

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

OLD PATHS ADVOCATE

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

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

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NO. 5

COMMITMENT AND DEDICATION

By PAUL O. NICHOLS

When a sinner obeys the Gospel, he ceases to be his own. The apostle Paul would remind us. “For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Cor. 6:20). He says, “God be thanked that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine, being then made free from sin, ye have become the servants of righteousness. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.” (Rom. 6:16-18). “What know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Cor. 6:19, 20).

Once a person becomes a Christian, he is supposed to be committed to the service of God. Jesus tells his followers, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness...” (Matt. 6:33). And the promise of the Lord is “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Rev. 2:10). If a person wants to go to heaven, he is going to have to be committed, because the Lord rewards nothing less. The apostle Paul informs the Christians at Corinth, “But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway” (1 Cor. 9:27). And every Christian should be just as dedicated. Many members of the church are not committed at all. They just belong to the church.

One commitment some Christians have never learned, and that is commitment to a home congregation. They feel no serious obligation to any church in particular, and yet the Bible symbolizes a congregation as a “flock of sheep” (Acts 20:28) and each member is a part of that

flock. But some are more like goats - we never know where they will be from one service to the next, which suggests lack of commitment. Such lack of dedication and commitment has resulted in congregations closing their doors and selling church buildings which have been built with the Lord’s money and then are used for denominational worship or places of business. (What a shame!) When we have a gospel meeting the only time some attend is when they customarily come, and that is Lord’s day only. They feel no obligation. Or when another congregation has a meeting, certain ones may not attend at a time during the week when they could, but go when the home church is having services and they are absent. If several make this a habit, it weakens the home church because of the absenteeism. Why not be committed to being at home when the local church meets. We make decisions in business meetings, and some decisions require the use of the Lord’s money. And when members are at other places for worship on Lord’s day, the money that they contribute that day is not available for carrying out our commitments. Such absenteeism causes the singing to be less inspiring, and is somewhat discouraging to the speaker who has spent hours of time studying in order to have a scriptural and edifying lesson - maybe one that all need to hear. And because that particular lesson needs to be heard by all, we substitute another in its place which may not be as badly needed or edifying.

Another thing that we need to think about, and that is this. If we happen to have visitors, either members or a non-members, who come and there are only a few present for the service, it may leave the impression that the congregation is on the verge of dying because of lack of interest. This impression would certainly not encourage anyone to come again.

We have young Christians who should learn commitment and faithfulness and dedication from the older members. We should ask ourselves, “What kind

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Editorial

OUR DAY AND TIME (PART 2)

By DON L. KING

Certainly, in our lifetimes we have never experienced anything even similar to the situation confronting our everyday existence and the church at this time. The Corona virus is a global pandemic and threatens the whole world. In California we are asked to remain at home and make only necessary trips to buy food, seek medical help, etc. It seems this is pretty much the status everywhere. I hear from our brethren in the Philippines that they are “locked down,” and are not allowed to go anywhere. The rest of the world is in a similar situation.

This matter presents a serious problem for the church. Brethren are seeking a way to worship and remain in compliance with the laws of the land. Reportedly, most have managed to obey Hebrews 10:25 where we are commanded not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together. All of us want to follow the apostolical example of brethren coming together to break bread (commune and worship) on the first day of the week as found in Acts 20:7. In Livermore, we have done just that and we thank God for His care. We would like to take this opportunity, however, to remind all of us of some things we dare not forget or neglect.

When a situation occurs such as we are encountering, it is sometimes suggested that we simply remain at home and worship with our immediate families. Yes, a congregation may, and sometimes did in New Testament times, worship in a private home. Romans 16:5 and Colossians 4:15, etc., are just two examples of several mentioned in the scriptures. However, keep in mind that those were autonomous, separate, self-governing congregations, They were not larger congregations divided into smaller groups for some temporary reason. In some areas, a lack of transportation requires congregations to be nearer to the member’s homes. The Philippines are one example of many. Notice this example: Suppose a congregation of fifty members temporarily divides into five small house groups of ten members each. It isn’t five new congregations because the five groups intend to meet together again after the pandemic is over. Each of those groups have a table, communion, the collection, etc. Thus, one congregation, divided, has 5 tables, 5 cups, 5 loaves, and 5 collections,

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QUERIST COLUMN

BY CLINT DEFRANCE

Question 2 - If the kingdom began with the Christian Era (Colossians 1:13), why does Paul speak of Christians still yet to enter the Kingdom (Acts 14:22)?

Answer: The expression “Kingdom of God” or “Kingdom of Heaven” has a wide range of meaning in the scripture-although all meanings and uses are connected. In the New Testament, the word kingdom is translated from the Greek word *basileia*.

Normally, this word has, primarily, three shades of meaning. Sometimes *basileia* refers to a realm, the region, domain, or country governed by a king. In Esther 5:6, the King offered Esther “up to half” of his kingdom - that is the territories over which he ruled. In Matthew 4:8, Satan took Jesus upon a high mountain, and in an instant “showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.” That is, the Devil showed Jesus the vast territories of human rulers with their riches and resources. This is, by far, the most common sense in which the word kingdom is understood by English speakers today, and many people do not understand the word in any other sense. But there are other possible definitions: the word may also mean a rank, that is, the dignity, or authority, or power to rule.

In Luke 19:11-27, Jesus told a parable about, “A certain nobleman [who] went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return.” This was in reference to a practice under the Roman Imperial system, in which a local ruler would journey to receive certification of his “right to govern” or his rank from the Caesar so that he could exercise ruling authority over a given territory. Then also, the word might refer to a reign, that is the duration or period of time when a particular sovereign is in power. Thus, we speak of the reign of King George III. Unfortunately, most modern English versions follow the tradition of the KJV and uniformly translate *basileia* as “kingdom” causing most English readers to think only of a territory or place where God rules.

That is not the only meaning and, in some cases, it is not the primary meaning. For example, when the Immerser and the Lord Jesus announced that “the kingdom of heaven was at hand” or “drawing near” - they did not

mean that a place or territory was getting close, but rather they meant that the time when heaven would rule over the earth was getting close! Of course, even when one of these shades of meaning is in view, the other aspects are present because these are all co-dependent. One cannot be a ruler unless he has the rank and a realm, and unless the official and recognized time for his reign has begun and not yet ended.

In light of this information, I think the most concise and correct theological definition I have ever heard or read for the phrase “kingdom of God” or “kingdom of heaven” was from Dr. Phillip Doddridge in his Exposition of the Gospels. He said, “[it] properly signifies the gospel dispensation, in which subjects were to be gathered to God, by His Son, and a society to be formed, which was to subsist first in more imperfect circumstances on earth, but afterwards was to appear complete in the world of glory.”

The passage in Colossians 1:13 refers to the saved people being brought under the authority of God through Jesus Christ and incorporated into the “society” of the redeemed - which is the church. The passage in Acts 14:22 refers to the final state of the kingdom: “complete in the world of glory” - that is, to heaven.

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**COVID-19, WHAT A DIFFERENCE
A DAY MAKES!**

BY GREG GAY

In James we read, “Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit;” whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.” But now you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil” (James 4:13-16).

In 1959 Dinah Washington recorded the hit, “What A Difference A Day Makes,” a popular tune about new love. Today, we can look back just a few days and say the same thing. Not about new love, but about the changes in our world since Covid-19 from the coronavirus has swept the world.

As I write these words, April 7, 2020, our strong United States’ economy is yesterday’s news. Today’s news is that our economy is in shambles, millions are out of work, and the government is stepping in with Trillions of \$’s to keep everything afloat.

Yesterday, we had the usual illnesses and tragedies of life, which are certainly overwhelming at times. Today we still have all of those, plus a new illness that is causing suffering and death in every nation around the globe. As of this date, 1,365,166 people have tested positive for Covid-19 and 76,504 have died. In the United States, there are 369,361 positive cases and 11,013 have died. The largest concentration of cases in the U.S. is in New York, but other “hot spots” are adding many new cases every day.

Yesterday (OK, a few months ago), the Press Release from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) of January 21, 2020 stated “The [CDC] today confirmed the first case of 2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) in the United States in the state of Washington. The patient recently returned from Wuhan, China, where an outbreak of pneumonia caused by this novel coronavirus has been ongoing since December 2019” (<https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2020/p0121-novel-coronavirus-travel-case.html>).

Three days later, on January 24, the CDC announced

the second infection in the United States. Their view at that time was: “While CDC considers this a serious public health threat, based on current information, the immediate health risk from 2019-nCoV to the general American public is considered low at this time” (<https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2020/p0124-second-travelcoronavirus.html>).

In the early days of this new disease’s emergence, the esteemed Dr. Fauci, Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases shared in a January 21, 2020 interview, “This is not a major threat to the people of the United States and this is not something that the citizens of the United States should be worried about right now” (<https://saraacarter.com/janflashback-dr-fauci-said-coronavirus-is-not-a-major-threat-to-the-people-of-the-united-states/>).

By March 11, 2020 the world had changed. Dr. Fauci testified before a House Panel, “The flu has a mortality of 0.1 percent. This has a mortality of ten times that. Bottom line, it’s going to get worse” (<https://www.krmg.com/blog/jamie-dupree/fauci-coronavirus-worst-yetcome/c35ctpvxohjjYef6x200gP/>).

That was the same date the World Health Organization (WHO) declared Covid-19 from the coronavirus a “pandemic” referring to a disease that is a global outbreak. (<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/04/coronavirus-covid-19-flu-influenza/>).

Indeed, it has gotten worse. As testing widens and as researchers and medical professionals gather information, it is now believed that the early comparisons to the “flu” were greatly understated.

The World Economic Forum reports April 1, 2020, “There is a misconception that COVID-19 is no different from common seasonal influenza. Both cause respiratory disease and are transmitted through contact, respiratory droplets and fomites (surfaces that harbor the virus following contact with an infected human). But they vary drastically in severity. According to the WHO (based on the current available data), 80% of COVID-19 infections are mild or asymptomatic, 15% are severe (requiring oxygen) and 5% are critical (requiring ventilation). These figures are considerably higher than what is typically observed in flu. The speed of transmission is very important when assessing the deadlines of a virus.

“Influenza has a shorter incubation period (the time

between infection and the onset of symptoms), so it can be diagnosed and treated more quickly. While influenza has a shorter serial interval (the time between successive cases) and therefore spreads more easily, COVID-19 has a higher reproductive number - meaning infected individuals pass the virus onto a higher number of people. COVID-19 is also more deadly than seasonal influenza. The crude mortality rate for COVID-19, based on confirmed cases to date, is currently estimated by the WHO to be between 3-4%, with seasonal influenza sitting well below 0.1 %. However, it is important to note that these figures are heavily influenced by the availability of quality healthcare, and by case data” (<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/04/coronavirus-covid-19-flu-influenza/>).

Yesterday, in the Church, at least approximately through mid-March, we had our usual routines. Families gathered for worship in our comfortable facilities and congregation leaders conducted worship and took care of member’s needs. Preachers worked as usual to learn, prepare sermons, visit, hold studies, travel for preaching appointments and to conduct gospel meetings, funerals, and weddings. Preparations were being made by many for our usual wonderful gatherings across the brotherhood around the world.

Today, life as usual for the church has been completely disrupted. I and others have compared this to a Saturday night snowstorm where we have two feet of snow on the ground and no one has four-wheel drive. Suddenly and temporarily (we hope), what we normally do has been interrupted. In addition to avoiding getting or giving a new highly infectious disease that can be spread by someone without symptoms, we have mandates of crowd limitations (10 or less), social distancing (six feet or more), and personal protective equipment (masks, gloves, wipes).

Many congregations are having to overcome great difficulties to assemble for worship and to do so safely. Preacher’s schedules have been cleared as Sunday appointments and meetings are postponed and travel has become very difficult.

It is expected in any crisis that lasts longer than it takes a snowstorm to melt that every congregation’s members can expect guidance from their leaders and that their leaders will gladly seek counsel from evangelists they trust, and that all will seek guidance from the scriptures in prayerful study. That has happened around the world and is wonderful. Solomon said, “Give instruction to a

wise man, and he will be still wiser; Teach a just man, and he will increase in learning” (Proverbs 9:9).

There are many preachers and leaders among us who have been willing to brainstorm with one another to find appropriate, scriptural solutions for what we are facing. That has been very encouraging and refreshing. Helping congregations figure out scriptural and wise choices for their situation is much more difficult.

We do have Bible examples of what was done in the early church during difficult times. We do know, when persecuted, all are to be willing to give their lives for the cause of Christ, and many have (Matthew 10:28, Hebrews 11, Acts 7). However, not every crisis in the church is a persecution or a time for martyrdom, especially when Christians are not being singled out for disparate treatment.

We have the example of Priscilla and Aquilla when they and all the Jews in Rome were ordered to leave town (Acts 18: 1-2). I’m thankful they figured out a way to get to safety (leave town) so they could continue their lives in God’s service. In Rome, as persecutions happened through the centuries, even the catacombs, usually places of burial, reportedly became a refuge for secret assemblies.

Many Christians in Jerusalem were able to leave town when persecution of Christians erupted. (Acts 8: 1-4). They could have easily stayed and died martyrs’ deaths. Instead, they sought safety so they could continue to serve God. Those who did stay in town, obviously sought safe places where they could meet without being arrested.

Today, some amazing solutions have been found as brethren look for places of safety and ways to meet without openly offending authorities and in a way that does not spread the disease. As we work through our sudden difficulties, hopefully we can trust that every Christian in every congregation in our fellowship, is acting in faith and doing the best they can to get through this crisis. From afar, rather than being critical, let us refuse to believe the worst, “And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you” (Ephesians 4:32).

Temptations abound as all have been ordered not to assemble as usual. We must be very careful to sort out what is required so we can obey God, and at the same time be very careful in our obedience lest we

draw unnecessary attention to ourselves. We are required to assemble every Lord's Day to sing, pray, be taught, commune, and contribute, even though some snowstorms of life may disrupt that temporarily. We are not required to meet only in a "church" building, only at 10:00 or 10:30 a.m., sing a set number of songs, have at least a five-minute main prayer, a 30-45-minute sermon, white cloths on the communion table, and a pot-luck lunch between services.

We must be very careful to sort out what is scriptural and what is not in times like these. We also must keep separate what is authorized for individuals/families versus what is authorized for congregations. It is not scriptural for a congregation to have "online church" on Lord's Day and ask everyone watching to commune at home. Leaders asking families to have the Lord's Supper at home and then to mail their contributions to the congregation's treasurer are advising things that are not scriptural. Changing the Lord's Supper in any assembly so each participant has their own loaf and cup is not scriptural. A local congregation must assemble and gather as a group to conduct worship (Acts 20:7, Hebrews 10:25). In the Lord's Day assembly, a local congregation meets for all members in attendance to partake of one loaf and drink from one cup (1 Corinthians 10:16-17).

As this pandemic continues, perhaps for months, travel and community assembly rules and laws may be strictly enforced and become so oppressive it is no longer possible for brethren to assemble in their current congregations. A New York Times article of April 6, 2020 reports the National Guard has been activated to help with stay-at-home restrictions, including traffic stops in Rhode Island, Florida, and Texas (<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/06/travel/coronavirusdriving-restrictions.html>). Current reporting is that restrictions of various types may be imposed in the future until treatments and vaccines for this virus are developed and widely distributed.

Again, if restrictions on travel and assembly are going to continue with no end in sight, and if a congregation's leaders have tried hard yet failed to figure out a way for their congregation to worship secretly, yet safely, they may conclude they cannot continue as a congregation.

In such cases, congregations can disband and become independent, separate, autonomous, family/block/small group congregations, as was common in New Testament days. While the complications are many

from this decision, nevertheless it does allow for safe, scriptural worship to be conducted by a congregation that is autonomous in a home location. Home congregations are scriptural, and we have examples of such in the homes of Priscilla and Aquila (1 Corinthians 16:19, Romans 16:3,5), Nymphas (Colossians 4:15), and Philemon (Philemon verse 2).

We are accustomed to congregations closing and their remaining members dispersing to other congregations. We are also accustomed to peacefully starting new congregations from overflowing building situations, or from people moving from one part of the country or from one nation to another, or from evangelism efforts. While I pray it does not become necessary for congregations to disband that would not be doing so were it not for this crisis, it is a viable, scriptural option.

Whatever life hands us, with God's help, we can handle it! We can do this brethren! We can adjust and emerge with our brotherhood intact and our faith stronger than ever to share the good news of Jesus to the world!

May God bless us in our choices even as we are faced with many new challenges. Peter describes our task, "Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king" (1 Peter 2:17).

COMMITMENT....continued from page one

of example and source of encouragement are we to our fellow Christians?" The apostle Paul wrote to the church at Philippi and said, "Those things which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you" (Phil. 4:9). He could say, "Follow me as I follow Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). We should be able to say this, too, and "be an example in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Tim. 4:12).

Of course, there are interruptions and circumstances that prevent our being at every service. A vacation may include a necessary absence, or the sickness or funeral of a loved one may call us away. Even some business or job may demand a required absence from the midweek service. And there may be other legitimate requirements for us to be elsewhere for service on Lord's day. Our own sickness may force us to stay at home. But what this article is about is the promiscuous neglect of duty at home; the lack of dedication. This is discouraging to the faithful who make it a point to be at every service.

To save ourselves we need to be an example of serious Christian living and necessary sacrifice in all that we do, because our salvation depends on it. And those who follow our example of commitment and dedication will be the church of tomorrow. What kind of legacy do you want to leave, and how do you want to be remembered when we have to answer the call of death? We definitely would like to have the Lord say to us in the day of Judgment, "Well done thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joys of thy Lord." But this will not happen if we do not dedicate ourselves sincerely to seeking first the kingdom of heaven.

Parable of The Vacationers

Now it came to pass, as summer drew nigh, that Mr. Church Member lifted his eyes unto the lake and said, Lo, the days come and even now are at hand. Come, let us go where cool breezes blow and clear waters refresh, and glorious scenes await.

Thou speakest wisely, answered Mrs. Church Member. Yet, there are four things we must do before we go."

Three things I can think of, but not four, responded Mr. Church Member. "We must arrange for the flowers to be watered, the dog to be fed, and the mail to be forwarded, but the fourth eludes my mind."

Yet, the fourth is like the first three, and more important than all. "Thou shalt remember your responsibility to be at the worship service and don't forget to give as the Lord has prospered you, that it may be well with thee. For verily thou knowest that thou hast more money now than when thou wilt return."

And it came to pass that Mr. and Mrs. Church Member worshiped the Lord and gave as they were prospered. The Lord was well pleased and the treasurer rejoiced, saying, "Of a truth there are those who care about the work of the Lord." — Adapted

OUR DAY AND TIME...continued from page two

etc. If you believe that is scriptural, look at it this way: If it is right to divide into 5 groups temporarily and worship, would it still be right for all 5 groups to meet in the parking lot of the church building and have their 5 cups, 5 loaves, and 5 collections? If that is right, one would be forced to admit that even after they go back together, they could all meet in one place and still

use the same number of cups, loaves, etc. If not, why not? To be consistent that would have to be allowed. No, Brethren, that can't be the solution because it isn't scriptural.

To try to use the old testament example of the Passover (a lamb for an house, Exodus 12:3) will fail the test also. The type there indicates a lamb (Communion commemorating Christ, our Passover, 1 Cor. 5:7) for every "house" congregation or church, 1 Timothy 3:15) The type and antitype thus indicates that each congregation has its own table for the Lord's Supper, rather than a Lord's table for every residence within a congregation.

In closing, allow us to say that whatever solution brethren choose during this terrible virus, our worship must still follow the pattern. We may choose to be a part of another congregation somewhere. We can read of brethren doing that in New Testament times. Paul visited many congregations on his journeys. We might choose to move to a more remote location in order to escape the attention of some who would seek to stop us. We know the early church sometimes had to meet in secret. However, we cannot, must not, change the pattern to fit our desires, no matter how well intentioned we may be, and I do believe we all have the very best intentions. We must see that our behavior and our worship fit the pattern. Otherwise, our worship will be unacceptable.

One of the most memorable things I learned from a study of the book of Job was that even after he heard of the total loss of everything he had and the death of his 10 children, seven sons and three daughters, he fell to the ground and worshiped! How many today would do that? Probably, many would say, "I just can't do that." "Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshiped." Job 1: 20. Our generation has never had to worship in adversity, but Job did. The example of all of the apostles issues the challenge to us to continue to worship in spirit and truth if humanly possible. Yes, even in the worst of circumstances. Think on these things. DLK



Announcements

Today, we had word from our printer that the crew is out due to the shelter in place orders, and only one person, the printer herself, is working. She informed me that this issue might be delayed a bit because of that. So, if your paper is late, you know why. We appreciate your subscriptions and renewals and also the preachers helping out with materials, etc. If you want to have an article or field report published, try to have it in our hands by the 13th of every month. DLK

The brethren at Turlock, California have requested that we announce the cancellation of their Memorial Day meeting this year due to the current health crises. DLK

PLEASE NOTE, that we at the Whispering Hills Church of Christ (Miami, OK) will be moving our Sunday afternoon services to 2:00PM starting on May 3rd.

Our Departed



“Roy Lee Criswell, The Common Man’s Preacher”

Roy Lee Criswell was born February 7, 1933 in Purcell, Oklahoma to Roy Virgil Criswell and Gertie (Blair) Criswell. Brother and Sister Criswell were wonderful people who raised their children in a Christian home, Brother Paul Nichols was conducting a gospel meeting near Purcell and Paul convinced a young teenage Roy Lee of two things, one, he needed to obey the Gospel, and two, he needed to become a preacher.

After graduating high school Roy Lee continued his education at Oklahoma State University and also took a job in a furniture store working his way up to store

manager before starting his preaching career. Roy Lee understood that any Christian young man who desired to preach must recognize that the title of preacher is earned and not given (2 Tim. 2:15.) He also understood that preaching was serious business (2 Tim. 4:2.) When the day came for Roy Lee to give his first lesson, in the audience sat his friend Brother Nelson Nichols. Roy Lee was scared and nervous because Nelson had been preaching full time for several years. However, Nelson encouraged him to press on and continue to work to become an evangelist. On October 23, 1958 Roy Lee wrote, “I wish to announce to the brotherhood that I plan to quit my job the first of Jan., 1959, to preach the gospel full time. For the past 7 years I have lived in Oklahoma City and have been affiliated with the 7th St. church. I am single, 25 years of age, and willing to do whatever I can wherever I am, as a servant of the Lord.” OPA Dec 1959

In the spring of 1960 (after much persistence on his part) Roy Lee married Zella (Rose) on April 16th in Dallas, Texas and together were blessed with five children, Ernie, Mike, Angela, Deborah, and George. They worked with churches in Oklahoma, Colorado, Texas, Ohio, Oregon, and California prior to January of 1967. That year, Roy Lee and his family were sent to work with the churches in Malawi on the African continent. His work in Malawi lasted for two years and although he was to stay longer, political unrest in that region forced an early return home. The Criswell’s loved their time in Africa and continued to show slide presentations to various congregations and friends in the years following and he always mentioned the African work in his prayers.

In the fall of 1970 Roy Lee worked 5 enjoyable months with the church in Levelland, Texas and in 1971 they moved to assist a new congregation in Columbia, MO. The Criswell’s were provided nice living accommodations in the finished basement of the new building located on Rice Road. As it is today, several Christians were in Columbia at that time attending the University of Missouri and several young Christian men including some with families were also living there working or fulfilling government orders to complete Alternative Service Program Orders during the Vietnam War. Some of these young men included Floyd Massey, James & Ronald Lankford, Roger Owens, Ralph and Ray Cockrum, Robert Beavers, Donald Warren and John Unger. Roy Lee used all of these people to help form a nucleus of Christians that would lay a foundation for the congregations that meet in Columbia and Jefferson

City today, He was not afraid to speak to anyone and made himself known throughout the city of Columbia through various media outlets and also reached out to young people on the college campus by inviting them to study with him and attend worship services. These methods proved profitable as the congregation tripled in size during his three year tenure. During this time he also traveled one week per month to labor with the congregation at Mozier, Illinois. This group grew very fond of him and continued to invite him almost yearly to visit and preach for them over the next 40 years.

In June of 1974, Roy Lee and Zella moved to work with the congregation at Cassville, MO and purchased a farm near the Jenkins community. Roy Lee was a hard worker in everything he did and along with Zella remodeled and built on to an old farm house and made it into a beautiful home. While on the farm they raised cattle and maintained and grew a large garden. Roy Lee loved the brethren in Missouri and was very fond of the Missouri Ozarks and the people living there. He delighted in making friends and helped his neighbors in any way he could which helped the church grow and prosper. He was not afraid to knock on the doors of strangers and invite them to church or to study the Bible which meant that he had a study going with someone different nearly every day. He visited the sick in hospitals and nursing homes on a regular basis and took a part time job at Ramey's grocery store in Cassville to supplement his support. Roy Lee never complained about secular work and used it as a tool for the mission field (Acts 18:3.) He taught and believed that a Christian should be the best employee a person should have and because of this attitude the store management allowed him to invite customers to church while he carried their groceries out to their car.

In 1981 Roy Lee and Zella moved to Seminole, OK to help establish a new congregation and also assist them in building a meeting house where his son George labors today.

In May of 1983 Roy Lee was asked to help start a new work at Aurora, MO. As he did in Cassville, he took a part time job at Ramey's grocery store in Aurora to help make up his support but also get acquainted with the community. He soon solidified a nucleus of Christians by helping to restore several out of duty members living in Aurora and also baptized a number of individuals into Christ. The brethren at Aurora were able to move from a store front location in a short time and purchased property on the west side of Aurora where they built a

beautiful building. Roy Lee's son Ernie and his family still worship there today.

Roy Lee held gospel meetings and preached at his home congregation regularly but he never desired to elevate himself over others. He promoted the importance of everyone being in the worship service and always encouraged and provided ways for members to make sure they were able to attend the assembly of the saints. He and Zella took people to church nearly every service and also drove hundreds of miles to attend gospel meetings and support new mission efforts at their own expense. In their local congregation, it was not uncommon for him to get 20-30 people to attend a Gospel Meeting.

Roy Lee and Zella were some of the most hospitable people you would ever know. When anyone stayed in the Criswell home, they were given a comfortable place to sleep, fed the best food you could ever eat and considered part of their family which also meant you were encouraged to participate in their daily family Bible study. I recall staying in their home quite often and was often greeted in the morning to the pleasant aroma of Zella's cooking and being woken up and greeted by Roy Lee barking at me like a dog ...

Their home always had guests, and it was not uncommon to visit the Criswell home and find them providing a total stranger a place to stay. There were some guests who took advantage of them, but one individual became a Gospel Preacher and was accepted as Roy Lee's own son. Roy Lee's empathetic nature was exhibited through a desire to help everyone he met in any way he could. I often thought he and Miles King had contests to see who could pick up the most hitch hikers. I rode with both of these men on occasions and it was always "interesting."

His son Mike said "Roy Lee was the "common man's preacher" because it seemed that there was not a person in the Lord's Church or the places he lived that he didn't know or tried to get to know." He was often called to assist with domestic issues in families and in times of sadness he seemed to always know the right words to say because he preached hundreds of funerals for church members, neighbors, family friends and even individuals he didn't know. After being diagnosed with dementia and moving away from Lawrence and Barry Counties people still called asking if he would come preach their loved ones funeral. He was so well thought of in the Aurora community, he won volunteer of the

year award after spending much of his own time at local nursing homes visiting with the residents and leading them in a Bible study.

Roy Lee worked in Aurora until 2013 when his health began to decline. He and Zella were able to sell their farm and move to Peculiar, MO to be closer to their son Mike, their daughter Angela and their families. On March 10, 2020, Roy Lee Criswell took his last breath on this side of Jordan surrounded by his loving devoted wife and precious family. He was a son, a husband, a father, a grandfather, a brother, a student, a furniture salesman, a volunteer, an encourager, a counselor, a friend, a preacher and a Christian. But to a lot of us, he was simply “Roy Lee Criswell, The Common Man’s Preacher.” —Jamie Lankford

GUM - Gum, William (Bill) Oscar, was born in Lebanon, MO April 16, 1930 and passed away at Mercy Hospital, Ardmore, OK on March 17, 2020, just one month short of his 90th birthday. He had Covid-19 symptoms when admitted and was immediately isolated in ICU for treatment. We learned a few days after his death that the test was negative. Bill was one of three children of William Clay Gum and Lillie May Huff Gum. He was preceded in death by his parents; his siblings, Mary Lou Burns and Jimmy Gum; his first wife, Betty Jean Gum; his granddaughter, Amy Jo Harms; and a stepdaughter, Vicky Gay Holt. He is survived by his wife of 39 years, Nona Maxine Deems Gay Gum, Ada, OK; daughter Rebecca Johnson and husband Kenneth, Lebanon, MO; Stepson, Gregory Gay and wife Cassie, Edmond, OK; a step son-in-law, Dean Holt, Stonewall, OK; seven grandchildren and ten great-grandchildren. Bill worked at odd jobs when he was a young boy. He was a shoeshine boy in a barber shop and remembered shining the shoes of Bro. Waller, one of our preachers, when he was in town. He worked at the laundry/cleaners where my grandfather, Homer Gay, had his shirts laundered. He also worked at a donut shop, had a newspaper route, and after marrying the first time, helped on his father-in-law’s dairy farm. Bill was active in the military for two years and in the army reserve for over 20 years. He eventually began working for the Missouri Highway Department and retired from there. Before Bill and mother married in 1981, he attended church with her at Lee’s Summit where he obeyed the gospel. He loved to worship, was an enthusiastic singer and led a fine dismissal prayer. Mother and Bill moved from Missouri to Ada, OK in 2005 to be near my sister Vicky in their final years. Along the way, Bill was diagnosed with dementia, which slowly robbed him of himself. In early 2018, Vicky, even though battling the

cancer that was to take her life, was able to gather all the information and complete all the paperwork for Bill to be admitted into the Veterans Administration nursing home at Ardmore. He was treated wonderfully and respectfully in the two years he was there. Several from family and the Ada congregation were very generous to give mother rides so she could visit Bill. Mother and I last saw Bill on March 6, just a few days before all visits to nursing homes were prohibited. Bill was thrilled to see mother, as always. He couldn’t quite remember who I was anymore, but he was always glad to see me too. We ate lunch together and left when it was his nap time. Due to the Coronavirus’ restrictions, very few were able to attend the visitation in Ada, OK and the graveside service at New Hope Cemetery where many of our people await the resurrection just a mile or so from the Lee’s Summit Church in MO. At mother’s request, I shared memories and scriptures at the graveside service in Missouri. —Greg Gay

Field Reports

Don L. King, 1147 Sherry Way, Livermore, CA 94550, old_paths@juno.com, April 14. Since last report we, like most of you, have been close to home. Our congregation has managed to worship each Lord’s Day unmolested, though with a somewhat shorter service. All of the items of worship are included, however. We give God thanks and praise for that. Our prayer is that the pandemic will soon ease and life can return to a somewhat more normal pattern. At the present, things seem to be slowly improving. Personally, we look forward to greater things as time passes. Brethren, please don’t allow this present distress to get you down spiritually. Our God is still in control and we trust Him more each day. Perhaps this situation will help to awaken souls who have been asleep, including some church members. Remember the early church who often were forced to worship even in secret and constantly in fear of their lives. We hear from Brethren abroad who are also seriously affected, but who look forward to greater things someday. We ask your prayers for our families and the church everywhere. May God bless the church.

Paul O. Nichols, 14217 Rosehill, Overland Park, KS 66221, pon.wjn.ks@juno.com. These are difficult times for everyone. We are concerned with continuing to do the will of the Lord and at the same time obey civil authority. Fellow Christians are having to make decisions that are scriptural in spite of restrictions advanced and enforced by the authorities. Back in the year 1918 during the flu epidemic we are told that

over a million victims died. In this day and time some members of the church have been victims of the present pandemic, brethren are suffering and death has taken loved ones. We are having to make decisions that we have never faced before. There will be some decisions made that we don't all agree with but we must not be too critical of one another. We all are trying our best to do what is right. We should do a lot of praying that the will of the Lord is done and act according to what we understand God would have us do under the circumstances. Our faith is being tried. May the Lord bless our brethren and our sisters wherever.

Billy D. Dickinson, 2850 N. Oakland, Springfield, MO 65803, bddickinson@juno.com, March 16. The annual study at the Rice Road congregation in Columbia, MO took place last week (March 9-13). Missing only the first night, what a blessing it was to attend and participate in what was the 10th year of this event. The topics involved theological questions, expository studies, moral issues and doctrinal matters. The edifying discourses on such important Biblical issues, involving a question and answer period after each presentation, made it a rewarding experience for everyone in attendance. Since I had to bow out last year due to convalescing from surgery, I finally dealt with the topic I had waited a year to present-- "May The Guilty Party Remarry?" Incidentally, all the services and discourses were taped and should be available soon for viewing on their website. If you have a special interest in my assigned topic, I encourage you to watch the video of my presentation to see why the "guilty party" is not authorized by the Lord to remarry. The study ended on Friday night, but as circumstances would have it, Mike Criswell and Jerry Dickinson were not able to be with us for the two sessions on that final day. The decision was made, obviously with the consent of their elders, to use a format that was different, involving a panel of preachers answering Bible questions from the audience. In order to assure that everything went smoothly and in an orderly fashion, each question was written on an index card and placed in a box by Thursday night. Judging from the feedback, this format seemed to appeal to most in a favorable way because it led to a discussion of various Bible issues that otherwise (for the most part) wouldn't have been dealt with. Perhaps the decision will be made to utilize this format again next year. Finally, I want to express my love and condolences to the family of our beloved brother, Roy Lee Criswell, who passed away on March 10. This is why Mike was not able to be with us for the latter part of the study. I'm thankful that I was able to attend the viewing and funeral on the Saturday

of the 14th at Raymore, MO as I made my way back to Springfield. Bro. Roy Lee was a faithful, dedicated preacher of the gospel and a dear friend. Through the years I held several meetings at Aurora and Cassville, always enjoying the hospitality of their home, and Sis. Zella is a picture of that "virtuous woman" in Prov. 31. May the Lord comfort her and the family in the days ahead!

George Battey, March 23, 2020. Brother Roy Lee Criswell was born on February 7, 1933 and passed from this life to be with the Lord on March 10, 2020 at the age of 87. Roy Lee "wore many hats." To two people he was a son. To two others a brother. To one a husband. To five a father. To the One who created everything, Roy was an adopted son purchased by the blood of "the Son" (Ephesians 1:5). To me Roy Lee was a foster-father. I would likely not be in the church today if Roy and Zella had not taken me into their home to help me, feed me, instruct me, encourage me. Roy Lee was everything he appeared to be. He had no "skeletons in his closet." If he had been vetted for a position on the Supreme Court, he would have come through the process "squeaky clean." Roy was an "example of the believers" and an "example to the believers" whichever way one wishes to translate 1 Timothy 4:12-Roy was both. He was an example of consistency and faithfulness. While others have shocked and disappointed the brotherhood by leaving and proving unfaithful, Roy was faithful. Roy was, in my opinion, the epitome of "pure in heart" (Matthew 5:8), and I have faith that he now "sees God." He had no ulterior motives. He believed in God and followed after His Son because that was in his heart. He did not "look around" to see if anyone was watching and then adjust his behavior or his speech. For as long as I knew Roy (since 1975), he always behaved himself and conducted himself with integrity and sincerity. I grieve for our brotherhood-the Lord's body. In December we buried brother Johnny Elmore. In January we buried brother Ronny Wade. Now in March we have buried Roy Lee Criswell. Before our eyes we are witnessing the passing of a generation of godly men--"men of war, who could keep ranks" (1 Chronicles 12:38)-men who fought against digression, worldliness, unfaithfulness. They were true soldiers in the Lord's army-men who endured hardships for the Lord's cause (2 Timothy 2:3). My prayer is that we who remain will pick up where they left off-to "declare [the Lord's] righteousness to a people who will be born" (Psalm 22:31). May we be a better people because we followed these men as they followed Christ (1 Corinthians 11 :1).

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WALKS THROUGH THE BIBLE...

GO. STAND. SPEAK!

By JERRY DICKINSON

“Then the high priest rose up, and all those who were with him, and they were filled with indignation, and laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison. But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, ‘Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life.’ And when they heard that, they entered the temple early in the morning and taught. But when the officers came and did not find them in the prison, they returned and reported, saying, ‘Indeed we found the prison shut securely, and the guards standing outside before the doors; but when we opened them, we found no one inside!’ So one came and told them, saying, ‘Look, the men who you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people!’” (Acts 5: 17-25)

Just as I was preparing to write my monthly article for this space I received a call from Brother Richard DeGough asking if I would do something for him, and since I love and respect Richard so much, I assured him I would if I could. Ronny Wade published a book of sermon outlines several years ago entitled, Pulpit Treasures, that were all submitted from preachers in our brotherhood. Richard submitted a sermon entitled, Go, Stand, and Speak based on the above passage in Acts 5. Richard said he had been thinking how that what happened to the apostles is so similar to what the churches are going through today with the coronavirus crisis, and how our response should be the same as the apostles. “Jerry, you can write a good article based on that!” Richard assured me, “And I would be pleased if you give it a try.” I told him I would consider it seriously, especially since he was asking me and encouraging me to do so. I have been thinking about it ever since and here are some thoughts.

The apostles were in prison, but God’s word cannot be confined or bound. Paul declared this was so in II Timothy 2:8-10. “Remember that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead according to my gospel, for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained.” Paul was in chains in a Roman prison, but, he announces triumphantly, the word of God is not chained! So it was with the apostles in Acts 5. They had been all thrown into prison, but that night an angel opened the prison doors, telling them to go stand in the temple and speak the words of life. Amusingly, really, the next morning when the authorities commanded they be brought before them, the officers came back to report they were not in the prison. “The doors were shut, and the guards were outside, but their cell was empty. They are gone!” was the report. The startled officials were in a quandary, wondering what had happened and what in the world to do now.

Then came an even more startling report, “The men you locked up last night are this morning standing in the temple teaching the people!” They were brought from the temple back to the priests and commanded not to teach or preach anymore in the name of Jesus. After threatening them, they were released. What did they do after being threatened? “And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.” (Acts 5:42) Notice, they taught and preached wherever they could, publicly and privately. They taught in the temple and in houses. They were under restrictions by the authorities but they found an outlet for the proclamation of the gospel. The word of God is not bound!

I have talked to a great number of brethren over the last weeks and what has impressed and encouraged me is that brethren are finding ways to continue worshiping and preaching the gospel in spite of restrictions and governmental regulations. I know of churches meeting in houses, barns, parking lots, and open fields - meeting in unusual places and under unprecedented pressure (at least for us in America) but still meeting and still proclaiming the word! God’s Word cannot be bound- not by a pandemic nor any other force on earth as long as God’s people trust Him, and as long as we obey the imperative, “Go, and stand, and speak all the words of this life!”

Be not dismayed what’er betide, God will take care of you;

Beneath His wings of love abide, God will take care of you.

God will take care of you, through every day, o’er all the way; He will take care of you.

Thank you my dear friend and brother Richard for helping us to remember that even when we are hindered and restricted by circumstances beyond our control God will make a way for us to continue to serve Him. We must, of course, be ready and willing to obey the Lord’s mandate to, “Go, and stand, and speak!” even if we have to do so in barns, and parking lots, and houses, and open fields. After all, THE WORD OF GOD IS NOT BOUND!