

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

OLD PATHS ADVOCATE

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

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

VOL. XCIV

NO. 10

“BIBLE WARNINGS”

BY CARL M. JOHNSON

The practice of communities keeping watch and warning its inhabitants of impending danger is almost as old as civilization. There is a scene that recurs often in the OT of watchmen stationed upon hills outside of a community. No one knows for sure when an enemy might descend upon the community in some grim raid, and the success of the raid will depend upon its being unexpected. Life is filled with nervousness.

Occasionally, some desperate watchman, who has narrowly escaped with his life and nothing more, will burst into the community and shout “Set the trumpet to your lips, sound the alarm, the foe is here!” (Cf. Hosea 8:1). The trumpet blasts its warning through a startled land, and the peacefulness of the night is shattered. In every street you hear the sound of hurrying footsteps and the anxious whispering of people speaking low, because fear is already knocking at the doors of their hearts as they head for shelter.

In World War II sirens warned Allied communities of impending air raids. Today in Oklahoma, communities are warned of tornadoes by a siren with a loud, distinctive whine. The sirens have saved untold numbers of lives through the years by warning people in time for them to take shelter.

It is bewildering to me, however, that most people in every age will respond to civil defense warnings and yet they will not respond to the warnings of God.

God’s Word is replete with warnings. Paul warns the Corinthians of the danger of falling into unfaithfulness. He reminds them of many of their forefathers in the days of Moses who failed for various reasons to remain faithful. He concludes that their mistakes are examples

that we too can fall away and be lost. He warns, “Wherefore let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall” (1 Cor. 10:12).

Paul also warns, “that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith” (1 Tim. 4:1). He reminds the elders of Ephesus “that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears” (Acts 20:31). Peter warns Christians of the danger of false teachers (2 Pet. 2:1-3), and later says, “Beware, lest you also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness” (3:17).

Such expressions as warn, forewarn, admonish, instruct, beware, and take heed are found throughout the entire Bible. Such warnings are meaningless if it is impossible for a child of God to fall from God’s grace and be lost eternally.

Sixteenth century reformer John Calvin (1509-1564) popularized the doctrine of “once saved, always saved.” He developed a system of theology that his followers organized into five major points represented by the acronym TULIP. The last point is the “Perseverance of the saints.” It is the conclusion that once a person has been saved by the miraculous, predestinated, direct operation of the Holy Spirit upon his heart, he can never sin again in such a way as to be eternally lost. Calvinists argue that if a Christian is lost on Judgment Day, it will be proof the person was never actually saved to begin with. Foy E. Wallace Jr. offers this terse summary of Calvinism, “If you seek it, you can’t find it; if you find it, you can’t get it; if you get it, you can’t lose it; and if you lose it, you never had it” (Hugh Fulford Spiritual Sword April 2013, p. 13). This is the best summary of Calvin’s convoluted theology I have ever read. President Thomas Jefferson, however, has even harsher words for the evils of Calvinism:

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SUBSCRIPTION RATES

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

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

Editorial

SOME FINAL THOUGHTS ABOUT WISDOM

By DON L. KING

Our last two editorials have had to do with wisdom. Just a few more thoughts are in order. James 3:18 says: "And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace." James McKnight (Apostolical Epistles page 596) translates this verse as follows: "Besides, the fruit of righteousness with peace, is sown by them who practice peace." In other words, those who practice peace are usually those who are known to live in peace. A steady, thoughtful, calm attitude may save the day. It is there that the fruit, or product, of righteousness will come to light.

Of all the important and precious attributes needed within the church today, few are greater than a person who is a peacemaker. Many of us have lived through the terrible times of division. We have often remarked that family trouble or church trouble are among the most worrisome things in this world. Either one will be the last thing we remember before finally falling into a troubled, and fitful sleep. Then, one or the other will likely be the first thing we think of when we awaken in the morning. Many times, an argument takes place simply because someone feels they just have to have the last word. Sometimes, such arguments were unnecessary in the first place. The disagreement may not even have been regarding scripture, but some irrelevant matter. In fact, we usually don't disagree about what the Bible says, but about something it doesn't say. A peacemaker is wonderful during such stressful times.

We appreciate the words of Doug Edwards on page 181 of his commentary of James 3. We quote: "Division is a terrible thing. It is the product of earthly, sensual, and devilish wisdom. Christians should deplore the division of the Lord's body. There can be a worse evil than division, however, and that is when truth is sacrificed in order to have unity. When truth is sacrificed, true unity does not exist. Jesus plainly warns that He came with a sword, not to bring this false peace to mankind (Matthew 10: 34-37). Paul says to mark those who cause divisions (Romans 16:16) and reject the factious man (Titus 3:10). In our experience, when brethren sacrifice what is right in order to have peace, the matter is soon

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**IDENTIFYING MARKS OF THE NEW
TESTAMENTS CHURCH PART 2**

By MELVIN BLALOK

Editor's note: We continue to offer articles from a series by Brother Melvin Blalok of Cleburne, Texas - Greg Gay

In the previous article we wrote concerning the identifying marks of the New Testament church. We stated that the church is a New Testament institution, and that Jesus is the builder of it, Matt. 16:18. In fact, Jesus promised during His ministry that he would build His church, showing that it was yet in the future. He made this promise while the Old Testament remained in force. When Jesus died on the cross the Old Testament came to an end and His death initiated the New Testament. It required the death of Christ for the church to be purchased by His blood, Acts 20:28.

Some have mistakenly believed that John the Baptist was the founder of the church. This false idea may have come about because Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, Matt. 3:13-16. John came to prepare the ways of the Lord, Matt. 3:1-3, but it was not his mission to begin the church. John understood his mission very well. We find him uttering these significant words: "You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ,' but, 'I have been sent before Him.' He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. Therefore, this joy of mine is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease. He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all," John 3:28-31.

John the Baptist described himself as a friend of the bridegroom. He pointed to Jesus as the bridegroom. He said of Jesus, "He must increase, but I must decrease." His mission was nearly complete as he spoke these words. John the Baptist was executed by the order of King Herod, even before Jesus made the promise to build His church. We read of this tragic event recorded in Matt. 14:1-10.

It is two chapters later, in the Gospel of Matthew that we read the wonderful promise of Jesus, ".....and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it," Matt. 16:18.

John said, "He who has the bride is the bridegroom." We learned in previous articles that the church is the bride of Christ, 2 Cor. 11:2; Rev. 19:7-8. Originally published December 7, 2020. 214 Pearl St., Cleburne, TX 76031 (807) 641-1668 melvinblalock@sbcglobal.net



*Wedding of Ronny and Alfreda Wade
with M. Lynwood Smith - June 1955*

HE SEES!

By RICK MARTIN

After Jesus performed the miracle of feeding the multitude, he told his disciples to board their boat and cross back over the Sea of Galilee. This is something they had done several times. However, this time something was different ... Jesus sent them across alone and stayed behind.

As night began to fall, the disciples waved goodbye to Jesus, perhaps expecting a leisurely cruise to the other side. Halfway across the sea, a storm strikes, and progress is impossible. The disciples break their backs

pulling over and over at the oars, but the wind is against them. It is all they can do to stay afloat, and they find themselves in a very stormy situation.

The disciples were stuck in the middle of the sea, and they thought they were completely cut off from the Lord. But they were not. The Bible tells us that He was intently watching them and knew everything that was going on: Mark 6:48, "He saw them toiling at the rowing, for the wind was contrary unto them."

Life is often like a placid stream: weeks, months and even years flow by without a ripple, a trouble, or anxiety; nothing to show the direction of life. But sooner or later some difficulty, bereavement, or trial comes to test us, and the true character of our life is revealed.

Much like it was for the disciples on this occasion, we sometimes face contrary winds and rugged waves. It is difficult dealing with the ups and downs of everyday living. I am sure that each of us can think of times in our lives when we have felt overwhelmed by the cares of this world. Sometimes we may feel like we are in the middle of a sea with the wind and waves beating against our vessel. We feel swept away by our problems, by our difficulties, and cannot seem to find a way out.

There are times when the storms of life get us down. It is in those times we need some help. We need someone to calm our troubled, stormy life. Where do we go, who do we turn to for help? Some may go to a trusted friend or relative. Others turn to a counselor or seek advice from good books. But are these things really the best options? What about the Bible, is there something in it that might offer a solution?

In the parallel account of our story in Matthew 14, we see that Jesus makes six statements:

First, we see He says, "Take courage." These words tell us there is no reason to wonder what the future might hold. Jesus tells us to be courageous and always to trust him when life seems uncertain. We must place our faith and our confidence in Him when the storms of life surround us.

The second thing He says is, "It is I." What a great statement! How wonderful it is to know that Jesus is present. Jesus can defeat and overcome any storm that comes our way. It doesn't matter what kind of problem

or difficulty we might face, when Jesus is present in our lives, all is well.

The third statement of Jesus is, "Don't be afraid." How wonderful! Remember the relief you felt as a little child when your mother or daddy would say don't be afraid. There is no reason to be afraid of anything or any person here upon this earth. When we put our faith and our trust in Jesus Christ all fear is driven away. Why, because He is with us.

The fourth statement is very simple he says, "Come." What a great invitation. Jesus invites us to come to Him. He is the only true option in this world. Jesus has already done his part, and now he wants us to come unto him to receive the gift of salvation.

The fifth statement of Jesus is, "You of little faith." We may be overwhelmed by the storms in our lives much as Peter was by the waves that surrounded him. We may find ourselves in need of stronger faith, but that only gives us more of a reason to trust Him. We must take the hand of Jesus and day by day our faith in him will grow stronger.

And finally, Jesus makes this statement, "Why did you doubt?" Jesus can give comfort, peace, and salvation. There is no reason for us to live with fear, or doubt, or anxiety. Jesus is just as willing and able to do the same thing for us as he did for Peter. He can calm our troubled lives; He invites us to come to Him. He extends His loving hand of salvation and longs for us to place our faith in Him. There is no reason to have any doubts when Jesus is by our side. He will safely lead us through the storms of life.

Safely through the storm with Jesus, I am clinging near his side, tho the waves are rough and rolling with the Lord I will abide.

The storms of life reveal how deep our faith is. It is in the storms where we find if our faith in God is real or fake. Jesus wants us to know that no storm will ever be able to separate us from the God who cares for us. Paul tells us about that in Romans 8:35-39 "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more

than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Think now about the apostle Peter. Peter went through some very difficult storms in his life. It seemed that Peter always was saying something and then later regretting what he said. He got himself in trouble by saying many things without thinking what the consequences might be. These storms enabled him to mature as a disciple of Jesus Christ and to later write some very useful words; 1 Pet. 1:6-7 “Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.”

Gold is one of man’s most prized possessions. When gold goes through a refining process, the impurities are removed, and gold becomes very precious. Peter states that faith is like that, but faith is much more valuable than gold. Our faith is refined and purified by the trials, the struggles, and by the storms of life. When our faith goes through that process, it becomes deeper and stronger than ever before. But also, as our faith goes through that process, it can become weak and fall apart. We must be very careful that our faith remains strong. Sometimes our faith may be shattered when the storms in our life did not get any calmer. In those situations, what did we do? Did we allow the storms to strengthen our faith in God? Or did those storms drive us farther away from him? If Jesus can control the storms of the sea, then certainly he can control the storms in our life as well. If we are faithful and obedient, Jesus sees us in the good times and in the bad. He can calm whatever storm may come.

There are some scriptures that we need to keep in our mind when we are facing uncertain faith during the storms of life. Hebrews 12:2 “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

James 1: 2, “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall

into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience.” And then Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 4: 16-18 “For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

When experiencing the storms of life, we should allow them to bring us into a deeper faith with God. We may not like the storm we are in. We may not understand why the storm is happening. We may even wonder what we did wrong to cause these bad things to happen. There are some things that only eternity will answer. Remember there can only be one good outcome when we allow God to be in control and that is, our faith will be stronger, and God will be praised. He is in control and His grace is sufficient for whatever storm may come into our lives. As a Christian we need to hold fast to our faith during those storms.

It is in the fall of the year that the florist plants the bulbs of the spring-blooming flowers. He then puts them away in a dark place for a few months. It is always best for them to be rooted in the dark and not in the glaring sun. In the shadows their lifegiving roots will begin to sprout and grow. It is down in the shadow of the earth that these bulbs gather strength, and the next season’s beautiful bloom is created. They are rooted in the shadow to bloom in the light. And so, it is with us, sometimes we must go through the darkness so we can bloom in the beautiful light of Jesus Christ.

What a wonderful story. Here we find words that encourage us to trust Jesus, even when we cannot see our way clear to do so. We must put our faith in him even when life seems uncertain. We must turn to Jesus in time of trouble and know that He will safely lead us. Many times, life seems like a storm that’s too much for us to handle. There are times we lose sight of the Lord. Rest assured He knows exactly what we’re dealing with; just as He saw the disciples toiling at the rowing, He sees us and knows exactly when we need Him to show up and still the storm in our life.

Some years ago, a school in England let their children

out to see King George pass by in a parade. They gave the children little British flags to wave. After the king passed by a little girl was seen off by herself crying. A teacher came to her and said, "What's wrong darling, did you not see the king, did you not get to wave your flag?" The little girl responded, "oh no, I saw the king and I waved my flag, but I am afraid the king did not see me." Such might have been the case with King George. He probably did not see that little girl in the crowd of school children that day, but I can tell you with all assurance that such is not the case with King Jesus. No matter what your heartache, no matter what your struggle, no matter what your pain; just as He saw the disciples on that stormy night, HE SEES you and me through our storms of life!

MAKE IT AS SURE AS YOU CAN

By PAUL O. NICHOLS

PUBLISHER'S NOTE: We are printing an article in this issue by Paul O. Nichols who celebrated his 100th birthday on September 5. He was baptized in 1937 by Homer L. King at Montebello, CA and not long after his 18th birthday gave his first sermon. He has preached throughout the USA and has done evangelistic work in a number of foreign Countries as well. Our sincere congratulations to a great servant of the Lord whom we love. I have known him all of my life and am very appreciative of all he has meant to me through the years. DLK

After Jesus was crucified, the Jews came to Pilate and demanded that a guard by soldiers be set up at the tomb to be sure that His disciples did not steal the body and claim that He had risen from the dead. The response by Pilate was, "Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can" (Matt. 27:65). Under certain circumstances this would be sound advice. If a person had a million dollars to invest, it would be good advice to tell him to "make it as sure as you can". The reason would be to encourage him to safeguard his money. It would be fool hearty for a person to fail to give serious consideration to the matter before making the move. Intelligent people would have to agree that such is good advice.

God has given to each of us something far more valuable than silver or gold. And we have been given the right to do with It as we choose. That gift is the eternal soul of man. We are free moral agents and make our

investments wisely or with reckless abandonment and suffer the consequences. It would be terrible to suffer the loss of our most precious and valuable possession.

At the beginning of time man was created by God, and He "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul" (Gen. 2:7). And we are informed by the Lord, "Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Eze. 18:4).

It is sad that we humans are so wise when it comes to mundane matters, but grossly ignorant when it comes to the spiritual. Millions have risked their eternal souls without serious consideration whether their investment will pay off in the long run or be forever lost. Most religious people in the world do not read and study the Bible. Many risk their eternal destiny based on what some preacher has said, but fail to check with the Lord to see if it is according to the inspired word of God. One woman said, "I don't read the Bible and I don't pray. I pay the preacher to do that." Most denominational members consider their pastors to be the experts when it comes to Bible understanding and interpretation. And those pastors may be just as ignorant as they are when it comes to a correct understanding of the Scriptures. Jesus warned of some religious leaders long ago, "Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" (Matt. 14:15). Most religious leaders of the denominations want to be on a pedestal, exalted as somebody special, and wear man made titles, such as "Reverend" and "Right-reverend", and "Father" so and so. Their churches have creed books and religious manuals devised and written by men, which identifies them from other religious organizations. These rules can be and are often altered and updated from time to time to coincide with the life and times of modern society. These organizations wear all kinds of names invented by men. They add to and delete from the Bible what they choose, without a twinge of conscience. They adjust their teaching and practices to please and entertain the people and to draw large crowds. Money from their duped and misled followers fill their coffers, and they glory in the pomp and splendor of their services and church edifices. They entice the rich, the famous, and the politically influential. Some promise miraculous cures and others promise miracle wealth. The blind leading the blind.

During the earthly ministry of Jesus, the apostle Peter

said of Him, that He “went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him” (Acts 10:38). But He rebuked many who followed Him for free food after they had been fed the loaves and fishes. He said, “Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled” (John 6:26). As a result of His rebuke and the teaching which followed, the Bible says, “many of His disciples went back and walked with him no more” (John 6:66). They were like many in this day and time who are not serious enough about spiritual matters and follow the sound advice to make their salvation as sure as they can. Many use religion as “icing on the cake” rather than the main course in Christian living. But faithful and honest preachers of the Gospel encourage people to take their religion seriously. The Bible tells us of the Bereans. “These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, In that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11). As a result many obeyed the Gospel and became Christians.

Everyone who hears the Gospel would do well to follow sound advice to “make it as sure as you can”.

JUST THIS ONCE

UNKNOWN AUTHOR - SUBMITTED BY RICK MARTIN

Something important came up, he does not remember what, but he decided it would not hurt to miss church services this once. He had been taught differently, but he missed. She hated to go without her husband; the two children were difficult to manage without his help, so she missed too.

The conscience worked overtime that day. A short while later they decided on a Sunday out-of-town trip and missed again. Conscience spoke again, but its voice was softer.

With each succeeding absence their spiritual appetites diminished. Fellow Christians were concerned and came to call.

At first there were excuses - out of town, did not feel well, etc. - and then resentment because such concern made them uncomfortable.

It has been years since they were active in the the Lord's work. Their hearts are stirred occasionally by nostalgic

memories of a better yesterday, but God seems far away. No one ever goes back to see them. Too many have tried, but their interest was not welcomed. They are now left alone in their sin and their darkness.

Their loss is sad enough, but the loss of the two children, now teenagers, is even more tragic. They never had a chance. The father and mother did have the privilege of knowing the Lord, but they rejected Him. The children never knew Him.

It is a tragic story; the story of Four Lost Souls on a one-way street to somewhere they do not want to go. The parents are driving, the children are being taken for a ride. It all began with the mistaken idea that it would not hurt to miss “just this once”!

BIBLE WARNINGScontinued from page one

I can never join Calvin in addressing his god. He was indeed an atheist, which I can never be; or rather his religion was Demonism. If ever man worshiped a false god, he did. The being described in his 5 points is not the God whom you and I acknowledge and adore, the Creator and benevolent governor of the world, but a demon of malignant spirit. It would be more pardonable to believe in no God at all, than to blaspheme Him by the atrocious attributes of Calvin (Jefferson, Letter to John Adams, April 11, 1823).

Calvin's words are tantamount to the words of the serpent in the Garden of Eden. God clearly warns Adam and Eve that the consequences of eating of the fruit of the tree in the midst of the garden is death (Gen. 3:2-3). However, “the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil (3-5).

Similarly, God warns us repeatedly that we can abandon the faith (11im. 4:1), fall from grace (Gal. 5:4), and be lost eternally (Mt. 25:46). However, John Calvin argues, “Ye shall not surely die.” Millions of people have bought into Calvin's damnable theology and consequently they are not alarmed by the multitude of God's warnings.

The prophet Amos describes Israel as such a people

in his day. Israel has become rebellious toward God. Jeroboam corrupts the worship in Bethel by putting idols in the house of God and making priests of the criminal element. In an effort to awaken the people to their sinful condition and cause them to turn back to Him, God sends a series of calamities upon them including economic collapse, drought, crop disease, locusts, plague, and warfare, “yet ye have not returned unto me, saith the Lord” (Amos 4:10).

In addition to sending these calamities upon Israel, God also sends His prophet Amos to explain to the people the meaning of the calamities and warn them that unless they return to God in repentance they will be destroyed. In Amos 3:6, however, we have the chilling response of Israel to God’s warning “Shall a trumpet be blown in the city, and the people not be afraid?” It is incredible to Amos that people are alarmed by the blast of a trumpet in the city warning about the threat of an approaching enemy, but the same people are not alarmed by the warnings of God.

Amos’ words are appropriate for America today. Our country has been in a moral freefall for several years. God has been systematically phased out of any type of government operated institution, such as courts and public schools. Over two million abortions are performed annually, while homosexuality is celebrated and protected. Illegal drugs and gambling remain multi-billion dollar industries. Oklahoma usually leads the nation in the divorce rate, and today it is considered normal to live together without being married. Yet, God warns that those who do “such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Gal. 5:21).

Denominational churches have corrupted worship by synthesizing it into entertainment while some in the Lord’s church have been so preoccupied with infighting that they have lost sight of our mission of evangelism. Consequently, we have shown no significant growth in America in the last few decades according to the latest census.

Over the same period we have suffered from natural and contrived calamities that should have awakened us to the tenuous nature of our existence here, and the need to turn back to God. We have seen record droughts, followed by devastating floods; monstrous tornadoes, hurricanes and earthquakes that have caused unparalleled

destruction, financial collapses, school shootings, church shootings, sniper killings, and continual terrorist activities. All the while, the Lord warns us, “Behold I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watches .. .’ (Rev. 16:15). God is sounding the trumpet loudly. I wonder, is anyone alarmed?

I read about a preacher who preached often on the Judgment Day. Someone asked him why he preached on the subject so often and he replied, “If you could only see what I see every day. I see the Archangel with the trumpet to his lips, his eye focused on God, his head cocked to hear so he can sound the trumpet to signal Christ to descend with a shout and put an end to it all. Then I see the world around me, careless, giddy, idle, foolish, thoughtless, and sinful. What else can I do but warn them?”

When we note the persistence of Paul’s warnings to the elders from Ephesus, the persistence of the preacher mentioned above does not sound so strange. In his farewell address to the elders Paul said, “For three years I ceased not to warn everyone night and day.”

It is also worthwhile to note the intensity of his warning. He says he warned them “with tears” (Acts 20:31) This is the second time in the address that Paul mentions his own tears (20:19). He loves the Ephesian church desperately and he foresees the dangers that lie ahead for them when they will be distracted and injured, torn by false doctrine, and laid waste by sinful men. His warnings, therefore, are persistent and passionate.

It is often said that, “Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty.” The infection of the world is never far away from us. Where truth is, falsehood ever attacks. We are involved in constant warfare to keep the faith intact and the church pure. We must, therefore, continue to sound the warning. What else can we do?

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SOME FINAL THOUGHTS....continued from page two

made even worse and the problem more difficult to resolve than before. I recall my father saying years ago that two cats with their tails tied together and thrown over a clothes line may be together, but they certainly don't have unity. The fight will be fierce!

The church needs brethren who seek, or pursue, peace. Paul wrote of this in Romans 14:19. "Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another." If we all will work toward edifying or building up one another, it will be much easier to have peace. It is difficult to fight someone we are trying to build up spiritually. Wisdom usually saves the day when disagreements arise among brethren.

We do not wish to be misunderstood. Some issues are not a matter of liberty. Some things are matters of Divine law; and in such cases, we have no choice but to hew to the line and let the chips fall where they may. Jude wrote of this in Jude 3 where he said: "... ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints." If it is a matter of faith, we must contend for it, no matter what the consequences. However, such is often not the case and then brethren must seek peace by using wisdom from above.

Think on these things. DLK

Our Departed

WINCHESTER, Vera Emelina: Vera was born October 26, 1935 in Missouri and passed away peacefully on August 2, 2022. She was married to Jimmy Winchester in 1953. They had celebrated 68 years of marriage in October, 2021. Vera was known to be a very active person and hard working. She and Jimmy were very active in the church both at Lodi and Stockton, CA. At one time Jimmy served as an elder in the church at Lodi. I had known both of them for about 70 years. Like the paths of many, her life had its mountain tops and deep valleys. She was preceded in death by her parents, her son, James Winchester II, her daughter, Rebeca Foyil, and her daughter in law, Beverly Winchester. She is survived by her husband, Jim, her son, Kenneth Winchester, her grandchildren, great grandchildren, all

of her seven siblings, and countless family, friends, and loved ones in many locations. She was genuinely loved by all who knew her and will be missed for a very long time. We laid her body to rest in the Cherokee cemetery at Lodi where many of her loved ones and family are buried and we look forward with faith to the great reunion of all of God's family in the resurrection Day. Karl Modgling and I were honored to be asked to speak at her service. -Don L. King

BULLARD, Suzanne Kay: Suzanne Kay Bullard was born November 1, 1945 in Hillsdale, Michigan, to Donald and Doris McGinnis. She died August 1, 2022, in Moore, Oklahoma, at the age of 76. She married Edward Bullard Jr. May 7, 1966 in Carlsbad, New Mexico. She is survived by two sons, Bryan Bullard and wife Esperanza of Norman, Oklahoma, and Steven Bullard and wife Ina of Little Elm, Texas; four grandsons, Joshua Bullard, Richlands, North Carolina, Ethan Bullard, Gunter, Texas, Jared Bullard, Plano, Texas, and Zachery Bullard, Little Elm, Texas; one step-granddaughter, Noemi Garcia, Norman; one stepgrandson, Gabriel Garcia, Norman; one brother, Karl McGinnis and wife Bobbie Jean, Georgetown, Texas, and numerous nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by her husband Eddie Jr. We buried Eddie Jr. in January of this year after a severe winter storm left everything covered in ice and snow, but we buried Suzanne's body beside his grave during an August heat wave with temperatures soaring well over 100 degrees. Eddie and Suzanne lived much of their lives in Tupelo and Ada, Oklahoma. Eddie was a carpenter and itinerate preacher. He kept monthly appointments at several congregations through the years, and Suzanne was always by his side. She was quiet, reserved, and very pleasant. She was a hard worker and spent several years offering child care within her home and later in life she worked at LegalShield in Ada, where she retired. She was a devout member of the Lord's church and never missed a regular church service until she became incapacitated near the end of her life. I was honored when Steven and Bryan asked me to conduct her funeral service. Carl M. Johnson



Field Reports

David Griffin, Lebanon, MO 65536-September 10-The Lee's Summit congregation near Lebanon, MO is at peace and carrying on the Lord's work in this part of the world. As summers usually are, this one has been busy and has passed quickly. We were able to attend 4th of July meetings in both Springfield, MO and Sulphur, OK. Both events were enjoyable. Glen Ballard and other brothers are doing a great job of stirring up new interest in the Sulphur meeting. Early this year, the Oakwood congregation in Edmond, OK asked me to conduct sessions with the teachers of the congregation. These sessions involved 4-hour sessions once each month on Saturdays in June, July, and August. The attendance was good at all three sessions. The brothers all enthusiastically participated. The sessions were also attended by brothers from other congregations. I was thankful to be able to lend assistance to the teaching brethren. We concluded the August session with a three-day meeting. Here at Lee's Summit, we are now looking forward to our Fall meeting with Greg Gay October 19-23. God bless all!

Don L. King, 1147 Sherry Way, Livermore, CA 94550, old_paths@juno.com, September 13, 2023. The California Labor Day meeting was great. Crowds were excellent and Carl Johnson did a superb job preaching the gospel. Unfortunately, we were in the middle of a very hot weather time but the building was well air conditioned and I believe all were comfortable. I have preached several times at home and elsewhere but have remained at home on Doctor's orders until a gall bladder surgery can be done. If the Lord is willing, I plan to be able to hold two meetings later. One at Nashville, TN and another at McAlester, OK. We appreciate the understanding of brethren where I was previously scheduled. Lord bless the faithful.

Billy D. Dickinson, 2850 N. Oakland, Springfield, MO 65803, bddickinson@juno.com, Aug. 17. I will begin by saying that the 4th of July meeting in Springfield, MO was an inspirational event on several levels. With the problems of Covid, gas prices, the economy, etc., we weren't really sure what kind of crowds we would have. However, the determination of brethren to attend from various parts of the country exceeded our expectations. The meeting peaked at about 800 in number one night, a great crowd given the obstacles that hindered many

from coming, and 25 preachers edified us with the word of God. It was a pleasure for me to work with Brad Shockley in arranging the services, a talented preacher whose friendship I treasure, and the meeting is now history. For whatever good was accomplished, to God we give the glory! A little over a week ago I held a meeting at Little Rock, AR and enjoyed being with them, especially being able to reminisce with Doug Edwards, Melvin Styers and Maurice Chandler about past experiences we have shared. We had good crowds, including visitors from here and there, and Jerry Dickinson dropped in on his way to a meeting in Indiana. Everything went well while there, but unfortunately, Judy and I came down with Covid after returning home. It took us all this time to get it, obviously something to struggle through, but at this writing we are both feeling better and, Lord willing, will completely recover soon. I pray that will be the case by the time I head for a meeting in Chestnut Ridge, KY on the dates of Sept. 7-11. My final meeting of the year will be Oct. 26-30 at Sharonville, OH. Also, we are looking forward to having Walter Hunter with us here at Jamesville the first weekend of November. Please remember us in your prayers!

Carl M. Johnson 1400 Northcrest Dr. Ada, OK 74820 carlmj33@gmail.com Aug. 12: We just concluded the California Labor Day Meeting last Lord's Day. The meeting was hosted by the Livermore congregation and I was honored to be asked by the brethren to do the preaching. I enjoyed the meeting immensely. It was good to get to be with Don King and the Livermore brethren and to see a lot of dear friends from the West Coast. At least a dozen preachers attended the meeting, including brother Melvin Ventura of Hawaii. Several young men spoke at a Saturday morning service and did an excellent job. I also conducted the annual Homecoming Meeting at the 11th Street congregation in Tulsa in August. It too was a wonderful meeting with consistently large crowds and numerous visitors from all over the region. Clint DeFrance baptized a young Micronesian man during the meeting. Clint has been doing an excellent work among the Micronesians in the Tulsa area. I preached both services here at home yesterday and, Lord willing, Phyllis and I will go to Mountain Home, Arkansas, on Wednesday to begin a meeting (Sept. 14-18). Jimmie Cating is scheduled to conduct our fall meeting here in Ada (Sept. 18-25). Please keep us in your prayers.

Kevin W. Presley, 108 Mulberry Court, Dothan, AL 36303, August 23, 2022 Our travels have taken us to several places this summer including Miami, OK; Napoleon, AL; Nashville, TN; Blue Springs, KY; Dothan, AL; Marietta, GA; Mountain Grove, MO; and Hillcrest, MS. Meetings have mostly been very well attended. It has been refreshing to see people emerge from the pandemic with a hunger to go to meetings and hear the word of God preached. While the difficulties of the last two years have undoubtedly done damage to the souls of some, perhaps revival has been kindled in the hearts of others. Our monthly work with the Hillcrest, MS has entered a new phase as we begin an exhaustive study of the eldership. The leaders and other men of the church are eager to see the congregation continue to grow and mature and it is encouraging to me to be with them from month to month and see them progress in their work. The television work continues to grow and reap much interest and some results. We are now airing on 19 stations across the nation and have more than 12-thousand subscribers to our YouTube channel. We receive correspondence from all around the world every week. Despite the many evils that have accompanied technology and modern mass media, we have been provided with tools that make it faster to reach people with the gospel message and I rejoice to see brethren interested in taking advantage of the opportunity. May the kingdom of God's dear Son increase until He comes again.

Greg Gay, 3816 Tambos Tri, Edmond, OK 73034, papagreg@aol.com, 916-804-3787. September 9, 2022 In my last report I failed to mention my Uncle John Spradley's 100th birthday on June 24. Many relatives and friends gathered on a very warm day to celebrate his birthday. I know it is well after the date, but he has since had some health difficulties and would love to hear from anyone: 2705 Landcaster Ct., Edmond, OK 73012. I preached at Norman, OK in July for their annual Visitor's Week meeting. We were busy every day with invitations for visits and meals. Their building design functions well for their large group with plenty of room for the many who visited from the neighborhood and surrounding congregations. I was delighted to spend time with Matt Trent who works with this wonderful group and the elders, Hollis Allen and Kevin Cutter, who requested the theme of The Family for the meeting. It was good to see the 400-500 who attended the Texas Labor Day meeting capably hosted by Fossil Creek and

facilitated by Kevin Presley. I appreciate being asked to be one of the speakers. The Sunday morning of the meeting I preached to a full house at Valley Parkway, my first time there. I appreciate the elders' invitation to make being there on Labor Day Sunday an annual appointment. As I write, Cassie and I are in Kauai, Hawaii, looking forward to our island-hops to Oahu for worship on the Sundays we are here. We never know who else we will see from the mainland as we gather for worship at Waipahu in "the paradise of the Pacific," as brother Danae used to say, and spend the day visiting with our dear friends in the congregation. I am scheduled to be at Lee's Summit outside of Lebanon, MO October 19-23. That is going home for me to the congregation where I was raised. I look forward to seeing all who can attend. My plans are progressing to visit Kenya and South Africa in November. I intend to mainly work among members of my Facebook Group, God's Good News from Greg, and with other referred prospects to study with them for conversion and to introduce them to the faithful congregations there. It is interesting how work from past decades continues to produce opportunities for fellowship around the world today. Many years ago, James Orten and Bill Davis worked among the brethren in South Africa. I am told Johnny Elmore worked to raise money for the building that is at Steenberg in Cape Town, South Africa. I am just one of 10 or more of our preachers who have been privileged to visit these places in recent years to meet and encourage the brethren there. It is very easy to forget we all benefit from good work done by others, past and present all over the world. My online studies with brethren in Southern and Northern India are going well. I look forward to returning to India next year. There are many who are working diligently in India to preach the gospel. Reports are frequent of individuals obeying the gospel and congregations being converted from error. Brother Art Lynch and I are progressing on plans for the study at Grapevine, TX December 23, 24, 26, and 27. Speakers have been notified and topics accepted. Next will be the process of sharing questions for the speakers to consider in presenting their topics. Our work continues with the Piedmont, OK congregation with ongoing studies and preaching. Cullen Smith held our meeting in July. He did an excellent job presenting wonderful truths about the Lord's church and who we are to be as members. Our own members attended well plus we filled the building with visitors who came from surrounding congregations.

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WALKS THROUGH THE BIBLE...

THERE ARE NO TRAFFIC JAMS ON THE SECOND MILE

By JERRY DICKINSON

“You have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.” (Matthew 5:38-42)

These remarkable words of Jesus are radical and revolutionary! In fact, it is interesting that most all commentaries, even by Church of Christ commentators, maintain that the words of Jesus are not to be taken literally. There is a scene in the movie “Gandhi” where the famous pacifist who led the movement to free India from British rule is talking with a “Christian” minister about the words of Jesus. Gandhi, who is Hindu, tells the minister that he is going to follow the teaching of Jesus about not resisting evil and turning the other cheek and use a non-violent approach to seeking Indian independence. The minister, who claims to be a Christian, replies that the words of Jesus are metaphorical and not to be followed literally. The irony is that the Hindu accepts the words of Jesus literally, and follows them, but the professed Christian does not.

Judy and I were eating in a restaurant recently and all the waiters and waitresses had on shirts with messages written on the back. One young man had an unusual message on his shirt. “There are no traffic jams on the second mile.” I was impressed that the restaurant allowed their employees to wear those kind of messages in these days of political correctness and bias against religion. But, I also wondered how many people in the restaurant recognized the message was a reference to the words of Jesus. Most people, I presume, have heard about going the second mile, but I fear in our age of Biblical illiteracy not many know it comes from the Bible.

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus teaches a radical and revolutionary doctrine. His followers, he declares, will love their enemies, turn the other cheek when slapped, pray for the persons who abuse them, and go the second mile. In Roman times a soldier or government official who was traveling on government business could by law compel ordinary citizens to carry their baggage for one mile. Citizens were under obligation to carry the load for a mile, but could not be compelled to carry it further. Jesus, incredibly, tells His followers to go the second mile! Can you imagine what the people listening to this sermon in person must have thought? They despised Roman rule and occupation and the idea of carrying the baggage beyond what was required was unthinkable. Surely, they must have thought, He cannot be serious. His words must be metaphorical, not literal! Even today, many if not most Christians, cannot believe that Jesus expects us to follow his teaching literally.

I believe our Savior does intend for us to follow His teaching literally. He expects us to love our enemies, turn the other cheek, and go the second mile! Radical? Revolutionary? Oh yes, no doubt about that. Christians have always exasperated unbelievers. How could they forgive those who persecuted and murdered them? How could they sing when being led to their deaths? Why wouldn't they serve in the army? Why would they carry a soldier's baggage a second mile? Why? We are like Jesus! He went the second mile when He left the ivory palaces of Heaven and came down to walk among men and become a man acquainted with sorrows and a sharer of our griefs. Coming to earth and living as a man was the first mile, but He went a second mile that led to the cross and an awful death on behalf of not only His friends, but His enemies. Who would do that? No, there is no traffic jam on the second mile!

When a Christian was compelled to carry a soldier's baggage a mile he did so, but then looked up at the soldier and declared, “I will carry the load a second mile!” The soldier or government official must have been startled and thought, who would do that? Perhaps the soldier would ask, “Why would you volunteer to go a second mile?” “I am a Christian, and I am following the teaching of my Master, the Lord Jesus Christ,” would be the humble reply. That reply and the journey of a second mile had a dramatic and powerful impact on the world then, and still does today when Christians follow the teaching of their Master. If you are on the second mile you are not going to have to worry about traffic or traffic jams. However, the reward of being on the second mile is knowing we are on the road with our Savior!