

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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SOCIAL JUSTICE OR SPIRITUAL JUSTICE?

By DAVID GRIFFIN

In the past few years, the term “social justice” has almost become a household word. It seems like the term is used in every news broadcast, and it may also be heard in sitcoms, celebrity interviews, and even in broadcasts of major sporting events. A few years ago, many had never heard of it; now it seems to be everywhere.

The concept of “social justice,” in various forms, has been around for at least a couple of hundred years or more. When used in modern popular culture, it generally refers to a host of interrelated social and economic concerns. For example, “Economic Justice” seeks to make personal income more evenly distributed across society. “Social Privilege Theory” identifies certain conditions that either help or hinder people in making progress in life - such as gender, height, IQ, social class, ethnic or racial background, or disabilities. The theory then aims to advance policies that will rectify such unfairly advantageous or otherwise inhibiting conditions.

The upshot of all this is that such differences that have “naturally” existed among people for all human history are no longer acceptable. Now, government should take proactive measures to “level the playing field” in all areas of society. Consider the following. According to the International Forum for Social Development, “social justice is not possible without strong and coherent redistributive policies conceived and implemented by public agencies” (Social Justice in an Open World: The Role of the United Nations, page 9). In other words, government should coerce equality, enforce “fairness,” and ensure by “strong” regulation that outcomes in life are equal for everyone, regardless of merit, skill, incentive, old fashioned hard work, or any of the other things that have been traditionally a part of getting ahead in the world. What all of this implies is that every person or special group of persons “deserve” to have

wealth equal with all other persons regardless of their ability or willingness to earn it. Moreover, people with wealth should be coerced by “public agencies” to turn some of it (or much of it) over to others in the name of “justice.”

As I hear so much these days about “justice,” it occurs to me that justice is a Bible concept. The word appears 129 times in the NKJV. In perusing some of these passages, I see that God is indeed concerned about justice, especially as it concerns the “disadvantaged.” The book of Deuteronomy says, that “[God] administers justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and clothing,” and “Cursed is the one who perverts the justice due the stranger, the fatherless, and widow” (Deut. 10:18; 27:19). Furthermore, “He will bring justice to the poor of the people; He will save the children of the needy, and will break in pieces the oppressor” (Psalm 72:4). But nowhere in the Bible does God consider the poor to be always in the right and those with plenty of resources always thereby guilty of something. Even though Exodus 23:6 says, “you shall not pervert the judgment of your poor in his dispute,” three verses earlier in the same chapter the record says, “You shall not show partiality to a poor man in his dispute.” In other words, equity and right should not take a back seat even if doing so would be an advantage to the poor. Moreover, in the matter of “atonement money,” the Lord did not endorse the idea of a “graduated tax” depending on one’s income. In Exodus 30, when God told Moses to take an offering during the census of the people, God said in verse 15, “The rich shall not give more and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel, when you give an offering to the LORD, to make atonement for yourselves.”

But aside from all these “social issues,” the Bible also speaks of the justice of God in the scheme of redemption. This is “spiritual justice.” In the English New Testament, the words “righteousness,” “justice,” “judgment,” and “just” all stem from the same root word

continued on page 8

CONTENTS

Vol. XCIII No. 4



ADVOCATE

Social Justice or Spiritual Justice? 1

Editorial 2

The World of Romans One 3

The Touch of Faith 5

Elders as Authoritative Leaders 6

Our Departed 10

Announcement 11

Field Reports 11

WALKS THROUGH THE BIBLE 12

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Editorial

THE WAY IT USED TO BE

By DON L. KING



The picture at the top of this editorial is of the church of Christ in Arvin, California in 1940. The church had earlier used cups and classes before learning the truth and beginning scriptural worship. Once they did so, they were tireless workers for the Lord. A great congregation grew from those humble beginnings.

The building pictured is not much by today's standards. It had dirt floors, only outside walls, nothing finished on the inside, no ceiling, no insulation, and heat came from a 50-gallon oil drum which burned wood. There were no benches early on. Brethren met there each Lord's Day at 9:45 A.M. and 2:30 in the afternoon. You can see the sign on the right of the building which was rented at the time for ten dollars per month. It apparently was first owned by the "Workers Alliance" labor group. In 1942 the brethren bought the building for eight hundred dollars and began slowly improving it. The men who worked hard during the day, also worked in the evenings and Saturdays on the building. Even the women and children did what they could. Curtains which had once enclosed the class rooms were torn down, a floor was installed, interior walls installed, windows repaired so they functioned, bathrooms constructed and benches with backs which had been somehow located, were also brought in.

continued on page 9

THE WORLD OF ROMANS ONE

By WAYNE MCKAMIE

The Roman letter was written from Corinth on the third missionary journey of the apostle Paul in the winter of 54 or 55. Paul was in the home of Gaius, and Tertius was by his side as he wrote by the direction of the Holy Spirit.

Paul began this great letter by saying, "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ." I think it is interesting that Paul, a rich, powerful, influential Jew, was proud to be a servant, a bond slave of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Notice also that Paul was called to be an apostle, "separated unto the gospel of God." Paul was not separated to a monkery, a nunnery, a mountain top or a commune, but to the gospel of Christ. Paul was separated to the gospel the good news, not new news, but the good news of the death, the burial, and the resurrection of Christ.

Paul says some things that we need to hear in our day. In fact Romans One is a case history of the human race. In it you will find a diagnosis, a prognosis, and a remedy prescribed. This case history is not lovely.

In Romans 5:21, "sin hath reigned unto death." In Romans 3:23, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." One thing you may be sure of, Romans One gives the whole truth about the human condition. Romans One is dark and foreboding. It's thunder and it's lightning! The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness. In verse 24, the scripture says, "God gave them up." In verse 26, again, "God gave them up." In verse 28, the scripture says, "God gave them over." The problem was sin. It is amazing how we like to trace our problems to anything, ANYTHING other than the real problem of SIN!

I was in Baylor University when John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas. I remember the ensuing discussion and the commentators as they talked about how a man could be gunned down in cold blood by another human. They said, "Maybe it was due to the frontier spirit that prevails in Texas. Perhaps it was the fault of the motion picture industry." They never really got around to discussing the real reason.

Just as today we tend to ascribe it to every reason under

the sun except the real problem which is sin.

The Bible is a very honest book. The Bible tells it like it is! The scripture says, "There is none righteous! no not one." All perversion is traced to the human heart. Until the heart is cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ, nothing good is going to come and nothing good is going to happen.

Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves; Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters; haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them (Rom. 1:24-32).

What an amazing view into the world of Romans one! Notice in verse 24, "God gave them up." If you have ever heard a note of finality struck, it is that passage. It sounds like clods on the coffin of humanity, if you will! GOD GAVE THEM UP ! He withdrew his restraining grace and let them have what they insisted on having. He gave them over to the consequences of their own sins.

This all says that even in this life, we can be given up. It is possible for us to fall out of the hands of the living God. What a tragedy! Romans One is a portrait of man without God. What I fear is that this will become the portrait of America. God gave these people "over" to spiritual and moral uncleanness and let them reap their own due reward.

God gave them up to "VILE" affections! In other

words, “wrong fulfillment of evil desires.” The wrong fulfillment of natural desires becomes what the scripture calls “vile affections.” In describing the world of Romans One, Paul says, even their women did burn in their lusts one toward another, indicating that the world of Romans One, had stooped to a new low.

With this, Paul introduces us to the slimy, sleazy world of homosexuality. If you have ever wondered if the Bible is current, if the Bible is relevant, if the Bible addresses anything today, if it bears any concern for the present, all you need to do is read Romans One. The world of Romans One, was very much like the world of 1998. The things stated in this chapter have a very familiar ring, do they not?

In the last few years, society has been wrestling with this problem. It is the understatement of our day to say that “homosexuality has come out of the closet.” In San Francisco, in 1983 there was a parade in which 300,000 people participated to sustain the very thing that Romans One condemns. Sometime ago 200,000 people marched while Mayor Ed Koch declared it to be gay and lesbian pride week in New York City. We have churches who claim 50,000 homosexuals as part of their membership. Some years ago the Catholic church in San Francisco made a statement in regard to this problem and said in effect that such is not to be held as sinful, that such ought to be treated with compassion and understanding, that we should take a nonjudgmental approach, and that we should seek to avoid alienation of all such people.

It may sound like the voice of one crying in the wilderness of these modern times, but Paul said, “they changed the natural use.” Paul needs to be heard in our culture, in our society, in this very day. We have films, clubs, plays, churches and even preachers who would excuse, defend, justify and glorify the very thing which Paul condemns, We have reached a day when reason is out the window and self will has moved in.

I deny that any individual is born a homosexual. I readily recognize that there is a tremendous amount of such activity in our time, all of which is a result of a series of wrong decisions, each of which the person is responsible for making. Decisions that were made out of step with and contrary to God’s natural order.

Genesis 1:27, says, “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; MALE and FEMALE created he them.”

1st. Corinthians 6:9, speaks of “abusers of themselves with mankind.”

Romans One again, “even their women did change the natural use.” Both men and women LEFT the natural use (the use of the body according to God’s order) and burned in lust, men with men and women with women. But let’s face it, the virus of evil spread even to the women and they became as bad as the men. Notice the sexual language, men, women, male, female.

Evidently as far as God is concerned and as far as Paul and the Holy Spirit are concerned, there is a natural use and an unnatural use. The natural is ground into the constitution of the sexes that the Lord made in the very beginning. It is the unnatural that is under judgment in Romans One.

Notice another thing Paul says in Romans 1:27. He says, “receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet.” Paul says they are under judgment now and on the road to ultimate judgment. Paul states that such carries its own penalty. Paul says it carries its own DUE penalty. How true !

Years ago I attended a seminar where some of our leading health officials predicted that by 1990, one hundred thousand people will die in the United States as a result of this. They told this particular group that in the next 2 years that there will not be a public school in the United States that will not be touched by this problem.

A recent conversation with a clinical psychologist, gave a real view into this world. He works with children who are abused and perverted. He said he sees some unbelievable and abominable practices resulting from everything from drunken parents to Satanic worship.

Many years ago a leading health official from Great Britain came to the United States. After walking through one of the great syphilis wards of New York City, he said, “God Almighty certainly writes a legible hand !”

Are we building another Sodom and Gomorrah? Study Genesis the 19th chapter. Will we soon be pleading with God, as was Abraham of old to destroy us not? On Feb. 26, 1983, I attended a debate in Denton, Texas between Dan Billingsly and Dr. Ralph Blair of New York City. I listened with amazement that evening as Dr. Blair sought to defend the proposition, “Homosexual practice is consistent with a Christian’s lifestyle.”

Even a casual look at Romans one will teach us that this is not the case at all! Homosexuality flies in the face of God according to this chapter. Homosexuality flaunts God's law, His divine principle, and His divine order. How do you think the term, "Sexual revolution" sounds to an unchanging, eternal God?

May God help us as a community, as a world, to wake up and to realize that we cannot put a new robe on the prodigal while he is still in the hog pen. You will remember in the parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15, that it was only after the prodigal came home that the father placed a robe on his back and a ring on his finger. We must not get into the position of advocating bigger and better hog pens. We must not get in the position of killing the fatted calf for those who are still in the far country.

What is the root of the problem? Romans 1:28, "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge." Frankly, there were those of that day who didn't want to hear it. There are those today who still don't want to hear the message of Romans One. It is a dark and foreboding message but it is a message we need to hear. They were void of judgment. They had no sense of direction. They didn't know where they were! What an appalling picture.

Romans One is the portrait of man without God. Man without God is a horrendous picture! Shall it become the portrait of America? Shall it become the portrait of your home town? The world of Romans One was a world on death row! The smell of death was in the air. We need very much today to listen to what the scripture is saying to us:

One of the most troubling things about studying the world of Romans One, is that it sounds like the 6 o'clock news. What we are looking at in Romans One are the footprints of God. We are listening to the foot fall of God walking away from us!

Please notice the last verse, "Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them."

At one time these people had known the judgment of God. When they knew God they glorified him not as God. This tells us that the knowledge of a coming judgment does not necessarily keep us from present sin.

Why did Paul preach this message? Was it only to tell of the impending death of Rome? I think it was also to convince them of their desperate need of the gospel! In verse 16, Paul told them, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation."

Sin isn't going away. There are no new sins. There are new ways to commit the same old ones. But, you can change. You can be born again. You quit sins by repentance. No wonder Paul said, "such WERE some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God," 1st. Cor, 6:11.

Publisher's Note: This material is also in tract form. Contact Irvin Barnes, 321 8 East Farm Rd. 88, Springfield, MO 65803. — OPA 1998

THE TOUCH OF FAITH

By RICK MARTIN

All Bible students are familiar with the woman from Matthew 9:20-22 who said, "If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole." We note that this woman did not say that she would have to touch the very person of Jesus to be healed. She believed that simply touching the hem of His Garment would make her well.

Parallel passages tell us that Jesus felt virtue or power go out from Him when she touched His garment. Wonderful power flows out from the Lord when we touch things that belong to Him.

No one would contend that power would have gone out just the same and healed the woman if she had touched the garment of someone else. Do you think she would have been healed if she would have touched someone else's garment? She could have said, "a garment is a garment, and I will touch the garment of my choice and be made whole." Suppose she had said, "There is no virtue in His garment, and therefore no use to touch it."

Of course, the virtue was in Christ and not in His garment, but still she was not healed until she touched His garment. I feel confident that all agree that the garment must belong to the Lord for healing to take place in the life of this woman; but as we apply these matters to some things of our day some may not readily agree.

There are some things which are of great importance just because they belong to the Lord. The purpose of this article is to point out some of these things that are important because they belong to the Lord.

The first thing I want to notice is His name. The name of Jesus is more precious than His garment was, when He was here in person. His power does not flow out to us through His garment, but rather it flows through His name. Peter said: "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." Acts 10:43. Peter also commanded: "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" Acts 2:38. In Acts 4:12 he says, neither is there salvation in any other name. Paul declares, "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" Col. 3:17. Just as one garment was not as good as another, today one name is not as another.

Second, another thing belonging to the Lord is the Gospel. Paul said, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" Rom. 1:16. We notice that this is the Gospel of Christ, not just a gospel. Just as the woman was determined to touch the garment of Christ, men of today should be determined to touch the Gospel of Christ. We should be sure to contact His Gospel, and not just one of the many "gospels" of today. The Lord's Gospel must be believed and obeyed. Power flows out from the Lord's Gospel to save lost souls-this is not true of any other gospel.

Third, we see that faith pertains to Christ. One must believe in Christ to become a child of God, Gal. 3:26-27 "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." One faith is not as good as another. No one can say, "I will take the faith of my choice." There is one faith, Eph. 4:5. 2 Cor. 13:5, "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith." Jude 3, "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." As no other garment was as good as His garment, so no other faith will do today. His power or virtue flows out through what Paul called, "the faith of Christ" Gal. 2: 16. The early Christians were all of the same faith and were of the same "heart and soul", Acts 4:32. They did not have different faiths or religious orders in those days.

Fourth, we see that baptism belongs to the Lord. Today people speak of taking the baptism of their choice. Sprinkling and pouring do not belong to the Lord. They belong to man and participation in such is to touch the garment of someone else. Baptism connects one with the death of Jesus, it must be burial in water and have in it a resurrection, like Jesus was buried and resurrected. Rom. 6:3-4, "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 up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." The woman was not cured of her disease until she touched the garment of the Lord and likewise, we cannot be cured of the disease of sin until we are baptized with the baptism that belongs to the Lord.

Fifth and last, we see that the church belongs to the Lord just as His garment did. Paul said to feed the church, which was purchased by His blood, Acts 20:28. He loved the church and gave Himself for it, Eph. 5:25. It is not my church or your church. The garment was His garment. It did not belong to the woman who touched it either before or after she touched it.

No one would say take the garment of your choice, yet men say that about the church today. We must respect the Lord's church and put it above all religious bodies today. Just as the woman knew that she could only be made whole again by touching His garment, we should understand that we can only be whole again by being a member of His church.

I trust that this article has convinced you that the things that belong to Jesus are better than the things that belong to men. There may be obstacles, but like the woman of great faith, may we all get closer and closer to the things that belong to the Lord and have the touch of faith.

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ELDERS AS AUTHORITATIVE LEADERS

By BEN ELLIOTT

The title "elder" has carried authority since the first time that we read about it in the Old Testament. When Moses asked for aid in the leadership of Israel from

God, the Bible says in Numbers 11:17 that there were seventy elders given a portion of the Spirit so they could “bear the burden of the people with you (Moses), so that you (Moses) may not bear it yourself alone.” They were regarded as “friends of the prophets” (2 Kings 6:32), advisors of kings (1 Kings 20:8) and as colleagues of the princes in the administration of the affairs of the city (Ez. 10:8). In the New Testament, they are often mentioned alongside the chief priests and scribes. William Barclay notes, “The elders were the administrators of the synagogue; they did not preach, but they saw to the good government and order of the synagogue, and they exercised discipline over its members.” Naturally, when we come to congregational organization, the term “elder” reminded the early Christians of those who bore the title before them. It was worn by those of great honor, respect, and authority. This brings us to our first point.

Title Implies Authority

Peter and Paul both use multiple titles describing the office of the elder. They describe an elder as an overseer and an example; moreover, both of these carry a connotation of authority. For our purposes, we will focus on the term “shepherd” in reference to an elder. In 1 Peter 5: 1-2, Peter, who was a fellow elder, exhorts the elders to “shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight.” As the Holy Spirit thought this term appropriate, we must see these duties as pictorially significant to the elders of the church. J.W. McGarvey gives three duties of shepherds in the first century. “1. To keep the sheep from straying, 2. To lead them to water and pasturage by day, and back to the fold, when need be, at night, and 3. To protect them against all danger by night.” It is also important to note the word “flock”. W. E. Vine’s tells us that it is “used metaphorically of local churches cared for by elders.” All of these responsibilities we will notice are laid to the feet of the elders within and only within their local congregations.

Tasks Demand Authority

One of the first verses we are encouraged to memorize as young Christians is 1 Peter 5:8, which says, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.” The young mind, unformed and highly impressionable, needs to be protected with warnings like this. Is it to frighten? Certainly so, but it should be even more fearful to the elders who are overseers of immature souls. Notice that the devil is seeking whom he may devour. That implies that there are some who are more difficult to influence than others, but also that

there are those who are willing to succumb to the devil’s snares. The parable of the wheat and tares in Matthew 13 will help me show this danger. In this chapter, the field represents the world while the wheat, also known as the good seed, represents the sons of the kingdom. The tares, which is the bad seed, represent the sons of the devil. We can conclude that the church will grow up among the evils of the world, and, although these evils are threatening to the good seed, we are not allowed to militantly attack these evils. Under the oversight of the elders, the flock is to grow and mature in the very presence of wickedness; furthermore, the elders must be vigilant to do so without being choked by the world, Acts 20:29 says, “For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also, from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves.” Similarly, in Titus 1: 10, the Bible says, “For there are many insubordinates, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain.” McGarvey explains this point thusly, “A very small wolf in sheep’s clothing can scatter a large flock of sheep ... and a man who teaches nothing false but aims at strife and division can often do more harm than a false teacher. With a firmness, then, that knows no yielding, but with a caution and prudence which guards against unjust judgment, must the shepherd watch the door which opens into their folds.” It almost seems unfair that elders and ultimately everyone must be on guard, not only against the world, but also against some in the Church. The devil is persistent and will uproot whoever in attempt to scatter the flock; however, it is the elder’s responsibility to prevent this by dealing with false teachers and those who cause strife.

I was blessed to grow up in a congregation with elders. The pulpit was well guarded because of those men. Many times, we were viewed as too selective, but it was never to hurt anyone’s feelings. It was to make sure the congregation was always given consistent, sound doctrine. McGarvey rightly noticed that an even more subtle and dangerous person is the one who causes strife and division. After all, wasn’t this Paul’s initial purpose of his first letter to the Corinthians? Before he can finish his introduction, he teaches on the tragedy of a divided church. Paul says in verse 10, “Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined

together in the same mind and in the same judgment.” He also gives a chilling command in his farewell to the Romans. Paul writes in Romans 16: 17, “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.” Many congregations have divided or faded into nothing due to unrestrained members who were diligent to cause strife in a congregation. The elder is not only responsible to deal with such a mindset but also to withdraw from the member if they cannot be settled.

Tasks Demand Care

The elders responsibility rests within the power given to them from the word of God. Because the title comes with power, it will be sought by men who seek control. These responsibilities are too much for a man with a lust for power. They can only be given to one who cares about the Church so deeply that he would give his life for its service. One that loves more than anyone else and seeks restoration over excommunication. 1 Peter 5:2-3 says, “not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock;”. Paul wrote Titus in Titus 1:7-9, “not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he (the elder) may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.” Being an example is a notable requirement of eldership both to the flock and the world. Paul told Timothy in Timothy 3:7, “that elders must have a good testimony among those who are outside”. Elders are to be the Christian par excellence. Due to this concept, all of us should strive to fit the bill of the eldership. If we all worked so that our reputations were as the holy and righteous people of God, the Church would shine with such brilliance that not even skeptics could find footing to discredit it. It is important to note that, although some may say Peter was stripping elders of their authority in 1 Peter 5:2-3, he is actually giving them direction on how to use it. Guy N. Woods rightly points out, “It is not to be forgotten that to deny elders the proper exercise of authority in the oversight of the church is as much a perversion of New Testament teaching as it is for the elders to abuse their rights and privileges through improper seizure of authority.”

Authority Implies Greater Responsibility

Let’s take a look at Hebrews 13:17. This verse says, “Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for

they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.” Elders, in some way, will have to account for the souls of their congregation. James points out in 3: 1 that those who teach will receive a stricter judgment. The Hebrew writer emphasizes the same idea but to the elders specifically. I grew up hearing from our elders, “Our goal is to go to heaven and bring everyone here with us.” They understood this warning and heeded it well. It was most important to them that everyone in that congregation was headed to heaven. Due to this great responsibility, it is vital that the authority of the eldership be used in consideration of I Peter 5. They have to undertake this task willingly, eagerly, not for dishonest gain, and without a tyrannical mindset. The goal cannot be stated enough: shepherd the flock. That means that every step taken by the elder must be to ensure the safety of the souls entrusted to them.

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SOCIAL JUSTICE....continued from page one

in the Greek New Testament. Paul makes abundant use of these terms in the book of Romans. In chapter 3, he writes that Christians are “...justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (Romans 3:24-26). Paul’s point here is that a God of perfect justice is also a God who must punish sin. Yet God’s perfect love provided a perfect sacrifice for sin—his son. In this way, he “demonstrated” his righteousness—or “justice,” if you will. Thus, were it not for the sacrifice of God’s son, the perfect justice of God would result in no escape from sin’s punishment for any member of the human race. It would be unjust for a perfectly just God not to punish sin; but that he might at the same time be both “just” and the “justifier of sinners,” he provided the

sacrifice of his sinless son. The wonderful outcome of this just action is that sinful human beings can be saved from their sins by God's justice, instead of condemned by it, and therefore do not have to receive what God's justice says they deserve! By obeying the everlasting gospel and serving the Lord in his kingdom, the faithful may escape God's retributive justice.

Thus, while it may be true that certain social inequities ought somehow to be made right—aside from the debate about how that should be done—it is indeed a much weightier matter that people heed the obligations of “spiritual justice.” For while expending much time, great effort, and millions of tax dollars seeking ways to make sure people get what they presumably “deserve” in this life, many people ignore, and even disdain God's “policies of spiritual justice.” The outcome of this negligence and disdain is that multitudes regrettably will receive what God's justice demands. This consequence is beneficial to no one, but Satan himself. Hence, it behooves all to come to the cross and accept sin's sacrifice and escape God's just reward for sin!

How may I do this? I must believe that Jesus Christ is God's son and sacrifice for sin. Jesus says, “Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.” (John 8:24). I must repent of my sins. That means my heart and life must change to conform to the will of God. Jesus says, “unless you repent you will all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3). I must also confess Jesus. In Matthew 10:32, he himself says, “Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven.” Finally, I complete my gospel obedience in baptism. Peter tells the multitude in Jerusalem, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.” When I obey these things from the heart, the Lord promises to take away all my sin for which justice says I deserve punishment. He will simultaneously add me to his kingdom, his church, and in this relationship, I may serve him all my life and enter glory with him in the end. This, my friends, is “Spiritual Justice” in the extreme! —OPA

THE WAY IT USED TO....continued from page two

It was admittedly a spartan beginning, but the brethren had a will to work and were determined. They loved the Lord and the truth and faithfully followed His will.

Bro John Reynolds from Ceres, California was one of the early preachers to hold a meeting there in 1944. He received \$25 for the meeting. Brother Reynolds, knowing the church would need help, contacted the Siskiyou congregation in Los Angeles and young preachers began coming to help. The first preacher who came to live in Arvin and work for the church was Brother Ray Nichols, an older brother of Paul Nichols. Other preachers who also held meetings there were: Barney Welch, Chester King, (my first cousin) Paul Nichols, Gayland Osburn, Ervin Waters, Homer L. King and Clovis Cook.

The results of such dedicated brethren produced wonderful results and growth. It is almost always that way. In September of 1944 Verlin and Clara Elliot and family moved from Missouri to Arvin. The Carl (“Snooks”) DeGough family were also located there. Other families from out of State began moving in, and things soon began to look up. They eventually outgrew the building, and a new building was constructed with seating for about 250 was filled most Sundays according to reports. Later, likely as an outgrowth, two congregations came into existence in nearby Bakersfield, one of which continues to this day.

The reason we have gone into some detail about the work at Arvin is to demonstrate how things grow when brethren are enthused and determined to see the church grow. A very similar situation was found when the work in the Philippines began in 1981, only about 40 years later.

Brethren were enthused and though they were poor, often worshiping in primitive places on dirt floors, just as the brethren in Arvin did, the work grew by leaps and bounds. People would come from a distance to hear the preaching and would even stand in the rain outside if the place was full. By the way, they didn't mind if the preaching was long either. They wanted to hear the gospel! The locations were on opposite sides of the world, but the results were the same.

When brethren have found the truth and are excited about it, they work hard putting in long hours; and the church grows. When we read the 2nd chapter of Acts, we see the same sort of excitement and enthusiasm. Read Peter's sermon beginning in Acts 2:14 and on through verse 36. You can sense the excitement as he preached. He loved what he was preaching! What happened? Thousands were moved to obey the

wonderful gospel he preached by inspiration of the Spirit. The church of the Lord Jesus Christ began that very day with three thousand showing obedience in baptism. Nor did it quickly slow down. Verse 42 says: "And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." Brethren were so enthused that some sold possessions and goods giving them to all as every man had need. (Verse 45) Listen folks, when brethren love their brethren, they are willing to give what is needed of their time, possessions, money or whatever. They also want to get along with the brethren because they love one another. The idea that those brethren would have missed a service of the church for a ball game, or other frivolous occasion, is not reasonable. Hear Luke as he records in Acts 2:46,47: "And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart. Praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved."

Today, we need to be excited about the truth. It will take us to Heaven, and that ought to make anyone happy. We can recall when some would shed tears at the close of a gospel meeting because they didn't want it to be over. It was the greatest thing all year, and they hated to see it end. If you have ever wondered why meetings commonly lasted two weeks or more in the 1940s and early 50s, that is one of the reasons along with the fact that they often saw results and loved gospel preaching. There was nothing as exciting to them as attending a gospel meeting and hearing great old-time preaching where sin was unabashedly condemned, and Heaven was joyfully anticipated. It seemed to get better every service. I have had old preachers tell me that the second week was usually the best! The church began looking forward to the next meeting as soon as one was finished. We need to be happy about our salvation. Paul wrote: "Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." (Ephesians 5:14) Yes, the pandemic has been terrible, but great things await us. Let us be happy in Christ. Think on these things. —DLK

(We want to express our appreciation to Gail Brewer and Carl Elliot who furnished information about the early Arvin, California congregation. Gail is the daughter of "Snooks" DeGough and Carl is one of three sons in the family of Verlin Elliot, both of whom are mentioned in the article. —DLK



FROM LONG AGO

This picture was taken in 1933 at Bethel, Texas. The preachers are from left to right: Brother McBride, Clovis Cook, H.C. Welch Sr, I.G. Hager, and Homer L. King. On the back of the picture it says this was the year Clovis Cook left Texas for MO. He then traveled with Bro King as he trained to become a gospel preacher.

Our Departed

McCLURE - Patsy McClure, 90, of Ada, Oklahoma passed away Saturday, January 30, 2021 in Ada. Patsy was born on April 22, 1930 in Stratford, Oklahoma to Pat and Lottie (Hightower) McClure. She grew up in the area, attending and graduating from Vanoss Public Schools in 1949. Patsy spent most of her working life as an accounting clerk for OG&E. She was a faithful member of the church here in Ada. Patsy was an attractive, personable, but plainspoken woman. A man in his 70s told me a few years ago that Patsy was the prettiest girl in his high school and he wanted desperately to date her, but he was afraid to ask her because he was intimidated by her father. She was a very loving person, but she was not shy about sharing her observations. If you had gained weight, she would point it out to you in a pleasant, matter-of-fact way. She loved children, and always had time for her family. In fact, she often would

sit in with various relatives when they were unable to take care of themselves fully. She was also a good cook, and enjoyed making treats for her friends and family. She was preceded in death by: her parents; her brothers, Dick, Bill, and Ralph McClure, and Albert Stevenson; one sister, Aleta Bell, one brother-in-law, Lee Wayne Bell, and one nephew, Sean Bell. She is survived by her nephew, Jimmy and wife Susan McClure, nieces Betty (McClure) Shelman and Gayle Barrett, as well as several cousins, relatives, and friends. I knew Patsy my entire life and I was honored she wanted me to conduct her funeral. —Carl Johnson

Announcement

NEW SONGBOOK-The new songbook, *Redeeming Love*, is at the printer and is scheduled to be released in April. The books may be preordered from Legacy Music Publishing. They will be \$5 each for orders of 50 or more; \$6 each for orders smaller than 50, and \$10 for spiral bound books. Shipping is additional. Demo CD's should be available close to the release date of the book. They will be \$15 each, plus postage. The book contains a good blend of old and new songs and we hope it will serve churches well. As soon as I am able to formulate an updated shipping cost estimate, I will update the website and orders may be placed there (legacymusicpublishing.com) or you may contact me at legacymusicpublishing@gmail.com or (334) 618-1550. Thank you for your patience with all delays in publishing the book and for your support of the book! -Kevin W. Presley

IN MEMORY OF HOWARD COLE - The George and Shirley Culbertson family sent a generous donation to the Old Paths Advocate in memory of our special friend and dedicated brother, Howard Cole. This is greatly appreciated by the family of the OPA, and people not currently receiving the paper will be added to the subscription list in Howard's memory. —DLK

Field Reports

Don L King, 1147 Sherry Way, Livermore, CA 94550, old_paths@juno.com, March 13. Since last report, the situation with the world-wide virus has improved somewhat we believe, due to vaccinations. The church here plans to begin our normal schedule of services

beginning April 4. Across our Brotherhood many meetings have been canceled during the past year, and some have this year as well. However the future looks brighter now and we pray the Lord it comes to pass. We thank God that our local congregation has not had to deal with problems from the authorities and though some of our members have had the virus all have survived. We older ones have gotten the vaccine and feel more confident. Looking back, the church worldwide has had to deal with many trials and we hope we are the better for it. When Paul spoke of the afflictions the brethren had been forced to deal with in apostolic days he said: "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." (2 Corinthians 4:17) It appears that our problems tend to actually strengthen and make us better than ever before. We take courage from that. Preachers, we always need your field reports and articles. Though I may not write you every month asking for them, just know that we need your input and encouragement. Try to have them to us no later than the 12th of every month for current publication. Let us look forward to the work.

David Griffin, Lebanon, MO 65536, March 2021. As in many places, of course, COVID-19 events have somewhat hampered our efforts here at the Lee's Summit congregation in Missouri at least as far as having meetings is concerned. The Lord willing, the vaccine and other factors will result in change for the good. The brethren here have decided for now that it would be better to cancel meetings we've had planned. Consequently, we haven't had a meeting here since our Spring meeting in 2019. I myself was scheduled to hold a meeting here in the Fall of that year, but my back troubles forced a cancellation. I have since had surgery (May 2020), which has made wonders of improvement. Basically, back to normal, if not even a little better than nature had me before! We continue with extended studies with the young people of this congregation. Over many months, we have gradually worked through almost all the New Testament. When we finish, they all say they are eager to go forward with the Old Testament. It is a great pleasure to see the young take an interest in the Scriptures! I have my own meetings planned right now. About the time you receive this issue of the paper, Lord willing, I will be in Dothan, AL, April 7-11. I will also be in Edmond, OK in August. I greatly look forward to these meetings and being with the brothers and sisters in these areas. Moreover, I am available to accommodate any congregation looking to conduct a meeting. deg20@protonmail.com

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WALKS THROUGH THE BIBLE...

ARE YOU A ONE CUPPER?

By JERRY DICKINSON

“For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, ‘Take, eat, this is My body which is broken for you; do this in memory of me.’ In the same manner He took the cup after supper saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes.” (I Corinthians 11 :23-26)

It is noteworthy that Paul informs the Corinthian brethren that he had received his information about the establishment of the Lord’s Supper from Jesus Himself! Paul, of course, was not present that night with the other apostles when Jesus instituted His memorial supper, and although (surely) he had talked with Peter and other apostles about the events of that night, he insists that Jesus Himself revealed these things to him. When Paul established the church in Corinth he obviously instructed them about the proper and correct way to observe the Lord’s Supper. Since they were now improperly observing it, Paul reminds them of what he had received from the Lord and delivered to them. He admonishes them, moreover, to keep the ordinances “as I have delivered them to you.” (I Corinthians 11:2)

A few years ago I was preaching during a “mission” meeting being held in Antlers, Oklahoma in which several congregations in the area were participating. There were twenty or so folks from a church of Christ in the area which used individual cups in the communion attending the meeting. I had preached several nights on the plan of salvation, the nature of the church, etc. and my plan was to preach the last night on the worship of the church, focusing in part on the proper observance of the Lord’s Supper. There were several tracts on the table in the foyer about the Lord’s Supper and other subjects as well. On the next to the last night, after services, an older lady from the aforementioned church approached me and asked if she could ask me a question. “Sure,” I replied.

“Are you a one cupper? she asked pointedly. I was taken aback and paused to smile. “Well,” I answered, “It has been a long time since I have heard that term, one cupper, but yes, I am a one cupper! I believe that Jesus used one cup when he instituted the Lord’s Supper and I believe we must use one cup in observing it today.” She nodded her head and then responded, “I knew you were after I read one of the tracts I took home last night.” I repeated to her that I had not heard the term one cupper in a long time but it did not bother me at all. Then, she surprised me by asking, “When are going to preach on it in the meeting? I would like to hear what you believe!” I almost fell over (as my mother-in-law used to say, lol) and told her I indeed intended to preach on the proper observance of the Lord’s Supper the next night. And I did!

There was a nice crowd the next night and several outsiders, including many from the cups church, and of course the sister who had called me a one cupper. I quoted the words of Paul in I Corinthians 11, emphasizing the fact that Paul quoted Jesus as saying, “This cup is the new testament in My blood.” Jesus, I declared, says the bread is His body, the fruit of the vine is His blood, and the cup is the new testament! The one loaf represents the one body of Jesus, and the one cup containing the fruit of the vine represents the one covenant ratified by His shed blood. Suddenly, a man spoke up from his seat and loudly asked, “Where does the Bible say that?” I, along with everyone in the audience was a bit stunned. I looked at him and replied, “Where does the Bible say what?” I wasn’t really sure what he was referring to. “Where does the Bible say the cup is the new testament?” he asked. I repeated that the passage I had given was I Corinthians 11:25. He asked me to wait a moment while he found it. Of course everyone was looking at him while I waited. Finally, I said, “If you have found it why don’t you read it out loud for all to hear!”

“I will,” he said, and began to read but when he came to the part about the cup being the new testament he paused and stopped. “Read it out!” I cajoled him. “Read it!” Haltingly, he continued. “Jesus said this cup is the new covenant.” After reading it he just looked up at me and I said, “Thank you for your question and thank you for reading the scripture for us all!” I could not have worked out better if I had planned it that way. The lady, and everyone else, heard the man read it straight from the Bible. It was not a one cupper preacher, but the apostle Paul, who received it from the Lord. “This cup is the new covenant in My blood.”

Oft we come together, Oft we sing and pray; Here we bring our off’ring On this holy day.

May we keep in mem’ry, All that Thou has said, May we truly worship As we eat the bread.

May we all in spirit-All with one accord, Take this cup of blessing, Given by the Lord.