

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. 9

R.I.P.

By KEVIN W. PRESLEY

In recent years, we received news of several Hollywood and political celebrities whose lives came to sudden and tragic ends. Most recently, we were saddened at the death of comedian and actor, Robin Williams. Mr. Williams was a comedic genius and many of us, at times, enjoyed his endearing talents and qualities. He was, by many accounts, a kind, caring, and giving person donating his time to entertain troops serving abroad and investing in other philanthropic causes. It was also revealed that he quietly battled many ‘demons’ in his life, namely depression, which apparently led to his decision to take his own life. That battle is undoubtedly real for millions of people and they should be loved and helped at every opportunity. Suicide is never the answer for saint or sinner. As has been said many times: it is a permanent answer to a temporary problem. The purpose of this article is NOT to deny or belittle the reality of Mr. Williams’ struggles, nor to usurp God’s place as the judge of mankind. My purpose is to remind us of divine truths that are easily forgotten when emotions run high and personal opinions trump reality. It is in response to some of my Christian brothers and sisters who express their legitimate sympathies in an illegitimate way.

It is not only the public reaction to the passing of Robin Williams that provokes me to consider these things, but many other celebrity deaths bring the same observation. When such news is reported, social media is instantly flooded with memorials and well-wishes for fans and family members, (which are not necessarily wrong) but invariably, Christians (who, of all people, should have some understanding of Jesus Christ and that for which He died) will post the phrase R.I.P. or Rest In Peace concerning the one who has died. Some may not be thinking about the true implications of the statement, but regardless, it is negating the

importance of the gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and is circumventing the judgment of God to which all are subject. Unrepentant lives of alcohol and drug use, sexual immorality (promiscuity, multiple marriages, etc.) all seem to be overlooked in these times. Faith in Jesus and obedience and faithfulness TO Jesus apparently are not considered factors in a person’s eternal fate, especially if that person is famous or well-liked.

A SACRED PROMISE

The Word of God beautifully pictures death as a repose for God’s children who have slipped from the cares of this world to a state of peace through death. The Psalmist longed to be released from his temporal troubles saying; “...that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest.” (Ps 55:6) When Job was stricken with such sorrow and loss, he saw death as a pleasant release from his turmoil. He said; “There the wicked cease from troubling; and there the weary be at rest.” (Job 3:17) The writer of Hebrews affirmed “There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.” (Heb 4:9) Paul is speaking of the rest we come to know in Christ Jesus upon our faith and obedience to the gospel. We rest from the human efforts to achieve salvation through the works of the Mosaic law and now, through grace, enjoy the benefits of Christ’s work upon the cross upon our obedient faith in Him. We therefore rest in Christ. For the person who entered that rest in this life, there is a sweet assurance of eternal rest and security in the arms of Jesus after physical death. This is the whole aim of the gospel - to reconcile us to God and prepare us to enter His holy and eternal presence! Please note, dear reader, Paul’s emphasis: “There remaineth therefore a rest TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD.” Though all men are God’s creation, the designation “people of God” is always used in scripture to delineate those who are separated from the world and consecrated to the Father in a covenant relationship. That relationship was gained

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Editorial

CHRISTIAN LIBERTIES

By DON L. KING

There are few things more prone to argument than the topic of liberties for Christians. Some insist certain things are liberties while others insist they are not. An actual liberty is a matter of indifference. The Lord permits us to use our discretion in matters of indifference. We have the liberty to partake or not partake, indulge or not indulge, do or not do; and the Lord is still pleased with us. However, there are some things to consider. First, is the thing under consideration really a liberty? Even with liberties there are strict guidelines for us to follow with respect to the conscience of others. Paul spoke of this in 1 Corinthians 8 when he wrote concerning the eating of certain meats. The Jews, for instance, had a conscience against eating pork. The Gentiles had no such conviction and could eat pork with a clear conscience. Paul wrote in verse 8: "But meat commendeth us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither if we eat not, are we the worse." Paul clearly states a Christian may eat meat or not, and the Lord doesn't care. Then in verse 9 he wrote: "But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to them that are weak."

Anyone can see that we must use wisdom in the pursuit of a liberty. Even when it is really a liberty, we must be careful not to cause someone who is weak in that area to be harmed. We do not have the right to step on another's conscience in the exercise of our "liberty." For some reason, this seems to be a problem with some. They believe if it is really their liberty to do as they please, no one has the right to object. That is so mistaken. In 1 Corinthians 8:11, 12 the apostle wrote: "And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ."

Hence, even a liberty can provoke sin. Remember we are to "prove all things; hold fast to that which is good." (1 Thessalonians 5:21) In the very next verse he said, "Abstain from all appearance (forms DLK) of evil." (Verse 22) The actual thing under consideration may indeed be a matter of

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QUERIST COLUMN

By Ronny F. Wade

In a recent article I dealt with the kind of bread to be used in the Lord's Supper. Since the scriptures indicate that Jesus instituted the Supper on the first day of the feast of unleavened bread, it would follow that we today should use unleavened bread when we observe the Lord's Supper each first day of the week. I also noted that Exodus 12:8-15 describes the Passover meal and the bread to be eaten during that feast. My conclusion was that so long as the bread used in the Lord's Supper is unleavened the type of flour used, in making the bread is inconsequential. In response to this article, I received the following from a concerned individual: "Have you never read Ex. 29:2? I thought when the Bible says WHEAT, that cancels rice, barley, almond and all other kinds of flour." First of all let me say that I appreciate the letter and the concern that it demonstrates. In Exodus 29:1-2 the record states "And this is what you shall do to them to hallow them for the ministering to Me as priests. Take one young bull and two rams without blemish, and unleavened bread, unleavened cakes mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers anointed with oil (you shall make them of wheat flour)." In these verses the Lord gives specific instructions as the bread to be used IN THE CONSECRATION OF AARON AND HIS SONS AS PRIESTS, and since "wheat" is specified all other types of flour are excluded. However, this passage has nothing to do with the Passover bread. Those instructions are given in Exodus 12:15 "Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses. For whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel." No instructions are given here or elsewhere as to the type of flour to be used in making this unleavened bread for the Passover feast. Hence, we don't have the right to insist on a particular type of flour to be used in the unleavened bread for the Lord's Supper, if so, where? A very important point should be made here i.e. taking scriptures out of their context can be very dangerous and misleading. We do not have the right to misuse the scripture by giving it a meaning not given by the inspired individual who wrote it, or by applying it to a situation different than the one in which it was used. I am not saying that there are not times that certain scriptures have extended applications, but I am saying that it is wrong to misapply scriptures and give them a meaning the Holy Spirit did not intend.

Question: Would you please say something about the way some people dress when they come to the services of the church?

Answer: Unfortunately it seems that many today care very little about what they wear or how they appear when they come together to worship God. I have always felt that if God or Christ were literally present we would be more careful about how we dress when we gather for cooperate worship. According to 1 Timothy 2:8-10 women are to dress modestly and profess godliness by so doing. Some today expose more of their body than is proper and certainly fail to express modesty or godliness either one. Shameful dress has no place in the assembly of the saints. When men, some of whom take part in the service, come dressed as though they just came in from the field or from under a car changing the oil, it not only leaves a bad impression but seems to indicate that they care little about making a proper impression on those who might be visiting. In reality, it is a matter of priorities and values. Wearing shirts such as "I eat at Eskimo Joe's" or "I'd rather be golfing" immediately indicate a careless attitude on the part of the individual who wears them. What kind of example do we set before those who are present who are non-believers? Do they see any reverence or respect on the part of those so dressed? Many of the denominations have tried to repair the problem by having split services. One is dubbed "traditional" the other "casual." If the casual is any worse than the traditional I would hate to see what is worn. While driving by I often see both men and women in shorts as they enter these meeting houses. In fact on a few occasions I have had women attend gospel meetings so dressed. Few would think of so dressing at a funeral or wedding. Why? Obviously they recognize that weddings and funerals are special occasions, we agree, they are. But, so are the services of the church. While one may correctly argue that clothes don't make the man, clothes do tell a lot about a man. If an individual has little and in the words of James comes to the assembly in "filthy clothes" he should not be mistreated in any way, James 2. There is however a vast difference between a man who has little or nothing and one who dresses better for a party or work than he does for a service in the presence of the God who made the world and His Son who died on the cross for our sins. (Send all questions to Ronny F. Wade P.O. Box 14352 Springfield, MO 65814 or ronnywade36@gmail.com)

**PAUL WASN'T SENT TO BAPTIZE?
CONTEXT IS EVERYTHING!**

By ANDREW RICHARDSON

“I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; (15) Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. (16) And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. (17) For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.”

When it comes to properly understanding a statement in the Bible (or anywhere else)-context is everything! Teachers who deny baptism as a requirement for salvation often offer 1 Corinthians 1:14-17 as support, alleging that Paul is “de-emphasizing” baptism. Apologist Matt Slick, host of CARM radio, said the following:

“If baptism is necessary for salvation, then why did Paul downplay it and even exclude it from the description of what is required for salvation? It is because baptism is not necessary for salvation” (<http://carm.org/lis-baptism-necessary-salvation>).

This is an abuse of context to the fullest. Paul explicitly states the reason he was “thankful” for not having baptized the Corinthians-”Lest any should say that I baptized in mine own name” (v. 15). Paul had enemies who were always seeking to undermine his work and influence, and he did not want them to have an opportunity to charge him with an attempt to gain his own disciples by baptizing his converts in his name rather than Christ’s name. The context reveals why they might lay such a charge:

“For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. (1) Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. (13) Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? (14) I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; (15) Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name.”

The Christians at Corinth had formed factions under the names of various preachers, including

Paul. Some professed to be “of Paul”-the party of Paul, so to speak. In rebuke, Paul asks, “Were ye baptized in the name of Paul?” Christians should be “of Christ” since it was Jesus whom was crucified for them. It was Christ’s name in which they were baptized. Christ is not “divided.” Paul condemns their behavior.

If Paul’s opponents caught wind of those at Corinth that were professing to be “of Paul,” then they would have likely accused him of baptizing in his “own name,” but Paul had not baptized many of them at all; thus the potential accusation of his adversaries could hold no water, and this is why he was thankful. His statement had nothing to do with the importance of baptism in relation to salvation. Slick asserts that Paul “downplayed” baptism, but in truth, Paul downplayed the administering of baptism by his own hands among the Corinthians-not baptism itself. Paul did not say he was thankful none of them had been baptized, but that he himself had not been the one to baptize them.

Paul continues and says, “For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel...” To those who think like Slick, this means Paul separated baptism from the gospel, but again, he was not talking about baptism itself, but the work of performing it. It was not a significant thing to Christ for Paul to be the one who administered the baptisms-it matters little which Christian is the baptizer.

Slick asks why Paul excluded baptism from what is required for salvation. The answer is-he didn’t! In fact, Paul says he preached the gospel, and the gospel teaches baptism as essential for salvation:

“And [Jesus] said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:15-16).

The gospel according to Jesus includes both faith “and” baptism for salvation, and Paul taught the same:

PUTTING ON CHRIST

“For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:26-27).

Doesn’t it stand to reason that if “as many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ,” then

as many as have not been baptized into Christ have not put on Christ? Can a man be saved without “putting on Christ”?

BAPTIZED “INTO CHRIST”

“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? (4) Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. (5) For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.. (Rom. 6:3-5)

Baptism is how we get “into Christ.” How can one be saved without being in Christ? Paul says “if” we have been planted in the “likeness” of his death (baptism) we shall also be in the likeness of “his resurrection.” So, what if we have not been planted in the “likeness of his death”?

THE CIRCUMCISION OF CHRIST

“In [Christ} also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead” (Col. 2:11-12).

Paul connects the removing of our sins with being buried with Christ in baptism. It is in baptism when Christ “circumcises” the sin from our souls (forgives us). (Note: Another necessary aspect of the removal of sin from the heart is repentance which proceeds and leads to baptism wherein is the actual removal of sin, i.e., forgiveness, by Christ-Rom. 6.) Just as Peter said to repent, and be baptized “for” the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38). Can a man be saved without the “circumcision of Christ”-the forgiveness of sins?

It’s intellectually dishonest, as well as sinful, to rip scripture from context to support a preconceived belief. Paul didn’t “downplay” baptism anywhere, but rather taught its purpose and necessity in the salvation of our souls. Let us take on his attitude when he said, “For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ” (2 Cor. 2:17).

THREE QUESTIONS THE ATHEIST CANNOT ANSWER

By AARON BATTEY

There are many facts of nature that the sad and hopeless belief of atheism cannot explain. To make it more personal, the atheist today will go by the name of John. You have probably talked to John at some point in your life, but did you ever think to tell him these three profound truths to which his atheistic beliefs have no reply?

First, John cannot explain the very first origins of life. You have probably heard John say something like, “Well, we are still looking into that,” when you asked him to explain where the chemicals that produced the first life form originated. John believes that all things come from materials that you can detect with the five senses. However, there is no proof whatsoever that a certain combination of chemicals (which, themselves, came from nowhere apparently) in even the most ideal conditions can produce life of any kind. Scientists definitively disproved this theory of spontaneous generation years ago. Only a real and living creator can explain the miraculous phenomenon of a mature earth and man coming out of nowhere. Genesis 2:7 explains, “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.” The natural principle -everything that had a beginning had a cause- is only satisfied by the greatest cause of all. That cause is God who is “Spirit” (Jn. 4:24), outside the realm of time and space.

Second, John cannot explain where thoughts and cognition come from. Materialism is the belief that everything in existence has a material origin and can be sensed by the five human senses. This doctrine is also the crux of atheism and evolution. Did you know your friend John believes in this doctrine? Did you ever think to ask John how immaterial “thoughts” could have originated from material “chemicals”? If you have ever asked John this question, his reply was undoubtedly, “Well, we are still looking into that.” The atheist has no response, but the Bible does. Once again the scriptures provide us with the answer when they say,

“For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts,” (Isaiah 55:9). Only someone who is smarter than humans could have created humans. This is a basic truth that John and any rational scientist must agree with. Nonetheless, there will always be those who deny even such basic truths. To such minded people the Bible also says, “But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise,” (1 Cor. 1:27).

Lastly, John cannot explain the origin of morals. After all, how much does hate weigh? Is there an atom for love? What is the chemical composition for the murder molecule? If you were to ask John about the existence of morality he might be puzzled; thus, these three follow-up questions are good to instill to your memory. Morality, just like thoughts and cognition, is immaterial and cannot be explained by atheism. Since atheists cannot explain this phenomenon, they claim there are no set morals. Where does this type of thinking lead? It leads to humans killing babies, Hitler annihilating a human race, and John cheating on his wife. In contrast to this ludicrous thinking, the Bible says that Eve’s “eyes ...were opened” after she ate of the forbidden fruit (Gen. 3:7). She became aware of a set standard of right and wrong. The origin of morals and a human conscience did not occur by accident.

Search the scriptures for yourself to see if the claims in this article are true and accurate. More importantly, use some common sense and realize that this intricate universe we live in is not due to an accident. Accidents bring about only more disorder, but God and His Word offer order for your life. OPA

WHERE SANCTIFICATION IS FOUND

By BENNIE T. CRYER

The church in Corinth was having some big problems because some of the members were having trouble accepting the fact that their source of wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption were not from their own wise philosophers and wise men that were held in high esteem by the world and themselves. Some members seemed to

think that since they were so advanced in worldly wisdom and knowledge they could work out with their own minds what plan was needed to work out their salvation from sin without the benefit of revelations from heaven. To take the place of their vaunted philosophers and wise men they even chose Paul, Cephas, and Appolos to take their place. Some seemed even to put Christ in this category. In effect they desired to leave God out of it and his revelations so the Holy Spirit has Paul to write 1 Cor 1:30-31, “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: 31 That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.”

Let each reader be reminded that God in his grace gave Corinth the wonderful plan of salvation that through their obedience had placed each member “in Christ.” What did God reveal about the means of placing them “in Christ?” What were they required to obey? Heb 5:9, ‘And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.’ They, along with us today, needed to hear the gospel of Christ and let it produce faith in their hearts that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, Romans 10:17. This faith would lead them to repent of their sins, Luke 13:3. Then their faith would lead to confess their faith in Christ Jesus as the Son of God, Acts 8:37. Then their faith would lead them to be baptized (immersed) in water, Acts 8:38-39, Romans 6:3-5. This is emphasized in the 3rd verse of the last reading: “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?” How do you think God feels about preacher after preacher, teacher after teacher who openly declares that one is saved before he is baptized? Even now I hear that some of our brethren have fallen into this same trap. God himself openly declared through Paul about the position obedient believers are in when he revealed “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus.” God chose baptism as the action for a person to take in order for Him to place the obedient believer in Christ. God chose baptism as the point for this movement to take place. Luke 20:4, “The baptism of John, was it from heaven, or of men?” This same question needs to be asked and answered correctly about the baptism Jesus and the apostles had in mind in Mark 16:16-17 and Galatians 3:26-27

Since Jesus has become Corinth’s and our wisdom

and righteousness and we are “in Christ” what more is expected of us by God? God provided Jesus for us and his Son became the source of our sanctification! But what is sanctification? It is the state of one who has been consecrated to God and is purified from his past sins. He then maintains his proper relationship with God by keeping himself from defilement. From no other source can sanctification come. God made Jesus to be our sanctification with all that this state implies which is a very large part of our maintaining in good order our relationship with him for the rest of our lives. Christ is ready to help us in this matter. Eph 5:25-27, “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; 26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, 27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.” Why was Jesus Christ so interested in the church being sanctified and that it “should be holy and without blemish”? One part of the answer to this question is because he is holy and without blemish. And so is God, who let the seraphim around his throne cry out to one another, “Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory”, Isaiah 6:3. So is the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ. They are holy and are interested in each member of the church becoming like them in this respect. Their interest involves the entire man being holy. 2 Cor 7:1, “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” This verse was Paul’s message to the Corinthian Christians and to us to day. The message indicates that you and I, as members of the church, have a responsibility laid on us to use God’s plan to cleanse ourselves from impurities and keep ourselves separated from things that defile us in both “flesh and spirit.” “Perfecting holiness” is a present active participle indicating that every day of our lives this is an ongoing activity which each of us must be engaged in. In this way we develop holiness striving to become more like Jesus and the divine beings. 1 Peter 1:15-16 informs us, “But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; 16 Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.” This “perfecting holiness” is in contrast with a denominational doctrine that sanctification is a second blessing that when you receive it you will not sin. A lady I was studying with informed me she had been sanctified, that is, she had received this second blessing and did

not sin anymore. Her assumed status was in direct contrast to 1 John 1:8 where the beloved apostle wrote, “ If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” Of course, as we grow into the likeness of Jesus we become more like him who is holy, 2 Corinthians 3:18, “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

In 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 these words are recorded. “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? 20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.” Joseph, in Genesis 39, is a fine example of what this implies to one who is separated and consecrated to God. He had suffered much because of the actions of his own flesh and blood. His brothers had betrayed him and sold him to a band of Ishmaelites as a slave. They, in turn, sold him to Potiphar a high ranking Egyptian, a captain of the guards. Potiphar was so impressed with Joseph that he put him in charge of his whole house. Joseph, as a slave, was a godly person, well favored, and blessed by God. Potiphar’s wife, in the absence of her husband, desired Joseph to commit adultery with her. Day by day she approached him desiring him to lie with her. But day by day Joseph refused her. She lied about Joseph and Potiphar put him into prison though Joseph had done no wrong. Why did Joseph resist this temptation? There were a number of reasons but mainly because he believed his body belonged to God and was not to be defiled. He had sanctified and consecrated his body for the use of God.

God made Jesus to be our sanctification. By his plan, that we must obey, God places us into Christ where we are sanctified and our life is consecrated and dedicated to the service of God. Paul tells more about sanctification in 1 Thess 3:13, “To the end he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.” God made Jesus to be our sanctification and his work in this area will last to the end of time. A teacher or preacher is jeopardizing his soul and the souls of those that hear him when he teaches a person is saved and sanctified before he is baptized into Christ. Where is sanctification found? Only in Christ!



R.I.P. continued from page one

by physical birth through Abraham in the Old Testament; it is now gained by the NEW BIRTH through Christ. (John 3:3-5) This wonderful re-birth into Christ’s kingdom involves water and the Spirit - regeneration through the revelatory work of God’s Spirit that takes place in water baptism for the remission of sins. (Rom 6:3-5, 17; Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16; Col 2:11-13) Rest from sin and from the futility of self-justification in this life are found only in Christ Jesus. ETERNAL rest and peace are also ONLY in Christ. “And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.” (Rev 14:13) Note that the blessed dead are those who “DIE IN THE LORD”. In Galatians 3:27, Paul plainly affirms that baptism of the penitent believer is the step that places us “into Christ” or into the Lord. Revelation 2:10 reminds us that we must be “faithful unto death” or faithful to even the extent of death and in death in order to receive the “crown of life”.

A SOLEMN PRONOUNCEMENT

Sadly, the Bible paints a different portrait after death of the person who did not obey the gospel and live a holy and consecrated life for Jesus. 2 Thess. 1:7-9 says ; “...when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.”

In Luke the 16th chapter, Jesus lifted back the mysterious veil of death and He allowed us to gaze into that world beyond. He showed us two men who represent the only two kinds of people who live on earth: those who are saved in Christ and those who are lost. Lazarus was a man who had little fare belonging to this life but had prepared for eternity. The other was a rich man whose life consisted of material things and pursuits. We don’t know that he was wicked by our misguided estimation of wickedness but it is clear that he was an unbelieving, unrepentant, disobedient sinner in God’s sight. Jesus could not have been more plainly spoken when He said; “And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom: the rich man also died, and

was buried; And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments...” Luke 16:22-23. Lazarus was “resting in peace” whereas the rich, but spiritually bankrupt, man was experiencing anything but rest or peace. I take no pleasure in these haunting words. Though it is a thrilling thought that good will ultimately triumph over evil, the sad fact is many spiritually careless people who lived their lives in sin and indifference to Jesus Christ, His church, and His word will not be saved, but will spend eternity being tormented as a result of their choice. Heartbreaking but true! If Jesus pronounced such a fate for this rich man long ago, what gives us the authority to say that one who has never obeyed the gospel, was thus not a member of Christ’s church, and by all indications did not live a life faithful to Jesus, is resting in peace?

Please think carefully about what you say and post for a world lost in sin to see! Jesus died an awful death of blood and agony on Calvary so the lost could be reconciled to God. Justifying and giving false hope to the worldly sinner who is outside of Christ (Prov 17:15) cheapens the sacrifice of our Lord who suffered so that we might have a way to God through Him and thus, truly REST IN PEACE. May the Lord help us all to be ever-conscious of our appointment with the pale rider and live our lives in faith and obedience so that we might rejoice in the repose of death and rest in His eternal love. kwpresley@gmail.com



CHRISTIAN LIBERTIES continued from page two

indifference in God’s sight. But that isn’t the case if it might cause a brother or sister to be weakened or sin because of our participation in it. So, what is the first thing we must do? One must identify the item as a genuine liberty using the guide rules already mentioned. This is very critical because some claim liberties where none exist. Some sisters claim trimming their hair a liberty. However, 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 proves otherwise. A Christian woman is to let her hair grow. One cannot let it grow and cut it at the same time so that doesn’t qualify as a liberty. Some claim the use of alcohol is a liberty but Galatians 5:21 shows otherwise. Drinking causes drunkenness which is condemned. Others claim dancing is a liberty but again Galatians 5:19 proves otherwise. Lasciviousness certainly includes the practice of dancing. Such behavior could never be a liberty but just suppose the aforementioned things are liberties. Notice 1 Corinthians 10: 23, “All things are lawful for me, but all things are

not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.” This is a very interesting verse. Paul shows us that first of all we must prove the thing is lawful. It may be lawful (permitted) and still not be expedient (advantageous or best) but one thing is certain: if it isn’t lawful, it will never in a million years be expedient or advantageous. To try to assert something is a liberty (expedient) when it cannot be proved to be lawful is absurd. In addition: even when something is proved to be lawful, or permitted, it still may not be best to insist upon it. Go back to the eating of meats Paul wrote of in 1 Corinthians 8. We know it was lawful, or permitted, for a Christian to eat anything as long as it was done with thanksgiving. However, that was not the case if the eating of meats caused a weak brother’s conscience to be wounded. Paul said, “Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend.”

What have we learned? We know that even a liberty can be wrong if we insist on it to the detriment of a brother in Christ. I have no right to insist you accept my actions in your presence as right if you sincerely believe what I am doing is wrong. I need to have more consideration for you. Think on these things, DLK

Announcements

FREE SONG BOOKS

The congregation at Stony Point, Kansas City purchases a new set of song Books each time a book is published. Consequently, we have many of the older publications which we want to make available to faithful congregations who need and would like to have them. All we ask is that the shipping be paid by the congregation requesting the books. Please send the title of the book requested and the number of books needed. Send request to Stony Point Church of Christ, 14217 Rosehill, Overland Park, KS 66221. - Paul Nichols



MY POSITION ON CARNAL WARFARE

I cannot participate in military service in any form, directly or indirectly, in combatant or noncombatant service, because:

1. My duty and obligation to my God is superior to all other obligations (Acts 5:29; Matt. 22:37).

2. My God in the Bible forbids that I engage in carnal warfare in the following references: ‘My kingdom is not of this world’ (Jno. 18:36). ‘Put up thy sword’, ‘For all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword’ (Jesus in Matt. 26:52). ‘For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal’ (2 Cor. 10:3, 4). ‘Love your enemies’ (Matt. 5:44). ‘Recompense to no man evil for evil’ (Rom. 12:17).

3. To enter any branch of military service, combatant or noncombatant, I would be compelled to “swear” (take an oath) but the Bible forbids that I do so (“Swear not at all” Jesus, Matt. 5:34).

4. To enter any military service I would be compelled to be yoked together with unbelievers, which is forbidden- “Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers” (2 Cor. 6:14).

5. To be in any branch of military service in any way, I would be part of an organization and therefore have fellowship in the service, but such is prohibited; thus: ‘Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them’ (Eph. 5:11).

6. To serve in any way in military service, I would be deprived of obeying the command to assemble on Lord’s day to worship God in the Bible way, at least part of the time, hence would disobey God (Heb. 10:25; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1, 2).

Therefore, I cannot conscientiously engage in carnal war in any form or branch and for the above reasons, I authorize my name to be listed in support of the above principles. Colton Clyde Harrison, Carter Church of Christ, Frederick, OK.

Our Departed

COALE - Norma Spivey Coale was born on March 8, 1926 near Samson, AL. She passed from this world on Thursday, July 31, 2014 at the age of 88, after several years of declining health. She was a long-time member of the Earlytown congregation. In fact, it would be difficult for anyone familiar with our congregation to not immediately think of Norma when the name Earlytown is mentioned. She was our “Shunamite woman”. Norma and Jimmy’s home was a haven of hospitality to countless gospel preachers and other families through the years. Norma was not content unless she was busy doing

for others and few joys in her life would equal her love for cooking and providing for guests, the sick and infirmed, and those grieving their own losses in our community. She was the epitome of an "oldfashioned" Christian woman. She was pious, devout, benevolent, chaste, and modest. She loved others and it showed through her years of selfless service. She was preceded in death two years ago by her husband, Jimmy. After Jimmy left us and after she could no longer live at home and help others, Norma began to rapidly decline. Not knowing her heart or usurping Christ's judgment, it is yet easy to believe that Norma is enjoying rest and release from struggles with her health and other earthly cares. She is survived by her two sons Maury Coale (Jill) of Earlytown and Phillip Coale of Tallahassee, FL, two grandchildren, Samuel Talmage Coale and Sallie Katherine Coale, and step granddaughters, April Hanbury and Sarah Kinsey. Norma's death leaves an unmistakable void in this century-old church. Her remains were laid to rest with many other saints who sleep in the Earlytown church cemetery. It was this writer and Bro. Robert Harrison's privilege to help those gathered remember this great woman in the Lord. -- Kevin W. Presley

CROUCH - Marjorie Nace Crouch was born on the family farm near Alta Vista, KS, on February 1, 1918. She departed this life to be with the Lord on August 5, 2014, in Mansfield, TX, at the age of 96. Marjorie grew up in KS experiencing many of the difficulties associated with the Great Depression. She graduated from high school in 1935 and spent the next year taking care of her mother and other family members. Then, upon taking a training course and passing required exams, she taught school for two years. After attending Kansas State University, she again taught school for four years, teaching in a one-room school house (all grades). In August 1948 Marjorie married Melvin Crouch of San Antonio, TX, where they lived for 25 years and where she was a very busy homemaker with six children. In 1973 they moved to Uvalde, TX, where Melvin worked for First State Bank of Uvalde until 2002. They then relocated to Arlington, TX, and he passed from this life on December 26, 2007. Marjorie was a devout Christian, a lifetime faithful member of the church, having been baptized into Christ in the winter of 1936. She was a great student of the Bible, having

read it completely an untold number of times, only the Lord knows. In addition, she read the Gospel Advocate commentary series, the James Coffman commentary series, and perhaps others, from cover to cover. Marjorie loved people. While Melvin made a very comfortable living, they always lived very modestly. Money was a God-given blessing to be used to bless the lives of others and further the work of the church. Their generosity was felt by untold numbers of people. Marjorie was preceded in death by her husband, Melvin Crouch, and daughter, Sarah McFarlin. Survivors are Son, Tom Crouch and wife Beverly of Mansfield, TX; daughter Linda Cutter and husband Jerry of Oklahoma City, OK; daughter Martha Morris and husband Chuck of Deer Park, TX; daughter Susan Cawley and husband Jonathan of Louisville, CO; son Kent Crouch and wife Pam of Bentonville, AR; twelve grandchildren, 22 great grandchildren and 2 great-great grandchildren. [Personal note: I first met Melvin and Marjorie Crouch in 1954 or 60 years ago. In the last 60 years I know personally that they touched the lives of thousands around the world through helping purchase Bibles, tracts, famine relief and the support of gospel preachers. They were a great example of what Christianity is all about.] -Jerry L Cutter.

RENNER, -Sister Leora Baker Renner beloved wife of R.H. and mother of Larry and Gary passed away August 10th in her home in West Chester, OH. Leora had been in declining health for several years due to heart trouble and Alzheimers disease. She was a joy to know. On more occasions than I can remember I was a visitor in her home. Her hospitality, pleasant smile, joyful laughter and winning personality endeared her to many thru the years. She and R.H. were constant companions for over fifty-eight years. Their love and admiration for each other was evident. When she became ill R. H. was attendant to her every need both day and night, and faithfully remained by her side until the very end. Leora had been a member of the church a greater part of her life. She was raised in Kentucky but moved to the Cincinnati, Ohio area over fifty years ago. She and R.H. attended the West Chester congregation. On a bright sunny day a large crowd of family and friends gathered in the century old West Chester meeting house

for a memorial service in her honor. As we removed her body from the building the old bell in the bell tower tolled its message that one of its original members was leaving. It was a very touching scene. It was my honor to say a few words of warning and comfort to those present. -Ronny F. Wade

Field Reports

Don L. King, 1147 Sherry Way, Livermore, CA, 94550, August 14, 2014, e-mail oldpaths@juno.com. It was recently our pleasure to preach twice on Lord's Day at the Yuba City, CA congregation. Exceptional crowds were present at both services and we enjoyed being there. We look forward to a meeting at Columbia, MO in October and it will also soon be time to plan the annual trip to the Philippines for January 2015. If I have counted correctly this next trip will be our 34th trip there. The work has grown and while it has had some setbacks it is still a large and growing work. It has spread over most of the major Islands now and is encouraging to see their growth in every way. We ask our preachers to send reports and articles as they have the time to write and also that our subscribers renew promptly to avoid missing an issue. The paper will soon celebrate 83 years under the present name. Not many have been so fortunate. Thank you one and all.

Kevin W. Presley, 108 Mulberry Court, Dothan, AL 36303 - August 13, 2014. It was my pleasure to conduct the annual August meeting for the New Salem church near Brookhaven, MS. Some of my earliest preaching took place in this community and having lived more than 2 years in Lincoln County, the meeting was a wonderful time with many we love. Crowds were consistently good and every church in the area was represented. It was good to have the support of a large number of brethren from Jericho and Jerusalem. They are kind and loving brethren and their presence, along with all of our other visitors, was a real boost to the meeting. In July, I enjoyed working with the brethren on the north side in Springfield, MO. The meeting was well attended and an encouragement to me. Bro. Irvin Barnes has been a constant encourager of mine through the years and I am thankful for our association throughout the week - as well as he and Barb's many years of faithful service in

the kingdom. June took us to Lawrenceburg, TN (Springer Rd.) and Tulsa, OK (11th Street). Each meeting brought large crowds and left me built up! We are looking forward to re-launching our television program in NW Arkansas and in West Monroe, LA. We have had great success with the program in both places with recent baptisms and lots of interest. David Killingsworth and I have finished building a new HD video studio and set and are planning to produce program starting this week. These programs will have very high production value and will be visually engaging for viewers. I am anticipating ever greater things as new programs are produced for these communities and whoever else may decide to use them. Also, thanks to all who have purchased the new songbook! I appreciate all of the encouragement the brotherhood has given in this effort. If you would still like to order the book and/or CD's you may do so at legacymusicpublishing.com. Finally, won't you consider attending the annual New Year's meeting in Dothan, Alabama this December 27-31 under the direction of Bro. Ronny Wade? You won't be disappointed. The Dothan congregation should be releasing more information very soon. May the Lord bless you all in His work.



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THE BACK PAGE...

LABORERS IN THE VINEYARD AND DEGREES OF REWARD

By CARL M. JOHNSON

I mentioned in last month's installment of "The Back Page" (August 2014) that the Scriptures teach the probability of degrees of reward and punishment in the hereafter. Since then I have received several inquiries about how the teaching of degrees of reward can be harmonized with the parable of the workers in the vineyard who all received the same payment at the end of the day (Mt. 20:1-16).

Matthew 19 tells us of the rich young ruler who came to Jesus in quest of eternal life. He was a good man who kept all of the commandments of the law from his youth, but he lacked one thing. Jesus tells him to sell whatever he has, give it to the poor, and come and follow Him. The young man, clinging to his many possessions, goes away sorrowfully (Mt. 19:16-22). Subsequently, Peter draws a contrast of himself and the other apostles with the self-centered rich man. He says, "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?" (Mt. 19:27). Jesus promises that the apostles and all others who forsake themselves will be greatly compensated—"a hundredfold" and "everlasting life" in the world to come (ver. 29). However, Jesus quickly cautions Peter by adding, "But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first" (ver. 30).

Jesus then offers a parable to illustrate what He means (Mt. 20:1-16). A man hires workers for his vineyard. They are employed, however, at different hours of the day—from early morning all the way to the eleventh hour (note the 12 hour work day). When time for payment comes, amazingly those who have worked the least are paid the same wages! The other laborers complain that such treatment is unfair. The owner acknowledges that he has not treated all the workers on the same basis, but explains that their grumbling is inappropriate. As owner, he has the authority to do as he pleases, and such treatment is entirely "lawful" (ver. 15). Jesus concludes, "So the last shall be first and the first last" (ver. 16).

Expositors agree this may be the most difficult of all of Jesus' parables to interpret in all of its particulars. Several important truths are clear. Jesus is warning Peter and the apostles, who would come into the church at the very beginning, that the time will come when others will be added. The apostles were not to claim a special honor and place because they became followers of Christ first.

There is also a warning to the Jews. They knew they were originally God's chosen people and they were unlikely to forget it. In the church, however, all Christians are God's chosen people (1 Pet. 2:9). It would be a major mistake for Jews to assume an attitude of superiority because God came to them first.

The parable also teaches that acceptable work must be done in the proper spirit. The early workers in the vineyard were jealous over what the others received. They begrudged the owner's generosity. They are not complaining because he has deprived them, but because he has been so merciful to others. As sovereign, God may do as He pleases and it will always be right (Gen. 18:25). Human assessments of His operations are far from perfect. The disciples were constantly making poor judgments and they needed to be taught better. They quarreled about who would be the greatest (Lk. 22:24), and some petitioned for places of prominence (Mk. 10:37). They downplayed Mary's generous gift bestowed upon Jesus not long before His death (Mt. 26:8). They needed to learn the principle that God will exalt the humble (Mt. 26:13; cf. Mk. 12:42; 1 Pet. 5:5-6), and humble the exalted (cf. Daniel 4:28-37). The teaching warns against the attitude of the elder brother (Lk. 15:25-32).

The parable teaches other lessons, but apparently one it cannot teach is that every saved person will receive exactly the same reward in heaven. Jesus clearly teaches that He will "reward every man according to his works" (Mt. 16:27). The expression "according to" (kata) implies a norm, standard by which "rewards or punishments are given" (Frederick W. Danker 2000, 512). If this does not mean a proportionately fair dispersal, language scarcely has any meaning. (Compare also the parable of the pounds, Luke 19:12ff.).

We do not know yet what heaven will be (1 Jn. 3:2). Some expositors believe the environs of heaven will be the same for everyone, but that some will have a greater capacity for enjoying it than others. All such reasoning is speculative. However, we know Jesus promises to reward us there according to our works in this life.

What a wonderfully inspiring promise! It should cause us to abound in our service, "persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day" (2 Tim. 1:12). cmjthebackpage@gmail.com