

Our purpose is to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints,” and to “prove all things; hold fast that which is good.”

OLD PATHS ADVOCATE

“To continue speaking the truth in love,” “endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace,” “keeping the ordinance as delivered.”

“Thus saith the Lord, ‘stand ye in the ways, and see and ask for the Old Paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest of your souls.’ (Jer. 6:16) “And they that be of Thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The Repairer of the Breach, The Restorer of Paths to Dwell in.” (Isa. 58:12).

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NO. 2

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE LORD’S SUPPER

By *KEVIN PRESLEY*

Many people have questions about the Lord’s Supper and in this article I would like to answer some of the questions that people might have.

The first question I would like to notice is: Why do the churches of Christ observe the Lord’s Supper every Sunday?

There are many religious organizations that observe communion infrequently. Some do so quarterly or semiannually or annually. There are those who reserve the communion for what they deem to be a ‘special occasion’ or perhaps some religious holiday. But, how often should the church observe the Lord’s Supper? Does the Bible give us any indication of that?

We are told to eat the Lord’s Supper on a recurring basis. This is a commandment of the Lord (I Corinthians 11:26). In other words, it’s not a one-time observance, but it is to be done on a recurring basis. To add to this, Luke records the very earliest history of the church by saying this: Acts 2:42 “And they (the disciples) continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”

The term “breaking of bread” was used by the early disciples to refer, on many occasions, to the Lord’s Supper. Luke tells us that these people, after they were baptized into Christ, continued in the work and worship that the Lord gave to His people and they did so stedfastly. “Stedfastly” means faithfully or regularly; it means unwaveringly.

Luke later records that this was still the practice of the church that was located in Troas. Acts 20: 7 “And

upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them.” He shows that the purpose of the church coming together on Sunday was to eat the Lord’s Supper. It seems that it was the focus or the main impetus of their gathering together. We see in this passage was that Paul delayed his journey in order to assemble with the church when they came together that Sunday, the Lord’s Day, to break bread and eat the Lord’s Supper.

Some might say, “But the Bible doesn’t say that you have to commune every Sunday.” It is true that the Bible never uses the specific sentence, “You must come together to commune every Sunday.” What the Bible DOES say is that the Lord’s Supper is to be done regularly, that it was done stedfastly, that it is to be done recurrently. We also know beyond a shadow of a doubt that the early disciples followed that command on the Lord’s Day, or on the first day of the week.

There was another important observance of the Jews under the Old Testament, namely this: Exodus 20:8 “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.” That is one of the Ten Commandments. The Sabbath was a very holy day to God’s people. Do you suppose that when Moses inscribed that commandment on those tablets of stone and revealed them unto the people, that the people said, “Moses, this is a little vague? God didn’t give us enough information. After all, there are fifty-two Sabbaths in a year, so which ones do you mean? Would it be okay if we just observed ONE Sabbath each year? Could we “keep the Sabbath day”, by doing it ONE Sabbath each year; or maybe TWO; or FOUR; once every quarter or so? We’ll make sure to take a Sabbath day and keep it holy.” The answer is NO! Every week had a Sabbath, and it was to be kept holy. When God said, “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy,” there was no question in their minds that He meant when it comes the seventh

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Editorial

THE CALL TO COURAGE

By BILLY D. DICKINSON

Different news anchors have used a variety of sign offs at the end of their newscasts. Here are a few examples: Edward R. Murrow- "Good night and good luck"; Chet Huntley and David Brinkley- "Good night, Chet...Good night, David. And good night from NBC News"; Walter Cronkite- "And that's the way it is" However, it was Dan Rather who once ended with the words, "Thank you for joining us tonight. Courage!" He actually used that sign off for only a week, being forced to find another one, because people thought it was bizarre. Then on the final night of his 24 year career as a CBS anchor, Dan Rather got the last word with this message, "To our soldiers in dangerous places. To those who have endured the tsunami and to all who have suffered natural disasters, and who must find the will to rebuild. To the oppressed and to those whose lot it is to struggle, in financial hardship or in failing health. To my fellow journalists in places where reporting the truth means risking all. To each of you: Courage!"

Indeed, courage is an attribute that is given great emphasis in the word of God. In fact, God calls us to be valiant in doing His will and in facing the trials and temptations of life. The truth is that living for the Lord is not for cowards, meaning that we must put away from ourselves timidity and indecision, and we must "endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ!" (2 Tim. 2:3). That's why it is necessary to do as Peter exhorted in 1 Pet. 1:13, "Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." He's telling us to brace up our minds for action, to keep cool and maintain self-control, and to fix our hope on the mercy that we will receive when Jesus comes again. Yes, in Christ we have received the call to be courageous!

It was Joshua who received an important "call to courage" when he was chosen as the new leader of God's people after the death of Moses. In Josh. 1:1-9, no less than three times God commanded Moses' successor to "be strong and very courageous." Make no mistake about it, this was a command from the Lord: "Have I

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QUERIST COLUMN

By RONNY F. WADE

Question: Would you please explain the meaning of the phrase “let a man examine himself” and “he that drinks unworthily” in 1Corinthians 11:27-29?

Answer: The verses in question read as follows: “Whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup.” The word “examine” is from the Greek “dokimazo” meaning to test, or prove. Each person is to test or prove themselves. I cannot examine you, you cannot examine me. I know my heart, but I do not know your heart. I am out of place if I try to determine what is in your heart. But why am I to examine myself? The answer lies in verse 27. I must not eat and drink the Lord’s Supper unworthily. Unworthily is an adverb of manner and tells how one does something. What is it that I must do when I eat the bread and drink of the cup? Paul says that I must “discern” the Lord’s body. Discerning is a translation of the Greek word diakrino, which means to “judge correctly.” When I partake of the communion without properly realizing that it is a memorial of the body and blood of Christ, and treat it as nothing more than a common meal, I eat and drink damnation to myself. Participating in this observance in a worthy manner has nothing to do with our being “worthy” to participate. I have heard some say “let everyone examine himself to see if we are worthy to participate.” Paul did not say that, nor did he command it. We are to examine or test ourself to make sure that we are discerning the emblems as being representative of the Lord’s body and blood. But what if one partakes and his/her heart or life is not right? Does that affect me? I don’t believe it does. I am responsible for myself, and no one else. Since I am not a mind reader I don’t know what exists in the mind of others. Nor do I always know what might exist in their life. This is undoubtedly the reason Paul tells us to “examine ourselves.”

Question: Does James 4:13-17 teach that it is wrong to make plans for the future?

Answer: The sin of these verses is not the making of future plans, but rather making them without taking

God into account. The people of these verses were assuming that “tomorrow” they would go into a city, spend a year there, buy, sell, and even make a gain.” Inspiration answers: “how do you know that?” None of us know what will happen tomorrow, first of all because we don’t even know if we will be alive tomorrow. James points out that our life is like a vapor that appears briefly and then is gone. He then tells us that we should say “if the lord wills” we will do such as mentioned in these verses. I suppose all of us have plans for tomorrow and even into the distant future. It is not wrong to make plans. Jesus taught the advantage of planning in the statements of Luke 14:28 with reference to the man intending to build a tower. Wise people have always planned, the passage in James underscores the truth that the future lies in the hands of God. “If the lord wills” we will do such and such. This should be a solemn reminder to all of us that our lives are temporary and uncertain. We are here today and gone tomorrow. Thousands have undoubtedly planned to obey God at some point in their future only to fail because death intervened. Felix and Agrippa are prime examples. How many have made plans to correct wrongs they have committed, or reconcile with alienated brethren or friends, “tomorrow?” The list could go on and on. Failing to take God into account has been the downfall of many well-intentioned people. (Send all questions to Ronny F. Wade P.O. Box 14352 Springfield, MO 65814 or ronnywade36@gmail.com)

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QUESTIONS ABOUT continued from page one

day of the week, that day is to be set aside and kept holy to the Lord. In fact, a faithful Jew didn't dare overlook any Sabbath! Now, add to this that early church history shows that for almost the first three hundred years after Jesus established the church, the disciples observed the communion on a weekly basis. The early church came together and observed this sacred and solemn feast every Sunday. If we are to follow their example, when the first day of the week comes, shouldn't we be found in an assembly of Christians breaking bread?

The second question I want to notice is; if it is important to follow the Lord's example in using one cup in communion, wouldn't we have to use the exact same cup that Jesus used?

The answer is no. The vast majority of people who commune believe that it is significant that Jesus used bread and fruit of the vine. Most of us probably wouldn't even think of using hamburger steak and iced tea to observe the Lord's Supper. That would be profane! It is against the pattern of the Lord. Why? Because of Christ's example and the representative properties of those things which He chose to make up the supper. If THOSE THINGS are important, is it necessary to use the same loaf of bread that Jesus and His disciples used? Is it necessary to obtain grapes from the same vineyard that Jesus used? Of course not. Those are merely the types of elements that Jesus used and specified when He established the pattern of His supper. The same is true of the cup. There is no magical property in the cup, any more than there is in the bread or the grape juice. Those are merely the emblems that Jesus selected to represent to us the life-giving realities of His body, His blood and the new covenant. We can follow Jesus' pattern exactly when we do the same things, in the same way that the Bible reveals that Jesus did them when He instituted them.

The third and final question is; why do the vast majority of churches today use more than one loaf and more than one cup?

In short, for the same reasons that they do many other things that aren't found in the scriptures; change and innovation. When you look at the history of God's people, you find that things don't remain as God gave

them for very long. Man changes those things, and the communion is no different. The practice of using more than one loaf and more than one cup is a relatively modern innovation. Nearly every scholar will agree that Jesus used ONE. If we just let the Bible speak, what does it say about that? The fact is individual communion cups weren't used until a little over one hundred years ago. You won't read about them in the Bible. A doctor by the name of J.G. Thomas invented the individual communion set in Lima, Ohio in the 1890's. In 1950, a preacher among the churches of Christ named G.C. Brewer introduced them to a congregation of the church of Christ in Tennessee, and the practice spread throughout many of the churches of Christ in America and around the world. Brother Brewer didn't introduce them because he found a passage where Jesus used them; he advocated them because he thought it would be an improvement upon what the church had practiced for almost 1900 years. The problem is; they are in contradiction of the design and purpose of the Lord's Supper as Jesus instituted it two millennia ago. All should be content to follow the Lord's pattern. Jesus said, "This do in remembrance of me."

In this article I have answered three questions about the Lord's Supper; 1) why do the churches of Christ observe the Lord's Supper every Sunday? 2) When using one cup in communion, do we have to use the exact same cup that Jesus used? And, 3) why do the vast majority of churches today use more than one loaf and more than one cup?

It my desire that I have answered some of the questions you might have about the Lord's Supper and that all men might faithfully follow the Bible Pattern. kwpresley@gmail.com

HERE AND THERE

By RICK MARTIN

Politics has certainly been in the news lately. Most of us are familiar with the terms right wing and left wing. They originated from the seating arrangement in the British Parliament. Those on the left opposed the crown while those on the right were in favor of the monarchy.

In the spiritual realm the terms right and left were applied by God concerning the care of His word. Joshua

1:7- Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper withersoever thou goest. This is good advice to us today as we seek to find the right manner to walk in the way of the Lord.

In October the Chapel Grove and Springer Rd. congregations in Tennessee cooperated in holding a mission meeting in the town of Lawrenceburg. The theme of the meeting was, "Wake Up, America" Duane Permenter preached two nights and Nate Bibens preached one night. For areas that have several congregations close by this might be an idea to consider.

Keith Thomson, Mike Criswell, and Alden Stockam just completed a four week trip to four African countries. They traveled to South Africa, Botswana, Kenya, and Tanzania. By all accounts the trip was a success. Unfortunately, Alden contracted malaria while he was there and I am sure he would appreciate our prayers. Keith was also put in contact with a man from Dubai who is interested in starting a congregation.

Clint DeFrance and Shahe Gergian recently visited Hong Kong, Qatar, Malaysia, and Bangladesh. Reports of the trip were excellent. Many people were able to hear the Gospel and 3 were baptized. Please continue to pray for this work and that those who would obey would be able to hear the gospel.

Don King and Frank Brancato began their annual trip to the Philippines on January 3rd. Don has been involved in this work for over thirty years. Many congregations have been established as a result of this work and the church in the Philippines seems to be strong and thriving.

Duane Permenter and Ron Wood traveled to Mozambique to check on the work. According to Duane they had quite an adventure getting there. The first day Duane tore a calf muscle and a rather large lady fell on Ron on the escalator. Here I was thinking the danger was out in the bush and here these fellows were having trouble in airports! We are glad to hear that Duane and Ron had a successful trip and made it home safe.

The New Year's meetings across the brotherhood are now history. Reports indicate that each met with great

success. I was able to attend the Alabama New Year meeting and it was an enjoyable time. The preaching and singing was outstanding. The Hartford Hwy. Church of Christ is to be commended for the efforts they put forth so that this meeting can be held. A word of thanks should go out to all the congregations who sponsored these meetings and to the men who conducted them.

Kevin Presley reports that Let the Bible Speak is reaching people in local TV markets and people on the internet all around the world. Kevin is working on several exciting video projects he hopes to release this year. More information about these projects will be forthcoming. Brethren Doug Hawkins, Clint De France, Shahe Gergian, Nate Bibens, Austin McConnell, David Killingsworth, Randy Cantrell, and others are all involved in these projects and they will potentially be tremendous tools that local churches can use in their efforts to evangelize -- including a new online, multi media Bible study course for unbelievers. Kevin also plans on having a new songbook ready for distribution this summer. I am currently working on the new directory for 2017-2018, Where the Saints Assemble. Plans are to have it ready by the end of March or the first of April.

That's all for now. Pray for the brotherhood.

PAGES FROM THE PAST

The following article by Brother Tom Smith is from the May 1928 issue of The Truth. Brother Tom along with Brother Lynwood Smith started the annual New Year's meeting in Oklahoma. He is the father of Brother C.A. Smith.

SELF-CONDEMNATION

"Happy is he that condemneth not himself in the thing which he alloweth."

Brethren often use this in giving the lesson that we should not condemn a person for doing or teaching a thing when we are guilty of doing or teaching the same thing or something equally as bad. This is a good lesson.

I have often heard it used against the Sunday School brethren, for while they condemn the Society and the instrumental music brethren, they are themselves just

as guilty of doing something which they cannot read in the Bible. And this reminds us of the Savior's language: "Why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, and considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?"

When brethren condemn anyone for saying that they believe a person can be saved in any church, they generally begin to reason with such like this: Christ is the head of the body, the church-just one. And we are called into one body, the church-just one.

And when they hear brethren say they believe in the class system, they cite to them 1 Corinthians 14: 31 and give them Christ and the apostles always teaching, but not in classes.

But now let someone present the same line of Bible reasoning and proof for one cup in the communion, and they say: "Oh that is different." Now, there is just as much Scripture for one cup as there is for one body, or church, or for one kingdom, or for one teaching at a time in the church. Why do we contend for one body; for one kingdom; for one bread; for one cup? The answer is: Because the Bible so teaches and gives us the example. He took the cup or a cup. And Paul gives it the same. It is never in the plural.

Some say that Christ had reference only to the contents. Wonder where they learned that? Not from the Bible, I am sure. Do they really think he handled the contents without the cup? The cup is the communion of the blood of Christ. Hence without the cup there is no communion. If we have two cups, for instance, and pass one to the north side and the other to the south side of the assembly we destroy the communion, for to be such it must be common. So I say let those who advocate cups first cast out the beam from their own eye then they can see clearly to take out the mote from their brother's eye. In love and for unity. -Tom E. Smith

CALL TO COURAGE.... continued from page two

not commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the Lord thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goes!" (verse 9). It isn't hard to imagine why Joshua was probably a little intimidated by the burden of responsibility that was placed upon his shoulders. After all, it was a daunting

task to step into the shoes of a great leader like Moses and, if that wasn't enough, the awesome task was before them of possessing the land of Canaan.

The story is told about a sergeant in a parachute regiment, who was a seasoned jumper, and one day he found himself sitting next to a lieutenant in a plane. Fresh from "jump school," the lieutenant looked a bit pale as they approached their jump zone. After being asked if he was scared, the lieutenant's reply was: "No, just a little apprehensive." When asked about the difference between those two things, his explanation was: "Apprehensive means I'm scared with a university degree!" Likewise, Joshua must have been feeling a little apprehensive about the task of leadership he had inherited, leading God to make him the following promise: "There shall not any man be able to stand before thee all the days of thy life: as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee. Be strong and of a good courage: for unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I swore unto their fathers to give them" (verse 5-6).

This makes it very clear that in a Biblical sense, the "call to courage" involves several things-- (1) Bravery in the face of danger, (2) steadfastness in the face of opposition, (3) action in the face of resistance, and (4) optimism in the face of despair. With these things in mind, let's notice some principles of truth that will help us to answer successfully our "call to courage"...

OUR POSITION IN CHRIST

As long as we abide in Christ we have no reason to fear because He is the one who makes us strong, victorious, and acceptable in God's sight. When we "put on the whole armor of God" (Eph. 6:11), that enables us to "stand against the wiles of the devil." According to Paul, that's how we can "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might" (Eph. 6:10). After all, it is "in Christ" that all spiritual blessings are found (Eph. 1:3), so we have all the incentives and tools we need to remain focused and steadfast. Think about it: We are God's possession (1 Cor. 6:20), Christ's friends (John 15:15), members of the Lord's body (1 Cor. 12:27), "sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints" (1 Cor. 1:2), and Jesus is our High Priest through whom we have direct access to God (Heb. 4:14-16).

If we really understand our position In Christ, that should embolden us to take our stand for the Lord!

The key is found in the following language of Paul: "Seeing that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech" (2 Cor 3:12). This shows that the faith and hope we have in the gospel of Christ should cause us to proclaim it boldly. It is said that Nikita Khrushchev, once premier of the Soviet Union, often denounced many of the policies and atrocities of Joseph Stalin. As he was denouncing Stalin in a public meeting one time, someone shouted from the audience, "You were one of Stalin's colleagues. Why didn't you stop him?" The reply was, "Who said that?" After agonizing silence, as no one dared to speak up, Khrushchev declared: "Now you know why!" Brethren, let us never shrink back in trepidation and fear from declaring the glorious gospel of our Savior. Instead, we must be "bold in our God," as Paul wrote in 1 Thess. 2:2, "to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention."

CONFRONTING OUR FEARS

Courage does not necessarily mean that we have no fear at all, but it means that we have the strength to face our fears and deal with them. General George Patton once said that "courage is fear that holds on one more minute." Captain A. Riddenbacher said: "Courage is doing what you are afraid to do. Where there is no fear there is no courage." It has also been said that "courage is not the absence of fear, but rather the judgment that something else is more important than fear." To repeat a point that has already been made, it is to cultivate optimism even in the face of despair. It goes back to the idea of having complete trust and hope in God (no matter what happens). The following words of David illustrates the point: "Be merciful unto me, O God: for man would swallow me up; he fighting daily oppresseth me...What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee. In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust: I will not fear what flesh can do unto me" (Psa. 56: 1-4).

It's obvious that David confronted his fear on that occasion and he found strength in the knowledge that his trust was in God. We need to have the attitude of a woman who was deathly sick. After stating to a neighbor that she simply wanted what pleases God, the visiting friend asked, "But what if God were to refer the matter back to you?" Her calm response was: "Then I would just refer the matter back to him." That's the kind of faith and trust in God we're talking about! It is to believe that God loves us, He knows what is best, and we are willing to place all circumstances into His hands (come what may).

CULTIVATING THE LOVE OF GOD

We must learn to live with the realization of God's love for us (and the power that it generates in our lives), instead of nurturing fear that is generated by Satan against us. Consider the words of John: "And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love" (1 John 4:16-18).

Please remember that either fear will push love out or the love of God will push fear out. We need the confidence that Paul had: "For the which cause I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed...Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 1:12-13).

MY PEOPLE DOTH NOT CONSIDER

By PAUL O. NICHOLS

"The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know; my people doth not consider" (Isa. 1:3). This statement was made by an inspired prophet of God. This was not an accusation against outsiders. It was recognition of the true condition of those who should have been more concerned with their standing with God; they were the Lord's chosen people. Could this be said of the members of the body of Christ today? "If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?" (Prov. 24:12).

Many Christians are naive and they do not consider the facts of the situation. There are those who are part of the problem without their realizing it. But this is no different now from what it was when Jesus addressed the seven churches of Asia. The congregation at Laodicea received a scathing rebuke from the Lord because of their attitude of complacency. Listen, "These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I

will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods., and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore and repent” (Rev. 3:14-19). These Christians did not consider their true condition. They thought they were just fine like they were. They did not see any need to be too concerned; after all, in their minds they “had need of nothing.” How delusional some members are!! How many of us are like that in this day and time?! The apostle Paul wrote to the Christians at Corinth, “Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (I Cor. 10:12).

Congregations are dying in various parts of the brotherhood. Churches have quit meeting in different places. Some are closing their doors. and places of worship which have been built with the Lord’s money are being sold, and denominations are now meeting in them. But “My people doth not consider.” Now, instead of an evangelistic attitude on the part of preachers and leaders of congregations, we have turned almost wholly to local events which have become more like social gatherings than ever. Food and fun and getting acquainted with new people are more important than the spiritual aspects of these events. One man said, when he heard the word “fellowship”, he could “smell the coffee”. Sure there is some Gospel which is taught or preached, but that has become really more secondary. How many real “Gospel Meetings” are being held nowadays long enough to convert sinners? How many new congregations have been established in the United States recently? No, members of the church have lost their enthusiasm and fervor to win the lost. How many sinners can we expect to convert in a weekend meeting? We, who have been preaching for a long time, can remember the meetings we used to hold which would continue, night after night, for as long as the interest prevailed. In some of those meetings many would obey the Gospel, and members of the church would rededicate their lives to serve the Lord by correcting their wrongs through repentance, confession and prayer. Christians would drive long distances to be blessed by the preaching of the Gospel, and to lend their influence and presence to encourage the efforts of the man who had left home and loved ones to carry the Gospel to destitute places, knowing “that if our Gospel be hid it is

hid to them that are lost” (2 Cor. 3:4). But “my people doth not consider.”

We have members of the church now who don’t even attend as they should, or could, when a meeting is being held by their “home congregation”. Such feel no obligation, and perhaps show up as a visitor only. And we have others who are no more dedicated to their home church than any other congregation. We have gotten too affluent to stay at home and lend our efforts to build up and help strengthen the congregation where we claim to be members. Dedication and commitment are foreign words to some, it seems. Obligation means nothing to some Christians where they share the responsibility of the success or the blame for the failure of the congregation where they belong. If they have reason to leave town for a few days, they don’t make any effort to be back with their home church for the worship service on Lord’s day where they are obligated and needed, even if they could; lack of commitment! They worship elsewhere depriving the home church of the financial support needed to fulfill its responsibilities to accomplish its duties and work of the church they have helped to initiate. Fun and games is the order of the day - “lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God” (2 Tim. 3:4). “My people doth not consider.” It is no wonder that children of such parents don’t take religion seriously-and when it is too late, they wonder what went wrong, and refuse to take any of the blame.

Remember. “If thou sayest, Behold, we knew it not; doth not he that pondereth the heart consider it? and he that keepeth thy soul, doth not he know it? and shall not he render to every man according to his works?” (Prov.24:12). Think about it!

WHAT A DAY THAT WILL BE

By DARRELL CRAWFORD

Christians are eagerly awaiting the coming day of the Lord, and as the song so aptly says. “What a day that will be!”

The day will come like a thief in the night (2 Peter 3:10). Just as a thief comes when we are least expecting him. Jesus will return when we do not expect Him to come. Therefore, we need to be ready all the time, just as Jesus warns us in the parable of the ten virgins.

In Mathew chapter 25, Jesus speaks of ten virgins who were invited to a wedding. Five of the virgins were

wise enough to take enough extra oil to keep their lamps burning all through the night. The other five were referred to as foolish because they did not take enough oil with them to keep their lamps burning. The bridegroom came while the foolish virgins were out purchasing extra oil, and they were not allowed entrance into the wedding upon their return.

The obvious lesson is that we must be prepared for the Lord's coming at all times. At Jesus' return only those whose lamps are burning will be allowed entrance into heaven, where the wedding feast will take place.

In order to make adequate preparation for the day of the Lord, we must work hard at maintaining our spiritual lives. Such maintenance requires regular reading of God's Word, regular prayer, exercising our spiritual strength, and resisting all the temptations that come our way. In that way we can overcome MOST of the temptations that the Devil throws our way.

Still, we will likely sin from time to time. When we do sin, we have an advocate with God in Jesus Christ. If we will confess our sin through Christ, God will forgive us and cleanse us of all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9; 2:1; James 5:16).

The day of the Lord will mark the end of time and usher in Eternity. If we have made adequate preparation, we will be caught up to be with the Lord and thus we shall ever be with Him.

Paul describes the events of that day, "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. (1 Thess. 4:16-17).

There is a popular doctrine among Premillinealists in the religious world today called the "rapture." The doctrine is taken from Paul's expression "caught up together," in the above text which comes from the Latin word "rapere." This doctrine teaches a secret, silent coming of the Lord when the righteous living will be "caught up" to heaven, prior to a 1,000 year reign by Christ here on the earth.

The passage cannot refer to such a secret and silent coming of the Lord because Paul says this will be a very noisy time, including a literal shout loud enough

to wake the dead (verse 16). Furthermore, when we meet the Lord in the air, we will always be there with Him. We will not return to the earth because it will be destroyed with a fervent heat (2 Pet. 3:10;12).

Premillinealists believe that when Jesus came the first time, He came to set up an earthly kingdom. They believe that when the Jews rejected Him, that He failed to do what He came to do. This would seem to give Satan more power than God! In Matthew 16:18 Jesus said that the gates of hell (powers of hell) would not prevail against His church. He also said in John 17:4, "I have finished the work which You have given Me to do." This does not support the idea that Jesus' mission was thwarted or incomplete.

Jesus is coming back when we least expect it. He said, "the hour ye think not the son of man cometh" (Mat.24:24; Luke 12:40). He is coming back for a prepared people, for a righteous church, so we need to be ready, for that time will indeed be a wondrous occasion. What a day that will be! -OPA

**WHY A
"PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS"
IS A LIE
BY AARON BATTEY**

The popular plea from evangelical ministers, "You need to have a personal relationship with Jesus," has been around for years. This mantra tickles people's ears, makes the eyes sparkle, and leaves the heart feeling peaceful and delighted. That's all very nice, but .. so what? Perhaps discovering where this phrase came from would provide an even more soul stirring enlightenment.

In 1913, Billy Sunday invented the phrase "A personal relationship with God." This became the motto behind what became known as the Third Great Awakening. That would be a fine and dandy motto if the Bible was written in 1913, but it wasn't. For Bible believers who value the Word of God to direct their lives (Colossians 3:17), this phrase does not make the cut. Phrases and doctrines that originated centuries after God's word was fully and finally revealed (Jude 3) should rather stimulate indigestion before peace and delight are to be had. Keith Mathison speaks to this reality very pointedly in his book *Dispensationalism: Rightly Divining the People of God?*

Historical arguments are not the final test for the truthfulness of any doctrine. Scripture is our sole authority for both doctrine and practice. Yet the history of a doctrine can be highly relevant. We have much more reason to be confident of a doctrine such as the Trinity, which has been taught since the first centuries of the church age, than of a doctrine first taught 150 years ago. As a rule, Christians should be cautious about accepting any doctrine that has never been taught in the history of the church. (1995, R&R Publishing p. 12)

The reasoning expressed by Mathison is supported by nothing short of the Bible itself. In Acts 15 the Jerusalem church elders and apostles wrote a letter to the church at Antioch in order to address Jews who were binding circumcision on Christians. Speaking to this point, the church leaders said the following: “We have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, ‘You must be circumcised and keep the law’ to whom we gave no such commandment,” (Acts 15:24). The last phrase in the quotation stands out. The fact of the matter was this: nowhere in the church’s history or in the Law of Christ (Galatians 6:2) was circumcision ever commanded or even hinted at as a practice to be followed. This example reinforces the importance of looking back to the original teachings of the early church, specifically the official delegates of Jesus being the apostles and prophets (1 John 4 :6).

The phrase, “Have a personal relationship with Jesus,” is not found in the Bible. It is not a truthful reality. Rather, this mantra is a cunning lie, fit to attract and idolize man’s selfish construct of God; making God what man would like Him to be instead of what He is in reality. God is not our “daddy” or extravagant lover. Jesus has not left the right hand of God in order to pet and coddle the Christian in his sin. God is greatly to be feared (Hebrews 10:31). Jesus’ mandates for salvation include leaving all to follow Him (Matthew 19:21-22) rather than Jesus leaving all to follow the Christian.

IN TIMES LIKE THESE

By SAM V. SMITH

While in prison the second time Paul writes his second letter to Timothy and admonishes him to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. He realizes that his time in this world is not very long and wants to prepare Timothy to continue on in the work of the church after he is gone. He seems very anxious that this young man would pass on to faithful men the things that he had

heard of Paul in order that they would be able to teach others also, II Tim. 2:24 “And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient.” He also told him, “to study to show himself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” We soon conclude from these writings that a great responsibility has been laid upon this young man. Will he be able to do this in the times we are about to describe?

In II Tim. 3:1 we have this warning, “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.” He then proceeds to give a long list of evils that would be in the lives of the people in those days; “For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy.” On and on the list goes taking up most of II Timothy 2. These are a few of the conditions under which Timothy would have to work after the departure of the apostle Paul.

Our thoughts now turn to these times in which we are living. What would be best for us? What do we need most to withstand the evils to the present generation? Such evils are drugs, alcohol that our people, both young and old, are turning to. If they continue in these things it only spells more trouble for them. I believe there is less respect for the marriage vows than at any time in my life, and this is very sad. These conditions cut across all segments of our society, sparing only those who are willing to be led by the word of God. It is apparent that one finds himself in the midst of much evil today.

In times like these, what do we need? First of all we need a Savior. This is the common need of all men because all have sinned, Rom. 3:23, John 1:10. Man is not sufficient of himself, but his sufficiency is of God, II Cor. 3:5. Man is unable to direct his own steps, Jer. 10:23. Man has a dire need for a Savior. We have a Savior who came to this world and died and shed his blood that we might be saved from our sins. He threw out the lifeline and all who will take hold will be brought safely to the shore.

Second, in times like these, we need to behold the goodness and severity of God, Rom. 11:22. We need to remember that some things happen as chastisements, Heb. 12:5-11. All serious Bible readers will remember God’s dealings with the children of Israel as they moved toward deliverance. Time and time again He had to rebuke them. These people witnessed the display of God’s power on several occasions, but they forgot.

Third, in times like these, we need to renew our

allegiance to the Lord's church. We often forget that we get strength by being a part of the Lord's church. The disciples were told. Heb. 10:25, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." Today, in times like these, many fail to see the importance of assembling themselves together. As a result the assemblies are often small, which is a discouragement to those who are present. With man there has always been strength and encouragement in numbers. However, this is not necessarily so with God. Our faithfulness to our commitment to God is what pleases Him.

Fourth and last, in times like these, we should have respect for authority. The lack of respect for authority is seen all around us. Just as Paul stated in II Tim. 3, children do not respect parents, parents have little or no respect for God's laws or authority in religion. Men have reached the point in which it doesn't matter what you do in worship as long as it is from the heart. Allow me to remind you, that God's word which is our source of authority says, "See that you do all things according to the pattern." And so we must do.

May we be always be careful how we walk and live, "In Times Like These." -Sam V. Smith 1912-2009

Our Departed

GIBBS - Marie Gibbs was born in Davis Oklahoma December 22, 1932, and passed from this life of 83 years peacefully on Sunday evening, November 27, 2016 in Visalia, California. She was the daughter of Orville Johnson. She was preceded in death by her husband Royce and son Kenneth. She is survived by daughter Darlene, daughter-in-law Mary Ann, sister Keitha, and all their families. There are 6 grandchildren, 11 grandchildren, and her beloved Church family.

Marie married her husband Royce in Davis, Oklahoma on December 28, 1948 at 16 years of age, and soon moved to California where they would spend the rest of their lives. As many of their time they started out with not much, but their case was to the extreme. After they were married they came back to the house they were to live in and it had burned to the ground. So, they literally started with nothing at all. But they overcame all the obstacles and remained married for 48 years till Royce passed away.

Marie was baptized at 16 in Davis, Oklahoma and remained faithful all her life. She always showed up at

Services with a smile and welcomed all conversations. She drove herself to Services as long as her health would allow her. Even when all of us worried about the weather, she always just said she would be ok. She was very independent and dedicated to the Church, and that is a good example to us all.

When she became too ill to live at her place, she had to move to a care facility. She kept telling her daughter she wanted to go home. At first the daughter thought she meant her old place, but after a while she realized Marie meant she was ready to leave this old life, for her new one above. When Darlene asked Marie if that was what she meant, she said yes. She was ready to go home. And soon after she did just that, peacefully in her sleep.

I was asked to conduct the services for this dear Sister, and congregational singing was led by Don Rowland.
- Geary Trent

NELSON - Margaret Ann Brumley Nelson was born May 14, 1930, in Clinton, Oklahoma, to Jessie Clarence Brumley and Mabel Naomi Fails Brumley. She passed away Wednesday, December 28 in Henryetta, Oklahoma, at age 86 years, 7 months, and 14 days. She grew up in Ada, Oklahoma, and went to school in the Ada Public Schools System. She worked at Safeway Supermarket 32 years and later in the cafeteria in the Ada Public Schools. She was a faithful member of the Lord's church for 69 years, having been baptized by Clarence Kessinger in 1947. Margaret was preceded in death by her parents, her sister Pauline, and her daughter J. Ann. She is survived by 2 brothers: Kenneth Brumley and his wife Sue, of Ada, and Weldon "Buddy" Brumley and his wife Carolyn of Exeter, California. She is also survived by many nieces and nephews, great-nieces and great-nephews, and one special niece, Nancy Wadley of Henryetta, Oklahoma. I knew Margaret about as long as I can remember. All of the Brumleys were part of our church family when I was a child. I always thought Margaret was one of the prettiest girls I ever saw and she remained an attractive woman the rest of her life. We had a lot in common. We were both loyal fans of the New York Yankees baseball team. She helped me get a job at Safeway when I was a senior in high school and I kept the job until I was a senior in college. Our main association, however, was within the church. She was so faithful in her attendance until her health failed her. She was good to pick up other people who needed a ride and bring them to services. I was honored she wanted me to conduct her funeral service. She had her share of disappointment and heartaches in this life, but she fought a good fight, finished the course, and kept the faith, and I am confident she will receive a crown of righteousness in that day (2 Tim. 4:6-8).

- Carl M. Johnson

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THE SALT OF THE EARTH

By CARL M. JOHNSON

After Jesus begins the sermon on the Mount by describing the kind of character we must cultivate if we are to have happy, meaningful lives, He moves on to describe how that character is to be put into action. What is the role of the disciple who is aware of his spiritual inadequacy, who mourns with the suffering, is humble, hungers and thirsts after righteousness, and has all the other qualities Jesus mentions? (Mt. 5:1-12).

One role incumbent upon all disciples is described by Jesus as being comparable to salt. "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men" (Mt. 5:14 NKJV).

This figure illustrates the value Jesus places upon His disciples. Salt was so precious in the ancient world that a bag of it was often equivalent to the value of a man's life. Some authorities say that more wars have been fought over salt than over gold. Marco Polo says that in the 13th century cakes of salt were used as money in Tibet. A part of the salary of Roman soldiers was paid in salt. The Latin word for salt is "salarium" and is the word from which we get our English word "salary." We also get the expression, "He is not worth his salt," from this practice. In other words, the person was not worth the salt he was paid as part of his salary. Conversely, we often say, "He is the salt of the earth." The Bible uses the word salt 33 times, and there are several varieties mentioned.

In Luke 14:34-35 Jesus says, "Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its savor, how shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill, but men throw it out."

Anthony Bradley says Jesus is actually referring to the use of salt as fertilizer in this passage ("You Are the Manure of the Earth," Christianity Today, Oct. 2016 pp. 72-76). The "dunghill" (manure pile) has been used as fertilizer for centuries and salt keeps dunghills from rotting and becoming useless. Over time, however, the compounds of salt naturally disintegrate and lose saltiness," making it less effective as fertilizer for the soil and as a preservative for the manure pile. Jesus' point is that when we realize we are functioning as fertilizer, we measure our value by the growth we stimulate in others.

In Matthew 5:13, however, it is most likely that Jesus has in mind the function salt performs as seasoning in food. Food is insipid and tasteless without the seasoning of salt. Paul says, "Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you are to answer everyone" (Col. 4:6).

Whether the Lord is talking about using salt to preserve and enhance the effectiveness of fertilizer or as seasoning to preserve and enhance the flavor of food, the point is that salt is useless until it is applied to something else.

The same is true of Christians. As the salt of the earth, we must give the saving Gospel message to lost people. The world would be in complete moral corruption if it were not for the influence of Christians. Just as salt is used as a preservative to keep foods from rotting, we live our lives in a way that helps to save and preserve the souls of those around us (1 Jn. 5:19; 2:2). If we make no effort to spread the Gospel message to the lost, and we make no effort to live according to God's teachings, we become as useless as salt that has lost its "saltiness." We may be "good people," but we have become "good for nothing" so far as the lost is concerned.

Another characteristic of salt is that it works secretly. It enhances the flavor of other foods, but it never gets any credit. I have never known anyone to shove a forkful of potatoes into his or her mouth and exclaim, "Wow, that is great salt!" It is the salt that has the potatoes seasoned just right, but the potatoes get all the credit. In fact, the only time you can taste salt is when you get too much of it on something.

We must be careful not to pour too much of ourselves onto others by being cumbersome and heavy-handed. We do not dominate them and dictate every move, but as salt we enhance the qualities they already have.

We must also remember that we are not the potatoes of the earth. We are not the main course that craves the center of attention as did the Pharisees (Mt. 6:1-4). Rather, we are the salt. We quietly expend ourselves, use ourselves, and give ourselves to save, enhance, and preserve the lives of others while focusing the glory upon God (Mt. 5:16). cmjthebackpage@gmail.com