

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).

VOL. XCIV

LEBANON, MISSOURI • MARCH 2022

NO. 3

RIP AND SIP COMMUNION HERE TO STAY?

By *KEVIN W. PRESLEY*

In a recent article published by The Christian Chronicle (a newspaper published by members of the church of Christ), the headline read: “‘Rip and sip’ communion cups may be new normal.” The article refers to a fairly recent innovation which packages a small wafer and a single serving of grape juice in one unit. The chiclet-sized wafer is enclosed in a sealed compartment. After consuming the cracker, the participant turns the unit over, removes the sealed top and drinks the small amount of grape Juice contained inside. The product became popular before the start of the Covid-19 pandemic and was often used for taking the Lord’s Supper to the sick and shut-ins. As many churches have reconvened their assemblies, still conscious of the potential spread of the virus, the rip and sip packets have become even more popular since they allow the elements to be distributed with little to no contact with other fingers and hands. In some cases, the members pick up the packets on their way in to the assembly and when the supper begins, they open the compartments and partake.

In the minds of many, the pandemic did no favors to the case for one-loaf and one-cup in communion. Those who were already fearful are now even more determined to avoid coming into contact with others’ germs. It has been noted many times that almost 1,900 years after Jesus established the supper with His disciples by passing a loaf of bread from hand to hand and sharing a common cup, in 1894, physician J.G. Thomas invented and patented a system for filling and distributing individual cups to a congregation. His innovation was in response to a new understanding of microbes and infectious illnesses. Thomas’s invention was quickly accepted by most denominations and churches of Christ soon followed suit beginning in 1915. Individual cups were seen as more efficient and expedient but really, the motivation was sanitation. It was seen as uncouth and even dangerous for a group of people to share a common drinking vessel. This is despite the fact that no evidence, scientific or anecdotal, has ever been

produced showing that following Christ’s example has ever been the cause of outbreaks of sickness or disease.

Now that Covid-19 has made us even more leery of lurking germs and viruses, it appears to some that even the “more sanitary” practice of each person having their own cup is also dangerous if said cup is carried on a common tray. The above referenced article quotes Mac Ice, director of special collections and archives at Brown Library at Abilene Christian University as saying: “One hundred and ten years ago, individual cups were not the problem but rather the solution to our awareness of germ theory. There were germs, we discovered, and so we stopped using the common cup and went to individual cups. Now there are germs, we discover, and we are going from individual cups to individual sealed cups and crackers in plastic bags.” Besides the admission that the use of individual cups is only a little over a century old, the widely accepted innovation itself is now seen as unsafe by a number of congregations. What divided congregations and the brotherhood and was argued for in the name of sanitation for generations is no longer sanitary.

The article referenced above cited a pair of surveys recently taken among members of churches of Christ showing that many congregations do not intend to ever go back to the trays holding individual cups but will remain with the newer ‘rip and sip’ packets or something similar. Of course, if there is no pattern for the distribution of the fruit of the vine and if individual cups are scriptural to begin with, then the even newer practice would be no less scriptural. Both practices are, however, a departure from the way Jesus observed the Supper with His disciples. Mark 14:22-23 says: “And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them and said, “Take, eat; this is My body. Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, and they all drank from it.” Matthew 26:27 says: “Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you.” If multiple loaves and multiple cups are

continued on page 5

CONTENTS

Vol. XCIV No. 3



ADVOCATE

'Rip and Sip' Communion Here to Stay? 1
 Editorial 2
 Instrumental Music 3
 Announcements..... 7
 Our Departed..... 7
 Field Reports 10
 WALKS THROUGH THE BIBLE..... 12

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SUBSCRIPTION RATES

Single Subscription One Year..... \$15.00
Also On The Internet
Published Monthly by **Old Paths Advocate**, Lebanon, MO
A.C. Brockman, 2033 King James, Lebanon, MO 65536
periodical postage paid at Lebanon, MO 65536
Send Form 3579 to **Old Paths Advocate**
1147 Sherry Way, Livermore, CA 94550.

All articles published in **Old Paths Advocate** contain the view of the writer and do not necessarily reflect the views of the editors and publishers. If you have any questions, please direct them to the author listed at the heading of the article.

Editorial

FEAR OR OPTIMISM

By DON L. KING

The times in which we now live are different than most of us have ever known. The daily news warns of the probability of invasion in Ukraine by Russia, fears of what China may also do militarily, the multiplied thousands of people entering the US illegally from many lands, the huge increase of crime rates; and then there is the Covid 19 virus pandemic which has taken so many lives of even those who were in Christ. It has also caused great difficulties for the church in many ways. Added to this, and more, is the constant increase of all we must buy to exist. Everything in the grocery store has increased in price, literally from milk to pickles! Meat is also more expensive as well. We noticed steaks recently that were \$17 each. (We didn't buy.) Even beans have increased in price! Everything is more expensive now.

We are being told by authorities that this is only temporary, yet prices continue to increase. A trip to the gas station is like a bad dream. Where we live, gasoline is now near \$5.00 a gallon, even more at some locations, and promised to go even higher. A person wonders, "Where will this end?" Just this morning, a warning came that all goods will continue to increase in price for the foreseeable future. The inflation rate is now at 7.5 %. In other words, unless a person has received a cost-of-living increase of 7.5% or more this year, you now have less money on which to live, and that with everything more expensive than a year ago.

It might seem that to be optimistic now is not logical. However, those of us who trust the Lord and know He will never leave us should be optimistic. We are just passing through this world on a journey to a place where everything will be wonderful. Yes, things are difficult now, but it will not always be this way. As Ronny Wade titled a book several years ago, "THE SUN WILL SHINE AGAIN, SOMEDAY." Whether or not it shines in this world, we look forward to an existence forever in Heaven where, "...God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." (Revelation 21:4) Why be afraid now with such wonderful blessings to look forward to?

continued on page 6

INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

By RONNY F. WADE

Music has its place in Christian worship. Since it is the product of divine authority, we must recognize, and determine (1) the kind of music authorized, (2) the purpose of music, and (3) the manner in which it is to be delivered.

First of all, let us study the kind of music authorized in the New Testament. There are two kinds of music: vocal and instrumental. Which one is acceptable to God? Could they both be acceptable? In order to determine this, let us notice the passages where our subject is addressed.

Matthew 26:30 “And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.”

Acts 16:25 “But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.”

Romans 15:9 “and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy, as it is written: For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles, And sing to Your name.”

1 Corinthians 14:15 “What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding.”

Ephesians 5:19 “speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.”

Colossians 3:16 “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”

Hebrews 2:12 “saying: I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You.”

Hebrews 13:15 “Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.”

James 5:13 “Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms.”

These nine passages reveal what God has to say about our subject. Therefore any conclusion that we draw,

must be based upon what they reveal. It doesn't matter what I think, or what I like, or what others may say about the subject. In the final analysis it is what God says and reveals in His word that matters.

THE COMMAND TO SING IS A SPECIFIC COMMAND AND EXCLUDES ALL OTHER KINDS OF MUSIC

There are two kinds of commands in the scriptures. One is generic, and the other is specific. A generic command is one without further specification. In other words a generic command includes any subordinate elements with the sphere embraced by the term. An example of a generic command is found in Mark 16:15 where Jesus commanded the disciples to “go into all the world and preach the gospel.” “Go” is generic, that is they are not told how to go. They could go by beast of burden, ship, walking etc. There was no further specification, hence they had a choice. On the other hand, there are commands that are specific. When such is the case, we have no choice in the matter, we must do exactly as the scripture directs. An example of a specific command is found when God commanded Noah to build the ark out of gopher wood Genesis 6:14. Noah had no choice as to the kind of wood he used. God had specified “gopher” wood. That excluded all other kinds of wood. God did not have to say, “don't use oak, or walnut.” He had specified gopher and that automatically excluded both oak and walnut as well as any other kind of wood.

In the matter before us, the command to “sing” is specific. Singing is commanded in both Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16. Because singing is specified, it excludes all other kinds of music. God did not say “sing and play” when he gave the command. He said “sing and make melody in your heart...” He said “singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord...” Thus, when something more than singing is done, God is disobeyed. In 1 Corinthians 4:6 Paul wrote “Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may lie puffed up on behalf of one against the other.” The Twentieth Century Translation says “keep to that which is written.” And the Amplified New Testament says “go beyond that which is written.” The message is clear, we cannot go beyond what the New Testament teaches on this subject. To add a mechanical instrument to our singing is to “go beyond what is written.”

THE PURPOSE OF SINGING

We sing for the purpose of praising God and offering thanksgiving unto Him. The scriptures say “Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His

name.” “and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy, as it is written: For this reason I will confess to You among the Gentiles, and sing to Your name.” Singing is not some kind of production for the benefit of the hearers, but rather for the purpose of worshipping and honoring God.

MANNER OF RENDITION

Singing in worship to God, is not for the purpose of entertaining other people. Religious organizations that use singing to draw crowds, produce entertaining programs, etc. miss the mark. We are commanded to sing “with grace in your hearts to God” Colossians 3:16. In Ephesians 5:19 we are instructed to “make melody in our hearts...” Never, in the New Testament scriptures, are we commanded to play on any kind of an instrument for the purpose of honoring God.

There are a manner of religious organizations and many thousands of individuals who see nothing wrong with using a piano, organ, or some stringed instrument in praise and worship to God. But the argument never made in defense of this practice is that “we should use it, because the New Testament teaches us to do so. The New Testament is silent on the matter. We are commanded to sing and make melody in the heart, but never play on an instrument. There are, however, a number of arguments that are advanced in favor of the use of mechanical instruments of music. We shall notice some of them at this time.

1. It was practiced under the law of Moses, in Old Testament times.

The same reasoning would bring in the use of burning incense, animal sacrifices, and polygamy. That which proves too much, actually proves nothing. The mere fact that instrumental music has been used before proves only that. For us to practice anything taught or allowed by Moses, but not by Christ in effect places the authority of Moses on a par with the authority of Christ. We know such is just not the case. Furthermore in Galatians 5:4 we read “You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.” Any attempt on our part to try and seek justification for a practice based solely on the teachings of the law of Moses, places us in opposition to the work done by Christ in His death.

2. Instrumental music is not expressly forbidden by the New Testament

This reasoning puts a premium on the silence of the scriptures. It, in effect says “we have more respect for what the bible does not say than for what it actually

says.” An extension of this argument would cause us to contend that anything can be practiced so long as it is not specifically condemned. Such would be grossly wrong. There are many things condemned in the scriptures that are not specifically named. Where, for example, does the scripture say “thou shalt not smoke marijuana?” Surely no one would contend that because such is not specifically forbidden, it would be all right. What we need to remember is what God told us to do, that is, “sing” and “make melody in our heart to the Lord.”

3. Instrumental music is only an aid, like song books.

This may sound good, but it is false reasoning. When one uses a song book, that person is still just “singing.” When one sits on a church pew or meets in a church house, they are still just “singing.” However, when one plays on an instrument they are producing another kind of music. They are doing something in addition to singing. Something that is not authorized.

4. We have instrumental music at home.

That is true, we do. We also have beef steak and potatoes on our tables. We wash our hands and feet. The fact that we do this at home, does not give us the right to do them in worship to God. There are many things that are morally right, but religiously wrong. There is nothing inherently wrong with a piano. It is wrong, in the service of God, however, because it is not authorized by the scriptures. Steak and potatoes would be just as wrong, for they are not authorized in the service of God either.

5. There will be instrumental music in heaven.

To grant that this will be the case, still does not prove that we should use it in the church in worship to God. There will be angels in heaven, golden bowls of incense etc. Again, the argument, if valid, proves too much. And that which proves too much proves nothing.

6. The Greek word “psallo” also means to accompany the singing with instrumental music.

This argument is based on the idea that the Greek word translated “make melody” in Ephesians 5: 19 means or at the least includes playing on an instrument. If you consult the Greek dictionaries you will find that the definition given this word range from: “pluck the hair,” “twang the bowstring,” “twitch a carpenter’s line,” “touch the chords of a musical instrument i.e. make instrumental music,” and “to touch the chords of the human heart i.e. to sing, to celebrate with human praise.” Now, I ask you, which definition fits the 19th verse of Ephesians 5? It is in singing that we make

“melody” in the heart. W. E. Vine in his Dictionary of New Testament Words says “...in the N.T., to sing a hymn, to sing praise in Eph.5:19.”

OBJECTIONS TO INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

1. Instrumental music corrupts and makes vain our worship in the practice of that which God has not taught.
2. We cannot worship God in spirit and truth and use it, for it is not taught in the word of God, and is no part of “all truth” revealed to the apostles by the Holy Spirit John 16:13; John 4:24.
3. We cannot walk by faith and practice it, for it is not taught in the word of God, and faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God Romans 10:17; 1 Corinthians 4:6.
4. It is no part of the divine pattern and we corrupt the plan for God’s house and therefore labor in vain when we use it Hebrews 8:7.

QUOTATIONS

From John Calvin: “Musical instruments in celebrating the praises of God would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting of lamps, the restoration of other shadows of the law. The Papists therefore, have foolishly borrowed this, as well as many other things from the Jews.

From John Wesley: “I have no objection to instruments of music in our chapels provided they are neither heard nor seen.”

From Adam Clarke: Music as a science I esteem and admire, but instruments of music in the house of God I abominate and abhor. This is the abuse of music, and here I register my protest against all such corruptions in the worship of the author of Christianity.”

Let us all reject man made devices and return to the pure apostolic gospel in our preaching and practice.

(All scripture quotations are from the New King James Version of the Bible unless otherwise noted.)

“RIP AND SIP”continued from page one

different than Christ’s example, then the newer practice described above does not even resemble the sacred meal our Lord established. How is the term ‘communion’ or

a ‘common sharing’ even applicable to such a practice? It is not. Regardless, many believe their congregations will permanently continue using the ‘rip and sip communion cups’. The Jenkins Institute survey cited in the article found that 62-percent of the people asked did not intend to return to the former practice anytime soon and 17-percent do not expect to ever return to trays. The Christian Chronicle article then cites an on line survey which allowed respondents to state their opinions about the new practice. It turns out, not only are the trays used for the past century seen as unsanitary but even as distasteful. One woman responded: “I do not enjoy the single-serve communion cups, but I don’t think I want to have communion from a tray that has passed under dozens of mouths and noses.” Another person said: “I would be happy not to pick up some bread everyone in the whole church has touched. I do not consider myself a germaphobe, but at the same time there is no necessity to pass along germs with trays.” How silly and how baseless! At what point does faith become a factor in all of this? Who would have ever thought that individual cups would come to be seen as dangerous and unsanitary? Of course, when you make excuses to change the ordinances of God, the door is then opened and you can continue to justify the next innovation and the next...

The question of this writer is this: if people are so concerned with sanitation, why stop with changes to the Lord’s Supper? If the pandemic has brought such a heightened awareness of germs that people can no longer even touch the trays that others have touched, then what about shaking hands? What about sitting inside the same enclosed space for an hour? What about the droplets expelled as people in that room sing praise to God and the preacher stands before the congregation and projects his voice? Why not replace assembling in person with the oxymoronic ‘online assembly’? Many denominational churches and cups congregations have done just that during the height of the pandemic. Why not make that permanent as well since we are now so germ conscious? Where does it end? What further innovation and change will be spawned by the futile quest for a sterile environment? The fact of the matter is, the Lord designed His church to have close contact with each other. We are not to forsake “the assembling of ourselves together.” (Hebrews 10:25) “Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread...” (Acts 20:7) “Speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.” (Ephesians 5:19) In a similar vein, the Lord shared a loaf of unleavened bread and He shared a cup of fruit of the vine with His disciples and “they all drank out of it.” (Mark

14:23) In so doing, He commanded them to continue to do what He showed them. “This in remembrance of me...” to drink from the cup that He passed to them and they followed His instruction for the record says “they all drank out of it.” (Mark 14:23)

On a recent television broadcast, after I presented the case for using one cup, a viewer commented: “I’m sure this man means well but Jesus gave us common sense.” I simply replied: “Did Jesus not have common sense?” The Creator of all life knew all about the microbe long before the microscope was invented. Still, He designed His church to meet in common assemblies; to warmly greet one another even by physical contact (Romans 16:16); and to observe the sacred Supper as a covenant meal sharing its emblems in a way that reflects our unity and oneness as the body of Christ. To suggest that we can obey the Lord’s will without coming into close contact with others is not only unreasonable, it is biblically impossible. How far will this obsession with germs drive our brethren? To what level of absurdity and inconsistency will brethren be willing to go in the name of “sanitation” and “safety”? At what point will they acknowledge that obeying God is simply a matter of faith? God knew what He was doing when He ordained His institutions and ordinances. Why not just trust His wisdom and His power enough to humbly follow the commands and examples of His Word?

FEAR OR OPTIMISM.....continued from page two

In Acts 27, 24, 25, Paul told his fellow shipmates, all of whom expected the ship they were on to flounder, or sink at any moment, to fear not and be of good cheer! That must have seemed absurd to those who did not know the Lord, because it looked like certain disaster to those who were but sailors. They were experiencing great fear. Sometimes, God’s children also become fearful, and that is a serious problem.

Fear gradually destroys our faith. It is dangerous because it gnaws continually within us and is eventually destructive to us spiritually. Why? Because faith and fear are direct opposites. Remember in Mark 4 when the Lord and the disciples were in a small ship that was caught in a severe storm? The Lord was peacefully asleep in the back, and that should have been a calming sight; but the disciples were very fearful that the ship would soon sink. After all, the ship was filling with water from the waves! They woke Him and said, “...Master, carest thou not that we perish?” (Mark 4:38) Jesus calmly arose and rebuked the wind and said, “Peace, be still.” Verse 39 says, “...And the wind ceased, and

there was a great calm.” Notice what He then said to the disciples: “Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?” (Verse 40) Their fear was a demonstration of their lack of faith.

Yes, Jesus knew their minds and realized that as humans they could not fathom being calm and unafraid under such frightful conditions. Yet, He spoke of the fact that they had no faith. I like to think that I would not have been afraid with Jesus in the ship with me, but I have never been in that situation. It seems that this might be comforting to us at this time. Generally, a person who has great faith has little, if any, fear about circumstances. On the other hand, those who have great fear are likely to be low on faith. This is a great lesson taught by our Lord Himself, and we need to take it to heart now.

This world is torn and confused by many things now. Just as Paul told his shipmates in Acts 27:31: “... Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved,” the same is true for us today. No matter what happens we must be steadfast and abide in the ship, the old ship of Zion, and then know that we are safe from all harm. I simply cannot fathom a member of the church being so foolish as to leave the church in these difficult times. To me, it is like a man whose house is on fire calling his insurance company and cancelling his fire insurance! We must not allow fear to overwhelm us. Those who operate out of fear often make unwise decisions and later regret their foolish actions. We repeat, fear destroys faith. Should we be optimistic? Absolutely! The Lord is still in charge, and is with His people who remain faithful and abide in the ship. God has provided us the dear old church of Christ, purchased by the precious blood of His own Son, in which if we abide, we shall be saved in the end. As Paul said in Acts 27:25: “I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me.” That, my brethren, gives me optimism. Think on these things. —DLK

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Announcement

Words of Love - Volume Three By Wayne McKamie

I am happy to announce that we have published the “Words of Love” - Volume Three by J. Wayne McKamie. This volume contains 45 radio sermons across numerous Bible subjects. The Words of Love radio program has aired on a Lubbock, TX radio station for over 40 years. The prices are:

Hardback book is \$16 + \$4 shipping

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In Him, Gary Robinson

Our Departed

MARSH - Charlotte Ann Marsh of Dothan, AL departed this life on December 3, 2021, at the age of 72 years after battling Covid-19. She and her late husband Richard were members of the Hartford Highway Church of Christ for many years. Charlotte was born on July 4, 1949 to the late Benson and Dorothy Ann Byram. She lived in Florida for several years before settling in Dothan for the last many years of her life. Charlotte was a selfless woman with a joyful and giving spirit. Beyond her faithful service to Christ in His church, she served her community through “Meals on Wheels”. She had a

contagious smile and was known for her hugs when she greeted people at the church assembly. For fifteen-or-so years, when the church in Dothan hosted our annual New Year’s meeting, she and Richard were known for the huge vat of chili they would prepare for the picnic each year. They prepared for months and looked forward to showing their hospitality in that way from year to year. Charlotte dealt with some sorrows and disappointments in the last years of her life but remarkably did so with the grace that only God can lend. She was a testament to the Joy that comes from knowing the Lord. She was preceded in death by her parents; and her husband of 52-years, Richard, who passed away one-year ago. She is survived by her sons, Thomas (Melissa) Marsh and Matthew Marsh; her siblings, Darryl Byram and Cheryl Byram; and her sister-in-law, Donna Marsh. It was my honor to conduct the memorial service to remember this kind and wonderful woman. —Kevin W. Presley

SMITH - Grace Elaine Smith of the Hillcrest congregation in Brookhaven, MS passed away on December 28, 2021. She was 86 years of age. Born on August 9, 1935, Elaine was the daughter of Ernest and Mildred Montgomery. Sis Elaine obeyed the gospel as a young person and spent most of her life as a steadfast member of the Hillcrest church. In 1954, she married Claude Bennett Smith, Jr. and to their union were born two sons, Scott and Steve. Sis. Elaine was a devoted wife and mother. She was a wonderful southern cook, and her home and table were opened to many gospel preachers and other Christians down through the years. She had a lovely alto voice and taught many of the young ladies in the congregation to sing. She was indeed a woman like the one described by the wise man in Proverbs 31. For the last few years of her life, her mind was overtaken by Alzheimer’s disease until she did not know even the closest people to her. Claude Bennett lovingly and devotedly cared for her through her illness. She is now at rest from her labors and afflictions, and we trust, by God’s grace, awaiting the crown of life at the last day. She is survived by her husband, Claude Bennett; her two sons, Scott (Renee) Smith and Steve (Jana) Smith; two grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren. It was this writer’s privilege to assist Bro. Jay Culbertson in conducting the service. Bro. Wayne Fussell led a beautiful prayer at the graveside. She was laid to rest on a lovely sunlit afternoon in the Hillcrest church cemetery where her body awaits the glorious resurrection at the coming of our Lord. —Kevin W. Presley

SHEPARD - Violet was born September 27, 1925, in Darwin, OK to Norman Edward and Alice May (Reynolds) Sipes. She departed this life on December 20, 2021, in Davis, Oklahoma, at the age of 96. In her early childhood, the family moved to Hickory, OK.

She met and then married Bobby Shepard on June 29, 1946, and took residence in Sulphur, where they lived most of their lives. When her children married and left home, she occupied her time with crocheting, painting, writing poetry and gardening. Violet was a member of the Sulphur church that has hosted the Fourth of July Camp Meeting for many years. She and husband Bob were very hospitable and hosted many gospel preachers and their families in their home. Everyone who knew her knew she had a sweet and gentle soul. She will be missed greatly by all who were blessed to know her. Son-in-law Troy Gould said she may have been the sweetest woman he has ever known. She is preceded in death by her husband Bob; four sisters, Jewell Southard, Joy Trammell, Viola Householder, and Ruby McBeth Gaines; and one great granddaughter, Jessica Hensley. She is survived by her six children Ruth Hensley, Ardmore, OK, Harold Shepard & wife Margo of Spring Hill, KS, Bobby Shepard of Sulphur, OK, James Shepard & wife Karen of Spring Hill, KS, Phil Shepard of Lone Grove, OK, and Doris Gould & husband Troy of Norman, OK; 10 Grandchildren; 14 Great-Grandchildren; 3 Great-Great Grandchildren; as well as many nieces, nephews, and a large extended loving family. —Carl M. Johnson

CHAPMAN - Leland "Skeet" Jack Chapman, of Velma, Oklahoma was born March 18, 1951 at Duncan to the late Mr. J T Chapman and Mrs. Wanda (Cartwright) Chapman. He departed this life Friday evening Dec. 17, 2021 at a healthcare facility in Oklahoma City, at the age of 70. Skeet was raised in Velma where he graduated high school in 1969. He then attended college at Murray State of Tishomingo, Oklahoma. He and Myrna Wright were united in marriage on June 13, 1970, and they made their home primarily in Velma and were blessed with three daughters. Skeet owned and operated Jenkins Pump & Supply for many years and also farmed and ranched. He was also an independent Oil producer (Chapman Oil) of Velma. Skeet loved people and treated his many friendships with the utmost importance. He was a devout member of the East Lincoln Church of Christ in Healdton. Preceding him in death were his, parents and a grandson, Jack Williams. Survivors include his loving wife Myrna of the home; daughters, Renea Ely, Shannon Williams and Courtney Thompson and husband Sean, all of Velma; sister, Norma Stagner and husband Leo of Velma; Brother, Bim Chapman of Velma; grandchildren, Emily Ely, Bryan Ely, Lexi Williams, Laney Williams, Tripp Thompson and Nash Thompson; uncle, Bob Chapman and wife Joyce of Tom Bean, TX; lifelong best friend, Ray Pearson and wife Marsha of Oil City; numerous other family and friends. Skeet was a rare breed. His personality lit up the rooms

he entered. He was always cheerful and encouraging. He was one of the most charitable, gift-giving men I have ever known. He regularly handed out silver dollars to people especially on their birthdays. He explained that young people today do not know what silver dollars are. He gave one to a little boy recently and asked him, "Do you know what that is?" The little boy responded, "It's a big nickel!" When Skeet spoke to you he had a way of making you feel as though you were the most important person in the world. We were shocked and grieved at his sudden departure, but through his good works here I am confident Skeet has laid up treasures in heaven (Mt. 6:19-21; 1 Tim. 6:17-19). Over 700 people attended his funeral in the small town of Velma. Gary Cannon assisted me in officiating the service and Don Pruitt conducted the graveside service. —Carl M. Johnson

BRUMLEY - Carol Sue Brumley was born January 29, 1943 in South Charleston, West Virginia to Clarence and Wanda Pence Kessinger. She died Thursday, December 23, 2021 at her home, at the age of 78. She married Jerald Barton on April 19, 1961. He preceded her in death on January 31, 1973. She later married Kenneth Brumley on January 9, 1974. She was a homemaker and devoted caretaker of her aged mother until her mother's death. Survivors include her husband, Kenneth, of the home; her children, Tammy Hall and husband Mike, Kent Barton and wife Lisa, Wayne Lee and wife Melissa, Chuck Barton and wife Scarlett and Stephen Barton; her brother, Buddy Kessinger and wife Sue; grandchildren, Taylor Manuel and husband Steven, Brady Barton, Clair Spencer, Jackson Barton and Lily Barton; and three great-grandchildren, Brylan, Emersyn and Rowan Manuel. She was preceded in death by her parents, Clarence and Wanda Kessinger; her husband, Jerald Barton; and infant sister, Judy Mae Kessinger. Sue grew up as a preacher's kid. Her father Clarence was a contemporary of Brethren Homer L King, Homer A Gay, and Clovis T Cook. Clarence preached the Gospel until he was well into his 80s. Clarence and Wanda moved from West Virginia many years ago to Ada and Sue and her older brother Buddy grew up here. Sue was always a pretty girl and a good athlete. I knew her first husband Jerald Barton, who was a public school teacher, coach, and administrator, and I had the task of preaching his funeral when he died in 1973 of cancer. Later, Sue married dear friend Kenneth Brumley, and they remained married until her death. We are consoled in the knowledge that they were all faithful Christians. Joe Hisle and I conducted the funeral service and George Battey conducted the graveside service. —Carl M. Johnson

BULLARD - Edward (Eddie) Nathaniel Bullard was born July 26, 1944 in Ada, OK to Edward Nathaniel Bullard Sr. and Lorene Little. He passed away Friday, January 21, 2022, at the age of 77. He married Suzanne McGinnis May 7, 1966 in Carlsbad, New Mexico, and they were blessed with two sons. Eddie was a carpenter and a Gospel preacher who preached regular monthly appointments at Sulphur, Davis, Galey, and other churches for many years. Survivors include his wife, Suzanne, Moore; two sons, Bryan Bullard and wife Esperanza, Norman, and Steven Bullard and wife Ina, Little Elm, TX; four grandsons, Joshua Bullard, Richlands, NC, Ethan Bullard, Gunter, TX, Jared Bullard, Plano, TX, and Zachery Bullard, Little Elm, TX; a granddaughter, Marissa Bullard, Little Elm, TX; step granddaughter, Noemi Garcia, Norman; step-grandson, Gabriel Garcia, Norman; two brothers, Harmon Bullard and wife Frances, Crofton, MD and Billy Bullard, Vinita; a sister, Deborah Kirkpatrick and husband Charlie, Durant; and an aunt, Martha Sweatt and husband Johnny, Ada and numerous cousins, nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his parents; his step-mother, Jolene Bullard; and a brother, Buddy Bullard. Eddie did carpenter work for me on several occasions through the years and I always enjoyed visiting with him. He could talk about any subject and he enjoyed it. Several years ago, before his health declined, he actually trained for, ran, and completed a marathon - 26.2 miles! He didn't look like a long-distance runner, but he trained and completed the race. That fact alone tells you something about his self-discipline and endurance. I don't think I ever heard him preach because I was always filling the pulpit somewhere else at the time, but I heard him lead prayer often in the public assembly and he did an excellent job. A terrible winter storm of ice and snow hit us the day of the funeral and hindered many people who intended to attend, but I was honored to officiate the service and the congregational singing was beautiful. —Carl M. Johnson

DOING - David "Dave" Doing, one of seven children born to Elmer and Emma Kathner Doing, was born February 5, 1932, in Laclede County, Missouri, and left the troubles of this world behind February 7, 2022, at the age of ninety years. After graduating from Conway High School, Dave entered the United States Navy and served for four years, before returning to the Laclede County area. In March of 1956, Dave was baptized into Christ and remained faithful until death. He served as Deacon, as well as Elder until his health would not permit it. On April 22, 1956, Dave married Lela Richardson. Together they shared nearly sixty-six years of love and laughter. Dave enjoyed working with

people. He spent nearly forty years dealing with the public either as a field man for Mid-Am Dairy, in the feed store, or at Central Bank. He made friends quite easily and will be remembered fondly for his quick wit and genuine kindness. He is survived by his wife Lela of the home; two daughters, Geeta Bunner and her husband Isaac of Nixa, MO and Tara Massey and her husband Kenyon of Lebanon, MO; one sister, Neva Draheim of Conway, MO; four grandchildren, Hannah and Haven Bunner and Silas and Mithila Massey; several nieces and nephews and their families; other relatives; church family and countless friends. He was preceded in death by his parents; two daughters, Jennifer, at age fourteen and Janet, at age eight; as well as five siblings. Dave was a devoted husband, father, grandfather, brother and friend. He lived his life as a man of faith and led by example. A quartet consisting of Mark Triplett, Kendall Cook, Howard Meents, and Todd Richardson sang beautifully four songs, David Griffin read the obituary, son-in-law Isaac Bunner gave a brief tribute, and Cullen Smith and I gave the eulogy and sermon to a standing-room-only crowd that filled Shadel's Colonial Chapel in Lebanon. —Carl M. Johnson

WEBB - Rilla was born on June 12, 1944 to Luke and Geneva (Deatherage) Taylor. She died on December 2, 2021, at the age of 77. She married Roy Webb on April 30, 1990. Together they made their home in Ada, Oklahoma. Rilla was a devoted member of the Church in Ada, where she called the fellow members family. To know Rilla was to know a friend, she never ceased to put others before herself. She was always willing to give of her time and resources when there was a need. It was quoted that "Rilla treated everyone she met as if they were royalty." Rilla was known for her quilting abilities. Quilting was her passion and she loved to give her beautiful creations to her many friends and loved ones as gifts. Most recently she was able to give each of her 9 great-grandchildren their very own quilt designed and created specifically for them. Rilla's favorite role was "Mimi" to her grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Mimi was known as the "safe place" for all of her grand babies. She was full of love, hugs, and snuggles. Her house was always full of homemade foods and desserts. She made sure that everyone's favorite treat was available when they came to visit. In fact, it was said that she had a "Magic Pan" and no one could bake like Mimi. She is survived by her husband, Roy, of the home; her children: Shelley and Gary Sweat, Bobby and Brenda Webb, and Tabby Pletcher; her grandchildren: Michael and Tamara Jennings, and their children: Brody and Jagger; Logan and Pen Phillips, and their children: Griffin and Ryatt; Bethany and Nalon Hopkins, and their children: Cassandra, Easton and Rhyker; Forrest and

Julia Sweat, and their daughter: Remington; Christian and Zane Reynolds, and their son: Gunner; and Jeni Anise Moore. And one sister: Sue Worrell along with niece, Krista and nephew, Scott. Rilla was preceded in death by her parents; her daughter, Laura Irene Kinard; and many other brothers and sisters. I was honored to conduct Rilla's funeral service, before a full house of family, friends, and brothers and sisters in Christ. She will definitely be missed. —Carl M. Johnson

STOCKAM - Marjorie Louise Stockam (Marge) of Joplin, MO was born February 15, 1932. Marge departed this life on December 21, 2021. Marge is survived by her husband, Jimmy Muri Stockam, of the home, and three sons and their wives, Steve and Diane, Jimmy and Stefani, Scott and Angela. Marge also leaves seven grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. She also leaves behind a host of brothers and sisters in Christ. Her infectious smile and laugh will be missed by all. Marge was a dedicated student of the Bible and always maintained an extensive prayer list of the ones for whom she was praying. Jim and Marge were examples to all. Marge was an elder's wife. She had shown by her life and example what a Christian sister should be and how to be an elder's wife. Marge was one of the sweetest persons I have known, and you did not have to be around her very long until you knew she loved the Lord, and she loved the church Jesus established. It would be impossible to know all the people she influenced by her life, but I was one who benefited from her. She knew how to encourage and how to admonish if it was needed. Marge had traveled many a mile during her 89 years upon this earth, but she longed for that final journey when at the end she could say "it is so good to be home." Marge will be greatly missed by all who knew her, and I pray her example will forever be in our hearts. It was my honor to be asked to speak words of encouragement and warning at the funeral of a dear friend and sister in Christ. —Muri Helwig

BRISCOE - Lindsey Michael Briscoe was born, Friday, April 28, 1967 in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma and was brought home and adopted by Dewey Edgar and Veneta Lindsey Briscoe, and he passed away on Wednesday, December 15, 2021 in Healdton, Oklahoma at the age of 54 years, 7 months and 17 days. Lindsey was a graduate of Healdton High School, Class of 1985 and was currently employed by the Healdton Public Schools and was also serving currently as the mayor of Healdton. He was a lover of music and played bass guitar in numerous bands through the years. Lindsey married Regina Norton in Healdton, Oklahoma on November 5, 1988. He was preceded in death by his parents, Dewey Edgar and Veneta (Lindsey) Briscoe; Father and Mother-in-law, Lyndon and Nadine (Elliott)

Norton; brother-in-law, Lyndon Norton, Jr. and a sister, Tara Patterson. He is survived by his wife Regina of the home in Healdton; son, Wesley Keith Briscoe of the home in Healdton; daughter, Rayleen Pfeiffer of Pleasanton, Texas and a granddaughter on the way; brother, Dewey L. Briscoe and his wife Cheri of Healdton, Oklahoma; Sister-in-law, Ruby Rich of Ardmore, Oklahoma; several aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, nephews, church family, his musician family and colleagues and friends. Lindsey is also survived by his birth family including his mother, Tela Patterson, father, George Colbert and his wife Patty, brothers, Michael Patterson, Jeff Colbert, Georgie and sisters, Amy, Kimberly, Lori and Susan. Lindsey was out of the church for many years, but when he was restored several years ago he put the Lord and the church at the top of his list of priorities. He was a genuine pleasure to be around and a great asset to the church in Healdton. I was honored when his wife Regina asked me to conduct the funeral along with Glen Brown. —Carl M. Johnson

Field Reports

Roger L. Owens, PO Box 239, Neosho, MO. 64850, (417-766-8969), February 8. The work in the Pacific Northwest moves forward with so much to be done. Our TV programs continue to bring new souls to our attention every month from a number of states. The work in Riverton Wyoming continues to hold its own and grow. Matt Usery is doing a great work and we love him and his family's efforts. Please pray for him. I continue to mail out a monthly encouragement along with many Bible correspondence courses. The work in Gering Nebraska is holding firm, but a lot of sickness there. Two of the members face ill health and one other faces cancer. We have others that we could encourage if we just had more involvement from those who might help us. We plead for your assistance. Larry Combs and his wife are hard at work finding men who can travel this spring and summer to assist in that area. We have a number that are going to help this spring and summer. Thanks Larry. We have a number of congregations that now assist in the work financially. Piedmont, Opp, & Floral Alabama. Then there is Temple Georgia. Crescent, Miami, Broken Arrow Oklahoma. Otis Colorado. Brumley & Joplin 20 St. also Leawood congregation & Springfield northside in Missouri. Then there is Sierra & Covina congregations in California. A number of individuals as well. Pray for all of us. God bless the kingdom

Greg Gay, 3816 Tambos Trl, Edmond, OK 73034, papagreg@aol.com, 916-804-3787, February 12, 2022

December's activities included the Preachers' Study, hosted by the 21st. St., Oklahoma City congregation and capably facilitated by Ron Courter and Richard Bunner. There were many first-time presenters this year, all diligent students of the Bible. All the study presentations are being shown on Christian Landmark's YouTube channel. We enjoyed the Oklahoma New Year's meeting, hosted this year by the Norman, OK congregation. The meeting was well attended for today's world. It was wonderful to hear so many address the theme of "Through It All," based on Psalm 34:19. Of course, the singing was amazing, something we are accustomed to and love at our big meetings. My preaching appointments in recent months have included Joplin, Missouri (Leawood Village), Moore, Ada, and Crescent, Oklahoma. I appreciate each invitation very much! In January I was in a meeting in Lubbock, TX. I enjoyed being with everyone there despite the virus that plagued families during and following the meeting. It was wonderful to be with dear friends there including Eric Stone and family and George and Louva Hogland. George is not well, as has been shared, and the family has requested prayers on his behalf. I felt right at home staying with DJ and Kathy Hastings and appreciate their every kindness. My Facebook group, God's Good News from Greg continues to grow. Each video sermon has good interest with hundreds of views. I am scheduling more studies with individuals in various nations who have asked Bible questions. My mother, Maxine Gum, and I were able to make the trip to Missouri for the funeral of our dear friend, Dave Doing of the Lee's Summit congregation. Dave and Lela have been part of our lives for many decades. We treasure their love and friendship. Our work continues with the West View, Piedmont, Oklahoma congregation. We are very thankful for them and thankful to be part of the congregation. Our winter leadership study sessions are at the halfway point of the schedule with good interest and diligent preparation by all.

Billy D. Dickinson, 2850 N. Oakland, Springfield, MO 65803, bddickinson@juno.com, Feb. 1. I thought the January and February issues of the OPA were excellent! They provided readers with historical information concerning its origin and why the need was felt for such a paper. With the beginning of its 90th year, let's use its pages to point people back to God's word and impress them with the need for a "thus saith the Lord" in all things. After all, liberalism, digression and worldliness are even more at work in the world today than it was in the 1930's. I am looking forward to holding the following meetings this year. March 26- April 3 at Hoyte, TX (along with my brother, Jerry); July (dates to be determined) at Claxton, MO; Aug. 3-7 at Little Rock, AR; Sept. 7-11 at Chestnut Ridge, KY; Oct. 26-

30 at Sharonville, OH. If you are near any of these congregations, please mark those dates on your calendar and plan to be with us! The work here at Jamesville continues on, sending out a monthly bulletin to our members and those who have visited our services, and here lately we have had the opportunity to preach to those who need to obey the gospel. With all the things going on in the world and our country (the pandemic, talk of war, unrest and lawless disrespect for authority), who knows what is going to happen next? It's certainly not a time to "quit the church" or linger in disobedience to the gospel. Instead, let's preach the gospel to the lost and remain steadfast in the faith. Please keep us in your prayers.

Kevin W. Presley, 108 Mulberry Court, Dothan, AL 36303, January 7, 2022. Our gospel meetings for 2021 ended in December in Aurora, MO. It was a delightful meeting held with the assistance of Bro. Elias Rodriguez. Bro. Jonathan Bunner has recently relocated to this area to begin a work among the Hispanic community and Bro. Elias has been visiting monthly to assist in this work. Both Jonathan and Elias are hard and diligent workers in the kingdom and their efforts are already meeting with great success. Several have been baptized. We had a host of Hispanic visitors at the meeting along with numerous brethren from other congregations. The services were bilingual with Bro. Elias translating the sermons and Bro. Jonathan translating the prayers and announcements. The work has a bright future, and may God bless both men as they use their talents for Him. It was also a joy to preach a Sunday in LaGrange, GA. These are wonderful friends of ours and we always delight to visit them. The year ended with a wonderful New Year's Meeting in Brookhaven, MS. The crowd was near 300 and Bro. Jerry Dickenson and the Hillcrest church did a wonderful job conducting the meeting. The preaching and singing were outstanding and the spirit of cooperation among the local churches was superb. After nearly 20 years of hosting the meeting in Alabama, we have agreed to discontinue the meeting in Dothan and support the Hillcrest church in Brookhaven as they, Lord willing, now conduct the meeting each year. We appreciate the church for their willingness and zeal to continue the tradition and we know the meeting will thrive under their oversight. My 2022 meeting schedule will begin in March, Lord willing, with efforts in West Monroe, LA and Lawrenceburg, TN. I look forward to a fruitful year in preaching the glad tidings of Christ, the Savior where I'm afforded the opportunity. Our television outreach across the country continues to grow and produce results and for this, we give thanks and glory to God. May He bless the righteous labors of His people everywhere in the coming year.

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WALKS THROUGH THE BIBLE...

I COME TO THE GARDEN ALONE

By JERRY DICKINSON

I love to walk! I try to take a walk every day. It is good exercise, of course, but it is great therapy too. Walking is a great stress reliever and I am able to clear out my brain and think more clearly. Some of my best ideas for sermons come when I am walking alone and it is amazing how a sermon can just come together and crystalize as I stroll along and recall and contemplate passages from God's Word. It is as if I am walking with God-or more accurately walking with God's Word. We cannot see God, of course, but we can hear Him through His word.

I love to walk with God! God implored Abraham in Genesis 17:1, "Walk before me and be blameless." Genesis 5:22 declares that Enoch walked with God. The word walk is a favorite of Paul's in the Ephesian letter. He beseeches in Ephesians 4:1, "Walk worthy of the calling with which you are called." In chapter 5:8 he declares, "For you were once in darkness, but now are you light in the Lord. Walk as children of light."

The word "walk" occurs 212 times in the Bible. Adding to that the various forms of walk such as walked, walking, etc. and the words occur 392 times. The Greek word most often translated walk in the New Testament is "peripateo". The word "peri" means around and the word "pateo" means walk, therefore "peripateo" literally means to walk around. You can tell a lot about a person by who they walk around with! The idea of the word "walk" as used in the Bible is the sphere of one's existence or manner of life. Paul is saying in the Ephesian letter that we are to show in our manner of life that we are not children of darkness but children of light. We are to live lives worthy of our calling as Christians. We are to walk with God through our relationship with Christ.

It is interesting that the first time the word walk, or actually walking, occurs in the Bible it refers to God. Genesis 3:8 says, "And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day." Notice they heard His "voice" walking in the garden. Of course, this is figurative language because a voice cannot walk, but the idea is that God came and communed with Adam and Eve in the garden. They did not see the invisible God, but heard his voice. His voice walked with them and God communed with them in the Paradise He had created for them. There is something marvelously beautiful about walking with the voice of God sounding in your ear. As long as they listened and followed the voice -as long as they walked with God-Adam and Eve were safe and free and sinless. Soon, however as we know, they listened to another voice -the voice of the Devil -and they ceased to walk with God. They fell, and oh how great was that fall. We are suffering the effects even today of their failure to walk with God's voice!

Jesus came and walked among men so that he could redeem the world from the fall. He walked the road to Calvary and died so men could once again walk with the voice of God and have communion and fellowship with Heaven. When Mary went to the garden tomb and found the tomb empty she began weeping when suddenly she heard someone behind her walking. She turned and thought Jesus was the gardener until Jesus spoke her name and then she cried, "Rabboni!", recognizing the Lord. As God had walked in the Garden of Eden with Adam and Eve before the fall, Jesus walked with Mary in the garden after his victorious death and resurrection! C, Austin Miles put it in figurative language we have sung many times.

I come to the garden alone, While the dew is still on the roses:
And the voice I hear, falling on my ear, The Son of God discloses.
He speaks and the sound of His voice is so sweet the birds hush their singing,
And the melody that He gave to me, Within my heart is ringing.
And He walks with me, and He talks with me,
And He tells me I am His own, And the joy we share as we tarry there,
None other has ever known.

We too can walk with the Lord and listen to his word! Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to reveal His word and they wrote it down for us so we can read it, memorize it, and thus take it with us even when we are walking around. Have you heard the voice of God walking lately? No? Why not take a walk with the voice of the Lord God and let his word as revealed in the Bible bring you into harmony and fellowship with Him? The Lord will walk with us if we will walk with Him.

Isn't it amazing and awesome that as God walked in the Garden of Eden in the beginning so that He could have fellowship with Adam and Eve, He wants to have fellowship with us as well. Even after this fellowship was broken by sin, God loved the world so much that He sent His only begotten Son so that we could be delivered from sin and be reconciled to our Creator. Someday, in eternal realms, I look forward to walking with my Savior in God's new paradise garden (Revelation 2:7). Maybe I'll get to walk alone with Him and listen to the sweet sound of His voice. What a walk that would be!