

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. 11

GOD’S PLAN TO DEAL WITH TROUBLE MAKERS IN THE CHURCH 1 CORINTHIANS 4:14-17

By *BENNIE CRYER*

14 I write not these things to shame you, but as my beloved sons I warn you.

15 For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel.

16 Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me.

17 For this cause have I sent unto you Timothy, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach every where in every church.

In this first epistle Paul, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, has been dealing with some of the problems within the church in Corinth. He is going to teach them how they should be conducting themselves as a church of Christ. These verses teach us today how we might better solve problems within a congregation of the Church of Christ.

In v14 he lets them know that he does not want to shame them. The word translated “shame” is used very few times in the Greek New Testament. Here it means to turn one upon himself and so produce disagreement, harshness, feelings of hatred, or resentment, etc. Paul did not want this to happen to his children in Corinth. If a church leader is to imitate Paul he will see to it that matters such as this are handled with a view of the members being strengthened and not weakened or driven out. They were his beloved sons in the gospel. So he wanted to warn them by just admonishing them. He wanted this admonition to be present in their minds when problems would arise among the church members that there will be consequences if they continued to do what he had heard they were doing.

A congregation’s elders, teachers, and evangelist must warn or admonish church members of these

consequences. Paul is dealing with them now as his spiritual beloved sons. Later he writes to the church in Ephesus these words: 4 “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (6:4). He is dealing with the members of the church in Corinth in the same way as he instructed the physical fathers in Ephesus to deal with their physical children.

In v15 he strengthens his father/children relationship by reminding them that even though they have had countless tutors or guardians in Christ you do not have many fathers because he had first preached the gospel to them. Acts 18:8, “And many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized.” When Paul used the word “begotten” in v 15 he was referring to his preaching the gospel to them before anyone else did. This teaches us that in the new spiritual birth process the gospel, the word of God is what God chose to begin the the new birth process. It is the seed of the kingdom. It initiates the new birth process. The Corinthians had to hear the word of God first to begin the new birth process in their life. This is when they were begotten. Since only one father can do that the many instructors were not a part of that.

V16 taught the Corinthians that they were to be followers of Paul. Just as a child might try to imitate his earthly father. Later on he qualifies further this admonishment: “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.” 1 Corinthians 11:1. “7 For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you;” 2 Thessalonians 3. Every preacher, elder, teacher, or member must understand these instructions are written to them today and they too, must be an example for others to follow. We must remember to follow Christ as our supreme example regardless of how a church leader conducts himself.

V17 indicates that he can see that their behavior needs someone there that can help them follow Paul’s instructions and manner of life. He sends Timothy to

continued on page 8

CONTENTS

Vol. LXXXIX No. 11



ADVOCATE

God's Plan to Deal With Trouble Makers 1
 Editorial 2
 Querist Column 3
 Christianity Dragged in the Mud 4
 Pages From the Past..... 6
 Repent or Perish..... 7
 Good Thoughts..... 9

Bonds of Matrimony..... 11
 Our Departed..... 11
 Field Reports 11
 THE BACK PAGE..... 12

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Editorial

MODERN IDOLATRY

By DON L. KING

The subject under consideration from 1 Corinthians 8:1 through 11:1 is idolatry. According to historical accounts, in the sacrificial worship in idolatrous temples, the animal to be offered was taken before the idol for sacrifice. As an item of worship, the person offering the sacrifice would often eat a portion of the meat. Another portion was burned in worship to the idol. This showed fellowship between the worshiper and the idol. This was the common practice, and it was believed that by burning a part of the meat the idol god had consumed some also. Obviously, since the idol could not actually consume any of the meat, it was eventually taken to the market or “shambles” for sale to the public for common use. As a result, anyone who bought meat at the market could be reasonably sure it had been used in idolatrous sacrifices at least part of the time. That was perfectly alright (see 1 Corinthians 10:25). Paul reasoned in 1 Corinthians 10:26 that the earth and everything in it belonged to the Lord anyway. Hence, it could be used with a clear conscience as long as it was done with thanks to the Lord.

The problem was that there were some church members in Corinth who considered themselves strong and others weak. In chapters 8, 9 and 10 Paul discusses the strong weak issue also. However, remember that these three chapters deal with idolatry in the main. This is no small issue. In fact, Paul said more about idolatry than he did the Lord’s Supper, the so-called “hair question” or a number of other things. Those who considered themselves strong were seemingly trying to convince Paul that it was alright for them to go to the temples of idols and eat the feasts. After all, the idol was really nothing anyway. It was just an image. It wasn’t alive, and it surely was not a real god. So what was the problem with going there and eating the meat? They were not worshiping the idol, they thought. They considered it a trivial matter, and those who objected were weak brethren. I have noticed that even in our own day it is often these who say they are “strong” enough to not be affected by going to worldly places and consider us weak who warn against it. However, Paul commanded: “...flee from idolatry” (1 Corinthians 10-14). He knew it was sin for them to be involved in anyway at all.

We have little problem with brethren wanting to go to the idol’s temple in America. However, there were a number

continued on page 8

QUERIST COLUMN

By CLINT DE FRANCE

Question: Can you comment on the first verse of the song, God is So Good To Me, from the new song book? I've heard several people say it is not scriptural and should not be sung.

Answer: Before getting into the particulars of this song, it seems necessary to point out a fundamental fact about song lyrics but one that many seem to misunderstand. Song lyrics almost always involve poetic language. This is true of the massive collection of song lyrics in the Old Testament we call The Book of Psalms. Some of the poetic features used in Psalms include: personification (where inanimate objects like trees, rocks, and water are said to do things that only intelligent beings could do (Psalm 98.8), metaphor (where a person, like God, is said to be something in a figurative sense in order to describe some aspect of His character or nature (Psalm 18.31), anthropomorphism (where spiritual beings, like God, are described as having physical characteristics (Psalm 17.6), anthropopathy (where human emotions are ascribed to God although God does not experience emotions in human fashion (Psalm 74.22), etc.

Because of the figurative and symbolic nature of poetic language, there are several occasions in the Book of Psalms where taking the words literally would result in false doctrine. For example, in Psalm 58.3, The wicked are estranged from the womb; They go astray as soon as they are born, speaking lies. If taken literally, this teaches that infants (at least some of them) are separated from God even in the womb. However, it is absurd to take this statement literally: no one speaks as soon as he is born, lies or otherwise. This is a poetic hyperbole - an exaggeration for the purpose of emphasis. It means that those who became heinous sinners usually begin their criminal career early in life.

It may be that some people are not comfortable with poetic language and would prefer instead wooden literalism. However, scripture clearly shows that God has authorized the use of poetry in worship (Colossians 3.16; Ephesians 5.19), and has used poetry Himself in His revelation! Consequently, it is altogether inappropriate to brand an expression as unscriptural simply because it is poetic, figurative, or accommodative. While there are certainly some unscriptural songs, we should be prudent before taking our penknives to the hymnal and ask if there is perhaps a poetic meaning that we are missing in these words.

With these thoughts in mind, let us consider the verse in question from the song, God is So Good to Me by Videt Polk.

The first verse begins: From up in heaven one day God looked down, saw that the souls of men downward were bound. Some object that this statement impugns the omniscience of God. They challenge that God knows all things, so it is wrong to speak of Him looking down one day. Let the reader consider Psalm 102.19-21: For He looked down from the height of His sanctuary; From heaven the LORD viewed the earth, to hear the groaning of the prisoner, to release those appointed to death, to declare the name of the LORD in Zion, and His praise in Jerusalem...Also, Psalm 14.2-3: The LORD looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek God. They have all turned aside, they have together become corrupt; There is none who

does good, no, not one. One responds, That is just poetry! Indeed, and so is the modern song lyric. In fact, it seems obvious that the song writer had an excellent understanding of these scriptures and actually borrowed the expression straight from the pages of the Bible!

The song in question continues: made Him so sad, He wanted a plan that saved they might be. Some challenge that this expression depicts God as unprepared for the sin of man and denies the eternal foreordination of the gospel. However, let the reader note Genesis 6.6-7, And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. So the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them. Also, 1 Samuel 15.10-11, Now the word of the LORD came to Samuel, saying, I greatly regret that I have set up Saul as king, for he has turned back from following Me, and has not performed My commandments. One responds, That is accommodative language! Indeed, and so is the modern song lyric. As stated above, it is most likely that the lyricist borrowed the expression from the Bible!

Finally, the song states: After all else had failed God sent His son. Some challenge that this makes the mission of Jesus a last-ditch effort, rather than the culmination of God's predetermined plan. Yet, once more, the reader should note Matthew 21:33-39: Hear another parable: There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country. Now when vintage-time drew near, he sent his servants to the vinedressers, that they might receive its fruit. And the vinedressers took his servants, beat one, killed one, and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants, more than the first, and they did likewise to them. Then last of all he sent his son to them, saying, They will respect my son. But when the vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance. So they took him and cast him out of the vineyard and killed him. One responds, But that is the figurative language of parables! Indeed, and the lyric is the figurative language of songs. Once more I suggest that the writer borrowed his expression from the Bible itself!

We must be careful to pay attention to the lyrics of our songs in worship. Singing is an action of the heart as well as the voice, and we should not be singing false doctrine. At the same time, we must realize that God has chosen the language of poetry as a part of His system, and He has included it in worship. Therefore, if you find a song lyric that seems confusing or disconcerting, seek out one who is knowledgeable in the scriptural use of figurative and accommodative language in the Bible, perhaps the brother who edited and published the song book and ask for guidance in how to sing that song with the spirit and the understanding. You will find that your worship life will be richer and better for it.

[Additional note: I want to formally express my appreciation to brother Kevin Presley for the work he does in publishing a song book for Gods people. Clearly, the brotherhood has well-placed confidence in Kevin as a teacher of the Word of God, and I can think of no one among us more qualified to ensure that when we teach and admonish one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs we are doing so in the best and most scriptural way possible. - CED]

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CHRISTIANITY DRAGGED IN THE MUD

By BARNEY OWENS

“Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.” (II Tim. 3:12-13). These remarks are pertinent to every age and race. Godly denotes those who live with piety and holiness suitable to the Christian faith. Will is to will, desire or wish, implying the act of volition. It is often used in cases where wisdom and justice are not apparent, but where the will is absolute. Like the Apostle, those who have the desire to live the Christian life have periods when good and evil principles are brought into close collision and the bystander cannot understand why one will not just “go along with the crowd” rather than pursue his beliefs. Wax is to drive forward as if with repeated strokes, beat forward, beat ahead, push forward, advance. This is descriptive of evil men in contrast to those seeking to do meticulously the will of God. To use a common expression it means these evil characters will “go from bad to worse.” Deceiving and being deceived suggests how these deteriorate from bad to worse. It is through self-deception as well as deceiving others. Paul evidently has in mind some he had personally observed who had repeated falsities so often that they came to believe them as true. I must admit, that I have crossed paths with some in my lifetime that I judged this the case. If you disagree with this conclusion, surely you realize that some men are bent on deceiving others whether they believe their deceptive ways true or do not believe them so.

World conditions are like the rising waves of an angry sea. Never have we a greater need for a rock of ages to which we can cling. Never in my lifetime, has there been a greater need for the unity in the body of Christ to shine in the world with a noble light. Yet, despite the urgency of the times, and the opportunity these times afford, the church seems to be driven by evil men to come apart at the seams. Tensions within and without the church pull at the tie that binds. I suppose that some of this can be expected and even anticipated, first, because the times were stressful from the beginning even though the Apostles walked the earth. Secondly, the church is not a robot but a living organism. The church must grow and deal with things that would hinder and destroy it. And, third, some that have been baptized into Christ (added to the church,) have brought

worldly and religious practices-baggage-unknown to the New Testament with them. Pride, arrogance and self-will have always been (and I suppose ever will be a menace) to the church. Fourth, we recognize and have championed the free moral agency of man with the right to read, study, and come to scriptural conclusions. If the church had an infallible Pope whose words were infallible laws, I suppose that some turmoil would be alleviated. Deliver us from that!

Jesus recognized that Christians were to live in the world, yet He knew there loomed the danger of contamination, a real and deadly threat to the spiritual man. For that reason the Lord prayed to the Father, “I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.” (Jn. 17:15). Doubtless, His prayer and intention was to include the influence of evil men, whose desire is to deceive us.

THE CHURCH AND THE KINGDOMS OF THE WORLD ARE NOT THE SAME

In the judgment hall of the Governor in answer to his question, “Art thou the King of the Jews,” Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but my kingdom is not from hence.” (Jn. 18:36). The kingdom of our Lord and the church are the same people-people “called out of the world” and placed in the Kingdom upon obedience to the Gospel (Col. 1:13 & 18). Without thinking about it, we are all aware that the Kingdoms (Governments) of the world are established and maintained by force and carnal might. However, the Kingdom of Jesus Christ was not established nor is it maintained by the weapons of carnal warfare. The Gospel is not machine gunned into a person and Christians do not capture others, put them in jail or otherwise torture them until they confess Christ. If that was the manner Christ wants us to use, He asserts that He would not have been taken prisoner by the Jews and delivered to Pilate because there would have been a skirmish put up by His followers.

The Jews as religious zealots by bringing Jesus to Pilate had surrendered to a political agenda in order to advance their religion. “And the whole multitude of them arose, and led him unto Pilate. And they began to accuse him, saying, We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, saying that he himself is Christ the King.” (Lk. 23:1-2).

Mixing politics with religion was popular when it was to their advantage. They certainly did not care about Caesar being honored. They serve as an example of what others do to advance a cause. Christians send a look of condemnation in their direction for what they did and how they accomplished their end - calling for the death of Jesus.

Look at the terrorists among us called "Islam." They wage war in the name of Allah taking the physical lives of innocent women and children, even to the point of trying to destroy religions that are different from their own. Politically they use their religion to gain advantage. Americans have historically deplored such acts of violence. There are ways of bringing others to your side besides the use of fear of bodily harm. As Christians, we stand in opposition to their tactics and follow the manner Jesus advocated, which is to gain people by gaining their heart. A person becomes a Christian when he has "obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine" preached from the Book of God (Rom. 6:17).

Viewing the landscape today, we see so called Christianity being dragged to the low point of being used to advance political agenda's. While some speak ill of the Jews as they use their religion to exalt Israel, and bemoan the fact that people of the Muslim persuasion promote their religion to gain advantage either politically or geographic, turn around and practice the same thing. Men like Pat Robertson, Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton calling themselves "Reverend" use a perverted form of Christianity to further their political ideologies. Regarding or discarding their politics, shame on them for low-rating Christianity to the mud! May I add that these men clearly are more interested in filling their pockets and duping their followers than in seeking to please God. Giving them the benefit of the doubt, (trusting that they are not outright hypocrites), if they believe what they are doing is right, they are "deceived" and they are "deceiving" those who blindly follow them. The Apostle indicted such men when he inferred that they use a cloke of covetousness" (I Thes. 2:5). A word to the wise from the Savior: "if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall in the ditch." (Mt. 15: 13).

WHILE ON THIS MAY I MENTION TWO IMPORTANT THINGS

1. The use of the word "Reverend" as a religious title for men. The men named are not the only ones guilty of attaching the title to themselves for advantage. The

word "reverend" is found but a single time in the Bible. David used it in Psalm 111:9 when speaking of God, "holy and reverend is his name." The meaning is that God is terrible and men in recognition of His great might and justice in judging human frailties should fear lest we fail to obey His commandments bringing displeasure to Him. No man is worthy of such homage; therefore, it is irresponsible for a man to place such a title before or after his name. Such titles are foreign to the spirit and statements of the Word of God. Our Lord was quite severe in denouncing the use of religious titles. Speaking to the Pharisees of His day, the Lord said, "all their works they do for to be seen of men... And love the uppermost rooms at the feasts, and chief seats in the synagogues, And greetings in the markets, and to be called Rabbi, Rabbi. But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven." (Mt. 23:5- 9). The title of "Rabbi" was one that was earned among the Jews, yet, the Lord said this marks a separation among the people, therefore it should not be used. The men that take such titles unto themselves wish to show the superiority of themselves over common folk, or looking in the opposite direction, they desire to demonstrate the inferiority of we commoners to them. Shame on any man that calls himself "Reverend" a Biblical word used to designate God. Let me go a little further. When brethren in the church for which Jesus died are want to use titles to separate themselves from other members of the body they are equally as wrong. Taking words that are used to describe "A work" and place it on a signboard pointing to a certain man is contrary to the spirit of Jesus Christ. Some young men who aren't shaving yet seek recognition thinking that a title makes them "somewhat" is the fruit of what we who are older have sown. Shame on us!

2. Some ask: Doesn't the fact that these men are sincere allow God to overlook their error? It is not my place to say what God is allowed. The only thing I can go by is what He has revealed to us. Whether a man is sincere or insincere has nothing to do with the matter of what is right and what is wrong, what is good or what is evil, what is righteous or what is sinful. Was Uzzah sincere when he saw the "Ark of the Covenant" sway and fearing it would fall and be crushed, put forth his hand to steady it? Regardless, he died the moment he touched it. Was Lot's wife sincere when she peeped back toward Sodom? Doesn't matter, she died the moment she saw

the flaming city. When people use Christianity (albeit a perverted or corrupted form of it), to further their political ends Christianity is dragged through the mud giving the atheist ammunition to thwart the Lord's Cause. Anyone with normal reasoning powers can see that the principle is the same as used by the Israelis and Islam.

CHRISTIANITY TURNED INTO PAGANISM

The occurrences of our modern world more and more place Christianity on the level of Paganism. Some who "claim to be Christians" act more like Pagans than Pagans themselves. At times, the similarity startles the observer. An outstanding characteristic of Pagan practices (ancient and modern), is that they use their (so called) "gods" to their own purposes. Religion becomes to them a device used to manipulate, placate and otherwise control these "gods" for their own purposes and ends. Pseudo Christians have the same spirit in their attempt to convert and order God to take up their cause and aid them in their particular endeavors. Can we deny that their idea is to perform a few rituals or appropriate the name Christian to some far-fetched endeavor obligating God to take their side and somehow demands that others condone it. In addition, if any stand opposed to them or their endeavor, the advocates think that person arrays himself against the Almighty. God becomes a personal Genie and with a little practice the number of times we have to rub Him brings the desired blessings. Exaggerating? I think not! Look at the conditions around us, as these religious charlatans are hard at work deceiving the masses. "For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple." (Rom. 16:18).

CHRISTIANITY AND POLITICS

Some of my brethren in Christ attempt to bring God down to our levels and make Him our servant rather than the other way around. Not to the extent, those mentioned above practice it, but it is done. The Kingdom of Christ is NOT of this world. Deceive ourselves as we may, God has not granted us the right to run the affairs of the KINGDOMS OF MEN. As a teenager, I recall a brother making the remark that he voted against a man running for President because he was a Roman Catholic, It so happens that he won and did become President. And, the man that opposed him (who was NOT a Roman Catholic) was later elected President and although he protested "I am not a crook, " was indeed a shyster.

That was not surprising to students of the scripture. Christians need to pay attention to God's word. Daniel remarked (4:17), "that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdoms of men, and giveth it to whosoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men. " Do you think you can change that? Do you think you can change God's mind? Do you think that by some ritual (voting) that you can obligate God to you? Some Christians are like Sarah when God promised that Abraham and she would have a son: "Sarah laughed" disbelieving that God would accomplish what he said, Others are like her when she gave her husband her handmaiden to bear a son for him. Such Christians evidently decide they will help God out by voting the best man to office. Often brethren and sisters the similarity between Pagans and us is all too great.

PAGES FROM THE PAST

The following article by Brother Homer A. Gay was published in the January 1945 issue of The Old Paths Advocate. Brother Gay writes about our Savior and how he was "despised and rejected" by man. Brother Gay points out, that in reality, the only who was not despicable in the whole crucifixion scene was our Savior. -Rick Martin

Despised and Rejected By Homer A. Gay

Fulfilling the prophecy literally, Jesus at the time of His trial and crucifixion was "despised and rejected of men" (Isa. 53:3). But, while it was the Christ, who was despised it was the other figures in the pitiful drama who were despicable. Practically, every man whose name is mentioned in the tragic story behaved in a most despicable manner.

Judas is the recorded traitor in the drama (Matt. 26:47, etc.). He had been a disgruntled disciple all the while, and the record declares him to be a thief. But it was his betrayal of his Master for blood money that gave him his unenviable record. He appears in the shadow of the cross with 30 pieces of silver in his hand, a heart as black as the ace of spades, and fades out of the picture as a self-destroyer (Matt. 27:5).

Peter's part in the drama is also a shabby part. He had boasted that even if all others forsook the lord, he would die before he left Him (Matt. 26:33-35). But cowardice gripped him at the last, and he fled from the Master. Later on he was to laugh at death and defy the world,

as he plead the cause of the lord, but in the hour of his Master's danger he denied with an oath that he even knew Him.

No less despicable was the part played by Pilate. He permitted the government he represented to be mobbed by the rabble. He found no fault in Jesus of Nazareth, and as the head of the government he pronounced Him faultless (Lk. 23:4). He made a halfhearted effort to save His life; but he feared insurrection and yielded to the mob. He released a robber whose guilt was undenied and delivered to the mob the Man he had pronounced innocent of all wrong. He washed his hands as a sign that he would have no part in the death of an innocent man, but 2,000 years have not been long enough to wash the stain from his reputation. And just here I would say with the poet:

“No soap that I have ever seen can make a man like that look clean;

For what I say of him is true: that man was dirty through and through.

I think today, those who have the power, that's needed in the trying hour

And fail that power to exercise, stand guilty in the Savior's eyes.”

Nor is there anything commendable in the actions of the public at that time. The people who crowded around the seat of authority and demanded the blood of the most stainless character in history were a part of the people who less than a week before had acclaimed His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. They knew nothing of what they were doing when they greeted Jesus as a king, and they knew no more when they demanded His execution—they merely followed the crowd as most people do today.

The only character in the play that did not play a despicable part was the Man who was “despised and rejected.” Sharp as the nails that pierced His hands and feet was the knowledge that He had been forsaken by His most intimate associates, sold and betrayed by a long-time companion, and blasphemously denied by His leading disciple. Literally He was compelled to “Tread the winepress alone, for, of the people, there were none with Him” (Isa. 63:3). But there was neither bitterness nor resentment in the heart of the forsaken, betrayed, and dying Master. His very death rattle voiced a prayer for those who killed Him.

When I think of all the Lord has done for me I am

constrained to say: “I'll be a friend to Jesus, my life for Him I'll spend; So, while on earth I'm living, my Lord shall have a friend.”

REPENT OR PERISH

By PAUL O. NICHOLS

Repentance is a change of mind that results in a change of conduct. 10 Luke 13:3 Jesus said, “I tell you, Nay, but except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (as others who perished because of sin). It is impossible to misunderstand the plain and unequivocal statement of facts that if one is not penitent for the sins in his life, there is no hope of salvation for him. In Acts 3:19 the apostle Peter cried out, “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out...” A person may regret some act of sin he has committed, but he may not resolve that he will never do it again. Just feeling sorry for a wrong is not indication a person has repented. Listen to the apostle Paul who states, “For godly sorrow worketh repentance unto salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death” (2 Cor. 7:10). Apparently there is a difference between godly sorrow and the sorrow of this world. Godly sorrow prompts a person to not only regret the action, but leads him to determine not to be guilty of the same sin again under any circumstance. Worldly sorrow, on the other hand, may be the result of his being caught or his sin being exposed. This kind of sorrow does not result in genuine repentance. He may determine to be more sly the next time, or that he will “cover his tracks” better so as not to be caught again. Many a person has gone to prison because of this attitude.

The Bible teaches us that “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). In fact, the apostle Paul writes to the Romans and says, “We have before proved both Jews and gentiles that they are all under sin” (Rom. 3:9). The all who have sinned are the same all who must repent of their sins in order to be saved. However, there are other things a sinner may do rather than repent of his sins. He may do as Gehazi who denied his wrong doing when confronted by his master (2 Kings 5:20, 21). Or one may try to cover his sin, as David did, by hiding the evidence. The sinner might not deny his sin, but just try to justify it as did Adam and Eve when they were guilty of eating the forbidden fruit (Gen. 3:11-13). But the Lord says, to the sinner, “ye have sinned against the Lord: and be sure your sin will find you out (Num. 32:23).

Repentance that saves is repentance toward God - “repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord

Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21). In other words, the sins that we have committed are offensive to the Lord, and therefore must be forgiven by Him. We are compelled to give them up, and make up our minds to not do those things again because they offend our God. This is the result of Godly sorrow.

When Cornelius and the other Gentiles were converted, the Jewish brethren at Jerusalem said, “Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life” (Acts 11:18). Repentance toward the Lord is repentance “unto life”.

The word of God indicates that repentance unto life is produced by different things. First, the apostle Paul wrote to the Romans and said, “...despise thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God” (Rom. 2:4, 5). The person who refuses to accept the influence of the goodness of God can only look forward to his wrath in the day of Judgment. “For there is no respect of persons with God (Rom. 2:11). “But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons” (Col. 3:25).

The certainty of judgment causes people to ponder their fate. The inspired writer says, “Behold therefore the goodness and the severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off” (Rom. 11:22). Yes, “...it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment...” (Heb. 9:27). “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men...” (2 Cor. 5:10, 11). When a person is persuaded he is lost and undone and without God unless he repents of his sins, and that he must face the Lord in this condition, then surely he can see the urgent need to repent of his sins to obtain the Lord’s forgiveness.

In the first law of pardon for the alien sinner repentance is a requirement; without it one cannot be saved. And in the second law of pardon for the erring child of God, it is just as much a requirement.

The Lord wants to save. In fact, God is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9). REPENT OR PERISH!

GOD’S PLAN continued from page one

them for this purpose. He is Paul’s beloved son in the faith. He trusts Timothy because he has seen his faith in action. It amazes me that when congregations call a preacher in to assist them in a work in the church they sometimes do not investigate to see if he is faithful. Most preachers are likable and it is easy to not investigate them. But the Lord has not come and as long as he delays his coming we have to make sure we keep false brethren out of the pulpit.

The Lord willing the next article will give us Paul’s actions that will take place when he next visits them.

MODERN IDOLATRY continued from page two

of things that went along with such practice. Revelling and banqueting were usually present at the idol’s feasts. That was the idea of having a big party where all eat and drink to excess and no rules are enforced. Some want to be involved in that today, but it is just as wrong now as then. Fornication and other forms of immorality were commonly associated with idol’s feasts, so it is small wonder Paul warned against it. Perhaps we do not realize how closely associated some of the common sins of today are with idolatry. Remember Paul said, “flee from idolatry.” (1 Corinthians 10:14) The reason for this is found in verse 7 where he wrote, “neither be ye idolaters as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.”

The eating and drinking was, apparently idolatrous worship. That’s what he is talking about in this context. So, the eating of meat here was not just a meal at all, was it? Perhaps it may have been to some of the Corinthian brethren (at least in their own minds) but to others who saw them eat it at the idol’s temple, they were in fellowship with the idol and actual worshipping it. So Paul is definitely concerned with what others think of us. Whether we want to admit it or not, the Bible does not allow us to live and eat in a way that leaves the wrong impression or violates the conscience of others. We simply are not allowed to do that. It is wrong for me to publicly go to places and engage in practices that others are convinced are wrong. We may believe it is permissible. However, if it becomes controversial and the church can be harmed, we must leave it alone. I am not allowed to do anything that compromises my ability or influence to teach another the truth no matter what it is.

In 1 Corinthians 10:15 Paul said, “I speak as to wisemen, judge ye what I say This is by no means to be understood as a compliment to those Corinthians. They are not really, wise. No one who is really wise will do what they did!” In an earlier chapter (chapter 4), he had soundly chastised those in Corinth who considered themselves very learned and wise. They thought they were even greater than Paul and other apostles. This seems to be a sarcasm. In other words, if you are so wise, listen to what I say. Then in verse 16 he said, “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?” This verse, though it certainly applies to the Lord’s Supper, was not spoken as an explanatory statement. Rather, it was stated as an argument against their idolatrous practice. This is the context. I used to wonder why this verse was found here instead of over in chapter 11 where the Communion is the subject. His point was this: just as the people at the temple of the idol showed their fellowship with the idol by being there and eating the meat in worship, so it was with the Lord’s Supper. How could they fail to see the conflict of interest? Could they really have fellowship with the temple of idols (devils) and also the Lord’s table? Of course not! Paul is showing that when they went to the temple of idols and sat down to eat the meat there (though they did not believe in the idol and did not consider what they did as worship), they appeared to have fellowship with the ideals represented by the idol. He showed in verse 20 that the Devil was the one really behind it, and he did not want them to have fellowship with the devils. In verse 21 he said, “Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord’s table, and of the table of devils.” It was not physically impossible for them to do this, for some of the Corinthians were doing that very thing. However, it was morally wrong or sinful. The word “cannot” in this verse, in Greek, is said to mean that it was forbidden. Paul would not that they appear to fellowship both the Lord and the Devil by sitting at both tables and appearing to worship both. Brethren, we had better think about what we do on Saturday night, where we go and then what we do on Lord’s day. Our actions may very well be just as incompatible as what the Corinthians were doing. God forbid that we be so foolish! More later. -DLK

GOOD THOUGHTS

ADAPTED

Can The Lord (And Your Local Congregation) Depend On You?

You flip the switch ON and expect there to be light. You begin your day with a trusty alarm clock - one that keeps accurate time and never fails to sound the alarm on time. Without it, you’d be late every day.

You turn on the light switch and immediately the room is illuminated.

You turn the faucet on to brush your teeth. The water flows - just as it always does.

The automatic coffee maker has kicked in - right on time. You grab a cup and head out the door, car keys in hand.

You open the car door, put the key in the ignition and turn it. The car starts.

These simple everyday habits are necessary. Each of them hinges on reliability - you depend on these things so you can get your day started. Your day is full of similar situations that you take for granted because reliability is something you assume will always be there - until it fails.

If you get up and turn on the faucet and nothing comes out - you’re frustrated. You need water. How can you get your day started without water? You say to yourself, “Not today!”

You depend on many things each day. Without dependability or reliability your life would be almost impossible. Simply try to list the things in your life upon which you depend - daily. It will be a very long list.

Yet - in the Lord’s Church people often avoid reliability. Some people don’t like to be dependable.

Dependable. Trustworthy. Consistent.

Does that describe your place in the local congregation?

The simple act of public worship happens three times each week, but almost every congregation with which we’ve ever been associated suffers from some members who are unreliable. Some members enjoy showing up when they want, going elsewhere when they like, or simply staying home when it suits them.

Can the congregation depend on you to always be there unless sickness or something beyond your control prevents it? If not, why not?

The work required to maintain the physical facilities of the church building rarely rely on more than a small

number of people. There's usually one or two people who mow the yard. Others are content to let them do it. Most congregations try to get people to sign up to clean the building, but normally you can count on one hand those willing to tackle that thankless chore. Again, the number of reliable people is usually very small. It's always easier to let somebody else do it.

Visiting the sick or elderly, studying the Scripture with people (members or nonmembers), helping those with problems and challenges - again, these tasks normally fall to the hands of only a few.

The Pareto Principle - also known as the 80/20 rule - always seem accurate. Namely, it seems that 80% of the work is done by only 20% of the people. Or, only 20% of the people are really reliable - people you can always count on for whatever must be done.

What makes the difference? Why are some in the 20% and others in the 80%?

Desire.

That's it. Simply, desire. Some want to be dependable while others are unwilling to be responsible.

It isn't talent.

It isn't skill.

It isn't opportunity.

It just boils down to will and willingness. Those who are willing to be reliable and work to make it so, are. Those who don't want to be dependable, are not.

Accountability is often an issue. Some of us don't like to be held accountable. We rather enjoy showing up for services if we want - and staying home if want. And we don't much like folks checking up on us to find out where we were. We may want to be left alone. We'd like to tell others, "Listen, if I'm there - I'm there. If I'm not, then I'm not. It's none of your business." We're wrong, of course - but that's how people sometimes behave. We like our privacy. But rarely do such people comprehend the honest concern brethren have when they see others drifting, growing weak or losing interest in the Lord's Church.

The same attitude is manifested in all Kingdom endeavors. "Work? Don't count on me. If I'm there, fine. But if I'm not, don't be shocked."

What if your alarm clock, or light switch, or faucet,

coffee-maker or car ignition worked that way? You'd fix or replace them - that's what. You wouldn't tolerate it because you understand that life cannot be managed like that. You need these things to work, all the time - every time!

Why shouldn't the Lord's work happen as reliably as your alarm clock? Or be as dependable as your light switch? Or faucet? Or coffee-maker? Or your car's ignition?

Isn't the work of the Church more urgent and important than those things? Then why do some members treat it with such contempt or apathy?

The amazing thing about reliability in the Lord's Kingdom, the Church, is that it's not a complicated issue to fix. It can be fixed fast! All that's required is a person's willingness to become reliable - then to follow through by doing the things dependable people do.

- Show up 100% of the time - on time.
- Do things for the Church.
- Do things for others.
- Always be accountable.
- Let others know what's happening with you.
- Find out what's happening with others.
- Let others count on you.
- Show your interest in the Church, the congregation and the brethren.

Making that decision may be the toughest part of being dependable. But the rewards are incredible. You'll find yourself doing things - and regretting that you weren't doing them sooner. You'll find people relying on you - and it will feel great. You'll find yourself and your family being more engaged in the work of the Church. The Church will become more precious to you, and your family will reap the rewards. Brethren will become more important to you. You'll grow closer to other members. Your love for the church will grow.

The Lord's work will prosper because YOU are involved - dependable - reliable. The congregation will thrive. Your life will improve. Your family's spiritual welfare will improve. The benefits will far outweigh the small price you'll pay for being reliable!

In time, you'll experience some frustration with those 80% who continue to be lackluster in their service and unreliable for the work of the Lord. But you may be able to help them make the decision

you made - to number themselves among those who are trustworthy. Perhaps over time you can reverse that 80/20 and help create a congregation where 80% of the members are working, not just 20%. Lord willing, with enough dedication and hard work you can build a church where 100% of the members are engaged in the effort.

The Lord's work needs everybody. More importantly, everybody needs the Lord and the Church. We all depend on God to save us through His Son Jesus Christ. We count on God to be true. The question is ...

Can God depend on us to take up our rightful place in His Kingdom, the Church, and do our part? -OPA



Bonds of Matrimony

BARNES-HARGIS - On July 15, 2017 Evan Barnes of Springfield, Mo. and Casey Hargis of Somerset, KY., were united in marriage before a large crowd that gathered on the front lawn at the farm home of Casey's parents. The visitors were seated on bales of straw. Evan and Casey stood before an arch tastefully decorated with lights and flowers. God provided the rest of the decorations. To the east one could see cows grazing quietly in a steep hill pasture surrounding a large pond. To the south, a barn, a road, and across a valley another steep meadow of green that intersected with a patch of beautiful trees. In this setting Evan and Casey pledged themselves to each other as rays of the setting sun broke through the clouds on the western horizon, holding the darkness at bay, just long enough for the ceremony to be completed. Evan is the son of Tony and Dawn Barnes. Casey is the daughter of Mark and Marsha Hargis. Evan is a 5th generation Christian in the Barnes family reaching back to the church at Hale, Arkansas. Casey is a 5th generation Christian in the Cromer family reaching back through the church at Walnut Grove, Ky. Evan and Casey met at the 4th of July meeting at Springfield. Evan is making a good leader in the public worship services. Casey has a sweet and endearing personality. She is quiet and mild mannered yet demonstrates a strong commitment to Christ and His church. Evan and Casey live near Springfield and worship with the church that meets at Pleasant View. I was honored to perform their ceremony. -Irvin Barnes

Our Departed

BLOSS - Judy Kay Bloss, 68, of Lavalette, WV, passed away from this life on Tuesday, May 30, 2017, at the Emogene Dolin Jones Hospice House in Huntington, WV. Her memorial service was conducted on Friday, June 2, 2017, at 12pm at the Reger Funeral Chapel by Brother Philip Scott of Corbin, KY. Judy was a splendid homemaker and a faithful member of the Church of Christ on Garretts Creek Road in Wayne, WV. She was a member of the Lord's church for more than 40 years. She is survived by her husband of 49 years, Thomas "Tom" Bloss; children and spouses, Michelle and Wyn Baker and Gregg and Jennifer Bloss; four grandchildren, Bethany and Drew Baker and Gracie and Braden Bloss, all of Lavalette. Judy was a beautiful, kind, and godly Christian lady. She spent her time wisely on this earth. She was always concerned about the plight of others and conducting herself in a way God approved. The last few years of her life were spent dealing with a lot of health issues. In spite of her health, she always presented herself with poise, dignity and with a smile on her face. She was talented in gardening, sewing, cooking and decorating and she cherished her grandchildren beyond words. Judy lived as an example of godliness before all, and will not be forgotten due to her influence and lasting good works. While she is physically gone from us now, we rest peacefully in the hope that her reward in Christ outweighs the struggles she faced here. We ask for your prayers, as our family continues to press on toward the mark for the prize of the high calling, as we long for a happy reunion someday on the other shore. -Wyn Baker - Lavalette, WV.

Field Reports

Herman Cola - Friday, September 29, 2017. Greetings in the name of the Jesus Christ, the author and finisher of our faith, as we continue to serve the Lord. Here in Palawan Philippines is now a rainy season. Many of us suffer TYPHOID FEVER including my daughter Hannah. The work of the Lord here in Palawan Island is still going. Last August 26, 2017 we had a day Bible Study in our Congregation at Malis, Brooke's Point, Palawan. This coming Saturday, September 30, 2017 our Bible study is going to be held at Taruzan Congregation, Bataraza, Palawan. Pray for this work and pray for each one of us to be one family in the Lord. Thank you for your unending love to us as your brethren in the Lord. Regards to the whole congregation and to your family circle. God Bless You always.

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THE BACK PAGE...

THE PUBLIC READING OF SCRIPTURE

By CARL M. JOHNSON

I was very pleased when I learned a great-nephew of mine is scheduled to do the public reading of Scripture at his home congregation at the mid-week service tomorrow night. The news reminded me of occasions when I was a teenager and I was asked to do the public reading. On one occasion a preacher asked me just before services to read his text for him and I dutifully got up and read 1 Corinthians, chapter 11. However, the preacher followed me and spoke on 2 Corinthians, chapter 11. He told me after services that I did a good job reading, but I read the wrong chapter. As he walked away he mused to himself, "I guess they thought I was going to preach on the hair question tonight."

I learned from the experience that if you are asked to read the Scriptures publicly, you should be given enough notice to prepare yourself properly. God's Word deserves our best efforts. To stand at the front of a church and read the Bible is to stand in the place of God and proclaim His Word.

Once you have been assigned a passage, you should spend some time making sure you understand it. You need to know to whom was it written and for what purpose was it written? Know in advance what you are going to say by way of introduction and conclusion.

Once you have a basic understanding of the passage, you will need to practice reading it aloud. If you are halting, stumbling, and mispronouncing words, you are not serving the congregation as well as you can.

Do not be surprised if you find yourself a little bit nervous at least the first few times you read. This nervousness typically causes people to go too quickly-to run to the front, to speed-read, and to run back to the safety of the pews. When in doubt, slow down.

Practice varying your tone and pace, but be careful that you do not become an actor delivering a dramatic presentation-this is not Shakespeare! Your task is to read the Scripture in a way that helps the listeners to understand it without drawing attention to yourself.

The public reading of Scripture, however, is not merely for the purpose of training young men. It has always had a very important role in the assemblies of the church. Paul mentions to Timothy three elements in the public ministry of God's Word, "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine" (1 Tim. 4:13).

The word "reading" refers to "the reading aloud of the Scriptures in the public worship" (Interlinear Greek-English NT 827). Just as the reading aloud of the Scriptures was a prominent feature in the assemblies of Jewish synagogues (Lk. 4:16; Acts 15:21; 2 Cor. 3: 14), it remained a prominent feature in the public assemblies of the early church (Col. 4:16; 1 Thes. 5:27).

Paul instructs Timothy to read the Word of God aloud, exhort the congregation to follow the message of the text, and then teach them a fuller understanding of the text's meaning. Modern-day sermons should be based upon these three elements (Cf. Rom. 12:7-8, and 1 Tim. 6:2).

The word "attendance" means to "devote yourself to; to be absorbed in." The ministry of God's Word that begins with the public reading of Scripture is something Timothy cannot neglect (1 Tim. 4:14). It is to be the most important thing he does.

Some of the teachers in Ephesus are devoting themselves to the teaching of false doctrines and promoting division and departure from the faith (1 Tim. 1 :4; 4:1). By contrast Timothy is to build the congregation by devoting himself to the PUBLIC READING OF THE SCRIPTURES. Paul sees the public sounding of the Word as a safeguard against false teaching. I have noticed in recent years that a lot of churches have almost dispensed with the public reading of God's Word and treat it as something of an afterthought that wastes time. As one commentator says, "They have time for ... endless announcements, but no time for the reading of the Bible." I will give you "book, chapter, and verse" for every point I make in a sermon, but I admit I have omitted the public reading of a sermon text on many occasions, especially if the text is lengthy.

However, I have been to churches that have a schedule on the board for public reading, and they maintain the schedule even during gospel meetings. It is actually refreshing to see public reading given a more prominent role in our services.

What if we all treated the public reading of Scripture as more than just the precursor or setup for the sermon? Hearing someone read the Word is a different experience than reading silently to oneself. A well-prepared and gifted reader can bring out the meaning of a text in a way that listeners can experience the Bible in a rich and powerful manner. cmjthebackpage@gmail.com