

West Virginia School Of Preaching

# VICTORY LECTURES

October 26 - 30, 1998

Theme: "Balance In An Unbalanced World"



## CHURCH OF CHRIST

Fourth Street and Willard Avenue  
Moundsville, West Virginia 26041

# WEST VIRGINIA SCHOOL OF PREACHING LECTURESHIP

**October 26-30, 1998**

Church of Christ Hillview Terrace  
Moundsville, WV 26041 Phone (304) 845-7227  
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## **Theme: Balance In An Unbalanced World**

**CONGREGATIONAL SINGING 6:30 - 7:00 pm**

Tommy Tucker, Bridgeport ,WV

**Monday Evening: October 26 Keynote:**

7:05 pm The Goodness and Severity of God

Gary Workman

**LUNCH WILL BE PROVIDED EACH DAY IN THE SCHOOL MULTIPURPOSE ROOM**

**Tuesday October 27**

9 am Hate Evil, Love Good  
10 am God's People in the Army  
11 am Emotion and Reason  
1:10 pm A Balanced Pulpit  
2:10 pm Contending Without Being Contentious  
3:10 pm Possibility? Or Probability Of Apostasy

Clarence McDowell  
Brad Poe  
Charles Pugh, III  
Phil Grear  
Gary Workman  
Keith Ball

**Evening: Keynote**

7 pm Neither To The Right Nor To The Left

Gary Workman

**Wednesday October 28**

9 am Extremism of Pharisees  
10 am God's People in the Family  
11 am Faith and Works  
1:10 pm A Balanced Congregation  
2:10 pm Peace, But Not At Any Price  
3:10 pm Worship: Meaningful Without Being Faddish

Albert Farley  
Denver Cooper  
Frank Higginbotham  
George Erwin  
Keith Cozort  
D.Gene West

**Evening: Keynote**

7 pm The Lion and The Lamb

Donnie Barnes

**Thursday October 29**

9 am Positives and Negatives  
10 am God's People In the Body  
11 am Grace and Obedience  
1:10 pm A Balanced Life  
2:10 pm Zeal With Knowledge  
3:10 pm Works of the Flesh Vs Fruit of the Spirit

Steve Smithbauer  
Roger Rush  
John Barcus  
Charles Newell  
Donnie Barnes  
Randy Cook

**Evening: Keynote**

7 pm Change Vs The Unchangeable

Donnie Barnes

**Friday October 30**

9 am Faith and Opinion  
10 am God's People In the Vineyard  
11 am Spirit and Truth  
1:10 pm A Balanced Leadership  
2:10 pm Blending Youth With Age  
3:10 pm A Church That Protects And Proclaims

Gene Miller  
Bill Dorriety  
W.Terry Varner  
Paul Hoover  
Randy Baker  
Michael Phillips

**Evening: Keynote**

7:05 pm Weighed In The Balances

Donnie Barnes

# **The Goodness and Severity of God**

**Gary Workman**

There are so many concepts of deity in the world today. The Bible tells us that "Go created man in his own image" (Gen. 1:27), but man has been making God into man's own image ever since. It just seems to be a characteristic of human nature to believe that God is much like we are. So people tend to attribute to God the inclinations that they themselves have.

## **Wrong Concepts of God**

Many in the world today do not even know who God is. Some worship great philosophers. Some worship their ancestors. Some are idolaters and worship gods of wood and stone. Some worship animals. Some worship the stars.

Even where there is a belief in the one true God, and even among Christians, it seems to be a perennial fact that most people have an unbalanced view of God's attitudes and attributes. Some think of God as a vengeful tyrant, and therefore picture themselves as "sinners in the hands of an angry God." Others think of God as a kind, grandfatherly figure passively watching over his children from on high, accepting any lifestyle they happen to have and any form of worship they might want to give. These think that no matter how they choose to live, in the end God will say, "Welcome home, my child."

The Bible is the great corrector of human errors and deviations. Though men may be unbalanced in their views of God, the Bible presents the truth. Even Christians of the first century needed some correction in their concepts. Some thought of God as much too harsh, while others thought of God as much too soft. In order to set forth a balanced view of Deity, the apostle Paul said, "Behold then the goodness and severity of God" (Rom. 11:22).

## **Why Does God Treat Man with Severity?**

Though many reasons could no doubt be listed, I see two basic answers to this question, both having to do with God's nature.

### **God is the Almighty, and therefore expects obedience.**

God is "Lord of heaven and earth" (Acts 17:24), says Paul, and the identical words were used by Jesus (Luke 10:21). Since He is the Creator, He is the Owner --- the Master of the house, the Lord of the manor. Since "the Lord made the heavens" (Ps. 96:5), He is "great and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods" (v.4). "For the Lord is the great God, and the great King above all gods" (Ps. 95:3). And He is the sole Ruler: "Besides Me there is no God" (Isa. 44:6).

This means that God has absolute power over everything. He is the great Governor of the universe. "He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by name" (Ps. 146:4). Honor and majesty are before Him: strength and beauty are in His sanctuary" (Ps. 96:6). So great is God. Paul says, that when He put Jesus over everything, "it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted" because God is "all in all" (1 Cor. 15:27-28).

Being supreme, God has the right to command. At the very beginning of creation God exercised his right to command. "By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth... For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast" (Ps. 33:6,9). The Psalmist's application is this: "Let all the earth fear the Lord; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of Him" (Ps. 33:8). God Himself said, "But this is what I commanded them, saying, 'Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be My people. And walk in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you'" (Jer. 7:23).

Some say, "That's the Old Testament. If you're really spiritual you'll see freedom in Christianity, not commandments." But God still commands today. Paul said, "If anyone thinks himself to be...spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord" (1 Cor. 14:37). And God is the one who "now commands all men everywhere to repent" (Acts 17:30). God is still the Commander-In-Chief of the universe.

Since God commands, he also punishes. He "spared not the ancient world, ... when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow" (2 Pet. 2: 5-6). God also punished his own people when they rebelled or disobeyed (1 Cor. 10:8-11), and 'every' transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward" (Heb. 2:2). Ultimately, God rejected the majority of Israel, and "by their unbelief they were broken off" (Rom. 11:20). Paul then issues a warning to Christians that if we do not continue in God's goodness we also will be cut off (Rom. 11:22).

### **God is holy, and therefore must oppose sin.**

God has said, "Ye shall be holy, for I am holy" (1 Pet. 1: 16). but mankind has not lived up to the expectation. "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God" (Isa. 59:9). God created us for his own glory (Isa. 43:7), but "all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).

Because of human failure, Paul said that "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men" (Rom. 1:18). "God is angry with the wicked everyday (Ps. 7:11). Who can stand before his indignation, and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? (Nah. 1:6). Eventually all must face "the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgement of God" (Rom. 2:5).

### **Why Does God Treat Man with Goodness?**

#### **God is benevolent.**

God "gives to all life, breath, and all things" (Acts 17:25). God, the Creator of the earth, "gives breath to the people on it, and spirit to those who walk on it" (Isa. 42:5). When God created Adam, He "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being" (Gen. 2:7). And God has given life to every other person as he "forms the spirit of man within him" (Zech. 12:1). From the beginning, God the "Father of spirits" (Heb. 12:9) has been the bountiful Benefactor of mankind. God "gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness" (Acts 14:17).



God is the Giver of "every good and perfect gift" (Jas. 1:17). His greatest blessing was when he "gave his only begotten Son" (John 3:16). In Christ "his divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness" (2 Pet. 1:3). We therefore may have "every spiritual blessing...in Christ" (Eph. 1:3). Paul said, "All things are yours; whether. . . life or death, or things present or things to come; all are yours" (1 Con 3:21-22).

### **God is merciful.**

There was a time when we were alienated from God, having no hope and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12). We "in time past were no people, but now are the people of God; who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy" (1 Pet. 2:10). God offers salvation to everyone, saying, "I will be merciful to their iniquities, and their sins will I remember no more" (Heb. 8:12).

### **God wants all men to repent and be saved.**

Paul said, "The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance" (Rom. 2:4). The goodness of God not only keeps man from suffering more than he deserves but also as much as he deserves. God was longsuffering even in the days of Noah (1 Pet. 3:20). And God is "longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9). God still "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust" (Matt. 5:45) because God wants all men to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4). Therefore, we need to "continue in his goodness" (Rom. 11:22).

### **How Will God Treat Us?**

How God will treat us in the end will depend on how we treat God in the meantime. If we reject the love of God and his great gift of salvation, only severity awaits. "He that rejecteth me and receiveth not my sayings hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day," (John 12:48). If we accept God's love and salvation but live unfaithful and worldly lives, God's severity will still await. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" (Heb. 2:3).

On the other hand, if we embrace God's salvation and live faithful lives, God's goodness awaits even though we occasionally will stumble into sin. "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin...If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:7,9).

We can have assurance of ultimate salvation so that the goodness of God will be ours (1 John 5:13; 1 Cor. 15:58; 2 Pet. 1:10-11). God doesn't want us to be in doubt. But it's up to us to cooperate with him so that we can have the "living hope" (1 Pet. 1:3) that he provides.

## Hate The Evil and Love the Good

Clarence McDowell

Amos prophesied about 160 years after the kingdom of Israel divided into the northern kingdom of ten tribes - still known as Israel - and the remaining two southern tribes, known as Judah. He grew up in Tekoa, a city of Judah, but was sent to prophesy against Israel during a time in their history when they had turned aside from God in ways that are frighteningly similar to what is now the case in America. Jeroboam II was reigning in Israel, and led them in successful military campaigns against Syria. II Kings 14:25 records: *"He restored the coast of Israel from the entering of Hamath unto the sea of the plain, according to the word of the Lord God of Israel, which he spake by the hand of his servant Jonah, the son of Amittai, the prophet, which was of Gathhepher"* (KJV). Like present day America, the country was wealthy and prosperous, but rife with evil. They were still worshiping the two golden calves set up at Bethel and Dan by Jeroboam I. The rich were taking advantage of the poor to the extent that Amos said in Amos 2:7 that they *"Pant after the dust of the earth on the head of the poor."* Greed has reached flood stage when the greedy have already taken all the land from the poor, and still want the dust that has settled on their heads.

Another similarity to our modern culture is seen in Amos 7:12-13 where we read what Amaziah the false prophet told Amos: *O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread and prophesy there: But prophesy not again any more in Bethel: for it is the king's chapel, and it is the king's court."* Then in Amos 5:10, the prophet laments: *"They hate him that rebuketh in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly."* Isn't it disturbing that, for the most part, America does not want to be told what God said? America does not want to hear about the permanence of marriage. America does not want to hear what God has to say about the sanctity of human life. America does not want to hear that God has labeled the practice of homosexuality an abomination. More and more, we hear the voice of God drowned out by the voices of humanists who preach what people want to hear instead of what God wants them to hear.

But because of those same similarities between Israel in the day of Amos and our present time, what Amos told Israel almost 8 centuries before Christ is particularly relevant to the problems plaguing our culture. Amos told them: **"Hate the evil, and love the good, and establish judgment in the gate: it may be**

that the Lord God of hosts will be gracious unto the remnant of Joseph." I want to examine that prescription he wrote for Israel, and point out how this ancient remedy would cure the sickness of our own society.

### The Command to Hate Evil and Love Good Implies a Standard

We are continually hearing people claim that good and evil are ambiguous terms, alleging that no absolute standard exists by which good and evil can be measured. The frequency of these assertions reflect the extent to which humanism has influenced the thinking of Americans. One of the false tenets of secular humanists is that evil and good are matters of private opinion. Listen to this quotation from Article 6 of Humanist Manifesto II:

*In the area of sexuality, we believe that intolerant attitudes, often cultivated by orthodox religions and puritanical cultures, unduly repress sexual conduct. The right to birth control, abortion, and divorce should be recognized. While we do not approve of exploitive, denigrating forms of sexual expression, neither do we wish to prohibit, by law or social sanction, sexual behavior between consenting adults. The many varieties of sexual exploration should not in themselves be considered "evil." Without countenancing mindless permissiveness or unbridled promiscuity, a civilized society should be a tolerant one. Short of harming others or compelling them to do likewise, individuals should be permitted to express their sexual proclivities and pursue their life-styles as they desire. We wish to cultivate the development of a responsible attitude toward sexuality, respect, and honesty in interpersonal relations are encouraged, Moral education for children and adults is an important way of developing awareness and sexual maturity.*

When the humanists tout moral education for children and adults, what do they mean? They mean that their immorality is to be taught in place of the Bible morality. For them, adultery is ok, fornication is fine, and homosexuality is healthy.

### God Himself is The Standard of Good

The honest person who believes there is a God cannot at the same time believe that there is no such thing as right or wrong, because holding those two positions simultaneously would be contradictory. In Luke 18:18-19 we read: "And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, why callest thou me good? None is good save one, that is, God." In saying that, Christ was affirming that God Himself is the standard by which goodness is measured. It follows then, that evil can be correctly termed "ungodliness." In order to claim that no one has the right to affix labels of right and wrong, one must first conclude that there is no God. Humanists unashamedly deny that there is a God. Others who intone against absolutes of right and wrong are actually practical atheists.

The text of Amos 5 holds forth God as the essence of goodness. Note that in verse 4 the LORD says *"Seek ye me, and ye shall live."* Then in verse 6, we read: *"Seek the LORD, and ye shall live..."* Now, compare those verses with verse 14, which says: *"Seek good and not evil, that ye may live."* Seeking the LORD leads to life, and seeking good leads to life, because the LORD is the essence of goodness.

### The Urgency of the Appeal

Amos urged the pursuit of good rather than evil for the most fundamental of reasons - that they might live. His was a message of impending judgment. There would be wailing in the streets. In a culture where professional mourners were used, those so skilled would find their services in demand. Like the unprepared today, who talk of Christ's coming in unctuous tones, some foolishly desired the day of the LORD. Instead of bringing relief, it would bring death. Amos warned of relief that would not come, by comparing their misplaced hopes to that of one who was flooded by comfort after having escaped from a lion, only to be met by a bear.

God's message is not modified by time. A century and a half later, when the people of Judah became entangled in the same sins that had earlier destroyed the northern kingdom, God gave another prophet the same message He delivered through Amos to Israel. God directed His Habakkuk, His spokesman: *"Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it"* (Habakkuk 2:2). I have heard some affirm that the sense of that passage was that he was to write it in large letters, so that the one running by could read it, but that is not the sense of the passage. The point is that they were to read it so they could run and escape the carnage that would accompany the assault of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar's forces. That understanding is essential to our correct interpretation of the better-known passage from Habakkuk that Paul quoted in the Roman letter - *"The just shall live by his faith"* (Habakkuk 2:4). The same warning inheres in Amos's urging the northern kingdom to seek good and not evil, for life itself hangs in the balance.

A second reason for them to heed the words of Amos was really an extension of the first. It was so that the LORD, the God of hosts, would be with them. In the face of the announced judgment, the possibility of the LORD the God of hosts not being with them should have caused them to shudder. The God of hosts was God Almighty, who defended Israel against her enemies. Unless the people addressed by Amos sought after God, He would not be there to defend them when the Assyrians came against them.

### We Seek What We Love



Of course, the opposite is also true. We avoid what we hate. Haven't you known people who spent all their grocery money on liquor, perhaps even leaving their children hungry? Why? Because they love alcohol. Haven't you seen others whose childhood was a living hell because of an alcoholic parent and now those grown children will not go near beverage alcohol? Why? Because they hate it. The task of the prophet was, and the task of gospel preachers still is, one of causing people to fall in love with God. When we do, we will love what He loves and hate what He hates.

### America Needs the Message of Amos

Is it not painfully clear that our present society loves evil and hates good? When you have one opinion poll after another that says Americans condone immorality in our leaders, what does that say except that we are a nation in love with evil? It used to be that Christians who stood up for their ideals were among the most respected members of society, but now they are too often labeled intolerant, bigots, or homophobes - because our society hates good and loves evil. Why are modern movies laced with filthy language? Because our society hates good and loves evil.

How do we explain the wrong turn that our culture has taken? Why have we come to a time when human life is no longer valued? What explains America's love affair with drugs? Why in the midst of affluence is suicide rampant? The answer is that people have turned aside from the Bible and the precepts that influenced the thinking of the men who framed our nation. Dr. James Dobson was correct when he asserted: *"The humanistic system of values has now become the predominant way of thinking in most of the power centers of society."*<sup>1</sup> The tragedy of tragedies is that in our present day, some of the most vocal advocates of humanistic values are the leaders of mainstream religious groups! Instead of changing the culture, they have allowed the culture to change them. Instead of proclaiming a message that can change the lifestyle of the sinner, they change the message to accommodate the sinner's lifestyle.

Humanism leads to an inevitable conclusion, as the following quotation intimates:

*"Bertrand Russell, a clear-headed liberal humanist, wrote as follows about what he called 'the night of nothingness': 'There is darkness without and when I die there will be darkness within. There is no splendor, no vastness, anywhere; only triviality for a moment, and then nothing.' That says it all. Whereas for the Christian nothing is finally trivial, for the*

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<sup>1</sup> James Dobson, Children at Risk, (Dallas, TX; Word, 1990) p.22

*humanist everything becomes finally trivial, death, as Russell says, producing precisely that effect.*"<sup>2</sup>

In view of Dr. Dobson's claim that "*The humanistic system of values has now become the predominant way of thinking in most of the power centers of society,*" is it any wonder that human life has become so trivial? That is exactly what humanism declares it to be. Is it any wonder why people risk their lives by trying to dull their senses with ever increasing dosages of drugs? For the humanist, that would be preferable to facing the night of nothingness that they believe death to be.

### The Message is Still Urgent

Life still hangs in the balance. The false and hopeless message of humanists must be drowned out by the heralds of God's timeless truth "*the just shall live by his faith*" (Habakkuk 2:4). We must help people understand that good and evil are not arbitrary labels affixed by narrow minded religionists. Good is good because it identifies behavior that brings lasting happiness. Evil is evil because it is inherently destructive. God, Himself the fountain-head of wisdom has made the distinctions between the two, because the self-interest of our own lust renders mankind incapable of such a task. We must hold up the message of the cross, so that people might learn to "*Hate the evil and love the good...it may be that the LORD God of hosts will be gracious...*" (Amos 5:15).

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<sup>2</sup>J.J. Packer and Thomas Howard, Christianity: The True Humanism, (Waco TX; Word, 1985, p.231-232

Clarence McDowell was born in Ligonier, Pennsylvania and married the former Eileen Woleslagle, also of Ligonier. They have four daughters- Ramona, Kimberly, Margaret, and Jennifer. Their only son Scott, works at David Lipscomb University.

Brother McDowell attended Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, and worked as Superintendent of Hot Rolling at Latrobe Steel Co. and at Franklin Steel Co. While working at Franklin, Pennsylvania, he and his family established the church in that city. Then in 1977 they moved to Kittanning, Pennsylvania- the county seat of Armstrong County- and established the church there. The Kittanning church now has elders and deacons, and their building, valued at \$475,000.00, is debt free.

While working at Kittanning, brother McDowell commuted to Ohio Valley College, and earned a B. S. degree in Bible. He has spoken on lectureships at Ohio Valley College and at Freed-Hardeman University. In addition, he has contributed articles to The Gospel Advocate and had held gospel meetings in several states.

## GOD'S PEOPLE IN THE ARMY

Brad Poe

I thank the West Virginia School of Preaching, overseen by the eldership at the Hillview Terrace Church of Christ and directed by Emanuel Daugherty, for conducting this lectureship and inviting me to contribute to the program.

**Introduction.** The church is not explicitly identified as God's army in the New Testament. Yet it is implied in commands like *put on the whole armor of God* (Eph.6: 11), and in Paul's orders to Timothy, *war a good warfare* (1Tim. 1:18) and *endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ* (2 Tim.2:3). We know what it means to sing "onward Christian soldiers."

Many thoughts attend the biblical portrayal of God's people in the army. My first reaction was to talk about war. But to speak of God's army only in the language of spiritual warfare, while being biblical, would not be balanced. To call a soldier "one who fights" is like calling a baby "one who wets." Its something he does, but he is much more than that. Combat is not the lone, collective feature of an army.

If guns and guts don't define a soldier, what does? How do you describe his heart? What does It mean to speak of God's people in the army? We will start with a parable which plainly teaches what I contend to be the comprehensive biblical principle to govern a Christian soldier. It doesn't speak in terms of a soldier but a servant. It is the "Parable Of The Unprofitable Servant."

**Jesus' teaching on Christian duty.** *But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup. and gird thyself and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken,' and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which was our duty to do.* (Luke 1-7:7-10).

You can almost see the man come in from the field, wearing a hard day's work. Another man in dry clothes meets him at the barn: "Get cleaned up. Fix my supper. Then you can eat." An American laborer would file a grievance. But Jesus builds His teaching point on the assumption that the man will do as he is told, without complaint or reward.

If that strikes you unfair, remember the man is a slave and not an hourly-wage worker. He was bought, not hired. Their relationship is one of ownership, not contract. Its his duty to see to his master's needs first. *Does he thank the servant?*, Jesus asked. He only did what was expected.

Jesus' use of this episode to explain the Christian life shouldn't disturb us. He wasn't calling God a taskmaster or discipleship a drudgery. Read another text if you want to learn what God thinks about us. Read this one if you want to learn what we should think about our work.

*So likewise you*, Jesus said. There is something about a servant doing what is expected that offers an appealing description of Christian duty. Certain things are expected from disciples. Jesus had to include this parable in His curriculum to the twelve to teach them, and us, that when service is not enjoyable, applauded or profitable, we ought to serve anyway.

We routinely operate by this rule. Certain behavior is expected **from** certain people. We perform some tasks, not for reward or recognition, but because it is required. Why do **parents** clean up after their sick child? Its required. When the "Titanic" filled with water and the lifeboats filled with passengers, why did the men wait for the women and children? It was expected. What made young servicemen travel around the globe and risk their lives in the jungles of Southeast Asia? A sense of duty.

**A soldier's comprehensive career ethic is duty.** I would like to make the case that to speak of God's people in the army is to affirm the Christian lifestyle as one of duty. Nothing defines a soldier more than his performance of what he ought to do, in spite of what he wants to do. The lone, collective feature of an army is not "shed all blood" but "discharge all duties".



I have the suspicion that we aren't rightly impressed with the notion of duty, as demanded by Jesus in the above parable, and represented by the soldier-icon. So before we rush on, what does duty look like, dressed up in army fatigues? An Old Testament model of the dutiful soldier stands at attention at 2 Samuel 23:39: *Uriah the Hittite*. His name is the last in a catalog of soldiers called King David's 'mighty men', a small company of specialized fighters.

Uriah's wife's name was Bathsheba. For my purposes, I will assume you know the story in 2 Samuel 11 and 12. If not, read that inspired story about two soldiers, one who did his duty and one who did not.

Just what was Uriah thinking when David pulled him off the front line in the war against Ammon (2Sam. 11:6)? Just what was this soldier thinking when David gave him a letter to deliver to Joab treating him, a tactical warrior, like a messenger boy (11:14)? Just what was this soldier thinking when Joab commanded him to execute a battlefield maneuver which, in Joab's own words was unwise even in the judgment of a military novice (11:16-21)?

To answer, we don't know what Uriah was thinking. We only know what Uriah was. He was a soldier. Remember Uriah's protest to David when the king wanted him to go home, be with his wife and legitimize David's child whom Bathsheba carried? *The ark, and israel, and Judah, abide in tents; and my lord Joab, and the servants of my lord, are encamped in the open fields; shall I then go into mine house, to eat and to drink, and to lie with my wife? as thou livest, and as thy soul liveth, I will not do this thing.* (11:11). Read that again. That's a man of duty talking.

Paul charged Timothy, *No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.* (2Tim.2:4). The desire to please him who hath chosen drives Christian soldiers. God's people in the army are people of duty.

But how do we orient ourselves around this spiritual truth?

**Regarding God, duty means compliance with His commands.** Let me now speak of another soldier, a centurion, whose servant was sick (Lk.7: 1-10). He must have thought Jesus would hear the plea of a Jew before a Roman, an elder before a soldier. So a group of local synagogue leaders asked Jesus to heal the servant. *He is worthy for you to grant this to him.* (7:4). Jesus was obliged. But before He could arrive, the centurion sent friends to meet Him with a note:

Don't trouble yourself further. . . just say the word and my servant will be healed. (7:6,7)

The message marveled Jesus. He wheeled around to the crowd. *I say' unto you, I have not found so great faith.* (7:9) What was it that impressed Jesus? *Just say the word.* The soldier requested nothing but the words of Jesus. "Say the word. You don't have to come to my house, touch my servant, or see his face. Just say it Jesus and its as good as done."

Listen to the centurion explain: *For I a/so am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.* (7:8) In the military, there is a chain of command. Survival can depend upon orders being carried out exactly as they are handed down. Insubordination is the great sin. If someone outranks you, his word is not to be ignored or questioned but obeyed.

In the beginning, when God said, *Let there be light* (Gen. 1:3) there was immediate and complete compliance. Long before the Son had a voice box, His word was making things happen. *The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without him was not anything made that was made.* (Jn. 1:2,3) Jesus outranked the squall on the Galilean waters, so when He said *Peace, be still!* (Mk.4:39), the wind quit and the boat slowed back down to a gentle rock. He outranked the devils, nature and disease. Nothing committed insubordination.

The centurion understood Jesus' place in the chain of command. Whatever it was that so troubled his servant, it was compelled to comply with His command. *Just say the word, Jesus, and my servant will be healed.*

Our duty as the army of God means, first and most, compliance with His word. Any soldier who doesn't understand his place in the chain of command better get with it. We must carry out God's orders as they have been handed down.

**Regarding men, duty means performing necessary tasks.** I don't know where some in my generation got the notion that our Christian discipleship only demands us to perform those tasks which are desirable. There is no mandate for worship to be entertaining, for Bible reading to be lucrative or Christian service to be glamorous. Like soldiers, God's people discharge their duty by doing required, expected and necessary things. Obligation is the engine which drives God's army.

At this point, someone may object: "Isn't that a contradiction of the Bible? Doesn't Scripture teach love as the supreme Christian motive? If a task is performed only because it is necessary, how can it be performed out of love?"

Many can't equate duty with love because duty is not often attended by warm, fuzzy feelings. They suppose that you can't strip love of feelings and still call it love any more than you can strip the stripes off a zebra and still call it a zebra. But the analogy is flawed. Stripes define a zebra. Remove them and you've got a different animal. However, feelings don't define love. Remove them, and you've still got what you had. More to the point, what you've got left is the ideal motive of love, undressed, plain and bare that cannot be mistaken for anything else.

The substance of what the Bible calls love is duty. I would turn the above question on its head. If a task is performed only because it is necessary, how can it **not** be performed out of love? A task performed, not for money, not for pleasure, not for fame, not for any other reason other than that it is necessary can be no more an act of love.

One young husband stands at his front door with a bouquet of roses to surprise his wife. Another husband, age 80, kneels at the bedside of his wife who has had two strokes and wipes the drool off her chin, after changing her soiled clothes. Which act is most dutiful? Which is the greater act of love? An act of real duty is an act of real love.

The cornerstone piece of proof for this is the cross of Christ. What motive drove Jesus to Calvary? love, and only love. *For God so loved the world...* (Jn.3: 16). *But God commendeth his own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.* (Rom.5:8). *And walk in love, even as Christ also loved you, and gave himself up for us* (Eph.5:2). *Hereby know we love, because he laid down his life for us* (1Jn.3: 16). Not every verse that tells what Jesus did tells why He did it. But every verse that teaches why He did it, reveals love as the lone motive.

We are accustomed to thinking of love as defined by magazine covers and the Hollywood box office. But that isn't biblical love. There was nothing romantic about Jesus' scourging. There was no soft song played to accompany His walk down the Jerusalem street. The crucifixion was no dreamy, sentimental thing. It wasn't lucrative, charming or fun. But it was a soldier-like act of duty. And it was the greatest act of love ever performed.

When Jesus and the apostles commanded us to love each other as Christ loved us, they commanded us to love like this: *By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren* (1Jn.3:16; cf.also Jn.13:34).

Our duty as God's army means, second, doing necessary things. Any soldier only attracted to those jobs which are convenient, advantageous or before the camera had better get with it. The daily course of Christian discipleship includes far more required tasks than glamorous ones.

**Regarding Satan, duty means making war.** Some soldiers may be bloodthirsty. But as a rule good soldiers don't grin at the prospect of war. They only do it when necessary.

The Holy Spirit used war-talk in the New Testament to address the Christian's relationship with the devil. Perhaps the most memorable Scripture describing the Christian as a soldier comes in such a context. *Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.* (Eph.6: 11) Following a second appeal to *take up the whole armour of God* (6:13), Paul identified a Christian soldier's armour and equipment: *having your loins gird about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace: above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.* (6: 1-17).

The Holy Spirit also used war-talk in the New Testament to address the proper response to false teaching. Paul's orders that Timothy *war a good warfare* (1Tim.1:18) comes in a context in which two false teachers, *Hymenaeus and Alexander* are reprimanded (1:20). In another letter written to expose false teachers, this one to a church, Paul wrote *though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds.* (2Cor.10:3,4)

Our duty as God's army means, third, waging war against Satan. Any soldier who will not guard the peace which God achieved in the church by waging war against its enemies had better get with it. Confrontation, though never fun, is sometimes our Christian duty.

**Conclusion.** Is there honor to be found in obeying orders? Can God's people in the army find satisfaction by discharging their duties? When a soldier does the necessary thing, what does it say about the man beneath the uniform?

Nathan Hale was a famous soldier in the Revolutionary War, captured by the redcoats and executed for espionage. He is an American hero for saying: 'I only regret, that I have but one life to lose for my country.' But I like something else he said better.

In the fall of 1776, General Washington desperately needed to learn the intentions of British forces occupying long Island, NY. He stood before a regiment and asked for a volunteer for an intelligence mission behind enemy lines. At first call, there were no volunteers. At second call, Nathan Hale alone stepped forward. In a conversation later with a friend, in defense of his decision, Hale said: "I wish to be useful, and every kind of service, necessary to the public good, becomes honorable by being necessary."<sup>1</sup>

If I might borrow that soldier's language, every kind of service, necessary to good of the kingdom, becomes honorable by being necessary.

God's people in the army are people who perform daily, often unattractive, but necessary, deeds of Christian service. They are heroes, because great men aren't just men who perform wonderful feats. Great men are men who perform ordinary feats, wonderfully. They are heroines because great women aren't just women who perform wonderful feats. Great women are women who perform ordinary feats, wonderfully.

<sup>1</sup>William Bennett, ed.w.comm., The Book Of Virtues (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), pp.715.

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# BALANCING EMOTION AND REASON

Charles C. Pugh III

One of life's greatest challenges is the challenge to develop a balanced life. A lack of balance results in all kinds of problems in various areas of life. However, proper balance results in many positives. Balance of color and sound can bring beauty to art and music. Balance of diet is vital to the health of the physical body.

Balance is essential to true religion. The history of religion involves a study of action, reaction, and extremes which often show imbalance. One of the specific areas where such extremism (imbalance) has often been evidenced is in the areas of the intellect (reason) and the emotions. We often see a wide range of religious thinking and expression which runs from cold intellectualism to impassioned emotionalism. Man is both an intellectual and emotional being. However, there must be a proper balance between these two vital parts of man. As we attempt to discover the proper balance between reason and emotion in religion we will do such in view of three areas of consideration: (1) A DEFINITION of the terms (2) A DESCRIPTION of the problem and (3) A DECLARATION of the truth.

## DEFINITION OF THE TERMS

Emotion is a "disturbance, excitement, state of feeling" (Webster). Feeling can be a powerful motivation. When Peter set forth evidence on the Day of Pentecost which demanded the conclusion, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36), it stirred his hearers very deeply. "Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). Cut (pricked, KJV) here means, "be pierced, stabbed . . . the feeling of sharp pain connected with anxiety, remorse, etc." (William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon Of The New Testament, p. 416); "To pain the mind sharply, agitate it vehemently: used especially of the emotion of sorrow" (Joseph Henry Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon Of The New Testament, pp. 334-35).

The gospel appeals to the emotions of man. Just knowing the truth is not enough. Man must be moved to obey the truth. His emotions must be moved. He must act upon what he has heard. When the intellect (reason) has been reached with the facts, and the emotions stirred, the volition (will) must be activated. One may have his intellect (reason) addressed, and his emotions stirred, but not activate his will (cf. Acts 24:25).



Reason is the power of comprehending, inferring, or thinking in rational ways" (Webster). To be rational is to honor the law of rationality.

This law, or principle, of rationality, sometimes called the law of sufficient reason, says one should draw only such conclusions as are warranted by the evidence. This principle is recognized by every rational person whether or not he(she) has formally studied the discipline of Logic. It is a principle which is at work continually in the lives of all sane people.

For example, suppose that a man tells his wife that he needs to run to town. She wants to know **why**. It will not do for him to say something like, "Well, dogs bark," or "Clouds surely are pretty." If he were to say something like the above, a troubled look would likely appear on his wife's face, and his remark would be interpreted by her as a sign that either (1) he did not really understand her question, or that (2) something is wrong with her husband! We all understand that we constantly are giving **reasons** as explanations for positions we take (conclusions we draw). We also try to give **adequate** ones, not ones that will not stand further investigation. If the husband in our illustration (upon being asked by his wife why he needed to go to town) responded with: "I need to get some gas for the car," he is seeking to explain or justify the position that he has taken (the position was: I need to go to town). He is trying to give an adequate reason for his conclusion. He is reasoning. He is being logical [Mac Deaver, "The Necessity Of Logic In 'Rightly Dividing' (II)," Rightly Dividing The Word: Volume I - General Hermeneutics, The Fourth Annual Shenandoah Lectures (San Antonio, TX: Shenandoah Church of Christ, 1990) ed. Terry M. Hightower, p. 132].

One might attempt to deny the need to honor the law of rationality but the very moment he begins to give "reasons" for denying this law he is, in fact, admitting the truth of it. The very fact that one would ask, "How do we know it is true that we ought to justify our conclusions by adequate evidence?," is proof that this law or principle is true. One who asks for such is calling for the sufficient evidence that warrants the conclusion: One ought to justify his conclusions by sufficient evidence.

The Bible honors the law of rationality. The following biblical statement illustrates something very crucial in reference to the hermeneutic of the apostles:

And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and giving evidence . . . (Acts 17:2-3, NASV).

The above biblical passage is of value in identifying something very crucial about the basic approach of the apostles toward the Bible and the interpretation and proclamation of its message. Note that Paul reasoned (dialogomai) from the scriptures. The example of Paul (as well as the example of those who heard Paul - Acts 17:11) shows that the apostles honored the law of rationality in their handling of the scriptures, and enjoined such on their auditors (cf. 1 Thess. 5:21; 1 Peter 3:15; 2 Peter 1:16-21; 1 John 4:1).

### DESCRIPTION OF THE PROBLEM

The challenge of properly balancing emotion and reason in religion involves overcoming the extremes of (1) throwing the intellect (reason) into neutral while the emotions take over and run wild and/or (2) laying aside the emotions with the result being a cold, heartless religion. In order to possess the biblical balance of emotion and reason the following principles must be acknowledged:

1. There is a place for tears in religion. Jesus wept (Luke 19:41; John 11:35; Hebrews 5:7). The psalmist confessed that "rivers of water run down from my eyes, because men do not keep Your law" (Ps. 119:136). The apostle Paul preached with tears (Acts 20:31). As he wrote to the Philippians he did so "even weeping" (Philip 3:18). The weeping prophet Jeremiah desired a head full of waters and eyes that were a fountain of tears that he might weep day and night for his people (Jer. 9:1). It could be that some of us who preach have been so careful to avoid emotionalism that we have gone to the opposite extreme and have lost passion in our preaching becoming as "cold as icicles."

2. There is a place for enthusiasm in religion. Enthusiasm is "strong excitement of feeling; ardor; something inspiring zeal or fervor; passion (Webster). The biblical word is zeal. Although zeal is not sufficient it is essential (John 2:13-17; Rom. 12:11; Titus 2:11-14). Enthusiasm is not a superficial kind of showmanship. It is not loudness. Rather it is the spiritual product of "God within us" (en plus theos). Our singing should be spirited, joyous, and hearty (Col. 3:16; 23). Our response to the preaching of the Word of God should be one of zeal and enthusiasm (cf. Acts 17:11; Jer. 15:16).

3. There is a law of succession in mental states - - knowing (intellectual), feeling (emotional) and

willing (volitional). Everest made a great observation which evidences the beautiful balance of the Christian system when he stated, "Knowing is the basis of emotional excitement; and both knowing and feeling must precede willing or choice. The Apostles were sent first to turn men from darkness to light, to make known the great facts of the gospel. Preaching the word and thorough instruction were to precede all else. The feelings were to be aroused and kindled into godly sorrow by the nature of the gospel facts; facts . . . finely adapted to produce this result . . ." (Harvey W. Everest, The Divine Demonstration. A Text-Book Of Christian Evidence, p. 186).

No inspired preacher ever sought to arouse the emotions until first he had presented the facts of the gospel sustained by adequate evidence. Emotions move one to do what is right. Emotions do not determine what is right. People can be moved by emotion to do what is wrong, and erroneous, even with great sincerity. Such is one of the tragedies of denominationalism.

#### DECLARATION OF THE TRUTH

Some years ago a speaker at a college lectureship stated: "There's more to life than logic . . . All life is not logical. There's an emotional element in Christianity and for us to try to construct a system which includes all the elements in some kind of rational or logical way is to misunderstand part of what life is all about."

The above statement implies that there are various "elements" in Christianity, one of which is emotional; e.g., "There's an emotional element in Christianity." Furthermore, the statement says to have a system where "all the elements" are included in a "rational or logical way is to misunderstand part of what life is all about." To this we would raise some crucial questions: Is the logical or rational nature of Christianity just an element of Christianity as is the emotional? Is the system to which the speaker refers the Christian system? If the system does not include *all* its elements in a "rational or logical way" does this mean then that *a part* of the Christian system is not rational and logical, and thus a part of the Christian system is irrational and illogical?

The truth of the matter is that every religion available to man has an emotional element within it (Christianity included). However, it is not the emotional element of Christianity which proves that Christianity is the one true religion. I know the Christian religion is the one true religion, but not because it makes me feel good. The Buddhist, the denominationalist and the atheist may all feel very good, but this is not sufficient evidence to warrant the conclusion that their religion is right. It is whether a religion honors the law of rationality which determines whether that religion is the right religion. Only *one* religion

honors the law of rationality (i.e., only one religion acts in harmony with the demand to justify its claims by sufficient evidence) and that is Christianity. To be rational means that one will draw only such conclusions as are warranted by the evidence.

Although it is the case that a vital part of man is his emotions, and a part of Christianity appeals to his emotions (Philippians 4:4,7; 1 Peter 1:8,9; John 15:33; et al), *no man ever has the right to be irrational in any part of religion* (i.e., no man ever has the right to espouse a position for which he does not have sufficient evidence) and no part of Christianity, be it emotional, intellectual, or spiritual part, teaches that man can refuse to be rational (i.e., refuse to justify his conclusions by adequate evidence) and be right in so doing. The Bible demands that logic (sound reasoning) be honored in all things (1 Thessalonians 5:21). When any part of religion is set against logic (sound reasoning) the result is the loss of a test for truth and error.

### CONCLUSION

Christianity is the one true religion, and is therefore the **only** religion which properly balances emotion and reason. There is no contradiction between emotion and **reason** in biblical Christianity. The faithful Christian life is one in which "you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:8), and yet it is a life in which one is to "always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3:15).

The late brother Franklin Camp offered what, in my judgment, is a wonderful summation of the need to balance emotion and reason. He stated: "In order for one to understand the gospel, he must be taught and, when properly taught, if he can be reached at all, the story of sin and the cross of Christ will touch the deepest emotions of the heart and lead the will to loving submission to truth. When one is a Christian, there is a constant thrill of undying gratitude that keeps **aglow** the warmth of the Christian love and sends one singing on his way in service to God and man. This is **Christianity**. It is neither the formal and cold religion that leaves one indifferent and unconcerned, nor is it characterized by wild, emotional scenes that have no regard for truth.

Let us be careful and be sure that our Christianity is based upon a Bible instructed intellect and emotions that respond to the greatest story that has ever fallen upon the ears of man. May this produce within each of us a love and response to the love of God and a gratitude that will keep us happy. Rejoicing on our way as we serve both God and man" (Franklin Camp, The Word Of Life, March, 1977, p. 4).



## **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

### **CHARLES C. PUGH III**

Charles C. Pugh III was born June 17, 1948 in Marietta, Ohio, the son of Mr. & Mrs. Charles C. Pugh, Jr. His father served as an elder of the Grand Central Church of Christ, Vienna, WV until his death in 1977. Charles is a graduate of Parkersburg High School and has studied at Ohio Valley College, Harding University, and Harding Graduate School of Religion with graduate study in Philosophy of Religion and Christian Evidences under Thomas B. Warren. He is married to the former Sharron Beeson of Harrisburg, Arkansas, and they have three children: Mrs. Benjamin (Mendy) Brewster, Charles IV (Chip), and Nicole; and one grandchild, Hannah.

He has spoken on various lectureships (Spiritual Sword, Freed-Hardeman, Ohio Valley College, Ohio Valley, Firm Foundation, Greater Kanawha Valley, and others), preaches in several gospel meetings yearly, has published articles in various brotherhood publications, and has written numerous weekly articles for area newspapers. He has authored a number of Bible study books and has served as a part-time instructor in Bible at Ohio Valley College. He currently is a faculty member of the West Virginia School of Preaching in Moundsville where he teaches various courses in Christian Evidences and Homiletics.

Charles preached his first sermon in July, 1967 at the Red Bush Church of Christ, Little Hocking, Ohio. Upon graduating from Harding University, he worked with Jess Nutter at the Harmar Hill Church of Christ, Marietta, Ohio, and has served as an evangelist for the following congregations: Harmar Hill, Marietta, OH; Indianola, Mississippi; Chestnut Blvd., Cuyahoga Falls, OH; Camden Ave., Parkersburg, WV; Waverly, WV; and is now in his eleventh year as the preacher for the Bridge Street Church of Christ in New Martinsville, West Virginia.

## **A BALANCED PULPIT**

**Phil Grear**

Preaching has fallen on hard times in our society. At one time preachers were held in high regard in most communities, but such is often no longer the case. Television portrays them as hypocrites or shysters. Fewer young men want to preach, and fewer parents are encouraging their sons to do so. Preaching is attacked as “out-of-date” and totally unnecessary in a modern world. “Don’t preach to me” is the cry of many, including more and more within the church. Sermons are getting shorter and shorter, and many would prefer dramas and skits to Bible preaching. Are some clamoring for a more “modern approach” because they are embarrassed by the “old-fashioned” practice of preaching?

In the face of this antagonism the preacher faces many challenges, including the need for balance in the pulpit. Paul stressed the importance of this when he wrote in 2 Tim. 4:1-2, “I charge you therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.” Our preaching is to “convince (to lay bare or expose), rebuke (reprimand), and exhort (urge to particular course of conduct.) We are to maintain a balance between condemning sin and encouraging righteous living. This need for balance in the pulpit cannot be over-stated.

### **IMPORTANCE OF THE PULPIT**

Church growth “experts” say a strong pulpit is absolutely essential to church growth. They are only saying what God has been saying for two thousand years. The words “preach,” “preacher”, or “preaching” are used seventy-one times in the New Testament, sixteen of those in Acts, the greatest study of church growth ever done. God gives his assessment of preaching when Paul writes, “it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believed.” (1 Corinthians 1:21, KJV) It was God’s plan for redeemed sinners to tell unredeemed sinners about the redeemer. The world may laugh at such an approach, but it works, and is the only method that does.

We need preachers who are keenly aware of the burden to proclaim the Gospel. We need preachers who understand what Jeremiah was saying, “I will not make mention of Him, nor speak

anymore in His name. But His word was in my heart like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back, and I could not.” (Jeremiah 20:9) We need preachers who understand that if they don’t preach they will answer for it, and souls will be lost.

### **BALANCE IN THE PULPIT**

There is a challenge every time a preacher steps into the pulpit. Besides the obvious challenge to be true to the Word of God, there is also the challenge presented by his audience. There are new Christians, and those who have been Christians for many years. There are young people and those in their twilight years. There are those who are about to get married, and those who have weathered the storms of life together for decades. There are those who know the Bible well, and those who don’t know the Old Testament from the New. Some are facing illness, or other family, financial, or personal problems. There are those who are content with the way things are going, and those who are wondering if life is worth living. There are those whose hearts are hardened in sin, and those who have very tender consciences who need assurance in their relationship with Christ. How do you meet this great variety of needs in one thirty minute sermon? It is obviously impossible, so you try to do it over the long haul with a variety of texts and topics that eventually will help everyone.

There are several things that can hinder balance in our preaching. We must be sensitive to those or our pulpits can become unbalanced without our being aware of it.

*“HOBBIES.”* It is easy to fall into the trap of riding a particular horse to death. Certain subjects can become our “favorites”, and get emphasized to the exclusion of other equally vital subjects.

*INFLUENTIAL PEOPLE.* Preachers are human enough to want to be appreciated, and thus can succumb to the temptation to be “men-pleasers”. (Galatians 1:10) Certain influential people can sway us in such a way as to cause us to shy away from some subjects so as not to be “offensive” to them. The local Diotrophes may attempt to control the pulpit. Maybe the heavy contributor gets his “hobbies” preached. Preachers must not be “yes men” to anyone but God.

*PERSONAL AND FAMILY SIN.* We must not avoid subjects that condemn ourselves or some member of our family. Those who occupy the pulpit must have more personal integrity than that.

*LACK OF STUDY.* Sometimes preachers develop a collection of effective sermons on familiar subjects, and then get lazy. We must continue to study and grow in our knowledge of God’s

word. Paul instructed Timothy to “give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.” (1 Timothy 4:13) Without proper study habits we can find ourselves simply repeating sermons on familiar subjects, ignoring others that need attention.

The concept of balanced preaching implies that unbalanced preaching is possible. We can lean too much to one side or the other. We must learn to walk the middle ground between the ditches, thus avoiding either extreme. Preaching must be balanced between...

*DOCTRINAL AND PRACTICAL.* There is a need for both. It is sad when preachers ignore doctrine. There are things we must know and believe, and know why we believe them. Preachers who say “I don’t preach doctrine” contribute to many of the problems the church is facing today. The lack of doctrinal preaching has created a situation where Christians don’t know what the Bible teaches, and so are willing to accept anything or anyone. On the other hand, it is just as sad when the practical is ignored. It is not enough to know what we believe, but we must answer the question, “So what?” How does the doctrine make a difference in our lives? How do I live each day so that I can be a light shining in the darkness? (Philippians 2:15)

*POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE.* The Bible contains both “thou shalts” and “thou shalt nots”. We must not neglect either one. Preaching must become neither a weekly berating of the brethren, nor a weekly pat on the back while we tickle their ears. We must remember that it is our job to both comfort the afflicted, and afflict the comfortable.

*MILK AND MEAT.* We must feed both the newborn babe in Christ and the mature adult. We must preach both the rudiments of the Gospel and the meat of the word. There are young people to be grounded in such things as baptism, one church, and instrumental music. There are also more mature Christians who need to understand redemption, atonement, and propitiation. We are not talking about balancing between the simple and the complex. It is our responsibility to make every subject, including the meat, as simple as possible. Could some preachers be showing off in the pulpit by trying to impress the audience with the deep subject they are capable of discussing?

*EMOTION AND LOGIC.* Our preaching must use both. Our appeals to people must be reasoned discussions of what God has done, and what he expects us to do for him. But the Gospel will also touch our emotions. The story of Jesus on the cross is an emotional story, but it becomes even more so when we have reasoned with an audience concerning the “why” of the cross. Some

might say that a discussion of atonement and propitiation is dry, but properly understood it gives real meaning to Calvary. We must strike a balance between a cold presentation of facts and an appeal to emotionalism that is designed to do nothing more than create "holy goose pimples". Jude speaks of using a variety of appeals in reaching people with the Gospel, and so must we. (Jude 22-23)

## CONCLUSION

There is no greater life than that of a preacher. Sometimes we emphasize the headaches and pressures involved, but there is no greater way to spend your life, and we get to make our living doing it. But to be truly effective at it, we must strike that happy medium that gives balance in the pulpit.

## BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Phil Grear was born in Parkersburg, WV. He was baptized by his grandfather, Tom W. Butterfield, on March 11, 1962. He preached his first sermon when he was sixteen. He graduated from Harding University in 1974 and has served churches in Sissonville, WV, Prosperity, WV, Farmington, WV, and has been with the Tenth and Clairmont church in Cambridge, OH for the last twelve years. He also serves as chaplain at the Southeastern Ohio Regional Medical Center in Cambridge.

Phil has held gospel meetings in West Virginia, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Maryland. He has worked in youth camps and youth rallies. He is a staff writer for *West Virginia Christian*, and has contributed to other brotherhood papers. He has made mission trips to Italy and Cuba, and has plans for a trip to Scotland.

Phil is married to the former Darleen Jones of Searcy, Arkansas. They have two daughters, Amy Andrick of Nashville, TN and Katie who is attending Freed-Hardeman University.



## **Contending Without Being Contentious**

**Gary Workman**

The theme of this lectureship is that Christians must be balanced in an unbalanced world. The idea is that we can become unbalanced in many different ways. Some seem to be balanced in one area but unbalanced in another. They may be balanced in moral living but unbalanced in attitudes. They may be balanced in how they treat alien sinners but unbalanced in how they treat brothers and sisters in Christ. That which is true and right always lies between two extremes. This is no less true when it comes to contending for the faith. Here again, balance is required.

### **Why Be Balanced in Contending for the Faith?**

In order to answer this question, we have to see two expectations that God has of us. If we only see one, regardless of which one it is, we cannot be pleasing to God.

#### **Christians are commanded to contend for the faith.**

Jude exhorted his readers, including us, "to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). And if we have any doubt about what this means, we can get clarification by reading Jude's explanation in verse four. There he tells about "certain men" who are "ungodly men" who were "turning the grace of God into lasciviousness..."

It is clear that some thought God's grace would cover purposeful sinful living. Paul addressed the same problem when he asked, "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" (Rom. 6:1), and then answered it with a resounding negative. It seems that people who overemphasize grace to the neglect of obedience are always with us. Inspired men fought against such teaching in the first century, and we are still fighting against it today.

The apostle Paul said, "I am set for the defense of the gospel" (Phil. 1:16-17), and we should be ready to do the same. Preachers are commanded to "preach the word" all the more urgently when Christians "will not endure the sound doctrine" and "turn away their ears from the truth" (2 Tim. 4:2-4). In a day when love, grace and unity are emphasized to the neglect of truth and obedience, this command seems all the more urgent. It's not that these three themes are unimportant; they are. But one can understand and appreciate much about God's love and grace and still not be in Christ or his church. And one can be perfectly united in denominational fellowship and still be lost.

Peter said, "Ye have purified your souls in your obedience to the truth" (1 Pet. 1:22). Those who "obey not the gospel" will perish at the second coming of Christ (2 Thess. 1:8; 1 Pet. 4:17). Faith alone will not save us. God wants the "obedience of faith" (Rom. 1:5; 16:26). Paul said that people "were made free from sin when they 'became obedient from the heart' to the doctrinal pattern contained in the gospel message (Rom. 6:17-18), and obedience never ends. Even those who truly become Christians can end up lost if they don't 'continue in the faith' (Col. 1:23) and remain 'children of obedience' (1 Pet. 1:14).

### **Christians are not to be contentious.**

While Jude 3 says to "contend earnestly for the faith," Titus 3:10-11 says that a "factious" (ASV) or "divisive" (NKJV) man "is perverted and sinneth, being self-condemned." The NKJV says that "such a person is warped and sinning." Those who think they can manifest an ugly and divisive spirit on the Lord's behalf have a warped view of what the Lord expects, and Paul urges his readers to "reject" or "refuse" them (Tit. 3: 10).

In our zeal to contend for the faith, we must not overlook the fact that contentiousness is condemned in scripture. Proverbs 21:19 says that it is "better to dwell in the wilderness than with a contentious and angry woman," but the Lord's church has seen a lot of contentious and angry men. Solomon said that a contentious man will "kindle strife" (Prov. 26:21). Some, in fact, seem like they are always looking for a fight or to stir up some kind of problem.

Paul said that those who are "factious" or "contentious" are those who "obey not the truth but obey unrighteousness" (Rom. 2:8). He said that the churches of God have "no such custom" of being contentious (1 Cor. 11:16), but some have made it their ongoing habit. How sad it would be to contend for the purity of the church only to end up destroying part of it because of a contentious attitude. Preachers, especially, must be on guard against this. Paul wrote to Timothy, saying, "The Lord's servant must not strive, but be gentle towards all" (1 Tim. 2:24).

### **The Importance of Christian Attitudes**

There are those who lean so heavily on the Christian action of contending for the faith that they ignore the Christian attitudes that are vital to our relationship with God and men. Even the reformer Martin Luther, who protested against the Catholic Church of his day, said: "I am more afraid of my own heart than I am of the pope and all his cardinals, for I have within me that great pope Self. Even the apostle Paul had to practice self-discipline, 'lest by any means after that I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected' (1 Cor. 9:27).

Some who contend for the faith seem totally lacking in love. They claim that they love those whom they oppose, but their words appear hollow and unconvincing because of the attitudes they manifest. Many treat non-Christian denominationalists, who are not even in the Lord's church, in a kinder way than they treat brethren whom they perceive to be in error. "He that saith he is in the light and hateth his brother is in the darkness" (1 John 2:9).

Some seem totally lacking in humility. When correcting needs to be done, it must be done in "meekness." Paul said (1 Tim. 2:25), "If a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted" (Gal. 6:1). Even the great apostle Paul said, "We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her own children" (1 Thess. 2:7). Paul was not a contentious man.

Some seem oblivious to the fact that they too are sinners. In fact, it is often the case that the one doing the correcting has more serious errors than the one being corrected. Jesus warned against this hypocrisy when he urged such people to cast the beam out of their own eye before trying to get the mote out of their brother's eye (Matt. 7:3-5). He didn't condemn judging; he just qualified the judges.

Some seem to forget that their standards of judgment will, in the end, be used on them: "with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you" (Matt. 7:2).

## **Contentiousness Destroys the Effectiveness of Contending for the Faith**

To be effective, truth must be presented in love. To merely claim something like "I say this in love" is not enough. Paul wrote about "speaking truth in love" (Eph. 4:15), not "claiming to speak truth in love." A certain manner and approach is needed, and the hearer can often tell the difference.

Paul said to "become blameless and harmless, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation among whom ye are seen as lights in the world" (Phil. 2:15). But truth without love is like a light bulb covered by a dark lamp shade. The unloving attitude keeps the light from shining out. It gets in the way of truth.

To be effective, reproof must be given in gentleness. In reference to some erring brethren of the first century, Paul said to "reprove them sharply" (Tit. 1:13). But those were liars and deceivers, not sincere people who made an honest mistake in their interpretation of scripture. Regarding others who were not so perverted, Paul advised "gentleness" (Gal. 6:1).

It is the word of God that is to be sharper than a two-edged sword, not our presentation of it. A sharp tongue, bitter words and a poison pen will cancel out the healing power of God's word. Cutting words of sarcasm will only cause people to turn deaf ears to the message they need to hear.

Let us all determine to contend for the faith as if Jesus were looking over our shoulder. And after all, he is.

## POSSIBILITY AND PROBABILITY OF APOSTASY

Keith G. Ball

Our subject of discussion is apostasy. It is our purpose to ascertain whether or not the scriptures teach that a child of God can live and behave in such a way as to forfeit the eternal home in heaven that awaits him. Webster defines apostasy as: "an abandoning of what one has believed in, as a faith, cause, principle, etc." Although the word apostasy is not found in most English translations of the scripture, the word *apostasia* is used in 2 Thessalonians 2:3 and has been translated as "falling away" in the KJV. Thayer's defines the word as "a falling away, defection, apostasy" (Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, 14th printing, June 1974, p. 67). Other forms and variations of the word are used and have been translated as "depart," "departing", "turn away" and "fall" or "fell away."

The question is: "Is it possible for a child of God to fall from grace and if it is, what are the probabilities of such happening to you/me?" There is a great need for this study because of the assaults upon the word of God that have taken place. During the 16th century, John Calvin, a leader of the Swiss Reformation Movement, presented his ideology in a work entitled, "Institutes of the Christian Religion." Calvin's beliefs can best be illustrated by the mnemonic tool, TULIP.

T=Total depravity or total inability, i.e., Man is totally unable to save himself.

U=Unconditional election--God's electing purpose was not conditioned by anything in man.

L=Limited atonement--Christ's atoning death was sufficient to save all men, but efficient only for the elect.

I=Irresistible Grace--the gift of faith, sovereignty given by God's Holy Spirit, cannot be resisted by the elect.

P=Perseverance of the Saints--Those who are regenerated and justified will persevere in the faith, i.e., cannot fall from grace and be lost.

Today the errors of Calvinism exist in various forms among a variety of religious groups. It is extremely important that the Lord's church maintain its purity and guard against all forms of this most dangerous doctrine.

### I. A DANGEROUS ERROR EXPOSED

Calvinism's perseverance of the saints is also known as "once saved always saved" or "security of believers." It is important that the reader know that Calvin's doctrine of perseverance of the saints grew out of the erroneous view of predestination. Proponents of Calvinism believe that God foreordained and predestined some men and angels to eternal life and others to eternal damnation and that there is nothing that either can do that would affect God's choice. This error grew out of another error, original sin. In the fifth century, Augustine was very vocal about the human nature of man, stating that all men are depraved because of Adam's sin and that "no one believes unless He wills" meaning that only those elected by God are preserved and predestined for heaven and the grace of God cannot be resisted. Thus one can see that these errors are linked and related in such a way that the one grows out of the other. In regard to perseverance of the saints, Loraine Boettner, one of the leading proponents of Calvinism writes in his book entitled, The Reformed Doctrine of

## Predestination

"This doctrine does not stand alone but is a necessary part of the Calvinistic system of theology. The doctrines of Election and Efficacious Grace logically imply the certain salvation of those who receive these blessings. If God has chosen men absolutely and unconditionally to eternal life, and if His Spirit effectively applies to them the benefits of redemption, the inescapable conclusion is that these persons shall be saved." (Loraine Boettner, The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination, The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, Phillipsburg, New Jersey, 1980 p. 182.)

It should make one shudder to consider that, by this false doctrine of election and predestination, God is being blamed for the condemnation of all souls that have not been "chosen" by Him. According to this doctrine they have no hope and there is nothing they can do to be saved because they are not chosen and among the elect. If man does not have the power to choose or resist then the doctrine of once saved always saved has to be true. The fact is, man has a choice. The person who "heareth and doeth" is a person who has made a choice to conform to God's way. Jesus likens him to the man who built his house upon the rock (Matthew 7:24, 25). Likewise the power of choice remains in man to decide not to do as Jesus says. Jesus likens him to the man who built his house upon the sand (Matthew 7:26, 27). Israel had to make a choice; God or idols (Joshua 24:15). The truth is that God is not willing that any should perish (2 Peter 3:9). God wants the vilest of sinners to be saved. The most wretched and detestable, the dregs of this world, are loved by God and he wishes that they would come into the soul-cleansing blood of Jesus. "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him" (Romans 5:8, 9).

## **II. POSSIBILITY--YES**

It is an unchangeable truth that a child of God can live and behave in such a way that they forfeit and lose their eternal home in heaven. To deny such is to have a flagrant disregard for the scriptures for the scriptures address this subject in a most clear and simple way.

On more than one occasion Moses interceded for the stubborn people of Israel when God was ready to "blot" their name out of His book. In the Revelation letter our Lord says that for those who overcome he will not blot their name out of the book of life (Revelation 3:5). It seems rather obvious that those whose names have been blotted out are individuals who, at one point in time, have been in a harmonious relationship with God but have since fallen from His grace.

It likely was painful for the Apostle Paul to speak of a "departure" from the "faith" that would come as described in 1 Timothy 4:1. Here we have the word *apospesontai*, kindred to *apostasia*, which can be translated apostasy. The "faith" from which these individuals would depart was the "one faith" of Ephesians 4:5. These individuals would abandon truth, Christ and His church!

Likewise, the Hebrews writer addressed those who had "tasted the heavenly gift" (Hebrews 6:4). They had become Christians and had enjoyed the "peace that passeth understanding" but then they would "fall away" (Hebrews 6:6). Vincent says the word "tasted" is to "have consciously partaken of" (Marvin R. Vincent, Word Studies in the New



Testament, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, 1887, Vol. IV, p. 445). The advocates of Calvinism say of such individuals who fall away that "they were not really Christians to start with." This is absurd because the scriptures clearly identify these individuals as "once enlightened," i.e., Christians (Hebrews 6:4).

James describes that it is possible for "brethren" to "err from the truth" (James 5:19, 20). Shortly after the gospel came to Samaria, a man by the name of Simon believed and was baptized (Acts 8:13). A short time later, when Paul and John came to Samaria, Simon coveted a gift that only the apostles had. Peter told him to "repent" because his heart was not right in God's sight and his soul was in jeopardy (Acts 8:21, 22). It is apparent from this account that Peter perceived that had Simon not repented and had he died in such a state, this man who had been saved would have been lost. Simon had a heart problem much like the Hebrews writer describes in Hebrews 3:12, "Take heed brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the Living God." Notice that they were called "brethren" indicating that they were faithful Christians as he was writing. Furthermore, he tells them that, because of an evil heart, they could depart from God.

Can a Christian slip into apostasy and fall from God's grace? We can answer, according to the scriptures, with an unequivocal, yes!

### III. PROBABILITY--YOU DECIDE

If you have become a Christian, have been enlightened and have tasted the heavenly gift, the most important thing you can do for your soul is to guard against apostasy. Could this not be part of what Paul is speaking about when we are told to "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12)? One of the most arrogant and foolish things a Christian can say or think is, "I will never leave the Lord." Had Peter not been so arrogant and had he realized that it was possible, he would have taken the steps to guard against his departure. However, such steps were not taken and he proceeded to deny our Lord not once but three times (Matthew 26:69-75). We do know that the Lord does not desire any to be lost (1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Peter 3:9). Unfortunately, the numbers of those who will be saved will be significantly smaller when compared to the number of those who will be lost. Jesus describes it as "few" verses "many" (Matthew 7:13, 14).

One way that the Christian guards against apostasy is to do as Paul did and "buffet" (ASV) or "discipline" (NKJV) the body and bring it into subjection (1 Corinthians 9:27). In other words, the Christian exercises restraint and self control by not allowing the temptation of the flesh to overcome him. One guards against apostasy by a continuing and abiding respect for the authority of the scriptures. Indeed the scriptures are all sufficient and the Christian needs look nowhere else for guidance and authority (2 Timothy 3:16, 17).

Let us guard against apostasy by realizing that we can "drift away" from the word of God. "Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply we drift away from them." (Hebrews 2:1 ASV) Marvin Vincent, in his Word Studies presents this thought in regard to the word "drift," "Lapse from truth and goodness is more the result of inattention than of design. Drifting is a mark of death: giving heed, of life. The log drifts with the tide: the ship breasts the adverse waves, because some one is giving earnest heed." (Ibid., Vol. IV, p. 393.)

It no doubt was a sobering thought for Christians in the first century to ponder the words of the Apostle Paul in regard to apostasy (1 Timothy 4:1). The same could be said of

the elders at Ephesus when Paul told them that some of them would come to speak perverse things and draw away some of the disciples (Acts 20:29, 30). These Christians should have asked themselves "Is it I who will depart?" Today we should ask ourselves the same. Further we should ask, "Have I already departed?" It is extremely important that the Bride of Christ and each member of the body maintain purity so that the church will be without "spot or wrinkle" and that it be "holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:27).

Let us also give regard to the instructions found in 2 Peter 1:10. Let us note that Peter says we must put forth an effort to make our "calling and election sure." Furthermore he says "if ye do these things ye shall never fall." The "things" to which Peter refers are the Christian virtues listed in verses 5-7. In these virtues we must continue to grow. Then, by the grace of God, we will enjoy an abundant entrance into the "everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:11).

### **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

**BORN:** Fairmont, West Virginia

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## **Neither to the Right nor to the Left**

**Gary Workman**

Moses was commissioned by God to tell the people, "Ye shall observe to do therefore as the Lord your God hath commanded you: ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left" (Deut 5:32). And when Joshua, the great leader of God's people who ushered them into the promised land, reached the end of his journey, he gave a farewell speech to the nation. He said, "Be ye therefore very courageous to keep and to do all that is written the book of the law of Moses, that ye turn not aside therefrom to the right hand or to the left" (Josh. 23:6). Many similar statements are found in scripture.

It is clear that when people walk with God, they must walk between two extremes. This is a narrow path with pitfalls on both sides. Jesus said "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matt. 7:14). The way of the world, on the other hand, is very "wide." It has a lot of latitude, and people take any course they like. This is why there are over 300 denominations and altogether over 3000 different religious groups in our country all claiming to be "Christian."

### **We Must Understand How the Bible Authorizes**

Much of the cause that takes people to the right or to the left is a failure to understand how the Bible authorizes. Without understanding Bible authority, it would be impossible to know for sure what the Bible teaches us to believe and do. So let us take a look at some basic principles.

#### **Our basic obligations.**

In the first place, we must understand that we are obligated to the New Covenant, not to the Old (Rom. 7:6; 2 Cor. 3:14; Col. 2:14; Eph. 2:15; Heb. 7:12; 8:13). Confusion about this has led to all sorts of denominational errors, and they are still very much alive. So the question narrows down to how the New Testament authorizes.

Second, we have obligations that go beyond explicit commands. Jesus said, "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments" (John 14:15). Any statement of fact requires belief and possibly action. Hebrews 11:6 says that "without faith it is impossible to please him," and we are therefore obligated to believe. Also many commands or statements are implied, and we have an obligation to catch the implication. For example, Jesus rebuked some Jews for failing to understand from Exodus 3:6 that there is a resurrection from the dead (Matt. 22:29-30). He said that Moses "showed" it, though it was not stated explicitly (Luke 20:37).

We must treat all obligations of belief or action as if they were explicit commands, and we will therefore refer to them in that way.

### **Every command includes specifics and generics.**

We should easily be able to realize that there are specifics and generics in Bible obligations just as there are in everyday life. A doctor may prescribe a pain killer; that's generic. Or he may prescribe aspirin. That's specific as to kind, and it is also exclusive. Getting ibuprofen is not an option. But prescribing aspirin is generic as to brand. We may choose to buy Bayer or some other. It's optional as far as the doctor is concerned.

The specific part of a Bible command is always obligatory, never optional. And without additional authority, it is also exclusive. Those who are on the liberal left tend to violate specifics. They either want to make them optional, or they want to bring in additions and therefore not keep them exclusive.

The generic part of a Bible command always involves options as to how to obey it. But the options must not violate some other command. Those who are on the radical right tend to violate generics by making them specify what God left up to human judgment.

### **Examples of specific and generic authority.**

Ephesians 5:20 says that we are to be "giving thanks always for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father." Here is specific authority for praying to the Father as the addressee. And here also is specific authority for praying in the name of Jesus. But the posture of the prayer, whether standing, kneeling, etc., is in the realm of the generic. It is therefore left up to human judgment unless some other scripture makes it specific.

In Luke 22:17 Jesus took a cup and said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves." They had specific authority for dividing the contents of the cup among each one present. But how to divide it was not specified. Therefore, they, had generic authority for either drinking out of one container or pouring it out into each person's separate container. That part was left up to human judgement.

In Colossians 3:16 we have a command regarding psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. There is specific authority for "singing" them. Therefore playing them on an instrument is not an option unless it is authorized elsewhere. But how to sing them is not specified. It is in the realm of the generic as to whether to sing in unison or in four-part harmony. And the style of the songs is not specified either so either classical or popular melodies are options.

## **We Have Disunity in Diversity**

People often advocate "unity in diversity" in regard to the Christian faith. This is typical among denominationalists, but also increasingly heard among brethren. We are told that in the Lord's church we should have this unity in diversity and just ignore deviations on the right and the left. But the reality is that there is much disunity in diversity. This has happened because men have made obligatory matters optional and optional matters obligatory', and they have pressed their cause to the point of disruption of fellowship. They have also erred in other matters of doctrinal understanding.

It has been said, "We've disagreed on a thousand and one issues." I always thought it was an exaggeration until a brother mailed me his list of 1001 actual issues over which he says brethren have disagreed. Specifically I know of thirty-five issues that have caused division in the church, and at least fifteen recognizable groups of fellowship. Some of these divisions have come from the right and some have come from the left.

Those on the left have violated the unity required by God by doing something prohibited, or failing to do something commanded, or adding to what is commanded, or subtracting from what is commanded, or substituting something else for what God specified. Those on the right have violated the unity of the church by making an example alone binding, or by failing to recognize that some New Testament commands were either temporary or peculiar to the circumstances of the first century, and that some actions were incidental rather than essential.

## **Can We Have Unity in Spite of Diversity?**

**We can have unity In spite of a diversity of opinion.**

We will never have the same opinions about things, but we can still have a unity in doctrine and fellowship. Unity prevails as long as there is no pressure to conform or ostracism if one doesn't. Paul and Barnabas had a diversity of opinion about Mark, but they found a peaceable solution to the disagreement (Acts 15:36-41).

We always have a certain amount of diversity in every congregation. But we can have unity in spite of the diversity when the diversity is in the realm of personality, opinion, preference and judgment. Here are some examples: what kind of a church building to have, which preacher to work with, which mission work to support, which benevolent activities to engage in.



### **Can we have unity in spite of a diversity of doctrine?**

In the first place, it is difficult to agree on what is doctrine and what is opinion. It has often been said. "We should not bind our opinions as though they were doctrine." That's easy to say, but the question is, how do you determine which is which? In practice, all divisive issues on our left are matters of doctrine, and all on our right are matters of opinion. In actuality, all issues that are matters of revelation are doctrine, and all others are opinion. None of us has the last word in being able to sort it out completely, but we should all keep on studying in order to do the best we can.

A certain amount of diversity may not threaten fellowship as long as the matter in question does not affect Christian conduct, or deny some clearly revealed truth, or violate someone's conscience, or lead someone else astray. If something is clearly a matter of doctrine, then some questions are in order. Is the person embracing the questionable view or practice new in the faith? Does he have a teachable attitude? Is he congenial rather than divisive? Are there any serious consequences that could lead others to fall away? We must recognize that not every member is at the same level of maturity. We will always have babes in Christ among us, and therefore erroneous thinking to overcome. And even Jesus gave people time to repent (Rev. 2:21).

Sometimes, though, matters of doctrine cannot be reconciled and disruption of fellowship must take place (2 Thess. 3:6). When people are determined to walk "disorderly," whether it is on the right hand or the left, we must ultimately part company in order to walk with God on the strait and narrow way. After all, that is the only way that will lead to life in heaven above.

## EXTREMISM OF PHARISEES

Albert E. Farley

"Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees." Matthew 16:6<sup>1</sup> This warning from Jesus to his disciples serves as the introduction to our study. Verse 12 tells us that the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees is doctrine. In Luke 12:1 Jesus said the leaven of the Pharisees is hypocrisy. When we combine them, we learn that the leaven of the Pharisees includes (1) their doctrine and (2) their hypocrisy.

The Pharisees are first mentioned in the scriptures during the ministry of John the Baptist. Matthew 3:1-12 and John 1:24. They were sent by the Jews of Jerusalem to John to ask who he was and why he was baptizing. John told them he was making straight the way of the Lord and that one was coming after him who was preferred before him. In Matthew's account, John called them vipers, refused to baptize them, and commanded them to bring forth fruits meet (suitable) for repentance. These Pharisees no doubt carried these reports back to Jerusalem, and their great opposition against Jesus began.

The Pharisees were among the most active and bitter enemies of Jesus Christ during his earthly ministry. They criticized him for allowing the sinful woman to wash, dry, and kiss his feet, and to anoint his head with ointment, Luke 7:39; criticized him for eating with publicans and sinners, Matthew 9:11, Mark 2:16, Luke 5:30, 15:2; accused him of casting out devils through the prince of the devils, Matthew 12:24; held a council against him, how they might destroy him, Matthew 12:14, Mark 3:6, Luke 19:47, John 11:53; tempted him by asking for a sign from heaven, Matthew 16:1; tempted him with questions concerning divorce and remarriage, and the commandments of the law, etc., Matthew 19:3, 22:34; sought to lay hands on him because he taught parables against them. Matthew 21:45-46, Luke 20:19; took counsel how they might entangle him in his words concerning tribute to Caesar, Mark 12:13; confronted him concerning fasting, Matthew 9:14, Mark 2:18, Luke 5:33; accused him of speaking blasphemies, Luke 5:21; used deceit in seeking to scare him into leaving Jerusalem, Luke 13:31; derided him, Luke 16:14; commanded him to rebuke his disciples, Luke 19:39; challenged his authority, Luke 20:1-2; sent spies who feigned themselves as just men to take hold of his words to deliver him unto the governor, Luke 20:20; sent officers to take him, John 7:30-53; brought a woman taken in adultery to him to catch him in his words, John 8:1-11; accused him of lying, John 8:13; opposed him for healing the blind man on the Sabbath, John 9; gave commandment to the people that if any knew where he was, to show it that they might take him, John 11:57; furnished Judas with a band of men and officers with lanterns, torches, and weapons to arrest him at Gethsemane, John 18:3.

Later, after the church was established, the Pharisees zealously persecuted the church and were responsible for many of the early Christians' being arrested, beaten, and killed. Acts 7:58-8:1. Still later, after some of the sect of the Pharisees became believers in Christ, some of them caused great harm by seeking to Judaize the gospel and to bind circumcision and the law upon Christians. Acts 15:5. In Galatians 2:4, Paul (who himself had been a Pharisee) said these were "false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage." Today, although (formally speaking) the sect of the Pharisees

does not exist in name, their spirit and teachings are too often manifested in the teaching and lives of men and women – both in and out of the church. Truly, in our desire to be faithful to our Lord and to be balanced in an unbalanced world, we need to beware of the leaven – the extremism – of Pharisees!

## THE PHARISEES

The Pharisees are mentioned by name 100 times in the New Testament. They were one of the major Jewish sects and orders that existed in the first century, along with the Herodians, Zealots, Sadducees, and Essenes. None of these are mentioned in the Old Testament. Josephus, the Jewish historian, said the Pharisees were well established in the days of Jonathan the high priest – in the year 144 B.C.<sup>2</sup> They evidently originated during the 400 year period of time between the Old and New Testaments – after the Jews had returned from Babylonian captivity.

The word “Pharisee” means “to separate.”<sup>3</sup> The name they gave to themselves was “Associates.”<sup>4</sup> J.W. McGarvey said they were called “Pharisees” “... because of their extreme care to keep themselves separated from all persons and things that were legally unclean.”<sup>5</sup>

In the beginning, the movement of the Pharisees appears to have been very noble in purpose. Antiochus Epiphanes, the Seleucid king of Syria (175-164 B.C.), had led a fierce and cruel persecution against faithful Israelites who would not accept the Greek faith and culture.<sup>6</sup> He commanded the Hebrew scriptures to be destroyed, and all who ~~were~~ found with any book of the Old Testament or who consented to the law were put to death. Also under penalty of death he forbade the observance of circumcision, the Sabbath, and the Jewish feasts. In these circumstances, those who would later be called “Pharisees” sought to protect and guard the law. They were very zealous to study and apply the law to their daily way of life as the means of separating and distinguishing themselves from the immoral influences of their times. These influences included the false religions of the Greeks and the nakedness of those who participated in the activities of the Greek gymnasium.<sup>7</sup>

The Pharisees also resented and opposed the high priesthood’s being combined with civil authority – as advocated by the Sadducees.<sup>8</sup> They were the “ordinary people” against the aristocracy; they represented pure religion against “ecclesiastical politics.”<sup>9</sup> While the Sadducees most often controlled the temple ritual, the Pharisees and the scribes maintained the synagogue as the center of their worship and teaching.<sup>10</sup>

In time, however, this movement degenerated into a formalistic, legalistic, self-righteous, and hypocritical religious party. How did those who sat in Moses’ seat<sup>11</sup> find themselves to be fighting against the very God whom they claimed to serve?<sup>12</sup> How did they become so unbalanced? This study ought to be of the utmost importance to us today.

## WHAT IS EXTREMISM?

The dictionary defines “extremism” as “the quality or state of being extreme”.<sup>13</sup> The word “extreme” is from a Latin word that literally means “being on the outside – more at EXTERIOR.” It means, “existing in a very high degree; going to great or exaggerated lengths; exceeding the

ordinary, usual, or expected; LAST; situated at the farthest possible point from a center; most advanced or thoroughgoing; MAXIMUM; syn see EXCESSIVE" and "something situated at or marking one end or the other of a range; a very pronounced or excessive degree; an extreme measure or expedient; to the greatest possible extent."<sup>14</sup>

We must be careful to note that to be extreme is not necessarily sinful or wrong. **It is not a sin to possess a faith in God or a love of God that exists in a very high degree.** Jesus commended the Canaanite woman, "O woman, great is thy faith ..." Matthew 15:28. The first commandment is to love God with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind. Luke 10:27.

**It is not a sin to go to great lengths in serving the Lord.** The apostles went into all the world and preached the gospel to every creature. Mark 16:15-16. Paul said Epaphroditus was sick nigh unto death "... because for the work of Christ ... not regarding his life ..." Philippians 2:27-30. Paul said of himself, "Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." 1 Corinthians 8:13; 9:19-23.

**It is not always a sin to be situated at the farthest possible point from a center.** The middle-of-the-road is not always the true position. For example, the atheist takes an extreme position on the existence of God and says, "I know there is no God." The agnostic takes the middle-of-the-road position and says, "I don't know whether or not there is a God." The Christian takes the opposite extreme position, believing that God is and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Hebrews 11:6.

**It is not a sin to seek to be perfect in obeying God's commandments to the greatest possible extent.**<sup>15</sup> Matthew 7:21, Colossians 3:17, Matthew 5:48, 2 Timothy 3:16-17. Jesus did not condemn the Pharisees for their obedience to the commandments of God; he condemned them because they said and did not. Matthew 23:2. In seeking to do all that is commanded of us, we often fail and are unprofitable servants in need of God's saving grace! Luke 17:10; 18:10-14; Romans 3:23, 6:23.

Concerning extremism, Roy Deaver has correctly asked, "Is there something inherently wrong about one's being an 'extremist'? Is a position or doctrine wrong simply because it is an extreme position or doctrine? Is a position or doctrine right simply because it is a 'middle-of-the-road' position or doctrine? When we are dealing with God's revelation to man the geographic location of a position or doctrine has nothing to do with the rightness or wrongness of the position or doctrine ... With regard to (1) the existence of God, (2) the deity of Christ, (3) the inspiration of the Bible, (4) the amenability of all accountable human beings to the gospel of Christ, (5) the oneness of the church, (6) the exclusivity of the gospel, (7) the purpose of baptism, (7) etc., I am an extremist. But, I affirm with all the confidence begotten by truth that these positions are correct, though they are extreme positions."<sup>16</sup>

We recognize, however, that there are positions and doctrines that are sinful because they are extreme. The leaven of the Pharisees reveals certain extremes that we must be careful to avoid.



## THE LEAVEN OF EXTREMISM AMONG THE PHARISEES

**They were extreme in their emphasis on outward appearance.** They did all their works for to be seen of men. Matthew 23:5. They often fasted twice a week. Luke 18:2. They presented a sad countenance. Matthew 6:16. They disfigured their faces that they may appear unto men to fast. 6:16. They made long prayers in pretense. 23:14. They loved to pray standing in the synagogues and on street corners to be seen of men. 6:5. They used vain repetitions, thinking they would be heard for their much speaking. 6:7. They gave alms before men to be seen of them. 6:1. They sounded a trumpet before them. 6:2. They gave to receive glory of men. 6:2. They made broad their phylacteries and enlarged the borders of their garments to appear of men to be more religious. 23:5. They outwardly appeared righteous unto men but within they were full of hypocrisy and iniquity. 23:28. Jesus said they made clean the outside of the cup and platter, but inside they were full of extortion and excess. 23:25.

**They were extreme in the importance they placed on their own works of righteousness.** They trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others. Luke 18:9. They thanked God they were not as other men were. 18:11. They exalted themselves. 18:14. Josephus, himself a Pharisee, said they boasted that, because of their accurate knowledge and observance of religion, they were the favorites of heaven.<sup>17</sup> They, being ignorant of God's righteousness, went about to establish their own righteousness and did not submit themselves unto the righteousness of God. Romans 10.

**They were extreme in their ambition to be recognized as religious leaders and to be praised of men.** They loved the chief seats in the synagogues. Luke 11:43. They loved greetings in the markets. 11:43. They loved the uppermost rooms at feasts. Matthew 23:6. They loved to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. 23:7.

**They were extreme in the value and importance they placed upon the interpretations and traditions of the elders.** Their traditions gave more value to the gold of the temple than upon the temple, itself. Matthew 23:16-17. Their traditions gave more value to their offerings than upon the altar of God upon which their offerings were made. 23:18-22. Their traditions encouraged them to take support that ought to have been given to their own parents and to give it into the temple treasury. Mark 7:6-13. The apostle Paul – while Saul of Tarsus, a Pharisee of the Pharisees – persecuted the church of God and wasted it because he was "...more exceeding zealous of the traditions of my fathers." Galatians 1:13-14. Their traditions transgressed and made of no effect the commandment of God. Matthew 15:3,6. They rejected the commandment of God to keep their own tradition. Mark 7:9.

**They were extreme in how they emphasized lesser matters and omitted greater ones.** They strained at a gnat and swallowed a camel. Matthew 23:24. They paid tithe of mint, rue, anise, cummin, and all manner of herbs but omitted and looked over the weightier matters of the law such as judgment, mercy, faith, and the love of God. 23:23, Luke 11:42.

**They were extreme in looking for and in finding faults in others.** They often asked Jesus questions – not to learn the truth but to entangle him in his talk. Matthew 22:15. They constantly



watched him that they might find an accusation against him. Luke 6:7. They sought signs from him, tempting him. Matthew 16:1. They feigned themselves as just men that they might take hold of his words. Luke 20:20. They beheld the mote (bit of wood) in their brother's eye but did not consider the beam in their own eyes! Matthew 7:1-5.

**They were extreme in reaching hasty and illogical conclusions.** They judged that Jesus was not a prophet because he let a sinful woman touch him. Luke 7:39. They judged he was not a prophet because he came from Galilee. John 7:52. They criticized him for eating with publicans and sinners. Mark 2:16. They accused him of casting out devils through the prince of the devils. Matthew 12:24. They criticized his disciples for plucking ears of corn and eating them on the Sabbath. Mark 2:24. They said he was not of God because he healed the blind man on the Sabbath. John 9:16. Nichodemus criticized his fellow Pharisees and rulers because they judged Jesus before they heard him or knew what he did. John 3:1, 7:51-53.

## CONCLUSION

These – and other like extremes – are sufficient to warn us to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees. In Matthew 5:20, Jesus said, “For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.” May we study God's Word and ask him for the wisdom to examine ourselves in the light of his Holy Word that we might guard ourselves against the extremism of the Pharisees. Only in this way can we find balance in an unbalanced world.

## Biography

Born April 26, 1942, Crum, WV. Baptized February 22, 1959. Graduated from Montgomery High School 1960. Served as radioman in U.S. Navy 1960-64. Married Nancy Ann Brewer June 18, 1965. Four children: Scott, Clista, Rebecca, and Elisabeth. Three grandchildren: Bethany, Darren, and Aaron. Attended Ohio Valley College, West Virginia Institute of Technology, Glenville State College (BA Elementary Education), Alabama School of Religion. Taught at Crum Elementary School. Have been located with congregations at Belington, Chesapeake, Weston, Crum, Webster Springs, and Salem, with whom we have begun our 17<sup>th</sup> year. Began publishing and editing WEST VIRGINIA CHRISTIAN 1993.

<sup>1</sup> All references are from the King James Version of the scriptures.

<sup>2</sup> Ant. xiii. 5, secs 9 and 10:5.

<sup>3</sup> Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, Joseph Thayer, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI, 1974, p. 649.

<sup>4</sup> Master Study Bible Encyclopedia, Holman Bible Publishers, Nashville, TN., 1983, p. 1587.

<sup>5</sup> The New Testament Commentary, J.W. McGarvey, Vol. I, Gospel Light Pub. Co., Delight, AR., 1875, pp. 34-35.

<sup>6</sup> A Dictionary of the Bible, John D. Davis, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI., 1961, p. 602.

<sup>7</sup> Between The Testaments, Charles F. Pfeiffer, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI., p. 80.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 112.

<sup>9</sup> The Gospel According to John, Leon Morris, WM. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co. Grand Rapids, MI., 1981, pp. 138-139.

<sup>10</sup> Pfeiffer, op. cit., p. 113.

<sup>11</sup> Matthew 23:2-3.

<sup>12</sup> Gamaliel, a Pharisee and a doctor of the law, warned the council of this very sin. Acts 5:34-39.

<sup>13</sup> Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 10<sup>th</sup> edition, 1994.

<sup>14</sup> loc. cit.

<sup>15</sup> An excellent discussion of “Alleged Legalism” is found in PILOTING THE STRAIT, A Guidebook For Assessing Change in Churches of Christ, Dave Miller, Sain Pub., Pulaski, TN., 1996, pp. 96-98.

<sup>16</sup> The Spiritual Sword, Vol. 17, No. 2, January, 1986, "When a Brother Accuses Me of Practicing Anti-ism," p. 21.

<sup>17</sup> Cited in "Sects and Orders Mentioned in the Scriptures," ILLUSTRATED REFERENCE HOLY BIBLE, Chandler Bros., Rockford, IL, 1877, p. vii.

# **GODLY PEOPLE IN THE HOME**

**Denver Cooper**

Godly people are people who recognize the Bible as God's Word and therefore look for and accept all that He has to say about his creation which will make it godly. Godly signifies that one is of God. Certainly this conforms to all of the facts relating to the new birth of John 3.

A home with godly people is a GREAT HOME. It is especially true when the marriage is GREAT. Marriages are GREAT when the husband and wife follow God's instructions. Only a little reflection will show that GREAT HOMES are valuable. Sociologists, psychiatrists, marriage counselors and preachers all affirm the value of good homes. Marriage is right. It is honorable (Heb. 13:4) when entered according to God's plan. A godly young lady will seek a godly young man for a lifetime companion. Such seeking necessarily involves avoiding evil companions (1 Cor. 15:33). Two people with Biblical ideals as their standard of choice will be most likely to begin and maintain a godly family.

## **GODLY PEOPLE ARE PEOPLE OF GREAT FAITH**

Godly people in the present home often reflect the godliness of preceding generations. 2 Tim. 1:5 indicates the faith and godly influence of grandmother Lois as well as mother Eunice.

"By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were afraid of the king's commandments". Do you think you would have had that kind of faith? Imagine putting your infant baby in a small basket-boat and attempting to hide it in the weeds of the Ohio River. Jochabed believed that somehow that baby would be cared for by God in Heaven. She did all she could and left the consequences to God.

## **GODLY PEOPLE ARE DISCIPLINED PEOPLE**

Godly fathers are the corner stones of discipline. They learn from God what is their role in the home and do not shirk or abdicate their responsibility in spite of popular or political sentiment at the time. He graciously accepts his leadership role in spiritual, domestic, social and civic matters. He is a gentleman who bears up under the loads of life which may really test the faith of all. He, like Joshua, stands strong and is of good courage. He sets a godly example of a loving, faithful husband, a courteous, considerate father and a kind, helpful neighbor.

It is tough being a father. Every GODLY father wants to be a good father. It isn't always so easy. I've wished sometimes that I might have another round at it. When first faced with the responsibility it is a brand new experience. It means more than holding the baby for all to see and passing out double-bubble cigars to show ones joy. Only if

you have had a much younger brother, as I have, you learned to change diapers and serve the bottle. It is no small task to try to quiet the little fellow at 3 a.m. in the morning while leaning on the bed half-awake. We generally learn as we seek for answers. Later on we look back and sometimes suffer for the mistakes we made. Godly parents seek God's help in rearing children and do what they believe is best for them. Children know, or will eventually learn, it is based on love and for their good. Perhaps the mistakes will help them with their children.

Godly mothers hold a "price far above rubies" (Prov. 31:10). Really, she sets the moral tone of the home by her sacrifices, hard work and management of the home. It may, at times, be difficult, but she is generally sweet spirited with a meek and lowly heart. (Mt. 11:29). She and her husband implant ethics such as dependability, punctuality and integrity in the hearts of their children and all who in some way depend upon and look to her for help even outside the family. She is careful to be just, fair, impartial and honest with her children and the rule of the house is applied to even the visiting friends.

One article I read from a professional declared that 85% of those who have jobs over a period of a few years and lose them do so because they lack of integrity, fail to be punctual or they get to the place they just cannot be depended upon. One business man told me, "I had to let him go because he was always kicking the porcupine". He was a troublemaker. Yes, the strength of the nation, yea, even the church, is dependent on such godly mothers.

### **TOGETHER GODLY EXAMPLES ARE SET**

Godly parents teach other members of the family the truth regarding beverage alcohol, abuse of all drugs, the evil and dangers of immodest attire, the impropriety of impure language and of course, the dangers of keeping bad company.

It is foolish to expect children to refrain from drinking intoxicants, cheating on their companions, be dishonest in their business dealings or careful of their speech when they do not set the example. There is no place in the godly home for beer, indecent dress, corrupt speech or acts of ingratitude.

"Children's children are the crown of old men. (Prov. 17: 6). If we dote over our grandchildren why wouldn't we do the same for our children? Expectant fathers who are godly are full of great joy. I love to see expectant fathers all a glow. That is the way it should be. A few times I've witnessed the tears of sorrow by a young mother giving birth when at the time the father could not even be located. He was not godly. Godly fathers will help with the children. He may be a "nursing" father. I've gone to the pulpit a few times with spewed milk on the shoulder of my suit coat. When such occurs, does it make one less masculine? Certainly not!

Regardless of the permissiveness of the present age, godly parents will exercise discipline over their children. They will first set the examples; second, they will communicate. Discipline without communication is abuse. Repetitive slogans are

influences of the world. "See the USA in your Chevrolet", for example. Third, discipline is a must. It has two crucial characteristics. 1. Consistency. 2. Timeliness. Solomon says, "For whom the Lord loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth." (Prov.3: 12) Don't be deceived, permissiveness in the home will show up in the church building or in the grocery store or in the restaurant. Just anywhere you go, people will know.

### **GODLY PEOPLE WILL SHED TEARS**

Godly people will, at times, shed tears. The Savior cried over the problems of others. (John 8:35). David said, "I water my couch with tears" (Ps.6: 6). Further, he said, "My tears have been my meat day and night" (Ps.42: 3). Mary washed the Saviors feet "with many tears" (Acts 20:19).

"A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but when she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for the joy that a man is born into the world (John 16:21).

Godly mothers in the home have a God ordained privilege of molding clay into a man or woman fit for the master's use. The great privilege is expressed in the demand for honor (Ex. 20:12); that she be feared (Lev.19: 3). Her teaching must not be abandoned (Prov. 1:8; 6:20), nor was she to be despised, mocked or scorned. (Lev. 15:20; 17:35; 19:26; 23:22; 30:17). To have a child is great joy (Gen. 21:6; Luke 1:46-55).

Slaying the yet unborn will not cross the mind of a godly mother. John was filled with the Holy Spirit in Elizabeth's womb (Luke 1:15) and, upon hearing "the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb" (Luke 1:14). Were these but globs of protoplasm?

### **GODLY PEOPLE WILL ABHOR DIVORCE**

Godly people will not think of divorce as a method of solving their problems. Both husband and wife should honor the God given sexual relationship. God will punish the immoral (Heb.13: 4). Each partner is God's gift to the other. The intimate relationship of the husband and wife is more vital to the child's healthy development than the parent's love toward him. The marital union is for life. God hates "putting away" (Mal. 2:16).

### **GODLY PARENTS WILL LOVE THEIR CHILDREN**

Godly parents will give good gifts to their children (Mt. 7:9-11; 2 Cor. 12:14). Favoritism was an ungodly act shown by Rebekah in Gen. 25:27). Those gifts will provide work ethics. In many homes it is naturally expected that papa must work. Of course, mama's work is never done. What about the children? In our age some believe work is bad. Play is good. Why is gambling so popular? It is the antithesis of work.



Gambling makes people believe they can get something for nothing. God knew the value of a working family. He charged his new creation with 5 things. 1. Fill, 2. Subdue, 3. Rule over, 4. Work, 5. Take care of the earth. (Gen. 1: 28; 2:15). Sin changes things. God's plan for man includes work. The family must be fed, clothed and sheltered. Failure to do so makes one a most ungodly sort. (1Tim 5:8). We must work to help the poor and to spread the gospel of Christ. (Eph. 2:8; Phil. 1: 1-18).

### **GODLY PEOPLE LIVE GOOD CLEAN LIVES**

Godly people are not perfect; nor do they claim such. Whether this generation is worse than the one before, only God knows. Every generation has had problems. Even godly families have problems. Look at Adam and Eve; Noah, drunk and naked in his tent, provided temptation for Ham. Abraham and Sarah had sinned and Ishmeal was the illegitimate sons resulting from their wrong. Lot had pitched his tent toward Sodom. He made his home in the wicked city environment where adultery would be considered a virtue compared to the awfulness of other sins there. Rebekah conspired with Jacob to deceive his father and defraud Esau. Jacob's partiality to Joseph invited envy and rage on the part of the other brothers. David's sin with Uriah's wife set the stage for many subsequent sins by the sons.

### **GODLY PEOPLE IN THE HOME MAKE RELIGION THE CENTER**

With many, religious activity is only marginal. The first things included are the things they like. About an hour is left for worship. Godly parents teach their children to love God, Christ, the Bible and the church. Godly children will contribute to the welfare and happiness of the home by being submissive to the parents and helpful when age and infirmity have taken their toll. Earlier sacrifices will be remembered and services will be rendered appreciatively.

A godly daughter "excellest them all" (Prov. 31:29). The daughter may be intelligent, beautiful and popular, but she is not good if she is not obedient (Eph. 6:4). "Honor thy father and mother" is a must if one is godly.

### **GODLY PEOPLE IN THE HOME DIMINISHES BAD HABITS**

Godly people demand courtesy and respect. Fits of rage and unseemly behavior will not be tolerated. Under adverse times few things compare to the increased blessings of a large family showing concern for the hurt.

The Law of Moses required special consideration of a "brother" (Lev. 25:25-55). The elder brother of Luke 15 was not a man of a forgiving spirit. We must remember that the lost can be saved. "A man that hath friends must show himself to be friendly; and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother" (Prov. 18:24).

One of the most often used metaphors used to describe the church is that of the family (Mt. 6: 9); joint heirs (Rom. 8: 17); brothers and sisters (Jas. 2: 15). We enter the

church as newborn babes (John 3:35). Children required to obey and respect family obligations will look similarly on the church. Evil ones will be the opposite.

Godly people in the home will produce good elders, deacons, preachers and Bible class teachers. From the homes of my wife and me have come 26 full time preachers, several elders and a host of Bible class teachers. I thank God often for the godly home that was mine. Let us never regret being "godly in this present world" (Titus 2:11,12). We will influence generations yet unborn.

**Denver E. Cooper was born in Cairo, WV April 2, 1923, reared in Parkersburg and graduated from Parkersburg High School in 1941. He was baptized in 1937 by bro. Charlie Taylor who encouraged him to attend Free-Hardeman College which he entered in August 1942 and preached his first full-length sermon in September 1941. He married Florence E. Smith of Sistersville, WV in March 1945 and they celebrated 50 years together March 1995. To this union was born 8 children and they adopted one daughter. His located work include Ironton, OH; Harrisville, WV; Chester, WV; Philippi, WV; West St., Weirton, WV; Toronto, OH ; Ravenswood, WV; Dewey Ave., St. Marys, WV; Weirton Heights, WV; Weirton, WV; Timberville, VA and Hillview Terrace Moundsville, WV (present). He has been a Bible instructor in West Virginia School of Preaching beginning in 1994.**

## FAITH AND WORKS

Frank Higginbotham

The title of the lesson we are studying is Faith And Works. It is not Faith vs Works. Faithful gospel preachers have always taught that faith is complimented by works. They have vigorously opposed any doctrine that separates faith from works. Until recent years the spread of the teaching that sets faith against works, was spread by denominational teachers who had bought into the doctrines of Calvin. In recent years, it is not uncommon to hear our brethren telling us that Christ has done it all and that we cannot do anything that will effect our salvation. We see Calvinism set forth in the creed that states "Wherefore, that we are justified by faith only is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort." No doctrine that contradicts the word of God is wholesome. It is dangerous in that it leads honest souls to ignore plain Bible teaching. This teaching has been used to get around the instruction to be baptized into Christ. It is reasoned that we are saved by faith only and thus we do not need any works to assure our salvation. Since baptism is a work, it is excluded from our salvation. The Calvinist turns away thinking that he has proved that baptism is a non-essential. Faithful brethren have successfully shown that faith alone will do nothing for us. There must be a faith that is willing to humbly obey the instructions of the Lord for us to obtain salvation. In more recent years some of our brethren sound as though they have been trained at the feet of John Calvin. The words of Charles Swindoll and other Calvinists seem to be echoing in our church buildings. One man has stated that it is a scandalous and outrageous lie to teach that salvation arises from human activity. He further contends that "We do not contribute one whit to our salvation." No Calvinist could have stated his cause better than this. Is it true that what we do has nothing to do with our salvation?

Will faith alone save? Before proceeding in this discussion, we need to take a look at the word 'only'. The word means without anything else. Everything else is excluded. Most who contend for faith only are quick to include repentance. However, the meaning of the word 'only' excludes it. In the book of James there is a discussion of the necessity of works in our salvation. This teaching by James caused men like Martin Luther to reject the genuineness of this great book. It was reasoned that Paul taught justification by faith only and James taught justification by works only. Since Luther perceived that the teachings of Paul were more in agreement with what he believed, James must not have been inspired. The fact is that neither Paul nor James taught salvation by anything 'only'. Paul's teaching of justification by faith in Romans 4 and 5 does not include the word 'only'. It is mainly the book of Romans to which the Calvinists appeal in making their arguments. Yet this book is hemmed in by Romans 1:5 and Romans 16:26 which tie obedience in with faith. Faith does not exclude obedience but rather includes it. If we are able to show some examples of people who had faith but that they were not saved, we will have shown that more than faith is required. James tells us of the devils who believe and tremble but most surely will be lost. If faith only saves, the devils will be saved. (James 2:19). In John 12:42,43 it is explained that many of the chief rulers believed on Christ but was this the kind of faith that saves? They refused to confess Christ. Were these moral cowards saved? They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. If faith were the only requirement, they would be saved. John speaks of Christ coming to his own but being rejected. However, those who would accept him were given the right to become sons of God. (John 1:11,12). In John 8 Jesus identified some who believed on Him. They were told that they were His disciples indeed if they continued in His word. In verse 44 Jesus said that they were of their father, the devil. Even though

they were believers in His word, they are described as being servants of Satan. It takes more than just believing to make us disciples of Christ. Since it can be shown by the Bible that some may be believers and still not have salvation, it follows that faith only does not save. It takes more than faith alone to bring salvation.

If we are not saved by faith only, are we saved by works only? The answer is no. Without the unmerited favor of God, no man could hope to be saved. Paul states in Ephesians 2:5 that we are saved by grace. Grace is an undeserved favor that God extends to man. Regardless of what we would do, we could not earn our salvation. The Bible declares that there is none righteous, no not one. (Romans 3:10). All of us have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23). Because of our sins, we deserve to be lost. However, God in His mercy and love has extended His hand to us. We do not deserve it but God gives us salvation by His grace. Does this then exclude any acts of obedience on our part? The answer is again in the negative. Even though man can never do enough to earn his salvation, his obedience to God's will is still required. After we have done all that is required of us, we still should realize that we are unprofitable servants. (Luke 17:10). It is in this light that Paul exhorts us to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. (Philippians 2:12). When we do what God commands for us to do, we are not earning salvation. When one contends that works have nothing to do with our salvation and do not affect it at all, we wonder if our lack of works have anything to do with it. Jesus stated that we should enter into the way that leads to Heaven. (Matthew 7:13). If we do not enter in, will this effect our salvation? Will God's grace save us anyway? If not, then our obedience must have something to do with our salvation. We are told in Matthew 7:21 that not everyone that says Lord, Lord will enter into the kingdom of Heaven. Who then will enter in? The answer is that the one that does the will of the Father will enter in. Surely we can see that obedience or a lack of it have some bearing on our salvation. Just obeying what God has commanded does not mean that I have earned salvation any more than the march around Jericho meant that the Children of Israel earned the fall of that great city. They still were only doing what they were commanded and thus were unprofitable servants. When we obey the gospel we are only doing what we are commanded and can in no way claim that we have saved ourselves. We have not taken anything from the grace of God by submission to His will. Thus we conclude that works alone will not save us.

A passage that deserves consideration now is Ephesians 2:8-10. This passage is often used by those who would try to remove obedience from our salvation. It is stated that we are saved by grace through faith. There is then a discussion of the contradiction of works of boasting and grace. It is stated that we are not saved by this kind of works. We have however, been created in Christ Jesus unto good works. This passage eliminates some type of works from our salvation but does it eliminate all works? Let us not take a look at the types of works that the Bible speaks of. There are works of merit that Paul speaks of in Romans 4:2,4. These works would cause one to have room for glorying or boasting. The Bible also speaks of works of the Law. These would be works that one did in order to be submissive to the Old Testament Law. Paul reasons that by the deeds of the law, no flesh will be justified. (Romans 3:20). Then there are works of man's own devices. In Romans 10:1-3 Paul speaks of his heart's desire and prayer for his own nation that they might be saved. He would quickly say that they excelled in zeal but this zeal was not coupled with knowledge. They were ignorant of God's wisdom and went about to establish their own righteousness. This was not God's righteousness and would not lead to their salvation. They needed a knowledge of God's will so that they could submit to it. Another kind of works is referred to in Matthew 23:5. In this passage the Lord explains that the works of the Pharisees were done in order to be seen of men. These works



could not possible bring about salvation. There also is a reference to works of obedience in Acts 10:34,35. Peter had been reluctant to go to the house of Cornelius. Cornelius was a Gentile and Peter did not want to extend the gospel to him. After a vision of a sheet being let down from Heaven that included both clean and unclean animals, Peter was convinced that God wanted him to preach to the Gentile. Upon coming to the house of Cornelius, Peter declared that God is no respecter of persons but in every nation, the one who feared Him and worked righteousness would be accepted of God. The works he refers to here are not condemned. They are works that meet God's approval. The righteousness that they were to work is the righteousness of God. His commandments are righteousness. (Psalms 119:172). These were things that we are to do under instruction of God. God gives the command and we are to do what he says. This kind of work is never excluded from God's scheme of Redemption. When people list baptism as a work, it must be remembered that it is a work in exactly the same way that faith is a work. While we are being told that we are not being saved by baptism, a person needs to remember that faith is a work in exactly the same way. If this passage removes baptism from being a requirement for salvation, it also eliminates faith as being necessary to please God. Faith is referred to as a work of God in John 6:29. After seeing that the Bible speaks of several kinds of work, do we conclude that Ephesians 2:9 excludes all works? Is it just a certain kind of works that is removed? The works excluded by this passage are works of boasting. We are not saved by works of merit, works of the law, works of human device or by hypocritical works. Works of obedience are not excluded by this passage. They have always been necessary for man to please God. Remember that if baptism is excluded from our salvation by this passage, so is faith, repentance and faithfulness to God. These are all works of God's righteousness. If we do these things we cannot boast of our salvation. We have only done that which is commanded of God.

All of us have been impressed by the great chapter of faith that is recorded in Hebrews 11. These examples of faith are intended to give us courage and direction in how we can be justified by faith. Paul reminds us that the things written before were written for our learning and to serve as examples for us. (Romans 15:4). We are told that the things that happened to the Children of Israel happened to them for our example. (1 Corinthians 10:11). Therefore, we read carefully about great men and women of faith and see how they were justified before God. The lessons we learn will be helpful to us in determining how we are to be justified. Were they saved by faith without works of obedience on their part? Were they justified because they had a living faith that did God's will? We must conclude that works did play a part in their salvation. Is there a harmony between faith and works? Read carefully Galatians 5:6. "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love." Paul in this one verse settles the question. It is not faith only and it is not works only but it is **faith that works by love**. As you read the 11th chapter of Hebrews notice that the person who was justified by faith did something to show his faith. James states that if one could show his faith without his works, James would show his faith by his works. Notice the verbs of action mentioned in connection with the faith of these great people. We are told of the faith of Enoch. Note that Enoch walked with God. (Genesis 5:22,24). Noah pleased God with his faith. Noah moved with fear and prepared an ark for the saving of his house. Could anyone imagine that Noah would be in this list of great people if he had argued that if he built an ark this would be a work and he would not be saved by faith. Would the building of an ark have earned salvation for this good man? This was simply an act of obedience that in no way said that he had earned salvation. Abraham is mentioned twice in this chapter and both times it is mentioned that he obeyed God. He went out to a land that God would show him. Would it have been real faith if he had refused to go? Faith was coupled with obedience. He also was told to offer his son to God and



obeyed God's instructions. There was no thought on his part that if he offered his son, God would owe him salvation. Would it be reasonable for us to assume that God would have saved him even if he had not offered his son? This was faith working by love. It is interesting to note that Paul uses Abraham to show that faith is necessary and James uses this same man to show that works are necessary. Isaac and Jacob are mentioned in this chapter and the verb of action is 'blessed'. Moses is referred to as being justified by faith but notice how his faith caused him to make a decision of action. He refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter and chose to suffer affliction with the people of God. He led God's people out of the land of Egypt. The action of his faith is clear. It was not faith alone that directed him. He obeyed God's instructions because of his faith. Israel was delivered from Pharaoh's hand because of faith. Could they have said that faith would save them without them leaving the land of Egypt? Did the wall of Jericho fall separate from God's people obeying the instruction to march around the walls? Faith without works is dead. This kind of faith cannot save anyone! Instead of trying to show that men and women are justified by faith only, the 11th chapter of Hebrews demonstrates that real faith obeys the commandments of God. The lesson we gain from study is that God extends His grace to those who are willing to submit to Him. "Thought he were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." (Hebrews 5:8,9).

It is time for us to plead for a return to the 'old paths' and to teach again that faith and works belong together. As long as Satan's plea for faith only is heard, people will not know the real joy of humble obedience prompted by a strong faith in God. It is faith that works by love that brings to man the salvation that God offers.

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## A BALANCED CONGREGATION

George Erwin

The subject for consideration at this hour is, "A Balanced Congregation." According to *Funk and Wagnall* balanced means "To keep in due proportion." Before proceeding we will read 1 Timothy 4:11-16.

A balanced congregation needs a balanced preacher. He must "give attendance to reading (study)" and "to teaching." 1 Tim 4:13. Paul told Timothy, "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine." 1 Tim 4:16. Those who can only see the preacher in the study and in the pulpit have a wrong perception. The most important thing in a preacher's ministry is that he practices what he preaches. He is to teach by example. 1 Tim 4:12. He must live **godly**. He must visit the widows and orphans in their afflictions. He must preach and practice pure religion. James 1:27. He is to "teach" Christ's word faithfully. He must "Preach the word...reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." 2 Tim 4:2.

There must be a balance between truth and love. The lack of humility and tact in preaching the truth causes many to think there is a lack of love. We must preach the truth, without compromise, in love. Eph 4:15. It is important that we "preach the word...with all longsuffering..." 2 Tim 4:2. **ONE WAY** we show that we are disciples of Christ is that we "have love one to another." John 13:35. Sadly there are those who think that preaching the truth faithfully is a sign of a lack of love. A congregation cannot be a true church of Christ without preaching the whole truth. The church is "the pillar and ground of the truth" 1 Tim 3:15. The only way we can be free from the blood of all men is that we not shun to declare the whole counsel of God. Acts 20:26,27. True disciples of Christ must not only have love but they also must continue in the truth of Christ. It is only the truth that can make us free. John 8:31,32. The most loving thing we can do is to strive to convert those who err from the truth. James 5:19,20. The most loving person who ever lived offended the Pharisees when He taught the truth. He was criticized for doing this. His answer was, "Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" Matt 15:14.

There needs to be a proper balance between teaching concerning grace and works. According to the teaching of some grace covers even sins not repented of and eliminates all obedience. Perhaps some do not emphasize grace enough. "By grace are ye saved through faith" Eph. 2:8,9. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men..." Tit 2:11. The demonstration of God's grace is found in Romans 5:8. "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Jesus Christ died to make it possible for unworthy people to be saved. There is no sin so great but we can be saved if we repent and obey the gospel. People responsible for the death of the Son of God were saved on the Day of Pentecost. Acts 2:36-41. Where sin abounds "grace did much more abound" Rom. 5:20. Grace does not eliminate the need for obedience to Christ. "He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" Heb. 5:9. The passage usually quoted by grace only advocates demands faith. We need to realize the truth that our faith demands obedience if we are to be justified James 2:2. "In Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love." Gal. 5:6.

Those saved by grace are "zealous of good works" Tit. 2:11,14. No passage of Scripture more clearly shows the need for God's grace than Luke 17:10, "When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do." Without God's grace we are without hope. But, we are without hope, unless we have an obedient faith. 2 Thess. 1:7-9.

We should not be ashamed of our relationship to the "Restoration Movement." Cecil Wright says that Barton W. Stone, Thomas Campbell, Alexander Campbell and Walter Scott came to be known as the "big four of the Restoration Movement." We owe much to these and other restoration leaders. For example, Thomas Campbell coined the slogan, "Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; where the Scriptures are silent we are silent." This is in harmony with what Peter wrote, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles (utterances) of God" 1 Pet 4:11. The only way to obey 1 Corinthians 1:10, "to speak the same thing," is to follow this rule. However, the Lord's church was established by Jesus Christ better than 1,900 years ago. Jesus said, "Upon this rock I will build my church..." Matt. 16:18. Paul told the Ephesian elders, "Feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood" Acts 20:28. The Lord's church has been in existence since the Lord began adding those who are saved to it. Acts 2:41-48. We do not depend upon the restoration leaders for our existence as a church. Any doctrine or act of worship that originated with the Restoration Movement must be rejected. Everything about the church goes back to the first century.

There must be balance with regard to worship. Jesus gives the basis for New Testament worship. The hour has come "when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" John 4:23-24. God alone is to be the object of our worship. Matt. 4:10. He has a right to expect our worship to please Him. Some are more interested in pleasing man than God. If our primary desire is to please man we cannot please Christ. Gal. 1:10. True worship must be in spirit or from the heart. We pray with the spirit and with the understanding. We sing with the spirit and with the understanding. 1 Cor. 14:15. In observing the Lord's Supper we must do so in a worthy manner, "discerning the Lord's body" 1 Cor. 11:29. Anything that distracts from this must be avoided. Worship must be according to the truth, God's word. John 17:17. We are speaking of that part of the truth that came from Christ. John 1:17; Heb. 1:1. In worship there must be balance between enthusiasm and reverence and order. Heb. 12:28; 1 Cor. 14:40.

We need balance with regard to the use of women in the church. God has some restrictions upon women. They cannot be elders. 1 Tim. 3:2. They must not teach publicly when Christian men are present. 1 Tim. 2:12. This does not mean that God has a higher regard for men than women. Gal. 3:28. There is much that women can and should do. The older women are to teach the younger women. Tit. 2:4. Women can teach the younger children. There are many acts of service women can do. Phoebe was a servant of the church in Cenchrea. Rom. 16:1. We must not neglect to use the talents of godly women, except in those areas God has forbidden.

There must be balance between the young and the elderly. The church must take an interest in youth. "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth. Eccl 12:1. A congregation with no or little interest in young people has no future. This does not mean that we are primarily interested in providing recreation for them. There is a place for Christians to help provide and supervise

recreational activities but that must not be where the emphasis is placed. Too many are underestimating the interests and abilities of our youth. Christian youth can and should do work in the church. The young men can lead in worship. We must be careful in sending our young people to youth meetings under the direction of other congregations. As we give attention to young people we must not neglect the elderly. A wonderful service to both the young and the elderly is to encourage the young to visit and render service to the elderly. The church needs the enthusiasm of youth and the wisdom of those who are older.

There must be a balance in our thinking with regard to elders. Some look upon elders just as figureheads. Elders are also known as bishops. Bishop is from *eiskopos* which means overseer. "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief; for that is unprofitable for you" Heb. 13:17. They watch for anything that will endanger the soul. It is their responsibility to see that error is not taught. Tit. 1:11. It is the responsibility of elders not to allow a congregation to go into apostasy. Strong elders will not allow the church to go into liberalism or to bind upon the church things the Lord has not bound. They are not lords over God's children. They are pleased to consider the wishes of the congregation in matters of judgment. Peter said they are "ensamples to the flock" 1 Pet. 5:3. An ensample is a pattern according to W. E. Vine. They don't just tell people how to live, they show them how to live. The best elders are servants of Christ and the church. Jesus told the twelve, "...whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant..." Matt. 20:26,27.

There are other examples which could be given. Balance is important for growth, unity and faithfulness in any congregation. The Lord does not require that the church be great in numbers or wealth. But, He does require that it be faithful. 1 Cor. 14:2.



# PEACE, BUT NOT AT ANY PRICE

Keith B. Cozort

Peace is a desired attribute and a lofty goal. It is generally sought after and yet it seemingly takes very little to destroy the possibility of its ever being achieved.

## DEFINITION:

Our English dictionary gives the following definition for the word "peace." "1. Freedom from or a stopping of war, 2. A treaty or agreement to end war or the threat of war, 3. Freedom from public disturbances or disorder; public security; law and order, 4. Freedom from disagreement or quarrels; harmony; concord" (*Webster's New World Dictionary*, Second College Edition, World Publishing Co., New York and Cleveland, David B. Guralnik, Editor in Chief, pg. 1044).

In the Hebrew, the word means, "to be whole, complete; to be at peace, in friendship with any one" (William Wilson, *Wilson's Old Testament Word Studies*, MacDonald Publishing Co., McLean, VA, pg. 305).

In the Greek, "It describes a] harmonious relationships between men, Matt. 10:34; Rom. 14:19; b] between nations, Lk. 14:32; Acts 12:20; Rev. 6:4; c] friendliness, Acts 15:33; 1 Cor. 16:11; Heb. 11:31; d] freedom from molestation, Lk. 11:21; 19:42; Acts 9:31; 16:36; e] order, in the State, Acts 24:2; in the churches, 1 Cor. 14:33; f] the harmonized relationships between God and man, accomplished through the gospel, Acts 10:36; Eph. 2:17" (W. E. Vine, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, MacDonald Publishing Co., McLean, VA, pg. 851-852).

## PEACE DESIRED:

As we examine the Scriptures we certainly see the desire for peace among God's people. There is a desire for peace between man and his fellow man. Abram desired to have peace between his herdsmen and those of his nephew, Lot (Gen. 13:7-9). Since Abram and Lot came out of Egypt as very prosperous men there arose a conflict between their herdsmen. In order to try to keep peace Abram stated, "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren" (vs. 8). Abram will then suggest a plan whereby he and Lot go in opposite directions in order to keep from having conflict between their workers. This plan Lot agreed to follow and when he saw the well watered plains of the Jordan valley he chose it as his destination. Lot, of course, will pitch "his tent toward Sodom" (vs. 12) which will be the mistake of a lifetime!

There is also a desire for peace between man and his God. The prophet Isaiah shows us why man becomes separated from God. "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear" (Isa. 59:1-2). God desires peace with man but man's sins and iniquities make the peace which He desires impossible as long as those sins remain unforgiven.

The Lord says, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3). The import of this question, which is directed to the children of Israel, is that if they desire to be in a close relationship with God, and at peace with God, then they must be willing to walk the path which God walks. God is the leader. He is the one who chooses the path for man to walk. So, if man desires peace with his God, he must walk the strait and narrow way (Matt. 7:13-14) as God directs.

The prophet Jeremiah describes those of his day who would cry out, "Peace, peace; when there is no peace" (Jer. 8:11). These false prophets were guilty of speaking what the people wanted to hear



but they would not speak the words of the Lord. In fact, they contradicted the prophet of God, Jeremiah, and labeled him as a false prophet (Jer. 28-29).

Let us examine some prices others are seemingly willing to pay for the notion of peace but these prices are too high for those of us who desire to be faithful to our God.

### **PEACE, BUT NOT AT THE PRICE OF DOCTRINE**

Our God desires peace between Himself and His people and also between brethren, but not at the price of changing the doctrine of Christ. The apostle John tells us, "Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (Jn. 8:31-32). To know the truth that will set man free he must continue in the word of the Lord.

John, the apostle, will also tell us, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds" (2 Jn. 9-11).

### **PEACE, BUT NOT AT THE PRICE OF PURITY**

While Jesus was conversing with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, He told her, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (Jn. 4:24). Our Lord was emphasizing the need to worship God in the right frame of mind or attitude, "in spirit," as well as worshipping Him in doing the right things, "in truth." This is what Jesus describes as acceptable worship in the sight of our heavenly Father.

To attempt to worship God by the traditions of men is unacceptable. "This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoreth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:8-9).

### **PEACE, BUT NOT AT THE PRICE OF BEING IN CHRIST**

It is unfortunate, but true none the less, that many of our brethren have called a "cease fire" with anyone in the denominational world who claims to believe in Jesus as the Christ. The following will serve as an example of such actions being taken and promoted by our brethren. Brother Max Lucado, preacher for the Oak Hills Church of Christ in San Antonio, TX. spoke at the Promise Keepers Rally in Washington, D.C. on October 4, 1997. Promise Keepers is a gathering of men from across the nation for the supposed purpose of calling men back to taking the lead in their families and in their communities. As you will see it ends up being a mutual admiration society. Brother Lucado's message was transcribed by Lynn Seaborn from the C-SPAN broadcasting network as follows:

**Max Lucado:**

"I want you to think about where you attend or have attended for quite often [sic - K.B.C.]. And on the count of three I want all of us to say the name of our religious heritage, denomination or name of church. Will yo do that with me? On the count of three I'd like to hear it from you. One, two, three.

**Crowd:** (noise)

**Lucado:**

"Did anybody understand anything that was said? Now on the count of three I would like for you to shout with me the name of the savior [sic - K.B.C.] who has redeemed

your soul, Jesus Christ. One, two, three.

**Crowd:** Jesus Christ!

**Lucado:**

"We are at a very important point and the reason we are here today and that is to ask [sic. - K.B.C.] the almighty God to unite His church. We are asking this afternoon for the miracle of millennium. The watching world has never seen the united church. The watching world has never seen God's people as one. The watching world has never seen us cooperate... And we have come now this afternoon to repent of our sectarianism. We have boasted about the name of our church instead of the name of our Savior. We have taken pride in our denominations rather than pride in our heavenly father. We have been jealous and competed with the church across the street or across the city rather than be jealous over the cause of Christ. We have focused on controversies that divide us rather than focus on the cross that unites us. And our prayer this afternoon is that God can once and for all do a miracle of the millennium. That he can inaugurate a new day. That he can bring about a new era, something that our eyes have never seen. Why? Because Jesus says that when we are one in Christ, then the world will be one for Christ."

This is nothing more than the old "I'm OK, you're OK!" philosophy. It is promoting the idea, "We're all going to heaven, only by different roads!" How strange such ideas are when they are compared with the word of God. Jesus still says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (Jn. 14:6). Plus, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21).

Shortly before the betrayal by Judas, our Lord was praying to His Father in heaven. In that prayer He stated, "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (Jn. 17:20-21). Our Lord's prayer included His desire that all of His followers would be "one." He expressed this desire concerning not only His apostles but also concerning all those who would believe and obey through the hearing of the apostles, that includes all of us as well. Yet, Jesus had already shown how that oneness can be achieved when He said, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (Jn. 17:17). It is by abiding in the truth, the word of truth, that we are made free (Jn. 8:31-32) and will be "one" with one another and with God. There is no other way! It is the only way to true spiritual peace!

The apostle Paul tells us, "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). Paul emphasizes that they put on Christ when they were baptized into Christ, and not before! It's truly a shame that many of our brethren today have not realized this fundamental fact. They continue to try to get people "into Christ" in ways different from and contrary to Paul's declaration.

### CONCLUSION

Brethren, peace is good if it is based upon the word of God. It is wrong and evil if it is at the expense or price of doctrine, purity, or being in Christ.

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## WORSHIP: MEANINGFUL WITHOUT BEING FADDISH

D. Gene West

Text: Matthew 4:10

### Introduction:

1. The word worship occurs in the New Testament forty-three or forty-four times.
  - a. The word most frequently used for worship is the word proskuneo, and it is found some thirty-four times in the New Testament.
  - b. This word means to praise, adore, render homage to, to lean forward and kiss the hand of someone or something.
  - c. In the context in which we are speaking today, it would mean to lean forward (bow down) and kiss the hand of God.
2. Matthew used a form of the verb proskuneo when he quoted Jesus, during his temptation, telling Satan, "Thou shalt worship the Lord your God..."
  - a. In the clause, "...and him only shalt thou serve," Matthew used the word latreuseis, which is almost always translated by the word serve in the New Testament.
  - b. One may deduce from the ways the various words are used in the New Testament, and in the Old Testament as well, that "all worship is service to God, but not all service is worship."
3. There is a very peculiar idea going around in the church today, an idea which began to make its rounds among the denominations, and particularly the Christian Church about thirty or forty years ago that everything one does in his life is an act of worship to God.
  - a. This is simply not true! Everything the Christian does in this life should be an act of service to God, even when he is mowing the lawn, or she is baking bread, this should be done in a way that will bring glory and honor to God.
  - b. This kind of thinking has caused people to think that because they may mow their lawns in different ways, they may also come to the assembly of God's people and change the activities of that assembly around in order to make that worship more pleasing to themselves.
  - c. **But** we must remember that we come together in the sacred assembly to worship God, that is, to praise, adore, pay homage to, to lean forward to kiss the hand of Deity, and that it must be true therefore, that Deity has the right to prescribe what activities he will accept as the fulfillment of that worship.
  - d. This means that it is up to man to adjust himself to the desires of God, rather than for God to adjust himself to the desire of man, and this is true in any phase of the Christian life.
  - e. This is a part of what conversion is all about!
4. Before the age of technology, evolution, and humanism, "People used to have a greater sense of mystery than most advanced societies today. Almost all people believed in God (or at least in some divine being) who was out there somewhere. God was in heaven - high and holy, all-powerful, all-knowing, and present everywhere. There was a sense of awe and reverence before a God who everyone agreed was too big to understand fully. No one even

claimed to understand the mysteries of God - people simply accepted the word of God by faith. They marveled at God, were amazed at the Lord, and maintained a healthy fear and respect for the Almighty."<sup>1</sup>

5. But it is not that way anymore because education, sophistication, and secularization has caused those of us in the western world to become too smart to think like that, and as a result we have developed "fads" in our worship, just as we have in other phases of our lives such as in the clothing that we wear.

6. We have lost the idea of the holy, the transcendent, the august, and have substituted for it, often, silly little fads that are so meaningless that even the most brazen give them up in a short while. Do you remember when there used to be the dimming of lights, and the holding of hands so the Spirit could move among us during the eating of the Lord's Supper?

7. We have forgotten that God is at one and the same time, both appealing and terrifying!

a. Because this has happened we have presumed to tell God what we are going to do to worship him.

b. We ask, who is truly the important one in this equation? Is it really God?

8. Have we forgotten that there is both a sense of fear and a surge of love filled with a passion to draw near to God?

a. Do we stand, as did Moses when God spoke to him from the burning bush, wanting to see such an incredible sight, but fearful of looking upon the face of the living God?

b. It is only when we come to look upon our own fragility in light of God's divine greatness that we can properly put ourselves in the correct mind-set for worship.

c. We need, like Isaiah, to recapture the sense of God's divine majesty, splendor, and glory. (Isaiah 6:1-13)

d. If we do not, our worship will be reduced to mere fads which move us for a little while and then vanish away.

e. This will happen when we become enamored with our own wisdom, which is foolishness in the sight of God. (1 Corinthians 1:25)

9. Pride is the greatest enemy of worship and humility and reverence are the beginnings of any true worship to God.

## **I. WHAT IS MEANINGFUL WORSHIP?**

A. Define the words "meaningful," and "faddish."

1. The word "meaningful," according to the 9th edition of the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, means, "having meaning or purpose; full of meaning; significant; having an assigned function."

2. As you can see from the dictionary definition, this word has a vastly different meaning from the way it is usually used with regard to worship.

a. The word is generally used in our time to refer to something that I like, or desire.

b. So, "meaningful" means different things to different people depending upon their whims or desires.

c. Today, however, we will use the word as it is used by the vast majority of the population, and we will speak of worship that has meaning or purpose, or is significant.

3. Faddish is defined by the same source as, "a practice or interest followed for a time with exaggerated zeal; a craze."

a. We can see from the serious definitions of these two words that many people who are talking about meaningful worship are really speaking of "faddish" worship.

B. Some of the fads that have made their way into the worship of the churches of Christ are as follows:

a. Lifting up hands. (Some people get very belligerent when one criticizes this action.)

b. Handclapping. (They get even more belligerent, some times downright hostile about this one, and begin to try to show from the Scripture that this is endorsed by God.)

c. Drama.

d. Female leadership.

e. Observing religious holidays.  
babies.

f. Dedicating

g. Observing the Lord's Supper any day.  
clusters.

h. Sunday night

i. Dimming lights.

j. Children's worship.

k. Etcetera, ad infinitum, ad nauseam.

C. Criticize any of these things, and you immediately become an ignorant old moss-back who doesn't know anything about anything! (One can hardly wait for some of these young fellows to become the ignorant old moss-back warlord watch dogs!)

1. The question most frequently asked is **not**, "What does the Bible say about worship?" or "What is the will of God regarding worship?"

2. The question most frequently asked is: "What's wrong with.....?"

3. To this I generally reply, "What is right with it?"

D. There are at least four different kinds of worship that are mentioned in the New Testament any one of which would be meaningful to someone. These are:

1. Ignorant worship - Acts 17:23.

2. Vain worship - Matthew 15:9.

3. Will worship - Colossians 2:23.

4. True worship - John 4:20-24. (We are to worship God in spirit and in truth so this worship is both true and spiritual.)

E. Meaningful worship can only fall into one of the above categories, and that would be true, or spiritual worship, because ignorant, vain, and will worship cannot be meaningful in the sight of God; though they may well be in the sight of some men.

## II. WHAT IS MEANINGFUL WORSHIP IN THE SIGHT OF GOD? (Notice the qualifying phrase, "in the sight of God.")

A. In every worship situation there must exist the worshipers and the Being/s being worshiped, which is to say that there must be those who are executing the worship, and the One/s who is/are the recipient/s of the worship.

1. This is to say there must be the performers and the audience.

2. Contrary to the popular idea those who are gathered in the meetinghouse at any



given time are **not** the audience.

3. They are the performers, if we are allowed to use the terms of the theater, so it is not up to the "actors" to change the direction of the play-writer, or the director, but they are to adhere faithfully to the script.

4. **It is God who is the audience**, and not only so but he is the play-writer and director as well.

5. Our role is to faithfully perform (for want of a better term) that which is pleasing to God, and to forget about what we think regarding this matter. (See: Ephesians 5:19-20; John 4:20-24)

B. The Father seeks a certain type of worshiper, and that type which he seeks is one who will worship him in spirit and in truth. What does this mean?

1. It means that the worshiper must have the correct attitude regarding God and the worship of God when he proceeds to worship him.

2. That attitude is not, what do I like, or even what is meaningful to me, but it is an attitude of humility that allows God to command me regarding what he desires.

a. It is the attitude of the Psalmist who said, "I was **glad** when they said to me, 'Let us go into the house of the Lord.'" (Psalm 122:1)

b. We are to worship God acceptably and with reverence and godly fear." (Hebrews 12:28)

c. Acceptably means in a way that is approved of God.

d. With reverence and godly fear, means with deep respect and in awe.

3. When one has the correct practices in worship, and God has prescribed those, one is ready for the really difficult task of worshiping God acceptably and with godly fear, and with the spirit of humility.

C. In addition to these things Paul, specifically speaking on the subject of worship told the Corinthians, in 1 Corinthians 14:40, that worship is to be conducted decently and in order.

1. I once told a highly educated graduate of David Lipscomb University that this was the reason why he could not raise his hands and sway back and forth during the worship, mutter "Amen," and "Praise God." When I quoted this verse from Holy Scripture he replied, "That is a catch-all, and means what you want it to mean."

2. I did not talk any further because Solomon said, "Answer not a fool according to his folly."

D. God has always required two sides of action to those who would claim to be obedient to him. First there is:

1. The proper attitude, frame of mind, or disposition which is favorable toward spirituality.

2. Faithfulness to the specific ways God has pinpointed that a thing must be done, from an external point of view.

a. Note the kind of animal that could be offered to him in the Old Testament days!

b. So, God wants the right action and the right attitude!

3. Think of those many in Bible history who attempted to approach God and failed because they did not approach him in the way, and with the attitude prescribed by the "Father of Lights."

E. To further emphasize this point, let us take a brief look at the number of people who did not sufficiently consider complying with the details of the instructions of God.

1. Adam and Eve, regardless of what their attitude might have been, partook of the forbidden fruit. (Genesis 2:17 & 3:11)

- a. We might point out that improper attention to the details of obedience to the Word of God **always** manifests an improper attitude toward God.

- b. Often this demonstrates a lack of humility in serving God.

- c. You just do not do the wrong thing with the right attitude, unless your attitude is one of total ignorance of what you are doing.

2. Nadab and Abihu in Leviticus 10:1-3, and their action demonstrates an improper attitude toward the command of God, even if they were drunk.

3. The Sabbath breaker in Numbers 15:32-36.

4. Moses, striking the rock, in Numbers 20:11-12.

5. Achan, and his stealing of the things from Jericho, in Joshua, chapter seven.

6. Saul, and his failure to submit to the will of God by sparing Agag, in 1 Samuel 13:13-14 & 15:19-23.

7. Uzzah, who contrary to the will of God, touched the Ark of the Covenant, in 2 Samuel 6:1-7 & 1 Chronicles 15:12-13.

8. King Uzziah, and the penalty for his pride against God, in 2 Chronicles 26:15-18.

9. All these people, and others that could be mentioned, experienced the wrath of God because of their deviation from the divine directives of the Holy One.

- a. What makes us think that God will not deal with us in a similar manner when we deviate from his divine will in the matter of worship, or in any other matter so far as that is concerned?

F. Meaningful worship in the sight of God means that as we worship him we are joyfully aware of the awesome presence of the only True and Living God in the universe, and that we react to his communication to us (the Word of God) in such a way as to let him know that we are submissive to him in all matters.

1. If the worship of God during the public assemblies of the church has become for you dull and perfunctory, the fault does not lie with either God or his Word!

2. People who are experiencing such a thing should not attempt to manipulate the worship to arouse their worldly souls, but they need to get into a prayerful studying mode with God, and remain there until the fires of zeal once more burn in their souls!

G. God has not changed his insistence regarding man's loving obedience to his will, as we note in the following verses:

1. John 14:15, "If you love Me, keep My commandments."

2. John 15:14, "You are My friends if you do whatever I command you."

3. Recall also that Paul said that the Old Testament was written for our admonition and learning. Romans 15:4, "For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope."

4. The things that happened in the Old Testament came to pass as examples for us, as Paul emphasized in 1 Corinthians 10:11-12, when he said, "Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, on whom

the ends of the ages have come. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall."

H. The faith that those of us are to have who are living under the New Testament dispensation is an obedient trust, which conforms to the will of God always.

1. In worship as in all other matters we must remember, Romans 11:33-36 "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable {are} His judgments and His ways past finding out!" (34) "For who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has become His counselor?" (35) "Or who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to him?" (36) For of Him and through Him and to Him {are} all things, to whom {be} glory forever. Amen.

2. "Ours is not to question why, ours is but to do or die."

3. Those of us who are not "in search of wonder," are the ones who usually find it!

4. The only way one can know "wonder" is to search the Word of the Living God!

### III. THE ACCUSATION THAT WE ARE BOUND BY RATIONALISM, OR THE EARLY ENGLISH ENLIGHTENMENT OF JOHN LOCKE.

A. A common statement one hears made is that, "Campbell lived during the period of the Enlightenment which was profoundly influenced by the thinking of such men as the English philosopher John Locke," and "that it was an age which emphasized what was reasonable, rational, and scientific," then to this is added such ideas as, "Campbell keenly distrusted mysticism and the display of emotions in worship, stressing instead, the ability of human reason to encounter God."<sup>2</sup>

1. This kind of thinking needs to be analyzed for several reasons, not the least of which is, that it makes our faith a product of a particular worldly philosophy rather than the product of the Word of God.

2. It assumes some things about Campbell and about emotions, and his view of emotions that have never been verified by the history of the restoration movement.

a. When one views such works as Seven's **Voice of the Golden Oracle**, he becomes aware that old brother Campbell was a deeply emotional man, but it is also true that most of the time, he was able to control his emotions during the worship of God.

b. It also assumes that in order to experience emotions one must shout, clap hands, or sway back and forth in worship. This is patently false!

3. The view that the restoration of the churches of Christ in America is based upon a human philosophy rather than on a correct view of the Word of God would demand that we are nothing more than a denomination among denominations. (This is the point at which many of the "Change Agents" have arrived.)

B. If our faith is built upon the philosophy of John Locke, or any other man this side of the first Century, how can these fellows explain the fact that the "church Fathers" vindicate what we believe, and they wrote a full fourteen centuries before John Locke was born?

1. They have to explain the early "church Fathers," as well as the many movements to get back to the Bible such as the Waldenses, the Albagenses, and the work of such great men as Zwingly and Savanarola, all of whom lived before the days of the Protestant Reformation, or in the very early days of that Reformation. How do they

explain that these people thought just as we do, if we are products of the philosophy of John Locke?

2. What influenced these men and these movements to correct the apostate church was neither being rational, nor was it the influence of John Locke.

3. What influenced these men was the fact that they finally came in contact with the **BIBLE!**

a. If it were not so serious, we could simply discount as being silly the notion that we believe what we believe because of the influence of John Locke or Alexander Campbell, the Haldane brothers or any other men involved in the early restoration of the faith.

b. The clarion call of all these reformers was "Back to the Bible," just as the people mentioned above were calling men back to the Bible.

C. So far as our faith being "reasoned out, and reasonable," it would take another lecture as long as this to discuss all the passages found in the New Testament alone, to say nothing of the Old Testament, in which God calls upon his people to reason, be reasonable, and to enjoy a reasonable faith.

1. The plain fact of the matter is that anything that opposes God, or causes one to substitute something for the will of God is unreasonable!

2. Did not Paul tell the Romans, in chapter twelve, verses one and two that we are to give our bodies as a living sacrifice to God, and that this is our reasonable service?

3. Let us take just a moment to investigate this word "reasonable" in this passage.

a. It comes from the Greek word, "logiken," which is the accusative, feminine, singular of "logikos," which comes from the root verb "lego."

b. According to the **ANALYTICAL GREEK LEXICON**, page 248, the word means to "lay, to arrange, to gather, and to say; it also means to speak what has been mentally thought out." In other words, after one has mentally thought out any given situation, in religion, and out, he can speak that which is reasonable.

c. Paul was telling the Romans that they were to "think out" the Christian faith, and then commit themselves to God as living sacrifices because this is the reasonable thing to do.

d. The word "logikos," means, "Pertaining to the reason, the rational, the spiritual, pertaining to the mind and the soul."

4. We have a tendency to believe that reasonableness pre-dated Campbell just a bit so far as history is concerned.

5. If we do not want to follow the Bible, let us be honest enough to say so, and let us not try to blame it on John Locke or Alexander Campbell.

D. Have you ever noticed that those who carp most about the age of Enlightenment, and the use of reason in our interpretation of the Scripture, do themselves, use reason to reason that we should not reason?

1. In so doing they use all kinds of false basic assumptions.

a. Not long ago I read a book on leadership in which the author took the position that the reasons we, in the churches of Christ, call elders, elders is because of our heritage in coming out of the Presbyterian Church which has

used this designation for officials in their church for hundreds of years. He went on to say that we should call elders, shepherds, and I have no problem with that.

b. But did it never occur to this brother that we, in churches of Christ, call elders, elders because that is the most frequently used term in the New Testament? This is but one example of an argument from a false basic assumption, and this can be multiplied by the hundreds.

c. Not only is this so, but it also involves bringing a false accusation against brethren.

2. To reason that one should not reason in matters of religion, and then attempt to prove such a concept by reason reveals two important things:

a. A highly hypocritical agenda.

b. These people believe that their reasoning is superior to the reason of anyone else, including God's divinely inspired Ambassadors! It is kind of like shooting people who threaten to shoot others, and declaring shooting to be wrong.

### Conclusion:

1. How then, can one engage in meaningful worship, and do so according to the will of God?

a. Prepare your heart to worship.

b. Engage in worship without asking the selfish question, "What am I going to get out of this today?"

c. Live a life that makes you want to come into the presence of the Lord in worship. Be like the Psalmist who said, "I was glad when they said let us go up to the house of the God of Jacob."

2. Do not allow the "agenda laden liberals" force you into thinking about what is "new," and what is "traditional:" rather think in terms of what is right in the sight of the only True and Living God of the universe.

1. Dozier, Dan, **COME LET US ADORE HIM**, College Press Publishing Company, Joplin, MO, 1994, p. 21.

2. Ibid. pp. 26-27.

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## The Lion and the Lamb

Donnie S. Barnes

### Who is Jesus?

Who is Jesus? A song asks, "Who is this Jesus you talk about every day?" Of the nearly six billion people living in the world today, approximately 2.7 billion have never heard the name "Jesus Christ." Of the some 7,000 languages in the world, approximately 5,000 of them are without any translation of the Bible. In India alone, some 40,000 people die every day without ever hearing the name of Jesus Christ. Every ten seconds twenty-six people die in the world. Over twenty of them are not Christians.

Who is Jesus? We need to know because our salvation is connected with His name. It was to Annas, Caiaphas, John, Alexander and several relatives of the high priest at Jerusalem that Peter said, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Who is Jesus? We need to know so as not to be deceived by a false Christ. Jesus said in (Matthew 24:4-5), "... Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many."

Who is Jesus? We need to know so as not to be confused about who Christ is. At Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asked His disciples, "Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?" (Matthew 16:13). They were ready with some answers; "And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets" (Matthew 16:14).

Who is Jesus? God knows: "... This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased..." (Matthew 17:5). The devil and his demons know: "... What have I to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of the most high God? ..." (Mark 5:7). Martha knows: "... Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world" (John 11:27). Peter knows: "... Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16). The centurion knows: "... Truly this was the Son of God" (Matthew 27:54). Thomas knows: "... My Lord and my God" (John 20:28). Paul knows: "... This Jesus, who I preach unto you, is Christ" (Acts 17:3). The Ethiopian eunuch knows: "... I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:37). John the Baptist knows: "And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God" (John 1:34). The angels know: "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11). Some Samaritans in Sychar know: "... We have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world" (John 4:42). Nathaniel knows: "... Thou art the Son of God; thou art the king of Israel" (John 1:49). The pressing question of the hour is, "Do you know who Jesus is?"

On the road to Damascus, Saul asked two very important questions, questions that need to be asked over and over today. Question #1: "Who art thou, Lord?" (Acts 9:5). Question #2: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6). Some ask the second question without having answered the first. Not until we understand definitely who the Lord is will we be constrained to do what He says.

Jesus was the Savior's common name during His lifetime, and He is generally so-called in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. In the epistles, He is generally referred to as "Christ" or "Christ Jesus." In addition, the Lord is presented in Scripture as being the "Lamb of God" (John 1:29) and the "Lion of the tribe of Judah" (Revelation 5:5), thus the designation, "The Lion and the Lamb." May we know Him as both!

### **Jesus---" The Lamb of God"**

Upon seeing Jesus approaching him, John the Baptist said, "...Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). The place where the eunuch from Ethiopia was reading when Philip joined him said this about Christ: "... He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth" (Acts 8:32).

A lamb, among the Jews, was killed and eaten during the time of the Passover to commemorate their deliverance from Egypt. (Exodus 12:3-11). A lamb was offered at the tabernacle, and afterward in the temple, every morning and evening as a part of the daily worship Exodus 29:38-39). Some seven centuries before Christ was born in Bethlehem of Judea, Isaiah wrote, "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth" (Isaiah 53:7). In Isaiah 53:10, Jesus is the bruised Lamb. Isaiah 53:11 sets Him forth as the Lamb of travail. In Revelation 13:8; 5:6, Christ is the Lamb slain (slaughtered) from the foundation of the world. In I Corinthians 5:7, Paul writes: "... For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us."

Among the Jews, a lamb was an emblem of patience, meekness, and gentleness. The very description of our Lord as "the Lamb of God" says a lot about His character. "Peter describes Him as a "Lamb without blemish and without spot" (I Peter 1:19). He is innocent in character and without sin. He is meek and lowly like a lamb. He was sacrificial in nature in that He came to ... give his life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28).

### **Jesus---"The Lion of the Tribe of Judah"**

The New Testament also presents Christ as being a "lion." John writes in Revelation 5:4-5, "And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon. And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof." This passage is the only time this appellation is used to refer to Christ. The word "lion" was employed in Bible times to describe the noblest son. On an occasion when Jacob blessed Judah, he called him a "lion's whelp." "Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be" (Genesis 49:9-10). "Shiloh" here refers to Christ. In nature, the lion is the king of beasts and the ruling monarch of the forest. Thus, the expression used in Revelation 5:5 becomes an emblem of one of kingly authority and power.

### **Jesus---The Lamb and the Lion**

The disposition of a lion differs greatly from that of a lamb. And yet, the Master is described in inspired language that incorporates both. A closer examination of the writings of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John reveal Jesus occupying each of these roles at differing times.

Jesus as a Lamb is seen when men attacked Him personally. He did not seek vengeance! He did not seek retaliation! He is well described in I Peter 2:22-23, "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." When the Lord was accused by the chief priests and the Jewish elders, "... He answered nothing" (Matthew 27:12). When Pilate was interrogating Him, Pilate said, "... Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee?" (Matthew 27:13). The Lamb of God.... Answered him to never a word; insomuch that the governor

marveled greatly" Matthew 27:14). Herein do we see the patience, gentleness, and meekness of the Christ.

On the other hand, Jesus is seen as the Lion when attacks were made upon His teaching His doctrine. Such a matter was entirely different from the attacks made upon Him personally. When attacks upon truth were made, Jesus fought back, and He fought hard. He stood like the Rock of Gibraltar. He answered and He refuted and, yes, He condemned. In disposition, it was the Lion in action when He said, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves. . . Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess... Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity" (Matthew 23:15, 25, 27-28). We see the Lion in action as He cleanses the temple on two separate occasions. He see him turning over the tables and cages. We listen as he exclaims, "It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves" (Matthew 21:13). An ancient proverb states, "Behold the wrath of a patient man!" When Jesus needed to be a lion, He was a lion. When He needed to be a lamb, He was a lamb. We can learn from this.

### **What Does This All Mean to Us?**

It means this: "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps" (I Peter 2:21). Christ was and is our example. We are to follow in His steps. We must seek to have His mind, His attitude, and His disposition. We must be determined to imitate His conduct. There are times when it is appropriate for us to display the lamb disposition of Christ. There are other times when it is appropriate to display the lion disposition of Christ. Don't confuse the two! Never be a lamb when you should be a lion! Never be a lion when you should be a lamb! Know when to be which. Know which to be at any given time and place. When Jesus taught His disciples to "Be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" (Matthew 10:16), He was teaching the balanced life that He Himself was living. In Ecclesiastes 3:1, Solomon said "To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven." In verse seven he continues, "A time to rend, and a time to sew, a time to keep silence, and a time to speak." Can it not be said that there is a proper time to be a lamb, and a proper time to be a lion? Yes, there is a time to be a lamb, and there is a time to be a lion. John said, "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked" (I John 2:6). Let's observe some examples.

### **Examples of the Lamb Disposition**

1. "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets" (Matthew 7:12)
2. .... Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matthew 5:44)
3. "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another" (John 13:34)
4. "If ye love me, keep my commandments" (John 14:14)
5. "Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (Romans 12:17-18).

6. ".... Speaking the truth in love..." (Ephesians 4:15).
7. ".... Love the brotherhood..." (I Peter 2:17)
8. "Let brotherly love continue" (Hebrews 13:1).
9. "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time" (I Peter 5:6).

### **Examples of the Lion Disposition**

1. ".... Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord" (Romans 12:19).
2. "....I am set for the defence of the gospel" (Philippians 1:17).
3. "Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand" (Ephesians 6:13).
4. "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them" (Romans 16:17).
5. "And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed" (I Thessalonians 3:14).
6. "Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear" (I Timothy 5:20).
7. "Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you" (II Corinthians 6:17).
8. "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness" (II Corinthians 6:14).
9. "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8).

Do not confuse the lamb disposition as weakness. Do not think that the lion disposition is to be applied in all areas of the Lord's work. Remembering that the Lord was "the Lamb of God," let it not be forgotten that He was also the "Lion of the tribe of Judah." While He did not retaliate or seek vengeance when personal attacks were made upon Him, it was a different matter when attacks were made upon His teaching, upon His doctrine, upon the truth of God. He was careful to point out the wrongs that needed righted and the ignorance that needed replacing with knowledge of God's word. When we see so many attacks on the church from without and from within, let us stand as did our Lord and defend the truth. While so many are working so diligently to change what should not be changed, bind what should not be bound, loose what should not be loosed, and teach what should not be taught, may we ever stand on the side of the "Lion of the tribe of Judah."

In Philippians 3:10 Paul has written, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death." May we, too, "know Him" as we ought to know Him, love Him as we ought to love Him, and serve Him as we ought to serve Him. May we be true to the things He was true to. May we stand for the things He stood for while standing against the things He stood against.

Yes, the Lord was characterized by love--tremendous love. This love compelled Him to stand firmly for the truth and to expose error. The very idea that love will compel us to "accept anything and everything" is not an idea to be found anywhere in the Scriptures. Certainly it is not found in the life of Christ. May each of us come to know that to be like Christ we must uphold that which is right and condemn that which is wrong. Some days will be "lamb days" and some days will be "lion days" as we... Earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3).



## POSITIVES AND NEGATIVES

Colossians 3:1-14

Steven P. Smithbauer

It has been said, "There is within every man a God-shaped vacuum which nothing can fill but God Himself." Inherent within the human race is a longing for purpose, self-worth, and direction. Over the centuries man has searched for fulfillment in all these areas, but when God has been ignored, he has been unable to find contentment and peace. But when one comes to Jesus Christ for fulfillment, he does not go away disappointed. It is not enough for one to simply cease doing evil, he must also begin to do right.

Former first lady Nancy Reagan was active in the war against drugs during her husband's administration. During that time period the phrase, "Just say no" was popularized. I remember a specific public service announcement on the television, where a young man was advising children "If someone offers you drugs, and you don't want them, just say no." While we certainly praise the efforts of the nation to discourage drug abuse, there is a problem with the young man's advice. He encourages you to "just say no" if you don't want the drugs, but what if you do??? Herein is the dilemma.

In Matthew 12:43-45, Jesus told the story of an "*unclean spirit*" who had been cast out of a man and wandered through "*dry places*" and finally decided to return to his "*house*". When he did, he found it "*empty, swept, and garnished*." Then he took seven other demons more wicked than he himself, and entered into the man. The conclusion to this is undeniable. We cannot "just say no" to wickedness without filling the void in our lives with something able to keep us from sin.

The Colossians were advised in our text to "*Set your affection [mind, ASV] on things above, and not on things on the earth*." (Colossians 3:2) There are those who criticize faithful Gospel preachers for being too negative. Their idea of the New Testament might be summed up in the words of the old song, "accentuate the positive, and eliminate the negative." While it is certainly possible to overdo the negative side, one must be careful not to eliminate from God's word instructions that are necessary for salvation. The theme for this series of lectures is "balance". Preachers of the Gospel need to balance their preaching by not shunning to "declare all the counsel of God." (Acts 20:27) That includes both positive (*Thou shalt...*) and negative (*Thou shalt not...*) commands in the scriptures, and both abound in the New Testament. The young preacher was told to "*Preach the word;...reprove, rebuke, and exhort in all longsuffering and doctrine*." (II Timothy 4:2) Of the three ways he is admonished to preach, two are negative, (i.e. reprove, rebuke).

The Colossians were given instructions for faithful Christian living in chapter three of that book. We would be wise to heed those same instructions today.

### NEGATIVES

In verses 4 and 5 of our text, Paul reminds the Colossians that they have died to their former way of living. They are then encouraged to "*mortify therefore your members which are upon the*



earth.” This means that they were to “put to death” the former desires of worldly living. Too many times we have heard Christians complaining about what they had to give up in order to live a faithful life in Christ. This brings to mind the Israelites in the wilderness who had forgotten their rigorous enslavement to the Egyptians and could only think of the “flesh pots” and the “leeks” they used to eat in that land. What is it that we are pining for, anyway? Do we not remember the wickedness of the world? Paul here in our text lists some of those wicked practices that the Colossians needed to leave behind. We should consider these to be negatives, (Thou shalt not’s), for the Christian.

1. *Fornication*, which is defined as illicit sexual practices. This includes adultery, homosexuality, etc.
2. *Uncleanness*, impurity/extravagance.
3. *Inordinate Affection*, unbridled passion, lust, no inhibitions.
4. *Evil Concupiscence*, Longing for wicked things, evil thoughts.
5. *Covetousness/Idolatry*, of avarice, or worship of mammon, (money/riches).

These things should have been put to death when the Colossians obeyed the Gospel and buried their old man of sin. (See Romans 6:1ff.) Paul reminds them those in the world who do these things incur the wrath of God, (verse 6). The Colossians, who were once a part of the world used to practice all of these and perhaps more, (verse 7), but now they were expected to rise above them. Paul does not accuse them of doing these, but gives them a “rebuke” (warning) because they appear to be looking back into the world from whence they had come. The charge he gives them is to “mortify”. We cannot be faithful Christians and practice these things! (cf. I Corinthians 6:9-11.)

II Peter 2:20-22, “For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.”

A second set of negatives is given starting with verse 8 of our text. Here Paul is giving “reproof”, (casting blame), because the Colossians are required to “Put off all these.” To put off something, it must be already on. “These” might refer to those “little pet sins” we tend to cherish, or overlook as being too trivial for God to take seriously. But we should be reminded that “[God is] of fairer eyes than to behold evil and canst not look upon iniquity.” (Habakkuk 1:13) The Colossians were to “put off”:

1. *Anger*, indignation.
2. *Wrath*, like anger but more intense. Described as violent passion, “boiling up quickly and soon subsiding.” (Thayer’s and TDNT)
3. *Malice*, wickedness that shows no hesitation to break laws.
4. *Blasphemy*, railing, slanderous speech against God or man.
5. *Filthy Communication*, low profane speech, profanity.
6. *Lying*, falsehoods, dishonesty.

The last three sins are of the tongue and caused by the first three which are from within. Remember the teaching of Jesus who said, "...*those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man.*" (Matthew 15:18) These Colossians needed to emulate Paul who had been "crucified with Christ", (Galatians 2:20), but even doing all this would not be enough. Assuming they would "mortify" their worldly desires and then "put off" all these other sins, that would leave them as a house "*empty, swept, and garnished*".

## POSITIVES

In verse 10, Paul reminds them that they have already "*put on the new man*", when they were baptized into Christ. That "*new man*" was a product of their learning of Christ, the Creator and Redeemer of all mankind. Before their conversions, the Colossians were gentiles who like the Ephesians were "...*without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.*" But since their conversions they found themselves on equal footing, ("The ground is level at the foot of the Cross.") seeing that in Christ "*there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all, and in all.*" (Verse 11) With that introduction, Paul then "*exhorts*" them with some positive commands, (Thou shalt's). They were to "*put on*":

1. *Bowels of Mercies*, tenderness, compassion.
2. *Kindness*, moral goodness.
3. *Humbleness*, modesty.
4. *Meekness*, gentleness.
5. *Longsuffering*, patience/steadfastness.
6. *Forbearing*, meaning to "put up with" others quirks.
7. *Forgiving*, to pardon or show favor.
8. *Charity*, love, which above all else will make all this possible for them.

They were to do this because they are "*elect of God, holy and beloved*". They were to take on the characteristics of their Savior, Jesus Christ. Peter said that Jesus left us an "*example*" that we should "*follow in His steps.*" (I Peter 2:21) And Paul says, "*we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*" (Ephesians 2:10)

Like the automobile, we were not made to run on empty. We many times do well by removing the impurities of this world, but if we fail to fill the void with the spiritual life, wickedness will return to find us an inviting, empty house. The latter state will be worse than the first.

Let us then emphasize both the positives and the negatives we find the New Testament, so we can then know "*all the counsel of God.*"

## BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Steve was born in New Martinsville, WV to Donald and Shelba Smithbauer, and was raised in Rochester, PA. He was baptized at age 11 at the Zelienople church of Christ and graduated from Freedom High School in 1976. Steve attended Ohio Valley College and Harding University from 1978 to 1982. He had the distinction of receiving the first Bachelor's degree in Bible from O.V.C. in May of 1982 with a minor in Greek language.

Steve began preaching full time May 16, 1982 at the Cameron Church of Christ, Cameron, WV where he preached for nearly twelve years. He began working with the Weirton Heights Church of Christ, Weirton, WV, in April of 1994, where he continues to serve as the pulpit minister. In May of 1998 he completed his sixteenth year of full time preaching.

In addition to his full time work, Steve has held Gospel meetings and taught Vacation Bible Schools at Salem, WV; Proctor, WV; Charleston, WV; Hundred, WV; Wileyville, WV; Steelton, WV; Moundsville, WV; Zelienople, PA; Ellwood City, PA; Langeloth, PA, and Beallsville, OH. He has spoken on the Ohio Valley Church Lectures and has taught at West Virginia Christian Youth Camp, and Camp Concern, where he has been a teacher for the past nine years, and now serves as assistant director for the intermediate week. He is also the speaker for the weekly radio program, "Give Me The Bible", which airs 9:30 a.m. each Sunday morning on WSTV AM, in Steubenville, OH.

Steve married the former Teena Fife of Ellwood City, PA, December 29, 1979 and they have three sons--David, age 16; Matthew, age 14; and Lucas, age 10. They reside at 115 Ardmore Street, Weirton, WV.

## GOD'S PEOPLE IN THE BODY

Roger A. Rush

There are only two institutions in the world which can trace their origin directly to the Almighty. The first is the family. Marriage, home and family originated in the beginning when God made woman from man's rib and brought her unto Adam. Adam said: "This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man" (Genesis 2:23). The record then continues: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Genesis 2:24). Jesus endorsed the historical narrative and further commanded: "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder" (Matthew 19:6). Thus was born of God, the home and family.

The second great institution owing its origin to God is the spiritual family. In the New Testament God's spiritual family is identified in one of three ways. In respect to its government it is called a **kingdom** (Matthew 16:19). In regard to its relationship to the world it is called the **church** (Matthew 16:18). And, in relationship to its organization it is called a **body** (Colossians 1:18).

If we are faithful to the scriptures, we are forced to admit that the Lord intended to build only one church (Matthew 16:18). Further, one church (kingdom, body) is all we find in the New Testament (Ephesians 4:4; Colossians 1:18). One church is all there should be today!

**Denominationalism** is not favorably represented in the Bible. Paul's first letter to the church at Corinth was written specifically to condemn the spirit which leads to denominational division. It is here that we encounter his plea for the church to "all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:10). He then went on to condemn the denominational spirit that puts men before Christ (1 Corinthians 1:11-17). The church should unite around Christ. It must not divided and rally around mere mortals.

**Interdenominationalism** says that we should all come together, in spite of our differences. We must accept each other without regard to doctrine. it results in a forced union, but not unity! It requires doctrinal purity to be sacrificed for the sake of church harmony. But, harmony cannot be achieved at the expense of doctrine.

**Nondenominationalism** is the word which best describes the church in the New Testament. To say that a party spirit never developed within the New Testament church would be inaccurate. We have already called attention to the problem in the church at Corinth. But, the solution was not the formation of another church. Instead, Paul demanded a return to Christ and the cross centered gospel (1 Corinthians 1:18-24).

The passage most often cited to defend denominationalism is John 15:1-8. Here we are confronted with the analogy of the vine and the branches. False teachers abuse the text offering an interpretation that is not remotely connected to the context and intent of our Lord's teaching. According to the denominational interpretation, Jesus is represented by the vine and each branch represents a denomination. It sounds good to the world, but it is fraught with error. Jesus is indeed the vine, but the branches do not represent denominations. in fact, each branch depicts an individual Christian drawing nourishment and strength from the one true vine, Jesus Christ. Individually, we must bear fruit for our Lord or face the very real prospect of being pruned from the vine. This analogy fits perfectly with what the Scriptures say regarding Christ, His body (the church;), and the

various members which compose it.

Two passages stand out in regard to this matter:

"For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: And those members of the body, which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honor; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked: That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet show I unto you a more excellent way" (I Corinthians 12:12-31 KJV).

"For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness. Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another; Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; Distributing to the necessity



of saints; given to hospitality. Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:3-21 KJV).

These passages, and others, make it clear that the spiritual family is a body. Christ is the head and each Christian, as an individual member of that body, takes orders from the head. There is only one body and only one head (Ephesians 4:4-6). The figure of the body is an excellent representation of Christ and His church. Barclay, in his daily Bible study series, identifies three specific lessons to be drawn from this analogy: 1) *we need each other*, 2) *we ought to respect each other*; 3) *we ought to sympathize with each other* (The Letters to the Corinthians, William Barclay, page 127). Barclay is correct in his observations, but there are many more comparisons to be made.

Notice the following:

- 1) Every member of the body must take his/her orders or directions from the head, Jesus Christ. No member has the right to assert authority over the head (Matthew 28:18). All must be in submission. The members do not tell the head what to do!
- 2) The members are not identical. Every member has a role to fulfill, and those roles differ from member to member. Differing roles do not indicate class or privilege in the body. Every member is important, though roles may vary.
- 3) The body, as a whole, can only function as well as its individual members. It is therefore necessary that every member find his/her place and contribute to the well-being of the body.

4) The focus should not be on any one member, but on the whole body. Sometimes a member must be sacrificed for the sake of the body (Matthew 5:29, 30). The welfare of the body must always come before any of its individual members.

5) For the body to function properly, each member must work in unison (harmony) with every other member (Ephesians 4:16).

6) Because of the relationship of each member to the other members, and to the head, a sense of dependence, respect and sympathy must develop.

7) There is no life for the member apart from the body!

It is therefore imperative that we be in the body of Christ, and that we fulfill our individual responsibilities in that body, the church.

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## GRACE AND OBEDIENCE

John Barcus

In a day of much confusion and contradiction, regarding "grace and obedience," what a need we have for balance! What the Bible says, about these two words is not hard of understanding when we truly follow the Word of God. They are both essential and have much to do with enjoying the abundant life here and experiencing eternal salvation in the hereafter.

Grace is simply a convenience term for all that God has done to make possible man's salvation and faith simply means all that lost man must do to appropriate God's gift of salvation. Paul states it this way, "For by grace you are saved through faith..." (Eph. 2:8). Grace and faith MUST stand together, neither strictly can be considered without the other. Thus, such expressions as "grace only" and "faith only" have no real meaning.

All that God has ever done to make possible man's salvation can be label "grace." This includes all of his eternal plans (Eph.3:11) as we can see them being worked out in the beginning by building, guiding and protecting the nation of Israel and in the works of the Old Testament prophets who prepared the way for the coming of the Savior.

It includes the birth, life, teaching, death, resurrection and ascension of the Son of God. It also includes the work of the apostles and that of the Holy Spirit in the giving of God's Divine Guide Book...the Bible. The Bible contains all that we can know or need to know in order to get to heaven. God's grace has done everything necessary to make possible our salvation.

In the Old Testament the supreme example of God's grace was the redemption of the Hebrew people from Egypt and their establishment in the promise land; not because of any merit on Israel's part, but in spite of their unrighteousness (Deut. 9:5-6). This grace was received through Israel's obedience ...marching to Canaan and observation of God's laws.

Again, the grace of God was supremely revealed and given in the person of Jesus Christ (Titus 2:11-12; Acts 15:11), who died for the sins of the world. This grace likewise is appropriated through obedience to God's laws.

God has set forth the means by which grace may be received. Man must choose to accept or reject this precious gift of God. Joshua admonished the Jews long ago to "choose you this day whom you will serve..." (Josh. 24:15). Jesus advised that the majority of the human race would make the wrong choice (Mt. 7:13), and Peter assured that God does not wish that anyone should perish (2 Pet. 3:9). There are many passages showing forth the eternal demise of those who rejected God and of the eternal reward of those who choose to obey Him.

Peter admonished and exhorted those on the day of Pentecost to, "save yourselves from this untoward generation"(Acts 2:40). There was a choice to be made on the basis of their faith (Acts 2:37) and their willingness to obey the will of God (vs.41).

Even though God's grace had provided the means by which man could be set free from the ravages of sin, it still remains man's choice, based upon his faith in the operation of God (Col. 2:12); and his obedience to the condition prescribed by the word of God, to avail himself of that grace. It is this very grace by which we are saved through obedient faith, this is God's gift and not of ourselves.

Salvation by grace through faith has both the human and Divine side. Both are equally essential if man is to be saved. This subject is very often misunderstood by religious people. In trying to praise God for his great love as manifested in his offering salvation to fallen man, people often fail to show man has a part to play in his own salvation. Certainly man can only do what God has commanded, but that God has command man certain things to do to be saved cannot be successfully denied.

"For by grace you have been saved, certainly emphasizes God's part in man's salvation (Eph. 2:8). Man sinful condition is clearly shown by God (Eph. 2:1-3; Col. 3:5; Rom. 3:23). But thanks be to God, that he has "by grace," provided the scheme of redemption for mankind (Eph. 2:8; Tit. 2:11-14; 3:4-5; 2 Cor. 5:18-20). Thus God's scheme of redemption is due to his grace. And this grace is the "gift of God" (Eph. 2:8).

Some one has said, "a gift refused is not a gift at all, it is only an offer." This GRACE that bringeth salvation THROUGH FAITH, also shows man's part in his redemption (Eph. 2:8). This is the human part (Heb. 11:1); this is God's purpose for giving us the gospel, so as to study and obey (Jn. 20:30-31). Man's part is obedient faith. Salvation is received when obedience has expressed itself (Mt. 7:21; Heb. 5:9).

All that man must do to appropriate the blessings of God's grace can be labeled "Faith." True faith will lead a sinner to repent, confess Christ as the Son of God and be baptized for the remission of sin (Lk. 13:3; Rom. 10:10; Acts 2:38).

It will lead him to worship God "in spirit and in truth" (Jno 4:24) and to live a life that will give honor and glory to God (1 Cor. 10:31). He whose faith will not bow in submission to the will of God cannot receive the salvation made possible by the grace of God.

Man is not saved because of the merits of his works, but because he proves his faith by DOING things COMMANDED by God. Man can never merit salvation. He can never work for it. yet, the Bible plainly says he must obey in order to receive it. Both God and man must have a part in man's salvation. This is simply the way God has provided "Salvation by Grace Through Faith."

Such balance is greatly needed in a world that is seemly so out of balance. "Grace and Obedience," these two words goes together. "What therefore God has joined together let no man put asunder."

## A Balanced Life

Charles E. Newell

Text: Luke 2:52- " And Jesus advanced in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man."

Introduction: The new Christian faces many questions after coming up out of the waters of baptism. After all they have just made a commitment to God above and His son Jesus Christ. Embodied in the requirement to repent is the fact that now one must change life patterns and align them with the will of God. Not so easy, perhaps, as one might at first glance suppose it to be, because the new Christian now sees that the previous world is a world of imbalance. He now recognizes, or will soon, that certain principles are to guide him in life's choices. John wrote in I John 2:15, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." Ouch! That sure puts things in a different light for a new babe in Christ. Now, a balance in life must be sought even in an unbalanced world. As we are often joined on the pathway of life by new Christians, it would certainly be appropriate to admit that we are all still learning, still growing, still maturing. One can underestimate the importance of striving for a balance in life that will please God.

We have witnessed the truth of the saying, "Extremes beget extremes", not only in the church but in the lives of God's people. It has always been that way and unfortunately, always will be. To avoid extremism we have to look to someone for help, for an example, for wise thinking and leadership. We have to look no further than Jesus for balance in every aspect of our life on earth. As Luke states it, Jesus "advanced", he grew, in those areas that covered the mental, spiritual, social and even the physical is mentioned by the writer.

### I. A Balanced Life Includes Growing in Wisdom.

The first area we look to Jesus to guide us in is the mental growth necessary to our maturity. James in chapter 1, verse 5 would encourage us to ask God for help. "But if any of you lacketh wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him." The Mormons, who accept the Bible as far "as it is translated correctly," accept this particular verse as being a promise from God to give wisdom and knowledge of His truths and to give them directly, miraculously to anyone (a faithful Mormon) that would make such a request of God.

That which Jesus grew in, and which we need, is the street smarts, the common sense, the know-how that is derived from God's word. Such a possession will stir us to commit to the following of God's will and to the separating ourselves from the world that John urged us not to love. Such a love will entrap the Christian and cause eternal destruction. Job posed this question, "But where shall wisdom be found?" (Job 28:12) James says "Ask God!" He



didn't say to ask the philosophers of this world, the scientists, the professors, he didn't even say to ask the preachers. Ask God! In verse 6, James continues, "But let him ask in faith..." To do so we ask in accordance with His will. How do we know what that is? II Timothy 2:15, "Study to show thyself approved unto God..." We dare not desire or seek after the approval of the world, our neighbors, or anyone. The approval of God is our priority. Such comes from a knowledge of God's word that the last generation possessed and which is slowly diminishing with this generation. Will history record that this generation allowed the Old Ship of Zion to slip from its mooring and begin a drift into the unsettled seas of apostasy? Perhaps, because we failed to teach and to learn the simple truths of scripture that will make us what we ought to be in the sight of God.

## II. A Balanced Life Includes Growing Physically.

Earlier Luke had this to say about the young Jesus as he grew: "And the child grew, and waxed strong, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him." This was God's only begotten son, born of a virgin, but yet an eternal being, pre-existing in heaven before time began. Luke does not let us forget this Jesus was both human and divine. The human part had to grow and develop as all little boys and girls must. He was growing in wisdom, intelligence and in stature. Luke describes his growth as "waxed strong."

I don't suppose that they were too concerned with calories and fat grams in the first century but enough is said that we know that excess is to be avoided. Preachers have been known to wax eloquent on the evils of tobacco and the vices of alcohol. Probably not as much as we should. But, I have a hard time remembering when anyone warned of the dangers of overeating or a lack of proper exercise. I have heard the argument that says the body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and anything that harms the body is sin. Tobacco harms the body, therefore, smoking is sin. Well, cholesterol isn't a welcome guest either. With every package of food and drink products on our grocery shelves marked with ingredients, fat content and calories, we have no excuse for not being careful with our bodies. This nation has been taken off its feet by the automobile and the television set. We park ourselves in front of the TV for hours at a time and snack ourselves right into the operating room. For us preachers, we golf once a week and call that exercise. A real active day is when we ride our riding lawn mower, hunt for the TV remote and walk to the car to go visit or go to the hospital.

Paul wrote in I Timothy 4:8, "for bodily exercise is profitable for a little; but godliness is profitable for all things having promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come." Paul did not discount the importance of taking care of the body. He mentions on more than one occasion some athletic endeavor to make a spiritual point. One of my favorite athletic verses is found in I Corinthians 9:24: "Know ye not that they that run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? Even so run; that ye may attain." Using the example of the physical effort of running, Paul illustrates the key to gaining the heavenly: run the spiritual race. We run for an incorruptible crown and in so doing we teach and preach along the way in an effort to take someone with us. It would appear to me that we do the church, the lost and our families, no favor when we fail to take care of ourselves. Days, weeks lost, never to be

regained because we have to recover from by-pass surgery. With a little more stewardship concerning our bodies we may well give extra years to the work of God. A balanced life includes taking care of that body which God has blessed us with.

### III. A Balanced Life Includes Growing Socially.

Luke, our inspired recorder, tells us that Jesus grew in favor with man. No details are given to us concerning these early years, but Jesus was already living the life of perfect example. A beautiful balance of knowing the Father's will and keeping the Father's will for all to see. Though he would later lose this favor with man, he reveals the influence that a follower of God should have in front of his fellow man. I have grown weary of hearing brethren say, "I don't care what people think...". The problem is that we should care what people think. Jesus did and when we get to instruction given by Paul as to the selection of qualified men to be elders, he evidently did. To Timothy, he would write, "The bishop therefore must be without reproach,...moreover he must have good testimony from them that are without." (I Tim. 3:2,7) Most of the qualifications assigned to those who would be elders also apply to every Christian. I care what my neighbor thinks about me and my family. I care what the store employee thinks about me when I go through he checkout. I want to be thought of as Christ-like. Qualifications for elders and deacons, ultimately, are decided by observation and conclusions drawn by others. If I desire the office of elder or deacon, I will care what others think of me.

As Christians, we all have a place to fill in our communities. It becomes our obligation to take our place and be leaders, examples, "lights of the world", not hid under a basket but shining for all to see. Whether it be as a member of the school board, umpire on the baseball field, employee in the store, or next door neighbor, we should be striving to be Christ-like. Let our friends, neighbors and even strangers that cross our path every day, see Christ in us. Too much of God's word deals with our relationship to others for us to think that we can live the way we want to live.

### IV. A Balanced Life Includes Growing Spiritually.

A perfectly balanced life could not be achieved without the inclusion of growing spiritually. The perfect character of Christ that is presented to us in scripture was realized because he recognized the necessity of obeying the Father's will without question. In Luke 2, Jesus is found to be missing after his parents leave the city of Jerusalem. Upon returning to the city, they find him in the temple among the teachers, amazing them with his understanding. Responding to his parents and their query as to why he was there and not with them, Jesus said, "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" Already, he is revealing the nature of a true follower of God. It is the Father's business that we are to be concerned with and which must be a burning fire in our hearts. Too many have lost sight of this simple goal of achieving balance in one's life. Jesus sets the example time and time again.

In the prayer before his betrayal, Jesus asked of the Father, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine be done."

The greatest need, that anyone has, is to be saved from sin. To find the solution through the blood of Christ, obeying the gospel and beginning to seek after the balanced life that comes from belonging to God is the greatest quest that one can begin. Woe unto those who would lay the body of Christ, his church, upon the sacrificial alter of compromise and say to those in error, "Can't we all get along?" Obviously the answer has to be NO! The church of Ephesus was warned in Revelation 2:5, that unless they repented, their candlestick would have to be removed from its place. Why? Because people were not about the Father's business. The acceptance of denominational baptism, the addition of instrumental music into worship and the installing of women elders and preachers are not being about the Father's business. Nor are they conducive to spiritual growth, but are instead feeble attempts to transform the church into that which will be acceptable to the masses.

The words of Peter still loudly proclaim the source of spiritual growth: "If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God" (I Peter 4:11).

Conclusion: Extremes have always begotten extremes and the same holds true today within the church. With the tendencies being to not rely on a "thus saith the Lord," sermons are being preached that no longer convert and edify. Too many times, sermons are preached that could be preached in any building in town and no one would be disturbed or upset over the content. A Balanced Life depends upon the words of truth that will answer the sin problem, heal the troubled heart and set one on the Quest of Eternal Life. Perhaps, more than ever before, it is time to haul out those sermons on first principles, the church and the worship that is pleasing to God. Let people know that the problem is still sin and the only answer is the Bible. If balance is to come to one's life, it is going to come from the uncompromising truth revealed to us in the Bible.

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## Zeal With Knowledge

Donnie S. Barnes

Three words comprise the subject matter before us. Two of the words deal with concepts while the middle word ties the two together. The two words appear in the same verse in Romans 10:2 where Paul writes, "For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge." Thus, we can have zeal that is not according to knowledge, or, we can have zeal that is according to knowledge.

### Concerning Zeal ...

The first concept is zeal. Among the 200,000 definitions found in *Webster's II New Riverside Dictionary*, zeal is defined as "Enthusiastic diligent devotion in pursuit of a cause, ideal or goal: Fervor." The essence, zeal is an intense enthusiasm for something. That something, however, is not inherent within the word itself. Sixteen times is the word used in the Bible: ten times in the Old Testament and six times in the New. Jehu said to Jehonadab in II Kings 10:16, "... Come with me, and see my zeal for the LORD..." Do others see our zeal for the Lord? If we lack zeal for the Lord, then certainly they see that.

In general terms, there are at least nine different types of zeal shown in the Bible. (1) Divine zeal in Isaiah 9:7. (2) Glorious zeal in Isaiah 63:15. (3) Wrathful zeal in Ezekiel 5:13. (4) Stirring zeal in II Corinthians 9:2. (5) Intense zeal in II Corinthians 7:11. (6) Boastful zeal in Philippians 3:4-6. (7) Ignorant zeal in Romans 10:1-3. (8) Righteous zeal in John 2:15-17. And, (9) Sinful zeal in II Samuel 21:1-2.

### Concerning Knowledge ...

The second concept is knowledge. Webster defines knowledge as "The state or fact or knowing. Familiarity, awareness or comprehension acquired by experience or study." 172 times it appears in the Bible: 120 times in the Old Testament and 52 times in the New. God said in Hosea 4:6, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee..." Peter said knowledge is to be added to virtue (II Peter 1:5). He also stated that we are to "grow in knowledge" (I Peter 3:18).

Knowledge is involved in our faith. Without faith we cannot please God (Hebrews 11:6). Faith comes from hearing (learning, gaining knowledge of) the Word of God (Romans 10:17). Thus, without hearing, learning and gaining knowledge, one cannot gain faith, and when one cannot gain faith, he cannot please God. Therefore, knowledge is important to the process of increasing one's faith.

Again, in general terms, there are at least twelve different types of knowledge shown in the Bible. (1) Natural knowledge in Matthew 24:32. (2) Deceptive knowledge in Genesis 3:5. (3) Sinful knowledge in Genesis 3:7. (4) Personal knowledge in Joshua 24:31. (5) Practical knowledge in Exodus 36:1. (6) Experimental knowledge in Exodus 14:4-18. (7) Friendly knowledge in Exodus 1:8. (8) Intuitive knowledge in I Samuel 22:22. (9) Intellectual knowledge in John 7:15-28. (10) Saving knowledge in John 17:3. (11) Spiritual knowledge in I Corinthians 2:14. And, (12) Revealed knowledge in Luke 10:22.



### **Zeal Without Knowledge**

One of the great characteristics of the Bible is its willingness to reveal both the strengths and weaknesses of its characters regardless of the fault or the character. In the lives of some of the 2,930 Bible characters, the principle of zeal without knowledge is amply displayed. One such example is that found in II Samuel 18. Absalom's revolt against David was coming to an end. Absalom had been slain by Joab. Joab dispatched Cushai to be the runner to bear the news of Absalom's defeat to David. As he began his running, Ahimaaz came to Joab with the request, .... But howsoever, let me, I pray thee, also run after Cushai. And Joab said, Wherefore wilt thou run, my son, seeing that thou hast no tidings ready? But howsoever, said he, let me run. And he said unto him, Run. Then Ahimaaz ran by the way of the plain, and overran Cushai" (II Samuel 18:22-

23). Ahimaaz outran Cushai and arrived first in the presence of David. "And Ahimaaz called, and said unto the king, All is well. And he fell down to the earth upon his face before the king, and said, Blessed be the LORD thy God, which hath delivered up the men that lifted up their hand against my lord the king. And the king said, Is the young man Absalom safe? And Ahimaaz answered, When Joab sent the king's servant, and me thy servant, I saw a great tumult, but I knew not what it was" (II Samuel 18:28-29). What zeal! What effort! Nonetheless, what good was the runner who bore no message? What good was the runner who could not fulfill the purpose of a runner? What good is a preacher who bears no message? What good is a preacher who does not bear the truth? Ahimaaz had a zeal but not the knowledge that needed to be presented.

In the New Testament, zeal without knowledge is seen in the life of the apostle Peter on more than one recorded occasion. There is the occasion recorded by Matthew in Matthew 16:21-23. "From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men." Peter meant well but did wrongly. Peter had more zeal than He had knowledge about the matter. Then, there is the occasion of the transfiguration as recorded in Matthew 17. Upon awakening and seeing that Jesus had been joined in conversation by Moses and Elijah, "Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias" Matthew 17:4). God corrected the matter in verse 5. Again, Peter, out of great zeal spoke, while knowledge dictated otherwise. Another occasion is found in Matthew 26:33-34; "Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended. Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice." Peter answered in zeal, but not with knowledge. One more example from Peter's life will suffice. On the occasion of Jesus' arrest as recorded in Matthew 26, Peter drew his sword and cut off the right ear of Malchus, servant of the high priest. Here again was his zeal. Here again was his lack of knowledge in the matter.

Saul of Tarsus serves as another example of zeal without knowledge. After his conversion to Christ, he would eventually stand before King Agrippa and use these words to describe his



former years. "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities" (Acts 26:9-11). Luke was also describe Saul in other passages. "As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison. Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word" (Acts 8:3-4). Paul said to the Jews in Jerusalem, "And I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women. As also the high priest doth bear me witness, and all the estate of the elders: from whom also I received letters unto the brethren, and went to Damascus, to bring them which were there bound unto Jerusalem, for to be punished... And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee" (Acts 22:4-5; 19). Who would question the zeal of Saul in these matters? He displayed more zeal for that which was contrary to the will of God than most will display for the will of God. While he had zeal for what he was doing, he lacked knowledge of God's will in the matter.

Paul was well acquainted with the principle of zeal without knowledge. In what we believe to be the sixth of his letters and the fourth of his prison epistles, the letter to the Romans, he wrote in Romans 10:2, "For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. He was speaking of the Jews for whose salvation he had just prayed in verse one. Paul's desire is seen in verse one and Israel's mistake in verse two. Israel's great mistake was that they had a zeal for God that was not based on correct knowledge. What they knew about God and His will was incomplete in their minds. Therefore, they had a "Zeal of God, but not according to knowledge." Referring to himself and his Jewish audience, Paul said in Acts 22:3, "I am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia, yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day."

Zeal is displayed today by the likes of the Mormons whose young men devote two years to mission work as they ride their bicycles up and down the streets of this nation and others. Zeal is seen in the Jehovah's Witnesses as they walk up and down the streets of our communities handing out their erroneous literature. Both of these groups display far more zeal than most of our brethren, but it is a zeal that is not according to knowledge. Zeal is a marvelous thing, but it must be based on the right knowledge of God's Word.

### **Zeal With Knowledge**

In John 8:32, Jesus said: "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." He defined that truth in John 17:17 when He said, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." God's Word is the truth that we are to come to know as fully as we can. Paul wrote: "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly

dividing the word of truth" (II Timothy 2:15). While we are to have enthusiasm and fervor about the Lord's work, it must be a zeal that is according to the knowledge of God's revealed truths.

Tremendous zeal is demonstrated in the life of Christ on the two occasions of His cleansing the temple of God at Jerusalem as recorded in John 2:13-22 and Matthew 21:10-13. His zeal was based on the knowledge of what God's house ought to have been as opposed to what Men had made it, "a den of thieves."

One cannot read the writings of the apostle Paul without sensing his ardent zeal for the truth and his strong faith in God. For example, he said in Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Not some things, not a few things, but "all things." Sense his zeal in Romans 1:16: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." Other examples of statements indicating Paul's zeal with knowledge are: "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (I Corinthians 11:33). "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints" (I Corinthians 14:33). "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong" (I Corinthians 16:13). "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men..." (II Corinthians 5:10-11). "..... We speak before God in Christ..." (II Corinthians 12:19). "For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth" (II Corinthians 13:8). "Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" (Galatians 4:16). "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Galatians 6:14). "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called" (Ephesians 4:1). "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath" (Ephesians 4:26). "I am set for the defence of the gospel" (Philippians 1:17). "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5). "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:13-14). "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him" (Colossians 2:6). "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Colossians 3:17). "..... We preached unto you the gospel of God" (I Thessalonians 2:9). "And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed" (II Thessalonians 3:14). "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses" (I Timothy 6:12). "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (II Timothy 4:2). "But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine" Titus 2:1). The list could go on.

In Paul's ministry, preaching, writings, and sufferings, we can see his great zeal for the truth of God. He planted churches and uprooted evil. He taught the gospel of Christ in dispelling

traditions and errors. He brought light to replace the darkness in the places he traveled to. What a great example for Christians today.

In the Lord's work being done through each local congregation, there is room for more zeal to be shown. Nonetheless, the zeal should be based on the knowledge of the truth. Unfortunately there are seemingly increasing numbers of brethren ("change agents") who possess great zeal in their efforts to change that which God intended to remain unchangeable. Many people are led away more from their zeal and enthusiasm than from their teachings. Hand clapping, shouting, waving hands above their heads, no doubt demonstrate zeal-but not zeal according to knowledge. The entertainment factor that some seem to be generating throughout the brotherhood among both young people and adults, has its base in emotionalism, zeal, enthusiasm, etc., but is not based on knowledge of the Scriptures. "Feel right" rather than "be right" seems to be the order of the day for many. There is nothing wrong with having zeal for and in God's Word and work. However, it must be based on the Word of God and be completely within the confines of His will. It is wonderful to see Christians demonstrate zeal in promoting their local congregation. The Bible class teacher that demonstrates zeal about his or her role in the kingdom has a great influence on others. The preacher who is enthusiastic about his message and his work is more of a delight to be around than the one who isn't. Elders who are enthusiastic about the church come across in a more positive way than those who appear to be more like the undertakers portrayed in the old westerns. You can spot them every time. Having zeal is not wrong. When it comes to being a faithful Christian, do it with zeal that is according to knowledge. When it comes to attending the worship services, do it with zeal according to knowledge. When it comes to attending Bible study and other special services, do it with zeal that is according to knowledge. When it comes to engaging in the various acts of worship, do it with zeal that is according to knowledge. When it comes to speaking to others about Christ and His church, do it with zeal that is according to knowledge. When it comes to helping others, do it with zeal that is according to knowledge. A happy, enthusiastic, zealous, faithful Christian is a walking billboard for God. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). Zeal and enthusiasm attract people while morbidity turns them away. The hymn "Sing and Be Happy" speaks volumes about zeal. May our lives do so as well. May those who know us be able to bear record that we have a zeal that is according to knowledge.

Christianity is not just sitting cloistered away from the world and thinking righteous thoughts. Sometimes it entails wearing the gospel armor and going forth to fight for truth and righteousness and against the evil one and his errors. When such times come, do it with zeal that is according to knowledge. Paul said in Ephesians 4:15: "But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ." Speak the "truth in love," but do it with zeal. Solomon said, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest" (Ecclesiastes 9:10). Jesus said, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the

night cometh, when no man can work" (John 9:4). Let us work; let us work diligently; let us work zealously; and, let us work according to a knowledge of the truth. With God's Word firmly entrenched in our minds and in our hearts, let us be able to say with Jehu, . . . Come with me, and see my zeal for the Lord" (11 Kings 10:16).

# WORKS OF THE FLESH VS. FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

Randy Cook

If there ever was a need for balance in an unbalanced world, the time is now. It doesn't take long at all to see the utter disregard for things spiritual in the majority of people. These same people are often not happy with a neutral position, but swing the pendulum in favor of worldliness. When such is accomplished, man suffers. Homes are torn apart. Marriages split. Children are abused and neglected. The work place is not productive. Our communities become unsafe places for our children to play. Our schools resemble war zones. Life becomes a constant struggle for new "things" that supposedly will bring happiness. Hedonism, or the pursuit of sensual pleasure, becomes a lifestyle. God becomes a byword and the subject of jokes. Religion is scorned and rejected. Those who adhere to such lifestyles think they have "life by the horns", that all is fine, and that their lives are balanced.

But such is certainly not the case! True balance comes when we serve the God of heaven according to His guidelines. Loving God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mark 12:30) is what real balance is all about. The unbalanced life is that which follows the works of the flesh, while the balanced life produces the fruit of the Spirit. Many mistakenly try to balance the two - living worldly lives, but pretending to be Christians. There just is no way to balance the two, or serve two masters. Paul instructed the churches of Galatia with these words:

"Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like, of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law " (Gal. 5:19-23).

In this lesson, we will briefly consider the meanings of the words in the text, then we will apply lessons to various aspects of life. When we avoid the works of the flesh, then develop the fruit of the Spirit, it's then that we will be balanced to stand before God and avoid stumbling.

## I. THE WORKS OF THE FLESH

- A. Adultery - unlawful intercourse with the spouse of another.
- B. Fornication - all illicit sexual intercourse: adultery, homosexuality, lesbianism, etc.
- C. Uncleanness - the impurity of lustful, luxurious, profligate living; immoral.
- D. Licentiousness - unbridled lust, excess, lasciviousness, wantonness, outrageousness, shamelessness.
- E. Idolatry - the worship of false gods, including covetousness (Col. 3:5).
- F. Sorcery - the use of drugs along with spells, magical arts, and the occult.
- G. Hatred - enmity; opposite of agape.
- H. Contentions - strife, debate, wrangling, quarrel, rivalry.
- I. Jealousies - an envious and contentious rivalry.



- J. Outbursts of wrath - passion, heated anger, anger boiling up and soon subsiding again.
- K. Selfish ambitions - a desire to put oneself forward, or to elevate self to a higher office or position.
- L. Dissensions - divisions.
- M. Heresies - dissensions arising from diversity of opinions or aims.
- N. Envy - the feeling of displeasure produced by witnessing or hearing of the advantage or prosperity of others.
- O. Murders - slaughter; unjustly taking another's life.
- P. Drunkenness - intoxication.
- Q. Revelries - riotous, drunken partying; carousing.
- R. And the like - anything like or similar to these things.

## II. THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

- A. Love - affection, good will, benevolence; 1 Corinthians. 13:4-7
- B. Joy - gladness, radiance, a bubbling forth like a mountain spring.
- C. Peace - the tranquility of the soul assured of salvation, contented with present lot in life.
- D. Longsuffering - patience, endurance, constancy, perseverance, steadfastness, forbearance.
- E. Kindness - gentleness, usableness, sweetness of disposition, willingness to comply, willingness to serve.
- F. Goodness - upright in heart and life; benevolent.
- G. Faithfulness - one who is relied on; trustworthiness; fidelity.
- H. Gentleness - meekness; mild tempered, patient under injuries.
- I. Self control - temperance; control of body and mind.

Sources: Vines Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words; Studies in Galatians, edited by Dub McClish; Guidance From Galatians, by Don Earl Boatman.

## III. BALANCE: WORKS OF THE FLESH VS. THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

**A. IN THE HOME.** If there would be less of the works of the flesh and more of the fruit of the Spirit produced in our homes, much heartache would be avoided. If husbands and wives would love and respect each other according to Ephesians 5:22-33, then adultery, fornication, uncleanness, and licentiousness would not be a problem. The fruit of the Spirit would produce homes where mates would be faithful to one another, and to God.

A balanced home would have the husband who would want to come home after work every day. The wife would make home a desirable place to come to every day. The husband would be loving, considerate, understanding and supportive. The wife would be kind, encouraging, good, and sweet. The husband would be the head of the home. The wife would lovingly let him, and be a good help-meet. The husband would be the spiritual leader in the home. The wife would be spiritually minded. The husband would be good about helping around the house. The wife would be a keeper at home.

Parent/child relationships would be also greatly enhanced if works of the flesh were absent, and the fruit of the Spirit was present. The balanced home would have parents who loved their children, and children who loved their parents. There would be a mutual respect. The parents would

see their children as gifts from God, and would rear them according to God's will. The children would obey their parents out of love and respect. The children would be asking how they could help, rather than a major confrontation occurring when the parents ask for help. The biblical balance of parents and children producing the fruit of the Spirit would do wonders to enhance the peace and tranquility of home.

**B. IN THE WORLD.** Even though we live in this world, we are not of this world (John 15:19). We as Christians must be the light of the world (Matthew 5:14-16). To properly be that light and to influence the world for good, the fruit of the Spirit must be visible in our lives. The world needs to see that we are full of love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control. This will help the overall atmosphere on the job, in the classroom, on the playing field, with our neighbors, and in our communities.

How many "labor strikes" could be avoided if all parties involved produced the fruit of the Spirit? Would Christians be the instigators and ring leaders of strikes if the fruit of the Spirit was evident in their lives? Would an employer be the cause of others wanting to strike if he had the fruit of the Spirit? A godly, balanced person would be honest, hard working, and would work as to the Lord (Ephesians. 6:5-9).

Our children and young people wield such tremendous influence on their peers. It is essential for them to remember their Christianity when at school or at play. The world watches closely for the Christian to "mess up." Surveys show that the majority of high school students cheat. Many students brag about immoral acts, ungodly behavior, and their language is filled with obscenities and four letter words. Sadly, these who are involved in the works of the flesh also wield a tremendous influence on others. Our young people need the courage to stand strong in the face of temptation and persecution. The young person who develops the fruit of the Spirit will be respected in the long run, when the worldly ones begin to reap what they have sown.

What kind of example are we setting in our own neighborhoods? Are we respected as families who are consistent with what we teach? Are our priorities in the proper order for Christians? Or do we profess to be Christians, but the works of the flesh are clearly evident in our daily lives. When we have problems with self control, or any other of the works of the flesh, we hamper the progress of the local congregation. Our examples in the community is not only a reflection on our own families, but a reflection on the church as well.

May we be aware that when we are out in the world, whether at work, school, or play, that the fruit of the Spirit being evident in our lives is one of the best ways that others will be influenced for good. While it is true that we must also actively teach them, they would not even listen if they saw the works of the flesh in our daily lives.

**C. IN THE CHURCH.** If there is any relationship in life where we would expect the fruit of the Spirit to be overwhelmingly present, it would be in the church. Christians, of all people, should treat other Christians with behavior evident in the fruit of the Spirit. But such is not always the case. There are occasions when attributes from the works of the flesh dominate parts or all of churches. There are those who at times replace the fruit of the Spirit with forcing their own opinions, thus developing hatred and contentions with those who differ. Others, because of selfish ambitions, can create such turmoil as to thwart growth in a congregation. Sometimes, there are even those who would resort to outbursts of wrath to get their way, and then become envious and jealous when they don't get their own way. Regrettably, there are even moral sins that have infiltrated the church. Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, and lasciviousness are sins that are becoming all too prevalent.

When these sins are committed by preachers or prominent members, they leave scars on congregations for decades, causing many weak members to give up the faith.

On the other hand, when there is love, joy, and peace in the heart of each Christian, that sets the tone for a balanced relationship. When longsuffering is a part of our makeup, then the differences we have with others will be handled peacefully and lovingly. When we are kind and good, we will usually receive the same in return. When we are faithful to our word, mild tempered and under control, others will see in us a true and faithful friend.

When the producing of the fruit of the Spirit in the life of every member of a congregation becomes a reality, the following will be evident: Elders will be more effective leaders and shepherds; deacons will perform their duties with zeal; teachers will teach with the desire to change the life of every student; preachers will proclaim the truth in love; all members will have a keen interest in the lost; parents will see that children are in Bible class; children will have a desire to learn; young people will look for ways to be of service; business meetings will be orderly and productive; there will be no gossip or backbiting; worship will be greatly anticipated; the Bible will be accepted as the truth; changes that are unscriptural will be rejected; all will be done to the glory of God.

**D. IN THE HEART.** When discussing the balance we need as Christians, we must get to the heart of the matter. Producing the fruit of the Spirit begins in the heart. In fact, they are so closely tied to the heart, one cannot develop them with an evil heart. The spiritual heart, the mind, is that seed bed where all of life is controlled. It is in the heart where love is nourished, where joy is safeguarded, and where peace is dwelling. The heart being right helps us to be longsuffering toward others, kind toward all, and good. When the heart is what it ought to be, then we will be trustworthy, gentle in our treatment of others, and we will practice self control in body and mind.

When we learn to put on the mind of Christ (Philippians 2:5), and to set our minds on things above (Colossians 3:2), then we will be better equipped to avoid the works of the flesh. Let us all practice the following:

"Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy - meditate on these things" (Philippians 4:8).

## CONCLUSION

As we look at the society in which we live, it doesn't take long to see the vast numbers of people contented to live their lives doing the works of the flesh. Evidently, these same sins have been around about as long as man has. They are nothing new. Therefore we must continually wage war against them. When these sins appear even in the most powerful leaders in the world, we are reminded of sin's ability to imprison.

Let us all as Christians first have our hearts full of the attitudes that will produce the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. May these attitudes become actions as we attempt to live balanced lives before our God. If we lose that balance, we may stumble and fall. Even though the world around us is unbalanced in living by the works of the flesh, let us not succumb to the temptation to follow. True balance is found only in serving God, according to His will, in His Son's kingdom, producing the fruit of the Spirit, in hope of eternal life.

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## Change Versus the Unchangeable

Donnie S. Barnes

### "Nothing is Permanent in Life but Change."

A. P. Gouthey said, "Blessed is the man who has discovered that there is nothing permanent in life but change." The banner over many is change. Political campaigns are waged on the platform of change. Government policies are made and laws are passed at every level of our government on the basis that a change is needed. Corporate board rooms witness lively debates about the need for change in corporate structures, policies, advertising campaigns, or products. The education world is always suggesting changes in methodologies of teaching and approaches to learning. Each year automobile manufacturers around the world reveal the changes they have made in their vehicles. The United Nations calls for change in many world trouble spots. Political regimes around the world are toppled on the basis of the need for change. Change is constantly called for in our judicial system. In matters of government, politics, business, education, industry, etc., change is a way of life. But, should it be so in the realm of religion? The answer is "yes" and the answer is "no!"

In the realm of religion the call for change is being loudly sounded forth. From many directions does it come. Not all change is good, and not all change is bad. Change may be for the better or for the worse. Everything does not need to change. Some things should never change. We can change the changeable but not the unchangeable.

Webster defines change as "To make different; alter. To give a totally different form of appearance to: To transform" (*Webster's II New Riverside University Dictionary*). On the other hand, he defines "Unchangeable" to mean "Not capable of being altered: immutable."

Regarding change and the church, there are some who are calling for the church to change, to make it different, to give it "a totally different form of appearance" to transform it from what it is to what they want it to become. Behind it all is the evil one, Satan himself, taking delight in the turmoil and division brought about by those who would endeavor to change the unchangeable church of Christ.

### Changing Change

Some change is good. One has to change in order to be a Christian, and that change is good. Once one has obeyed the gospel and has become a babe in Christ, he has to grow spiritually and increase in many ways, and that change is good.

In the realm of expediency changes can be made. There is nothing unscriptural about changing the meeting times on Sunday from 10:00 to 9:00. The meeting times on Sunday can be changed, but the meeting day (Sunday) cannot. There is nothing unscriptural about partaking of the Lord's Supper before the sermon rather than after the sermon, if that is what the leadership decides. At what point during the worship service the Lord's Supper is partaken of can change, but partaking of the Lord's Supper on Sunday cannot. There is nothing unscriptural about whether to have a morning and evening service on Sunday or a morning and afternoon service instead. Any number of services above one is to be decided by the eldership, but there must be at least one assembly of the church every Sunday. The list could go on.

Many matters pertaining to the church fall into the realm of expediency and can be changed from time to time. On the other hand, there are many matters that pertain to the church that are unchangeable, and under no circumstances is anyone authorized to change them. For example, the



church belongs to Christ, and it can never belong to anyone else. The saved are added to the church by Christ (Acts 2:47), and not by anyone else. The church is to have elders, deacons, teachers, etc., and no one else is authorized to replace such with other designations. The church is to make known the manifold wisdom of God (Ephesians 3:10), and no one can change that purpose. The church is going to be delivered up to the Father (I Corinthians 15:24), and no one can change its destination. The church is made up of the saved (Acts 2:47), and no one can change its membership.

A most important exchange between our Lord and some of the Jewish leaders took place in the temple area in Jerusalem and inspiration guided Matthew to tell us about it in Matthew 21:23-27. "And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority? And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet. And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things." Herein Jesus sets forth the only two sources of authority. Either it comes from (1) heaven, or it comes from (2) men. Either it originates in heaven or it originates on the earth. Either it originates in heaven and is sent down by inspiration, or it originates on the earth and is expected that God will accept it. Not so! If a thing is authorized by heaven it is to be believed and obeyed. If a thing is authorized by men only, it is to be rejected and not to be obeyed. Jesus has all authority in matters of religion. "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18). The great sermon on the mount concluded with this reaction on the part of those who heard it: "And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Matthew 7:28-29). Thus, what is done in the church must certainly be done by the authority of Christ. Paul wrote in Colossians 3:17, "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him." Jesus has not changed, and neither have His truths. "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever" (Hebrews 13:8).

### **The Unchangeable is Not Changeable!**

What is unchangeable in and about the church? What is unchangeable in and about the Christian life? Everything the Bible says is UNCHANGEABLE! If the Bible says something is to be done, that something is unchangeable and must be done! If the Bible says something is not to be done, that something must not be done! Matters of direct commands are unchangeable. Matters of Bible authorization for something or against something are unchangeable. Matters of Biblical doctrine are unchangeable. Matters of a "thus saith the Lord" are unchangeable. Matters of how we are to worship God are unchangeable. The list could go on, and on, and on, and on. The point is made--The unchangeable is not changeable!

Those who seek to change the unchangeable would have others to think that their changes are sanctioned by heaven. They would employ the language of the familiar to teach that which is not familiar with the truth. Paint over the spots of a leopard and it is still a leopard. Paint over the stripes of a zebra and it is still a zebra. Paint over what comes from man and it still comes from man.

## **Efforts to Change the Unchangeable Are Not New.**

In principle and in fact, efforts to change the unchangeable are not new. Listen to Isaiah in Isaiah 24:5: "The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant." Jeremiah said, "Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit" (Jeremiah 2:11). In Romans 1:25, Paul referenced those, "Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen." The churches in Galatia were confronted and troubled by Judaizing teachers who perverted the gospel and endeavored to change the truth so as to incorporate their religious traditions and practices (Galatians 1:6-7). They sought to work hard to change the message that Paul had worked hard to preach. In spite of the Lord's prayer for unity in John 17, some Christians at Corinth divided into a number of factions and divided the church. The epistle of Jude was written to encourage brethren to stand firm against false teachers who tried to change the unchangeable truth: "Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). In Revelation 2:12-17, the letter to the church at Pergamos noted that the church there had tried to change the doctrine of Christ by compromising with the doctrine of Balaam and the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. Attempts to change the doctrine of Christ was unacceptable in the first century, and, it is just as unacceptable today. "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son" (II John 9).

The first century church faced many false teachers both from within and without the precious body of Christ. Their hardships in so doing were many. As the body of Christ grew, so did the opposition of individuals who were not content to follow the Scriptures, and who desired to fan the flames of change so that the purity of God would better conform to the theology of the day. Is it not so different today? We are hearing such statements as these by some who would lead the way for changing God's truth today. Speaking at the 1994 Bellview Lectureship on the subject, "Agents and Tools of Change," bro. Wayne Coats made reference to some who are advocating change to the old paths.

- \* "God is renewing us and changing us. Fresh winds are blowing" (Lynn Anderson).
- \* "Our brotherhood is headed in such an encouraging direction right now" (Jim Hackney).
- \* "There are fresh winds blowing in the church of Christ" (Max Lucado).
- \* "There's a good breeze blowing across the brotherhood today" (Mac Lynn)
- \* "This is an era of great change in churches of Christ" (Randy Mayeux).
- \* "We'd better change the church or it has no future" (Rubel Shelly).

If these men are right, which they aren't, then why has that which has been so right for almost two thousand years suddenly become wrong?

Changing church government opened the door to many strange and ungodly doctrines including the birth and rise of denominationalism. Once men began to change the pattern God have

given through His word, the door was opened and one change led to another, and that one to another, and so on. It continues in like manner today. Brethren, it is sadder than sad! Where "change agents" cannot affect change, they seek compromise. Compromise is change in that something in God's pattern has to be given up in order to have it.

### **Have We Not Been Warned By Inspiration Itself?**

"Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron" (I Timothy 4:1-2). Some of what sounds bad is good. Some of what sounds good is bad. Truth is being challenged, the church is being compromised, the Bible is being attacked, evil is running rampant, and attempts are underway to change the unchangeable. Whether from within or without, God is against those who endeavor to change His ways. "Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the LORD, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the LORD" (Jeremiah 23:32). Those who stand on the side of God will continue to "hate every false way" (Psalm 119:104; 128). Those who endeavor to change the unchangeable bring confusion. Paul was guided to write, "For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints" (I Corinthians 14:33). Those who endeavor to change the unchangeable bring division. "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (I Corinthians 1:10). Not all that is being preached is gospel. Not all that is called gospel is truth. Not all that is called truth by man is called truth by God. The gospel and its glorious truth should remained unchanged!

### **Changes Underway Today**

Since many of the "change agents" are already making changes to their "changes," no one list would be exhaustive. However, among the current rash of efforts to change the unchangeable, the following can be found:

1. Change God's laws of divorce and remarriage to accommodate the multitudes.
2. Changes in worship to include instrumental music, special "presentation music," choirs, solos, responsive readings, parallel worship services, applauding, etc.
3. Changes in women's roles to include women in leadership roles, using women at the Lord's table and to lead prayers, to lead singing and to preach. Some see no problem with a woman becoming an elder or a deacon in the church.
4. Changes in fellowship so as to include all and exclude none who claim to be Christians.
5. Changes in attitudes toward the church so as to see it as just another "denomination."
6. Changes in the plan of salvation to omit any of man's responsibility and to conclude that salvation is by the grace of God only.

The list could go, and in reality in the brotherhood, it does.

**"Meddle not with them that are given to change."**

Brethren, we have no scriptural basis or authority to change the unchangeable. We do have a scriptural basis for leaving the unchangeable unchanged. Solomon admonished us well in Proverbs 24:21: "My son, fear thou the LORD and the king: and meddle not with them that are given to change."

God has not changed. "For I am the LORD, I change not..." (Malachi 3:6). Christ has not changed. "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8). The Holy Spirit has not changed. The Gospel has not changed. Although some would endeavor to change these things, .... Meddle not with them that are given to change." The Word can be depended upon; man cannot. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (11 Timothy 3: 16-17). Concerning the Bible, A. Z. Conrad penned these words:

Century follows century - *There it stands!*

Empires rise and fall and are forgotten - *There it stands!*

Dynasty succeeds dynasty - *There it stands!*

Kings are crowned and uncrowned - *There it stands!*

Emperors decree its extermination - *There it stands!*

Atheists rail against it - *There it stands!*

Agnostics smile cynically - *There it stands!*

Profane prayerless punsters caricature it - *There it stands!*

Unbelief abandons it - *There it stands!*

Higher critics deny its claim to inspiration - *There it stands!*

The flames are kindled about it - *There it stands!*

The tooth of time gnaws but makes not dent in it - *There it stands!*

Infidels predict its abandonment - *There it stands!*

Modernism tries to explain it away - *There it stands!*

And may we ever stand with the unchangeable Word of God.

May we not put feelings over faith but rather faith over feelings. May we never endeavor to change the Gospel to fit us, but rather, let the Gospel change us to fit it. May we ever show love, honor and respect for the Word of God. May we never handle it carelessly either through ignorance or willful intent. May we, like our Lord, live by "Thus it is written."



# BALANCE IN AN UNBALANCED WORLD

## FAITH AND OPINION

Gene H Miller

### INTRODUCTION

I want to express my thanks for the invitation to be a part of this lectureship, and my appreciation for the theme that has been selected. In view of the instability in our society today, as well as within The Church, this is a very important and most timely subject.

The Christian lives in two very different worlds. The spirit within has been redeemed, but the physical body has not. Not until the Lord comes and the graves are opened, will the body be redeemed. Both the spirit and the body have needs to be satisfied, and there are three positions we may take in regard to fulfilling those needs: 1) we may indulge in the physical to the neglect of the spiritual, 2) we may devote ourselves to the spiritual to the neglect of the physical, or 3) we may find the proper balance between the two. We need to avoid extremes and find the proper **Balance in an Unbalanced World**. The topic for this particular lesson is **Faith and Opinion**.

### OUTLINE OF STUDY

1. Determining the Difference
  - a. Definition of Terms: Opinion - Faith - Pistis
  - b. Discussion of Opinion: Opinion is: Vague - Variable - Subjective - Regulated
  - c. Discussion of Faith: Faith is: Explicit - Exact - Objective
2. Finding the Balance
  - a. In Christian Worship: Singing - Praying - Giving - Communing - Teaching
  - b. In Christian Work: Evangelism - Edification - Benevolence
  - c. In Christian Walk: Observance of Days-Military Service - Mixed Marriages
3. Some Principles That Regulate
  - a. Law of Persuasion
  - b. Law of Edification
  - c. Law of Expediency
  - d. Law of Order
  - e. Law of Love

### 1. DETERMINING THE DIFFERENCE

#### a. Definition of Terms

**OPINION** is defined as a belief not based on absolute certainty or positive knowledge, but on what seems to be true, valid, or probable to one's own mind; what one thinks; one's judgment.

**FAITH** is unquestioning belief, and is usually thought of as belief in God, Christ, the Bible, etc. Since faith comes by hearing The Word (Romans 10:17), then faith is the assurance and conviction that follows logical examination of truth.

**PISTIS** is the Greek word in the New Testament from which we get the word faith, and it means primarily a firm persuasion, or a conviction based upon hearing. Pistis is translated faith 239 times in the KJV, and assurance one time in Acts 17:31, where Paul states that God has given us assurance of the judgment by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Faith, then, pertains to things we can be assured of.



## b. Discussion of Opinion

**Opinion is Vague.** Matters of faith are clearly taught in The Word, while matters of opinion are often somewhat vague and obscure. Faith relates to matters on which The Bible clearly speaks. Opinion deals with matters on which The Bible is silent. For example, elders are to take the oversight of the local congregation, and the qualifications of these men are clearly spelled out. Those are matters of faith. Since The Bible is silent on the process by which these men are to be selected and appointed, that would be a matter of opinion.

**Opinion is Variable.** Faith pertains to matters that are firm, absolute, and constant, because they are rooted in the unchangeable Word of God, while opinion relates to precepts that are subject to human feelings and human judgment. That Christians are to assemble together to worship in spirit and truth is a matter of faith. Since The Bible doesn't say where or when to assemble, that would be a matter of opinion, and may vary from place to place and time to time.

**Opinion is Subjective.** Matters of opinion arise from within the individual, and are therefore subject to a person's thoughts, feelings, and emotions. One may esteem one day above another, while another esteems every day alike. These are matters of opinion. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.

**Opinion is Regulated.** However, God has not granted complete freedom in matters of opinion. Our opinions must be regulated by certain principles and guidelines that are clearly established in The Word of God. We do not have the freedom to form an opinion that is in violation of other clear teaching of The Scriptures, nor are we at liberty to press our opinion to the point of causing another to stumble, or causing division within the body of Christ.

## b. Discussion of Faith.

**Faith is Explicit.** Faith concerns precepts that can be known for certain, because they are clearly taught in The Word of God. Many misunderstand what Paul meant when he said that we walk by faith, and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7). Some seem to believe that seeing is knowing, and what we cannot see, we cannot really know, so we just accept those things by faith. Blind folks see nothing, but they **know** many things. A judge will send a man to prison for life for a crime he never saw committed, based on other kinds of evidence. After telling what he had seen and heard on The Mount of Transfiguration, Peter declared, *We have also a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed....* (2 Peter 1:19). Faith based on that word, is **more sure** than seeing and hearing. Things we see and hear fade with time. God has chosen that our faith be based on the eternal, unchangeable Word.

**Faith is Exact.** Since faith is rooted in the eternal Word, matters of faith are absolute, fixed, and certain. God's Word doesn't need to be changed, because human nature doesn't change. Since faith is based on that unchanging word, then faith never changes. We believe the same precepts today that Paul and Peter, Timothy and Titus, Aquila and Priscilla believed.

**Faith is Objective.** Inasmuch as faith is based on an object outside ourselves, (the Word of God), and doesn't come from within (feelings and emotions), faith is objective. Objective faith doesn't fluctuate as feelings and emotions change, but is as constant and steadfast as The Word. Therefore, anything that we do not hear from The Word, would not be of faith, and *whatsoever is not of faith is sin.* (Romans 14:23).

## 2. FINDING THE BALANCE

### a. In Christian Worship

**Singing.** Singing in Christian worship is a matter of faith, because The Bible clearly instructs us to praise God and admonish one another by singing (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16). When to sing, how many songs, with or without hymnbooks, with or without four part harmony, while standing, sitting, kneeling, etc., these would be matters of opinion to be determined by the local leadership.

**Praying.** The Bible clearly teaches the importance of prayer when we assemble to worship. Congregational prayer, therefore, is a matter of faith. We are taught to address the Father, through Jesus Christ. That's faith. At what point in our worship, how many prayers, standing, sitting, kneeling, etc., these would be matters of opinion.

**Giving.** We are taught in The Scriptures to lay by in store as prospered on the first day of the week (1 Corinthians 16:1, 2). There is no place for opinion about that. At what point in the service do we take up the collection, do we have a prayer before, have a song before, pass the basket, pass by the basket, leave in a box by the door, etc., would be matters of opinion.

**Communing.** Both Jesus and Paul teach distinctly in regard to The Lord's Supper. We are to take unleavened bread and fruit of the vine on the first day of the week (Matthew 26:26-29; 1 Corinthians 11:23-29). There's no room for opinion in that. Do we use one or multiple cups, pass them through the congregation or pass the congregation by them, have a song before or after, etc. These are matters of opinion.

**Teaching.** The early church continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine (Acts 2:42). We are admonished to search the Scriptures (John 5:39), and to study (2 Timothy 2:15). Teaching God's Word when we assemble, therefore, is a matter of faith. When to teach, where to teach, how to teach, etc., is left to human judgment and would be matters of opinion.

So we see that while **acts** of worship are clearly taught, and are matters of faith, **methods** are often left to human judgment, and would be matters of opinion.

### b. In Christian Work

**Evangelism.** Preaching the gospel in all the world is a matter of faith (Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15). We must go, we must preach and teach, we must preach and teach the gospel. Those matters are distinct, fixed, and unchangeable. How do we go, to whom do we go, how do we preach and teach, what teaching methods, what teaching materials, etc. These matters are left to human judgment.

**Edification.** Paul encourages the church to *follow after things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another* (Romans 14:19). When we come together, all things should be done unto edifying (1 Corinthians 14:26). This is not a matter of choice with the Christian. How we carry out that matter of faith would be a matter of opinion. Do we use gospel meetings, workshops, tracts, bulletins, gospel papers, etc.?

**Benevolence.** Jesus taught that one important factor in the judgment will be our treatment of those about us in need (Matthew 25:31-46). James declares that pure religion involves caring for the widows and orphans (James 1:27). As we have therefore opportunity, we must do good to all men, and especially to our brethren in Christ (Galatians 6:10). Since the Bible teaches us that clearly, that is a matter of faith, and we have no choice in the matter. How we take **care** of those needs is a matter God has left to human judgment, and may vary from place to place and time to time.

So we see again that while **the work** of the church is clearly taught in The Scriptures, and would be matters of faith, **the methods** of carrying out that work are usually left to human judgment, and would be matters of opinion.

### c. In Christian Walk

**Observance of Days.** To what extent can the Christian observe holidays like Easter and Christmas? Inasmuch as The Bible does not give instructions regarding such, such observation cannot be a part of our worship services, because it would not be of faith, and whatsoever is not of faith is sin. What about private observance in the home? Would that not be a matter of opinion?

**Military Service.** Can the Christian serve in the military, or as a policeman, or as an executioner? Since The Bible doesn't deal with these matters specifically, would they not be matters of opinion?

**Mixed Marriages.** Can a Christian marry a non-Christian? What about marriages between races? Would these not also be matters of opinion?

There are a host of other activities that would be matters of opinion: the use of the church facilities, which version to use, involvement in community activities, participation in recreational activities, etc.

## 3. SOME PRINCIPLES THAT REGULATE

As we have noted, faith deals with matters of worship and service in which God has given specific instructions. We have no choice in these matters. Opinion deals more with methods, with how we are to conduct that worship and service. We have freedom to choose in these matters, as long as our opinions fall within certain guidelines.

**a. The Law of Persuasion.** In discussing the observance of days, which would be a matter of opinion, Paul writes: *Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind* (Romans 14:5). In regard to the eating of meats, another matter of opinion, he writes *that there is nothing unclean of itself: but to him that esteemeth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean* (Romans 14:14). And later he declares: *And he that doubteth is damned if he eat: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin* (Romans 14:23). Persuasion suggests logic and reason, and doubt implies the absence of faith. So opinions or judgments must be formed after careful consideration of the truth of God's Word, and we must be fully persuaded that we are within God's guidelines.

**b. The Law of Edification.** In regard to the matter of opinion in general, Paul admonishes: *Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another* (Romans 14:19), and he cautions us not to do *any thing whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak* (Romans 14:21). We must seek to build one another up, and are not at liberty to hold any opinion that would destroy another's faith.

**c. The Law of Expediency.** In writing of meat offered in sacrifice to idols, Paul writes: *All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not* (1 Corinthians 10:23). In forming opinions about how to worship and serve,

we must be concerned about the most efficient way to achieve our purpose. We must choose only those options that will serve us best in reaching lost souls and in preparing them for eternity. We must redeem the time, that is, make maximum use of the little time left (Ephesians 5:15, 16).

**d. The Law of Order.** God has an order or arrangement for all that we say and do in work and worship. *The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord: and he delighteth in his way* (Psalm 37:23). The church in Corinth was walking disorderly, or out of order. After rebuking them, and instructing them in the proper order in which to observe the Lord's Supper, Paul wrote: *And the rest will I set in order when I come* (1 Corinthians 11:34). A little later in the same epistle, he admonishes this congregation, and all congregations: *Let all things be done decently and in order* (1 Corinthians 14:40). In forming opinions about the methods of work and worship, we must be sure that they are in keeping with God's order of things. To go beyond Divine instructions is sin (2 John 9).

**e. The Law of Love.** The Christian's greatest purpose in life is to love God and to do those things which please Him. This attitude must govern all we say and do in life, and certainly should be an overriding principle in reaching judgments and opinions. This was the attitude of Jesus, and we are to follow in his steps. *When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my father hath taught me, I speak these things. And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.* (John 8:28, 29). I do nothing of myself....as my Father hath taught me....I do always those things that please him..... May God help us all develop such an attitude. May we **always** seek to do **all things** to please Him.

## CONCLUSION

Perhaps there is no better way to sum up this lesson than with two good rules that came out of the restoration movement:

- 1) *Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; and where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent.*

Thomas Campbell.

- 2) *In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity.*

Rupertus Meldenius.

Let us strive always for unity in matters of faith, for liberty in matters of opinion, and for love in all things....love for God, love for His Word, and love for one another.

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Normantown High School Normantown, WV Graduated 1951  
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 1959-65 Elementary Teaching, Windham Exempt. Schools, Windham, OH - 6 Years  
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 1968-72 Preaching, Spencer, WV - 4 Years  
 1972-79 Preaching, Windham, OH - 7 Years  
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*The Gospel Message* - 15 min. weekly, WVRC Radio, Spencer, WV - 4 yrs. - 1968-72  
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Editor - Bulletin, *The Word of Life*, Windham, Ohio, 1972-79  
 Lecture - *Soundness of Self-Control*, *The New Birth*, Ohio Valley College, Parkersburg - 1980  
 Booklet - *Thanatology - A Discussion of Death*, Gassaway, WV October 1983  
 Booklet - *Music In Worship*, Gassaway, WV August 1984  
 Periodic Articles - *The Bible Herald*, W & W Christian Publications, Fairmont, WV  
 Weekly Column - *The Open Bible*, *Braxton Citizens News*, Sutton, WV May 1980 - March 1990



## God's People in the Vineyard

*Isaiah 5:1-7*

W. B. "Bill" Dorriety

### Introductory Thoughts

The soil and climate of the land where the people who wrote the Bible lived are almost ideal for vineyards. Often vineyards were planted on hillsides so all could see, consequently, everyone was familiar with them (Jeremiah 31:5). The imaginative mind of the people of Israel and Judah associated special significance in expressions like "*under his vine and under his fig-tree*" which carried the idea of peace and prosperity (1 Kings 4:25; Micah 4:4; Zechariah 3:10). Even the very act of planting and eating the fruit of one's vineyard implied settled and lengthy habitation (2 Kings 19:29; Isaiah 37:30; Psalms 107:37). The vineyard is also a familiar Bible symbol used to illustrate practical spiritual lessons. Both the Old and New Testaments contain many references to this ordinary symbol which vividly communicates great spiritual truths, easy to understand and remember.

In the Old Testament, God once had a people who were symbolically identified as a "*noble vine, wholly a right seed...*" which became "*the degenerate plant of a strange vine*" (Jeremiah 2:21). The Song of the Vineyard is a lyrical composition addressed to a once faithful people who, because they brought forth "*wild grapes*" instead of the expected wholesome harvest, have stirred God's displeasure. It is a sad song, warning of God's "*anger*" toward them (Isaiah 5:1-24). However, there is also an brilliantly optimistic stanza in which God offers His willingness to forgive. "*For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still*" (Isaiah 5:25).

In the New Testament, God's people are said to be in "*the true vine*," Jesus Christ. The Lord stated, "*I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. . . I am the vine and ye are the branches*" (John 1:1,5). It must be emphasized that the term "*branches*" represents individuals rather than a multiplicity of religious organizations (John 15:5,6). The Savior clearly teaches that his disciples must be faithful and fruitful or suffer pruning and burning (John 15:6). On the other hand, faithful and fruit bearing branches are promised, "*ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you*," and by so doing, the "*Father is glorified*" (John 15:7,8).

The purpose of this lesson is to learn and apply principles inherent in the symbolic descriptions of the Lord's people as His vineyard in both the Old and New Testaments. The pages of inspiration vividly illustrates relationships, responsibilities and rewards of the holy union of the saved with the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

### God's Song of the Vineyard to Israel and Judah (Isaiah 5:1-7)

At the time Isaiah delivered the Lord's "Song Of The Vineyard" the children of God were basking in material prosperity. After centuries of numerous manifestations of God's extraordinary love, they had become unfaithful and fruitless. They relied on their great material prosperity rather than trusting God from whom all blessings flow, leaving them indifferent and evil. When they should have been drawn closer to the Lord in humble gratitude and service, they took their prosperity for granted and really

were far from being righteous. This indifference and absence of thankful hearts remains a constant, ever pressing contemporary concern ([James 1:17](#)).

The song declares the Lord's love and provision for His people and even His disappointment. *"Now will I sing to my well beloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My well beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes"* ([Isaiah 5:1,2](#)). Oh, how the Lord loved and cared for them.

God's blessings are so evident and Israel's unfaithfulness is so apparent, God calls for impartial evaluation. *"O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard. What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?"* ([Isaiah 5:3-4](#)). How could they have forsaken Him after all he had done?

In the next stanza, God proceeds to reveal his intended judgment upon his unfaithful and wandering people. *"I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down: And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it"* ([Isaiah 5:5-6](#)). It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of a just God.

Then, God opens the curtain on six woes, six specific categories of evil, pronounced against God's apostate vineyard. They are unfaithful and unfruitful because they are guilty of being (1) greedy landowners ([5:8-10](#)); (2) drunkards ([5:11-17](#)); (3) those who consider sin as no great thing ([5:18-19](#)); (4) guilty of calling evil good and good evil ([5:20](#)); (5) wise in their own eyes ([5:21](#)); and, (6) justifiers of evil for reward ([5:22-23](#)). Little wonder the anger of the Lord was kindled against them.

Jehovah promises, *"as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the chaff"* so His wrath would be upon them. God has always required faithful obedience and purity of life in order to receive His blessings ([2 Corinthians 6: 14-18](#)). On the other hand, He who created us has always seen fit to punish the disobedient ([Deuteronomy 28:63](#); [2 Peter 3:9-11](#)). God has not changed! Every man must honor, respect and faithfully obey His precepts or suffer the consequences ([Ecclesiastes 12:13,14](#); [Romans 11:22](#); [Hebrews 2:1-3](#)).

God's people did not harken to His imploring voice and, consequently, suffered anguish, affliction and bondage at the hands of the Assyrians, the Babylonians, the Greeks, and the Romans. There were periodic intervals of renewed fidelity but, as a nation, they remained apostate. *"When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His (only begotten) son to redeem"* them. The Son of God confirmed his saving mission message with a multitude of miracles, yet they did not accept him. Remarkably, this was precisely the way God predicted through His messenger Isaiah hundreds of years before. ([Galatians 4:4-5](#); [John 3:16](#); [12:37,38](#); [Isaiah 6:9,10](#); [53:1](#)).

### The Song Continues in The New Testament (Matthew 21:33-46)

On one occasion, Jesus' authority was questioned by Jewish leadership, the chief priests and elders (Matthew 21:23). He responded by questioning the source of their authority and then posed the question whether John's baptism was from God or men (Matthew 21:25-27). His critics could not give an honest answer without accepting Jesus as the long awaited Messiah. Even though they knew the truth, they would not admit it. Jesus told them bluntly that, because of their hypocritical stance, *"the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you"* (Matthew 21:32).

The Savior continued by presenting these religious leaders with a parable about a householder who prepared a fine vineyard and, leaving it in the hands of trusted husbandmen, traveled into a far country. At the time of harvest, he sent servants to receive his rightful share of the harvest. One of these servants was beaten, another stoned and still another killed. Finally, the householder sent his own son. The wicked husbandmen clearly recognized the householder's son and, with full knowledge, slew him (Matthew 21:38-39). That's premeditated murder! Jesus then asked the chief priests and Pharisees what they thought should be the sentence of the hostile husbandmen. They said, *"miserably destroy those wicked men and let out his vineyard to other husbandmen"* (Matthew 21:41; 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12).

Jesus reminded those religious leaders of the inspired words of their own prophets concerning the "rejected" stone becoming the "head of the corner." Jesus quoted, *"this is the Lord's doing, and it is a marvelous thing"* (Psalms 118:22,23; Isaiah 28:16; 1 Peter 2:6,7; Ephesians 2:20). The Savior further reminded them that, because of their rejection *"The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof"* (Matthew 21:43).

What stronger appeal for repentance could Jesus have made? It was a clear call for a return to acceptance, faithfulness and fruitfulness. This same call continues to be sounded today, calling all men to worship and serve the Lord. Times may change and technology may dramatically advance, but sadly, the nature of some men never change. So many resist and reject the blessings that could be theirs.

Willful rejection of the Lord is a serious matter. Willful rejection of the Lord's commands is a serious matter. Willful fruitlessness is a serious matter. The immortal soul of man is at stake (Matthew 16:26; John 5:28,29). The Lord desires and commands all men to repent (2 Peter 3:9; Acts 17:30,31). Repentance is not a deep theological issue shrouded in dark and mysterious jargon. Repentance is clearly defined and illustrated by the Lord.

*"But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not. Whether of them twain did the will of his father?"* (Matthew 21:28-31).

## **I Will Work, I Will Pray, I Will Labor every Day, In the Vineyard of the Lord!**

"I want to be a worker for the Lord; I want to love and trust His holy word; I want to sing and pray, and be busy every day, in the vineyard of the Lord." In my boyhood memory, I can still hear the joyful and enthusiastic singing of that song by the little country congregation of the Lord's people. In fact, the volume and fervor of their voices increased with the chorus, "I will work, I will pray, in the vineyard, in the vineyard of the Lord; I will work, I will pray, I will labor every day, in the vineyard of the Lord." Back then I didn't even know what a vineyard was! I did realize it was supposed to be a place where folks loved and trusted the Bible; and where they prayed and worked every day. As time rolled on, I learned the term vineyard is a symbolic Bible description of the Lord's obedient people. It is the church of the Lord according to the New Testament.

Jesus illustrated his call for vineyard workers in a parable about the householder who went out to "hire laborers into his vineyard" (Matthew 20:1). The harvest was ready and there was an urgent need for workers. He went out "early in the morning," and hired workers for an agreed wage and set them about their tasks. The householder went out again and again the same day and hired additional laborers. What a wonderfully bountiful harvest for him to have needed so many workers. Late that same day, the eleventh hour, he went again into the market place and finding others simply standing around said, "Why stand ye here all the day idle?" Their response was, "Because no man hath hired us." (Matthew 20:1-7). To those who are just standing around, Jesus is calling them to work in His vineyard, the church. The church is a place of labor, not leisure. The excuse that no one has hired them will not suffice. Jesus constantly implores all to become fruitful laborers for His glory and honor in His kingdom.

At the close of the day, the steward was instructed to call all the workers together to receive their wages. Every one of them, to the dismay of some of the workers hired early in the day, received the same wage. The disgruntled murmured and even took their complaint to the householder. You see, they thought that since those hired late in the day received the same wage surely theirs ought to be more (Matthew 20:8-12). They questioned the householder's judgement. Remember, this parable was prompted by the disciples' concern for their own reward since they had sacrificed material things and relationships to follow Jesus (Matthew 19:27). The Lord gave them assurance that He will provide a crown of life for all who are found faithful in his service (2 Timothy 4:8; Revelation 2:10).

The householder responded wisely and prudently to the laborers who thought they should have received more. "I do thee no wrong," the wages were according to their agreement. "It is lawful for me to do what I will" with that which is mine (Matthew 20:12-15). Jesus prudently and lovingly responded to his disciples by assuring them, "everyone that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters" parents or material things "for my name's sake" shall be rewarded with the greatest possession "everlasting life" (Matthew 19:29). The Savior's concluding comment in both instances is a reminder that the wages for work in the vineyard of the Lord will be fair and ample but not always according to man's ideas. The Lord's will shall be done in all things. "But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first" (Matthew 19:30; 20:16).



## **The Lord of The Harvest Is Calling. . . Still!**

Jesus is earnestly calling for workers in his vineyard today. He is disappointed when refused. Remember, the Lord destroyed a fig tree because its only asset was pretty leaves (Matthew 21:18,19), and a man who was disappointed with the lack of fruit from a fig tree he planted ordered it destroyed so it would not cumber the ground. Only the intervention of the keeper prevented its removal. Isn't it wonderful that the Lord is intervening for me to have a second chance to answer His call? Will the lessons from the Song of the Vineyard impress our hearts, minds and lives? The Lord wants you and me to be faithful and fruitful in order to receive a glorious crown of life and live eternally with Him.

W.B. "Bill" Dorriety has been engaged in preaching, teaching, and missionary activities for more than twenty five years. Prior to entering into full time work for the Lord's Church, he engaged in preaching for several congregations while employed in secular work. During the years as "vocational minister," he held management positions with Sears, Roebuck and Company for fifteen years. His work in advertising, sales promotion and management have provided a rich background of experience working with people and business endeavors.

Educationally, Bill attended Freed-Hardeman College and later earned an undergraduate degree from the University of Alabama. He holds a Master's Degree in Business from UNC-Greensboro and is currently writing a thesis for a additional Graduate Degree in religious studies from Wake Forest University. He was also awarded the Doctor of Ministry Degree in Marriage and Family from the Theological University of America. Bill has also done extensive research in Restoration history and has several writings published.

Bill enjoys the association with brethren in gospel meetings and has worked for such efforts in a number of states as well as in foreign countries. He and his wife have been engaged in mission efforts in Germany, Russia, Scotland, England, Ireland and Northern Ireland. For the last fourteen years they have done mission work with the churches in Northern Ireland annually.

1999 Bill and Jacquie Dorriety will be entering a new phase of their commitment to work for the Lord. Bill will be preaching in gospel meetings, lectureships, and workshops instead of located work. The Dorrietys plan to reside in Wilkesboro, North Carolina at the present. Several gospel meetings have already been scheduled and they anticipate more opportunities for such efforts.

Concerning the future: When the necessary funding is achieved, the Dorrietys will honor invitations from the brethren in Northern Ireland to engage in extended work there. It is a great venture of faith on their part and they ask for the prayers of faithful brethren and opportunities to share details about their projected work in Northern Ireland.

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# SPIRIT AND TRUTH

W. Terry Varner

## INTRODUCTION

1. We appreciate the invitation to participate in this 1998 lectureship. The **theme**: "*Balance In An Unbalanced World*" is an appropriate theme.
2. The **topic** we have been assigned for this hour is: "*Spirit and Truth.*"
3. The **key** to our study will be *balance*. We define balance as: "established...especially in a position difficult to maintain. . .an intellect poised between foolishness and genius"<sup>1</sup>
  - a. Christians live "*in*" an unbalanced world--John 17:14.
  - b. But, Christians are not to live "*of*" the world--John 17:11,14.
  - c. Maintaining the divine balance requires a proper attitude (spirit) and affirmation of truth so that our relationship, position and poise in Christ is not "*foolishness*," but rather "*genius*;" i.e. wisdom--Eph. 5:15.
4. The **result** not only affects our relationship with the world and sin, but our life as a Christian and our eternal salvation--Gal. 6:14; 1 Tim. 4:16.
5. Let us consider a few areas wherein we must ensure that we the balance of spirit and truth.

## THE CHRISTIAN'S LIFE

1. The divine view of the Christian life is all-important.
  - a. Life is but a few years upon this earth.
  - b. Death is certain--Heb. 9:27.
  - c. Between life and death man must live the Christian life in spirit and truth or with balance. and avoid the allurements and entanglements of the world--2 Tim. 2:4; 2 Peter 2:19-22.
  - d. For the Christian to maintain the divine balance in life in this world of imbalance and uncertainty, he must remember daily that God loved us to the degree that He gave Jesus for our salvation--Rom. 5:8; John 3:16. We are children of the King.
2. Some Scriptural imperatives for the Christian to keep before himself:
  - a. We "live through him"--1 John 4:9; 2 Cor. 5:14-15; Col. 3:1-3.
  - b. We are to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ"--2 Peter 3:18.
  - c. We are to be "servants"--Matt. 20:27-28.
  - d. We are "saints" and not sinners--Eph. 1:1.
  - e. We are to "have the mind of Christ"--Phil. 2:5.
  - f. We are to have "Christ in us the hope of glory"--Col. 1:27.
  - g. We must allow "Christ be formed in you [us]"--Gal. 4:19.
3. Observation: Many Christians *do not* live the sanctified life expected and demanded by God.
  - a. John 17:17; 1 Peter 4:16.
  - b. "Sanctify" means "to cut off, to separate," and therefore to dedicate for a solemn purpose.
  - c. 1 Peter 2:9-12.
    - (1) We are separated or cut off from the world of sin to partake in a new life--2 Cor. 5:17.

(2) Sanctification is a setting apart, and something more. It means the Christian "*cuts off*," by virtue of being cleansed by the blood of Christ, his ways in the world and *now* lives for God!  
d. Match the sins that put Jesus on Calvary and Paul's catalogue of sins of men in the last days in 2 Timothy 3. You will find that more than half of them are involved.

4. Let us live for Jesus lives that are separated unto Him; therefore, lives balanced with spirit and truth.

### THE CHRISTIAN'S WORSHIP

1. People from all over the world worship. Some worship idols, animals, people or some other thing. What is most important to some become objects of their worship--wealth, popularity, education, prestige, etc.

2. The Christian, as God's child, has but one object of worship--God! God demands man worship Him and worship Him as He directs--Matt. 4:10; Psm. 95:6-7.

3. John 4:24 is the key New Testament text for our understanding and rendering worship to God.

a. Worship means "to make obeisance, do reverence to" God.<sup>2</sup>

b. Webster defines worship as "courtesy or reverence paid to worth; hence, honor; respect. Act of paying homage to a deity; religious reverence or homage."

4. In the New Testament several Greek words occur for worship; however, only three occur more than once or twice.

a. *Proskune* (Mat. 4:10; John 4:21-24) occurs some sixty times. Thayer defines it:

as an expression of profound reverence; hence in New Testament, by kneeling or prostration to do homage (to one) or make obeisance, homage shown to men of a superior rank, homage rendered to God and the ascended Christ.<sup>3</sup>

b. *Sebomia* (Matt. 15:9; Mark 7:7; Acts 16:14) occurs ten times meaning "to stand in awe; to venerate, to reverence, to worship, adore."<sup>4</sup>

c. *Latreuo* (Phil. 3:3; Heb. 12:28; Rev. 22:3) occurs ten times and means "to render religious services or homage, to worship, to perform sacred services; to offer gifts; to worship God in the observance of the rites instituted for his worship."<sup>5</sup>

5. Since worship involves not only its direction to God, but *how* we are to worship Him, it seems so strange to hear brethren who "do not enjoy coming to worship," "who come late and leave early," "are so bored with it all," "I am tired and expected to be lifted in my worship," "all that a Christian does is worship." N.B. Not a single definition of any of the Greek words for worship lends any support to these sentiments we often hear.

6. John 4:24 is the classic New testament text for worship and if and when understood, we will avoid being self-centered and our worship will be balanced with spirit and truth. Consider our worship from John 4:24:

a. The Action of worship--"Worship."

b. The Aim of worship--"Him."

- c. The Absolute of worship--"Must."
- d. The Attitude of worship--"Spirit."
- e. The Authority of worship--"Truth."

### THE CHRISTIAN'S MESSAGE

1. The Christian's message may be defined variously:

- a. Gospel is the good news--1 Cor. 15:1-2.
- b. Salvation from sin to produce spiritual health--Matt. 1:21; Eph. 1:7.
- c. Christianity meaning the religion stemming from the life, teachings and death of Jesus--Matt. 1:23; John 20:30-31.
- d. The faith once delivered and makes God's grace possible--Jude 3; Eph. 2:8.
- e. Hope of eternal life--Eph. 2:12; Titus 1:2.
- f. Christ in whom all things are summed up--Col. 2:9.

2. The Christian message delineates between truth and error. 1 John 4:6 shows the following seed thoughts:

- a. Truth depends upon its origin. In this case, divine truth originates with God and is expressed in His Word--1 Thess. 2:13.
- b. Man must accept divine truth and reject error to be saved--Cf. The Parable of the Sower and its four soils--Luke 8:4-8.
- c. Truth is gained by one's reception of the divine truth the hearer hears--John 8:32.
- d. The truth of God is to be lived or experienced. Cf. Rom. 1:21, "knowing God, they glorified him not."
- e. There is both "the spirit of truth" (divine truth) and "the spirit of error" (man's false teaching).

4. The "spirit of truth" contains both doctrine and practical matters. Christian must keep a healthy balance of both. In so doing, they imitate Paul's methodology of doctrine and practice in his many epistles.

5. While orthodoxy; i.e. teaching according to the Scriptures, must be upheld at all cost, one must never lack love in our proclamation and defense--1 Cor. 13:1-3; 1 Peter 3:15.

### THE CHRISTIAN'S OPINIONS

1. Any good Bible student recognizes that not all religious matters are of faith, but there exists opinions which *must* be held in liberty and with charity.

2. Before the Restoration Movement in America, students in Europe struggled with Papal Edicts and Council Decrees and stood firm against them and claimed the Bible as the final authority in matters of faith.

3. In the 17th century in Germany, Robertus Meldenius stated: "In essentials unity; in non-essentials liberty; in all things charity." Later Thomas Campbell restated it as: "In faith unity; in opinion liberty; in all things charity." It is a good slogan, for it is Biblical.

4. In the current climate of the great brotherhood of God, it appears that there has been a shift in our thinking in which everything is made to be "matters of faith" and nothing is allowed to be

"matters of opinion." Certainly, we are not advocating making "matters of faith" opinion. But, we are pleading to allow those areas of opinion to remain so. I call for calmer heads, wiser minds--"be therefore as wise as serpents, and harmless as doves" (Matt. 10:16)-- and hearts filled with love--1 Cor. 13:1-3.

5. An example of opinion of which I speak is *how* the Holy Spirit indwells in the Christian.

### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup>Webster's *Third New International Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged*, (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1986) I:165.

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<sup>3</sup>Thayer, J. H., *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1956), p.548.

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<sup>35</sup>Thayer, *op. cit.*, p. 372.

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## **A Balanced Leadership**

By Paul Hoover

### **Introduction**

- A. Recently President Clinton made it known that he lied concerning an adulterous relationship in which he was involved.
- B. He lied under oath. That means he committed a felony.
- C. This was not the first time President Clinton was caught in a lie or in adultery.
- D. You would think that everyone would be outraged at his conduct. After all we are talking about the leader of the most powerful nation on earth.
- E. Yet, surprisingly, many people are supporting the idea that a persons morals and ethics can somehow be separated from his ability to serve.
- F. Scandals of horrific proportions have become common place in the leadership of this nation. And, perhaps, even worse, it has become acceptable to many people in this country.
- G. It may be the case that this acceptance has resulted in a lower standard of leadership in many other areas.

### **Body**

#### **I. "Do as I say, not as I do."**

- A. Have you ever heard the phrase, "Do as I say, not as I do?"
  - 1. Some leaders do not verbalize this idea, yet they employ it in their position.
    - a. Some who are leaders in the work place have poor work ethics, yet they expect everyone else to have good work ethics.
    - b. Some parents have adulterous relationships, drink, smoke, curse, yet, expect their children to be model citizens.
    - c. Some members of the Lord's church do little more than warm a pew three times a week. They complain about everything. They hold petty grudges against their brethren. They gossip and degrade those around them. They however would not tolerate this conduct in their brethren.
    - d. Some elders are short tempered, uninvolved and unwilling to defend the Gospel; yet, they expect the congregation to be what it should be.
  - 2. All of these people have some things in common.
    - a. Their creed, expressed or implied, is, "Do as I say, not as I do."
    - b. This creed expresses one of two things.
    - c. The implication is that these people recognize a standard by which right and wrong can be measured.



- 1) By saying, "Do as I say," they acknowledge a high standard of conduct.
- 2) By saying, "...not as I do," they acknowledge that they themselves are not living up to that high standard.
- 3) They either seek to ignore their own accountability or they believe themselves to be superior to other people.

B. A good example of this attitude and its results can be found in 2 Samuel chapters 11 and 12.

1. Prior to the events recorded in these two chapters David was a leader by example.
2. However, in 11:1 David changes his method of leadership.  
*"It happened in the spring of the year, at the time when kings go out to battle, that David sent Joab and his servants with him, and all Israel; and they destroyed the people of Ammon and besieged Rabbah. But David remained at Jerusalem."*
3. On this occasion, David reflected the attitude of, "Do as I say, not as I do."
4. David went on to commit adultery and murder. David would not have approved of these actions in anyone else. He would have carried out lawful punishment upon any other offender. This is evident in his reaction when Nathan rebuked him.  
12:2-6 *"The rich man had exceedingly many flocks and herds. But the poor man had nothing, except one little ewe lamb which he had bought and nourished; and it grew up together with him and with his children. It ate of his own food and drank from his own cup and lay in his bosom; and it was like a daughter to him. And a traveler came to the rich man, who refused to take from his own flock and from his own herd to prepare one for the wayfaring man who had come to him; but he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him. So David's anger was greatly aroused against the man, and he said to Nathan, As the Lord lives, the man who has done this shall surely die! And he shall restore fourfold for the lamb, because he did this thing and because he had no pity."*
5. David had a high standard of morality. He believed that people should live for God, yet on that occasion he did not lead by example and the result was sin.  
12:13 *"So David said to Nathan, 'I have sinned against the Lord.'"*
6. This attitude of, "Do as I say, not as I do," resulted in sin on David's part, but David's sin resulted in problems that went beyond David personally.  
12:14 *"However, because by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also who is born to you shall surely die."*

- a. The child of David's adulterous union with Bathsheba died because David through his conduct had given the ungodly an opportunity to blaspheme.
  - b. Now, let's make some application.
- C. Every child of God is a leader.
  - 1. Older women are leaders of younger women.
  - 2. Mothers are leaders of their children.
  - 3. Men are leaders in the home. They lead their wives and children.
  - 4. Elders are leaders in the church.
  - 5. Every Christian must lead others to Christ.
- D. If our attitude is that of, "Do as I say, not as I do," we are bound for destruction and will lead others there as well.
- E. A leader must lead by example. Our lifestyle must be such that we can humbly say, "Do as I strive to do."

## II. "To each his own."

- A. The second point that we will look at is another which is not likely to be verbalized but can be seen in many peoples actions.
- B. The idea is "Each to his own." The result is apathy.
- C. Apathy is terrible in anyone. It is disastrous in a Christian.
- D. You hear a lot of apathetic excuses.
  - 1. "We want to do more for the Lord but we are busy."
  - 2. "We want to instruct an erring brother more perfectly but he may be offended."
  - 3. "We want to evangelize but the world is not interested."
  - 4. "We want to say no to some of our children's activities but they may get mad."
- E. There is no end to the excuses we can make.
- F. Let's not have a misunderstanding on this subject.
- G. We can either be apathetic or be a Christian. We can't be both.
- H. The great commission excludes apathy in any Christian. In Mark 16:15, the Lord said, *"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."* This is a command that every Christian must obey. Apathetic people will not and do not obey it.
- I. No leader leads, as God would have them lead if they are apathetic.
  - 1. When older women are apathetic, they will not lead younger women in a godly fashion.  
 Titus 1:3-5 *"...the older women likewise, that they be reverent in behavior, not slanderers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things--that they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, homemakers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed."*
    - a. Apathetic women are not likely to be an example in these areas.

- b. Nor are they likely to take the time to teach younger women anything other than how to set a poor example.
  - c. You older ladies--is there even one young lady in your congregation who is having marital problems or who is overwhelmed by her role as a working mother or whose house keeping abilities are not too good. If there is even one such young lady, what should you be doing about it?
- 3. When parents are apathetic they will not lead their children in a godly manner.  
 Ephesians 6:4 *"And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord."*
  - a. Apathetic parents are not likely to take the time to train their children.
  - b. They are more likely to advocate their responsibility to Sunday school teachers and preachers.
  - c. Parents, in view of this passage, if you are not personally teaching your child about God, what should you do about it?
- 4. When elders are apathetic they will not lead a congregation in a godly manner.  
 Hebrews 13:17 *"Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you."*
  - a. An apathetic elder does not watch out for his own soul, let alone anyone else's soul.
  - b. An apathetic elder will not be willing to address issues and situations in the congregation, which must be addressed.
  - c. An apathetic elder will let the flock wander aimlessly without leadership and guidance.
  - d. If you are an elder and you are not really watching for the souls of your congregation, what should you do about it?
- J. If you are apathetic in your leadership role, regardless of what that role is, I have repeatedly asked the question, "What should you do about it?"
- K. The answer is, you should do what David did in Psalm 51. That is to say, repent and become the leader that God would have you be.

### III. "Come follow me."

- A. For any of us to be the leaders that God would have us be, we must first learn to follow.
- B. Listen to the words of the Lord in Matthew 4:18, 19, *"And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. Then He said to them, 'Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.'"*
  - 1. Peter and Andrew were going to become leaders or fishers of men.
  - 2. They would gain this leadership position only by following the Lord.
  - 3. We also notice that the Lord certainly was not apathetic nor did He say, "Do as I say, not as I do."
  - 4. The Lord said, "follow me." What did He mean when He said, "Follow Me?"
    - a. It was necessary for the disciples to physically follow Jesus as He traveled. But, the Lord wanted more from these men to walk in a neat little row behind Him.
    - b. It was necessary for them:
      - 1) follow His example.
      - 2) follow His doctrine.
      - 3) Only then were they fit to be leaders.
    - c. Notice the application of this principle in Paul's writing.  
1 Corinthians 11:1 *"Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ."*

### Conclusion

- A. Every one of us has a job to do.
- B. Every one of us is in a leadership position. We have a responsibility to lead in a godly manner.
  - 1. If we do not lead, as God would have us lead those who follow our example may lose their souls.
  - 2. This, of course, means that we would lose our soul as well.
- C. None of us are perfect. We all make mistakes. Yet we should be able to say, "Do as I strive to do." If we cannot say this to those who follow our lead we are not fit to lead.
- D. As leaders we must set the proper example. We must submit to those who have the rule over us. If everyone is doing their job correctly we follow the chain of command and are all led to God.
  - 1. Children follow parents who follow the Lord.
  - 2. Wives follow husbands who follow the Lord.
  - 3. All Christians follow elders who follow the Lord.
  - 4. The lost follow the saved who follow the Lord.
  - 5. The Lord set the great example for following God.
  - 6. In the church all roads should lead to God.

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## **BLENDING YOUTH AND AGE**

**H. Randall Baker**

Diversity exists in the church. This was true in the first century, and it is true today. In the midst of diversity, there must be harmony among God's people as we labor together (1 Corinthians 1:10; 3:1-9).

There are various ways in which the early church was diverse. The congregation at Jerusalem consisted of folks who were financially diverse (Acts 4:32-37). Racial diversity also existed (Acts 11:1; 15:7). The church then, as now, consisted of both males and females (Romans 16:1-15). As a result, the church experienced gender diversity. Age diversity is also a reality. Congregations consisted of young and old (1 Timothy 5:1,2).

Most generally there is a vast chasm between the oldest and youngest members of a congregation. Age differences can lead to conflicts as a result of differing ideas, values, understandings, and maturity levels. Therefore, it is important that we learn to work together in harmony to the glory of God.

### **MAINTAINING UNITY**

Unity must be maintained. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity" (Psalm 133:1). Unity is a worthy goal, as long as it is based upon truth. It was for unity that Jesus prayed (John 17:20,21); it was for unity that Paul pled (1 Corinthians 1:10); and it was for unity that Jesus died (Ephesians 2:16). Herculean effort must be put forth by young and old alike to maintain unity. Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3), we can "spare no effort" (NEB) to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. When problems do arise, solutions must be sought (Acts 6:1-3).

### **WORKING IN HARMONY**

To promote harmony it is vitally important that young and old alike recognize four important truths. Proper understanding and recognition of these four truths will allow youth and age to blend together in harmony and provide the proper balance as they work together to the glory of God.

Working together in harmony requires respect and recognition of Biblical authority. The Scriptures are inspired of God (2 Timothy 3:16,17; 2 Peter 1:20,21); and have been given to man to direct and guide (2 Peter 1:3). The New Testament is the only source of authority in matters of faith and practice. "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Colossians 3:17).

A failure to recognize Biblical authority results in problems. We are keenly aware that a failure to respect authority in the civil realm often results in fines and punishment (Romans 13:2). To violate God's law is not without impunity (Genesis 4:1-5; Leviticus

10:1-3; Acts 5:1-10; Romans 6:23). Often, a failure on the part of man to respect and recognize God's will results in division.

Young and old alike must acknowledge the authority of God's word. All, regardless of age, must understand that there are areas in which God has specified and in so doing man does not have the prerogative to change those things. An illustration of such would be singing. God has specified that we are to sing and make melody with the human heart (Colossians 3:16; Ephesians 5:19). Neither young or old has the right to change what God specifically stipulated. We are bound by what God has authorized.

The contemporary style worship verses Biblical worship (sometimes referred to as "traditional worship") often appears to run along age lines. Many within the younger generation advocate the contemporary style worship while others, most generally older folks, advocate the traditional style services. The contemporary style service promotes many unscriptural ideas, such as choirs and solos in worship. Regardless of what age group advocates these things they are unauthorized within the word of God. They are sinful (2 John 9; 1 Corinthians 4:6).

It is extremely important that young and old alike have a firm grasp of Biblical authority. Understanding the perimeters of authority is essential for folks to work together in harmony.

For young and old to blend together in harmony and unity they must understand tradition. Every congregation has some form of tradition. It may be two songs and a prayer. It could possibly be the observance of the Lord's Supper either before or after the sermon. Folks need to distinguish between doctrine and tradition (cf. Matthew 15:1-10). Doctrine cannot be changed or altered one syllable (Galatians 1:6-9). Tradition can be changed and some should be changed periodically to avoid a rut.

Some folks elevate tradition to the platform of truth. This was a mistake of the Jews. They elevated the oral and written traditions that had been passed down from generation to generation as being on par with God's word. It was Jesus who gave this stern warning, "Well hath Esaias prophesied of you hypocrites, as it is written, This people honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me. Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups: and many other such like things ye do...Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition" (Mark 7:6-9). May God help us not to be like the Pharisees.

To avoid binding tradition it is important that we take a candid look at things in our worship. The elderly need to recognize that "two songs and a prayer" are traditional rather than doctrinal. And that songs sung out of Hymnals as opposed to songs on an overhead is traditional. Tradition is not wrong because it is tradition. Tradition is only wrong when we try to bind it upon others as God's truth.

Some traditions are much more expedient than others. It may be much more expedient to use songs books rather than an overhead, since some folks have poor eyesight. It is important for us to keep others in mind (Philippians 2:3,4).

Fulfilling our role in the body is an important aspect of working in harmony. Each member of the human body is important, each member has a function to perform. Such is also true with God's spiritual body-the church (1 Corinthians 12:14-25). A body in which each member is contributing will increase the body and will build it up on love

(Ephesians 4:16). Thus, when the young and old fulfill their responsibilities (cf. Matthew 25:14-25), the church will go forward in peace and love. However, in fulfilling our roles in the body there may come a time, as a result of limitations due to age, that I many have to step aside and let those who are younger step in. The person who knows when to step aside and the one who knows when to step in are to be greatly admired.

In working together to accomplish and fulfill our roles in the body it is necessary that those who are older prepare and equip the younger saints to serve. Primarily this is the duty of leaders in the church (Ephesians 4:11). The Leadership in some congregations fails to equip the saints and especially the young. This is a tragic neglect. It should not be overlooked. Too, we recognize that not all congregations have elders. In such cases it is important that the older men teach and train the younger men (Titus 2:1-2, 7-9).

Although the sphere of work and responsibility is different for males and females within the kingdom (1 Timothy 2:8-15), it does not mean that our young ladies should be neglected. "The aged women...teach the younger women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed" (Titus 2:4-5). Young ladies have many areas in which they can serve. Our elderly ladies need to be instructing and teaching them in these important areas.

For young and old to work together in harmony it is imperative that brotherly love exist. "Let brotherly love continue" (Hebrews 13:1). "And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover a multitude of sins" (1 Peter 4:8). The absence of love produces strife, hatred, discord and division. The absence of love will destroy a congregation.

Love is the badge of discipleship (John 13:35). Young and old must exhibit a strong affection for each other. Christian charity must prevail (1 Corinthians 13:3-8).

The proper recognition of Biblical authority, the correct understanding of tradition, the proper fulfilling of our roles within the kingdom, all joined in love will promote peace and harmony.

## **CONTRIBUTION OF OLD AND YOUNG**

As young and old work together there are many things that each group can contribute to the other. These contributions promote peace and blend youth and age together in harmony.

The older, more mature members provide stability. Some folks are tossed about by every new teaching that comes along (Ephesians 4:14). The elderly members who are grounded in the truth, can be a great stabilizing force in a congregation. They can stand as watchman on the wall (Ezekiel 3,33), and warn of danger. They can provide stability by contending for the faith (Jude 3), by being set for the defense of the gospel (Philippians 1:17), and providing instruction in times of trouble.

The older generation can provide encouragement. Barnabas means the "son of exhortation" (Acts 4:36). He was an encourager. We need more Barnabas' today in the church. Elderly Christians can encourage their younger counterparts in faithfulness (Hebrews 3:12); good works (Titus 2:14); spiritual growth (2 Peter 1:5-7; Hebrews 6:1); and in child rearing (Titus 2:4).

Through years of experience, and being on the "firing line" day after day, the hoary head can direct with wisdom. Life is a great teacher. Wisdom, most generally, comes after years of experience. The elderly can steer the younger in the way of wisdom.

Our younger folks have many things to contribute, too! Perhaps one of the great provisions of youth is energy. When the elderly have tired, the youth are just getting started. The younger generation can bring energy and zeal to a congregation. They can build a fire in a congregation and keep it going. And there are some fires that need to be started.

In areas of liberty, where God has not stipulated how something is to be carried out, we have freedom. Ideas and methods that were one time successful may not be so now. In these areas of liberty youth can make valuable contributions. They have and will continue to bring new ideas and methods before leaders that will facilitate outreach and growth.

Like the elderly, our young can encourage (Hebrews 3:12). They can encourage one another as well as those who have diligently labored through the years in the Lord's service. Young folks should never forget the valuable contributions of those who have gone before. It is important that we honor them (Romans 13:7). Older folks can get discouraged as age begins to impair. It is important that young folks encourage their older counter parts. Such will result in a benefit to both.

Young and old will continue to co-exist in the kingdom. Both groups can labor together in harmony promoting the unsearchable riches of Christ. May God help us to work together in love.

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# A CHURCH THAT PROTECTS AND PROCLAIMS

Michael E. Phillips

TEXT: Ephesians 6:13-17

THESIS: The Lord's church must be both defensive and offensive as it faces today's world.

## INTRODUCTION

1. In the world of sports, a team which plays all defense never scores; likewise a team which plays all offense does not protect its own goal.
2. It is easily revealed that a mixture of both defense and offense must be maintained.
3. There are similar points which pertain to the Lord's church.
  - a. If a church has a single focus on the "change agents" and various influences which corrupt the Lord's body, a lack of growth could easily result from the elimination of evangelism (Mk. 16:15-16), and in time that church could die.
  - b. If a church's only goal is numerical growth, pragmatic efforts may be employed to attain a full building while sin is unattended from without and within.
  - c. The Lord can pull that church's candlestick! (Rev. 2:5)
4. In Eph. 6:13, those Christians were encouraged to take "the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."
  - a. The figurative items of armor were to be used both defensively and offensively in the battle against evil.
  - b. The protection offered by the various shielding implements would protect the spiritual warrior against the sinful fiery darts which are aimed in his direction.
  - c. The "sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph. 6:17) is to be used offensively, as the faithful soul "earnestly contends for the faith" (Jude 3).
  - d. The church can not afford to leave either of these items behind!
5. This world has much to offer, as does the Lord's church, yet the two are not to be mixed together.
  - a. As a person carefully reaches into a briar patch to pick the sweet berries from within, he needs to beware of the thorns, yet be bold enough to stomp some briars in order to reach the reward of the harvest.
  - b. As the church carefully avoids the dangers of change and doctrines of men, it must also be willing to stomp sin that gets in the path in order to harvest precious souls for the Lord.
6. The Lord's church must have two balancing approaches in order to be successful.



## I. A CHURCH THAT PROTECTS

### A. Against False Doctrine

1. In the text (Eph. 6:16), Paul encouraged the brethren, "Besides all having taken up the shield of THE FAITH, with which ye will be able to quench all the burning darts of the wicked one." (George Ricker Berry, INTERLINEAR GREEK-ENGLISH NEW TESTAMENT, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989, p. 696).
  - a. The protective shield is THE OBJECTIVE FAITH.
    - i. "The faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3).
    - ii. "That form of doctrine" (Rom. 6:17).
    - iii. "The engrafted word, which is able to save your souls" (James 1:21).
    - iv. "The way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers" (Acts 24:14).
    - v. "The gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom. 1:16).
2. How is this shield of the faith used against false doctrine?
  - a. "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (I John 4:1).
  - b. "We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error" (I John 4:6).
  - c. What is the answer?
    - i. We must know God.
    - ii. The only way to know God is through the special revelation which He has provided us, the inspired, objective truth of the Word.
      - "Thy word is truth" (John 17:17).
    - iii. The church must know the Word in order to protect against the "fiery darts" of sin, and the false doctrines (creeds, manuals, perverted gospels [Gal. 1:6-9], etc.).
    - iv. The Bereans "received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11).
      - Today's church should know and do the same!

### B. Against Sin

1. "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:23).
  - a. This verse is pointing out the need for justification by Jesus Christ for both Jew and Gentile, though the principle is valid for all men, even Christians.
  - b. This fact is why there is comfort in the words recorded in I John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."
2. The church protects its members against sin by edification through association.
  - a. "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another" (Rom. 12:10).

- b. This is one important reason for meeting with the saints regularly: "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Heb. 10:23-25).
- 3. The church works to willingly, humbly, restore the erring, and protects against falling away to sin.
  - a. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:1-2).

### C. Against Apostasy

- 1. The church was warned in the first century to beware!
  - a. The apostle Paul warned concerning the second coming of Christ, "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition" (II Thes. 2:3).
  - b. The elders of Ephesus were warned, "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:29-30).
  - c. Timothy was warned twice on this matter: "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils" (I Tim. 4:1), and "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (II Tim. 4:3-4).
- 2. The church must stand on the foundation of truth in order to avoid falling.
  - a. "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle" (II Thes. 2:15).
    - i. There is no other foundation on which the church can stand.
    - ii. Christ is the only reliable foundation (I Cor. 3:11), and His doctrine ONLY must be taught (II John 9).
    - iii. "All other ground is sinking sand!"

## II. A CHURCH THAT PROCLAIMS

### A. Objective Truth

- 1. "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (II Tim. 4:1-2).

- a. Only the inspired Word can make the man of God complete (II Tim. 3:16-17).
- b. Only the inspired Word will matter in the judgment (John 12:48).
- c. The Word must be proclaimed when it is popular and when it is not.
- d. The Word proves and exposes error, convicts the guilt of sin, and urges compliance to its teaching.

- 2. The church tells of "righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come" (Acts 24:25).
- 3. The church is to make known "the manifold wisdom of God" (Eph. 3:10).
  - a. The church is a necessity according to God's plan.
  - b. The church is for all people.
  - c. The saved are only found in the church (Acts 2:47).

#### B. Oneness

- 1. The church must proclaim its unity as seen in the relationship between the Father in heaven and His Son Jesus Christ (John 17:21)
- 2. The church must proclaim unity in doctrine; "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (I Cor. 1:10).
- 3. The church must proclaim oneness in spiritual structure; "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Eph. 4:4-6).
  - a. The ecumenical "unity in diversity" approach in the denominational world is sinful, and in direct conflict with the inspired Word of God!
  - b. The preachers of change which are leading the Lord's church into this path are seeking the "swift destruction" (II Pet. 2:1) which is promised against them.

#### C. The Gospel Plan Of Salvation

- 1. Paul described the gospel which was preached in I Cor. 15:1-4 as "how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures."
  - a. The gospel plan of salvation must be "according to the scriptures."
  - b. Faith in Christ (John 8:24) according to the scriptures (Rom. 10:17).
  - c. Repentance from sin (II Cor. 7:10) according to the scriptures (Luke 13:3).
  - d. Confession of faith (Acts 8:37) according to the scriptures (Matt. 10:32).
  - e. Baptism for the remission of sin (Acts 22:16) according to scripture (Mk. 16:16).
  - f. Faithfulness until death (Rev. 2:10) according to scripture (John 14:6).
- 2. The church may not proclaim faith only, grace only, sinner's prayer, sprinkling, pouring, or any such "perverted gospel" (Gal. 1:7).

## CONCLUSION

1. The work of the New Testament church is to be conducted inside and outside of the doors of the meeting house.
2. The church of our Lord must protect itself against false doctrine, against sin, and against apostasy, yet precious souls will not break down our doors while trying to get into our fortress of protection.
3. The church must be willing to proclaim the message of objective truth, of oneness, and the gospel plan of salvation since those same precious souls will not likely hear the gospel message if the church does not go out into the world and proclaim it.
4. In the unbalanced world in which we live, the church must maintain balance in protecting the saint, and proclaiming to the sinner.

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## **Weighed in the Balances**

**Donnie S. Barnes**

### **Background of the Statement**

Apparently it wasn't enough that Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians had destroyed God's temple in Jerusalem and transported the vessels thereof to Babylon. But now, Belshazzar orders that the vessels that had been used in the service to God in Jerusalem now be brought to be used by his guests. "Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand. Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink therein. Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem; and the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank in them. They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone" (Daniel 5:1-4). What arrogance and defiance is displayed by Belshazzar! Little does he know and realize how serious this matter is. God will let him know. "In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another" (Daniel 5:5-6). In desperation .... The king cried aloud to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. And the king spake, and said to the wise men of Babylon, Whosoever shall read this writing, and shew me the interpretation thereof, shall be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom." (Daniel 5:7). How futile their efforts would be. Not even "all the king's wise men" could read the writing and "make known to the king the interpretation thereof" (Daniel 5:8). The queen told the king about Daniel and described him as having ..... An excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, interpreting of dreams, and shewing of hard sentences, and dissolving of doubts, were found in the same Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar: now let Daniel be called, and he will shew the interpretation" (Daniel 5:12).

Upon arriving in the king's presence, Daniel read him the writing and began the interpretation wherein is contained the above title. "And this is the writing that was written, MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. TEKEL; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. PERES; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians" (Daniel 5:25-28).

The interpretation Daniel provided was not one that likely had occurred to Belshazzar or anyone else present at the gathering. The interpretation was in three parts. (1) "Mene" meant that God had reviewed, evaluated, and taken account of Belshazzar's kingdom and had reached a judgment about the matter. In the modern vernacular we would say, "Belshazzar, your days are numbered." (2) "Tekel" meant that Belshazzar had been "weighed in the balances" and was found wanting. "Tekel" is used with reference to anything placed in a balance in order to ascertain its weight. The true worth, substance, or character would be determined. Therefore, God, in his judgments of men, represented this truth by weighing their lives and actions. (3) "Upharsin" and "Peres" are but different forms of the same words. "Upharsin" is in the plural while "Peres" is in the singular. The two terms reference that which is divided asunder. The context of the passage shows that it is the Babylonian kingdom that was being divided asunder and given to the Medes and the



Persians. In fact, that very night Belshazzar was slain, "And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old" (Daniel 5:31).

In about 626 B.C., Babylon had rebelled against the Assyrian Empire and overthrew the Assyrian capital of Nineveh in 612 B.C. With the Assyrians out of the way Babylon became the master of the Middle East upon its defeat of the Egyptians in 605 B.C. They remained a dominant empire until God gave them over to the Medes and the Persians in about 539 B.C. Their eighty-seven year reign was over. They had been weighed in the balances and found wanting.

### **An Old Testament Statement With New Testament Meaning.**

It was to the Roman brethren Paul wrote, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Romans 15:4). In his first recorded letter to the church at Corinth, Paul again emphasized the need for our learning from the Old Testament when he referenced the Israelites by saying, "Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted" (I Corinthians 10:6).

While Daniel 5:25-28 had a direct application to Belshazzar and the Babylonians, the principle of being "weighed in the balances" is applicable to us today. We read in I Samuel 2:3, "... The LORD is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed" (I Samuel 2:3). Job 6:2 says, "Oh that my grief were thoroughly weighed, and my calamity laid in the balances together! " (Job 6:2). Later in Job 31:6, the Bible says: "Let me be weighed in an even balance, that God may know mine integrity."

The balance was used to denote judgment. Please note the following from Daniel 5: (1) God put the message into written form. (2) God determined the standard. (3) God did the weighing. (4) God made the final assessment. (5) God did the informing. (6) God carried out His judgment. (7) Man had to accept and endure the results. God put the message in writing with the appearance of "fingers of a man's hand." Perhaps the writing on the wall was over by the candlestick so as to enable those present to have more light to read it by.

"Put it in writing!" "Get it in writing!" How familiar are these statements in the business and legal affairs of men today? We feel that if it is important, it needs to be in writing. Does not God feel the same way about His matters of importance. The end result is that God has given us His will for man in written form. It is called the Bible. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (II Timothy 3:1&17).

Concerning the judgment, we know this: (1) Christ will be the judge. "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son" (John 5:22). Paul said in I Corinthians 4:4, "...He that judgeth me is the Lord." (2) The Bible is the standard whereby man will be judged. "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works" (Revelation 20:12). (3) Every person will be judged. "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God" (Romans 14:12). (4) Both the good and the bad in our lives will be weighed. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (II Corinthians 5:10). (5) The saved will go to Heaven. "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matthew 25:34). (6) The lost will go to Hell. "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his

angels" (Matthew 25:41). Yes, God has informed us in writing that we will be weighed in the balance. How we live in this life will determine whether or not we will be found wanting.

### **The Importance of A Right Balance**

Bro. Mack Lyon, speaker on the esteemed television program *In Search of the Lord's Way* tells about an occasion when President John Quincy Adams called both houses of Congress together for a Special Session. It seems that a discrepancy had been discovered that required immediate attention. The President entered the assembly hall carrying two "bushel" baskets. Addressing the distinguished legislators, he said: "The bushel measure in my right hand came from South Carolina; the one in my left hand came from the city of New York. One of these bushel measures contains sixty-eight cubic inches more than the other." After pausing for a moment to allow the impact of that statement to settle into the minds of those assembled, he proceeded to walk over to a nearby table where he picked up two one-pound weights. Displaying the weights where the Senators and Representatives could see them, he said, "This weight in my right hand came from Massachusetts, and this other one came from Maine. One of them weighs nearly an ounce more than the other." Again, he gave them time to think about what he had just said. Then he concluded by saying, "Gentlemen, we need a standard measurement and a standard weight for the United States of America." That speech and demonstration did not fall on deaf ears, for the end result was the establishment of the Bureau of Standards of Weights and Measures.

By way of analogy, man does not have to convene a delegation, discuss, and establish a standard of measurement whereby God will determine how we weigh in the balance. God has already done that. We read in Proverbs 16:11, "A just weight and balance are the LORD'S: all the weights of the bag are his work." Solomon also wrote in Proverbs 16:2, "All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the LORD weigheth the spirits." God has determined that "... All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" Romans 3:23. Our loving Father has also informed us that we can change so as to be found acceptable of Him. Paul wrote in Romans 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Paul well described the change the Corinthians had undergone in I Corinthians 6:11:

"..... But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

### **How One Lives Today Will Determine How He Will Be Weighed at the Judgment.**

It is true that how one lives today will determine how he will be weighed when the day of judgment comes. If he lives righteously and faithfully by the standard of God's will, he will be found acceptable. If his life is not lived according to God's will, he will be weighed in the balances and found wanting. As a person travels across country, he can know ahead of time where he will end up by ascertaining where the road on which he is traveling leads. The same principle applies spiritually. One can know the outcome of his judgment now by ascertaining how he is living in comparison to the standard of God's revealed will. Time and space will allow only a few examples.

**1. God has already weighed the matter of how many churches there are.** While God speaks in the singular, man opts for the plural. Jesus said in Matthew 16:18, "... Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." In Colossians 1:18 Paul says the body is the church. In Ephesians 4:4 the Bible says "There is one body..." There **are** as many bodies as there are churches. There are as many churches as there are bodies. The Bible says there is only one of each. The matter of the church has already been divinely weighed.

**2. God has already weighed the matter of how He is to be worshipped.** In John 4:24, Jesus said: "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." He further states that God's Word is truth (John 17:17). Any attempt to worship God in a manner that is not divinely approved in the Bible becomes vain worship (Matthew 15:9). The matter of worship has already been divinely weighed.

**3. God has already weighed the matter of the type of music to be used in the church.** Mechanical and vocal were both options. He could choose one or the other or both. He chose vocal (acappella). "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:19). The melody is to be made in the heart which is internal, and not on a mechanical instrument which is external. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Colossians 3:16). The matter of music in the church has already been divinely weighed.

**4. The matter of the Lord's Supper has been weighed.** It consists of unleavened bread to represent the body of our Lord, and fruit of the vine to represent His shed blood" (Matthew 26:26-28). It is to be partaken of on the first day of the week-Sunday. "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread.. ." (Acts 20:7). The matter of the Lord's Supper has already been divinely weighed.

**5. The matter of marriage, divorce, and remarriage has already been weighed.** Jesus said, "And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery"(Matthew 19:9). The matter was also addressed in the great Sermon on the Mount. "But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery" (Matthew 5:32). The matter of marriage, divorce, and remarriage has already been divinely weighed.

**6. Adding to and taking away from the Bible has already been weighed.** God has given man the completed written record of His divine will. .... Ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3). God's warnings are clear. (1) Near the beginning of the Bible: "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you" (Deuteronomy 4:2). (2) Near the middle of the Bible: "Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar" (Proverbs 30:6). (3) Near the end of the Bible: "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book" (Revelation 22:18-19). The matter of adding to or taking away from the Bible (changing it) has already been divinely weighed.

**7. The matter of false teachers has already been weighed.** David wrote in Psalm 119:104, "Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way". Paul said in II Timothy 4:1-3, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth." To the church at Ephesus, Paul said, "That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they

lie in wait to deceive" (Ephesians 4:14). In I John 4:1 John said false prophets are gone out into the world. In II John 7 he said deceivers have entered into the world. The Hebrew writer said, "Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines..." (Hebrews 13:9). Peter said in II Peter 2:1, "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction." False teachers are aptly described by our Lord in Matthew 7:15, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." In writing to the Galatians, Paul said in Galatians 1:8, "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." The matter of false teachers has already been divinely weighed.

The list could go on, and on, and on; one example right after another. But perhaps enough has been presented to make us aware of the importance of remaining faithful to the Word of God. It is not a matter of WHO is right, but rather WHAT is right. When one does the WHAT, the WHO will take care of itself. The day is approaching with the rising of each day's sun wherein we will stand before the great Judge and be weighed in the balances. It is true that some will not want to be weighed because their lack of truth, obedience, and faithfulness will find them left wanting. What they will have failed to correct will be ever apparent. They have no choice about being weighed in the balance then, but they do have a choice now of doing or not doing God's will. Someone in ages past said: "To know the will of God is the greatest knowledge. To find the will of God is the greatest discovery. To do the will of God is the greatest achievement." And to these three may we add a fourth: "To live with God eternally is the greatest reward." Many today refuse to step on a set of scales for they fear the worst about their weight. Refusing to face the truth does not change the condition. Change the condition and you change what the scales will reveal. Change the condition and you change the outcome of the weighing. In Daniel 5:27, Daniel said to Belshazzar, ..... Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting." It was so for him... may it not be so with you!