John Doe really does not have much time for church work during the week, but his zeal abounds on Sunday morning as he drives to a nearby congregation to “help” them out.

What becomes really interesting is when there are three or four congregations within driving distance of one another and they each have a brother John Doe. This results in churches trading speakers on Sunday mornings. Brother John Doe from congregation A is going over to B; brother John Doe from church B will be at congregation C; and the brother from C will be at A. This way each congregation gets to support their speaker, or to put it more bluntly, each John Doe has been able to sell his sermon.

The above practice has no kinship with the words of the apostle Paul to the Corinthians when he said, “I

robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service” (2 Cor. 11:8). Instead brethren are robbing churches today to supplement their own excessive lifestyles. What’s more the church is being hamstrung, and unable to fulfill the Great Commission, which was mandated by our Lord. There is evangelistic work being done on six continents today. In some regions the work is far greater than the few laborers there can manage. Doors of opportunity are opening in countries where we have no preachers. Some American preachers are living in outposts where it would be beneficial to have another American family to help with the great harvest. The money that changes hands each week to what our denominational friends would call “lay preachers” would more than pay for these needs.

The weekend warriors are a discouragement to those young men who want to become gospel preachers, for while the two hundred dollars that some of them receive for speaking on a Lord’s Day is a handsome supplement to their already lucrative income, it is not enough for the man who receives nothing else during the week. Brethren snort and growl when they discuss supporting a preacher to labor full time in the Vineyard, but they hardly blink an eye at paying for a Sunday sermon.

In Matthew 19:27 Peter asked a question that suggests he and the other eleven had made a sacrifice in order to follow Jesus. Jesus’ answer to Peter also implies that His followers would all make sacrifices. I wonder if some are not profiting instead of sacrificing in the kingdom today.

Congregations of the church of Christ need to be good stewards of the Lord’s money. It should be spent wisely in areas where the most good can occur. There is authority to support a gospel preacher, whether he speaks in your assembly, or not. The brother who is simply a teacher or speaker should not be funded with the Lord’s money. If he is a faithful brother he had to assemble anyway. If he drove past his home congregation to get to yours he made a sacrifice. Instead of paying for his sacrifice let the Lord reward him for his good work. If you pay him it no longer is a sacrifice. Consider some more profitable ways of investing in the Kingdom of Heaven. We need preachers in foreign fields where the harvest is ready. Churches need to commit themselves for extended periods -- five, maybe ten years -- to the propagation of the gospel in these fertile areas. Here in the United States we should look carefully before plunging into a work. When an effort is decided upon send someone who is willing to go and preach the gospel.

*LIVING IN PERILOUS .... continued from page one*

Timothy? Absolutely! Nothing in the passage limits this prophecy to one particular event or period of time. Perilous TIMES will come and this scripture can lend us as much courage and hope as it did to Timothy in the long ago.

Many have been under the false impression that the arrival of the Kingdom would signal peace on earth and a utopian world in which to live. The scriptures never thus characterize the physical conditions of the church in the world during the reign of Christ. In this very chapter (3:12) Paul reminded Timothy “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” The church will face opposition from without and challenges from within as long as she exists in this world. Yes, perilous times will come! In the case described by Paul, those times will come when apostasy rears its head. The church of Christ endured struggle and hardship in its infancy and has weathered many a storm since. She will continue to be battered from without and ravaged from within at various times and as Paul taught Timothy, we need to be prepared to survive these dark days when they come. Consider 1) the RESOURCE and 2) the REASSURANCE Paul extends to Timothy for coping with tough times.

The word of God is our anchor in troubled waters. As you read the list of sins that will be apparent when perilous times arrive Paul describes three general manifestations of trouble: moral wickedness, spiritual indifference, and doctrinal waywardness. (3:1-9) All three are to be countered by a knowledge of and adherence to the scriptures. “But thou hast fully known my doctrine...” (3: 10) “But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” (3:15-17) And continuing into the next chapter, he plainly shows that these men would turn from the truth and refuse sound doctrine thus soliciting the famous charge to Timothy (and every gospel preacher): “Preach the word; be instant in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all long suffering and

doctrine.” (4:2) When apostasy takes place it shakes the faith of many. Apostates will always work to sow seeds of doubt, division, and destruction. But as painful as the experience may be, those who hold to the word with courage and conviction will survive the onslaught. In fact, in the previous chapter, Paul cites Hymenaeus and Philetus; “Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some. Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let everyone that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. (2:18-19) The admonition is then repeated in the next chapter, our text: “from such turn away.” (3:5)

Paul not only reminds Timothy of the RESOURCE that will uphold the faithful through perilous times but also the REASSURANCE that will sustain him when his faith would be shaken. “Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his.” In chapter 3, he describes the pernicious work of false teachers and compares them to two infamous magicians, Jannes and Jambres, who lived during the time of Moses and were a great source of consternation. But Paul gives this reassurance: “But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs (Jannes’ and Jambres’) also was.” (3:9) False teachers, antagonists, trouble-makers, and all-around enemies of the cause of Christ are difficult to deal with but their folly will ultimately reveal itself. Don’t be deceived or taken away by their ploy because their influence is limited and temporary but the truth will stand forever. Nobody can destroy it.

And finally, Paul reassures Timothy about living in perilous times by his own example. The great apostle knew his own share of adversity and opposition. He saw perilous times of his own but he survived them. The battle-word soldier of Christ recalled “Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me.” (3:11) And as he now faced the end of his earthly sojourn he so eloquently wrote “...the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished *my* course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing. (4:6-8)

The context of Paul’s warning about perilous times helps us to understand what they are and how to survive

them. Times of turmoil do not mean that the promises of God are not sure nor do they mean the faith is flawed. Stay strong and be of good courage because the Lord is the victor and the truth prevails. And one day the faithful and overcoming soldier can hang his armor on the jasper wall and live in God's golden city where perilous times will never again come.

### A CHURCH AFTER GOD'S OWN HEART

*Eph. 5:25-27*

Such a church is a projection of Christ in the world. What a blessing to humanity that divinity condescended to place on the earth such an institution. From the divine standpoint it is infinitely perfect. But for its beautiful symmetry to be manifested to the world, there are obligations and responsibilities resting upon those who constitute a local church of Christ. Such a church is:

#### 1. A Saved Church

Acts 2:47 No one becomes a member of the church who has not obeyed the gospel and been saved from past sins, by believing—Acts 16:31 “So they said “believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved you and your household.” by repenting--Acts 3:19 “Repent therefore and be converted that your sins may be blotted out...” by Confessing Christ Acts 8:37 and by being baptized Acts 2:38.

#### 2. A Surrendered Church

“And they that gladly received his word were baptized” Acts 2:41. They surrendered themselves to the Lord and subordinated their will to His. One of our greatest failures is our failure to completely and unreservedly capitulate to Jesus Christ when we obey the gospel. When Paul wrote about the liberality of certain brethren, he expressed it by giving the following commendation: “first they gave their own selves to the Lord.” 1Cor. 8:5. The worldly church member either never completely surrendered to the Lord or else subsequently rebelled. We must not only surrender, but we must take up arms in defense of His cause.

#### 3. A Separated Church

The word church from the Greek, means “a called out body.” The Lord intends that the church be separated from the world, and He separated us from the world by calling us with the gospel. “If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, therefore the world hates you” John 13:1. Many try to hold on to the world after becoming a member of the church. Such an inconsistency can never succeed. “Love not the world...1John 2:15-17. So the Lord

pleads, “Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord and touch not the unclean thing and I will receive you.” 2Cor. 6:17

#### 4. A Sacrificing Church.

Eph. 5:25 Christ “Gave himself for the church.” Hence, in turn, we must sacrifice for Him. When Jesus called Peter, James, and John “they forsook all, and followed him” Luke 5:11. The success of Christ's cause depends upon the willingness of His disciples to sacrifice. We could move mountains of difficulty, which now stand as an impediment to progress if we would only sacrifice enough. There is so much that needs to be done and there are too many idle members and congregations. We need to remember that someday we must give account of our stewardship.

#### 5. A Loyal Church

We should never ridicule the word “loyal.” Webster defines “faithful” by giving loyal as the meaning. “Be thou faithful unto death” Rev. 2:10. Being a member of the church involves “commitment.” Those who are not committed, usually fail, or allow themselves to be drawn or pulled away from duty. People who are not loyal or faithful, often miss church, love the world, have greater care for what goes on in the job, or neighborhood or outside of Christ than they do the church. Only loyalty to Christ, the captain of our salvation, can insure the triumph of Christ over Satan. We are losing the battle in many places simply because some refuse to remain loyal to the Captain of our Salvation. When people have and demonstrate more loyalty to school, sports, games, recreation etc. than they do the church, the church suffers.

#### 6. A Loving Church

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength” Mt. 10:30. “Grace be with all them that Love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity” Eph. 6:24. Thus, we should love God, our Lord Jesus Christ, and even our enemies. “These things I command you, that ye love one another John 15:17. “Owe no man anything, but to love one another Romans 13:8. “Love the brotherhood” 1Peter 2:17. “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently” 1Pet. 1:22. Bound together with chords of love unfeigned, let us not permit Satan to gain an advantage by tearing us apart with division. Unwise church leaders, and preachers often fail to count the cost of an unnecessary division that will launch us into a maelstrom of conflict which will sap our energies and drain our resources for years to come.

## Our Departed

GRIMES - Sarah Whigham Grimes was born April 7, 1922 and departed this life July 31, 2017 being at the time of her passing ninety five years of age. The service of remembrance was conducted at the 84 East Church of Christ building in Opp, Alabama. The building was packed with relatives and friends, who gathered to pay their respects to her memory. It was my privilege to have known Sarah since I was fifteen years of age, having stayed in her home while traveling with Brother Homer A. Gay who was in a meeting at the Lowery Church of Christ at the time. Chapman and Sarah were among my most cherished friends from the day we met until day they both departed this life. They were one of the most hospitable families I have ever known. You were always welcome in their home. Sarah's cooking was legendary and was appreciated by scores of gospel preachers whose privilege it was to abide in her home. When you left she always sent something with you to cheer you on your way. (Usually some of her wonderful fried pies.) Sarah was kind, gentle, and easily entreated. She loved to discuss the bible, and took great joy in talking about all the preachers she had fed and entertained over her lifetime. While on my way to Dothan to hold a meeting this last April, I called Sarah and told her I planned to stop by Opp on my way down rather than wait and come over during the meeting to visit. She asked "what do you want me to cook you." I replied that anything would be fine. "But what do you really want, she insisted." I said "how about fried chicken, purple hull peas, and fried corn bread." "I'll have it ready when you get here," and she did. To know Sarah was to love her, and the more you knew her the more you appreciated her. She was preceded in death by her husband Chapman and two of her sons Louie and Bill. Surviving are one son, Joe and his wife Mavis, and several grandchildren and great grandchildren. Sarah's body was laid to rest next to Chapman's in the Lowery Cemetery. This writer and Brother Rick Martin conducted the service. Following is a beautiful piece written by Brother Kevin Presley who was unable to attend the funeral while away in a gospel meeting. -Ronny Wade

Tribute To Sarah Grimes  
By Kevin Presley

To the family of Sister Sarah Grimes and all gathered to remember her: It is with deep regret that I am not

able to attend Sister Sarah's funeral service today. I was deeply touched that you, her family, requested that I be part of this bitter-sweet occasion remembering such a saintly woman and honoring her memory among us. We have walked through the valley of the shadow of death together before and now, it is her turn to go down the valley and cross to the other side where Christ awaits.

When news came of her death, I sat in my room several hundred miles away reflecting upon the great impact she made in so many lives including mine. Unlike many of you, my acquaintance with Sarah only goes back 21 years. Those years were some of her most trying ones. But this allowed me to witness the true depth of her faith and the steel of which her spirit was made. She spent 18 years as a widow and buried two of her beloved sons. She suffered with her own health and faced personal disappointments --- but she faced it all with grace and faith. We could all learn how to better bear our burdens by thinking about Sarah.

Her love for her Lord Jesus Christ was as strong and fervent in the valleys of her life as it was on the mountaintop. When grief and heartache almost overwhelmed her, and when her spirit was almost broken, she looked to the author and finisher of her faith who sustained her through her trials. She was perhaps the greatest example of patience and faithfulness I have ever known. Now, with the Lord as her judge, I believe the life crown is won and she has gained the rest from her labors that the Lord promised would finally come.

Her departure to be with the Lord leaves a great emptiness in not only the lives of her family but also the life of the church. A seat is now empty that cannot be filled. And with her passing, essentially, an era is closing in the history of the church in south Alabama. Her life in the church went back farther than most and she lived through some of the most wonderful times as well as some of the most challenging. Some of the greatest men to ever grace the pulpit in the past 100 years have lodged in her humble home, eaten at her bountiful table, and received encouragement from this great woman of God.

Women have played a prominent role in the work of God since the beginning of time. Many women's lives are chronicled throughout the Bible, some at length and others in passing but meaningful mention. If we lived in the days of inspiration and the recording of scripture, I HAVE to believe that somewhere in the pages of holy

writ, you would find Sarah mentioned by name.

She loved and revered her husband like Sarah of old;

She loved and prayed for her sons like Hannah;

She trusted the Lord like Jochebed;

She cared for preachers like the Shunammite woman;

She served like Martha but yet like Mary found the better part at the feet of Jesus;

She loved the gospel and shared it with others like Lydia.

She devoted her means to Jesus like Mary Magdalene;

She was full of good works and alms like Tabitha;

She possessed the faith of Lois and Eunice; Surely somewhere -- perhaps a postscript to one of his epistles -- Paul would have mentioned the name "Sarah" as he remembered some Christian woman along the way who showed him kindness and helped the work of God.

I do know this: her life was a living epistle. Her kindness, meekness, piety, and modesty portrayed the Christian faith everywhere she went. I'm thankful that our paths in life crossed for a little while. Her prayers, her words of encouragement, and her deeds of kindness strengthened me along my way. May God raise up other Sarah's 'for such a time as this.'

My prayers today are with the family ... and with the church she loved so much.

Truly, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints." Isn't heaven sounding sweeter all of the time?

In the love of Christ,  
Kevin Presley

## Field Reports

Greg Gay - 5109 Chicago Ave., Fair Oaks, CA 95628, 916-804-3787, papagreg@aol.com, August 8, 2017. We were close to home for the Fair Oaks congregation's

annual Western Study July 26-29. Alan Bonifay and I were asked to help them organize this study in its beginning many years ago and I was honored to be the speaker this year. The brethren allowed me to revive having a question and answer session after the Friday and Saturday night topics which was well received. Friday's topic was The Mark of the Beast and Saturday's was Mark and Avoid. While the first topic is a great mystery, the second is much more easily understood, but mostly ignored. There are still those around the brotherhood who are attempting to deceive the faithful to be part of the tentacles of the beast of error that has plagued us in the last decade or so. It was good to see all who came to the study from up and down the state. We enjoyed hearing Brad Shockley from Missouri in a recent meeting at Stockton, CA. Our work continues at 64th St. in Sacramento, for which we are thankful.

Don L. King - 1147 Sherry Way, Livermore, CA 94550, old\_paths@juno.com, August 16 - I have been away from my normal work load due to a broken arm which is slowly healing. My sincere thanks to Ronny Wade who has taken care of publishing the paper for me. You can send your material to me next month, Lord willing. Since last report it has been my privilege to preach at Planz Rd, Bakersfield twice, at home several times, Stockton, CA and Yuba City. We have enjoyed hearing Brad Shockley at Stockton as well as Duane Permenter here last Lord's Day. Both did outstanding jobs preaching. Also fell my sad duty to preach the funeral for Brother Carlton, Jack Jackson recently. Jack was my wife's uncle and he and Jean had been married for 55 years. They were once a part of the Fremont, Ca congregation and have always been a valued part of our family. We loved him and will certainly miss him. Jack and Jean had been attending the congregation in Lodi for the last 8 years after returning to CA from Oklahoma where they attended the Fort Smith congregation in Fort Smith, Arkansas for about 25 years. Lord willing, Ronny Wade will hold our meeting in September and then we are to hold a meeting at the 85th and Euclid congregation in Kansas City, Kansas. If you can manage to be with us, please do. The work in the Philippines seems to be doing very well and the reports are encouraging. The Hawaii work is also prospering. That work has been a direct outgrowth of the Philippine work and we are so thankful for them. Let me ask our preachers to please send your articles and field reports to me now and yes, we always need good material for the paper. Lord bless the faithful everywhere.

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## THE BACK PAGE...

### GOD IS TRULY AMONG YOU

By CARL M. JOHNSON

A few years ago a brother told me that while he was on a business trip in another part of the country he visited a congregation for Lord's Day worship and was met with the most unfriendly welcome he has ever received. He said the congregation was good sized, but not one person made an attempt to introduce themselves or to welcome him. He said he stood around for quite awhile after services were over in hopes of engaging someone-anyone-in conversation, but to no avail. He said in the future he will make other arrangements for a place to worship when he is in the area on business.

On another occasion a dear sister in Christ visited a congregation in another state for Lord's Day worship and received a similar reception. She and her husband were on vacation. Her husband did not attend worship services, but he always made it possible for her to attend a faithful congregation. On this occasion she was treated with cold indifference. After services were over no one introduced themselves or made an effort to make her feel welcome. The members huddled and visited among themselves until she finally left the building feeling completely shunned and questioning herself as to why. She wondered if they shunned her because her husband did not attend the service with her. She wondered if they had something against her home congregation. She wondered if they had mistaken her for someone else. She was definitely hurt, and was left to wonder why.

If such indifference is hurtful to visiting brethren, it does not take a genius to conclude how visiting outsiders would feel.

LifeWay Research recently surveyed 2,000 Americans who do not attend church services anywhere and asked what it would take to get them to attend a church. 62% of the respondents said they would attend a meeting about neighborhood safety; 51 % said they would attend a community service event; 46% said they would attend a sports or exercise program; 45% would attend a concert; 45% would attend a neighborhood get together; 35% a worship service service; 25% a recovery group; 24% a seminar on a spiritual topic.

Only about one third of the people surveyed said they would be willing to attend church for a worship service. The survey confirms what we have known for a long time-most outsiders are just not interested.

The survey also found that the most effective method of inviting outsiders to attend worship services is a personal invitation from a friend or family member. That method remains far more effective than TV commercials, postcards, a church member knocking on the door, or Facebook ads (Christianity Today Sept. 2016, p. 18).

Once people finally come to visit with us they must find a warm welcome in our assemblies if we expect them to return. They must feel appreciated. They must be edified, uplifted, and challenged by the things they see and hear.

In this Age of Entertainment, some outsiders find our assemblies dull and uninspiring, and they have difficulty connecting with traditional worship (Jn. 4:24; Acts 2:42). However, well-prepared leaders can demonstrate quickly that the focus of true worship is on praising and pleasing God rather than entertaining the worshipers or visitors.

If we plan our worship services with enough forethought, our singing, praying, and teaching will truly glorify God and the entire audience will be edified (Heb. 13: 15; 1 Cor. 14).

Our song service should inspire all of us. I have probably heard more compliments by outsiders on the beautiful singing in our assemblies than any other part of worship services. I am encouraged that brethren continue to work on all phases of church music (teaching and learning the rudiments of music, songwriting, publishing, song leading, congregational singing, etc.) in order to give God our very best during this part of worship (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16).

Preachers and teachers must prepare well to "preach the word" (2 Tim. 4:2). If the teacher is well-prepared, the listeners will be more likely to "pay attention" (Mk. 4:24), and "take heed how they hear" (Lk. 8:18). Preaching God's truth will help the hearers grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Prayers must be spoken intelligibly so church members can say "Amen," thus making the prayer their own (1 Cor. 14:15-16).

The brother who officiates at the Lord's Table should be passionate, sincere, and brief in making appropriate remarks. He should help the communicants to focus their minds upon the suffering of Christ-His body that was broken, His blood that was shed, and the New Covenant that was ratified.

Giving is to be done thoughtfully and cheerfully (2 Cor. 9:7).

If our worship is genuine and we demonstrate a warm encouraging relationship with one another, the visitors are most likely to respond to their experience in our assembly by saying, "God is truly among you" (1 Cor. 14:24-25). [cmjthebackpage@gmail.com](mailto:cmjthebackpage@gmail.com)