

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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RETHINKING SOME THINGS

By DAVID GRIFFIN

For most of our lives, we have taken for granted that that we can go into a grocery store and purchase most anything we want, anytime we want it, and for a reasonable price. I like things this way; most of us do. When the current crisis first began, many comments were made in jest about the seemingly inexplicable shortage of a certain personal hygiene product. I think most of us had our fun joking about it, but now it has moved on to bigger things. After two or three months of virus deaths and “shutdowns,” it is no longer just about toilet paper.

Recent experiences at the grocery store in general are teaching me to rethink some things. I find myself questioning if anything I’m looking for will be available—and not just TP! We Americans are not accustomed to this. Perhaps such experiences can help us better identify with our brethren in other parts of the world. But now, with the virus spreading among meat-packing plants, the possibility of a shortage of staple foods is more than a little disconcerting. Although other parts of the world face these kinds of issues all the time, we spoiled Americans are now being forced to realize just how fragile the “supply chain” is upon which our affluence if not our very livelihood depends.

But I’m no economist, and you would rather hear about such things from your favorite news anchor than from me. When I say I’m rethinking some things, it is true, I am rethinking my expectations of “the good life,” but it’s far more than that. If this crisis forces us to rethink anything, it is the fragile nature of life itself! This eclipses all else.

Modern advances in medical science are truly astounding. When I consider, for example, what

surgeons are able to do today, and then I consider that the first open-heart surgery was performed only eight years before I was born, I marvel at how far things have come just in my life-time. Today we have access to medical treatments that 99.9% of all human history could never have imaged, and some places still can’t imagine. But I am afraid we’ve come to take such things for granted. Our modern age now looks to Science as the “Savior.” But recent events have exposed some large gaps in the ability of science to save us from everything.

While doing all this rethinking, I recently did an internet search for information on life expectancy in decades past. My search led me to a site called “senior living.org.” First, the very fact that I am now at the age that such a website even captures my attention is itself rather telling, but that’s a different issue. Nevertheless, seniorliving.org, whose sources are the National Vital Statistics Reports and the U.S. Census Bureau, says that for males born in the year 2000, statistical life-expectancy is 75 years; for females born in 2000 it is 80 years. By comparison, one hundred and twenty years ago, the life-expectancy of a male born in 1900 was 47 years; for females born that year, 49 years. How young that is by today’s standards! Further, only 12% of males born in 1900 could expect to reach the age of 65, and only 4% to the age 85. Compare that to 2017 when the numbers were 84% and 42% respectively. What a difference a few decades make! Overall, the website shows that throughout the 20th century, life-expectancy increased with each decade, so that people born at the end of the 20th century can expect to live lives 37% longer than those born at the beginning of the 20th century! Consequently, modern medical advances, increased life expectancy statistics, and (I might throw in here) effective advertising urging everyone to “save for retirement” all contribute to the illusory expectation of long life. Most people now simply assume they will

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PUBLISHER

Don L. King
 1147 Sherry Way, Livermore, CA 94550
 Fax 925-454-8995

EDITORIAL STAFF

Billy Dickinson	Carl Johnson
Jerry Dickinson	Kevin Presley
Greg Gay	

OLD PATHS ADVOCATE WEBSITE:

www.oldpathsadvocate.org
 Rick Martin, Website Publisher
 Terry Studdard, Website Asst. Publisher
 Brandon Steward, Webmaster

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Editorial

HEAVEN

By DON L. KING

We all love to think of heaven, because it means so much to a Christian. Perhaps everyone has some special longings and feelings about heaven, but we know it will be wonderful. Heaven is the home of our Lord. He was there before He ever came to this world of sin and woe.

I always appreciated the way Lynwood Smith described the coming of Christ into this world. He said, "Down from Heaven He came, stepping on the clouds, as it were, into this world through a barn door." What a lowly entrance for the King of Kings and Lord of Lords! We would scarcely look for the greatest who ever walked to make such an entrance. The earthly life of Christ is not only wonderful and interesting to read, but also it makes one sad to realize what suffering He went through just being here away from home. He was so mistreated and unappreciated by those who should have welcomed Him.

During the years I have preached the gospel, I can truly say I have enjoyed it. I love it, and dread the day when age, sickness or death, may stop me from going. Yet, there is always a longing for home while I am away no matter where it might be. As a boy, raised in the home of a gospel preacher, I always dreaded the time when we had to pack up and leave home to travel. There is nothing like home. There we can truly relax, be ourselves, and let down. Heaven is home for the righteous. Paul wrote of Heaven when he said, "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." (2 Corinthians 5:1) Of course, Paul said this by inspiration, but it is obvious he thought of heaven as home. We should feel the same, perhaps even say so, but our actions may sometimes indicate otherwise.

Jesus spoke of "treasures in heaven" to the rich young ruler. In Mark 10:21 the record says, "Then Jesus beholding him, loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure

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QUERIST COLUMN

BY CLINT DEFRANCE

Question: Does the Bible authorize eating meals in the church building?

Answer: It is generally agreed upon by historians that Christians did not commonly assemble in formal meeting houses for some time after the apostolic era. There were exceptional cases, such as circumstances in the early history of the church when entire synagogues were converted and the building formerly used for the Jewish assembly was claimed and appropriated for Christian worship. The language of James 2.2-4 may indicate this had happened in some of the churches. However, it seems that most congregations met in private homes (Acts 8.3, 12.12, 16.40; Romans 16.15; 1 Corinthians 16.19; Colossians 4.15). Obviously, the same homes where the Christians met to worship would also be used for family meals and social meals by the Christians (Acts 2.46). In Corinth it seems that some of the meals were abused and the rich (who provided the food, and possibly the house) would eat before the poor arrived. Paul's remedy was to "wait for one another" (1 Corinthians 11.33-34), or else to give up the pretense of the social meal.

In the 20th century, the controversy over institutionalism in the churches of Christ caused some to oppose eating on the grounds maintained by the church treasury. This was an outgrowth of the debates over that issue. However, the Bible has nothing to say on the matter. In the opinion of this writer it would be better for the Christians to build and maintain their meeting places with private funds than to make an issue of this. If it offends the conscience of certain members, the right thing to do is either to find another way to pay for the facilities or to find another place to eat.

Question: Please explain the meaning of Acts 20.28. What role does the Holy Spirit play in appointing elders?

Answer: In his final address to the elders of the church in Ephesus, Paul gave this admonition: "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd

the church of God which He purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20.28).

Many times, the Bible describes the obedient response of men on earth to the revelation of God as a reflection of the work of God Himself in heaven. Jesus said that when congregations carry out scriptural discipline against a stubborn sinning member, "whatever they bind on earth has already been bound in heaven, and whatever they loose on earth has already been loosed in heaven" (Matthew 18.18). In the text under consideration, the apostle Paul refers to the fact that these men had met the qualifications and expectations revealed by the Holy Spirit for the office of an elder. This revelation was made by the preaching of the apostles and is revealed in Titus 1.6-9, 1 Timothy 3.1-7, and 1 Peter 5.2-4. Realizing they were God's choice for who should shepherd His flock, they had accepted the responsibilities attendant thereunto and upon the witness of the congregation had been appointed to the office.

Those who meet the qualifications revealed in Scripture today should also be charged to fulfill their duties and be shown the honor and respect worthy of those whom "the Holy Spirit has made overseers" - to resist God's appointed leadership is to resist God.

Send all replies or questions to Clint DeFrance, 2121 South Columbia Avenue, Suite LL2, Tulsa, OK 74114

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THE BIBLE'S PATTERN FOR EVANGELISM I

BY DUANE PERMENTER

The church started in Jerusalem and the people remained there for several years. There are many reasons this could have been; however, we must understand that spiritual food came from the Apostles and this was one of the main reasons people remained at Jerusalem. The Apostles begin laying hands on Christians from the day of Pentecost forward. This was to impart spiritual gifts as the Holy Spirit saw fit to help make the church mature from the beginning. (1 Corinthians 12:4-11) God always did everything from miracle to natural. For example, God created one man and one woman to populate the world. They were made by a miracle, Cain and Abel were born by natural birth. Eve was called the mother of all living; Genesis 3:20

Miracle then Natural

Even so, God started the church by miracles. First, the Apostles were baptized in the Holy Spirit and then the Christians after water baptism on Pentecost were empowered through the Apostles to do the work of the church by the Holy Spirit. The Apostles received the revelation from heaven directly through the Holy Spirit. They, in turn, would lay hands on Christians and each Christian received a gift or gifts of the Holy Spirit that the church might function as a mature group. This was until after the second generation of Christians died and the New Testament was written down. (1 Corinthians 6:4; Ephesians 3:1-5; 1 Corinthians 13:8-13)

Persecution Arose

In Acts 8 the church is several years old and many from different parts of the world who had come to Jerusalem to celebrate a Jewish feast had continued to remain from the beginning of the church in Acts 2. The church in Jerusalem is quite large and had a powerful effect on the city. A great persecution arose after the death of Stephen and the people in Jerusalem decided to leave the city and return to their various homes. Philip, the evangelist, is given as one example of what happened in Acts chapter 8. While returning to his home in Caesarea, he established churches in Samaria and many other places. After Philip's good work in Samaria, the church at Jerusalem sent Peter and John to lay hands on

the converts giving them spiritual gifts. This was since Philip the evangelist could perform miracles he could not, however, pass those on to other people for he was not an apostle with the power. This evangelism recorded in Acts 8 happened all over the known world by different individuals who were converted in Jerusalem.

The Church in Jerusalem and Barnabas

Acts 11:19-23; "Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only. 20 But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus. 21 And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord. 22 Then news of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch." (NKJV) These congregations were started by the people who came from Jerusalem. No doubt many people who had been in Jerusalem were endowed with gifts of the Holy Spirit to guide and assist them. These gifts took the place of the written Bible we have today. The point being even with the complete revelation received miraculously there is need of training and teaching people in addition. If people endowed with the knowledge of the Holy Spirit still needed training, then today it is important even with the Bible. Even though knowledge of the truth was available, it was still necessary for the church at Jerusalem to send out a mature evangelist to assist and further develop these people in the truth.

Barnabas and Saul

According to Acts 11:24 a great number of people were added to the Lord through the efforts of Barnabas. He had a great work for our Lord. Many of the people in the church at Antioch had spiritual gifts and yet the church in Jerusalem believed that they needed further help. The work evidently was big enough that Barnabas felt the need for someone to help him and he went to Tarsus to seek out Saul. Acts 11:25-26, "Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul. 26 And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch." (NKJV)

Evangelism in Antioch

Clearly, in the first century during the age of miracles the early church understood that circumstances often required more instruction and teaching. I am convinced that we sometimes misunderstand the work done in the first century. In fact, I hear people go into new areas and work for a few weeks and then after baptizing several, leave the work without help and it suffers or even dies. Some of our work may die; nonetheless, we should always do the best we can to promote what we start with the needed assistance. In fact, all need to make sure we understand the pattern for evangelism in the New Testament and follow it carefully. When the work dies it is a tragedy and when it dies because we did not do our duty, it is a disaster.

Today, we do not have the advantage of spiritual gifts. When we leave a new work, sometimes, we are deserting it too early. Remember, when first converted people are spiritual babies and need our help for months before we can leave them alone. Today we cannot leave individuals with spiritual gifts and we must develop them depending on where the people are spiritually. The church at Antioch had spiritual gifts yet, Barnabas stayed in Antioch for months and Saul came in and stayed there with Barnabas for over a year. Today, we cannot give spiritual gifts, so it naturally takes much longer in most cases to develop what is needed to continue.

During the next few months, I plan to study the pattern of evangelism in the Bible. It is my sincerest hope that each congregation will consider carefully what the Bible teaches on evangelism and together we can improve our work. More to come...P. Duane Permenter: duane@churchofchristhawaii.org

PAGES FROM THE PAST

The following article appeared in the 1937 July Issue of the Old Paths Advocate. In this article Brother King laments the ingratitude that is displayed by many people. He urges us to be thankful and appreciate the efforts of others. This is certainly something that is needed in our society today. —Rick Martin

INGRATITUDE

Homer L. King

By INGRATITUDE we mean “unthankfulness,” “ungratefulness” (2Tim.3:2); inappreciation” (Webster).

Paul teaches in his second letter to Timothy, chapter 3, that such will be the status of people in “the last days,” and one has to but look around, in order to see this on every hand. Surely, we are living in just such times as portrayed by the Apostle. I believe this is one of the outstanding sins of our time. Recent developments have caused me to realize this more vividly than ever before. However, ingratitude is not confined entirely to the present time. Let us look into the past for some examples.

I believe it is possible to begin with the dawn of creation for examples of this characteristic, which is so prevalent in the human family, but it will suffice now to begin with the advent of the Son of God into this world. Was He appreciated by the human family? Was He appreciated by the people of God? Nay, verily. “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not” (Jno. 1:11). As we consider the wonderful blessings of God bestowed upon the human family in the sending of His Son into this sin-cursed earth, we are astounded at the ingratitude apparent. This however, was foretold by the Savior, in a parable (Luke 20:9-17), concerning, “A certain man planted a vineyard, and let it forth to husbandmen,” sending his “servants” to gather the fruits, but they were beaten. Finally, he sends his “beloved son,” but they “killed him,” casting him out. Jesus informed them that the lord of the vineyard would destroy such wicked and ungrateful husbandmen and give the vineyard to others. He concludes, “The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner.” Their ingratitude could not make the purpose of God of none effect. What love! What loving kindness! What blessings, both temporal and spiritual! Finally, what sacrifice by the Son of God! Then, behold how unthankful, ungrateful; yea, what ingratitude! So apparent to the Son of God was this ingratitude, That He was heard to say, “The foxes have holes and the birds have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head.” Although He “came to minister unto,” which He did profusely, finally dying for all, yet in his dying hour, he was refused even a drink of water.

I now think of that righteous, benevolent, merciful, self-sacrificing man of God. Stephen, as he poured out his life in kind and righteous deeds; only to be stoned to death, reaching the climax as he prayed for those who so cruelly put him to death. How unthankful, ungrateful, and what ingratitude by that mob! I doubt seriously if his own brethren really appreciated him until after he was taken away from them.

Next before my mind passes the life and example of one of the most outstanding Bible characters, the Apostle Paul. If I should be allowed to be partial or to love and admire one apostle more than another, it would be Paul. So close did he follow the Savior that he could say: "Be ye followers of me even as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). His entire life after his conversion was one of service and sacrifice, but he met with the same ingratitude as others. He said:

"For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles. But though I be rude in speech, yet not in knowledge; but we have been thoroughly made manifest among you in all things" (2 Cor. 11:5, 6); "Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not? (2 Cor. 11:23-29). Was this outpouring of service and sacrifice appreciated by his brethren, or did he feel, as possibly every gospel preacher feels at times, that his efforts were not appreciated, receiving from his own brethren that same thing ingratitude? Hear him: "And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved" (2 Cor. 12:15). "Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" (Gal. 4:16). And, it is the same inappreciation, experienced by our Lord et al.

The Campbells, Stone, Smith, et al, of the Restorers were not appreciated in life as they should have been and as they deserved. They are, no doubt, appreciated more now than while living. They rendered a service so vital, that it seems they would have been appreciated, but alas!

As a rule the elders, teachers, song leaders, personal workers, in the home congregation are not appreciated, nor their life of sacrifice, until, if at all, they are removed by death or move away. For their invaluable service to the cause of Christ and to humanity, they generally receive but little, except criticism, knocks, and many times slander. If their praise is ever sung by their brethren, it is generally after they are removed by death. What ingratitude!

The gospel preacher, who sacrifices his home, loved ones, friends, and himself, to preach the gospel to the lost, receives as a rule, very little in this life but ingratitude at the hands of the world and his own brethren (Thank God, for the promised reward in heaven!). This is especially true of the home preacher by the home congregation. Jesus knew this and foretold us, "A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country." The brethren generally did not appreciate Brother Harper as they should while he was yet with us. We sang his praise after his death. The church here did not realize what Brother Gay and family were worth to the church until they moved away. It seems we appreciate nothing while we have it. Oh, what ingratitude! Are we all guilty?

FORGIVING OTHERS

By RICK MARTIN

Forgiveness is something that each of us has had to deal with in one way or another. When we refuse to deal with bitterness and resentment that puts us in bondage, we cannot have the fellowship with our Father that we are supposed to have.

As part of His teachings on the need for human forgiveness, Jesus states that a condition of receiving God's forgiveness is to forgive others.

When Jesus taught His disciples to pray, He said,

“forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.”

Paul reminded the Ephesians, “and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you.” Eph.4:32.

Once we understand the depth of our sin and the distance it puts between us and God and once we see the sacrifice that God made to restore fellowship with us, we should not hesitate to forgive.

In Matt. 18:23-35 Jesus tells this story; The Kingdom of Heaven can be compared to a king who decided to bring his accounts up to date. In the process, one of his debtors was brought in who owed him \$10 million, literally, “10,000 talents.” He couldn’t pay, so the king ordered him sold for the debt, also his wife and children and everything he had. “But the man fell down before the king, his face in the dust, and said, “Oh, sir, be patient with me and I will pay it all.” Then the king was filled with pity for him and released him and forgave his debt. But when the man left the king, he went to a man who owed him \$2,000 and grabbed him by the throat and demanded immediate payment. The man fell down before him and begged him to give him a little time. “Be patient and I will pay it,” he replied. But his creditor wouldn’t wait. He had the man arrested and jailed until the debt would be paid in full. Then the man’s friends went to the king and told him what had happened. The king called before him the man he had forgiven and said, “You evil-hearted man! Here I forgave you all that tremendous debt, just because you asked me, shouldn’t you have mercy on others, just as I had mercy on you?” Then the angry king sent the man to the torture chamber until he had paid every penny due. Jesus concludes by saying, “so shall my heavenly Father do to you if you refuse to truly forgive your brothers.”

The unmerciful servant found his own attitude of unforgiveness returned to him. We must not be that kind of person-quick to condemn, unwilling to forgive, unable to show compassion. Instead, we must be like Christ-who overlooks our unintended weaknesses, begs us to repent of our known sins, and eagerly forgives us when we confess our wrongdoing, even though he knows we will regrettably sin again, then ask for forgiveness again.

When we hear this parable, we become self-righteous

and say how could anyone be so ungrateful? The believer who will not forgive another is even more guilty than this slave. If we understood how much of a debt we owe God, we would begin to realize how petty even the worst debts we are owed truly are. God’s forgiveness is much greater and more precious than whatever forgiveness we are tempted to withhold from those who have wronged us.

We must realize that we have been forgiven of a debt that we could never repay and therefore we have no ground to stand on when we refuse to forgive others. It is a dangerous thing to be unwilling to forgive.

Two little brothers had finished supper and were playing until bedtime. Somehow one hit the other with a stick. Bitter words followed and tears flowed. Charges and accusations were still being exchanged as they got ready for bed. The mother said, “now Sam you need to forgive your brother.” Sam thought for a minute and said, “ok, I’ll forgive him tonight, but if I’m alive tomorrow he had better watch out.” This is amusing, but it shows us once a person asked for forgiveness, we must let it go.

Many have the attitude, “If you’ll act right, and pay the right price, I’ll consider forgiving you.” However, we forget the fact that, we must forgive the penitent brother, not in order for him to be saved, but in order for us to be saved-not in order for him to go to heaven, but in order for us to go to heaven! God only forgives us when we are willing to forgive others.

Those whom we have forgiven can be a tool in our lives to help us in our growth and understanding of God’s grace. Joseph understood this principle. Even though his brothers committed a great wrong against him, he was still able to forgive. They were viewed as the way to get him to Egypt, where he would be in position to save his people when a famine struck. His brothers were fearful of what he might do. They expected him to exact revenge, but Joseph was not vengeful. He told them not to be afraid, that he would nourish them and their children. He comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

Forgiveness is hard. It is a process that can be painful. Whatever our pain, whatever our situation, we cannot afford to hold on to an unforgiving spirit. Matthew 6:14-15 “For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive

not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.” Rick Martin teachermartin@gmail.com — Amen! DLK

IT IS NOT ENOUGH

By PAUL O. NICHOLS

There are many people in the religious world who have a very narrow concept of Christianity and what it takes to get to heaven. We find a similar attitude among members of the church. In the denominations there are people who think God is not very strict and to just believe in His existence promises them salvation. In a survey of several thousand persons it was revealed that 67% of those interviewed believed in heaven and 88% of those who believe in heaven were sure they were going there. We also have members of the church who seem to think that just because they have been baptized and as long as they stay out of trouble and get the communion every Lord’s day (or at least most of the time), the Lord will surely save them. These expect to be saved by the bare stint of duty.

In this article we hope to show by the Bible that God has a plan of salvation which requires more than some believe it takes to get to heaven. Hence, the title of the lesson is “It Is Not Enough”.

First, it is not enough to just be morally good. It is true that Christians are to be good moral people if they hope to get to heaven, but morality alone will not save. In the scriptures (Matt. 19:16-22) we have an example of one of the most moral and basically good young men anyone could ever hope to find. He kept all the commandments of the Lord from his childhood up, but failed to be saved when told by Jesus there was one other thing he needed to do. The Bible says, “he went away sorrowful.” His morality was not enough.

Some seem to think that regardless of what they believe, if they are just religious they will surely get to heaven. However, we are told in Acts chapter 17 when the apostle Paul went to Athens, Greece he found a city steeped in religious error. The people even had an altar with the inscription, “To the unknown God”, whom they ignorantly worshipped. When Paul was given the opportunity to speak to the people he referred to that altar and then said he was going to tell them about this God. In his speech he told them that there was a time when God winked at ignorance, but He now commands

all men everywhere to repent, because there is going to be a resurrection and all people everywhere are going to be judged by Jesus in that day (Acts 17:30,31). Just being religious is not enough.

Many people throughout the world claim to worship God in one way or another. They think it makes no difference to the Lord how, as long as we worship. But is this the teaching of the Bible, and is that all it takes to please the Lord? Jesus says in John 4:23,24, “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”

In Acts chapter eight we are told of a man who traveled over a thousand miles to worship God, only to find he was wrong, and his worship unacceptable to the Lord. When he learned the truth he accepted it immediately. When he obeyed the gospel “he went on his way rejoicing” (Acts 8:26-39). Just to worship the Lord is not enough regardless of how honest one may be. We must worship “in spirit and in truth”.

We can see by the scriptures to worship the Lord is important. But to worship only occasionally is not enough. The scriptures indicate that it was the practice of faithful Christians to assemble each first day of the week (on the Lord’s day) to worship God (Acts 20:7). And in Hebrews 10:25-29 we are informed that we are not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together. The writer lets us know that it is a willful sin for one to make this mistake. Jesus says to His disciples, “... Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness” (Matt. 6:33). Which simply means to put God first in our lives - before everything else. Christians need to learn this important lesson. It is not enough to worship occasionally.

How important is it that we be sincere and diligent in serving the Lord? James informs us in James 2:10,11, “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty.” It would be awful to come up short in the day of judgment thinking that we are going to heaven, only to be renounced by the Lord, and lost forever. It is not enough to keep most of the will of God. He wants complete submission to

Him and His will. He demands faithfulness.

Finally, it is not enough for a person to just have good intentions and plan some day to do better - to plan some day to obey the gospel, or to become more sincere and more dedicated to serving the Lord. Many a person has died unprepared to meet God simply because he put his salvation off for a more convenient time. The Bible says, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2). It is not enough to just plan to do better.

Frustration Binds Clergy

A surprisingly large number - 43 percent of the Jewish rabbis, 32 percent of the Protestant ministers, and 23 percent of the Catholic priests - are so disheartened about their work they have seriously considered leaving religious life.

Six out of ten expressed the view that religion is a waning influence on human conduct.

When asked to give reasons for their discouragement, they cited declining church attendance, widespread evidence of public indifference to moral and spiritual values; growing materialism, and lack of public concern about righting the wrongs of contemporary society.

More than a third of the Protestants and Catholics and more than half of the Jews who have seriously considered quitting their careers said they feel frustrated by their apparent inability to communicate with their people, or by a lack of interest and devotion among members of their congregations.

THE PROBLEM WITH LONELINESS

BY AARON BOONE

During this time of self-isolation, many, including myself, have felt an overwhelming sense of loneliness. Even when surrounded by family, the inability to go about our usual way of life has left us longing for the interactions we once took for granted. It is in these moments, as I read my Bible, that I am surprised to find so many throughout scripture have felt this same way. Yet throughout each of these accounts, one point stands out: the problem with loneliness is loneliness does not come from being alone; loneliness comes from thinking you are alone.

Following one of the most significant victories by any one man, we see the problem of loneliness on full display. As Elijah stands atop Mt. Carmel, outnumbered by 450 prophets of Baal, he cries out to the people "I alone am left a prophet of the Lord..." (1 Kings 18:22) Yet, as Elijah stands alone, he never forgets the one companion that still stands with him, God. And as Elijah begins to mock Baal and his prophets, he highlights a defining difference between the one true God and a false god: false gods are never there for you, but the one true God will never leave your side. It is upon this faith, Elijah prays to God to make Himself known to the people, and in a consuming fire, God reveals Himself as the one true God.

Subsequently, this victory did not have the impact Elijah expected. Having defeated the prophets of Baal in one of the most memorable showdowns ever, Elijah now finds himself being hunted instead of being celebrated. It is this fear of Jezebel, which drives Elijah to leave his servant, possibly his only earthly friend, go out into the wilderness alone, and pray that he would die. Within this moment of loneliness, God comes to Elijah to remind him that he has never been alone. God's question: "What are you doing here, Elijah?" (1 Kings 19:9) echoes God's question, "Where are you?" to Adam in Genesis 3. These are great questions for when you are feeling lonely. Where are you? What are you doing? Have you cut yourself off from the people who love you and the God who loves you? You see, Elijah's loneliness was not from being alone, but from thinking he was alone. As Elijah returns home with the knowledge that there are seven thousand in Israel still faithful to God (1 Kings 19:8), he immediately comes across Elisha, who would drop everything to work alongside God's prophet Elijah. Elijah's loneliness would soon turn into an abundance of faithful companions, not because the people were not there before, instead because Elijah started looking for them.

Understanding this, we can conclude that loneliness has a power over us that can immobilize even some of God's most exceptional workers. Loneliness thrives within our minds; it is a mindset that can defeat us if we let it. But, with a proper view of God, isolation will have no power over those who, as David did in Psalm 16:8 "set the Lord always before me..." Elijah, David, and others throughout the Bible teach us the importance of remembering the presence of God and His people in our lives, especially during the times we feel lonely.

WALKING IN THE LIGHT OF THE LORD

By ROGER L. OWEN

John 8:12 “Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that follows me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.”

Matthew 6:21-26 “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. 22 The light of the body is the eye: if therefor thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. 23 But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! 24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. 25 Therefore I say unto you. Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on, is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? 26 Behold the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?”

RETHINKING....continued from page one

live well beyond 65 and enjoy many “golden years” thereafter. And perhaps they will. Psalm 90: 10 says, “The days of our lives are seventy years; and if by reason of strength they are eighty years...”

On the other hand, I know it’s cliché; I know it sounds trite; and some will call it “depressing,” but the statistics haven’t changed the facts. None of us, regardless of our age, have any guarantee of tomorrow-virus or no virus. The New Testament book of James speaks of the elusive nature of life: “For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away” (4:14-15). The “vapor” here may refer to the fog that sometimes appears in the early morning. You get out of bed, look out the window, and a gray fog envelops the world. You go about your business, but in a little while, before you even notice, the fog has lifted, and a beautiful blue sky brightens the day. By late afternoon, that early fog is merely a distant memory. James says, “our life is like that fog.” Some mornings it lasts a few hours; others barely one hour. In either case, long or

short, it passes quickly, and eternity ensues. History and observation demonstrate that most human beings throughout time have not lived those comfortable “golden years.” And the current health crisis serves as just another reminder of the brevity and uncertainty of it all.

I am not a pessimist; I am not trying to depress anyone; nor do I have a grisly fascination with death. It is just that sometimes we are faced with circumstances that force us to rethink some things (or at least to ponder more carefully things we already know). And that’s probably good.

In the end, this life is only a temporary proving ground for the next. Thus, now is the day of salvation; now is the time for dedication. “Now” is the only time we have. “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints” (Psalm 119:15). “The years of our life are soon cut off, and we fly away” (Psalm 90:10).

HEAVEN...continued from page two

in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me.” Treasures in heaven? Yes, indeed, we can have treasures in heaven. No matter how little you may have here in this old world, you can be putting aside treasures in heaven. Jesus spoke of this on several occasions. The idea seems to be that you can live in such a way, learn to love the church, the Lord’s way, and brethren in such a way, that you will long for the day to just go home to be with the redeemed and the Lord. Paul wrote in I Corinthians 13:12, “For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known’: Think of it: no more questions we can’t answer. We will know as we are known of the Lord. Does that not equate to “treasures?” I don’t suppose we will be so impressed with what John described as a street of gold, gates of pearl, and all of the finery spoken of, though it will be tremendous to see. No one I have ever known has lived with such wealth. Think of who will be there! That is what will make heaven so grand. Treasures, indeed.

Having said this, however, we wonder if some are as convinced as others are. Preachers see folks on a regular basis who put nearly anything ahead of the church. Games, sports, vacations, etc., are just the beginning

of things we might mention. The point is that God's people, seemingly without thinking, get so caught up in this old world that instead of the church, the truth, and the Lord's way being first it may come in last. We recall many years ago getting to a place to hold a meeting at a small congregation, only to learn that three families chose that week to go to Disney World. It is sometimes difficult to choose a time for a gospel meeting so as to fit it in between all of the fun things going on among the Lord's people. Nothing wrong with God's people having fun, but it needs to be in proper perspective. Remember, the Lord mentioned "cares riches and pleasures" as being thorns that choked out the word! Luke 8:14.

Think on these things. DLK

Field Reports

Don L. King, 1147 Sherry Way, Livermore, CA 94550, old_paths@juno.com, May 14. The church here continues in peace, for which we give the Lord thanks and praise. We hear that some small easing of the restriction on us may come about soon, but we'll have to wait and see. We have heard similar things before. The virus is very stubborn and seems to be hanging on. This has tested every member of the Lord's church without doubt. We grieve that some of God's people have been so severely harmed and lost to death as a result of the virus. May the Lord comfort and bless all who are even now suffering from the loss of loved ones and others who are very sick. So many are out of work due to the shelter in place orders and one can't help but wonder how this will all come out. We pray the Lord to bless all of us in just the way we need Him, and give us wisdom and strength to meet the difficulties. It seems so strange not to be able to attend the 4th of July meetings, or any meetings for that matter. Brethren, don't give up. We will eventually be alright with the Lord's help and blessings. It was my pleasure recently to preach here to a nice crowd. May God bless us all.

Paul O. Nichols, 14217 Rosehill, Overland Park, KS 66221, pon.wjn.ks@juno.com, April 26. Perilous times have come. The virus which has plagued the world has tried our faith. Some of our dear friends and loved ones have been affected. Some have been able to overcome the curse but others have gone from us because of it. We certainly do sympathize with those who are suffering

over the loss of friends, family members and fellow Christians. Our church leaders have had to make serious decisions how to cope with the civil laws of our country, and still not make unscriptural decisions which are not in harmony with our duty to the Lord. We at Stony Point congregation have not failed to worship together as the Bible teaches, and at the same time practice the laws of sanitation as the law demands. We trust that others have, too. So far none in the congregation has suffered any ill effects from our doing our duty. We are happy that some restrictions are to be lifted in just a few days, but it will be necessary to exercise caution even then. May the Lord bless us all as we strive to do His will.

Irvin Barnes, 3218 East Farm Road 88, Springfield, Mo. 65803, May 1, 2020. An older gentleman was baptized here recently. As a child he went to church with his parents at the Ben Davis congregation near Houston, Mo. His mother made it to the church building, (confined to a wheel chair), on a Saturday morning to see her son obey the gospel. A time of great rejoicing for all! The Covid virus has disrupted the Lord's work around the world. Bro. Morales, in Peru, had 2 people ready for baptism. Because of the virus, the place where he had previously baptized would not let him use their facilities. The men dug a hole in the dirt, lined it with a large plastic bag, and filled it with water for a temporary baptistry. Greene county will not permit the church here at Pleasant View to meet in our building. In our discussions with them, they indicated that we could meet in the open air, providing we would observe the 6 foot rule. We met outside one Sunday and then rented an open sided tent for the rest of the time. Unless the rulings change, we will continue meeting under the tent through the month of May. My wife Barbara, underwent a very serious surgery on April 21, to correct some spinal stenosis in her neck. She underwent similar surgery for another part of her neck about 2 years ago. Both the old and the new surgery seem to be successful. Please continue to pray for her. Our grandson, Odas Drue, which came to our daughter and son-in-law, Sunila and Matthew Brown through adoption, had his final custody hearing April 29. The hearing was held, partly in our kitchen and partly in a court house in Louisiana. Through modern technology, the judge could see Matt and Sunila and they in turn could see and converse with the judge. This saved the Browns a long and tiresome trip to Louisiana. We continue to praise and thank God for this wonderful child. irvinbarns@aol.com

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WALKS THROUGH THE BIBLE...

LOVE, JEALOUSY, FEAR, AND WISE BEHAVIOR

By JERRY DICKINSON

“And David behaved wisely in all his ways, and the Lord was with him. Therefore when Saul saw that he behaved very wisely, he was afraid of him. But all Israel and Judah loved David, because he went out and came in before them.” (I Samuel 18:14-16) This great chapter (I Samuel 18) is freighted with emotion. There is the great love and friendship of David and Jonathan and the covenant they made with each other. Their souls were knit together because of their mutual fidelity to God. Both men had a complete devotion to principle and they both accepted God’s sovereignty over their lives. That is rare in one man; even more so in two men - and quite extraordinary in two men so close to the throne and each other. Because of his son’s love for David, and because all Israel and Judah also loved David, Saul was jealous and peevish. After hearing the women sing, “Saul has killed his thousands, And David his ten thousands!” Saul’s jealousy turned to anger and he groaned, “What more can he have but the kingdom?”

Finally, his jealousy and anger evolved into fear when he observed that David behaved wisely and the Lord prospered everything David did. Saul placed David several times in circumstances where he hoped and expected David to be killed, but David behaved wisely and prospered thus enhancing Saul’s fear and desperation. Interestingly, five times in I Samuel 18 it is declared that David behaved wisely. The Hebrew word translated wise behavior is a word that combines the idea of prudence and consequent success. The idea is that David was circumspect and careful in all he did, and because of that he was successful. The word could be translated “accurate” or “precise” and connotes the opposite of careless, nonchalant, or cavalier.

The Greek word that corresponds to the Hebrew word is translated “accurate” in Luke 1:3 where Luke assures Theophilus and his readers that his account of the life of Jesus is precise, circumspect, and strictly accurate. In his letter to the Ephesians Paul exhorts Christians to walk circumspectly. One translation renders Ephesians 5:15, “Be strictly careful about the way you walk.” Too many Christians are haphazard and cavalier about their walk with the Lord. What difference does it make, many quip, how I dress or where I go or even what I do? Paul says it does make a difference! People are watching - for that matter, the Lord is watching! Be circumspect; that is, be precise and accurate in everything you do and say as a Christian. Behave wisely and others will see your wise behavior and will love you, and more importantly love the Lord because of your circumspection.

David behaved himself wisely and thereby thwarted the designs of Saul on his life. Perhaps even more importantly he won the heart of Saul’s own son, Jonathan and the love of all Israel and Judah. Even Saul is forced to admit, after several attempts to kill David, that David is better and more righteous than he. “I have played the fool!” Saul laments in one of his few moments of clarity and honest introspection. David’s wise behavior was a testimony to his fidelity and proof that God had made a wise decision in choosing him to become king in the place of Saul.

When Paul gave advice to young evangelists Timothy and Titus he encouraged them to behave wisely. In Timothy 4, Paul admonished Timothy to be an example of the believers in word, manner of life, and purity. To Titus he wrote, “In all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you.” (Titus 2:7-8) In other words, behave wisely. Be strictly careful in every part of your life and work as a preacher of the Gospel. Every Christian needs to heed the admonition and exercise wise behavior.

David was precise, accurate, circumspect, and prudent and the Lord blessed him. This is always the case. Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego had 10 times the wisdom of Nebuchadnezzar’s counselors (Daniel 1:20) and they were promoted and excelled in Babylon. Joseph showed his wisdom and sagacity in Egypt and became Prime Minister over the whole realm. Wise behavior and consequent success go hand in hand. David knew, however, that it is the Lord who blesses and prospers. He is to be praised. The consequent success comes from the Lord. “And David behaved himself wisely, and the Lord was with him.” David expresses all this in Psalm 18, which he entitled, “God The Sovereign Savior”:

The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer; My God, my strength, in whom I will trust;
I will call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised; So shall I be saved from my enemies.
The Lord lives! Blessed be my rock! Let the God of my salvation be exalted.
Therefore I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the Gentiles, And sing praises to Your name.
Great deliverance He gives to His king, And shows mercy to His anointed,
To David and his descendants forevermore.