

*"Wilt Thou not
Revive us
Again :
that thy People
May Rejoice
in Thee?"*

Psa. 85:6



16th ANNUAL LECTURESHIP OF THE
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PREACHING AND MISSIONS

REVIVE US AGAIN

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1990

LECTURESHIP COMMITTEE

Robert Carrell
Edwin Jones
Bill Nicks
David Pharr

DIRECTOR OF LECTURESHIP AND EDITOR OF THE BOOK

Edwin Jones

East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions
6608 Beaver Ridge Road
Knoxville, Tennessee 37931-9599

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Introduction

At various times in church history circumstances and situations have made the creed for revival particularly acute. We live in just such a time. Liberalism and Legalism have combined to tear and divide the Lord's body and secularism has taken full advantage of the disunity. Now, especially, we are in need of a revival of both the spirit and truth of Christianity.

Revive Us Again is dedicated toward addressing our need to awaken from slumber and zealously live for the full truth of the Scriptures. With a revival of faith God can and will accomplish great things in our age. Toward this end, we appreciate the many excellent contributions of the writers in this volume. A special thanks is also due those of the Lectureship Committee, the secretarial staff of ETSOPM, Jay Morris for his beautiful cover design, and the people of Primar of Tennessee, Inc., for their helpful cooperation in printing this book.

Edwin S. Jones
Lectureship Director



Dedication to Clifford and Jean Reel

Because of their outstanding service faithfully rendered both in the church at Karns and as Director of East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions, this lectureship book is dedicated to brother and sister Clifford Reel.

We are honored to have the Reels in the history of this School of Preaching because of their good character and example. We are glad that they continue to show forth the same faithful example of humble service in the church at Oneida. They have been a wholesome influence in all of East Tennessee.

Bill Nicks
for the Elders at Karns and
Faculty of ETSOPM

Reviving Caring and Kindness

by Robert Carrell

"Revive us again; fill each heart with thy love. May each soul be rekindled with fire from above," has long been sung in our assemblies with great fervor but perhaps with little feeling. A revival of caring and kindness, essential ingredients in the compound of love, is sorely needed.

Among churches of Christ, the word "revival" has largely found its way into the trash-heaps of our vocabularies. For example, we prefer to speak of "gospel meetings" instead of "revivals." However, the word "revival" is not only a good word, it is also an appropriate word as we speak of protracted meetings or as we speak of the need for a revival of caring and kindness.

Revival means not only "to come back again to life," but also "to come back to health and vigor, to flourish again after a decline, to come back into use or attention." Jesus taught caring and kindness, and he lived caring and kindness. We need to revive the kind of caring and kindness he taught and lived.

Robert R. Carrell



Robert R. Carrell was born in Bloomington, Indiana. He is married to the former Juanita Jo Peace, and they have three children and five grandchildren.

Brother Carrell attended Indiana University, Abilene Christian College, Anderson College, Memphis State University, and Harding Graduate School of Religion, receiving his B.A. and M.S. degrees. He helped establish and taught in the Greater Cincinnati School of Evangelism. He has also been actively involved as an instructor in Dale Carnegie courses.

He has preached for over 40 years in Indiana, Illinois, Ohio, Florida, North Carolina and Tennessee. He is presently an instructor and Dean of Students at the East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions.

JESUS TAUGHT CARING AND KINDNESS

Luke wrote of "*all that Jesus began both to do and to teach.*" (Acts 1:1) Not only did Jesus **show** caring and kindness, he also **taught** caring and kindness.

Jesus taught, "*Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.*" (Matt. 5:7) Here the Lord is simply teaching that I shall not receive mercy if I am unwilling to show mercy. The hypercritical and hypocritical disposition often shown toward those with whom we may disagree simply does not square with what Jesus is teaching.

Jesus taught that the criteria for judgement will be in part, at least, how caring and kind we were toward those who are hungry, strangers, naked, sick, and in prison. (Matt. 25:31-46) We must be doctrinally pure, but we will not be able to stand behind our doctrinal purity in the judgement if we have been impure in the matters for which our Lord expressed such great concern. Our doctrinal purity means nothing, if, in our lack of kindness and caring for others, we show disdain finally for our Lord. (Matt. 25:40)

Kindness and caring must be constants, not variables. They are in evidence, not because certain conditions make them easier but because it is right to be caring and kind. They must be in evidence whether certain "favorable" conditions exist or not. Are we kind only when a brother agrees totally with our position? We need to show caring and kindness when members and non-members are right and when they are wrong, when we agree and when we disagree. Some are so dominated with a fear of condoning a person or a doctrine with which they disagree that they feel compelled to be uncaring and unkind. How many souls are never won to Christ because of this attitude?

I am to be kind, not because you are kind, but whether you are kind or not. I am to care, not because you care, but whether you care or not. We must be caring for those who care and for those who do not care. We must be kind to those who are kind and to those who are not kind.

Jesus said, "*This is my commandment, that ye love one another, even as I have loved you.*" (John 15:12) We have no

choice but to demonstrate love. This is not simply advice, it is a commandment. In fact, Jesus repeated it in verse 17.

JESUS LIVED CARING AND KINDNESS

At the marriage feast in Cana of Galilee, Jesus showed caring and kindness. (John 2:1-12) When his host had run out of wine at a public marriage feast, with understanding and compassion Jesus turned water into wine--better than that first served--and thereby saved embarrassment for his host.

In his encounter with the women at the well (John 4:4-26), Jesus showed caring and kindness. Here was a Samaritan woman, unaccustomed to having a Jew speak to her, who was not only spoken to but was asked for a drink. Further, Jesus knew of her many marriages but showed care for her spiritual well-being even though she was presently living unmarried with a man. To show caring and kindness was not to condone her sin, but it opened the door for additional teaching.

The pitiful character of John 5:2-9 who remained in his infirmity because others preceded him to the healing waters of the pool was shown kindness by a caring Master who healed him of his infirmity.

Reviving caring and kindness is simply reviving love. Jesus was love! Jesus taught love! Jesus lived love!

CARING AND KINDNESS IN THE BROTHERHOOD

At the risk of sounding naive, this writer would suggest that the many issues presently dividing our brotherhood would likely be less divisive if Christians were to revive caring and kindness. It is this writer's opinion that while many "doctrinal" issues divide us, yet it is the case that a lack of caring and kindness keep the breaches widened.

Regarding the matter of caring and kindness, two extremes can be seen in our brotherhood. One group imagines that such caring and kindness as is expected of the Christian demands that they be more concerned about what they perceive love to be and less concerned about doctrinal differen-

ces. To insist on doctrinal purity, they believe, is to miss the mark in the matter of love.

On the other hand, there are those who emphasize doctrinal purity but have far less regard for caring and kindness in dealing with those having different understandings of scripture teaching. Justification for their lack of kindness is that the other person is wrong. However, does running a traffic light give the arresting officer the right to beat the accused over the head with a baseball bat? How many verbal bats are swung at brethren by others who show little or no indication of disagreeing agreeably?

In a context where Paul is speaking of the fullness of God's revelation, he emphasizes the need for "*speaking truth in love.*" (Eph. 4:15) Nothing in the way of truth need be sacrificed when we show caring and kindness toward those whose understanding is less than or different from ours.

It seems that the hermeneutic of some determines their demonstration of love rather than love being seen as an integral ingredient in the development of a sound hermeneutic. As one writer has stated, "Humility is an essential ingredient in the compound that fosters illumination." (Webb G. Garrison)

Paul said that love "*doth not behave itself unseemly.*" (I Cor. 13:5) To put it into a positive form: Love has good manners. Here Paul is personifying love. Actually, love itself does nothing. Paul means that the person who loves does not behave unseemly; the person who loves has good manners.

Love for one another begins with consideration. "*...and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works.*" (Heb. 10:24) This consideration of one another will lead us to "*Bear...one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.*" (Gal. 6:2) The bickering, the biting, the quarrelling in the brotherhood are downplayed by some under the guise of defending the truth. Truth must be defended, but so must the truth be defended which speaks of caring and kindness in defending that truth.

Paul beautifully blends the ideas of doctrinal purity and considerate love in the Philippian letter when he says:

...make full my joy, that ye be of the same mind, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind; doing nothing through faction or through vainglory, but in lowliness of mind each counting other better than himself; not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others. (2:2-4)

Here is a plea for unity ("of the same mind") and a plea for a demonstration of love ("having the same love") in maintaining this unity. Difficult? Yes! But demanded. How do we do it? Remember Jesus. *"Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead of the seed of David, according to my gospel: wherein I suffer hardship unto bonds, as a malefactor; but the word of God is not bound."* (II Tim. 2:8,9)

In running the race let us look *"unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith...For consider him that hath endured such gainsaying of sinners against himself, that ye wax not weary, fainting in your souls."* (Heb. 12:2,3) As the perfecter of our faith, Jesus contended for doctrinal purity, but he was kind and caring in the dissemination of that faith.

Kindness and caring do not rule out our being tough on occasion. Jesus' love was both tender and tough. He drove out the money-changers from the temple. He offered scathing denunciations of the hypocritical scribes and Pharisees. These, however, were those whose hearts and intentions were singularly set on hypocrisy and wrong-doing. He was kind in his dealings with those who sought to do right.

So must we be as we seek to bring our brethren and others to a full understanding of truth. Some defenders of the faith find this difficult. Caring and kindness pale into insignificance as compared with what some consider to be the weightier matters of the law. But to the contrary, our Lord warned against those who *"tithe mint and anise and cummin, and have left undone the weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and faith: but these,"* said Jesus, *"ye ought to have done, and not to have left the other undone."* (Matt. 23:23) Our Lord clearly defines "weightier matters" and provides the proper balance.

Caring and kindness among brethren debating serious differences would go a long way toward changing the brethren

in error. Although it may be that change should occur regardless of the attitudes of the disputants, it is more often the case that such change will not occur when caring and kindness are wanting. It is still true that "a man convinced against his will is of the same opinion still."

CARING AND KINDNESS IN OUR CONGREGATIONS

Noticing that one of the men of the congregation was not looking well, my wife asked him how he was feeling. He told her, "Not so well." Then he added, "But nobody cares." My wife responded, "Listen, (his name), we're your brothers and sisters in Christ, and we care." Less than a week later, this man died unexpectedly.

Were we kind to him, and did we care? Were we only politely indifferent? Whatever, his perception of his relationship with his brothers and sisters in Christ was that "nobody cares."

Whether real or perceived, relationships which cause brethren to feel that "nobody cares" are relationships which need to be examined. We need to revive caring and kindness in our congregations.

One of the difficulties in our congregations is that we don't really know one another. We may say, "Oh, I have known that brother or that sister for ten years." However, much of our "knowing" is only superficial. You do not "know" a brother simply because you have looked at the back of his head for ten years. Much of our conversation with that brother has centered around the weather, fishing, and other such important items. Seldom do we really get to know one another. Seldom do we share our real feelings about God, the church, families, love, *ad infinitum*. We have in common being spiritual brothers and sisters, but as individuals, we are largely what we feel, and those feelings need to be shared.

Perhaps this lack of knowing accounts, at least in part, for our failure to show caring and kindness in our congregations. Our sensitivities have not been honed to a fine edge because we don't really know one another. And when we don't know one another, it is more difficult to be caring and kind. Agape

love, of course, will reach across the barriers between those who do not know one another. But a more intimate knowledge of one another in our congregations will bridge many gaps in our interpersonal relationships.

Here are some pointed scripture statements which speak of caring and kindness: "*That which maketh a man to be desired is his kindness.*" (Prov. 19:22a) Of the "worthy women" it was said, "*She openeth her mouth with wisdom; And the law of kindness is on her tongue.*" (Prov. 31:26) "*Thus hath Jehovah of hosts spoken, saying, Execute true judgement, and show kindness and compassion every man to his brother.*" (Zech. 7:9) "*Bless them that persecute you: bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that rejoice; weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another....Be not wise in your own conceits.*" (Rom. 12:14-16)

Additional texts read:

Now we that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let each one of us please his neighbor for that which is good, unto edifying. Now the God of patience and of comfort grant you to be of the same mind one with another according to Christ Jesus. (Rom. 15:1,2,5)

and be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you. (Eph. 4:32)

Put on therefore, as God's elect, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving each other, if any man have a complaint against any; even as the Lord forgave you, so also do ye. (Col. 3:12,13)

The results of such caring and kindness are that elders will love preachers and other members, members will love the elders and the preacher, and the preacher will love the elders and other members. It will change the church. It will change the world.

CARING AND KINDNESS IN THE LIVES OF
INDIVIDUALS

While love is generally considered positively, that is, in terms of what it causes one to do, it must also be considered negatively, that is, in terms of what it will keep one from doing. The apostle Paul put it this way:

Owe no man anything, save to love one another: for he that loveth his neighbor hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not covet, and if there be any other commandment, it is summed up in this word, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: love therefore is the fulfillment of the law. (Rom. 13:8-10)

The better way described by Paul in I Corinthians 13--better than coveting the more noticeable spiritual gifts and having the more prominent positions in the body--is the way of love. In fact, having all of the spiritual gifts to the exclusion of a caring and kind love is to profit nothing. (I Cor. 13:2,3)

The caring and kind nature of love is seen in its positive aspects. *"Love suffereth long, and is kind; ...rejoiceth with the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." (I Cor. 13:5-7)*

As well, however, are the negative aspects of love to be considered. *"...love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not its own, is not provoked, taketh not account of evil, rejoiceth not in unrighteousness." (I Cor. 13:4-6)*

We fail to show caring and kindness when we have not the positive aspects of love--when we fail to suffer long and to be kind, when we fail to rejoice with the truth, to bear all things, to believe all things, to hope all things, and to endure all things.

We fail to show caring and kindness in the negative aspects of love--when we envy, when we vaunt ourselves (boast or brag), when we are puffed up, when we behave unseemly, when we seek our own (way), when we are provoked, when we take account of evil, or when we rejoice in unrighteousness.

Under the guise of doctrinal differences or hurt feelings, brethren are often divided. While this writer was in school many years ago and preaching for a country congregation, it

was reported that two older men in the congregation had a falling out over whether or not Saul of Tarsus, while on the road to Damascus, had seen Jesus. One said he did; the other said he didn't. For ten years they were enemies, and neither worshipped his Lord. So far as this writer knows, they died in that state of affairs. This was undoubtedly far less a doctrinal matter that separated them, and far more just pure old mule-headed stubbornness.

Failure to show caring and kindness, however, is seen in more subtle ways. While error cannot be condoned and must be condemned, the person in error should be exposed, through the personality of the Christian, to a compassionate Lord. When we are aloof from one another, we present to the weak the idea of an aloof church, and aloof Lord. When Jesus *"saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion for them, because they were distressed and scattered, as sheep not having a shepherd."* (Matt. 9:36) His compassion did not preclude his condemnation of sin. He did not condone the sinner; he had compassion for him.

The tendency among some may be to categorize sin. We show caring and kindness toward the so-called "minor" sins, but we are more reluctant to accept the confessed adulterer. When the scribes and the Pharisees brought before our Lord the women taken in adultery, they said, *"Teacher, this woman hath been taken in adultery, in the very act. Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such: what then sayest thou of her?"* (John 8:4,5) Evidently, the charge was true. And they were right in their assessment of the penalty due. But as well as seeing the condition of their hearts, Jesus evidently saw the heart of the woman and knew that she was penitent. After exposing the hypocrisy of the scribes and the Pharisees, he told the woman that he did not condemn her and told her to sin no more. Even with an adulteress, our Lord was caring and kind.

What will this caring and kindness do for the church? First, it will help keep the church united. *"...with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; giving diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."* (Eph. 4:2,3) The "unity of the Spirit" and the "bond of peace" are inseparably connected.

Caring and kindness will make it easier to deal with our own sins. Paul said, "*Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; looking to thyself, lest thou also be tempted.*" (Gal. 6:1) An attitude of indifference toward a brother or a sister will make it more difficult to take our own sins seriously.

Caring and kindness will help the giver as well as the receiver. Jesus said, "*It is more blessed to give than to receive.*" (Acts 20:35) Perhaps such is the case because it is in giving that we receive. It is still true that while we are working on our work, our work is working on us. Showing caring and kindness will cause us to become a more caring and kinder people.

CONCLUSION

Our brotherhood needs a revival of caring and kindness. Our Lord taught caring and kindness, and he lived caring and kindness. When we have a brotherhood which cares and is kind, congregations which care and are kind, and individuals within those congregations who care and are kind, then we shall have gone a long way toward having the greatest revival the church has known in modern times.

Wilt Thou Revive Us Again?

by Clarence DeLoach

The Psalmist asked, "*Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?*" (Psa. 85:6) The prophet Habakkuk prayed, "*O Lord revive thy work in the midst of the years.*" (Hab. 3:2)

Revival! What a word! It is needed again and again!

MEN AND NATIONS HAVE NEEDED IT

Jacob needed revival! His story is told in the middle section of Genesis. He was born in struggle. In his father's old age he stooped to fraud and deception to obtain his brother's birthright. To escape the wrath of Esau, his mother made arrangements for him to visit her brother and dwell with him. On his way he had an enriching experience at Bethel. He saw a ladder reaching into heaven. The God of Abraham and Isaac appeared to him. For the first time in his life God was real to Jacob. He was so overwhelmed by that experience that he made three vows to God. He vowed (1) that the Lord would be his God, (2) that he would remember God's house,

Clarence DeLoach, Jr.



Clarence DeLoach, Jr. was born in Dickson County, Tennessee. He is married to the former Eddie Aline Lowe and they have four children. He attended Freed-Hardeman College and David Lipscomb College.

Brother DeLoach began preaching at age 15. He has done located work in Tennessee, Georgia, Ohio and West Virginia. He taught at Ohio Valley College for eleven years; has conducted over 300 gospel meetings in 22 states and one foreign country; has conducted a campaign meeting in Guyana, South Africa for the past five years. He has a daily radio program and weekly TV program. He has lectured at Freed-Hardeman College, Ohio Valley College, David Lipscomb College and several preacher training schools. He is presently with the Highland Heights church in Lebanon, Tennessee.

Brother DeLoach has been on staff of Gospel Advocate for seven years and is presently staff writer for Christian Bible Teacher. He is author of Bound to Abound (now out of print).

and (3) that he would give a tenth of all he possessed. (See Gen. 28:20-22)

Time moved on! Jacob traveled eastward and finally arrived at Laban's house. He met his match! The deceiver became the deceived! He fell in love with Rachel, but was tricked into marrying Leah. He worked hard and long for Rachel. His wages were changed ten times. THINGS WEREN'T GOING WELL FOR JACOB! In time he became obsessed with cattle and riches. God blessed him, but Jacob forgot his vows. He raised a family without God! It's no wonder that his boys became mean and cruel, and his daughters became worldly. Even his wives were idolatrous.

Jacob had been away from Bethel too long! He had forgotten his promises! But, Jehovah had not forgotten him.

And God said unto Jacob, Arise go up to Bethel, and dwell there: and make there an altar unto God, that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother. (Gen. 35:1)

It was a call to put away their idols. It was a time of commitment and cleansing. The entire family went! It was a time of revival! Jacob gave the place a new name - El Bethel, the God of the House of God! Jacob was never the same again! He was prepared to fit into God's plan.

Israel needed revival often in her history. Materially speaking, she had reached the peak of her glory in the days of King Solomon. But, spiritually she had declined. The Lord responded to Solomon's prayer with these words.

If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land. (II Chron. 7:14)

Things were dark and dismal in Judah when young Josiah began to reign. His predecessors had desecrated the temple and introduced abominations in the land. Josiah followed in the path of David and initiated reform in Judah. An accidental discovery brought about revival. They had lost the book! Josiah read it and commanded that it be read before all the

people. He called for commitment to keep it. Innovations were removed and the people transformed. The Word of God brought revival throughout Judah and Benjamin. (See II Chron. 34:29-33)

At various intervals, God's Old Testament covenant people needed revival. Such has also characterized spiritual Israel - the Church.

A LOOK AT THE BEGINNING

The book of Acts reveals what it was like in the beginning. The preparations had been made, and the foundation secured. Her beginning was right on target - no accident of afterthought! We see her in glory and beauty. Living in the shadow of the cross those early believers reflected the glory of Christ.

The church is pictured as a living, moving, active organism. It was the church, called out from the world. It was the vineyard in which her servants labored; the temple in which her priests worshipped; the army in which her soldiers fought and body in which her members were one.

The gospel was taken from Jerusalem to Rome. The Great Commission was taken seriously. Multitudes of sinners were touched and changed by the good news. The inspired historian, Luke captured the growth of the early church. First, about three thousand souls were added. (Acts 2:41) Then came daily additions, with five thousand men in Chapter four, followed by multitudes. (Acts 2:47; 5:14) The authorities in Jerusalem accused the brethren of filling Jerusalem with their doctrine. (Acts 5:28) A great company of the priests were obedient to the faith. (Acts 6:7) What exciting days they were as these new Christians turned the world upside down! (Acts 17:6)

The book of Acts is an eloquent testimony of the conviction, love, faith and dedication of those early believers. Churches sprang up all over the Roman Empire. Sinful man found forgiveness, love and acceptance with God. It was a time of unprecedented growth!

Great churches like Ephesus flourished! But, by the close of the Century many of those churches needed revival! Ephesus did! The Lord said, *"thou hast lost thy first love."* (Rev. 2:4)

Laodicea had totally lost perspective! She thought she was great - rich, proud and independent! Perhaps, a picture of many 20th Century churches. But, the Lord said, *"thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind and naked."* (Rev. 3:18) What she needed was not what she thought she needed! She needed refinement and a new sense of vision. She had lost the true sense of mission and needed revival.

Whenever we lose our bearings; when we lack vision; majoring on minors and forgetting that sense of urgency - we need revival!

Like the Corinthians we have become weak, needing strength; sickly, needing healing and sleepy; needing an awakening. (I Cor. 11:30)

WHERE WE STAND

The need for revival is apparent. Any casual inspection of our brotherhood reveals it.

In our nation and around the world a movement was launched in the Nineteenth Century. Voices were raised simultaneously calling upon people to by-pass human creeds and sectarian bias and get back to the Bible. Many saw the folly of religious division and the appeal to unite upon the scriptures had a tremendous impact. Like wildfire, the restoration plea grew! New Testament churches were planted in the countryside, in small town, and in the great cities across this land.

A peak was reached in the Fifties and Sixties. The religious encyclopedias said we were the fastest growing religious body in America.

But, something happened! We began to lose momentum. Much of the ground we made has been lost. Did our movement become a monument? Without attempting to assess all

the factors involved in our decline, it is obvious that we are down.

I receive numerous bulletins. Most of them reflect figures that are down. I talk to many preachers, and they are saying we are down. Lectureships and workshops have dealt with the problem. Books on church growth have predicted a dismal future if present trends continue.

We are down in the number of conversions. Very few churches are baptizing a hundred people in a year. 'Over twenty years ago it took twenty members of the church one year to convert one person. What would that figure be today - more like forty?

Scores of well established churches are running one hundred below fifteen to twenty years ago. There are exceptions! Due to excellent location or more challenging programs some are doing well. In some cases churches swell due to membership placements or a very popular preacher.

It is frightening to consider our decline in training preachers. Dowell Flatt reported in a spring issue of the Gospel Advocate that he had found in a survey of all our schools, colleges and preacher training institutions that we are down 20% in the number preparing to preach.

And what about our missionaries? Ten years ago we had more men in the field preaching to the masses than today, though the population has skyrocketed to over five billion people. Even men who are willing to go are finding it increasingly difficult to find a sending church. Fund raising is harder than ever.

What has happened? Have we turned inward? Have we become proud of our successes? Have we become too tradition bound? Are we holding tenaciously to worn out methods? Have we become smug and comfortable inside the walls of our commodious buildings? Have we become too educated? Have we lost a sense of urgency? Do we really believe men are lost without Christ? Is there any passion for souls? Have we absorbed too much of this present world? Have creatures comforts and personal amusement taken the place of evangelism and sacrifice?

The decade of the Eighties has been for the most part a period of decline. The Nineties are here! What will this decade mean to the church? The Twenty-First Century is knocking at our door. What will it be like for our children and grandchildren?

IT'S TIME FOR REVIVAL

Never has the need been greater. Never have the opportunities been more abundant. Can things be turned around? One thing is clear - we will never experience the growth of the First Century church until we **are** what they were; believe as they believed and serve as they served.

We must get back to the basics! It's no time for cleverness, human gimmicks or quick-fix techniques. Our minds need renewal!

WHERE DO WE BEGIN

Revival begins with me! We need the attitude of the old preacher who prayed, "*Lord, start a revival in this church and let it begin with me.*" Too long we've talked about the church in abstract. Too long we have removed it from the individual.

We need a revived faith in the message! Our pulpits have become forums for psychology and sociology. They need to catch fire for God! This will happen only when preachers feel deeply the burden of lost souls. Like Jeremiah the fire needs to rage in our bones. (Jer. 20:9)

For too long we have presented a milk-toast diet. Our sermonettes have made Christianettes. From the pablum-pretty speeches and eloquent platitudes approach, we need to revive the clear, clarion call - that distinctive and powerful message that characterized the first Christians.

The early Christians recognized their mission as one of teaching and sharing the message that centered in Christ. It was good news and they wanted everyone to hear about it. It centered in Jesus' death, burial and resurrection. It convicted men of sin, but showed how God was willing to forgive and accept.

It was exclusive in content and uncompromising in its demands. Though it appeared narrow to those who opposed it, those early disciples dared to confront their world with the claims of Jesus.

It was essentially good news. It was not a condemning message, but a saving. It warned of eternal consequences so men might be motivated to seek deliverance. It called men to sorrow and repentance so they could know peace and joy.

They did not whine, "Look what the world is coming to," but joyously shouted, "Look who has come to the world." Their voices and lives could not be silenced because they had been with Jesus. (Acts 4:13)

Once we share their message, we'll experience their mood—a zeal and excitement that challenged their world.

WHAT REVIVAL ENTAILS

Revival never comes easily. Men don't want to change. It is more comfortable to maintain the status-quo.

Revival demands reflection! Sticking our heads in the sand and ignoring the problem will perpetuate our mediocrity. But true reflection upon who we are - what our mission is and where we stand will motivate change, not stagnation.

Revival necessitates a desire for the "old paths." (Jer. 6:16) We must have the spiritual vision to **see** them, the incentive to **ask** for them and the will to **walk** in them.

Revival requires a right spirit. David prayed that God would "*renew a right spirit within me.*" (Psalm 51:10)

A FORMULA FOR REVIVAL

The prophet, Isaiah, tells us what changed his life and enabled him to serve. In Isa. 6:1-9 the prophet speaks of three looks that brought revival in his life.

First, an upward look. He saw the Lord high and lifted up! He saw his sovereignty - he is on the throne. God is in control of history! We need the vision of God that enables us to see his purpose being worked out. He saw his glory and

majesty. As Christians we must never lose the sense of awe in his divine presence. We may become so familiar with divine things that we lose the sense of wonder. True worship keeps this wonder alive!

Second, an inward look. Seeing God in his greatness caused Isaiah to see the sins and weakness in his own life. "*Woe is me*," he said. Revival requires that we take a good look at ourselves. Every sin must be confessed and cleansed by the blood of Jesus. There can be no revival without cleansing.

Third, an outward look. Because Isaiah had seen God, and his own sins he was prepared to answer the call of service. He heard the voice of God calling. Sin in our lives will muffle his voice. God asked, "*Whom shall I send*," "*who will go*"? The answer came from one who had seen his glory, and whose sins were purged, "*here am I, Lord send me*." Revival enables us to serve!

Oh! How we need to see God afresh, and be assured of his cleansing so we'll be ready for service. Could it be that we're lagging in our mission because we have lost sight of God and our own assurance?

THE FRUITS OF REVIVAL

Revival will bring change in our lives. Faith will replace fear! Optimism will replace negativism! Confidence will take away suspicion.

Revival will enhance our joy. A happy, joyful brotherhood serving in unity.

Revival will bring a sense of belonging. We'll be prepared to serve! We'll find our place in the body.

Revival stirs a richer, deeper assurance of our salvation. God's order is - revival, restoration and reassurance.

CONCLUSION

The assurance of God's word is that the kingdom shall stand forever. (Dan. 2:44) In history there have been highs and lows for the church. While we may be down, we are not out! We must reverse downward trends! However, it is not

by human effort that God's work is done. Zechariah reminded Judah that God's work in Jerusalem would be accomplished, *"not by might, nor by power, by my spirit, saith the Lord of host."* (Zech. 4:6)

Let us pray with Habakkuk, *"O Lord, revive thy work in the midst of the years."* (Hab. 3:2)

The words of Christ to the church at Sardis seem especially fitting for the church today.

Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. (Rev. 3:2)

People May Rejoice In Thee

by Frank McElveen

I am grateful to the God of heaven for allowing me to be here tonight. I want Brother Edwin S. Jones and those who comprise the lectureship committee to know how much I appreciate the invitation to come and to speak on this 16th Annual East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions Lectureship. I also appreciate the brethren that are participants on this program along with me. Now to the task at hand.

Wilt thou not revive us again; that thy people may rejoice in thee? (Psalm 85:6)

This is a psalm written after a signal display of God's mercy toward Israel, but when there was still much wanting to make the condition of the people altogether satisfactory. It consists of a thanksgiving for the deliverance vouchsafed (vers. 1-3); a prayer for further and more complete restoration to favor (vers. 4-7); and a joyful anticipation of the granting of the prayer, and of the bestowal on Israel, ultimately of all temporal and spiritual blessings. The prayers of scripture, like its promise, never grow old. They deal not with the changing surface and circumstances of life, but with its living heart

Frank N. McElveen

Frank N. McElveen is a native of Berkeley County, South Carolina. He is married to the former Goldie Brown and they have three children.

Brother McElveen received his academic training at the Nashville Christian Institute in Nashville, Tennessee, and at Howard University in Washington, D.C. He has been preaching the gospel for 34 years and has served at congregations in Tennessee, Alabama, Louisiana and South Carolina.

For the past 30 years he has served the Azalea Drive Church of Christ in Charleston, South Carolina, where he is the senior minister.

and abiding needs. So this prayer of the old psalmist is as fresh and fit for our lips tonight as when the ink was wet in which he wrote. The same spirit who inspired him also "helpeth our infirmities."

The outcome of REVIVAL. "*That thy people may rejoice in thee,*" the psalmist was thinking of God's chosen nation, Israel. That is no hindrance, to our application of both prayer and promise. The conditions and forms of national life and of church life are wholly different from what they were then and never can be the same. But principles remain the same. Righteousness still exalts a nation. "*Blessed is the people whose God is the Lord!*" A dead or lukewarm church cannot be a joyful Christian. Suppose all baptized believers would become true, earnest, loving disciples of the Lord Jesus, "*filled with the spirit,*" the whole face of society and national life would be changed, because its heart would be changed. (Acts 8:8) Meanwhile, revival, with all its fruits, either in the church or in the nation, must begin in the hearts and homes of Christians. Then the joy of the Lord will be our strength. All turns on this word, "thou" with God is life's fountain. In him our bodies live: how much more our spirits! (John 15:5; Phil. 2:13)

ITS PLEA. "*That thy people may rejoice in thee.*" So then it is plainly taught that low religious life and a joyous one are incompatible; there must be a reviving if there is to be rejoicing. With so many people religion seems rather a distress than a delight. They are, as it has been said, like a man with a headache; he would not like to lose his head, but he is very uncomfortable with it. A man was once invited to eat of some apples from a certain orchard, but he promptly declined. His friend was much surprised, and asked him the reason. "Oh," said he, "I took of some of your apples the other day, which were hanging over the hedge, and I am quite sure I do not want any more of them." "Oh," said the other, "I am not surprised; those apples were a poor lot; but I put them there on purpose for the boys, who are always taking what does not belong to them. But come into the middle of the orchard, and try the fruit there, which is of a very different sort." And so it is with many Christians; they take only the hard sour fruit of the religious life; that which is full of delight is in the midst of the garden of God, where as yet they have never entered. It is good to be God's servants at all, better, far better, to be of

those who rejoice, whose service of God is not a drudgery, but a delight; best of all when the rejoicing is in God, not in his blessings merely, but in him. God wants us to rejoice in him; the world will be more surely won for God when more joy characterizes his servants, and for ourselves, it is the surest guarantee of steadfastness.

JESUS CHRIST OUR EXAMPLE

Jesus Christ was "*a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief*." Yet He possessed a deep joy that was beyond anything the world could offer. As He faced the cruel death of Calvary, Jesus said to His followers, "*These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full*." (John 15:11) Those of us who have trusted Christ have the privilege of experiencing "*fullness of joy*." (Ps. 16:11) Yet, many Christians live under a cloud of disappointment when they could be walking in the sunshine of joy. What has robbed them of their joy? The answer to this important question is found in Paul's letter to the Philippian church. It is the sharing of Paul's secret of Christian joy! At least 19 times in these four chapters Paul mentions joy, rejoicing or gladness! The unusual thing about the letter is this: Paul's situation was such that there appeared to be no prisoner and his case was coming up shortly. He might be acquitted, or he might be beheaded! (Acts 28:30-31 indicates that he was a prisoner in his own hired house, but he was chained to a Roman soldier and not permitted to preach in public. Paul had wanted to go to Rome as a preacher (Rom. 1:13-16); instead, he had come as a prisoner. And, unfortunately, the believers at Rome were divided: Some were for Paul and some were against him. (Phil. 1:15-17) In fact, some of the Christians even wanted to make things more difficult for the apostle!

Yet, in spite of his danger and discomfort, Paul overflowed with joy. What was the secret of this joy? The secret is found in another word that is often repeated in Philippians: it is the word mind. Paul uses mind 10 times, and also uses the word think 5 times. Add the time he uses remember and you have a total of 16 references to the mind. In other words, the secret of Christian joy is found in the way the believer thinks his attitudes. After all, outlook determines outcome, as we think, so we are. (Prov. 23:7)

The best way to get to that point of rejoicing in the Lord, is for us to discover what are the causes of not having the joy.

1. Circumstances: Most of us must confess that when things are "going our way" we feel a lot happier and we are much easier to live with. But have you ever stopped to consider how few of the circumstances of life are really under our control? We have no control over the weather or over the traffic on the expressway or over the things over people say and do. The person whose happiness depends on ideal circumstances is going to be miserable much of the time! The poet Byron wrote, "Men are the sport of circumstances." And yet the apostle Paul in the worst of circumstances, writing a letter saturated with joy!

2. People: All of us have lost our joy because of people: what they are, what they say, and what they do. (And no doubt we ourselves have contributed to making somebody else unhappy. It works both ways.) But we have to live and work with people; we cannot isolate ourselves and still live to glorify Christ. We are the light of the world, and the salt of the earth. But sometimes the light grows dim and the salt becomes bitter because of other people. Is there any way to have joy in spite of people?

3. Things: The basic social ill that causes us to lose our joy is materialism. Today God's children are seduced by business and entertainment, and with the one hundred and sixty-eight hours God gives to us every week we use very little of it to promote his cause. (Mark 16:15,16) Things! How they cause us to lose our joy. Yet Jesus said, "*a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth.*" (Luke 12:15) In the sermon on the mount, Jesus warned against laying up treasures on earth: They are not safe, they do not last, and they never satisfy. Yet most people today think that joy comes from the things that they own. In reality things can rob us of the only kind of joy that really lasts.

4. Worry: How many people have been robbed of peace and fulfillment because of worry! In fact, worry even has physical consequences, and, while medicine can remove the symptoms, it cannot remove the cause. Worry is an "inside joy." You can purchase "sleep" at the drug store, but you can-

not purchase "rest." If Paul had wanted to worry, he had plenty of occasion. He was a political prisoner facing possible execution. His friends in Rome were divided in their attitudes toward his case. But in spite of all these difficulties, Paul does not worry! Instead, he writes a letter filled with joy and tells us how to stop worrying.

What Should The Local Church Be?

Paul said *"I beseech you therefore brethren by the mercies of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind. That ye may prove what that is good and acceptable, and perfect will of God."* (Romans 12:1,2) At the local church if we can get the minds of Christian thinking right we will rejoice in the Lord. Any congregation of the Lord's people should be a redemptive fellowship. By a redemptive fellowship I mean that the whole atmosphere and all our relationships to each other should be evidently loving and full of spiritual joy, so that anyone who visits our services is warmed and made serene. When an outsider comes to our services, he should see our love for one another, and therefore know that we are truly Jesus' disciples. (John 13:35) This according to our Saviour is the most powerful preaching that any of us can do. And we should draw an outsider into our circles of friendship, rather than let them look on hungrily as we talk only to each other. Children are influenced by such a redemptive fellowship and it is natural and inevitable for them to obey the gospel. It should be unnatural for them to grow up embittered and estranged from the Lord's people.

Epaphroditus Revives Me!

by Hugo McCord

Very little is known about Epaphroditus, but enough to make us long to meet him in heaven! Apparently he was born to pagan parents, for they named him in honor of Aphrodite (Venus), the Grecian goddess of love, who was born of sea-foam. His name then means that which is lovely, charming, fascinating. The prefix they placed on his name (ep) perhaps was an intensive form, thus indicating that his rejoicing parents were ecstatic at the baby's birth: "very lovely, very charming, and extraordinarily fascinating child!"

All parents should feel that way about a creation of God entrusted to them for training. Among the pagans, however, gratitude for a baby's coming into a home was not universal. "Exposure" was a common practice: to abandon a deformed child or a female baby, as some people bag up unwanted kittens, drive into the country, and leave them beside the road. Pagans did not know that *"children are the heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is his reward."* (Psalm 127:3) In reality every mother is surrogate: the baby is not her own.

Hugo McCord



Hugo McCord was born in New Albany, Mississippi. He married Lois Henderson, and they have one son, one daughter, and six grandchildren. He attended Freed-Hardeman College, University of Illinois, University of Tulsa, Virginia Seminary, Southern Seminary and New Orleans Seminary, and has earned A.A., B.A., M.A., B.D., and Th.D. degrees.

Brother McCord has done local work in Illinois, Indiana, Washington, D.C., Texas, Virginia, Oklahoma, and Louisiana. He has preached in 42 states and 18 foreign countries. In addition, he has appeared in scores of lectureships all over this country and the world. Brother McCord has taught at Oklahoma Christian College in Bible and Biblical Languages and as an adjunct professor with Alabama Christian School of Religion. His many books and articles have further expanded his influence for good and helped establish him as a truly great man of the faith.

Brother and sister McCord have recently moved to Portland, Oregon.

America too has gone pagan. Before 1973 it was murder to kill an unborn child. Now our Supreme Court holds that the fetus for the first six months is not a person, and that a pregnant woman, and her alone, should determine whether the baby lives or dies. As of 1988 Russia is more pagan than America, now legalizing abortion during the first seven months of pregnancy. And a few gospel preachers hold that for the first nine months no immortal spirit or soul is in the fetus, only when "it" starts breathing through "its" own nose.

In America one is fined and/or jailed for destroying an eagle's egg, but not for injecting a saline solution into the womb and applying a suction pump to destroy a developing child. The Supreme Court and sociologists in the universities and evolutionists say the six month fetus is a potential human being, but not yet human. Christians say the six month fetus is a human being with much potential.

Luke describes a six month fetus as leaping in his mother's womb for joy.(1:26, 44) True, the particular fetus described was filled with the Holy Spirit (1:15), but it is too much to say that as yet he was not a person.

It is inconceivable that the Lord sends the spirit (*ruach*) into a fetus only after six months.(Zechariah 12:1) One does not know how to describe the non-spirited fleshly mass for the six months. The only conceivable idea appears to be that the "Father of spirits" sends the spirit from heaven into the fertilized egg the day of conception.(Hebrews 12:9) No one knows "*what is the way of the spirit (ruach)* in the bones of the pregnant woman" (Ecclesiastes 11:5), but biblically it is there. God's action is invisible and imperceptible, but the inspired writer makes it real. People of faith take him at his word.

The baby Epaphroditus matured and came to be loved and appreciated by the apostle Paul, who wrote:

I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and servant of my need, since he was longing for all of you, and he was distressed because you had heard he had been sick. Indeed he was sick, and near death; but God had mercy on him, and not only on him but also on me, so that I might not

have sorrow upon sorrow. Therefore I have more eagerly sent him, in order that, when you see him again, you will rejoice, and I will be without sorrow. So, receive him in the Lord with all joy, and hold such people in honor. He was near death for Christ's work, risking his life, that he might make up your lack of service to me. (Philippians 2:25-30)

Paul paid five compliments to Epaphroditus. First, Paul claimed him as a brother. He was not a physical brother to Paul, a Jew, but he was among those Paul could describe as "*brothers in the Lord*," those who had obeyed the gospel.(Philippians 1:14, 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9)

For Epaphroditus to become a brother meant he had to change from his pagan parents' religion to Christianity. If he loved his parents, as they apparently loved him, the change was not easy. But personal integrity was at stake. Should one stay in his parents' church because he loves them, or should one love the Lord Jesus more than parents? "*He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me.*" (Matthew 10:37)

Paul could relate to Epaphroditus on the necessary change: he had had to turn from his parents' religion, and it was difficult. Some twenty-four years after he left "*the traditions of my fathers*" (Galatians 1:14) to be immersed into Christ, he still was grieving about his blood-kin:

I have intense sorrow and ceaseless pain in my heart. Indeed I could wish that I myself were condemned, and banished from Christ, for the sake of my brothers, my fellow-countrymen according to the flesh. (Romans 9:2-3)

Similarly, Gus Nichols loved his Baptist mother, but the preaching of C. A. Wheeler opened his eye, and his supreme love for Jesus moved him to leave her church. She called him a "turn-coat," which was hard to absorb, for she was precious to him.

We hope Epaphroditus was able to convert his parents, but certain it is that he left his parents' worship of Aphrodite and turned to the worship of Christ.

The second compliment received by Epaphroditus was that Paul recognized him as a fellow worker. Epaphroditus did not think that baptism was the end commandment of the Lord, but only the beginning. Therefore joyously he worked out his own salvation day by day, for he had tasted that the Lord is precious. (Philippians 2:12; 1 Peter 2:3)

Paul's third compliment was a recognition of military qualities in Epaphroditus: uncompromising steadfastness and aggressiveness and readiness. A Christian soldier does not use physical weapons, but the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, in opposing error and establishing truth. (Ephesians 6:17)

The fourth compliment recognized the fact that the Philippian church had confidence in Epaphroditus as trustworthy to take their contribution to Paul at Rome, some four hundred miles away: he was their messenger.

The fifth compliment recognized that the money brought to Paul was insufficient, and Epaphroditus decided to stay in Rome, get a job, and help Paul with rent and food bills: he became a "*servant of my need*," wrote the apostle.

The servant went beyond any call of duty; perhaps he held down two jobs, and became seriously ill. Yet he continued working. Word got back to Philippi of his near fatal sickness, and the church was worried about him. When Paul heard that, he thought enough is enough, and he sent the dedicated Epaphroditus home, lest he die, and to relieve the worry of the Philippian Christians. He commanded them to honor such men. He had offered his body as a living sacrifice. (Romans 12:1) Won't it be wonderful to visit with such a person in heaven?

Ebedmelech Revives Me!

by Hugo McCord

Ebedmelech was an Ethiopian. (Jeremiah 38:7) Ethiopians are black people. (Jeremiah 13:23) TV pictures of starving Ethiopians have touched many hearts. Why is their skin black, while others show white or red or yellow or brown?

I. ORIGIN OF VARIOUS PIGMENTS

What was the color of Adam's skin? His name means that which is red or ruddy. The Hebrew word for the earth from which Adam was made has the same meaning (Genesis 2:7), which makes a Mississippi native think of the town Red Banks. The hungry Esau, seeing pottage boiling, used a form of the same Hebrew word when he urgently requested Jacob, "*Give me, I beg you, to eat from the red the red the this, for I am weary.*" (awkward but literal translation, Genesis 25:30) Jeremiah used the same root word in Lamentations 4:7, translated "ruddy," where the color of some people was compared to red corals or rubies. But no one knows the color of the pigment under Adam's skin.

SPECULATIONS

Some say that the mark placed on Cain was a black skin. (Genesis 4:15) If so, one still has to wonder where today's blackness originated, for all of Cain's descendants were drowned in the flood in the days of Noah.

Since some descendants of Ham were African, some say that curse which Noah uttered resulted in a black skin. (Psalm 78:51; Genesis 9:25) However, the curse was not directed against Ham, but against Canaan; and the skin of the Canaanites was white.

A black preacher student from Nigeria came into my office at Oklahoma Christian College asking if God had cursed the Negro. No, I responded. He said that one of the preacher students had so stated. I asked, Who? He said, "Shirley

Young." Shirley was an excellent black preacher student from Indianapolis. I called Shirley to the office and asked why he had said that God had cursed the Negro. He responded, "I learned it in your Bible class." "Mine? How can you say that?" He replied that I had told the students about "Shadrach, Meshach, and a bad Negro." Shirley had made up a joke, but the Nigerian student had taken him seriously.

Some speculate that God, when he scattered the people from the tower at Babel, not only confounded languages but also changed skin pigments. Maybe so, maybe not.

WHAT IS NOT SPECULATION

That of which one can be sure is that God made of one "*every nation of men*," and that all peoples are precious to him who tasted "*of death for every one*." (Acts 17:26; Hebrews 2:9) Black or white or yellow or red or brown is beautiful, for God made "no junk." He looks not "*on the outward appearance*," but "*on the heart*." (1 Samuel 16:7) A Philippine surgeon, after applying mercurochrome to a brown abdomen, remarked, "As soon as I slit the skin, we are all alike."

II. A PROSELYTE

Ebedmelech was a proselyte. Somehow he had learned that there is one true God of heaven and earth, YHWH by name. (Exodus 3:15) He had had the courage to turn away from animism or other false religions of his people to put his faith in YHWH. (Jeremiah 39:18) He who dares to change religions or churches must be courageous. The more deeply one loves his people, the more difficult it is to make a change.

Paul had the courage to turn against his kinfolks. About a quarter of century after his immersion he was still painfully grieved that he had been unable to convert them. (Romans 9:1-2) When Gus Nichols left his mother's church, she called him a "turncoat." But he had learned the way of the Lord more perfectly, and stayed with it. He was hurt that she did not understand, for he loved her deeply.

III. A NAME CHANGE

Berkley Hackett told me in Kenya that often black people at their immersion change their first names to names of Bible characters. I do not know the first name of Brother Tunanakatta in Jakarta, Indonesia, but I know that at his immersion he became "David."

Similarly, the Ethiopian black man who became a proselyte in the time of Jeremiah changed his name. What name his parents gave him is unknown, but it was not Ebedmelech, which is pure Hebrew, and means "the slave of the king." Whether or not one is named so is not nearly so important as his being a slave of the King.

IV. A PALACE OFFICIAL

It is not necessary to conclude that Ebedmelech, described as a eunuch, (*saris*), Jeremiah 38:7, was impotent or unmarried, for Potiphar, an official under Pharaoh, was married and yet is described as a eunuch, (*saris*), Genesis 39:1, translated as "officer."

Similarly, besides Ebedmelech, another Ethiopian proselyte was an office of Queen Candace, and is described as a eunuch, (*eunouchos*), Acts 8:27, and there is no reason why the word should not be translated "officer" as in the case of Potiphar. And in the same way one can say that Ebedmelech was a palace officer "*who was in the king's house.*" (Jeremiah 38:7)

Though some men are physical eunuchs, and though some men were castrated to make them harmless as harem employees, there are some who make themselves eunuchs, not physically, but by will power, because they aim to go to heaven. (Matthew 19:12) People, divorcing for incompatibility, have forfeited the right to be remarried. In Jesus' eyes, when such people remarry, they become adulterers, and no adulterer can go to heaven. (Matthew 19:9; 1 Corinthians 6:9)

V. EXTRAORDINARY COURAGE AND CARING

Four princes of the king (Shephatiah, Gedaliah, Jucal, and Pashur) hated Jeremiah's preaching, and went to the king asking permission to put Jeremiah to death. (38:1, 4) The

spineless king Zedekiah replied, "*Behold, he is in your hand; for the king is not he that can do anything against you.*"

The hateful princes decided on a lingering death for the prophet: they dropped him into a dungeon of mud. Ebed-melech could have kept quiet, lest he offend the four princes. But his courage and love for a human being caused him to go over the heads of the princes and to speak directly to the king to save Jeremiah's life.

The cowardly king yet had some human compassion, for he sent Ebedmelech with thirty (one manuscript says three) men to the rescue. The thoughtful slave of the king took rags and worn-out garments and ropes and dropped them down to the sinking in the mire, saying, "*Put now these rags and worn-out garments under your armholes under the ropes.*" So the man of God was saved.

Then Ebedmelech realized that he faced the anger of the four princes, and he knew that they would not rest until they had killed him. However, the good Lord was watching, and wanted to spare the brave and caring Ebedmelech. The Lord sent Jeremiah (still muddy?) to tell the king's slave, "*You shall not be given into the hand of the men of whom you are afraid. I will surely save you. You will not fall by the sword. Your life will be yours for a reward, because you have trusted in me.*" (39,17,18)

VI. SOMEDAY NO COLOR DIFFERENTIAL

Christians rejoice in Ebedmelech's trust in the Lord, and in the conversion of another black Ethiopian palace official. (Acts 8:39) In God's plan for the present, despite advanced technology, no ethiopian "can change his skin" any more than a leopard can change his spots. (Jeremiah 13:23)

But someday, as Job speaks representatively of peoples of all colors, "*After my skin, even this body, is destroyed, then without my flesh shall I see God; whom I, even I, shall see on my side, and my eyes shall behold, and not as a stranger*" (19:26,27), various pigments will be gone forever.

Oneisiphorus Revives Me!

by Hugo McCord

I. HAPPINESS: A CHILD IS BORN!

Early in the first century, likely at Iconium, joyful to the parents was the announcement of a baby's birth. Happily and with anticipation the Greek-speaking parents named their son Oneisiphorus (*oniemi*), "to profit, to enjoy, to delight," combined with *phero*, "to bring, to bear", and so meaning "a bringer of profit," or "a bearer of delight."

Those parents' reaction was wholesome, yes, the way God wants all parents to feel. *"As arrows in the hand of a mighty man, so are the children of youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them."* (Psalm 127:4-5)

Unfortunately, however, many babies are unwanted, and millions are murdered before birth. In Russia paganism allows legal killing of the unborn during the first seven months of pregnancy. Our beloved America is pagan too, and only a step behind Russia, allowing children up to six months before birth to be killed.

An evolutionary doctor considers the unborn as a "potential human being," but a Christian doctor considers the unborn as a "human being with much potential."

II. PAGANS WERE CONVERTED

Oneisiphorus grew up and married a lady named Lektra. To them two sons were born, Semaia and Zeno. (2 Timothy 4:19, Greek minuscule 181) Zeno's name reflects an appreciation of Zeus, the alleged father of the gods. So we know that Oneisiphorus was a pagan, and apparently his wife and sons also.

According to an ancient apocryphal book ACTA PAULI ET THECLAE (referred to by Eusebius in the fourth century, and mentioned by Jerome and Augustine in the fifth century), Oneisiphorus was Paul's host in Iconium. This would mean that on Paul's first missionary journey Oneisiphorus and his

family were converted from paganism and were baptized into Christ about 48 A.D.

These conversions would mean that Oneisiphorus and Lektra changed from their parents' religions. They had become convinced that one religion (or, one church) is not as good as another. It was not that they did not love their parents, but they had learned something that their parents had never known. Oneisiphorus and Lektra had learned, moreover, that the blood of Jesus was the saving power, not their parents' blood. So they had the courage to make a change.

If one loves his parents it is not easy to change from their religion. Some twenty-four years after Paul left his family church, he wrote that his *"kinsmen according to the flesh"* still were much on his mind: *"I have great sorrow and unceasing pain in my heart. I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brothers' sake."* (Romans 9:2-3) But he had tasted that the Lord is precious, and would not turn back.

When Gus Nichols' mother heard that he had changed churches, she called him a "turncoat." That was hard to take, for he warmly loved his mother. But Gus could not be honest in holding on to what he knew was false. He thus showed he loved truth more than his parents.

Frans Magro and his wife of Malta (where Paul was shipwrecked) have had a heart-rending experience. At the time they left the Catholic Church and were immersed into the Lord's church, their three year old son was his mother's earthly idol. At that time the parents were immersed Frans' wife was pregnant again. Grandmother threatened her son and daughter-in-law, "If the child when he is born is not baptized into the Catholic Church, I'll never touch him!" Sadly, she has kept her word. And the wife's parents have changed their will so as to leave their daughter nothing. But the young couple knows that Jesus said, *"He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me."* (Matthew 10:37)

It was relatively easy for me to leave my mother's church when, at twelve years of age, I first heard the New Testament gospel, but not so with my mother. Her parents and her grand parents were members of her denomination, and so were all

her brothers and sisters. Her heart struggled between loyalty to her blood kin and loyalty to what she had learned is the truth about the one NT church. She had no ease for two years. Then one night she awoke my father after midnight, crying, and saying, "I want to be baptized, for I cannot read about my church in the Bible."

III. CHRISTIAN SERVICE

The fact that Oneisiphorus was said to be Paul's host in Iconium would mean that immediately after he and his family were immersed he would (like Lydia) say to Paul and Barnabas, "*If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and abide there,*" and he would have "constrained" the two preachers (cf. Acts 16:15)

The same hospitality begun at Iconium characterized the Oneisiphorus family when they made a move of about 125 miles to Ephesus. There that godly family was again united with Paul, and were happy to be of service both to him (during his three year ministry) and to the church.

The KJV follows the Greek manuscripts that cause 2 Timothy 1:18 to refer to Oneisiphorus' personal service to Paul: "*...and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well.*" However, the more reliable Greek manuscripts omit *moi*, "unto me," thus conveying the meaning of Oneisiphorus' work of service was extended to the whole church, not only to Paul. And the particular Greek word rendered "ministered" is the same word that means "deacon" (*diakoneo*), causing some to think that Oneisiphorus was asked to serve as a deacon in the church at Ephesus. The ASV omits the phrase "unto me," but leaves it open whether Oneisiphorus was an official deacon or one who served on his own in any way that he could.

An improvement in the translation of *beltion* ("better," comparative of *agathos*, "good") *su ginoskeis* from "thou knowest very well" to "you know better than I" (2 Timothy 1:18) would also serve to eliminate the "unto me" phrase, for Timothy could not know better than Paul what Oneisiphorus had done for Paul.

It appears then that Onesiphorus served the whole congregation at Ephesus, not Paul alone. During Paul's stay in Ephesus (54-57 A.D.) he had learned to appreciate the unselfish work of Onesiphorus. Then in 67 A.D., ten years later, with Timothy having been located at Ephesus for four years (63-67 A.D.), when Paul was not there, it makes sense to say of Onesiphorus that Timothy knew better than did Paul how many good things Onesiphorus had been doing.

IV. A TRIP TO ROME

It is no wonder that a man with the commitment of Onesiphorus, growing out of his love for the man who preached Jesus to him, that he kept up with Paul's travels. In 67 A.D. he had heard of Paul's second Roman imprisonment, about 400 miles from Ephesus.

Possibly secular business sent him from Ephesus to Rome, but, as we have learned to know Onesiphorus, he made it his main business to find and help his beloved friend and brother in the Lord. Prisons in those days were more unbearable than now, and the traditional Mamertine Prison was no exception. There Paul suffered "*wicked treatment, even to bonds, as a criminal.*" (2 Timothy 2:9)

Onesiphorus knew of such torment, and determined to help the man who had brought him out of darkness into light. Nero had accused Christians of setting fire to Rome, making Christians unpopular. In the eyes of the populace Paul was in disgrace, but Onesiphorus "*was not ashamed of my chain,*" wrote the prisoner. (2 Timothy 1:16)

The prison was hard to find (as it is today), but Onesiphorus "*sought me diligently, and found me,*" (2 Timothy 1:18) visiting, and taking things to Paul, making many trips, "*for he oft refreshed me.*" (v. 16)

Paul was excited by these visits from his friend, so much so that in three verses of scripture he penned two prayers in behalf of Onesiphorus and his family. (2 Timothy 1:16-18) Also, he closed Timothy's letter by asking Timothy to "*greet the household of Onesiphorus.*" (2 Timothy 4:19)

Paul's two prayers are used by the Catholics to prove it is right to pray for the dead, for they assume that Oneisiphorus was dead when Paul was writing. However, it is more reasonable to assume that, at the time of the writing of 2 Timothy in the fall of 67 A.D., Oneisiphorus had left Rome but had not yet arrived at his home in Ephesus. There is no reason to assume that he had died.

If one assumes that he had died, then Paul prayed for a deceased person, but it would be the only such instance in all of holy writ. Not only would such an example be singular and novel, but also it would contradict the whole of Bible teaching that as death finds a man, so will the judgment: *"it is appointed to men once to die, and after this the judgment."* (Hebrews 9:27; cf. Luke 16:19-31)

It is best therefore to hold that Paul prayed for a much appreciated, living man and his family. Such an example is uplifting and inspirational, especially as one sees the unfeigned affectionate love that wove the hearts of Oneisiphorus and Paul together, causing prayers to rise to the heavenly throne: *"Let my prayer be set forth as incense before you, the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice."* (Psalm 141:2)

Reviving A Hunger for Truth

by Franklin Camp

The church is facing tremendous problems today. Is there a major cause for our problems? I believe the tap root of our problem is a lack of hunger for truth. The restoration was born of a deep longing to find the truth in the maze of denominational doctrines. Any preacher or elder that looks at our situation can easily see that we have lost the burning desire to seek for truth. We are having more bible classes, more special studies than at any time in our history. Anyone acquainted with our plight knows there is less bible knowledge than any preceding period. Something has blighted our desire to know the scriptures. We will never cure our problems until we correct this major defect.

We Must Have An Appreciation Of Truth

If our problem is to be corrected we must begin with a new appreciation of the Bible. It is said, "Familiarity breeds contempt." Familiarity and knowledge are not the same. Could it be that just having the Bible has allowed us to lose our appreciation for it?

Franklin Camp

Franklin Camp was born in Mumfordsville, Alabama. He is from a family of preachers, including his father and grandfather. He attended David Lipscomb College.



Brother Camp began preaching in 1934 and has preached for congregations in Georgia and Alabama. Currently he is with the Adamsville, Alabama congregation for the second time after having completed a second stay with the East Gadsden Church of Christ of Alabama. His work also includes twenty years of radio work, being a frequent speaker at lectureships, including Freed-Hardeman College, David Lipscomb College, and Alabama Christian College, and the author of many articles and books. Brother Camp is now devoting himself to writing to a greater degree than in the past and will in this work continue to influence the church for many years to come. His books include: Old Truths in New Robes, Vol. I and II, The Work of the Holy Spirit in Redemption, and Principles and Perils of Leadership. He is currently working on a book of full length sermons.

An issue of the **Far East News Letter** was revealing in the contrast of our condition and people in China. Brother McVey described some trips he had made into China carrying Bibles. One group had their Bibles taken from them. Why would any nation refuse permission for people to have a Bible? The leaders of China are afraid of the power of the Bible. When people with open hearts become informed with the truth of the Bible, changes take place. The leaders of China know this.

Suppose someone came to you and told you he was going to take away everything except one thing. What would you keep? Would it be your Bible? It is not possible for me to conceive of life without my Bible. My life would be miserable. I would be as one lost in a wilderness without a compass or guide. What would be the reaction of elders, preachers, bible school teachers and other Christians today, if the government banned Bibles? The reaction would be immediate and loud. How much difference is there in your study of the Bible and the Chinese which do not have a Bible? How many Christians never opened their Bibles last week? If you opened yours, did you study it? One may read the Bible and not study it. One may study and not be searching for the truth.

I heard Archie Luper tell of a trip he made into China. He told of visiting a commune. He asked about a Bible. He was told there was only one Bible for the entire commune, but let's say 25,000. Can you imagine one Bible for 25,000 people? Try to picture one Bible in a large city. What would it be like? Suppose there was only one Bible for each congregation? Can you imagine what it would be like? Yet, I wonder how many Christians live as though the preacher is the only one with a Bible. Is it any wonder we have drifted.

An appreciation for the Bible calls for a love for it.

The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver. Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold. (Psalms 119:127) I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil. I hate and abhor lying; but thy law do I love. (Psalms 119:72,127,162,163) More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. (Psalms 19:10) Buy the truth,

and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding.
(Proverbs 23:23)

Observe the psalmist's appreciation of the scriptures. It meant more to him than gold or silver. How does this compare with our desire for material things? One of the reasons often given for not studying the Bible is a lack of time. How can material things be compared with the Bible? Solomon had the opportunity to compare riches and the truth. He exchanged truth for material things at one time in his life. When he wrote Proverbs he realized he had made a bad bargain. Will I compromise truth for material gain? I will not if I appreciate it and love it. There is a price to be paid for truth. It is not money. It is hungering for it. It cost time and thought. It demands laying aside preconceived ideas. I will gladly pay this kind of price if I love and appreciate it.

There Must Be The Right Attitude In Seeking Truth

A desire to know the truth demands the right attitude. The study of the Bible will not produce the right results unless we have the right attitude. Solomon said, *"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction."* (Proverbs 1:7) The irreverent heart will not find the truth. One must bow in reverence before truth if its riches are discovered. This is not worshipping the Bible. This is an attitude that enables one to come to know God which is revealed in it.

Ezra is a good example of the proper attitude. *"For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments."* (Ezra 7:10) Attitude is a prerequisite if the heart is prepared to seek the law of the Lord. The proper attitude is necessary if the Bible produces the right effect in life.

Now when these things were done, the princes came to me, saying, The people of Israel, and the priests, and the Levites, have not separated themselves from the people of the lands, doing according to their abominations, even of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites, the Ammonites, the Moabites, the Egyptians, and the Amorites. For they have taken of their daughters for themselves, and for their sons: so that the

holy seed have mingled themselves with the people of those lands: yea, the hand of the princes and rulers hath been chief in this trespass. And when I heard this thing, I rent my garment and my mantle, and plucked off the hair of my head and of my beard, and sat down astonished. Then were assembled unto me every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the transgression of those that had been carried away; and I sat astonished until the evening sacrifice. And at the evening sacrifice I arose up from my heaviness; and having rent my garment and my mantle, I fell upon my knees, and spread out my hands unto the LORD my God, And said, O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God: for our iniquities are increased over our head, and our trespass is grown up unto the heavens. (Ezra 9:1-6)

These people had disobeyed God. It disturbed Ezra to no end. He rent his garment and mantle, plucked his hair and beard and sat down astonished. How we need leadership with this attitude! Think of what it would do for us. Ezra was not the only one with the proper attitude. He called an assembly. Reflect on their attitude. They trembled at the word of God because of their transgressions. Ezra bowed in shame and blushed to lift up his face to God. The NKJ translates it "*I am too ashamed and humiliated to lift up my face to God.*" Don't we need this attitude today. What an assembly with Ezra as leader and the people trembling at his word. I long to see an assembly like that today.

This attitude produces results.

Now when Ezra had prayed, and when he had confessed, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, there assembled unto him out of Israel a very great congregation of men and women and children: for the people wept very sore. And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, answered and said unto Ezra, We have trespassed against our God, and have taken strange wives of the people of the land: yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing. Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them, tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law. Arise; for this matter belongeth unto thee: we also will be with thee: be of good courage, and do it. (Ezra 10:1-4)

When the attitude of Ezra and those which were with him is present today there is hope. Shekkaniah said, "*Yet now there is hope is Israel concerning this thing.*" If we can create this attitude there is hope for us, without it the future will be bleak.

Isaiah lived in dark days. Israel did not have the proper attitude toward the word of God through the prophets.

Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the LORD hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his masters's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider. Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward. (Isaiah 1:2-4)

The people cried for a king to be like the nations around them. The prophet was not appreciated. The fruit of that attitude is seen in the days of Isaiah. The nation was headed toward apostasy and captivity. Do too many of us have the attitude of Israel in wanting to be like the world? Too often history repeats itself. Human nature does not change.

God revealed to Isaiah the cure.

Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word. (Isaiah 66:1-2)

Does our study of the Bible produce changes in our lives? If no change takes place one or two things are certain. We think we are perfect or we are not seeking to know the truth to live by. How much did you grow spiritually, last week, last month or last year? Are there meaningful changes that are taking place in our lives? If not, there is something seriously wrong.

Another proof that we are not a Bible searching people any more is shown by our using so much man made material instead of the Bible. What has happened that we cannot take

the Bible and study it? We have used human props so much that many do not know how to study the Bible. Rules of bible study are a relic of the past. How can one search for truth if he has no knowledge of some simple rules of study?

How many bring their Bible to services? The congregation where Christians bring the Bible to all services is the exception. I remember the time when all brought Bibles, pencils and made notes. I seldom see this done today.

Respect For Bible Authority Is Necessary In Seeking Truth

We need to revive our attitude toward the Bible as our authority. There is a growing indifference toward appealing to the Bible for authority for our practice. Some attempt to justify their failure to submit to the Bible by appealing to the culture of the first century. Some try to circumvent what the Bible teaches about women teaching over men by saying those passages belong to the culture of the first century. We go down a road which has no end when we cease to accept the Bible as our authority. Any and every practice can be introduced. The Christian Church is a good example of where rejecting the authority of the Bible leads.

Biblical authority is emphasized in the Old Testament and the New.

To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is not light in them. (Isaiah 8:20) Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you, for to do them, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers giveth you. 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. Your eyes have seen what the LORD did because of Baalpeor: for all the men that followed Baalpeor, the LORD thy God hath destroyed them from among you. But ye that did cleave unto the LORD your God are alive every one of you this day. Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. Keep therefore and do

them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for? And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day? Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons. (Deuteronomy 4:1-9) And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: (Matthew 7:28) And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. (Matt. 28:18) If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. (I Peter 4:11)

All of these verses underscore the need for Bible authority.

Denying the need for Bible authority is equal to saying that human authority is as good as Divine authority. If Bible authority was not necessary God would not have given the Bible. Bible authority is supreme authority and there is no appeal from it. It requires as high authority to annul a law as enacted it. A state legislature cannot annul a federal law. The scriptures teach this. "*Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto.*" (Galatians 3:15) It is impossible for men to set aside the law of faith. Neither can man add to the law of faith.

The Authority of the Bible is Complete

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. (II Timothy 3:16) According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue. (II Peter 1:3) Which is not another; but there be some

that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. 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. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel unto you than ye have received, let him be accursed. (Galatians 1:7-9) 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 1:3)

The Bible covers everything. It includes generic and specific authority. Occasionally someone will say, "We do not need authority for every thing." This is incorrect. Every thing does not have to be named, but it still must be authorized. Expedients must be lawful. *"All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any."* (I Corinthians 6:12)

The Authority of the New Testament is Universal

It applies to all accountable beings. There is as much authority for obeying every command as there is for obeying any command. The same authority is back of each one. We can not be selective about which command to obey. Faith accepts and obeys all the New Testament. Hunger for truth will accept and follow any where and every where the New Testament leads.

The Bible Furnishes Answers To Our Questions

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear. (I Peter 3:15)

The passage requires two things. First, there must be the right attitude. God must be sanctified, set apart. The holiness of God must be recognized in word and deed. This avoids the fear of man and prompts purity of life. Reverence is necessary in seeking truth. A flippant approach indicates a lack of genuine concern about truth. When Christ is sanctified in the heart we are ready to give answers to those who question us. Our hope rests on Christ but this in turn rests on the scriptures. A knowledge of the truth is important every day, but it

is especially important in trying times. Second, the truth must be defended with the right attitude, meekness and fear. Arrogance and harsh words are not the way to defend truth. Humility of heart must accompany our answer. Pride not only hinders in learning the truth, it interferes with teaching others.

Applying Principles In Seeking Truth

There are some rules and principles to apply in seeking the truth. It involves more than letting the Bible fall open and begin reading.

The First Rule Is My Study?

Study to know God. A person may study and learn some facts and not know God. *"For they that dwell at Jerusalem, and their rulers, because they knew him not, nor yet the voices of the prophets which are read every sabbath day, they have fulfilled them in condemning him."* (Acts 13:27) Look at the phrase *"they knew him not."* Their failure to know him was not because they did not read. The prophets were read every sabbath day. Christ fulfilled the prophets, yet they did not know him. We may study and miss what the scriptures teach. *"But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless."* (Matthew 12:7) They read and missed it. Job longed to know God. *"Oh that I knew where I might find him! that I might come even to his seat."* (Job 23:3) Life eternal is knowing God and Christ. *"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."* (John 17:3)

The Bible Is A Revelation Of The Character Of God

The first chapter of the Bible is a revelation of God's character and nature. It is a revelation of his greatness. Here is where it all begins. If I fail to see his greatness I will miss the foundation on which every thing else. The remainder of the Bible is a revelation of his greatness. The Bible begins with his greatness and closes with it. *"And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."* (Revelation 19:6)

The greatness of God may be seen in numerous characteristics.

1. He is a spiritual being. Genesis 1:1 and John 4:34 reveal his spiritual nature. This accounts for the spiritual nature of man which places him above all other creation. This remind us that the spiritual is more important than the material. God must have the pre-eminence in our hearts. Knowing God enables us to get our priorities right.

2. The Bible is a revelation of God's holiness. *"For I am the LORD your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy: neither shall ye defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth."* (Leviticus 11:44) The holiness of God is taught throughout the Bible.

3. The Bible is a revelation of God's goodness. The word "good" is found ten times in Genesis 1. God's goodness is another word for his grace. His goodness provided for every need of Adam in the garden. God's grace saved Israel when it sinned. He told Moses this was his name. *"And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy."* (Exodus 33:19) His grace grows out of his character. It is not based on man's merit. The goodness of God is an expression of his love and grace. His grace supplies every need of man.

4. The Bible is a revelation of God's wisdom.

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen. (Romans 11:33-36)

When we recognize the wisdom of God we will rely on it rather than the wisdom of man.

5. The Bible is a revelation of God's power. The creation in Genesis 1 shows this power and wisdom. His wisdom is shown in the adaptation of the creation to the world. There was balance. There are many passages which tell of his power. *"And in very deed for this cause have I raised thee up, for to shew in thee my power; and that my name be declared throughout all the earth."* (Exodus 9:16) Many other references could be given.

The Greatness Of Man

The greatness of God enables man to appreciate the source of his greatness. Man's greatness must always be seen in the light of God's greatness. When we lose sight of his greatness we lose the sense of our greatness. Romans 1 is a vivid description of this truth. Here is why our world is stumbling and struggling today. We will never reverse the downward drift until there is a return to the bible and a recognition of God's greatness. Man's greatness is in his Godlikeness. *"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth."* (Genesis 1:26) *"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."* (Romans 8:29) It is man's spiritual nature that separates him from all other creation. Note carefully the contrast in Genesis 1:24,25 with 26 and 27. It is man's spiritual nature which enables him to worship God and have fellowship with God. God created women so man would have one like God and himself for fellowship.

When man was created he was holy. When he lost his holiness he lost some of his greatness. The revelation of God in the Bible is to help man see his need of God. When man sees God he sees his sinfulness and need of holiness and God. *"Follow peace with all man, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."* (Hebrews 12:14)

Man's greatness is in his goodness. Man can only become good through God's grace. His goodness then is a reflection of God's goodness. When man fails to reflect God's goodness he has failed to see God correctly and has lost sight of his mis-

sion. He misunderstands God's love and grace. God is merciful toward us but his mercy must create within us the same attitude toward others. *"And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments."* (Exodus 20:6) *"Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."* (Matthew 5:7)

Man's wisdom must come from God through his word.

Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace. (James 3:13-18)

Man is wise to the degree he listens to God. Genesis 2 and 3 makes this abundantly clear. Faith is listening to God, trusting God and expressing his trust by obeying. Man's greatness comes from listening to God rather than walking by his own wisdom. (I Corinthians 1:18-31)

The power of man comes from God and being Godlike. When man abuses this power he ceases to be Godlike. The strength of man is in proportion to his likeness to God. When he abuses this power he is weak. The likeness to God is brought about through Bible faith. The great men of the Bible were always men of faith. The heroes of faith are listed in Hebrews 11. They trusted God, not themselves. The gospel is God's power because it reveals God, grips the heart of man as it is directed to his spiritual nature, and thus it makes him holy, good, wise, and powerful. All of this is because it makes him like God.

Do we hunger to be like God? If so, we will hunger for the truth which reveals God to us.

Laodicianism Today

by Robert Taylor

It has been my privilege to speak on eleven of the last thirteen lectureships conducted here by Karns by the East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions. Each one has been a deep delight and high honor. Ardent appreciation is expressed to brother Edwin Jones, the School of Preaching and the fine Karns congregation for the opportunity of participating in the 1990 Lectureship. My assignment for both the book and the oral lecture is a study of the twentieth century counterpart of first century Laodicianism.

INTRODUCTORY CONSIDERATIONS

Names are both meaningful and signally significant. They always have been; they still are; they always shall be. There is a vast difference in what the name Paul connotes to our mind and what Nero does, in what the name John reflects and what infamy attaches the name Diotrephes and in what the noble name Christian implies and what is comprehended in the designation Communist. Congregational names are likewise meaningful. Jerusalem is suggestive of the mother church; Antioch reflects the spirit of evangelistic fervency; Corinth is remembered as a deeply disturbed or troubled church; Philip-

Robert R. Taylor, Jr.



Robert R. Taylor, Jr. was born in Bradford, Tennessee. He was baptized in 1944 and began to preach in 1949. He has done local work for 35 years and gospel meetings and lectureship work for 38 years. He has been at Ripley, Tennessee for more than a dozen years. He preaches in many gospel meetings and lectureships each year.

Brother Taylor of a graduate of Freed-Hardeman, David Lipscomb and George Peabody College for Teachers. He writes for various publications. He has had eighteen books published and numerous articles in various publications. He is a writer of tracts, is a script helper to V.E. Howard and writes the Adult Quarterly for Gospel Advocate.

Brother Taylor is married and has two children--Rebecca and Tim. His wife, Irene, is very active in teaching ladies' classes.

pi is the precious personification of the finest church Paul planted as per the Biblical record; the Galatian churches reflect a reckless course bent on wholesale apostasy from God's glorious gospel; Thessalonica is remembered as a church that needed much instruction relative to the second coming and Rome is remembered as having a faith spoken of throughout the whole world.

The seven churches of Asia in Revelation 1-3 are no different in reflected portraits from the very initial mention of their names in these chapters. Ephesus had left its first love; Smyrna reflects great fidelity to the Lord in the face of fierce foes and deep poverty; Pergamos and Thyatira tolerated false teachers in their congregational midst; Sardis had a name that lived but was dead spiritually save the faithful few; Philadelphia is remembered as having a little strength (perhaps small in numbers) but had kept the Lord's word, had not denied his name and had an open door or enormous opportunity set before them; Laodicea is a sad synonym for lukewarmness, disinterest, lack of zeal, heartlessness, iniquitous indolence and lethal lethargy. They were a congregation on their certain way to Eternal Gehenna and did not care. It bothered them not a particle.

The topic for this literary discussion is Laodicianism today. To have a workable basis for applications that need to be made, we need to have a thorough understanding of Ancient Laodicianism. This will be set forth under the twin sectional headings of the Lord's letter to them and an analysis of how they pioneered in this malicious malady, this spiritual sickness, this iniquitous illness.

THE LORD'S LETTER TO LAODICEA

And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write: These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou

mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. (Rev. 3:14-22)

ANCIENT LAODICIANISM ANALYZED

The seven churches in Asia fell into three categories. (1) Ephesus, Pergamos, Thyatira and Sardis received commendations and censures. (2) Smyrna and Philadelphia received only commendations and no words of censure. (3) Laodicea received no commendations and only words of cogent censure. It fell into an unenvied category. It has never been a worthy model or acceptable pattern for any subsequent congregation to emulate. Quite to the contrary it has been an example to avoid any and all imitation.

At a point in the past they had become the Lord's church in this prominent Asiatic metropolis. They had been born again or of water and the Spirit. (John 3:3-7) They had been added to the Lord's church universal. (Acts 2:47) They had been added to the Lord. (Acts 5:14) They had been obedient to the faith. (Acts 6:7) They had obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine delivered them. (Rom. 6:17,18) They had obeyed the gospel. (Rom. 10:16) They had been delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. (Col. 1:13) But something had gone wrong; they had soured spiritually; they ceased to remain what they became initially--faithful and fervent Christians. Lethargy replaced the Lord; heartlessness replaced holiness; apathy replaced ardor; indolence replaced intenseness of consecration to the Christ. Lukewarmness had led them down the perilous pathway to apostasy. Jesus Christ was NO longer in their congregational midst.

There is a marked, mighty contrast between the AUTHOR of this letter and the AUDITORS to whom he ad-

dressed it. He was the Amen; they were the opposite of that stately "So be it" or "So let it be" disposition of character. His was a FIXED character; theirs was a FLUCTUATING disposition. He was faithful; they were faithless; he was the true witness; they were neither true in language and life nor in motive and mission. He was accurate in his witnesses or testimony borne; they were incapable in their lethal lukewarmness of providing even accuracy of assessment touching their own definite deficiencies. He was the beginning (source or agent) of Jehovah's marvelous, majestic creation. They were not even remaining true to the spiritual creation that had made them sons and daughters of God. What he was they were not; what they were he was not. They were impotent imitators of that very one who had been to Calvary for them, had saved them and had blessed them so bountifully, beautifully and broadly.

They had words but not of the acceptable brand. Their works were neither fervent nor loyal. Apathy, not ardor, characterized their present position in A.D. 96. They breathed the polluted air of lethal lukewarmness--not the fresh air of loving, living loyalty to the Lord Jesus Christ. Cold they were not; hot they were not. They were a sickening in between. Jesus would have preferred their being cold or hot--not the nauseating lukewarmness he observed with spiritual sadness. They made him sick to his stomach. Continuation in this lukewarm condition meant they faced certain eviction from the Lord's mouth and it would not and could not be long in forthcoming. This is the human response when something is nauseous to our super sensitive system; we vomit it up and out. This the overseeing Lord threatened to do spiritually to these sickened saints at Laodicea.

They had a good eye toward their present position. They sensed nothing wrong in their spiritual make-up. They were just fine folks. They were at peace with sin, Satan and surrounding society. They had the attitudes of "We are OK, our city of Laodicea is OK, the whole world is OK." Why be bothered about religious zeal and flaming righteousness? Quite obviously, they were not bothered one single whit. They presented a threefold portrait of their greatness. (1) They were rich; they felt their wealth entitled them to wonders of worthiness. (2) They were increased with material goods.

They were pleased with their prosperity. They would have experienced real difficulty in ascertaining why the rich farmer of Luke 12:16-21 received a single syllable of censure from an aroused Jehovah. (3) They had reached the very summit of self-sufficiency. They experienced no felt needs-- either physically or spiritually--but what they could personally provide. Such a spirit pervaded the personnel of the whole city. An earthquake earlier in the first century had leveled their city. They refused Roman aid in its re-establishment. They would do it on their own which they did. Even their souls felt no tangible need of a Saviour. The armor in which they placed themselves was invincible; they felt they were vulnerable in no spot or spots. They were the supermen of their era; they belonged to an elite race or breed of mankind.

Heaven's spotlight of scrutiny revealed a vastly different assessment. Jesus presented a fivefold description of their deep deficiency. (1) They were wretched--not powerfully blessed at all. (2) They were miserable--not vibrantly happy at all. (3) They were poor--not the wealthy worthies they vainly envisioned themselves to have been. (4) They were blind. They saw neither their own pathetic plight near at hand nor the heavenly glories afar off that grew more distant every lukewarm day they lived. (5) They were naked. Like the rich man in the narrative of Luke 16:19-31 they may have clothed their physical bodies in the finest of apparel but they were spiritually naked. Robes of righteousness, the garments of godliness and the dress of dedication formed NO part of their spiritual wardrobe at all.

Christ had needful counsel for them. They needed to buy bold with all impurities or dross burned out in order that they might be really rich. They needed the robes of sobriety, righteousness and godliness in order that they might be spiritually appareled. Only then would their spiritual nakedness disappear. They needed the salve of salvation in order to provide spiritual perception for their previously closed eyes.

As the soiled sons and tainted transgressors they had become, they needed to stand and receive the deserved rebukes and needed chastisement of their offended Saviour. Zeal

needed to replace their apathy; repentance would solve their lethargy and apathy.

Their lukewarmness had ousted the Saviour. He is outside--no longer on the inside. Yet he had not vacated the congregational premises entirely or permanently. He yet lingered at the door and knocked. The doorknob is on their side--not his. They must open for his re-entrance again. Supping with him (communion) was not possible as long as the door of indifference stood shut. It separated them from their Saviour. Ardor and fervency could make that door stand ajar again; apathy and lukewarmness would keep it closed and closed permanently! There was room with him for all overcomers. The throne had no room for those who remained as the overcomer. Great was their need to hear and heed what the Spirit said to the churches in general and this one in particular.

LUKEWARMNESS STILL WITH US

Laodicianism did not die in the first century. Would God it had and with permanent effects. Multiple manifestations of it presently persist and much to sadness and injury. In a brief study like this I shall only be able to deal with a few of these multiples. Some eight will be numbered and noted in the remnant of our study.

(1) AN AVERSION TO STRONG DOCTRINAL PREACHING

We have no way of knowing just what type of preaching, if any, characterized ancient Laodicea in A. D. 96 as the Christ addressed a cogently pointed letter to them. During the early 60's of the first century Paul mentioned the Laodicean congregation in Colossians 4:12-16 and indicated nothing of the spiritual malady that would plague them a third of a century later. In earlier days Ephrafras possibly preached there as per Colossians 4:12 and we can be confident his preaching was straight down the gospel line. By A. D. 96 their practice was so poor that it seems fairly safe to assume the preaching, if any, had likewise deteriorated in the passing of a third of a century.

Laodicianism, whether ancient or modern, and strong doctrinal preaching (same as gospel or Biblical preaching) are poles apart. They have no affinity at all; they are mutually ex-

clusive. Strong doctrinal preaching will either kill Laodicianism or else Laodicianism will kill definitive, distinctive preaching. A potent, uncompromising pulpit set for the defense of the gospel in Pauline style (Philippians 1:8,17) and a powerless pew filled with calloused, compromising and lethal lukewarmness will not long exist in the same congregation. One will have to leave for the other to remain.

Far too many pulpits in churches of Christ today are filled with impotent men void of power, conviction and courage. In the strong commendation Jesus gave John the Baptist in Matthew 11 and Luke 7 he denied that the great Messianic Harbinger was *"a reed shaken with the wind."* The tall, slender Palestinian reed was at the total mercy of any prevailing wind. The wind controlled the reeds--not the reeds the wind. Modern preachers among us in mass have become reeds shaken by any and every prevailing wind that blows. They preach what the pew WANTS to hear--not what the pew NEEDS to hear and heed. They know what is pleasing to the palate of their superficial, secularistic and sensual auditors and they gear their watered-down messages accordingly. They know the speech that is smooth and the platitudes which are pleasant and pleasing. They are totally averse to the old definition of a gospel preacher's task as being "to comfort the afflicted and to afflict the comfortable."

More and more of our preachers are getting away from book, chapter and verse preaching. More and more frequently the concerned, who are gospel-starved, are saying, "We are fortunate if we get one or two verses in a whole lesson." The day of the proof-text is gone with many. Almost gone are the days when a preacher would make a point, back it up with an arsenal of Scriptures and use an illustration as an optional point. Now the illustrations take high priority over Scriptural usage.

It is not the least bit uncommon for our preachers to preach through an entire meeting or for months at a time in local work and NEVER tell a person what to do to be saved. Mention of baptism is about as scarce in some sermons preached among us today as among denominations who have denied it a place in the plan of pardon regardless of what Mark

16:16; John 3:5; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Galatians 3:37 and I Peter 3:21 teach relative to its cogent necessity.

Lessons that present the church in crystal clear fashion and as totally undenominational are about as scarce in some of our pulpits as artesian wells are in the middle of Sahara's burning sands. An exposure of Catholic, Protestant, Judaistic and World Religion errors would be beneath the dignity of too many of our present preaching personnel. What is wrong with mechanical instruments in worship seldom echoes from many of our pew-dominated--not Biblically-dominated--pulpits today. Lessons on the establishment of the church, the gospel plan of salvation, the conversion accounts in Acts, of what true, acceptable worship consists and how to lead people out of religious errors into the stately, sunlit truths of pure, unadulterated Christianity are no longer desired by people in the pews. Even those who say they are concerned with the bland, impotent preaching emanating from the pulpits where they attend yet they stay there or else exert little pressure for a change to gospel preaching again.

Strong doctrinal preaching could do much to counteract the loose, liberal and lax stands today on marriage, divorce and remarriage. Such should help to negate and nullify all the multitude of errors relative to grace and law. Strong doctrinal preaching would do much to offset the growing teaching that all one does in life is worship. Strong doctrinal preaching would help stop the growing practice of using women to do the work God has given men exclusively to do. Strong doctrinal preaching would acquaint us with the deadly dangers found in so many of the perverted versions of today.

Strong doctrinal preaching could help offset the mad rush to accept evolution, Humanism, agnosticism, theological liberalism, modernism, digression, the mad rush toward making of us just another denomination, etc.

(2) AN ALL-POSITIVE APPROACH WITH NO ATTENDANT NEGATIVES

As per the record in Revelation 3:14-22 there was no unmasking of false teachers at Laodicea as Ephesus had done in Revelation 2:2, no fighting against the synagogues of Satan as

struggling saints at Smyrna and Philadelphia had done in Revelation 2:9 and 3:9, no mention of confronting false teachers as Pergamos and Thyatira in Revelation 2:14 and 2:20 ff were challenged to do, no mention of Satan's seat as being there as at Pergamos in Revelation 2:13 and no mention of any present persecution leveled against them as was true with the faithful in the other six churches of Asia. Laodiceanism in the first century was not designed to trigger any tribulations or produce any persecutions. They waged no battle against sin, Satan or the sensual society about them. Theirs was a pleasing, positive posture and such never arouses any opposition. Why should it? Theirs was a "let others alone" sort of philosophy. They, the ancient Laodiceans, could be charter members and leading proponents of the All-Positive Club were they alive today. Now just who will deny it and upon what grounds of sustaining proof?

It is absolutely incredible that we have in churches of Christ today a new breed of pulpit fillers and pew packers who have accepted a no-negative position and an altogether positive philosophy of religious approach. They are totally out of sympathy with an oft-expressed sentiment that the only acceptable position of every Christian toward any and all religious error is one of exposure and opposition. They are bent on exposing no error and opposing no wrong. Now they are NOT totally against all exposure or opposition. They are adamantly against and definitely opposed to those of us who still believe in attaining and maintaining a balance between positives and negatives. They do not mind exposing us to their ridicule and contempt at all.

The all-positive proponents believe in living and let live. No ism is ever in danger from them. Religious error has a hilarious heyday in their impotent presence for they are not about to make it the least bit uncomfortable.

They reject all nos in their religion. Any "do not" is unwelcome. Every negative is a gigantic NO NO to them. Such people would not have been happy under patriarchy at all. Enoch was pretty negative in his work as an early prophet as per Jude 14,15. Noah was pretty negative in his work as an ark builder and preacher of righteousness. Strong was his condemnation of the unbelieving world around him as per

Hebrews 11:7. The coming of that universal flood to wipe out near universal sin was anything but an all-positive approach. Powerful patriarchs such as Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph were both negative and positive in patriarchal postures. They would not have survived idolatrous-infested Canaan and Egypt had they been of the insipid, all-positive stance. Moses was plenty negative in what he, at God's behest, brought upon Egypt in the form of ten plagues. Each plague was negatively aimed at some aspect of Egyptian idolatry. There would have been no plagues had Jehovah, Moses and Aaron been of the all-positive stance.

Had the all-positive proponents of today lived in Moses' era they would have been very unhappy with the Decalogue which was heavily balanced with negatives. Eighty per cent contained a not. Only the fourth and fifth (sabbath day remembrance and honoring of parents were positive and even these two implied negatives). In fact, I challenge any all-positive proponent to give me a single, logically stated positive proposition that does not imply an accompanying negative. To the initial ten commandments in the Decalogue Jehovah, through Moses and later prophets, added another 603 making a total of 613 precepts in the Old Testament Dispensation. Some 365 of these were negative--about 60 per cent. Some 248 were positive or about 40 per cent. I am made to wonder how the all-positive people handle this larger section of Old Testament or Mosaic Covenant directives. Surely, they could never preach them or any principle linked therewith without contradicting their own preferred and demanded philosophy that there be no negatives--not as much as a solitary one!

I have counted personally some 2,261 commands, charges or directives in the New Testament given either by Jesus or someone authorized to speak for him. These fall into 1,725 positives (76 per cent) and 536 negatives (24 per cent). Each of these positives implies a logical negative and each of these negative implies a logical positive. Such is the elementary and logical nature of positives and negatives. Only naive or very surface students could escape such simple matters. Now just how would an all-positive proponent preach the whole counsel of God and touch, either explicitly or implicitly, no negatives? Could Paul have uttered the famed Pauline statement in Acts 20:26,27 about full proclamation of Jehovah's whole

counsel had he never touched a negative either explicitly or implicitly? The question is rhetorical; it carries its own built-in answer.

I have wondered for years how these all-positive proponents could ever drive to their appointments to give their all-positive lessons if their car batteries were all positive with no negative at all in their make-up. Even battery manufacturers and installers know better than to build and install all-positive and no-negative batteries for automobiles. Some of our preachers need to go to school to be battery makers for awhile!!!

(3) APATHY TOWARD BIBLE STUDY

As per the Biblical record in Revelation 3:14-22 the Laodiceans of A.D. 96 were neither enthused about pondering God's word nor interested in its persistent practice in their lives and before their neighbors. Apathetic auditors and listless practitioners have always been little, very little, on Bible Study and even far less in its application to their loveless lives.

Apathy presently pursues the same passive pathway. Apathetic people are not serious students of Sacred Scripture. They are not as the blessed man in Psalm 1:2--one whose *"delight is in the law of the Lord and in it he meditates day and night."* They are not of the diligent disposition to go *"to the law and to the testimony"* as Isaiah counseled Israel to do in his ancient age. (Isa. 8:20) They are not of the dedicated group who *"seek ye out the book of the Lord, and read."* (Isa. 34:16) They never feel the need of Jeremiah 22:29, *"Oh earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord."* They never inquire as to *"what is written in the law of the Lord, how readest thou?"* as per Luke 10:26. They never study or give diligence to present themselves approved to God, workmen who are unashamed and who know how to divide or handle aright the word of truth. (II Tim. 2:15) They never *"give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine"* as per I Timothy 4:13. They never meditate on these things or give themselves wholly to them as per I Timothy 4:15. They are content to be as ignorant of God and his word as was ancient Israel in Isaiah's era. (Isa. 1:3,4) Captivity of a far worst type looms for such complacent people even as foreign captivity did for Israel in Isaiah's time. (Isa. 5:13) Apathetic

people are just as content with this abject ignorance of God's word and blasphemous denial of God's power as were the scoffing, sneering, infidelic Sadducees in Christ's era on earth. (Matt. 22:29) Apathetic people who know next to nothing about God's word are as beset with pressing and persisting problems as were first century Corinthians relative to bodily resurrection problems. (I Cor. 15:34) Apathetic people are total strangers to the holy habits of daily study of Scripture as practiced by the beautiful Bereans in Acts 17:11. There is neither a readiness on their part to receive the sermon nor a desire to confirm what is heard by examining the audited message with the written word. Modern Bereans they are not in any sense of the term. They feel there is neither a blessing to receive either in reading or in hearing read the Scriptures as per Revelation 1:3.

Apathetic people are not Bible readers at home. Their unfortunate children never see Dad with a Bible in hand or Mother with a Bible on her lap. They are not faithful attenders in our Bible classes. Sleep is preferred on Sunday morning to an hour with Sacred Scripture. TV is preferred on Wednesday night to Bible Study. Apathetic people are not the diligent auditors of sermons that are strong on Scripture and sharp in accurate applications made therefrom.

Apathetic people never wear out their Bibles. They may lose them permanently or misplace them temporarily but never use them enough to wear them out. New Bible replacement is one item of cost that never affects them!!!

Apathy is a real enemy to the Bible.

(4) APATHY TOWARD PRAYER

It is doubtful the Laodiceans of A.D. 96 were a people of persistent prayer. There is nothing in Revelation 3:14-22 to form the impression that they were fervent people of prayer. There is nothing in Revelation 3:14-22 to form the impression that they even felt a need for petitioning God on holy high. Proud people who feel a strong sense of self-sufficiency seldom experience a real need to petition help from a higher power. Like the Babylonian monarch, Nebuchadnezzar, in Daniel 4, they sense with pride that all their property and as-

sets are theirs by human enterprise--THEIRS and not another's. They are filled with the big "I" complex as was the rich farmer in Luke 12:16-21. If they pray at all, it is only when called upon to do so and then in form only or when a dire danger hits and they use prayer as an emergency device only.

They would never be a David or Daniel and pray fervently thrice daily. (Psalm 55:17; Dan. 6:10) They would never pray the type of prayer as did Ezra in Ezra 9 or as Daniel did in Daniel 9. They would never request to be taught to pray as John taught his disciples or as a disciple of the Christ requested in Luke 11:1. They would never think of rising early to pray as Jesus did in Mark 1:35 or spending either a portion of a night or the whole of such as Jesus did in Matthew 14:23 and Luke 6:12. There is one room never found in their houses--the prayer closet. (Cf. Matt. 6:4ff) To "*continue in prayer*," to "*prayer without ceasing*" and "*that men ought always to pray and not to faint*" would be far too much prayer for their indifferent, listless spirits. (Col. 4:2; I Thess. 5:17; Luke 18:1) They spend their time all right but little or none of it in prayer. They may know how to curse a blue streak but know nothing on the acceptable composition of prayer.

(5) APATHY TOWARD WORSHIP

Nothing appears in Revelation 3:14-22 that would leave the impression that Laodicea in A. D. 96 was arduous in adoring God or excited in extolling Him who is so worthy of worship. Lukewarmness and loyalty in worship are poles apart. No affinity exists between the contradictory stances. It is highly doubtful that worship meant much, if anything to such listless people. It does not to the indifferent of today.

Apathy strikes a lethal blow toward Christian worship in our day. The Lord's Day enjoys no priority in the lives of the lukewarm. They may attend services or they not. It really does not bother them either way. They do not miss the singing, the prayers, the sermon or Bible Lesson, the communion or the contribution in the least when they are absent. They do not mind missing what Jesus said, "*this do in remembrance of me.*" The sermon may be one they really need to hear but it is of no concern that they miss it. Songs and prayers which could build them up are treated with contempt by their deliberate ab-

sence. They feel no need to carry their financial part of the congregational budget. They may miss a half dozen Sundays consecutively and never make up a dime upon their return. They steal from the Lord in such matters just as surely as the Israelite robbers did in Malachi 3:8-12. Fellowship of fellow saints is of little consequence to them. They feel no loss Sunday night when the day has been filled with most anything except worship.

The lukewarm may come fairly regularly on Sunday morning but they are never present for Sunday night, Wednesday night or any night of a gospel meeting, a congregational lectureship or a VBS. To visit an area gospel meeting or a lectureship within easy driving range of their home would be unthinkable to them. Jesus told the devil in Matthew 4:10 that the worship and service of God was more important than the whole world at one's feet. None of his lukewarm members concur at all! To them most anything is more important than worship. Worship is near the bottom or end of their preferred priorities.

The growing, pernicious error that all of life is worship will be right down their apathetic avenue. What has kept them FROM worship through the years will now become their worship approach to God. Now they can quit what little church going they reluctantly have done and count as worship hunting, fishing, sailing, traveling, picnicking, family visitation and reunions, golfing, sports spectator attendance all day Sunday, etc. It seems strange and even incredible that some of our naive preachers and elders who are peddling such a Satanic system have not seen the full length to which lethargic church members will take the pleasing premise that all life is worship.

Congregational worship would soon die if all members were filled with the modern spirit of Laodicean lukewarmness. Now just who will deny it and upon what grounds?

(6) APATHETIC COMPROMISE OF TRUTH

Laodicea of A. D. 96 is not remembered as a congregation that stood foursquare for the truth. Truth was not sage in their hands then; it is no safer in the hands of Laodicean counterparts today. Nehemiah refused to descent to the com-

promising plains of perilous Ono in 445 B. C. Laodiceans are at the opposite pole. They compromise coming and going. Ground that has been won by the inch through sweat, blood and sacrifice they willingly barter away by the mile.

Compromise has been the order of this past decade in the so-called new unity movements. Our brethren have yielded FAR more ground to the Independent Christian churches than they have to us. Our hedging brethren have placed the mechanical instrument into the precarious realm of opinion. Fellowship has been extended to those who are clearly digressives in numerous areas--not just the instrument.

The humanly-contrived distinction drawn between gospel and doctrine and the so-called Big F and little f levels of fellowship have opened wide the doors of compromise. By such noxious means some would extend fellowship to those who once did obey the gospel but have not walked in the light of truth as demanded in I John 1:9 in years or even in decades.

By an irreverent and inexcusable tampering of II John 9-11 fellowship is extended to anyone who claims any sort of belief in the Lord's Deity. This is another compromise of truth. The doctrine of II John 9-11 is not the teaching ABOUT Jesus but the doctrine or teaching he either did personally or those authorized by him, apostles and prophets, did.

Compromise is lethal. In the fable of where the hunter was seeking a bear for a fur coat the bear asked the hunter to lay down his gun and dialogue with him. Just what does each of us desire? The hunter wanted a fur coat; the bear wanted a full stomach. Both received their wishes but not the way the hunter at first envisioned!

"Fresh fish for sale today" advertised a merchant. A friend said the "today" part was not needed since all knew what was for sale surely was for **today**. Off came today from the sign. Another told him he should remove "for sale" for all knew that what he had in the store was for sale. Off it came. Another said the "fresh" was not needed for all his customers knew he was reputable and would sell no fish unless fresh. Off it came. Another said he did not need "fish" on the sign for he smelled it a block away! Off it came. by compromise little by

little his whole sign was soon gone! Little by little we can compromise away all truth. Apathy majors in such wholesale compromising.

(7) NO CONCERN FOR SOULS

There is not as much as a syllable in Revelation 3:14-22 that leads us to believe there was even a tiny fraction of interest in soul saving in first century Laodicea. They were concerned neither with the saving of their own souls nor the souls of their neighbors. The Great Commission loses out in an apathetic framework. Their counterpart today is neither evangelistic (getting souls saved) nor preservative in intent (keeping souls saved). The mission of Jesus was to seek and save that which was lost as per Luke 19:10 and Matthew 18:11. This is NOT the mission of modern Laodiceans, it will NEVER be their mission as long as apathy is on the throne room of their listless hearts. Hell and who will go there is never a proclaimed message from Laodicean pulpits nor a received and acted-upon message by Laodicean pews. The complacent here and now is their only concern; the there and then is not anywhere near their heartless ways.

(8) AT EASE IN ZION

Physical Israel was plagued with this problem in Amos' era. The rugged seer from Tekoa wrote plainly and pointedly,

Woe to them that are ease in Zion, and trust in the mountain of Samaria, which are named chief of the nations, to whom the house of Israel came! Pass ye unto Calneh, and see; and from thence go ye to Hamath the great: then go down to Gath of the Philistines: be they better than these kingdoms? or their border greater than your border? Ye that put away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near; That lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall; That chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music, like David; That drank wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments; but they are not grieved for the affliction of Joseph. (Amos 6:1-6)

"At ease in Zion" has become a synonym for apathy, luxury, self-indulgence, lukewarmness, disinterest, unconcern, indifference and heartlessness. Amos lived nearly twenty-eight centuries ago. The conditions he found flourishing among God's people then are strikingly similar to what we observe all around us today. *"At ease in Zion"* and *"trust in the mountain of Samaria"* are striking synonyms for Modern Laodicianism.

People in Amos' age were basking in the sun of self-indulgent ease. They felt they were shielded and that no harm could befall them. They did not learn from the punishment that had come to other flourishing cities and peoples in that era of ease. They thought any day of punishment was on the DISTANT horizon if at all in their future. They extended a warm welcome to the near approach of violence. Self-indulgently, they wallowed in the lap of luxury. Their couches were places of great ease. The finest of food was theirs. To them music was in, preaching, such as Amos did, was out--WAY OUT! They were in full sympathy with David's musical innovation. Their desire for wine could not be satisfied with small goblets; they wanted the fiery liquid in abundance--in bowls that did not have to be replenished so frequently. Their pride of persons is seen in how they anointed themselves with the chief ointments. They were not grieved with Joseph's afflictions. The imagery herein is drawn from the malicious treatment the older, insensitive sons of Jacob treated the tender, youthful Joseph. They ate bread while they placed him in a breadless and waterless pit. Before they decided to sell him they had chosen a plan for his slow but sure starvation. Amos' contemporaries were not the least bit concerned with all the sorrows, sicknesses, privations, problems, trials, tribulations and distressed of their poorer brethren and neighbors.

Laodicianism of A. D. 96 breathed the same spirit. They felt safe and secure. They refused to learn anything that had happened to other cities in that first century. Judgment day was way off for them. Nearby violence did not bother them unless it imperiled their security. They had their riches and wealth and felt no need of anything. Likely, they preferred popular music to plain and pointed sermons on Christian living, giving, etc. Social drinking and even outright drunkenness would have fit right in with their earthly-centered form

of luxurious living. Poverty and afflictions of those less favored than were they never crossed their complacent minds.

Laodicianism of the twentieth century is not one whit different and it is just as nauseous to the Lord and his fervent saints as in A. D. 96. It goes right down the lethal line of being at ease in Zion and undiminished trust in an imagined realm of security. Such people never learn from what has happened to others. Judgment day is far removed from their mind. They do nothing to make society a safer place to live. Self-indulgent luxury is their preferred lifestyle. As long as their stomachs are full they do not worry about hungry neighbors. Popular music and innovations are in; the gospel basics are out--WAY OUT! Such people see nothing wrong with wine consumption and especially if moderately or socially done. They would never think of preaching a lesson on being teetotalers. They crown themselves with their own claims of greatness. The affliction of others is not their concern.

CONCLUSION

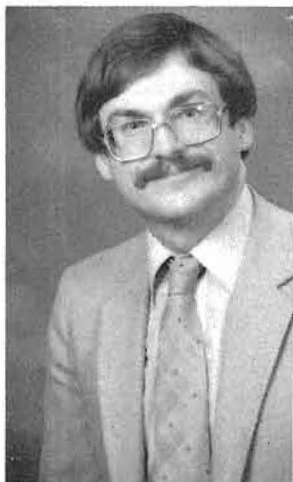
Modern Laodicianism without quibble or question is one of the most perilous plagues affecting the Lord's church today. It almost defies solution by conscientious preachers, elders and Christians who see and sense its lethal hold on the hearts of so many and feel such regret that they cannot help break its real grip on the masses.

The New Testament Church Has Been Restored

by William "Billy" Watkins

The dictionary defines the word restore to mean: "to bring back into existence or use; to bring back to a previous, normal condition."¹ From this definition, and the title of this lecture, one may conclude that the church that our Lord Jesus Christ built fell from a normal condition out of existence for the most part.

To any student of church history the sad decline and apostasy of the Lord's church is an all too real reality. Perhaps the first departures took place in the gradual deviation from the Biblically sanctioned government of the church.² In time, as Greek philosophy made its impression upon the minds of Christian thinkers, the revealed truth lost its unique position, and the truth became watered down with human rationalism.³ From that point, human doctrines and teachings took over, and the New Testament church became a church of men. These trends continued until the church became morally bankrupt.⁴



William E. (Billy) Watkins

Billy Watkins was born in Birmingham, Alabama. He and his wife, Connie, have four children. Brother Watkins attended Alabama Christian College (A.A.), Alabama Christian School of Religion (B.A, M.A., M.R.E.), University of Alabama in Birmingham (M.A.), and Columbia Theological Seminary (M.Th.).

Brother Watkins began preaching at age 18. He has done local work in Alabama, Georgia and Tennessee. He also worked with West Birmingham Christian School and taught extension classes for Alabama Christian School of Religion. He is presently with the Kimball Church of Christ in Kimball, Tennessee.

His articles have been published in Sound Doctrine, 20th Century Christian, Gospel Advocate, and Firm Foundation.

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Because of the deplorable condition of the church, a movement of protest against the church of the 14th, 15th and 16th centuries was begun.⁵ The great men of this reformation made many sacrifices and contributions, yet their followers nullified the progress they made by articles of faith, disciplines, or dogmas that continued to erect walls between the followers of each.⁶ As this situation continued, by the end of the eighteenth century the moral and religious condition of many people was low.⁷

Many people were searching for spiritual revival. Out of this search arose some religious revivals in what was then the American frontier.⁸ As this religious awakening continued, the Restoration movement began as a religious thrust to restore in faith and practice the church that Jesus built in the first century.⁹

We are familiar with the names of Barton Stone, Thomas and Alexander Campbell, John Smith, Walter Scott and many others. Yet, the question that confronts us is, did these men accomplish their goal of restoring the New Testament church?

To help us understand the concept of restoration, let us look at an illustration. If someone desired to restore an antique car they would have to know how the car originally looked. Once this information was obtained, then work could proceed to make the car as it was when it was made. The process of restoration would not be complete until all items were back to the original form.

The same process would be true in the restoration of the New Testament church. One would have to consult a source that revealed how the original church existed, and then proceed to duplicate that original pattern. The process of restoration would not be complete until all items contained in the early church were back to the original form.

The original source of the New Testament church was the Bible. So, the early restorers of the church went back behind all the doctrines of men, and took the word of God alone as their only guide to restore the church. With the Bible alone, one is able to restore the New Testament church in terms of admission, organization, worship, daily life and names.

The Bible clearly reveals how people became members of the church in the first century. The Bible says, "*And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.*" (Acts 2:47) Admission to the early church was based upon divine selection. This divine selection was, however, based upon human obedience to inspired teaching. The Bible says, "*Save yourselves from this untoward generation. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.*" (Acts 2:40-41)

Baptism is to be proceeded by certain things before it is proper for admission into the church. Jesus taught, "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*" (Mark 16:16) True faith in Jesus Christ must proceed baptism. Peter taught, "*Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*" (Acts 2:38) Repentance of sins must also proceed baptism for it to be effective.

But for baptism to accomplish God's purpose, the purpose of baptism must also be understood. The Bible teaches, "*Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.*" (Acts 22:16) Also, Peter wrote, "*The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.*" (1 Pet. 3:21) One must understand that baptism proceeded by faith and repentance saves by washing away one's sins.

Since the Bible reveals that these conditions were met before God granted admission into the church, for the church to be restored, these conditions must be returned to their proper place.

The Bible reveals clearly the organization of the early church. Paul teaches, "*And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to church.*" (Eph. 1:22) Jesus Christ is the only head of the church. No person has the right to assume such a position.

The local congregation of the early church were under the leadership of elders (bishops or pastors). The Bible says,

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"And when they had ordained them elders in every church," (Acts. 14:23). The early elders were aided by special servants known as deacons. Paul teaches, *"To all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons."* (Phil. 1:1)

Other than Christ, the Bible reveals no authority higher than the local congregation. The Bible also shows no organization higher than the local congregation.

Since the Bible shows local congregations under the leadership of elders, under the authority of Christ, for the church to be restored, boards, conventions, and synods must be rejected, and a return made to the simple organization of the first century church.

The Bible clearly reveals the worship of the early church. The scripture teaches, *"And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."* (Acts 2:42) To this may be added a passage from a chapter discussing worship, *"I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also."* (I Cor. 14:15) From these passages, five items of worship are revealed. These are doctrine or teaching which is to be only the word of God (II Tim. 4:2); fellowship which is also known as giving (Phil 4:15); breaking of bread which is the Lord's Supper (I Cor. 10:16); prayers; and singing (Eph. 5:19).

But, for worship to be acceptable, a proper attitude must prevail. Jesus taught, *"God is a spirit, and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth"*. (Jn. 17:17) Since the word of God is truth only those things contained in the New Testament should be performed as items of worship. To worship in spirit would be to worship God with a proper attitude from within oneself. All of this would exclude doing things that may please men, but are not commanded or given by example in the New Testament. Cain, Nadab and Abihu, and Jeroboam I all stand as reminders that God does not accept just any kind of worship offered Him.

Since the Bible shows how the early church worshiped, for the church to be restored, a Christian would practice only

the specified items of worship, with the attitude that God requires.

The Bible clearly reveals the daily life of the early church. Paul taught, "*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*" (II Cor. 5:17) The early Christians put away their old way of living and took on a new life in Jesus Christ. Peter taught, "*But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation*" (I Pet. 1:15). Those Christians sought to live as Christ had lived. To them, Christianity was more than something they practiced for a few hours a week, it was a total way of life.

But the Bible also shows that the early church did not keep the new life to themselves. The Bible says, "*Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.*" (Acts 8:4) The New Testament church sought to win converts from people with whom they made contact.

Since the Bible shows how the New Testament church lived, for the church to be restored, this standard of living would once again have to become the practice.

The Bible clearly reveals the names by which God called the New Testament church. It was called the church (Acts 2:47), the churches of Christ (Rom. 16:16), the Church of God (I Cor. 1:1), and church of the firstborn (Heb. 12:23).

Since the Bible shows how God addressed the New Testament church, for the church to be restored, all human names and designations would have to be dropped, and only those authorized titles be used.

As was stated earlier, for the New Testament church to be restored the terms of admission, organization, worship, daily life and names of the church would all have to be restored. If one will with an open heart study the Bible, one will find that the New Testament church has indeed been restored!

The fact that the New Testament church has been restored does not mean that there is no more to be done. The full work of restoration will not be complete until all come into "*the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*"

Endnotes

¹Peter Davies, ed. *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*. (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1969), p. 602.

²Marvin W. Hastings, *Saga of a Movement*. (Manchester, TN: Christian Schoolmaster Publications, 1981), p. 6.

³F. W. Mattox *The Eternal Kingdom*. (Delight, Ark.: Gospel Light Publishing Co., 1961), p. 107.

⁴*Ibid.* 223.

⁵Hastings, p. 13.

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷B.B. Tyler. *A History of the Disciples of Christ*. (Louisville, KY: Guide Printing Co., 1895), p. 1.

⁸*Ibid.* 10-11.

⁹Dabney Philips. *Restoration Principles and Personalities*. (University, Ala.: Youth in Action, 1975), p. 13.

The New Testament Church Needs Always To Be Growing In Ministry

by George Spivey

Few people today are aware of the fact that the first century church fell into apostasy by gradually being led in different directions by various doctrinal teachings and by doing things that the Holy Scriptures neither taught nor endorsed. Many individuals are not aware or knowledgeable of the American religious movement known as the "Restoration." The fact that Christ prayed for unity, as recorded in John, chapter 17, was somehow lost in the upheaval of division, confusion and differences of man's thinking.

In the 1800's there were a number of dedicated men who were committed to a return of the first century church pattern. The efforts which sprang forth in America were a result of study and work that had been done by sincere and dedicated men in England, Scotland and Ireland. Dabney Phillips in *Restoration Principles and Personalities* states that eight congregations of the Lord's church existed in Northwest England in 1669. In 1735, John Davis was preaching New Testament Christianity in Scotland. In 1804, a New Testament Church existed in DunGannon, Ireland.

George D. Spivey



George D. Spivey was born in Goodlettsville, Tennessee. He is married to the former Rosemary Cameron, and they are the parents of three children; Cameron, Cathy, and Christy. He attended David Lipscomb College (B.A.), George Peabody College for Teachers (M.A. and Ed.S.), and the University of Tennessee (Ed.D.).

Brother Spivey served as principal of Indianapolis Christian School; has preached in Indiana and Tennessee. He presently preaches for the church in Sevierville, Tennessee. He has held numerous gospel meetings in Kentucky and Middle Tennessee.

Although concerted efforts have been made to restore the New Testament Church, Christians cannot relent for one moment in putting forth the effort to keep the teaching and practice of the church scriptural and true to God's plan. There is the ever existing need for the church to work toward maturity in the Kingdom of Christ. When the Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he taught them to grow toward maturity. He taught them that he could not feed them the meat of the gospel because they were not able to bear it.

And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able (I Cor. 3:1-2).

The mere fact that we become a Christian does not mean that Satan will leave us alone. The fact is that he will have to work harder to influence us because we have confessed and accepted Christ as Savior and Lord. Likewise, as efforts are being made in restoring God's plan of New Testament Christianity, Satan is going to work harder to keep us under his influence and control. He is not going to just sit down and die. We must remember that the moment that our Lord had obeyed His Heavenly Father and was baptized that Satan appeared and tempted Him in the wilderness (Matt. 3-4).

As Christians today, we need to continue to grow and mature in the work of the Lord. The writer of Hebrews specifically states in chapter six that there is the need to leave first principles and go on unto perfection. This does not mean that we depart from the first principles but progress beyond them. The first principles are a foundation on which we build and are necessary in getting to "forgiveness through the blood of Christ." We are not to "forsake" or "deny" first principles but strive toward perfection. Could we spend so much time in teaching "What to do to become a Christian" that we fail to teach "How to live as a Christian"? We all start at square one and then move on to build on square one. Similarly, in regard to the "Restoration" efforts made by such men as Barton W. Stone, James O'Kelly, Raccoon John Smith, Thomas Campbell, Alexander Campbell, Tolbert Fanning and numerous others, we must move on to maturity through changing what is not right according to the scriptures.

However, we must not become stagnated because we spend so much debating over the "how" that we never get to doing the "what." This we have done in regard to the issue of how to take care of orphans and widows in the church (James 1:27).

What are some of the ways that we need to be growing toward maturity? One thing that we need to do as we grow toward maturity is to keep an open mind in trying to see and understand what the Holy Spirit really says in directing us as we approach the discussion of an issue or topic. We need to eliminate or set aside any preformed ideas and listen attentively to what is being addressed. We must work hard at not allowing opinions to become as if they are commands of God. We must work at alleviating division caused by opinions and prejudice and allow God's word to be the final authority in all matters. Secondly, we need to learn to say, "I am wrong" when we have it pointed out conclusively that we are wrong. A man's influence becomes stronger and more powerful when he is able to say, "I am sorry, I am wrong and I will correct the matter." We have had debate upon debate, and how many individuals have you seen openly admit or confess to being wrong? Apollos did not argue when Aquila and Priscilla taught him the way of the Lord more perfectly (Acts 18:24-28). Thirdly, we must allow ourselves to be overtaken by thrills and fads in the church. I have seen so many preachers of the gospel leave preaching or teaching the word due to the fact that they either spun out or had a burn-out. They just did not stick with preaching the word. They got caught up in trying to impress the congregation with some new gimmick or fad every time that they spoke. We must remember that the Lord's message is what has the power to convert the souls of men (Hebrews 4:12). We are not trying to say that a preacher is not to use illustrations to simplify his lessons. What we are trying to say is that a minister should not make psychology the authority of the lesson in place of the scriptures. We must remind ourselves that the Lord's message was one that was simple, kind and living in nature, but never compromising truth. As someone had said, "when you listen closely to what the Apostles are teaching, you realize that they did not have too many different sermons. All of their sermons were basically centered on the death, burial and resurrection of Christ,

the importance of being a Christian, the hope of eternal life, and bearing fruits of the Spirit" (Acts 2; I Cor. 15; Gal. 5).

We must never leave the true authority in our lives. We can denounce what we believe to be error and later find out that what we believed to be error was based on "tradition," "opinion," or "prejudice." It is a mistake to hold the early "Restoration" leaders as our source of religious authority. Does this mean that we do not respect what they did in trying to lead us back to God's original plan? The answer is a big "No". These leaders did not make the claim that they could not be wrong in some things. What they did was that they contented for a return to the right authority-the scriptures. It is a mistake to hold writers and editors of religious journals or Presidents of Christian Colleges or Universities as the source of religious authority. The church should and will exist even without these individuals. However, these men can and usually are a great force in helping us to get back to the scriptures in the teaching of the Gospel and Christianity. It is a mistake to hold the local minister and elders of a congregation as the final source of religious authority. This is not to say that we should not respect them in their contending for the truth, but realize that it is the responsibility of the minister and elders of a local congregation to uphold the scriptures as the final authority on scriptural matters. Again, we emphasize that the only real and true authority is the Word of God.

There are certain issues and areas that we need to address in discussing the topic of the church needing always to grow in maturity. As Bible students and Christians, we need to look seriously to see what the Word of God teaches on these issues. Allow me to point out one such area. When growing up in Middle Tennessee in the late 1940's and 1950's, I can only remember hearing one or two lessons on the subject of the Holy Spirit. Were the ministers afraid to speak on the subject? Were we as Christians afraid of being labelled "Pentecostal" if we discussed the subject? The early pioneer preachers were not afraid to address the subject. As we check the book - *Questions and Answers* - by Lipscomb and Sewell, we will see that the subject was addressed and discussed. Walter Scott was not afraid to address the topic. He used a five finger exercise to illustrate the plan of salvation as given in Acts 2:38. Each finger represented a part of salvation as given

in Acts 2:38. Each finger represented a part of the plan - faith, repentance, baptism, remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. What happened in this interim of time between then and now? We gradually found ourselves teaching the five steps of obedience - hearing, believing, confessing, repenting and being baptized. The teaching about the Holy Spirit was just ignored or omitted. We have baptized numbers in the mission field and have gone back in one to two years and have been unable to find many of them faithful to the Lord. What happened? Did we forget to teach them how to live as a Christian? Did we forget to teach them about the fruits of the Spirit? Someone has said, "you cannot have the fruit of something that you do not have." Is this right? We need to go by the scriptural plan and keep the authority of Christ at the very heart of the matter in what we say and do.

A second issue that shows the need for "Restoration" in this century is the change from elders over one local congregation to elders over a multiple number of congregations. The pattern set down in the early church at Jerusalem and in all of the congregations is simple and consistent. When the young preachers - Timothy and Titus - were sent out, Paul taught them to appoint and ordain elders in the newly formed congregations. The Apostle Paul specifically instructed Titus to appoint elders in every city (Titus 1:5). This passage in Titus has been misconstrued and some maintain that it means that a single eldership or set of elders can oversee a plurality of congregations. But we can get the answer very quickly if we will check with other passages of scripture. When Paul and Barnabus travelled to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, the scriptures state that they appointed elders in **every church**.

And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed (Acts 14:23).

To illustrate the point that the Apostle Paul was referring to the eldership of a local congregation, allow us to look at a case of conversion in the Book of Acts in Acts 18:8. The scriptures in this conversion do not give all of the account in detail. The scripture states that Cripus believed on the Lord with all of his house. Then the scripture states that many of the Corinthians believed and were baptized. We know that Cripus was

baptized. In I Corinthians 1:14, when the Apostle Paul was addressing the problem of being divided as to the preacher that they were following, he stated personally that he had baptized Cripus. The accurate conclusion is that the scripture just did not give a detailed account of the conversion. I take the instruction given to Titus to be the same way. Because if we go to Acts 14:23, Paul who is giving the instructions to Titus in Titus 1:5 states that they appointed elders in **every church**. This was in reference to each congregation because the Apostle Paul would not teach one thing to one person and another thing to someone else on the same topic or issue. As an Apostle, he would be consistent in teaching because he was guided and directed by the Holy Spirit.

Other issues today include "instrumental music" and the "new hermeneutics." We must constantly remind ourselves as we grow toward maturity that when seed is planted in good and honest hearts (Luke 8:15), it will always produce what it is supposed to produce - Christians and the New Testament Church (Acts 2:1-47).

During the development of our spiritual lives, it is imperative that we grow as Jesus grew (Luke 2:52). We must have our faith fed if we are to mature.

And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (II Peter 1:5-8).

In avoiding the pitfalls that many of our brethren have fallen into over the years, we must return to the basic fundamentals of square one. They are: (1) If we are to restore New Testament Christianity and continue to mature as Christians, we will need to go back and listen to what our Lord taught the Apostles, (2) We need to follow the Apostles and Preachers in the New Testament as they were guided by the Holy Spirit in teaching and guiding other individuals with personal need, and (3) We need to evaluate and check ourselves periodically to see if we are obeying what the New Testament commands.

Some ministers have referred to this going back as going back to the old paths of righteousness.

Each generation will have the same responsibility in finding answers to these all important issues and questions in identifying and building the church as revealed in the New Testament. The future generation will be faced with the strong possibility of responding to the issue of women taking major roles in church worship. This issue can involve legal interference. Other issues that are very likely to evolve are the acceptance of individuals into fellowship due to the ecumenical position relating to the plan of salvation and the basis for interpreting the scriptures. These are just a few of the issues that could be faced. The influence that our generation will have upon the younger generation will depend upon what kind of example that they see in us as we go back to the scriptures for our authority. One of the main characteristics that made our Lord so powerful was his example. He never asked us to do anything that he was not willing to do. His main purpose was to please God.

The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began to do and teach, (Acts 1:1).

When our younger generation looks at us and sees that we are practicing God's commandments and teaching consistently, they will see our growth in maturity and will be willing to go to the scriptures for their authority and pattern. They will follow the first century pattern as set down by the Apostles as the Lord had taught them.

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Our Preaching Needs To Emphasize A Balanced View Of The Restoration Principle

by Wayne Miller

The process of restoring the church, according to the New Testament pattern, is not finished. We must never be lured into believing that restoration is a completed product. A continual guard against the seeds of Satan and the devices of the devil must be kept in place.

The principles of the restoration movement are tremendous guidelines to keep before us today. Some of those principles are:

1. A recognition of Christ as the sole and sovereign head of the church.
2. The acceptance of the New Testament as the only rule of faith and practice for Christians.
3. The making of a proper distinction between the Old and New Testaments.
4. The restoration of the apostolic church, with the simplicity of its order, as revealed in the New Testament.

Wayne Miller

Douglas Wayne Miller was born in Chattanooga, Tennessee. He is married to the former Debbie Smith and they have three children. He is a 1981 graduate of the ETSOPM.

Brother Miller has faithfully served the State Street Church of Christ in Bristol, VA since 1981. He conducts six gospel meetings a year, speaks on a number of youth rallies, holds an annual mission meeting and is the director of teenage week at the High Rock Bible Camp. He has also had several articles published in brotherhood publications and has spoken at several previous ETSOPM lectureships.

5. The restoration of the autonomy of the local congregation.

6. The unity of all believers, produced by the above propositions.

Many slogans express the spirit and aim of the restoration movement: "Where the scriptures speak, we speak; and where the scriptures are silent, we are silent." "No book but the Bible; no creed but Christ; no name but the divine name." "In faith, unity; in opinions, liberty; and in all things, charity."

The restoration of the New Testament church is a heritage which we have received from the past. However, it is also a challenge which we seriously face in the present. As one has wisely stated, "The church is only one generation from apostasy."

The truth is clearly demonstrated in the Old Testament. We can only imagine the excitement and joy that prevailed among those people who returned from captivity to rebuild the temple and Jerusalem. Satisfaction had to be present when the temple was rebuilt and the walls of the city restored for security. No doubt there was a determination of these people to serve God faithfully.

However, the people were not more than a generation away from forgetting God. A few generations came and went and then God's prophet, Malachi, came to denounce the cold, formalistic rituals of their religion, and the ungodly practices of their lives. The people of Malachi's time had let religion degenerate to a ritual. The priests were despising the name of Jehovah. (Mal. 1:6) They were not offering the best animals in sacrifice to God, but were attempting to offer the sick and lame.

The final plea of Malachi to these wayward people is, "*Remember ye the law of Moses my servant.*" (Mal. 4:4) It seems that these people could have learned the lesson of history that unfaithfulness to God leads to dire consequences.

Our own day seems the right time for a religious revival. It seems the right time to call for a restoration of the Restora-

tion Movement. We, like the people of Malachi's day, in a sense, have inherited the Restoration Movement.

TRUTH

A restoration of the Restoration Movement means once again preaching on the vital subject of religious unity. Obviously, the prayer of Jesus our Lord for unity has not changed. (John 17:20,21) God's Son desires for **all** His followers to be united in belief. No doubt, the earnest plea of the Apostle Paul for unity is still intact for twentieth century children of God. (I Cor. 1:10-21) The reason that unity is possible is that the platform for unity remains in place. (Eph. 4:1-8) Pulpits must, once again, ring the message of unity out to the world. A message of compromise, just for the sake of unity, is not the proper message. Unity, based on the platform of God's eternal word, is a necessity for the Restoration Movement.

Our preaching must also emphasize the nature of the Lord's church. People must once again realize that the local autonomous congregation is the functional aspect of the church. Appreciation, support, loyalty, and love toward her must be established in the hearts and lives of her members. Unity must be achieved within the framework of the local congregation. (I Cor. 1:10-17)

The restoring of the Restoration Movement means emphasizing the sacrifice for the church. There must be a refocusing for the tremendous price paid to purchase the church. A constant reminding that Christ owns His body (Eph. 5:25-28) should assist in accepting and obeying His rules. Since Christ bought the church, it naturally follows that He is head of the church. (Col. 1:18) This headship does not allow men to make additions or subtractions from the source of authority. We all need to be reminded of the seriousness in following the teachings of the Master.

Sacrificial zeal must characterize the preaching of the gospel if the Restoration Movement is to continue. The fervency of spirit must once again move us to preach God's word. We are proclaiming a life-giving word that moves people from the horrors of hell to the home of heaven. **THAT IS EXCITING!!** Our choice is evangelize or fossilize, and the latter will

ensure our demise. Preachers must be enthusiastic and energetic in the proclamation of truth.

ATTITUDE

While truth is definitely vital to the Restoration Movement, the spirit or attitude is important. The proper attitude is to be seen in two special areas.

First, a right attitude toward scripture. The Restoration Movement has been, to a large degree, sacrificed on two altars of attitude. The altar of a liberal attitude produces corruption. This attitude opens the flood gate of various beliefs and teachings. It corrupts church organization; worship in the form of controlling society of the churches; and, in the use of unauthorized practices in worship. The problem with this attitude is that personal likes, dislikes, and enjoyment becomes the rule. The basis of authority becomes man rather than God and His eternal word.

The other altar is also a destructive attitude. It may result from an overreaction to the spirit mentioned above. Whatever the reason, the altar of legalism has been built. The sad result is all types of groups have developed. They are manifested in the forms of brethren being against church cooperation, Sunday schools, etc. The legalistic spirit is a refusal to acknowledge generic authority and christian liberty. With this spirit charges have been hurled, judgments rendered, and much energy expended, as brethren fight each other.

Brethren, these attitudes impede the call for religious unity. We must see the necessity of doing Bible things in Bible ways and calling Bible things by Bible names. Our preaching and teaching must be balanced, avoiding the two extremes. If God's word instructs us, either implicitly or explicitly, to do something in the Lord's work we must respond. However, if the details are not specified then we dare not write laws for Almighty God.

Second, a correct attitude toward each other is necessary. In the quest for unity we must recognize one another as brethren. A vital part of doctrinal soundness is manifesting Christian qualities of kindness, forgiveness, and brotherly love

generally. (Eph. 4:31,32) In dealing with matters of opinion we must demonstrate tolerance. To put it like early leaders in the Restoration Movement, "in all things charity." I can only imagine the spiritual revolution that an application of Romans 12:10 would produce: *"In love of the brethren be tenderly affectioned one to another; in honor preferring one another."* There is no authority for becoming brotherhood vigilantes. It seems that, on many occasions, we magnify our differences and minimize our agreements. It is absolutely necessary to remember that we are the family of God, brothers and sisters in Christ.

The day of restoring the Restoration is upon us. If we fail to restore New Testament Christianity who will? Gospel preachers can be, must be, an instrument of good in the restoration. To accomplish this task we must be balanced in our preaching.

May we sincerely follow the slogan, "In matters of faith, unity; in matters of opinion, liberty; but in all things, charity." Our balanced approach in proclaiming the word of God must remember that which the Bible says is bound on everyone. Opinion cannot be bound on another as a term of communion. As we distinguish between them, let's preach with love and sincerity.

What Was Wrong at Ephesus?

by David Pharr

"I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies. I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments." (Psa. 119:59-60) The beginning place of revival is to see ourselves as we are, to think on our ways in the light of God's commandments.

The letters to the seven churches of Asia provide a summary of things right and wrong with churches of Christ in every age. It is significant that the circumstances of congregations are considered separately; each one stands or falls on its own. There are no generalizations regarding the brotherhood. Autonomy means that congregations are neither required to follow, nor justified for following, the trends in other congregations. But, at the same time, the character of each congregation is no more than the character of the persons who are in it. *"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."* To revive a brotherhood, congregations must be revived, to revive a congregation, persons must be revived. For persons to be revived, they must understand and be sensitive to their needs. The letters to Asia provide the only workable approach. They cause people to see themselves as



David Pharr

David R. Pharr was born in Wilkesboro, North Carolina. He and his wife Peggy, have four children, James, Neal, Stephen and Beth. They have three grandchildren.

Brother Pharr attended Freed-Hardeman College, Rio Grande College and Alabama Christian School of Religion. From 1964 to 1988 he preached at the Charlotte Avenue Church of Christ in Rock Hill, South Carolina. Since November of 1988 he has been Director of East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions.

He is presently the Editor of Carolina Christian. Published works are: A Message From The Bible, Bible Correspondence Course on Acts, The Beginning of our Confidence, and Modern Messages From the Minor Prophets.

the Lord sees them and sensitive persons -- "*he that hath an ear*" -- will respond to obey.

What was wrong at Ephesus? Were it not for the Divine insight we might think there was nothing wrong. They were a working, enduring, orthodox church that opposed evil doers, false teachers and false practices. But Christ says, "*Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.*" He calls for repentance, revival, with the somber threat of being removed from his presence if they don't. (Rev. 2:1-7) Ephesus was a "great" church suffering from a deadly disease.

The text has been often chosen in seeking to stir up members to greater service. It may be, though, that our applications have sometimes fallen short of the target Christ has in mind. We have talked about regularity in attendance, an approximate tenth in giving, some involvement in personal work, and like things as the measure of acceptance. But there is no indication of these things lacking at Ephesus. Indeed, their works, patience, bearing up, and enduring would seem to imply they were active and involved.

Commendations

Good works in general are cited. In performing these works they expended toil and did not give up. This suggests the kind of service Paul admonished. "*Be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord...*" (I Cor. 15:58)

They had "*no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.*" They were intolerant of evil persons. Having to fellowship evil men was a burden they could not, would not, bear. Though not in fashion among most today, discipline of the disorderly is a standing order of the Head. (2 Thess. 3:6) I like Homer Hailey's comment: "...if they will not be transformed, let them be transferred."¹

Their opposition to false teachers and to false practices is shown in the way they tried false apostles, and in the way they hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans. False apostles could be put to the test by checking their miraculous credentials. (See 2 Cor. 12:12.) All teachers, true and false, should be tested by the Scriptures. (Acts 17:11; 1 Jn. 4:1; 1 Thess. 5:21) Pleasing personalities and pretty speeches must not divert us.

(2 Cor. 11:13-15; Rom. 16:17-18) At Ephesus liars were found to be just that -- liars and nothing better.

We know nothing of the Nicolaitans except what is in this passage. No doubt they were a party fostering false doctrine which led to false practices. The church was commended for hating their deeds. Never forget that it was their deeds, not them, that were hated. People with a superficial view of love might question hating anything; but the Ephesians hated what the Lord hated. It is never wrong to hate what Jesus hates, to oppose what God opposes, to expose what the Bible exposes, or to refuse fellowship with what Heaven will not accept. (See Psa. 97:10; 119:128)

Verse 3 seems to be a summary of their good qualities. They had not fainted. In due season we reap, "*if we faint not.*" (Gal. 6:9)

Today, in a time when false teachers are often tolerated rather than being tried; when discipline is more disdained than demanded; when there seems to be so little labor for Christ, and people would give up the Lord before they would give up their leisure -- in such a time, we would think Ephesus was a great congregation. But Christ said, "*Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee.*"

Their Ruinous Flaw

Many able scholars understood the "angel of the church" to represent "the spiritual character, inward state or prevailing spirit of the church itself."² Whether this is the sense or not, it is certain that the Lord addressed not their outward actions alone, but the heart behind them.

Their problem, therefore, was a heart problem. Men may be impressed by outward appearance, "*but the Lord looketh on the heart.*" (I Sam. 16:7) He "*searcheth the reins and hearts.*" (Rev. 3:23; cf. Heb. 4:13) Recall that Jesus "*knew all men*" and "*he knew what was in man.*" (Jn. 2:24-25) He could declare to certain Jews: "*But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you.*" (Jn. 5:42) It is not remarkable, therefore, that he could look into the Ephesians' hearts and see that love was no longer there. This fact, especially as it is echoed in John 5:42, deserves sober reflection. All the formalities of religion cannot dis-

guise a heart grown cold. The Divine indictment says nothing of error in teaching, nor of innovations in practice. Immorality is not the charge. Simply stated, Jesus says, *"I have looked into your hearts and I see that you don't love me like you once did."*

Ideas vary as to the significance of "first" love. We can hardly miss, however, the priority of love in the sight of God. (See 1 Cor. 13:1ff; Mark 12:30-31; etc.) Surely the worst hypocrisy is to perform the functions of Christianity while being motivated by something other than love.

In studying the seven churches we find some especially ugly descriptions. Some countenanced idolatry and fornication. Some tolerated the wickedness of Jezebel and such as sought to know the depths of Satan. Some were engulfed in materialism. Such things are not found at Ephesus. Ephesus was a respectable church. No vices were allowed there. We would probably think it was among the better of these congregations. But who will deny, upon careful reflection, that the charge against them was the worst of all. They had left their first love.

What Was Wrong?

All we know is what is written, but there are some implications in what is written that may help us to examine ourselves.

It may be that they had more interest in **debate** than in **revival**. Disdain for error had made them zealous to expose false apostles. They would meet error head on. For this they were commended. But Christ calls them to a deeper loyalty. Polemics are not enough. They needed a love revival.

Nothing indicates that the Ephesians treated the false apostles or the Nicolaitans unfairly. Exposing evil and error is not in itself an unloving thing to do. It is possible, though, that we may find more satisfaction in fighting error than in helping those who are in error. Maybe at Ephesus there was more enthusiasm for **exposing sin** than there was for **saving sinners**.

There is a particular danger in a climate that requires vigilant defense of the truth -- a danger that soundness may become an excuse for a suspicious and mean spirit. Those

who are compelled by love to fight against wrong have a special need to guard their love and keep it ever genuine and fresh. Love for Christ that defends his truth puts one into honorable conflict; but heresy hunting as a hobby is dirty business.

It seems in the letter to Ephesus that the doctrinal emphasis tends to the negative side. Had they become so involved in **defending the faith** that they were no longer positively **preaching the gospel**? Was there more attention to what they were against than on what they were supposed to be for? There need not be a dichotomy in this, but human flaws often create one. Was the failure at Ephesus that they were holding the line for truth, but not advancing the line for Christ?

Or consider that they may have been more impressed with **themselves as a church** than with **Christ as a Savior**. How easy it would be to exult in their soundness, their successes, their history. Many a church has done this. There is a point when people are more impressed with the greatness of "their church" than they are with the greatness of God.

One modern example of such a tendency may sometimes be found in the "big" churches with their big programs. The programs may be good. We can be thankful for the good that is done. Neither would we imply that a congregation has left its first love because it is large and seems successful. We have, however, sometimes sensed -- we hope we are wrong -- a spirit of aloofness, of arrogance, a spirit that measures what is right by whether it works, a spirit that is above criticism and correction. Some people seek out a big congregation. They justify themselves by claiming advantages, but how often is the real reason pride? We should be thankful to be in a good congregation; but never proud of the church we are and the great things we do. A congregation of fifty thousand would still be only fifty thousand "unprofitable servants," on the same level of every other brother, all sinners redeemed by the blood of the Lamb.

Likewise, there is a danger today that in our zeal to show the world the identity of the true church we may talk so much about the church that the subject of the Christ may seem to be neglected. We know that Christ and the church are one, and

that to be in Christ is to be in the church. We have rightly answered those who have said, "Preach Christ, but not the church." But unless we keep our emphasis in balance, people may tend to think they are saved by an affiliation rather than by the Lord Jesus.

We heard about a man who was coming out of the baptistry saying, "I've been baptized; find me someone to argue with." We were also told of someone who expressed, "Doesn't it make you feel proud to be in the right church and to be able to show everybody else they are wrong?" Have some been converted only to the winning side of an argument? The pattern for the church must be taught, but never to the neglect of the saving grace that has been manifested in the redeeming blood of a wonderful Savior. Maybe what was wrong at Ephesus was that their loyalty was more to the church of Christ than it was to the Christ of the church.

Another symptom may have been that there was much concern for **doctrine**, but little attention to **devotion**. They had a heart problem. It was not in their intellect; they knew the truth. There were no outward departures. But had religion become mere routine? Did they lack feeling? sensitivity? emotion? Religion that is merely loyalty to traditions -- even if they are good traditions -- is a heartless religion.

Men may know a lot of Scripture and still have no personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Some may preach powerfully in public, but pray poorly in private. Barclay quotes Dr. Johnson: "A man, sir, must keep his friendships in constant repair."³ The council perceived that Peter and John *"had been with Jesus."* (Acts 4:13) Constant attention must be given to our personal friendship with Jesus. Study is, of necessity, an intellectual activity; but it need not be abstract. Meditation on God's word day and night (Psa. 1:2) must capture the "heart" as much as it exercises the "brain." But how often do our tears drop onto the pages as we read the sweet story of redemption? Does emotion swell within us as we reflect on the greatness of grace? Is Jesus so real to us that faith is always conscious of His presence? Is there a daily place of prayer? Do we say with the Psalmist, *"My soul thirsteth for God?"* (Psa. 42:2)

Personal devotion is an intangible. It's not like attendance, or giving, things that can be counted or measured. I'm not suggesting we not do it, but in printing attendance and money figures in our bulletins, I wonder if we are really telling anything about the real state of the church. Even our conversations betray us. "Is he faithful still?" "Yes, he never misses a service." Does this not betray a shallow view of faithfulness?

Brethren are astonished when they hear that a noted and effective preacher has fallen into sin. "How can a man who knows so much and has taught so many do something like that?" It may be doctrine without devotion. So far as we know Demas was sound in what he knew, but his love got turned around. (2 Tim. 4:10)

What was wrong at Ephesus? In earlier times the elders had such affection for their brother Paul that they had embraced him and wept unashamedly when he had to leave. In Paul's letter to them he commends their *"love unto all the saints."* (Eph. 1:15) Such caring affection grows out of love for Christ. (See 1 John 5:1.) Was their loss of first love manifesting itself in **less affection for their brethren**?

It is shameful and astonishing that some who profess love for God show so little affection for their brothers and sisters. Isn't it ironic that people think it is a mark of maturity when they are so in control of their emotions that they rarely feel compelled to *"Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep?"* (Rom. 12:15)

The threat of withdrawing fellowship has come to have a dull edge because there is no little real fellowship to withdraw. *"No not to eat,"* (1 Cor. 5:11) sounds empty when nobody is eating with them anyway. A woman was notified that she was to be withdrawn from. She called to ask, "Does this mean my daughter can't get married there"? She thought of nothing else that might be missed. Have we so stressed the duty kind of love that we have forgotten the love of affection?

Also in the early history at Ephesus, we find that their love for the Saviour made the value of hindering possessions meaningless. They destroyed evil books worth fifty thousand pieces

of silver. (Acts 19:17-19) True converts come to Christ with the song, "I'd rather have Jesus than silver and gold." But, alas, for many the "*cares and riches and pleasures of this life*" soon get a choke hold. (Luke 8:14) Ephesus had become an established, solid congregation. No doubt, if they had been in our culture, they would have had a fine building, a capable staff, and a respectable community standing. Members would dress fashionably. Conversations before and after worship activities would be on things like fashions, finances, world events, recreation and sports. No, there is no hint that such actually prevailed at Ephesus; but anywhere that **worldly sophistication** has replaced **genuine spirituality**, it is certain that first love is gone.

Those who hold to a later date for Revelation have suggested that the loss of first love was connected with the fact that by now the congregation consisted of many second and third generation Christians. Whether this was the case or not, we know that there is often a difference in those who are converted out of religious error and those who, as we say it, "grow up in the church." In many congregations today there is a generation that lacks strong commitment to the very principles that brought their parents and grandparents to Christ. For many the pressures of traditions may keep them **affiliated**, but **their hearts** are not in the church of Christ. Witness some of the outlandish teenage and young adult programs, often orchestrated by paid youth ministers, and smiled upon by condescending leaders. There is a spirit of iconoclasm that ridicules and wants to distance itself from the old ways.

Certainly we are not suggesting that all are guilty, or that everything new to us is bad. Neither is it necessary to expect that second and third generation Christians will always have such tendencies. What must be recognized, though, is that unless religion is from a heart that is absorbed by love for Christ, whether in young or old, apostasy will soon follow. Such love is not passed on by inheritance.

Though apparently not related to what was happening at Ephesus, there is a statement by Jesus that is especially appropriate. In the context of his warnings of things which would precede the fall of Jerusalem, he said, "*And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.*" (Matt. 24:12)

Sin is stealing the love due to the Lord. No heart has room to love the world and Christ at the same time. (Matt. 6:24; 1 John 2:15) There is no softened way to say it. Many have left their first love because they have fallen in love with the pleasures of sin. (2 Tim. 3:4) Like Israel went whoring after Baal, worldly minded church members have let Satan's seductions win their affection away from Christ. (2 Cor. 11:2-3; Jas. 4:4)

Call to Revival

"Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works." "Remember" suggests recognition of need. They needed to reflect on how far they had fallen. "Repent" means to be moved by godly sorrow to make the right decision. As used here it means to return to their former heart. To "do the first works" means to restore in their lives those things which were genuine labors of love.

We have considered some things that might be symptomatic of loss of first love. Ultimately, though, everything is reduced to the issue of our love for the Lord. This is the first commandment because obedience to all other commandments arise from it. When people truly love God his commands become simply guidance for the experience of that love. (1 John 5:3) Without such love obedience to any commandment is meaningless.

Jeremiah represented Israel as having once been in love with God, espoused to Him in love; but their backsliding showed, as some have expressed it, that "the honeymoon was over." (Jer. 2:2ff)

The RSV gives the text this way: "...you have abandoned the love you had at the first." New converts typically radiate with zeal and excitement. They have found the treasure and "for joy thereof" have given up everything to have it. (Matt. 13:44)

Two longtime members were discussing the zeal of a new convert. One of them cynically observed: "Don't worry about it; after he's been with us for a while he'll calm down."

What keeps love fresh? It is easier to deal with outward needs. We are more comfortable teaching the do's and don'ts

of more specific commandments. Yes, love is commanded, but is love possibly simply as obedience to an abstract commandment? Do people simply make a decision to love and thereby have the kind of love that is demanded?

There is a serious flaw in our method. We have adopted shortcuts to revival. The symptoms are treated but the cancer is not removed. Sermons on the letter to Ephesus have concluded with little more than admonitions to attend regularly and give better. Calls for revival have seemed little more than "Come forward...we'll pray...and be here Sunday." We set attendance goals; visit those who have missed more than twice; have an occasional evangelism workshop; and beat people over the head with Hebrews 10:25. All of this is not bad; but we have been hacking at the branches when the poison is in the roots. Jesus said the problem is in the heart. The love is cold. Until this is changed we are only putting Band-Aids over a malignancy.

Barclay shares a sarcastic quote from Henry Ward Beecher: "The churches of the land are sprinkled all over with bald-headed old sinners whose hair has been worn off by the constant friction of countless sermons that have been aimed at them and glanced off and hit the man in the pew behind."⁴

Someone has illustrated our approach as being like having a car with a blown engine and having the mechanic only recommend a paint job; or like a doctor telling someone with cancer he just needs a haircut.

The only way for the human heart to come to a genuine love for the Lord (or for such love to be restored) is by a grateful response to the love He has for us. The commandment shows the necessity of love, but only the facts of the gospel can produce such love. *"We love him because he first loved us."* (1 John 4:19) The practice of religion involves a life filled with doing for Christ; but the heart of religion involves a powerful sense of what Christ has done for us.

"For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not live unto themselves,

but unto him which died for them, and rose again." (2 Cor. 5:14-15)

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Gal. 2:20)

Every faithful preacher wants to motivate people to live and serve better. A sense of urgency may make us want to get immediately at the point where we have observed failure. This direct attack may sometimes be the best approach. But most of the time we would do well to have enough patience and confidence in the power of the gospel story to help people see the greatness and wonder of the love of God. People too insensitive to respond to this can't be helped anyway. But good and honest hearts will grow to love God in return. Then all else will fall into place.

Someone complained that he was tired of hearing so much preaching on love. This is justified if it's nothing but meatless sentimentality. But too much can never be said about love from the Bible perspective. A great, historic, orthodox, working congregation was about to die. Jesus said there was only one flaw, but it was a fatal one. They had left their first love.

"Wilt thou not revive us again: that thy people may rejoice in thee?"

Endnotes

1. Homer Hailey, *Revelation, An Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), p. 121.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 116.
3. William Barclay, *Letters to the Seven Churches* (New York, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1967), p. 22.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 24.

Revival In The Home

by Floyd Dethrow

Introduction

The God of heaven saw the need of establishing the human home as a basic unit of society. The home then is the first institution ordained of God that man enters into. But much has happened to the home since God established it, and it seems this great institution has lost its way. The values which our Lord placed on the home have become lost to parents and children alike; the communication which should exist in the home cannot be found. There is a great need for "Revival In The Home."

The home should be more than a "filling station" just for food, shelter, etc., though necessary, it should be more than a haven of rest. The home should be a center of love and evangelism. The father should be a spiritual leader. As the head of the house, he should lead his family to the heavenly home. The apostle Paul said, *"his is worse than an infidel who will not provide for his own."* (I Timothy 5:8) Paul had in mind more than just material things. This also includes spiritual things. Consider also Eph. 6:1-4. The first mission field should be one's household. Parents should be soul winners at home, and

Floyd Dethrow, Sr.



Floyd Dethrow, Sr., was born in Jackson, Tennessee. He is married to the former Bobbie Nell McNeal, and they have five children and six grandchildren. He attended Nashville Christian Institute, Millikin University, LaSalle Extension University and Western Kentucky School of Preaching.

Brother Dethrow began preaching in 1954. He has served congregations in Tennessee, Illinois, Kentucky, and North Carolina, and presently preaches for the Eastside Church of Christ in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. He has preached on radio for more than 28 years; conducted gospel meetings in 20 states, preached in seven campaigns in the Caribbean and one in Guyana, South Africa; and spoken on many lectureships.

let their children see role models in them, who not only believe in saving their own souls, but also the souls of their children, their relatives and the souls of others.

There are many great examples in the Bible of men saving their families:

1. Noah saved his family in the ark. (Gen. 7,8)

2. Joshua saved his house. (Joshua 24)

There are also household conversions in the New Testament. The apostle Paul in giving the qualifications of elders said, and elder must be "*one that rules well his own house.*" (I Tim. 3:4) So the father should be a family leader. When husband and wife live in the fear of God, and lead their children to fear and obey God, the home can be a place of love and joy. We can see the need for a "Revival In The Home."

I. Revival Of "Family Altar" In The Home

In many homes children are not being brought up reading the Bible and spending time in prayer. They are not being taught the importance of the Kingdom of God and his righteousness. Parents are placing the job, the house, and almost everything else ahead of the spiritual welfare of the home. Jesus said:

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. (Matt. 6:33)

We are to show by precepts and examples that the Kingdom of God should be first, and that the Lord will supply all our needs. The Christian home should be a place of prayer and Bible reading. Joshua said:

And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your father served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. (Joshua 24:15)

This is truly a great example of a man who loves the Lord and his family. When a husband and father can stand and say what Joshua said, and have the support of his family, one can

be sure that man knows something about the will of God. Our children learn from us. Things that are important to us will be important to our children. If Bible study is important to us, it will also in most cases be important to our children. When parents spend time in prayer, children will grow up believing in prayer. So there is a great need for a Revival of the "Family Altar" in the home.

II. Revival of "Evangelistic Spirit" In The Home

The home can be a great force in the Lord's Church. Family members sometimes lose their zeal for lost souls. The greatest motivation to go out and teach the word to the lost should come from the home. Teach children to be zealous in winning their friends and associates to Christ. The example of Cornelius shows how a member of a family should feel about the salvation of a loved one. Cornelius had been instructed by the angel to send men to Joppa and to bring back Peter, who would tell him how he could be saved. (Acts. 10:1-5) And on the following day he entered Caesarea. Now Cornelius was waiting for them, and had called together his relatives and close friends. (Acts 10:24)

Cornelius was deeply interested in his relatives and friends, so while he waited for Peter to come he called them together with him. This same concern should be found in every home. We must reach out to family members and to others who do not live in our homes. We need a revival of zeal for lost souls in the home. A revival of the evangelistic spirit in the home could also mean a revival of the evangelistic spirit in the church. The congregations where evangelism is alive, one will see the same spirit in the homes which make up those congregations. Let us put within the hearts and lives of every family member a desire to reach and save the lost. The family must understand that it is the will of God for them to be soul winners.

III. Revival of the Role of Women and Girls In Evangelism

Women can carry out the great commission to teach, and baptize, and teach again. Women often feel that when it comes to spreading the gospel it is a man's world and women

should stand quietly by while the men preach the gospel; but women, young, middle aged, and elderly can be among our greatest personal workers. This attitude can be developed in the home. Just as an attitude of evangelism can be developed in the home, the concept that it is a man's world can also be developed in the home. In the scriptures we find women involved in teaching the word of God:

And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea; and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him. And the same man had four daughters, virgins, which did prophesy. (Acts 21:9)

During the great persecution of the church in Jerusalem both men and women were scattered abroad and taught the word to the lost. (Acts 8:3,4) Women can have Bible studies in the home with non-Christian friends. The home can be used for Care Meetings, Share Meetings and Prayer Meetings.

One of the best ways to undergird our homes spiritually is to focus our attention on leading others to Christ. If we are busily involved in reaching the lost it will motivate family members to study the word. Peter said:

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts; and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear. (I Peter 3:15)

When the home is motivated to go after those who are lost there will be four areas in which improvements will take place: 1. more time will be set aside for study of God's word; 2. attendance in the assemblies of the Church will also improve. Members of the family will assemble because they better understand the need for spiritual strength, and Christian association; 3. the quality of the lives of family members will be much improved also. Great concern will be shown for others who are not Christians, and efforts will be made to set before them good examples; 4. you will see a greater involvement in civic affairs, such as little league baseball, scouts, P.T.A. and other school activities being used to get acquainted with "outsiders," and to make friends. We want Christ to be seen living in us. Jesus said:

Ye are the salt of the earth, but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. (Matt. 5:13-14,16)

We cannot hope to accomplish this by living on an Island, or by ostracizing ourselves from the lost and just associating with ourselves. Our main objective should be to make contacts for the Lord. We must associate ourselves with the people if we are to be successful in reaching them.

IV. Revival of Servant Attitude In The Home

Our children need to see us serving others. They will benefit greatly when they see us visiting the fatherless, and widows in their afflictions. (James 1:27) The examples we leave for our children will be of even greater value when we serve without complaint. As Christians we should be happy to serve and to bring joy to those who need us. There are people who are old, and alone, and in need of someone to talk to. We can make a difference in their lives and then there are those who are lost and in need of the truth, we can also serve them. The thing of importance is, for our children to see us serving others. Paul said:

As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith. (Gal. 6:10)

Jesus taught a great lesson when tempted by a certain lawyer. The lawyer asked two questions: 1. Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? and, 2. And who is my neighbor? The lawyer knew the answer to the first question, but Jesus gave him a lesson in service to others in the answer to question number two that he should never forget. Jesus told of a certain Samaritan who gave aid to a wounded stranger. He helped a man he did not know. He did not allow the fact that the wounded man was a Jew keep him from doing what he could to save him. The Priest and the Levite passed by on the other side giving no aid to their fellowman, but the

Samaritan came to him when he saw him and had compassion on him; he then went to him and bound up his wounds pouring in oil and wine, then set him on his own beast and brought him to an Inn to take care of him. (Luke 10:25-35)

The Samaritan had an unselfish attitude; he spent the night with the stranger, paid for his lodging, and told the innkeeper, upon leaving, to take care of the man, and if it cost more than the amount he gave him, he would pay the rest upon returning. This is the kind of spirit and attitude our children need to witness in us. Those who grow up serving in the home will in most cases be good servants in the church. They will also teach their children what it means to serve their fellowman. The Lord's example of the good Samaritan tells us we are obligated to serve our fellowman regardless of race or station in life. Jesus said:

And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment and the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these. (Mark 12:30-31)

Our responsibility involves feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting those in prisons, in hospitals. (Matt 25) It also involves helping the elderly, the lonely, etc. It means showing compassion. How can we say we love God and not our brother? Through our lives as caring, sharing Christians our homes can be centers of love-emanating from the home to others. Teach Agape love to our families. Teach our children by example to share with others, and especially teach them to share Jesus. We need to loose ourselves in serving others, this helps to shape and mold the lives and destiny of our children. Our children should not be permitted to grow up thinking that all religious activities take place in and around the church building.

V. Revival of Reverence For God And Respect For Parents In The Home

The home needs a revival of unity. In the homes of our land today there are so many problems that are causing division in the home. Jesus said:

Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand. (Matt. 12:25)

The home should be a place of unity. Children should be able to grow up without the fear of being separated one from another.

The home should be a place of piety. Paul said: "*Let the children learn to first show piety at home.*" (I Tim. 5:4) This means family members should show reverence for God and respect for parents. In many homes children do not respect their parents. One need only to look around in our society to see the many evil influences which are partly responsible for this conduct. So many of our young people are under the influence of some kind of controlled substance; therefore, principles of right do not impress them.

Parents must teach their children respect for God. The best way to do this is by example. Showing respect for God and his word, parents can give their children training that will go with them throughout life. Making sure that the Bible is studied often helps to establish God's word as the rule. When children learn the principles taught in the Bible, and then observe those same principles in the lives of their parents, great things are going to take place where purity of life is practiced. Paul said: "*keep thyself pure.*" (I Tim. 5:22) Purity must be a way of life with us as God's children. Our influence will reach outside our homes when we live lives of purity. Paul said:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. (Romans 12:1,2)

It should be the aim of every home to combine all their God given abilities to the service of the Lord. Let God have full possession not only of your spirit and soul, but also of your physical body. Yield every member up to him. Paul said earlier in his letter to the Romans:

Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. (Romans 6:11-13) When one becomes a Christian he is dead to the dominion of sin forever. Christ died on the cruel cross to deliver all of those who believed in him from the effects of sin. The believer's new life belongs to God completely, and must be entirely devoted to Christ and his service. Therefore, sin must not continue to rule in the life of the Christian.

As we study and learn about purity of life in the home, we must understand that our conduct is to be like that of Christ in all that we do. Sin cannot control the Christian as long as he follows God's instructions. Parents must teach children that God's word is to be the rule in our lives. We are brought into Christ in order that we might be set free from sin. The apostle said, *"We are not to yield our members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin."* To present our members unto sin is to tender them to be used in its service of unrighteousness. The Christian is alive because of his death to sin. Our children need to know and understand this. The members of our bodies are to be used under the directions of God. There is truly a great need for a revival of right living in the home.

As stated earlier, every member must surrender to the Lord. He must cease to struggle, and cast all upon Him who is able to keep you from falling. This is indeed a life of self denial; this principle must be taught in the home. As Christians we cannot get our way. We must not desire to have our own way, but rather we should make sure that God's way rules. Our body might be called a living sacrifice because its natural life is not consumed like an ordinary sacrifice, but it is presented to God *"alive from the dead."* A new life of holiness is gained through our obedience to God. Having a new life the child of God must keep himself free from the world. He must not seek worldly goods, follow worldly ends, or be guided by worldly wisdom. The Christian must keep himself pure. Every home should be made aware of the need for purity of life.

VI. Revival of Humility Is Needed In The Home

Jesus taught much about humility. His disciples came to him saying, who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. (Matt. 18:1-4) We have great difficulty connecting humility with greatness. But in spite of the difficulty we have in making this connection, a basic Christian principle is that whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

What is humility? C. L. Lewis said: humility in simplest form, is "complete self-forgetfulness." "It is getting our minds off our own value altogether." "It is forgetting self completely and concentrating on others." "It is turning our attention outward rather than inward." This self-forgetfulness does not mean self-abasement. If we have completely forgotten self, we will unconsciously let our talents pour forth. So many Christians are hindered in the Lord's work because they are not humble. Many are not humble because they have never been taught what humility really is.

If every parent would start teaching humility to their children in the first year of life, this alone could save thousands of homes. Young boys would grow up to be mature men, concerned more about the welfare of others. Young girls would grow up to be mature women also concerned about others more than self. Just think what it would mean for a young man, and a young woman who are properly taught and trained in humility to get married and bring up a family. They would train their children to be concerned about others more than about self. The apostle Paul said:

Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil. 2:1-11)

This is what humility is, but how is it cultivated? What can we do to reach this state of self-forgetfulness? No better picture can be presented than what the apostle Paul presented in Phil 2:1-11. Here are at least seven things which help in cultivating humility:

1. Do nothing from selfishness or conceit.
2. Count others better than yourselves.
3. Look not only to your own interests.
4. Look also to the interests of others.
5. Empty yourselves.
6. Take the form of a servant.
7. Become obedient unto death.

Humility taught and practiced at home can make the difference in life. Children need to be taught how to be concerned about others and how to forget self. The problem we face today seems to be parents who are self-centered and do not see the need to instruct their children.

VII. Revival Of The Spirit Of Reconciliation In The Home

Many homes are divided because of strife and misunderstandings. Children leave home angry with their parents vowing never to return again. Many have left home and their parents pass away not knowing where they are. A reconciliation between parents and children is needed. The Lord wants a good relationship between parents and children

just as he does among other members of the church. The apostle Paul said:

Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honor thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise; That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. (Eph. 6:1-4)

The relationship between parents and children is a special relationship. Children must honor and obey their parents in order to please God. Fathers should not provoke their children to anger, but instruct them in the ways of the Lord. Fathers are cautioned against an excessive severity that provokes bitter, wrathful rebellion. Children should be corrected and restrained from self-will, and should be trained to be obedient to their parents from earliest childhood; but this should be done in love. It is always sad when parents go beyond reasonable limits in the discipline of their children. When children leave home because they feel that their parents are too cruel. There is a great need for reconciliation in those cases. Parents must kindly and earnestly train their children in the discipline of the Lord. The child will come to appreciate this and to love and honor the parent for the restraint and correction given.

Many husbands and wives also need to be reconciled to each other. Things happen in the home that drive father and mother from each other, thus causing the home to break up. These things ought not to be. Paul said:

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it. (Eph. 5:25)

In verses 23 & 24, Paul illustrated the duty of the wife to the husband by the church's subjection to Christ. He refers to the love of Christ for the church to illustrate and enforce the duty of the husband to love and cherish his wife. The love here required of the husband is not of passions, but of the soul in its spiritual purity and from its innermost depths. It should be Christlike, patterned after God's love, self-forgetful, self-sacrificing and self-devoting, even unto death.

May the master help us to have a revival in our homes by using the principles which are taught in the Holy scriptures.

A New Zeal for the Old Paths

by Jon Gary Williams

Introduction

It is indeed a privilege to share with you this evening some thoughts on the topic assigned: "*a new zeal for the old paths*." It is my sincere prayer that we can create more concern for this important subject.

What a tremendous title for a lesson! As I looked at this topic I could not help but think that it strikes at the heart of one of the greatest needs of the Lord's church today! There is nothing lacking more in the kingdom of Christ. There is nothing we need more today than a greater zeal among members of the body of Christ.

When we consider the subject of zeal we cannot help but be reminded of the church in the city of Rome. The Roman church had a degree of zeal but they did not have sufficient knowledge! The apostle Paul declared: "*For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.*" (Rom. 10:2) In our time, however, this is often reversed. Today we find that many members of the Lord's church have "knowledge" but are deficient in their "zeal!" Al-

Jon Gary Williams



Jon Gary Williams was born in Ada, Oklahoma and grew up in Pasadena, Texas. He is married to the former Betty Chick and they have two children. He attended College of Evangelists, Freed-Hardeman College, David Lipscomb College and Western Kentucky University.

Brother Williams has preached in Berea, Elizabethtown and Bowling Green, Kentucky; and is presently with the LaVergne Church of Christ in LaVergne, Tennessee. He helped begin and taught at The Great Commission School. He is a contributor to many brotherhood publications, and is author of *The Other Side of Evolution*, and a number of tracts.

most everywhere we look we see congregation after congregation sorely lacking in zeal! Countless members of the church are only lukewarm and devoid of genuine zeal for the cause of our Lord.

Should not this be a major thrust of the kingdom of Christ today? We should be giving more attention to the role each member of the body of Christ plays in this regard, for without zeal the cause of Christ suffers.

THE MEANING OF "THE OLD PATHS"

In our preaching we often use the expression "old paths," but what do we mean by this? Sometimes folks may not understand what we mean and may have a wrong impression of our use of the word "old." It is necessary to clarify that simply because something is old does not mean it is true. Age itself has no virtue, it has no inherent value. Just because a thing is old does not mean it is right or even desirable!

By the use of "old paths" we are, of course, speaking about the old truths found in God's word. We are talking about the original patterns and principles set forth in the Bible. We are referring to the paths contained in the original source book!

During one of the most difficult times of ancient Israel, when the people were removing themselves from God's established law, Jeremiah's plea to the people was, "*Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths where is the good way.*" (Jer. 6:16) Jeremiah's statement shows that during his days there were many "ways," new ways that were different than God's way! He pleaded with his people to "*ask for the old paths!*" This was the original way God designed for his people to follow. It was called the "good way!" This was the only way, the right way, the original way.

In our own Christian dispensation we see that the same thing is true. Today there are many hundreds of ways men have devised that are contrary to the way of Christ, ways that are in violation of original Christianity. As in the days of Jeremiah God today calls us back to the old paths, to Christianity as it was in the days of its original purity.

The church of Jesus Christ does have its old paths. It is the "good way" provided by God and which has been revealed to us through the New Testament. What the Lord desires for all men today can be found recorded in his eternal word. The apostle Peter said that we have been given "*all things that pertain unto life and godliness.*" (II Pet. 1:3) The apostle Paul plainly tells us that the scriptures are given "*for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness*" so that "*the man of God may be perfect.*" (II Tim. 3:16,17) Here it is that we find the "old paths" of pure Christianity that are just as applicable to people today as they were in the first century A.D.

THE MEANING OF "NEW ZEAL"

We sometimes make reference to having more "zeal" in the body of Christ. What do we mean by this? And what do we mean when speaking of a having a "new zeal" for the old paths?

Zeal, of course, is another way to describe eagerness and fervor! It is the passion of one's heart in pursuit of something that is considered serious. When we speak of a zeal that is "new" we are not using this in the sense of just being different or unusual. We do not have in mind merely a change. Rather, we are speaking of a renewed zeal, a renewed interest, a renewed concern! We have in mind a desire to return to the original patterns of the New Testament, to return to the original source of New Testament Christianity!

There is a great need for going back, all the way back to first century faith and dedication. When we do this we demonstrate our respect for God and for his word. This is one way in which we honor our Lord.

A "new zeal" for the old paths is really a revived zeal for what Christ brought to this world through his death. We all need to ask ourselves if we have this zeal and if we are concerned about returning to the "old paths" and encouraging others to return to first century Christianity.

THE OLD PATHS HAVE BEEN LEFT

When we speak returning to the old paths, this implies that the old paths have been left, that the original patterns of Christianity have been neglected. One cannot return to something that has not been left!

In Old Testament times the Jews are well known to have left the way that God designed for them. Israel, not content to live under the law of Moses, departed from it! Later, Judah also chose to depart from this law. As a result God dispatched prophets to rebuke and chasten them. Their cry was for the people to "return!" Their plea was, "get back to the old paths!" They were sent to a wayfaring people to point them back - all the way back to God's law.

Likewise, in our time there are many who have left the way God designed for man to follow. Pure, New Testament Christianity has been twisted and distorted! Men have wilfully turned away from the pure word of God and the original plan for his church has been left. Denominationalism with all its shapes and forms has drawn people further and further away from the pattern found in the New Testament.

During centuries of gradual departure from God's word (the original source of Christianity) the world of so-called Christendom has become nothing more than a vague semblance of what Christianity was in the beginning. The new and changing religions invented by men have turned millions away from God's pure word. The doctrines of men have corrupted the Bible and have taught people religious error which has led them into many different false paths! Today denominational religion is so filled with subjectivism there seems to be no end to new and different beliefs!

There is a great need for people to be taught about this great distortion of Christianity and a great need to call people back to Christianity of the New Testament.

THE THRUST OF THE RESTORATION

Calling people back to simple, plain Christianity is the thrust of the restoration movement! Those brethren of the early days of the restoration had a genuine zeal for their cause. Their thinking was, "Let's get back to New Testament Christianity, back to the fountainhead of apostolic truth." They

wanted to return as best they could to what they knew to be the teachings of Christ and the apostles. In their effort to restore Christ's church as it was in the days of its purity they were willing to make sacrifices. They knew that to pursue the course of "speaking where the Bible speaks and remaining silent where the Bible is silent" they would have to make some serious changes in previously held doctrines and practices.

No matter the cost they were willing to lay aside certain things as they discovered them to be in error, and, therefore, contrary to the Bible. The question of baby baptism was an issue that troubled many. Though having practiced this for many years some realized it was foreign to New Testament teaching, so they willingly began to leave it off. It was not taught in the Bible, hence, they know it should have no part in their teaching. And there was also the issue of sprinkling for baptism. Likewise, it was obvious to these men that this was a practice unknown to the New Testament and, therefore, unscriptural. Having such a high regard for the word of God they gladly laid this practice to one side and began to baptize people as the Bible authorized, by the act of immersion.

The doctrine of original or adamic sin also became a target of suspicion. When discovering this teaching had no basis in the scriptures the early restorers, at the cost of being ridiculed and scorned, were willing to put it aside. The teaching of special election also fell under scrutiny. As these men studied the matter of predestination they soon realized they had been advocating a doctrine totally void of Biblical support. They laid it aside and began teaching the free agency of man. Those gallant men of the early days of the restoration also began looking at the matter of wearing religious titles. Realizing this was something in clear violation of the word of God they gave up these titles.

In addition to leaving off certain things, preachers of the restoration also saw the need to add things. For example, on the matter of how frequent to observe the Lord's supper they soon came to realize the New Testament pattern was clear. Instead of monthly or quarterly observance they began partaking of the Lord's supper every first day of the week. On the question of what to call the church they saw the need to use Biblical terms. So, in keeping with the idea of "speaking where

the Bible speaks and remaining silent where the Bible is silent," denominational names soon began to be replaced with Biblical descriptions. Likewise, when these men began studying more carefully the question of how people are saved from sin, they discovered they had not been teaching the plan of salvation found in the New Testament. One by one they turned from their long held Calvinistic views and began teaching what the Bible plainly revealed for men to do to receive the remission of sins.

One of those early restorers was a former Presbyterian preacher by the name of Walter Scott. Scott was one of the very first men to present the plan of salvation in a graphic way. Often he would illustrate the plan of salvation in the form of steps, with each step representing a part of the plan. The lowest step stood for faith, the second stood for repentance, the third stood for the confession of one's faith, and the fourth stood for baptism for the remission of sins.

On one occasion when he was delivering a lesson on God's plan of salvation, there was in the audience a Baptist preacher who had come a great distance to hear what Scott had to say. He listened intently as Scott explained the logical order of the steps in God's plan. Before Scott completed his lesson the preacher rose and shouted, "I've found it! I've found it!" By this he meant he had found the plan by which man is saved! Though he had been preaching all these things, he did not have them in the right order and was not teaching the essentiality of water baptism! For the first time in his life he could see how clear the plan was! And he was like many men of that day who were honestly searching to find the truth!

Zeal was the key that motivated these men. They had a zeal that burned within them to be true to God's word and to restore the church and make it what it was in the days of the apostles.

However, the restoration is not just a thing of the past! The restoration of New Testament Christianity is an ongoing thing and we are still in it today! As long as there are those who teach and practice things that are contrary to the New Testament pattern, there will be the need to call men back to the "old paths"! And, likewise, there will always be the need

for people to have the same zeal characteristic of the early restorers.

LOSING THE ZEAL TO RESTORE THE CHURCH

The "old paths" of the Lord's church were once left. The restoration movement called men back. But, did you know that we are again in great danger of leaving them! To some extent the restored church is slowly losing its distinctiveness and is being led further away from the plain teachings and practices of the scriptures.

There are countless members of the Lord's church who have never heard of the "restoration" and the concept of restoring the church has no meaning to them whatever! This has come as a result of preachers failing to preach the restoration. It is indeed sad, but some of our preaching brethren are neglecting preaching the New Testament pattern.

Some men are doing this unintentionally. It is not that they are unaware of or opposed to the restoration, but rather that they are simply failing to preach it. While they may preach about the church in a broad, general way, apparently they do not see the importance of emphasizing its distinctive nature and the necessity of calling men back to the New Testament pattern. These brethren need to evaluate their preaching.

We are all aware of the popular expression, "Practice what you preach!" But a problem we face today is that some preachers are not "preaching what they claim to practice." Indeed, some of our brethren give lip service to the restoration but do not preach it. They claim to believe the restoration principles but never are they heard proclaiming them. Very likely some are guilty of this but are not conscious of it; not aware that months and years go by without them even making reference to! Does not this indicate that men do not have true zeal for the restoration?

Many years ago the beloved brother Batsell Baxter made a comment that I have never forgotten. While addressing a group of young preacher students he said, "Young men, never close a gospel meeting without pointing out the restoration!" This was something I truly appreciated and has meant so much

to me through the years. But how many preachers in the church today keep themselves aware of this need? How many meetings are preached and how many years go by with no mention whatever of the restoration? Let us not be guilty of neglecting to preach on restoring the Lord's church.

But, then, some preachers are failing to preach the restoration and doing so knowingly! Yes, there are some among us who do not believe the restoration, who do not believe that restoring the church is a viable position. We are made to wonder why these men want to remain among us filling pulpits within congregations of the Lord's church.

Not long ago a preacher made the remark, "Why, we can't be like Christians in the church of the first century; we don't dress the same today as they did then." Now this is something we might expect to hear from denominational preachers, but not from a preacher in the body of Christ! How naive and shallow have some brethren become? To illustrate how far removed some are from the restoration, take note of the following statements.

"There can be no unity of God's people so long as the Bible is given a place beside Christ. The Bible, so used, is the great divider of the church. Of all the churches founded on the Bible, Christ would say that none is his."

"The restoration heresy has diverted the Christian mind from the path of realism into a blind alley of fantasy. The whole object of the restoration is improper. Must we see all religious truth limited to the Bible?"

Many are alarmed by this and wonder, "Were these statements actually made by preachers within the church of Christ?" Indeed they were! And this serves to point out what is taking place in some congregations among us. There are those who do not believe in restoring the church at all. Such men are preaching "Christianity" on the same level as denominationalism and view the Lord's church as nothing more than a segment of "Christianity" on a much larger scale.

Some who reject the restoration concept have been saying of faithful brethren: "You are answering questions people are not asking!" "You are dealing with dead issues!" "You are

preaching about things no one else wants to hear!" "Your concern is like a 'tempest in a teapot'!" Such brethren do not realize that preaching the gospel is not a matter of what people want to hear! Nor is preaching the gospel to be curtailed by what the world considers "dead issues." Rather we are to preach what people need to know! We are to make people aware of the fact that they are lost and what they must do to be saved. This, of course, necessitates preaching Christ and his body, the church. But, in teaching people about the church, we must present it as it is revealed in the New Testament. Only in this way can we assure that the pattern of the "old paths" will be preserved.

After observing the attitudes of some brethren who doubted the restoration, one brother who had spent years studying his way out of a denominational religion found it hard to believe what he was hearing! He said,

I searched hard for the church of the Bible and finally found it. Now I read of men who are questioning the idea of restoring that church and are returning to denominational attitudes. These men do not realize they are going right into what I labored so hard to find my way out of!

The fact is, in many of our pulpits the church is losing its distinctiveness. Genuine zeal for the return to plain, New Testament Christianity is not the same as it was in days gone by and as a result the cause of Christ in many places is suffering.

Instead of departing from the restoration, brethren should be searching even more diligently for a return to the "old paths." We need to revitalize our concern and our zeal for the true pattern of the precious church Christ left with us and desires for us to follow.

WHY THE NEED FOR A RETURN TO THE OLD PATHS

Why is it such an urgent thing that we return to the "old paths" of New Testament Christianity? Why should we be concerned about going back to the original pattern for the church? Why is it important that we give attention to the church as it is revealed in the Bible? The answer to this is of utmost importance.

The reason for this return is because God only accepts those who follow his paths! To be in violation of his will, to teach and practice things not found in his word, is sinful! The apostle John declared, *"Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God."* (II John 9) Jesus, through John, made it clear that no one is to *"add to"* or *"take away from"* the word of God. (Rev. 22:18,19) We are directed not to place the wisdom of men *"above that which is written."* (I Cor. 6:4)

Jesus, while emphasizing the corruption of false teachers, pointed out the necessity of being true to the will of God. Hear his words in Matthew 7:21: *"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."* And again in Luke 6:46: *"And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"*

It is essential that men follow the will of God! To depart from his will is leave the "narrow way" that leads to eternal life. To leave the "narrow way" is to travel the "broad way." Our Lord said, *"for broad is the way that leadeth to destruction...narrow is the way which leadeth unto life."* (Matt. 7:13,14)

The fact is, over the years the "old paths" of God's word have been left. One by one the doctrines and practices of men have been accepted over the word of God, and as a result there has been a continuing departure from the "old paths." Through the centuries men distorted, changed and modified God's original pattern and plan for his church. Religious leaders built more on the hand-me-down traditions of their times than on the Bible. And as we work our way through history it is noticeable that the further away from New Testament days we get, the further away we see men have gotten from the "old paths" of Biblical times.

Most of us can recall our days of grade school and those lettering guides which were posted around the room (usually above the chalk boards). We were instructed to practice copying the letters of the alphabet in order to help us remember them and to help us improve our skill at writing them properly. And as long as they were copied accurately they could be recognized. But, if one child copied his lettering

from the sheet of another child it may then not be so easy to recognize the letters. And, if yet a third child copied from the second it would become even more difficult to recognize the letters, and so on. The further away from the original letter patterns we get, the more distorted the letters become. In order to have a copy like the original pattern one must go all the way back to the original letter guides.

This is the way it is with the Lord's church. We have a true pattern to follow! As long as men stay with that pattern they will be able to reproduce the church just as it is found in the New Testament. But, when men begin using the patterns of other men instead of the Bible, there will soon be a distortion of the Lord's church. And this is precisely what has happened. The only way to correct this is to go all the way back to the original pattern and follow it! No matter how many years have passed, no matter how far removed one may be from the first century, by going back to the original blueprint the church can be restored as it was in the very beginning.

This is the plea of the restoration movement today. Our job is to call people back to the original pattern for the church; all the way back to first century Christianity.

In the mid to late 1950's brother Jule Miller developed his popular filmstrip series. One of them, the fifth in the series, dealt with "The History of the Lord's Church." In that filmstrip brother Miller illustrates the tragedy of "falling away." Various Old Testament examples are given. Among them are Adam and Eve, the people at the time of Noah, the Israelite nation, and the case of Nadab and Abihu. The point is strongly emphasized that "men often depart from God's way!" This was indeed true through all of Old Testament history and was equally true not long after the close of the first century. And, the same thing is happening again.

Brethren, I do not want to be thought of as an alarmist, but many congregations among us are in trouble! We have churches of Christ with special solos, choirs singing during worship, the Lord's supper being observed on week nights, women teaching mixed classes and leading public prayer, and so on.

We have men who say they believe the Bible, but at the same time they deny the Bible is inspired. We have men who say they believe what the Bible teaches on divorce and remarriage, but who then go about teaching that baptism makes an unscriptural marriage scriptural, or that what Jesus taught in Matthew 19:9 does not apply to the non-Christian, or that adultery has nothing to do with the sexual act. We also have men who say that instrumental music is wrong, but when questioned they explain it is wrong only if it violates the conscience or if it causes division. Such as this ought not to be! But we are faced with it.

Why is there a need to return to the "old paths?" Because God wants us to follow them and because many have left them!

WE ALL NEED TO SEE THE ROLE WE PLAY IN CREATING MORE ZEAL FOR THE OLD PATHS

Brother Tex Williams once gave this splendid definition of Christianity: "Christianity is an aggressive way of life, wherein man is master over his environment and not a slave unto it." What better definition could there be for Christianity? But, how many of God's people today are truly aggressive? How many among us are truly zealous for the cause of Christ?

It would be a great step forward if every child of God would take stock of his life and evaluate his own zeal! We cannot wait on others to take the first step, to motivate us to action. More of us need to look back at previous attitudes and convictions and try the best we can to correct any lack of zeal.

Let each of us consider the value of God's precious word and remember how important it is for all men to follow it. Let us all take note of the role we can play in this great cause!

Reviving Morality

by Jim Franks

We certainly live in an age of moral confusion. A large segment of society (including some within the Lord's church) has completely lost the sense of right and wrong; often dismissing questions of good and evil as matters of personal preference. The word "sin" has practically been dropped from the vocabulary not only of thought but of action. Many have been dazzled by technology, and so preoccupied with material things, that they have lost any consuming interest in Heaven or Hell. Many, with science in one hand, and wealth in the other, have no time to consider moral responsibility. A change must occur in society's thinking; we have to become as sensitive about being moral morons, as we are now anxious about being intellectual idiots.

We send our children to school to spend long years in preparation for a vocation, a profession, an art. That same wisdom must be applied to the education of the moral sense within us. This is the revolution that is needed in our society; the understanding that we ought to be far more unhappy about remaining in the kindergarten level of morality than about remaining on the childish level of information and intellect.

Jim Franks



Jim Franks was born in Tupelo, Mississippi. He and his wife, Jo Ann, have two children, Eric and Beth. He attended Memphis School of Preaching (1970), North Carolina State University (B.S.), Duke University (Th.M. and Ph.D. in New Testament Studies).

Brother Franks has preached in Crossville, Tennessee, since 1980. He also serves as a Professor at Tennessee Bible College. He has appeared on numerous lectureships and frequently lectures to youth groups.

He has written extensively regarding Satanism and Premillennialism.

What is morality? Morality is the struggle for that which ought to be. Webster defines the word as: "The quality of that which conforms to right ideals or principles of human conduct." Moral conduct has been described as "a safe enclosure." A "safe enclosure" provided by God through His Word. Morality is action which is in one's best interest. Therefore, any action which is not in one's best interest is immoral. If an action is not in one's best physical interest, he should give it up. If an action is not in one's best spiritual interest, he should give it up. "This about all: to thine own self be true, and it must follow, as the night the day, Thou canst not then be false to any man." Hamlet, William Shakespeare

Immorality is not sexual irregularity only. Such a definition is merely a clever device by which modern men and women can legitimize many other sinful actions. If one can confine evil and immorality to the sexual realm, and allow pride and gossip to run rampant, he has made quite a good bargain.

In all the universe, (except for the Divine), there are only two realities, just two: there are persons and there are things. Whatever is not one is the other. The most significant line in the universe is the line that separates the two. Any one person above the line is worth more than all of the things combined below the line. People are of infinite worth (Matt 16:26), while things are instrumental. Things are to be used as we may need them, but persons are to be respected and loved. It is immoral to reverse this order by loving things and using persons.

True morality is the drive to live in peace and purity before God. Yet, man is a creature of conflict. As Mark Twain said, "Man is the only animal that blushes, or need to." We begin to face moral decisions early in life. The pupil in school must decide whether to cheat or not to cheat. However, the first severe conflict young people often face is in dating. It is in dating that teenagers must deal with the conflict between emotions and morals. This is not to say that moral conflicts are felt only by our youth. The struggle to overcome self, and the standards of the world, is a life-long struggle.

We live in a world which is complex, challenging, and confusing. This is an era of plenty and yet of poverty, of peace and yet of war, of strength with little security, of advancement without progress. Charles Dickens opens his splendid novel, *A Tale of Two Cities*, with a paragraph which, though intended for another time, graphically pictures our modern world: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times; it was the age of reason, it was the age of foolishness; it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair; we had everything before us, we had nothing before us." This language surely describes our generation.

Even a casual glance at contemporary America reveals that traditional concepts are undergoing dramatic changes. Traditional values are being challenged, ignored, and often ridiculed. While we have witnessed changes in our fashions, and our diets; we have also witnessed a drastic, if not frightening, change in attitudes about sex, the family, the church, and morality. No people in history have had so much of the world's bounty, and so much time in which to use it as we have. It is no wonder that we keep hearing the phrase "quality of life." After all, most of us are in a position to seek, and to share, the "good life."

THE NATURE OF VALUES

A look at history confirms that no society has ever been without some value system. We can add that every individual, as well, has some code of values. The issue, therefore, is not whether individually or collectively we are to have values, but rather what those values will be. In philosophy, such questions about value fall under the heading of "axiology," a term derived from the Greek word *axios* meaning "worthy." Axiology is the study of the general theory of values, including their origin, nature, and classification, as well as their place in our lives. One field of axiology is "ethics."

"Ethics" is occasionally used synonymously with "morals." We would be more accurate, however, to use the term "morals" to refer to conduct itself, and the term "ethics" to mean the study of moral conduct, or the code one follows. In ethics, we are concerned with questions of right and wrong, of duty and obligation, of moral responsibility. When ethicists use words

like "good" and "right" to describe a person or action, they generally mean that the person or actions conforms to some standard.

4 SYSTEMS OF ETHICS

There are four distinct systems of ethics which deserve our attention, not because all four are acceptable to the child of God; but because of their acceptance by society.

One system of ethics is called "antinomianism" (literally, "against law"). This faulty system maintains that there is no set of rules which are available by which one can make moral decisions. The antinomian maintains that all moral decisions must be made as a problem arises by use of human reason and judgement. He literally says that there is no law to govern his moral decisions. His decisions are random, erratic, and unpredictable. He... "enters into the decision-making situation armed with no principles or maxim whatsoever, to say nothing of rules."¹ This system must be rejected because it completely ignores God and His Word.

Another faulty system of ethics is "Consensus Ethics," which says: "Whatsoever the culture at a given time accepts, is appropriate and moral." According to consensus ethics, it was no worse for the Nazis to have murdered six million Jews than it would have been to have killed six million insects, or to have cut down six million plants. In fact, consensus ethics was used in defense of the Nazis at the Nuremberg trials. Their defense was basically this:

1. Their society had the need and the desire. They felt the need because they considered the Jews to be their enemies. This fear, that the Jews might turn on them, caused the desire to exterminate the Jews.

2. The next step was to enact laws that would promote their needs and desires.

3. Their next argument was: "Our society demanded that we adhere to the laws."

4. Their conclusion: It would have been immoral to fail to obey the law of the land.

5. Their final argument was: "You now by the laws of your land condemn us for obeying the laws of our land."

The prosecutor argued (correctly) that there was a higher law, a law that supercedes the law of the land. Consensus ethics is just one step away from "no law" ethics.

A third faulty system of ethics is "Situation Ethics." Ernest Harrison, a priest in the Anglican church of Canada, describes his own position:

The New Moralist does not accept at all the notion that there are moral standards which are revealed by God. He does not believe that God laid down laws which are for all men, at all times, under all conditions. He is, therefore, a relativist.²

Right and wrong, the situationalist says, always depends on the situation. Moral decisions cannot be made on the basis that some things (actions) are always right and other things (actions) are always wrong; rather, each moral decision should be made in view of the specific situation on the basis of "love" and that alone. Joseph Fletcher says:

The situationalist enters into every decision-making situation fully armed with the ethical maxims of his community and its heritage, and he treats them with respect as illuminators of his problem. Just the same he is prepared in any situation to compromise them or set them aside in the situation if love seems better served by doing so.³

Concerning commandments forbidding killing, adultery, stealing, lying, etc. Fletcher says,

...situation ethics has good reason to hold it as a duty in some situations to break them, any or all of them. We would be better advised and better off to drop the legalist's love of law and adopt only the law of love.⁴

The situationalist maintains that we should keep "law in a subservient place."⁵ Law is subservient to "love." If "love" is best served by lying, stealing, etc., then the law forbidding these actions must be set aside.

This line of thinking has become popular among some in the Lord's church. A brother, in a magazine circulated among members of the church, says, "Situations do arise in which more than one moral alternative must be considered. In such situations the exceptional moral principle may negate that would normally be 'right' exchanging it for a situationally higher principle."

He continues by saying, "The higher moral principle is indeed 'agape' love. It is at once the intent of all law and the summation or fulfillment of all revealed commands."⁶

This view of morality is not new, "*In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eye.*" Judges 21:25

Situational ethics has several basic faults. First, its spokesmen overlook clear commands of the Bible which are designed to regulate thoughts and actions for all ages. Some actions are wrong, always wrong, wrong for everyone on every situation. Several lists of such actions are found in the Scripture: Romans 1:28-32; Galatians 5:19-24; II Timothy 3:1-5.

Secondly, James Pike, and others, try to prove their case from exceptional cases, which (to them) seem to set aside moral law. For example, cases of "sacrificial adultery" (Pike tries to make a case for situationalism by the account of a German mother who could only be released from a Russian prison camp and be reunited with her family if she either became seriously ill or pregnant within the camp). According to Pike, this extreme situation allowed the unfortunate woman to commit adultery.⁷

Thirdly, the conclusions reached by Pike, and others, show that their theory is not what it claims to be. The situationalist claims that when one finds himself in a particular situation that he will make his moral decision (based only on the present circumstances) as it best serves love. However, Pike, and others, present unusual cases to help make moral decisions before the particular situation arises, and not when it arises.

Fourthly, situation ethicists make law and love mutually exclusive. For Fletcher, for example, it is either law or love; for the Christian, it is both law and love.

Some refer to Romans 13:8 in support of situation ethics.

Owe no man anything, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.

The contention is that when love fulfills the law, that it actually replaces the law. In the two verses following, Paul makes clear that he does not mean that love replaces law, and that he does mean that love is the sum of the law.

For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. Romans 13:9,10

By the expression "For this" it can be seen that the sum of the fulfilling of the law is abstaining from the evils mentioned, and loving one's neighbor as one's self. Thus, we conclude, that law and love are not exclusive but are mutually interrelated. Our Lord made it clear that there was no conflict between the law of God and love, *"If ye love me ye will keep my commandments."* (John 14:15) Also, *"If ye keep my commandments ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my father's commandments, and abide in his love."* John 15:10

When love (with its purpose and action) is not defined by objective moral law, the lover himself becomes the law.

Situationalism is an ungodly mechanism, the design of which, is to relieve man of moral responsibility. It must be seen for what it is: a veiled attempt to legitimize sinful conduct.

THE NEW TESTAMENT AND MORALITY

After this brief discussion of false (unacceptable) systems of moral conduct, we shall now examine the New Testament which presents the only acceptable standard of morality.

Beginning with the Sermon on the Mount, our Lord's first major discourse, we see God's absolute standard of moral conduct for all of humanity, in every situation. Jesus taught that not only was murder wrong, but also a malicious heart that might lead to murder. Jesus not only condemned adultery, but also the lustful look which is "*adultery in the heart.*" The moral principles in the New Testament are so absolute that both the overt act and the motive prompting it are equally condemned.

GOD'S STANDARD IS UNIVERSAL

Not only is God's law of morality absolute, but it is also universal. Correct moral conduct is not determined by situations as they arise, but are determined by God, and revealed to us through His Word.

In recent years, several books have been published with such titles as: "Ethics Without God," and "A Church Without God." All such are absurd. As an atheistic French philosopher said, "If there is no God, then anything is permitted." This is absolutely true, because, if there is no God, there is no value. If there is no God, then no thought or action is any better or any worse than any other thought or action.

The "Universal" Great Commission is proof that God's law regarding morality is universal. Jesus, who "*tasted death for every man,*" commanded His apostles to go, teach and baptize. (Matt. 28:19) Mark record the commission as: "*Goye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.*" (Mark 16:15) The Great Commission is robbed of its legitimate force if any false standard of morality is followed.

Secondly, the universal nature of the judgement is proof of the universal nature of God's laws, including morality. The final judgement will include the good and the bad. (John 5:38-29) The small and the great will be judged. (Rev. 20:12) We must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ. (II Cor. 5:10) "*So then everyone of us shall give account of himself to God.*" (Romans 14:12) A universal judgement demands a universal law.

And he that sat upon the throne said, ...Write: for these words are true and faithful ... the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone.... Rev. 21:5-8

CONCLUSION

God's law regarding moral conduct is absolute and universal. Any system of conduct which ignores God's Word must be rejected. Situations, unlike morals, are changeable. No situation can change vice into virtue or rebellion into righteousness. Only those who live in harmony with God's laws will live with Him in eternity.

Endnotes

¹. Joseph Fletcher, *Situation Ethics: The New Morality* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1966), p.18.

². Ernest Harrison, *A Church Without God* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1967), p.118.

³. Joseph Fletcher, *Situation Ethics*, p.18.

⁴. *Ibid.*, p.74.

⁵. *Ibid.*, p.31.

⁶. *Christian Bible Teacher*, October 1974, pp. 436-437.

⁷. James A. Pike, *You And the New Morality: 74 Cases:* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967).

The Distinctive Christian Influence

by David Meek

As the problems of our society mount, Christians and non-Christians alike are looking for someone to do something that will change the direction in which his world is traveling. Many are wondering if Christians and Christianity can have any influence on these changing times. It is not a question of whether Christians and Christianity can have any influence on these changing times. It is a matter of whether our society is willing to be influenced by Christians and Christianity and whether Christians are ready to wield that influence.

"But the path of the just is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble. My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings. Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart. For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh. Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life. Put away from thee a froward mouth, and perverse lips put far from thee. Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee. Ponder the path of thy feet, and

David Meek



David Meek was born in Tullahoma, Tennessee. He is married to the former Carolyn Sue Jackson and they have five children.

Brother Meek's training began with the "Studies in the Scriptures" correspondence course. He attended the Nashville School of Preaching; East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions; a 1971 graduate of Freed-Hardeman College; and a graduate from Union University in 1974.

He has served the church in Manchester, TN; Knoxville, TN; Henderson, TN; Sheffield, AL; Selmer, TN; and is presently preaching for the McDonald Drive church in Knoxville, TN. His service to the brotherhood includes conducting gospel meetings, workshops, youth meetings and lectureships.

let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left; remove thy foot from evil." (Prov. 4:18-27)

This recounting by Solomon of the advice that he received from his father as a child is a great source of encouragement for our time. Our world is in need of a more distinctive Christian influence. "The who-cares philosophy, which gets what you can, anyway you can, as long as you can, leaves a wasted world in its wake."¹ Our time is one in which many hands are thieves which snatch the wealth of our age, and people who manifest a lack of concern for the unborn. Immorality is like a fire raging through the forest. Consuming everyone in its path. Our society is having difficulty in accepting a standard code of ethics in both moral and spiritual values. Yes, our time is a time when we need more Christians to accept the challenge of providing for this world a unique influence that will help this society to examine its values and turn to the Biblical standard for living which God intended for all. We must show this generation and future generations how to live now and for eternity. This truly is that endless influence for which Solomon speaks.

CHRISTIANS INFLUENCE BY WORDS

When Peter arrived at the house of Cornelius they informed him that they were all present and ready to hear words whereby they could be saved. (Acts 11:14) He spake unto them the word of the Lord. Thus they were influenced by his words to give up their former way of life to obey and follow Christ Jesus. The words of Christ are a powerful means of influencing others.

In Judges 16:7-15 Delilah was having much difficulty in determining where Samson obtained his strength. Three attempts had been made to discover his strength and all had failed. She tried binding him with green withs that had not been dried. The withs failed to hold him. She attempted tying him with new ropes that had not been used. He broke them off like a thread. She weaved the seven locks of his head with the web and fastened it with the pin. Samson awaked out of sleep and went away with the web and the pin. With these means Delilah was not able to influence Samson to disclose where his strength lieth. But the text said, "*And it came to pass,*

when she pressed him daily with her words, and urged him, so that his soul was vexed unto death, that he told her all his heart...." (Judges 16:16-17) What Delilah was not able to accomplish with withs, ropes and a web she did with her words.

Christians everywhere need to be a great influence today by sounding out the word of Christ. To revive this means of influencing the world is one of the great need of our time. God is expecting us to do it. (Mk. 16:15-16) He has no other plans. Can he depend on you to be a distinctive Christian influence in sounding out the word?

CHRISTIANS INFLUENCE BY WHERE THEY WALK

Every Christian walking in Christ the light is a distinctive influence. *"Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth."* (John 12:35) When the Christian walks in the light he is walking with Christ and by His teaching. His walk in Christ will influence those about him. In this world of darkness the Christian influences that darkness as he continues to walk as the children of light. (Eph. 5:8) He reproves the unfruitful works of darkness when he refuses to participate in them. (Eph. 5:11) So Christians of today need to turn on their lights and expel the darkness of this world. Christ Jesus admonished Christians in the sermon on the mount to let their light shine before men. Not to put his light under a bushel but to put it up high where it could influence or shine on all. (Matt. 5:14-16) Christians, we can revive our influence in this world by walking with Christ who is the light of the world.

Walking in love is another distinctive way to influence our society. Paul told the Ephesians to be imitators of God and walk in love, as Christ, also hath loved us. He also said, be not partners with those who are sex perverts, evil speakers and who have uncontrolled desires. (Eph. 5:1-5) Walking in love is one of the foundation stones of a distinct Christian influence. Therefore, we must manifest love if we are to revive our influence. Our Lord taught that love for one another is a badge that would identify his disciples from the world. (John 13:35) The greatest of all Christian influences is love. Paul

taught the Corinthians some of the great attributes of love and said, that love would never fail but would endure. (I Cor. 13:1-13) The child of God walking in love can be and is a distinctive Christian influence.

CHRISTIANS ARE AN INFLUENCE THROUGH WORK

Before we conclude our discussion we must say something briefly about work ethics. Christians should exercise their influence by teaching and being a good example for work. The many get-rich-quick programs and social welfare have destroyed man's incentive to work for what he gets. In many instances this attitude of getting what you can without earning it has infiltrated the body of Christ. Christians should be known by their good work ethics on their jobs and in the church as well.

"The influence of Peter's shadow (Acts 5:12-16) is one of the most striking incidents recorded in the Book of Acts. The Apostles had performed several miracles of healing, which made such an impression upon the people of Jerusalem that they had faith in the power of his shadow."²

Peter's healing and working among the people caused them to trust him and to believe that his walking by the sick and his shadow falling upon them would make them well. Brethren, this is the kind of influence that Christians should have in the world today.

"Everyone has an unconscious influence similar to that of Peter. Whenever our shadow falls, it has its effect: if the light of goodness shines within us, other lives will be made brighter; if darkness reigns within, a cloud will be cast over those around us. Said Emerson, 'Men imagine that they communicate their virtue or vice only by overt actions, and do not see that virtue and vice emit a breath every moment.'"³

Endnotes

¹. Leroy Brownlow, *Leave A Better World, Today is Mine*, (Ft. Worth, Texas: Brownlow Publishing Co., Inc., 1972) P. Aug. 28.

² Walter Dudley Cavert, *Peter's Healing Shadow*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1944) p. 195.

³ *Ibid.*

Being Militant About the Importance of Influence

by Michael King

A twentieth-century Christian often feels as if he is a "voice crying in the wilderness" as he contends with those who are within and without the Lord's church who pose threats of compromise. A strong message is being communicated by society and untaught Christians that in order to find acceptance, experience growth, make a lot of money, etc., you must become more "tolerant," less "legalistic" and develop more "generic views" regarding biblical concepts and standards of behavior. In so doing, one fails to be "true to God" (Rom. 3:4) and becomes a disappointment to self. Truly the light that lights the world is placed beneath the bushel only to be smothered; and the salt that is to savor (preserve) the earth in righteousness is without strength, causing it "...to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of man." (Matt. 5:13-16) The appeal that deserves a response is that of God calling us to "...come out from among them and be ye separate...." (II Cor. 6:17)

It is my concern that we have become so afraid of being "peculiar" in a wierd way that we are losing our distinction of

Michael L. King



Michael L. King was born in Williams, Indiana. He is married to the former Sheila Ann Birdwell, and they have three daughters. Brother King attended Michigan Christian Jr. College (A.A.), Florence State University, Harding College - Mission Seminar, Oklahoma Christian College (B.S.E), and University of Missouri (Graduate hours in Psychology and Counseling).

Brother King has preached in Alabama, Missouri, Arkansas and Tennessee. He presently serves the Central congregation in Cleveland, Tennessee. He taught in Ukpom Bible Training College in Nigeria, and has participated in campaigns in Birmingham, England; Nigeria; and New Zealand. He participates in youth rallies, camps, and other related activities.

being a "*peculiar people*" (I Pet. 2:9) or manifesting a "quality beyond the ordinary." (*Young's Analytical Concordance*) Those who live in darkness hate to have the light of God's word shined on them through teaching and influence. (John 3:19-20) Though they be discomforted, we must "*reprove them*." (Eph. 5:11) If the Lord's church, the family circle, and godly living are to be preserved into the Twenty-first century with righteousness intact, we must experience that which was instructed by the Psalmist, "*Let the redeemed of the Lord say so!*" (Psa. 107:2)

Our topic of discussion calls for addressing the need for increasing the intensity level of our example. The presence of Christ's influence in our lives needs to be clear, decisive, desired, and behavior altering. It should be capable of being reproduced in the lives of beholders! It is not wrong that they "*see your good works*" whereby they can "*glorify your Father which is in heaven*." (Matt. 5:16) "*Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might*." (Ecc. 9:10) The term used to describe this kind of fervor is "militant." Webster has defined "militant" as "engaged in warfare; actively aggressive." Where there is not militancy, there is the germination of indifference and apathy. The basic reason for a breakdown of influence is the disposition that reflects both of the above traits, "It doesn't matter to me, because I don't care!" The church at Laodicea was experiencing a breakdown in militancy and was charged as being "lukewarm." (Rev. 3:14-22) The solution was given in verse 19, "*be zealous therefore, and repent*." When we become zealous and jealous for the cause of righteousness, we will become militant in so doing! Israel escaped corruption because, Phinehas, the grandson of Aaron, was zealous for God. (Num. 25:11) It is time that apathy and indifference for God and His business became history in our lives. This demands that we repent and turn from our lethargic spiritual stance!

A great story illustrating the importance of being aggressive in displaying a proper example is recorded in the book of Joshua. In chapter 4 twelve men, one from each of the respective tribes, were selected and instructed to pick up a stone in the midst of the Jordan River to be carried to the westbank and deposited. These stones were to be piled up as a monument,

That this may be a sign among you, that when your children ask their fathers in time to come, saying, What mean ye by these stones? Then ye shall answer them, that the waters of Jordan were cut off before the ark of the covenant of the Lord; when it passed over Jordan, the waters of Jordan were cut off: and these stones shall be for a memorial unto the children of Israel forever. (Joshua 4:6-7) That all the people of the earth might know the hand of the Lord, that it is mighty: that ye might fear the Lord your God forever. (4:24)

What are we leaving behind in the way of example that will allow succeeding generations to know the influence of the hand of God in our lives? Will they desire to glorify and serve Him as well? For their benefit, we must leave some monuments of example, e.g. study of the Bible, prayer, devotion to the Lord in service, worship habits, generosity in giving, evangelistic fervor and involvement, godly families, loyalty to the Lord's body, purity of heart and life, faith, hope for the future, and trust. If I have counted accurately, that makes twelve. Feel free to build your list of "stones" to indicate firmness and to demonstrate that all who follow us can exalt God because of what has been accomplished through us and provided for us. God has been Good! We need to say so, aggressively and militantly so!

Now, contrast Joshua chapter 7 with chapter 4. These two chapters I have entitled, "Meetings at the Rock Pile." Another memorial was established in this book, but it did not accomplish the same marvelous end as the first. The Israelites have been smitten at Ai, and Joshua was beside himself wondering why. God's response to Joshua's prayer was that, *"Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them."* (Joshua 7:11) Upon closer interrogation administered by Joshua, first of all by tribe, then family, and finally individually; Achan was brought for examination. He confessed that he had stolen some spoils of war and hidden them beneath his tent floor. He had caused all Israel to be cursed by his behavior and example. Achan was taken into the valley of Achor with all of the things that he had pilfered, his sons and daughters, livestock, and all that he had.

Joshua said, why hast thou troubled us? The Lord shall trouble thee this day? And all Israel stoned him with stones, and

burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with stones. And they raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day. So the Lord turned from the fierceness of his anger. Wherefore the name of that place was called, The valley of Achor (trouble) unto this day.

The Lord's church and His cause in general suffers and becomes "cursed" similar to Israel when behavior like unto that of Achan is allowed to prevail.

The basic areas where militancy needs to be exercised and the deposition of our Lord that needs restoration are to be found in I Tim. 4:12. They are:

1. In word - Our words become an index to our character. (Matt. 12:34-35) Our speech patterns and habits need to be reviewed regularly.

2. In manner of life - When it comes to demonstration of our love and loyalty, this is our exhibit #1. (Phil. 1:27)

3. In love - A united, loving and influential body of believers has a magnetic affect on the world. (Jn. 13:34-35)

4. In spirit - This is serving the Lord with our heart-man's spirit. (Luke 10:27)

5. In faith - Faithful means to be "full of faith." One's influence is a demonstration of his faith. (Jas. 2:14-26)

6. In purity - Christ has modeled the quality of purity (I Pet. 1:15; 2:21-22) in His own life that he died to enable us to achieve (Rev. 1:5), perpetually so. (I Jn. 1:7)

That which we are outwardly arises from the inner disposition is a thought we must keep in mind. I hope the saying is not always true, "What you see is what you get!" Could it be possible that our impressionable observers deserve more? The following selection emphasizes the seriousness of what we are saying:

You are writing a gospel,

A chapter each day,

By the deeds that you do,
And the words that you say.
Men read what you write,
Whether faulty or true;
Say, what is the gospel
According to you?

Finally, it is my firm conviction that in order for our lives to be exemplary, we need to become militant about putting discipline back into them. As individuals we have a desperate cry from self to be told NO now and then regarding unacceptable behavior, attitudes and relationships which hamper influence. (I Cor. 9:25-27) It all begins with the development of our mind and making it reason like our Lord's. (Phil. 2:1-10) Families must resurrect discipline once again! The family is the springboard for our influence. God's structure for authority in marriage, parenthood, and the church to be completely restored and maintain a dynamic influence, there must be a return to church discipline that characterized the first century church. (II Thess. 3:6-15; I Cor. 5:4-8; Rom. 16:17-18) With every effort to properly allow "the beauty of Jesus to be seen in me," meekness and humility is required. There is a difference between "letting our light shine" and "shining our light!" One has a guiding affect, the other blinds. As leaven working quietly but powerfully within, it will ultimately affect the outward dimensions. (I Cor. 5:6) We must be alert to avoid the "*leaven of the Pharisees*," which was and is a showoff religion. (Matt. 16:6)

The Bridge Builder

An old man traveling a lone highway,
Came at the evening cold and gray,
To a chasm vast and deep and wide,
The old man crossed in the twilight dim,

For the sullen steam held no fear for him,
But he turned when safe on the other side,
And builded a bridge to span the tide.
"Old man," cried a fellow pilgrim near;
"You are wasting your time in building here.
Your journey will end with the closing day;
You never again will pass this way.
You have crossed the chasm deep and wide,
Why build this bridge at eventide?"
The builder lifted his old gray head;
"Good friend, in the path I have come," he said,
"There followeth after me today,
A youth whose feet must pass this way,
This stream which has been naught to me,
To that fair-haired youth may a pitfall be.
He, too, must cross in the twilight dim,
Good friend, I am building this bridge for him."

Revive Us Again In Missions

by Bill Nicks

"Wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee?" (Psalms 85:6) This text suggests that some were not rejoicing in God. When we fail to rejoice in God and in Christ, the Rock of our salvation, there is a need to be revived. The mission of the church is to save souls. Everything in the realm of evangelism, benevolence and edification must be directed toward this grand purpose. Time is of essence. We must take seriously the command of Jesus to *"go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation."* (Mark 16:15) It is essential that every member of the body realize the vital role the church has in fulfilling this charge. The church is the *"pillar and ground of the truth."* (I Tim. 3:15) It is urgent that the churches of the Lord band together in cooperation to get the truth to all the nations of the world. Obviously, we have a long way to go to become ideal.

Proof of Need for Revival

Whether one lives in Houston or Honolulu, Nashville or New Orleans, Dallas or Detroit, he finds there are twice as many unfaithful Christians who do not frequent church as those who are faithful. These unfaithful have been led away

Bill Nicks

J.W. (Bill) Nicks was born at Nashville, Tennessee. He is married to the former Gerry Petty, and they have three children and five grandchildren.



Brother Nicks attended Freed-Hardeman College, Memphis State and Abilene Christian Universities, receiving his A.A., B.S. and M.A. degrees. He has done local work in Tennessee, Texas and Michigan and has taught at Michigan Christian College, Brown Trail School of Preaching, and for the past ten years has taught at the East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions serving as director from 1980-82, and for five months of 1988. He has been named Director Emeritus of ETSPOM where he still serves as a full-time instructor and also preaches for the Claxton Church of Christ.

He served as a missionary in Nigeria and Liberia, West Africa, for eleven years and began the school among the Ibos in Nigeria which is still in operation by nationals as Nigerian Christian School. He also began a Bible Training School in Liberia. He has made periodic trips to West Africa to encourage the work, the last being in November, 1988.

by modern idols, such as pseudo-science, sex, silver, sports and pseudo sayings (Freedom is doing as I please; One church is as good as another; Everybody is doing it; or, Look out for number one). In the city where you live, many former Christians have succumbed to the gods of worldliness, materialism and immorality.

We are losing our young people. It is estimated that 50% of them have quit the church between the 7th and 12th grades. Then 80% of those left have been lost to the church during college. Of 20 young people beginning in the 7th grade, only two faithful ones are left after college. This alarming loss is a tragedy, not only in potential work force lost, but in lost souls.

Poor attendance at church services is another proof of our need for revival. In a church of 600 members, only half will be back at night service, and less than that on Wednesday night. Of course, absenteeism is not the disease, but the symptom. The real disease is selfishness, worldliness, lust or unbelief. That is why the lakes and golf courses are crowded on the Lord's day, and not the House of God. Until we work to cure the disease, we cannot expect to cure the symptom. Diseases are what kill the church, not the symptoms. We must work on the sin problem to cure absenteeism in the pew.

Our giving is not as liberal as it should be. It is estimated that the average member does not give more than 3-5% of his income. The Jews, Mormons and Adventists give 10%. "*What do ye more than others?*" (Matt. 5:47) Some say they would do better if they were wealthy, or had more. But let us remember the poem: It's not what you'd do with a million, if a million should be your lot; But what are you doing at present with the dollar and quarter you've got.

Our evangelistic outreach is far below what it could and should be. When we compare ourselves with others, our paltry efforts are easily seen. The Assemblies of God have four times the number of our missionaries, the Jehovah's Witnesses twenty-five times that of ours, and the Seventh Day Adventists seventy-five times ours. The point is not that we should merely compare ourselves with, or keep up with those in religious error, but we must strive to reach our true potential in self-sacrifice and in love for truth. We could be the

fastest growing body of religious people if we saved our youth and a few of our neighbors. If we reach our potential in liberality, we could triple and quadruple our mission efforts abroad.

Where Do We Start?

In the matter of stirring brethren to action, there are prerequisites which need to be addressed.

1. Each of us must start with ourselves. Paul said, *"Take heed to thyself, and to thy teaching. Continue in these things; for in doing this thou shalt save both thyself and them that hear thee."* (1 Tim. 4:16) He said the same to elders in Acts 20:28. He practiced this as stated in 1 Cor. 9:27: *"I buffet my body, and bring it into bondage: lest by any means, after that I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected."*

2. There must be a revival in spirit. God said, *"I dwell in the high and holy place, with him that is also of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite."* (Isa. 57:7) If we are Spirit-filled people (Eph. 5:18), having the Spirit of Christ in us (Rom. 8:9), and are led by the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:18), we will not allow the pressures of worldliness about us to discourage us. We must face our task with optimism, believing in the power of the gospel. (Rom. 1:16) The gospel in its purity can break down the hardest of hearts, pierce the most indifferent minds, and rescue those teetering on the brink of torment.

3. We need a revival of faith, faith in God, in Christ, in ourselves and in our fellow-man. *"Without faith it is impossible to please God."* (Heb. 11:6) We must also have faith in the future, and believe that *"all things work together for good to those who love the Lord, even to those who are called according to his purpose."* (Rom. 8:28)

4. There is needed a revival in worship. We are all participants, and God is the only spectator. Often worship has become more of a performance to which the audience is merely viewers, and as non-participants, merely criticize, or applaud their leaders. Our worship must be heartfelt and genuine. *"God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must wor-*

ship in spirit and in truth." (John 4:24) *"Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness."* (Psa. 29:2)

5. Unless there is a revival of prayer, we will not have the blessings of God. *"Ye have not because ye ask not."* (Jas. 4:2) Although God knows our needs before we ask, yet he is pleased when we humble ourselves, recognize our dependence on him and ask him in prayer. *"Pray without ceasing."* (I Thess. 5:17; Matt. 6:8) Not everything is the result of natural law. God is able to withhold blessings when we fail to pray, and to release them to us when we do pray. Rain was withheld on the earth in answer to righteous Elijah's prayer, and he sent rain, after a drought of three and a half years, when Elijah prayed again, and the *"earth brought forth her fruit."* (Jas. 5:16-18)

6. Perhaps the greatest need is a revival of love. We need a proper amount of love for ourselves (Mat. 22:39), love for our brethren (I Jno. 3:10), 14,15), for God and Christ and their truth (I John 5:1,3; John 7:17; 8:32), and a love for the lost. (John 3:16; Rev. 22:17; Rom. 9:1-3; 10:1f)

7. We need an old-fashioned revival of repentance and confession of our sins, both of omission and commission. *"Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon."* (Isa. 55:6f) A true revival will come when repentance grows out of *"godly sorrow."* (2 Cor. 7:10) This kind of repentance will consummate in a change of mind and a change of life. The cleansing that comes from repentance (Acts 8:22) and genuine confession of sins (Jas. 5:16; 1 John 1:9) will ready a church for teaching the lost the way of life. (Isa. 6:5-8) After Isaiah was cleansed, he then heard the voice of the Lord and answered, *"Here am I! Send me."*

The Facts About Missions

There are certain undisputed facts which need to be inculcated within us before we can be moved to action. There is a universal need for the gospel for all are lost (Rom. 3:23), and the gospel is the power of God unto salvation. (Rom. 1:16)

Christ commanded us to go. (Mark 16:15f) The evangelism of the world is in our hands, since this *"treasure is in earthen vessels."* (2 Cor. 4:7) Philip was sent to the eunuch, not the angel. (Acts 8:26-39) Peter, not an angel, was sent to Cornelius with words which would save him and his house. (Acts 11:14f) Ananias was sent to Saul of Tarsus, not the Lord. The appearance of the Lord was to choose him as a "minister and witness" to qualify him for apostleship (Acts 26:16-18), but it was Ananias who told him to *"arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."* (Acts 22:16)

Another important fact to be considered in worldwide missions is that the church is the *"pillar and ground of the truth."* (1 Tim. 3:15) The church must undergird the truth so that it will not be "crushed to earth." The truth will still be truth if we fail to proclaim it, but we will be lost for our failure, and God will have to use others to accomplish his great task of evangelism. There are 250,000 babies being born daily, and as a consequence there are 450 million more unevangelized souls than a generation ago. This fact impresses us with the urgency of spreading the good news now. We have an obligation to go to the whole world now!

The U.S.A. has 96% of the gospel preachers in the world, but only 8% of the population. While there are still some unevangelized cities in our nation, yet surely we should work toward the use of some of these preachers on foreign soil. If we do not scatter, it may be possible that the Lord will scatter us by means that will not be pleasing to us, such as wars, or other calamities. After all, we are the most wealthy nation in the world. God has richly blessed us with prosperity. Unless we give him glory by using the means at our command in the spreading of his word, he could take away our prosperity, even delivering us unto captors, as he did once to ancient Israel when they refused to honor him. Let us be impressed anew that this is our task, namely saving souls. If the "friends of Christ" do not *"hold forth the word of life"* (Phil. 2:16; John 15:14), we surely know the enemies of the cross will not! (Phil. 3:18) The apostles did not have paved roads, automobiles, telephones and telegraph in their day, and yet in their generation, Paul could say that *"the gospel was preached in all creation under heaven; whereof I Paul was made a minister."* (Col. 1:23) We have these, plus radio and TV, printing presses, and

postal service. What we lack is not the means, but the will to do it. *"Wilt thou not revive us again, that thy people may rejoice in thee?"*

Results and Rewards

The results of a revival will be similar to that in the day of Manasseh, King of Judah. (2 Chron. 33:10-20) Although he had led Judah into idolatry, and was captured and chained, and carried to Babylon, he *"besought Jehovah his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers."* God heard his prayer, and brought him again to Jerusalem to his kingdom. A real reformation occurred because Manasseh was now in earnest about his worship to the true God. He then removed the idols, altars and foreign gods, and built up the altar of Jehovah, offering sacrifices, and commanding Judah to "serve the God of Israel." This is the secret of a revival in our day. When we seriously address the sin problem with bold preaching, and firmly but lovingly beseech brethren to repent of sins of omission, as well as sins of commission, the fruits will become evident, with earnest prayer that God will bless the efforts.

As in the case of king David, genuine repentance will lead to cleansing from sin, renewal of the Holy Spirit within, and a restoration of the joy of salvation. Notice the result of this revival of a clean heart and a right spirit within: *"Then will I teach transgressors thy ways and sinners shall be converted unto thee."* (Psalms 51:1,3,8-13) The mission of the church cannot be accomplished until we agonize over our sins as David did, and realize that it is against God only that we have sinned because we have failed to carry out the great commission of our Lord who died for us. Only then will we teach transgressors and convert sinners. Surely this will be as the Lord would have it. He said to Peter, *"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith fail not; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren."* (Luke 22:31f) He gives us the same advice today, *"strengthen your brethren."*

There are many rewards for faithful service in the kingdom of God. We have the most alluring incentives to serve. We are promised that the one who is faithful *"him will*

I confess before my Father who is in heaven." (Matt. 10:32) If we deny ourselves and *"shall lose our lives for his sake, we shall find it."* (Matt. 16:24f) When he comes, he promises *"then shall he render to every man according to his works."* (Matt. 16:27) He will say, *"Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."* (Matt. 25:34) Those saints who have died will be raised first when He comes, and living saints will be caught up to meet him in the clouds. (1 Thess. 4:13-18) In the twinkling of an eye, at the resurrection, *"we shall be changed,"* and this *"mortal shall put on immortality."* (1 Cor. 15:51-53) We shall dwell in the *"many mansions"* which are in the Father's house. (John 14:1-3)

The unbeliever says this desire for reward which the Christian entertains, and which the Lord encourages us to cultivate, is mercenary. He scoffs at the idea of "pie in the sky by and by." In reply to this irreverent expression, it is sufficient to say there are different kinds of reward. Some desires for reward are mercenary, it is true. But other rewards are natural. For example, one may marry for money (mercenary), or for love (natural). This natural reward for marriage is comparable to the reward which Jesus promises. The rewards for cross-bearing are not primarily related to the physical. The "Christian materialist" has the wrong concept. He regards God as a sort of Junior Partner, one of the sources who helps him get what he wants, such as a new car, a promotion in his job, or general success in his affairs of life. His view is that all he needs to do is to "believe in the man upstairs" and ask him for whatever he wants, and it will be granted. He will likely "join the church" that has the most Cadillacs parked around it. It does not occur to him that there are crosses to bear before we can reach the crown.

God has promised to care for our physical needs if we seek first the kingdom. (Matt. 6:33) But in his divine providence, he allows us often to suffer. Paul was a faithful servant of the Lord, and had a *"thorn in the flesh."* (2 Cor. 12:7-10) He prayed that it might depart from him, but the Lord said, *"My grace is sufficient for thee: for my power is made perfect in weakness."* In addition to this handicap, he was beaten with stripes and rods, stoned, thrice suffered shipwreck, a night and a day in the deep, in perils of rivers, robbers, the Gentiles, the cities, the sea, and among false brethren. In his

abundant labors, he was often hungry and thirsty, cold and naked, and had anxieties concerning the many churches he had established. And yet, observe how he is exultant regarding the reward that was awaiting him: *"henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give to me at that day; and not to me only, but also to all them that have loved this appearing."* (2 Tim. 4:8) From a materialistic point of view, Paul would have been regarded by the worldling as a dismal failure. From a Christian point of view, he was *"more than conqueror."* (Rom. 8:37) *"Wilt thou not revive us again that we may rejoice in thee,"* even in suffering and tribulation, when such are the natural consequences of carrying out the great commission of our Lord!

There is no greater satisfaction one can have that in the knowledge he can engage himself in the Lord's work, whether at home or abroad, in places where the Lord's church has not previously been known, and where the opportunity presents itself to expand the borders of the kingdom, establishing the church from the foundation. He has the joy of making some of the really important history on our planet. Most of the news of our day is insignificant. No doubt, people of Paul's day thought the exploits of Nero and the Roman army, or Roman politicians, constituted the real news of their day. They could not possibly envision that in future centuries millions would be singing the praises of the Lord whom Paul preached, and extolled the faith of that man whose *"speech was contemptible and whose bodily presence was weak."* (2 Cor. 10:10)

What is happening in Panama, or Eastern Europe, significant as they are from the viewpoint of democracy, are trivial in contrast to those who *"turn from idols to serve the living and true God."* (1 Thess. 1:9) It was a joy and a thrill in West Africa when we witnessed "ju-ju" burnings. These were occasions when men and women would learn the story of the love of God in Christ, and would pile items used in superstitious and vain worship of animistic spirits, and burn them. They would do this publicly, inviting newly formed Christian fellow-servants to witness the burning. We would sing "What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus." This kind of public demonstration would show repentance and unashamed acknowledgment of their faith in the Lord Jesus. What greater joy can there be than to see young churches in

action, and to have fellowship in their development by training men and women to be soul winners? (Prov. 11:30) But above all, the joy of knowing one is pleasing the Lord by helping to do his will, this is the highest joy.

May we pray for a revival in the greatest charge ever given to men, that of saving souls, which is the one grand purpose of the church in the world.

Renewal of the New Commandment

by Jerry Senn

John 13:34,35

As Jesus met with his twelve closest friends, on the night before his death, he had a full heart. There was so much to say and so little time remaining. His love for these simple, and often shallow, men is amazing. He was so patient and tender, thinking of them as "his own" and speaking to them as "little children." (John 13:1,33) Isn't it incredible that the burden of taking the good news of salvation to a lost world was resting upon these feeble fellows?

Our Lord knew where success lay. It was not in human effort or intellect. These men had no real communication skills. Their capacity to receive spiritual truth was also deficient. When Jesus spoke of a "kingdom" their mind were flooded with visions of personal power and national victory over the hated Romans. After the disturbing remark that he was going where they could not follow, he says:

A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

Jerry Senn



Jerry Senn was born in Columbia, South Carolina. He and his wife, Brenda Gail, are parents of three children. He attended Freed-Hardeman College (A.A.), Harding College (B.A.), and the University of South Carolina.

Brother Senn has preached in Moore, SC; Selma, AL; Valdese, NC; Greenville, SC; Morgantown, NC; Hendersonville, NC; and presently serves with the church in Greer, SC. He writes a weekly article for the Greer Citizen, and contributes to Carolina Christian.

Brother Senn is a board member of Palmetto Bible Camp and formerly of the Southeastern Children's Home, and is on the Advisory Board of the East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions. He has spoken on Carolina Lectures; Northeastern Christian College lectures and ETSOPM Lectures.

By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. (John 13:34,35)

He repeats the treasured secret three times in two verses. "*Love one another...love one another...love one another.*" Surely there is more to success in their mission to all the world than that simply command! Yes, but it is the key.

Relationships determine success. Human organizations have learned this. The Carnegie Institute of Technology, in their studies, "show that about 15 percent of one's financial success is due to technical knowledge and about 85 percent is due to skill in human engineering, that is, the ability to lead people and relate to them."¹ Football teams that succeed on the field know it isn't one player, but the teams's ability to work together, that gets the job done. Most coaches are masters at getting people to work together.

Jesus know this first and best. Consider the emphasis given in the New Testament to an often overlooked Greek word, *allelon*. It is usually translated "one another." "Excluding the Gospels, the word is used 58 times in the New Testament. Paul leads the list for frequency, having used the word 40 times."² It means a flow of influence in two directions at once, "mutually and reciprocally." It is very interesting and helpful to study each in context. Our Lord knew we needed skill in getting along with one another. He knew that unless we could "stick together" the movement of grace would deteriorate and fail. History has shown the truth of his statement.

If we are not happy with the growth of the church in our day, if we feel the world is simply ignoring our efforts to preach Christ, let us set out on a monumental quest of renewal, a revival of the loving relationship our Lord commanded.

Twenty centuries ago, Tertullian described how the heathen world regarded the church of Christ. "The heathen are wont to exclaim with wonder, 'see how these Christians love one another!' for they (the heathen) hate one another; 'and how they are ready to die for one another!' for they (the heathen) are ready to kill one another."³ We are reminded of Jesus' words, "*Greater love has no man than this, that a man*

lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13) John drives it home to us: *"He laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."* (I John 3:16) Truly, a consuming fire burned within the hearts of those ancient believers. An unbelieving world sat up and took notice. They will again!!! This key will work if we will.

But, an unattended fire goes out! An automobile engine will not run long without oil. Friction develops, then wear, and finally a breakdown occurs. Paul commended those whose love *"abounded"* and was every *"increasing"* (II Thess. 1:3). Peter spoke of loving *"fervently."* (I Pet. 1:22) Our Lord warned: *"And then many will fall away, and betray one another, and hate one another... And because wickedness is multiplied, most men's love will grow cold."* (Matt. 24:10,12) The wickedness here, referred to a time just before Jerusalem was destroyed in which heavy persecution would turn brother against brother. Only a lack of love can do that.

Brethren, if there is a weakness in our efforts to restore the ancient church, which overshadows all others, it is found in our apathy and careless attitudes and actions toward one another. Let us devote ourselves to renewal of the new commandment of Jesus.

RENEW THE COMMAND

Sixteen times in the New Testament we are instructed to *"love one another."* Of all the commands, love is the *"greatest"* (I Cor. 13:13). After listing many virtues, Paul said: *"And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony."* (Col. 3:4) Peter, who heard the Lord's "new command," remarks, *"Above all hold unfailing your love for one another."* (I Pet. 4:8)

Jesus gave emphasis to the command to love one another by calling it *"anew."* In John's epistle, he called it both *"old"* and *"new"* (I John 2:7,8). It was old in time, but new in experience. He gave no higher standard for human relations than Moses had centuries before, when he said, *"love thy neighbor as thyself."* (Lev. 19:18)

The command of Jesus was new in several particulars. (1) He gave love for others new meaning because he perfectly ful-

filled God's command. (2) "It is a new commandment because it is the characteristic commandment of the new age."⁴ (3) It was to be lived in the disciples, thus remaining new and fresh. John said, *"Yet, I am writing you a new commandment, which is true in him and in you."* (I John 2:8) No one can "know" Christ who does not keep his commandments. Thus, his love is "perfected" in us, as we love each other. As Ramsey says, it is as "old" as the earliest apostolic preaching, it is ever new as a fresh and vital and present force. 'Old as the sun, new as the dawn'.⁵ Jesus renewed an old command by living it. It will always be fresh and new as his followers do the same.

More words have been written about love than any other subject. Poetry abounds, songs attempt to describe it, sermons by the thousands extol its virtues. Thomas Carlyle has said, "If you do not wish a man to do a thing, you had better get him to talk about it; for the more men talk, the more likely they are to do nothing else."⁶ He correctly pictures many of us. We have been known for our "words," but in few cities are we known as that body of believers who are distinguished by our "love."

Love is more than mere sentiment or feeling. Here is an excellent definition of the Greek word, *agape*, translated "love" in our text.

Christian love, whether exercised toward the brethren, or toward men generally, is not an impulse from the feelings, it does not always run with the natural inclinations, nor does it spend itself only upon those for whom some affinity is discovered. Love seeks the welfare of all, Rom. 15:2, and works no ill to any, 13:8-10; love seeks opportunity to do good to *'all men, and especially toward them that are of the household of the faith,'* Gal. 6:10.⁷

We tend to interpret New Testament words based on their usage in society. Such is a mistake when considering this subject. Love is not something one "falls into" or "out of." It is based on a commitment to take action, according to what is best for those concerned. To successfully renew the new commandment we must have an accurate understanding of its meaning.

The only adequate incentive for this high quality of love is **God's love for us**. Listen to these thoughts from the apostle whom Jesus loved.

In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. So we know and believe the love God has for us.... (I John 4:10-11,16a)

God's love moves us to love one another and thereby "*his love is perfected with us*." (v. 17a) So, to "*believe the love*" (v.16) is a necessary ingredient if we are to love others. J.W. Roberts remarks, "It has been said that to believe the love is John's creed in three words."⁸ John's epistle is written "*that you may know that you have eternal life*." (I John 5:13) And, that knowledge, he goes on to say, causes one to act in a loving manner toward a sinful brother (vv. 15-17).

• How does security of soul give one an incentive to love his brethren? Let John answer:

There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and he who fears is not perfected in love. We love, because he first loved us. If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him, that he who loves God should love his brother also. (I John 4:18-21)

His point is well taken. One who fears punishment, feels himself under the condemnation of God, cannot love his brother. His mind is full of guilt. He sees him as a competitor, and is frustrated and anxious. Fear destroys the incentive to love other. But, peace results from "knowing" we are in Christ and safe from harm (Rom. 8:1,2). A "rejoicing" heart (because sins are forgiven), produces "forbearance" (love) toward men (Phil. 4:6). When we have peace within, we are ready to love others. This may identify much of the trouble brethren have with one another. The love of the apostle Paul for the church is well documented in Scripture. He loved even those brethren who hated him and wanted to see him dead. Here is his secret:

For the love of Christ controls us, because we are convinced that one died for all; therefore all have died. And he died for all, that those who live might live not longer for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. (II Cor. 5:14-15)

RENEW THE EXAMPLE

Once we understand clearly the new commandment, we must take appropriate action. Jesus didn't teach love with words, but with action. When the disciples learned to act out Jesus' example they were successful in pleasing God. But, much of the New Testament record is consumed with the problems which brethren had (and still have) learning to love each other.

The church began with a flurry of excitement. Brethren seemed so excited about God's love for them, they overlooked many differences and former barriers as they "devoted themselves" to one another in love. But, problems immediately began to arise. Ananias and Sapphira lacked love equal to others, so they lied about their hypocrisy. The Grecian widows felt unloved (were skeptical) when neglected. Many Jewish Christians had a terrible time accepting Gentiles into the fellowship of believers because of cultural or racial prejudice, which is expressed in unloving attitudes and actions. They were constantly encouraged to renew their love for one another, but not with eloquence of speech or outward acts of personal sacrifice (I Cor. 13:1,3). "*Walking in love*" involves following step by step the example of Jesus's love for men (Gal. 2:11,12).

The book of James is a letter written to Jewish Christians in a Roman world who were having difficulty maturing in Christ. The practical teaching of this book is very similar to the "sermon of the mount." (Matt. 5-7) "There is scarcely a thought in the Epistle which cannot be traced to Christ's personal teaching. If John has lain on the Savior's bosom, James has sat at his feet." In his discourse, James deals with mutual relationships seventeen times. Brethren have always had trouble getting along with one another.

A recurring problem discussed in James' letter is brethren desiring to practice a "saying" or "talking" religion,

rather than simply doing, taking action, as commanded by the Lord. Note these examples. Brethren were admonished for (1) praying words without confidence (1:16), charging God with the responsibility for their temptations (1:12-18), getting angry when under trial and speaking when they should be listening and obeying (1:26-27), saying "*be warmed and filled*" to the needy, but taking no action in his behalf (2:14ff). James teaches that mature faith is **walk** not **talk**. This problem surely is seen in human relationships. Paying lip service to the command to love each other will not (1) develop personal maturity, or (2) bring glory to our Lord.

Let us observe three relational problems James discusses in some detail. First, he sternly condemns **favoritism**, as antagonistic to love.

My brethren, show no partiality as you hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. For if a man with gold rings and in fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, and you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, "Have a seat here, please," while you say to the poor man, "Stand there," or "Sit at my feet," have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts? James 2:1-4

All societies have socio-economic levels. Men divide themselves into such in the world, why not in the Lord's church? The rich and powerful have much in common. The poor and weak have much in common. Isn't it common sense for these two groups to seek out those who fit into their mold? Well, brethren, that is exactly what we have done, in many places. We allow differences to make a difference in our attitude and action toward one another. Often, large cities will have congregations where folks of one race attend. Other congregations consist of the academics, others are largely the higher socio-economic level and usually there is one where brethren of all "walks" reside together. There may be a variety of reasons for this. More likely, they are excuse. Prejudice is alive and well today among us! This teaching does not suggest we act though differences do not exist. But, they should not be allowed to make a difference in our treatment of one another. The expression, "*respect of persons*" (KJV), as used here,

Signifies to show regard for the external circumstances of another, and to exhibit favoritism on the ground of rank, wealth, social position, worldly attainment and fame."⁹

All believers are sons of God by faith, having been baptized into Christ, *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."* (Gal. 3:27) Outward distinctions continue to exist, but all are on the very same spiritual level.

James continues, by saying, when we show favoritism we (1) possess evil motives (v.4), (2) blaspheme (v.7). (3) sin by violating the **law of love** (v.9), the new commandment. Love is called the "royal law" (v.8) because given by a king, it is itself king of all laws (Rom. 13:10). One cannot make claim to being a law keeper and violate this precept by attitude or action.

Does "love" mean I must "like" a person and agree with him on every point of doctrine, in order to fulfill this new commandment? Personality and doctrinal differences often cause brethren to divide. We may treat those whose personalities are appealing and who believe as we do on points of teaching in one way (with favoritism), while avoiding or rejection others. Such is clearly condemned by God.

Paul instructs us to "receive" (ASV) or "welcome" (RSV) those with whom we disagree on matters of opinion (Rom. 14:1). Folks who for conscience sake believe in eating only vegetables are generally of a particular psychological disposition or temperament, perhaps very different from ours. The view held may be totally obnoxious to us. We may feel the person is silly and immature in faith. Every human inclination may be to stay away from that brother. Nevertheless, Paul said "receive him" and to remember Christ's example.

We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak, and not to please ourselves; let each of us please his neighbor for his good, to edify him. For Christ pleased not himself. ...Live together in harmony with one another, in accord with Christ.... (Rom. 15:1-3b,5b)

Brethren, let us devote ourselves to a **renewal of Christ's example**, as well as of his teaching of love for each other. Here

is how it is to be done. Will we live up to his will? Or, will we claim such action is "compromise" or "weakness"? Jesus once said of the scribes and Pharisees, *"they preach, but do not practice."* (Matt. 23:3b) The truth is we only **believe** as much of the Bible as we **practice**. We will be judged, based on the mercy we **show** to others and *"mercy triumphs over judgement."* (James 2:13) Mercy (love for a brother) controls my desire to "judge" (v.4b). Someone has said: "The inclusive gospel cannot be shared by an exclusive people."¹⁰

Secondly, James, in his sermon style, deals with the problem of **church fights**, where ugly fusses and bitter wrangling kill and destroy.

What causes wars, and what causes fightings among you? Is it not your passions that are at war in your members? You desire and do not have; so you kill. You covet and cannot obtain; so you wage war. ...Unfaithful creatures!...God opposes the proud...Submit yourselves to God. Resist the devil... Draw near to God. Cleanse your hands and ...hearts...Be wretched and mourn and weep...Humble yourselves. (James 4:1-2,4a,6-10)

Can such a terrible condition have been true of the church of the first century? Could such exist today? Surely, we should not contend the writer speaks of literal wars, fightings and killings. Neither does it follow that the "unfaithful creatures" (RSV) or "adulteresses" (ASV) were sexually perverted, necessarily. The most natural view is that these strong words describe a spiritual problem between brethren. "Is it thinkable that Christians were actually guilty of these sins? It will be seen that it is not necessary to take these as actual fightings in carnal battle."¹¹

I believe there is nothing more distasteful to God than for his people to fight with each other. Surely, the Lord's cause is described as a form of war. But, Paul clearly states that *"the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds."* (2 Cor. 10:4) The power of the gospel is love. It has the ability to melt hard hearts and change lives as nothing else can. It isn't of a sentimental, mushy, or totally emotional quality. But, agape is that high quality which comes from above, not from this world (James 3:14-17).

All war comes from within. Wrong attitudes toward the world result in problems within the church. The key problem when brethren fight (in the sense spoken of here), is **selfishness**. It shows its ugly head in four ways: (1) Wanting his own way (4:1-2), (2) he puts self above God (v.2) and destroys anyone who stands in the way, (3) even prayer is selfish (v.4) and (4) allows himself to be deceived by the world, even believing he is a follower of Jesus (v.4).

Truly, selfish pride is opposite brotherly love. James speaks of spiritual adultery and friendship with the world as an accurate description of one possessed and controlled by a desire to please self. Honesty on the part of all will require an acknowledgement of being a bit selfish. We know that it does in personal relationships when one demands their way, without regard to the concerns or needs of others.

Brethren, have we been without such wars within the ranks of churches of Christ? Who would say we have not? In fact, are there subtle wars (and some not so subtle) going on right in the middle of the congregation where you serve? Are we free of being influenced by the world (devil) to demand our way? Such has always been the case among brethren.

We are given clear instructions on how to avoid such and remain faithful to Jesus' new commandment. (1) Submit to God, v.7, (2) Resist the devil, v.7, (3) Draw near to God, v.8, (4) Cleanse your life and heart, v.8, (5) Mourn over your sin, v.9, (6) Humble yourself before God, v.10. Here is a very difficult agenda for learning to act in love toward one another.

The Corinthians provide an example of a church at war within. They fought over who was the best preacher (I Cor. 1:10-17). Do we ever experience this sort of competition in our brotherhood? Preacher pride may not have existed between Paul, Apollos, and Peter, but it surely does today. It isn't uncommon for brethren to follow men, without regard to their relation to truth, into a spirit of division, prompted by selfishness. One's reputation and effectiveness may be sacrificed on the altar of preacher worship. A part of this problem lay in the arrogance of intellectualism at Corinth. Their supposed sophisticated wisdom led them to boast (1:31), think themselves "spiritual" while they were "carnal"

(3:1,18), yet, use their "wisdom" against one another (4:6), overlook sin in their midst (5:1,2), while rejecting sincere brethren whose faith was weak (8:7ff). Paul urges them to remember, "*knowledge puffs up, but love builds up*" (8:1). He uses his own example of one who would never again do anything intentionally to injure a brother (8:13), and gives a wonderful example of living the new commandment when he said, "*I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.*" (9:22b) The problem in Corinth concerning eating the Lord's supper (ch. 11) and the matter of speaking in tongues centered around a lack of love for brethren and a selfish desire to please themselves.

Paul's discourse on love (I Cor. 13) provides the solution to all internal church problems. In Henry Drummond's little book, *The Greatest Thing In The World*, he identifies nine ingredients of love from his study of this text.

Patience Love suffereth long
 Kindness And is kind
 Generosity Love envieth not
 Humility Love vaunteth not itself
 Courtesy Doth not behave itself unseemly
 Unselfishness. . . Seeketh not its own
 Good temper . . Is not provoked
 Guilelessness . . Taketh not account of evil
 Sincerity. . . . Rejoiceth not in unrighteousness, but
 rejoiceth with the truth.¹²

Eric Fromm has said: "Love is an activity; if I love, I am in a constant state of active concern with the loved person." ¹³

Brethren, the idea that we may ~~wage~~ war with one another over any matter because we are to "*uphold sound doctrine*" is a perverted and almost ruthless assault upon the "law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2,10). Standing firm on "truth" is essential (Jude 3). One should also stand firmly upon "convictions"

held, even in matters of opinion (Rom. 14:23). But, on absolutely no occasion may we disregard what is best for our brother. It is a high standard requiring tenacity and even painful disregard for our own desires. The word "sound" means "healthful" and implies what is taught will help others. Contending for the faith must never violate the law of love. William Barclay makes an interesting comment:

"One of the most difficult things in the world is to argue without passion, and to meet arguments without wounding. To be utterly convinced of one's beliefs without at the same time being bitter to those of others is no easy thing, and yet it is a first necessity of the Christian teacher and scholar."¹⁴

In James' discussion of our tongue, he says teachers *"shall be judged with greater strictness."* (James 3:1) After vividly describing the power of the tongue for good or evil, he says *"Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good life let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom."* (James 3:13)

*This is an admonition which every individual who teaches or preaches God's word needs to study and take to heart. He should ask whether the fruit of his ministry indicates that his wisdom is from above or below. He may be sure that if faction, strife, and division follow his work, the source is not the "wisdom from above."*¹⁵

The test, says James, for wise dealings (treating one another in love) is seen in what follows one's work. *"But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth."* (James 3:14)

"Teachers, preachers, writers, editors are all in a position where humility is often difficult and where selfish ambition is a constant temptation. There is a conceit of knowledge which is as real and wrong as the pride of worldly possession: and both dispositions must be rigidly expelled and avoided by all who would be pleasing to the Lord. ...We must all be careful lest an unseemly zeal, which has as its aim selfish ambition, prompts us to entertain a feeling toward others in, or out of the church, which is selfish and sinful."¹⁶

After the tremendous discussion of "the mercies of God," the basis upon which our salvation comes to us, Paul sets out, beginning in Romans, chapter 12, several changes (transformations) which ought to result relative to our actions toward one another. He urged one, *"not to think of himself more highly that he ought to,"* (12:3) *"let love be genuine,"* (12:9) *"love one another with brotherly affection; outdo one another in showing honor,"* (12:16) *"If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceable with all."* (12:18) Paul is clearly attempting to show us how to apply the "new commandment," how we should treat one another. Listen to him: *"Owe no man anything, except to love one another; for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law."* (Rom 13:8) We owe a debt to love each other because we have been loved. Paul's own debt (Rom. 1:14) was based on God's fantastic love for him. He turned to demonstrate it toward others. Here is the renewal of the new commandment! It is a revival of the **example** of Christ, *"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love."* (John 15:9)

The book of James provides the practical instruction for walking in love toward brethren. Be attentive to these clear prohibitions, *"Do not speak evil against one another, brethren."* (James 4:11) He means "stop running down" brethren. After all you are not a judge but a doer, just like the rest. Neither are we to be lawmakers, but law keepers. Only God can save and destroy. Certainly judgement of a godly sort is demanded, however, it is never right to be unloving (Matt. 7:1ff).

Thirdly, we learn how to renew the example of the new commandment by learning to correct one another. James gives us some forceful instruction.

My brethren, if any one among you wanders from the truth and someone brings him back, let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins (James 5:19,20).

In attempting to bring a wandering brother back to safety, we must believe that a Christian may, indeed, fall away and be lost (Gal. 5:4; 2 Pet. 2:19-22; Heb. 10:26ff). Love is only shallow sentiment if it permits us to allow a brother to depart the fold of safety without attempting to restore him.

A loving atmosphere is described in James 5:13-16, which will do much to assist us in lovingly confronting the wayward. These verses suggest, (1) deep concern for the needs of those either physically or spiritually sick, (2) an openness toward sin in our own lives. Confession means "to see the same: and suggests we "see ourselves as God sees us."¹⁷ That demands a heart of humility, a lowly spirit. (3) James stresses the "great power" of prayer. It is difficult to allow someone to wander while praying for him or her daily.

We have understood well the outward process of confronting the wayward described by Jesus (Matt. 18:15-20) and by Paul (I Cor. 5). These passages give us clear authority but do little to describe the attitudes which must prevail. Growing out of a relationship already pictured in James 5:13-16, we are able to approach the matter of "restoring" brethren as "burden bearers."

Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Look to yourself, let you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ (Gal. 6:1,2).

Please, note this concerns a brother overtaken by "any" sin. It may be doctrinal error or immoral behavior of any sort. We are here given insight into the character of one who attempts to correct a brother. He is to be "spiritual" or a man strongly influenced by the Spirit of God.¹⁸

"Do not amputate him, as a piece of gangrene flesh, from the church body, but so handle him as to restore him. Also do not do this in a proud, Pharisaical spirit, but in the spirit of gentleness, bearing in mind that thou thyself art not beyond the reach of temptation."¹⁹

To be sure, there is a time for drastic action (I Cor. 5:5), but even then the desire or motive was "that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." It may well be the case that if we approached brethren when they were first "surprised" by some sin, we would be much more successful in our efforts. When we work diligently to maintain strong personal relationships (Eph: 4:1-3), we will find the "restoring" process works

much more smoothly, even when "withdrawal of fellowship" is demanded.

As I read Paul's approach to restoration of brethren, a more tolerant spirit is seen than is often demonstrated among us, in the modern church. We listen with wonder, as we read his letters to Corinth. The heretical happenings there were serious and destructive to "sound doctrine," yet his heart was filled with love for them. He doesn't play down their failures, but offers great encouragement and even **trust** that they will busy themselves at the job of correcting their selfish attitudes and false teachings. He believed in the basic goodness of these brethren and assumed they would desire to change. They did! His loving, yet firm approach, worked. It will again.

RENEW THE RESULT

Jesus' new commandment (John 13:35) was intended to have a powerful impact upon the world for which he died. *"They will come to know you are mine, by your love."* That ancient world was much like ours, materialism, pleasure seeking, cruelty and greed ruled supreme. Agape was novel to their vocabulary. Gentleness was despised. Meekness, they thought, was weakness.

Into the chaos and confusion of that culture came a band of simple followers, whose hearts were knit together by chords of love. Their love for one another was amazing. They shared what they had to such an extent that *"no one said that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had everything in common."* (Acts. 4:32b) As the good news was spread to Jew and Gentile alike, there was not the collision of the cultures one might have expected. As they were made one in Christ (Gal. 3:26-28) a melting away of dividing differences began, as they followed the new commandment of their master. And, the gospel was carried, on the wings of this brotherly love, to a world awaiting a Saviour. The result was realized. It can be again!

CONCLUSION

In our efforts at renewal of the new commandment, we must, (1) renew the **command** to its proper understanding and emphasis, (2) renew the **example** of love our Lord lived before

men and that is described in the New Testament, and (3) renew the **result**, which involves **trusting God** to work through us as we submit our wills to his clear teaching.

Put off your old nature which belongs to your former manner of life...and be renewed in the spirit of your minds, and put on the new nature...And walk in love, as Christ loved us... (Eph. 4:22-24, 5:2).

FOOTNOTES

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Reviving Personal Commitment to Christ

by Curtis Cates

INTRODUCTION

Never in the history of the world has the need for personal revival of commitment to Christ been more critically needed than today. This is a day of atheism, skepticism, agnosticism, modernism, liberalism, and Humanism, a day of blasphemy, immorality, sodomy, promiscuity, bigotry and delinquency. Nothing is sacred--not human life, not the home, not the church. Oh, how the world needs a revival! And, regretfully, since the attitudes of the world have permeated God's people, how the church needs a revival! The burden of this chapter will be to discuss reviving personal commitment to Christ, examining what commitment is, how it demonstrates itself, and what blessings it produces.

WHAT IS COMMITMENT?

Personal commitment to Christ means to crucify oneself, surrendering his life and soul to Christ. *"Then said Jesus unto his disciples, if any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."* (Matt. 16:24) It

Curtis A. Cates



Curtis A. Cates was born in Phenix City, Alabama. He and his wife, Annette, are the parents of two sons. He attended Alabama Christian College (A.A., B.S.), Livingston University (B.S.), Samford University (M.S.), Alabama Christian School of Religion (M.R.E. M.Th.), University of Alabama (Ed.D.) and did post-doctoral study at Abilene Christian University. He began preaching in 1960, and has been in preacher training for twenty years. He has served as a professor at Alabama Christian College; Dean of Columbia Christian College; Dean of Alabama Christian School of Religion; and since 1982 has served as Director of the Memphis School of Preaching. He appears on many lectureships and youth programs, conducts several gospel meetings annually, and has traveled in the mission fields of Southeast Asia conducting meetings and lectures.

He is a contributor to Sound Doctrine, Firm Foundation, Spiritual Sword, and other brotherhood journals. He edits The Yokefellow and the Memphis School of Preaching lectureship books.

demands the refusal any longer to allow Satan to control one's life. *"Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?"* (Rom. 6:16) It further demands that one keep his old self, the old man, crucified. *"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?"* (Rom 6:1,2)

What saith the Scriptures in definition of "commitment?" The Lord set the example of commitment. *"Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously."* (I Pet. 2:21-23) His life was a constant committing of Himself to the Father. Though unjustly and grievously persecuted, He knew the Father would judge Him righteously. The same Greek word, *paradidomi* [to deliver, commend, or entrust something for another], is used in Acts 14:26, *"And thence sailed to Antioch, from which they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled."*

The Apostle Paul wrote, *"For the which cause I suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed [paratheke] unto him against that day."* (II Tim. 1:12) He had deposited or entrusted his whole being and well-being, his very soul and salvation to the Lord. He prayed the same for those at Thessalonica. *"...I pray your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."* (I Thess. 5:23)

The Absolute God is absolutely trustworthy! Thus, Paul to the Ephesian elders stated, *"And now, brethren, I commend [paratithemai, commit to the charge of, intrust] you to God and to the word of grace,...."* (Acts 20:32) So likewise had the Lord committed [parathithemai] His spirit to God while on the cross. (Luke 23:46) The blessed assurance and command therefore in I Peter 4:19 is, *"Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit [parathithesthai, to place with anyone, to deposit, to commit to one's charge] the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator."* The background of the word is the leaving of money [as one departed on a trip] with a close friend who could be

trusted; the trust was sacred, the full amount being returned when the trip was completed. God did not fail Christ, and He cannot fail us!

HOW IS COMMITMENT DEMONSTRATED?

The greatest example of commitment was exemplified by the Lord Jesus Christ, whom we are to follow. *"For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: 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."* (I Pet. 2:21-23) Paul was a truly great example of committing his soul to God. He wrote, *"For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."* (Phil. 1:21) To the Corinthians, he urged, *"Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ."* (I Cor. 11:1) Thus, by examining the lives of Christ, our perfect example, and of Paul, the great apostle to the Gentiles, one can achieve in large measure the realization of what it means to commit one's soul to the Father. What are some characteristics of the person who has committed his soul to the Lord?

First, he loves God supremely. To the lawyer Christ commanded, *"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."* (Matt. 22:37) Moses declared, *"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one God."* (Deut. 6:4) Thus, He will not accept divided allegiance, as was characteristic of those who worshipped idols and placed other things before God. (Ex. 20:3) With God, it is all or none. (Matt. 12:30) The objects of the Christian's affections have changed; he has given up the love for the world. *"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any many love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."* (I John 2:15) *"We love him, because he first loved us."* (I John 4:19)

Christ committed His soul to the Father because He loved the Father. He and His Father were/are one. (John 17:20-26) The Father gave the only begotten Son of His love to die for man. (John 3:16,35) *"...I love the Father, ..."* (John 14:31) Pleasing Him was uppermost in Christ's mind. Paul likewise loved the Father and Christ, writing, *"But if any man love God,*

the same is known of him." (I Cor. 8:3) "*Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ.*" (Eph. 6:24; cf. Rom. 8:28) "*If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema.*" (I Cor. 16:22) It was this love which constrained, or motivated the Apostle Paul (II Cor. 5:14), as it should all Christians.

Second, he loves God's Word. Notice how God and His Word are inseparable. "*...I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which [word] is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance....*" (Acts. 20:32) Notice how God's grace and the Word are inseparable. "*But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*" (II Pet. 3:18) Notice also that to "*...be barren and unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ...*" is to be blind, and to fall spiritually. (II Pet. 1:8-10) Notice that one's pleasing God and loving the Word are inseparable. "*For we walk by faith, not by sight.*" (II Cor. 5:7) "*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*" (Rom. 10:17) Notice further that salvation and the Word are inseparable. "*And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*" (John 8:32) "*Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.*" (John 17:17) No wonder David exclaimed, "*O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.*" (Psa. 119:97)

To love God's Word and to meditate thereon (Psa. 1:1-3) is to have the mind of God and of Christ, to think as God thinks. "*O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps.*" (Jer. 10:23; cf. Prov. 14:12, Rom. 1:18ff) Man must be revealed the thoughts of God, true wisdom. "*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.*" (Isa. 55:8, 9; cf. Job 28) The command is, "*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.*" (Phil. 2:5; cf. Heb. 8:10)

Christ loved the Word of the Father and thought His thoughts. He stated, "*...I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.*" (John 5:30) "*My meat is to do the will of him that sent me and to finish his work.*" (John 4:34) He prayed in the garden, "*Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.*" (Luke 22:42) In addition, He declared His Father's

Word, telling the apostles, *"...the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me."* (John 14:24) *"I have given them thy word,"* He prayed to God. (John 17:14) It was this Word which would produce faith and unity among God's true servants. Paul likewise loved the Word, writing, *"...we have the mind of Christ."* (I Cor. 2:16) He declared faithfully the testimony [Word] of God (I Cor. 2:1), so that the Corinthians' *"...faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power."* (I Cor. 2:5,10-13) He readily obeyed the will of the Father in his life (Acts 22:16; Phil. 3:13,14; et al.), knowing that Christ is *"...the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him."* (Heb. 5:8,9) Indeed, the Lord stated, *"If ye love me, keep my commandments."* (John 14:15; cf. Matt. 7:21-23; Luke 6:46; John 12:48; et al.) The idea that one can love the Father and the Son, while at the same time neglecting obedience to the Word is false to the core. Only flaming fire and fearful indignation await those who *"...know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."* (II Thess. 1:6-9)

Third, he lives a life of purity. Through repentance, he dies to the love and practice of sin. (Rom. 6:1,2) He is baptized for the remission of sins. (Acts 2:38; 10:48; 16:30-34; 22:16; I Pet. 3:21; Rom. 6:3,4) He continues walking in the light, and *"the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin."* (I John 1:7) The child of God is strengthened through the Word; *"Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world."* (I John 4:4); we know the difference between *"the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error."* (I John 4:6) John reminded his readers, *"My little children, these things write I unto you that ye sin not."* (I John 2:1)

The Christian maintains a life of purity, having committed himself to God, by maintaining purity of thought. Our Lord said, *"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God."* (Matt. 5:8) Further, *"But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are the things which defile a man."* (Matt. 15:20) Peter warned, *"Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul."* (I Pet. 2:11) The

Word helps man to set his priorities and to grow in spirituality; he corrects his mistakes and walks ever nearer the footsteps of the Saviour (II Pet. 3:18; II Tim. 3:16,17) *"Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator."* (I Pet. 4:19)

Christ lived a life of purity and well doing. Tempted by the Devil to sin, the Lord answered, *"It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God."* (Matt. 4:4) Thus, *"...we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."* (Heb. 4:15) Paul likewise lived a pure life, serving with his spirit in the gospel. (Rom. 1:9) *"But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."* (I Cor. 9:27) He urged Timothy to be an example in purity and in word (I Tim. 4:12), and *"Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shall both save thyself, and them that hear thee."* (I Tim. 4:16)

Fourth, he offers himself a living sacrifice. The very conversion of the penitent believer is the figure of a crucifixion. He dies to sin, he is buried in the watery grave of baptism, and he rises to walk the new life. (Rom. 6:1-5) He is raised from the grave in the likeness of Christ's resurrection; the old body of sin is through God's grace left in the grave [Christ's blood is contacted in His death (John 19:31), which blood cleanses one from sin (Eph. 1:6,7; Heb. 10:22; Rev. 1:5)]. He is then a new creature. (II Cor. 5:17; I Cor. 12:13) He is born into the Lord's kingdom, having experienced the new birth. (John 3:3-5; Col. 1:13,14; Acts 2:47) How can one commit his soul to God without becoming a member of His family? He then belongs to God, having been bought with a price. (I Cor. 6:19,20) *"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present yourselves a living sacrifice, holy acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."* (Rom. 12:1)

Christ offered Himself a sacrifice for us, though He knew no sin. A part of His commitment to the plan and purpose of God, Christ *"...through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God,"* (Heb. 9:14) tasting death for all men and making

reconciliation for the sins of the people. (Heb. 2:9,17) He is "... *the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*" (Rev. 13:8); He died for us while we were yet sinners. (Rom. 5:8) Christ was **the** perfect sacrifice for sin, not for His own sin but for the sins of the world. Paul likewise offered himself as a living sacrifice [as must be done by all who would be saved by the sacrifice of Christ]. As Christ had given His life for others, Paul sacrificed his life for the Lord and for the good of others [as well as for himself]. Had not the Lord stated, "*If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it?*" (Matt. 16:24,25) Thus Paul wrote, "*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*" (Gal 2:20) No wonder, then, he excitedly affirmed, "*I am debtor both to the wise, and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also*" (Rom 1:14,15)! Note how Paul sacrificed himself, as related in II Corinthians 11:22-28. With Paul, it was "*None of self and all of Thee.*"

Fifth, he lives a life of unity with God. "*And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent,*" the Lord prayed in John 17:3. He prayed further "*...that they might be one, as we are.*" (17:14) "*Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their [the apostles] 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: ...I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one.*" (17:20,21,23) Only by committing one's soul to Christ is this possible. "*That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.... But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.*" (I John 1:3,7)

Christ and the Father were/are one, perfectly united. "*I and my Father are one.*" (John 14:10) "*...who [Christ] being the effulgence of his glory and the very image of his [God's] substance....*" (Heb. 1:3 ASV) Paul likewise lived a life of unity with God. He wrote, "*For me to live is Christ.*" (Phil 1:21) He

was united with the Lord in his righteous life (Phil. 3:10-16), in his meditation (Phil. 4:6-9), in his worship with the saints (Acts 20:6,7; Col. 3:16,17), in his message (II Tim. 4:2), in his sufferings (II Tim. 4:16-18), and in his joys. (I Thess. 2:19,20)

Sixth, he lives a life of service. The Christian *"commits the keeping of their souls to him in well doing,"* (I Pet. 4:19) being equipped by the Word of God to *"all good works."* (II Tim. 3:16,17) He always abounds in the work of the Lord (I Cor. 15:58), *"...created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."* (Eph. 2:10)

Christ set the perfect example in work and service, *"...Who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him."* (Acts 10:38) *"I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day,"* the Lord said. (John 9:4) *"But Jesus answered them, My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."* (John 5:17) *"Even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many."* (Matt. 20:28) Paul likewise lived a life of service, having followed the Master. On the endangered ships, Paul assured the sailors, *"For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve."* (Acts 27:23) To the Galatians he wrote, *"As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."* (Gal. 6:10) He would have given his own soul to save his people, had that been possible. (Rom. 10:1-3; 9:2,3) Truly, he was a co-worker with God. (II Cor. 6:1)

Seventh, he refutes error, hating every false way. Of course, he speaks the truth in love. *"But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ."* (Eph. 4:15) Having committed his soul to God, David through His precepts got understanding; therefore he hated *"every false way."* (Psa. 119:104) People of God have always hated error, whether in their own lives or in the lives of others, lest Satan have the advantage.

Christ hated the evil one and every false way. He upbraided false teachers, both publicly and privately. (Matt. 23) [Today, the Lord might by some be called a "religious terrorist."] *"But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrine*

the commandments of men." (Matt. 15:9) *"Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up."* (15:13) To the Pharisees He said, *"Ye neither know me, nor my Father";* unfortunately, unless they repented, they would die in their sins and not go to be with the Lord. They did *"...the deeds of your father [Satan]."* (John 8:19,21,41) Paul likewise did not teach the heresies of men but rather exposed and repudiated them. Being a gospel preacher [not a "preacher" of the philosophies, theologies, traditions, and doctrines of men], the apostle wrote, *"(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ; And having in a readiness to revenge all disobedience, when your obedience is fulfilled."* (II Cor. 10:4-7) The Word reproves and corrects, if it is preached. (II Tim. 3:16,17) It is militant even to the point of demanding that the deceiver be disfellowshipped. (Rom. 16:17; II Thess. 3:6; cf. II John 9-11) Paul at times even rebuked some to the face (Gal. 2:11), as well as at a distance. (I Cor. 1:10-13, *et al.*) Paul did as he commanded; he continued in the doctrine (I Tim. 4:16), being also *"...set for the defense of the gospel."* (Phil. 1:17) In fact, to false teachers Paul *"...gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you."* (Gal. 2:5) *"Try the spirits,"* the apostle of love commanded. (I John 4:1) *"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them."* (Eph. 5:11)

Eighth, he loves his neighbor and his brethren. Not only are we to love our neighbor as we love ourselves (Matt. 22:39), but we are also to love one another as Christians. *"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."* (John 13:34,35)

Christ taught us how to love to a new extent; love others *"...as I have loved you."* (John 13:34) He loved us even when we were enemies of the cross and of God. (Rom. 5:6-10) He was the perfect example of loving *"...in deed and in truth."* (I John 3:18) The love of Christ was demonstrated in His giving all for sinful and rebellious man. Paul likewise showed great love for all men. He taught both Jews and Greeks the pure gospel, counting not his *"... life dear to himself, so that I might*

finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I received of the Lord Jesus"; therefore, he was "...*pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God.*" (Acts 20:21-27) He warned them night and day with tears. (20:31) *"And I will very gladly spend and be spent with you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved."* (II Cor. 12:15) Just as Christ's own people rejected Him, though He came to His own (John 1:11), Paul's own converts often turned against Him, though He loved them more than life itself. (cf. Gal. 4:16) He loved the brotherhood. (Rom. 12:9,10; Heb. 13:1; I Pet. 2:17)

Ninth, he loves the church. The church of Christ was in God's eternal purpose (Eph. 3:9-12), and it is in the church that we glorify God. (Eph. 3:21) The prophets made known that the church would be established in Jerusalem in the last days. (Isa. 2:2,3; Joel 2:28-32) It would be established with power (Mark 9:1; Acts 1:8; Acts 2:1-4), which came on Pentecost of Acts 2. Since then, all the penitent believers who have been baptized for the remission of sins have been added to it. (Acts 2:36-47)

Christ loved the church, giving Himself up for it. (Eph. 5:25) He promised to build the church/kingdom (Matt. 16:18,19); He shed His blood to purchase the church. (Acts 20:28) How can one possibly commit his life to Christ and not love and defend His very body, the church, His family (Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22,23; Rom. 12:4,5; I Cor. 12:13; Eph. 4:4; et al.)? Paul likewise loved the church of Christ. In addition to all his persecution for the cause of Christ, Paul had constantly upon him "...*the care of all the church,*" or congregations of the Lord. (II Cor. 11:28) He regretted so much that he earlier "*persecuted the church of God*" (I Cor. 15:9); only by God's marvelous grace was he forgiven. (15:9; cf. Acts 22:4; 8:3; 24:14) The church he once persecuted he now defended with his very life. (Gal. 1:13ff) *"Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church."* (Col. 1:24) [Sadly, not everyone who is persecuting the church today is a Jew or even outside of Christ]. Paul was careful to instruct Timothy how "...*to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God*" (I Tim. 3:15); Timothy in turn instructed others. (II Tim. 2:2) Some of that instruction is to

elders, responsible for knowing how to "...take care of the church of God." (I Tim. 3:5) It is the church of Christ that Christ will save at the last day. (Eph. 5:23-27)

Tenth, he has a forgiving heart. *"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."* (Matt. 6:14,15) One who refuses to forgive the penitent will not be forgiven. (Matt. 18:21-35) *"If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him."* (Luke 17:3)

Christ was our perfect example in forgiveness. Even on the cross, He prayed, *"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."* (Luke 23:34; cf. Luke 9:53-56) When 3,000 of them repented and were baptized on Pentecost, the Lord's prayer was answered. (Acts 2:35-38) *"Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye."* (Col. 3:13) *"And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."* (Eph. 4:32) Paul likewise had a forgiving heart. When the man who had his father's wife repented, Paul wrote the Corinthians thus: *"Sufficient to such a one is this punishment [withdrawing from the one in adultery] which was inflicted by the many, so that contrariwise ye should rather forgive him and comfort him, lest by any means such a one should be swallowed up with his overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you to confirm your love toward him."* (II Cor. 2:6-8) This spirit in Paul is also seen in his attitude toward John Mark. Beginning his second missionary journey, *"...Paul thought it not good to take with them him who withdrew from them from Pamphylia, and went not with them to the work."* (Acts 15:38) Later, Paul wrote, *"Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is useful to me for ministering."* (II Tim. 4:11)

Eleventh, he is faithful to the end. *"...be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."* (Rev. 2:10) *"And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."* (Luke 9:62) *"Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath*

promised to them that love Him." (Jas. 1:12) *"Behold, we count them happy which endure."* (Jas. 5:11)

Christ endured even the cross. The Hebrews writer urged, *"For consider him that endureth such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."* (Heb. 12:3) *"Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."* (12:2) *"Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; Though 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."* (Heb. 5:7-9) Paul likewise endured great persecution to the end, as a good soldier. (II Tim. 2:3) He wrote, *"Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sake..."* (II Tim. 2:10) *"As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us."* (Rom. 8:36,37) At the close of his life, he could write, *"...I am ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."* (II Tim. 4:6-8) Just as Christ finished His work (John 19:30; John 17:4), Paul finished his work.

WHAT BLESSINGS RESULT FROM COMMITMENT?

When a person commits his soul to the Lord, indescribable blessings are his. One, God's grace abounds in his life. *"But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."* (Rom 5:20) Redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, he is begotten *"...unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."* (I Pet. 1:18,10,23) God's manifold [many colored] grace (4:10) is sufficient to meet his manifold trials. (1:6) He is *"...kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."* (1:5) Two, with his soul well nourished by the Word of God, he is

able to be content, to adjust to various circumstances of life. His life does not have to consist of "things," riches of the world. (Luke 12:15) Paul wrote, *"Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."* (Phil. 4:11) Three, he has blessed assurance. *"For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."* (II Tim. 1:12) Four, he is happy, actively engaged in the work of the Lord. *"For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye so them."* (John 13:15,17) *"For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it."* (I Pet. 3:10,11) This is the abundant life (John 10:10)!

CONCLUSION

Not only does the Father reveal the commands of gospel, He also gives us marvelous examples of what it means truly to commit our souls to Him. How beautiful it is to see the great apostle to the Gentiles, Paul, as he imitates Christ, the one who gave His life for him--and for you and me, dear reader! Can I, can you *"die the death of the righteous,"* as did Paul? Can we finish the course? Can we gain the crown? Indeed we can, but only if we commit our souls to the Lord as did Christ, and Paul, and countless other saints throughout the ages. *"Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."* (John 8:32) *"If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments."* (John 14:15) *"...observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."* (Matt. 28:18-20)

Going Into All The World

by Clayton Winters

"The clock of time is wound but once, and no man has the power

To tell just when the hands will stop at late or early hour.

To lose one's wealth is sad indeed, to lose one's health is more.

To lose one's soul is such a loss that no man can restore."

More than five billion people live on earth, a spinning, rotating ball, 25,000 miles in circumference. Of this vast multitude, only about 32 percent claim to be Christian in the broadest possible use of that term. Among these religious classifications are 13,384 Churches of Christ, claiming a combined membership of only 1,623,744.

Furthermore, while you read the short poem above, 39 people died. That totals about 5,417 every hour of every day. And the tragedy is, as the above statistics show, that most of these died never having heard the saving message of the

Clayton Winters



Clayton Winters was born near Mountain City, Tennessee. He is married to the former Vivian May and they are the parents of three children. Brother Winters attended Milligan College and Immanuel School of Religion, specializing in Biblical languages.

Brother Winters has been actively engaged in the ministry for nearly 40 years. He has served churches in Virginia and North Carolina, and has been with the Broyles Street congregation in Erwin, Tennessee for the past twenty-five years. He has participated in radio and television work for many years in Tennessee, Kentucky and Virginia.

Brother Winters has written a number of tracts and workbooks. He is author of Basic Facts in Human Redemption, A Commentary on Ezra - Esther, and is presently preparing A Commentary on Kings - Chronicles.

crucified and risen Christ. Those still living groan under the burdens of sin and the Devil.

SIN TAKES ITS TOLL

Among high school students in our own country, 50.2 percent seek escape through marijuana or hashish, 15.2 percent use cocaine, 10.3 percent turn to hallucinogens, 92.2 percent attempt to drown their sorrows in alcohol (there are now 1.1 million teenage alcoholics), and 67.2 percent destroy their health and shorten their lives with cigarettes. Twenty-three thousand teenagers commit suicide annually.

Nearly half of all marriages break apart, and close to 50 percent of our children now live in a one parent home. Mothers brutally abort 1.5 million babies each year. Statistics show that about forty percent of teenagers now pregnant will be pregnant again within the next two years.

Pornography flows into our markets and homes by the truck-loads. Playboy's monthly circulation is 3,732,948, while Penthouse rolls out 2,251,491. Smut sheets overflow most news stands, and the silver screen graphically portrays the grossest sort of immorality. T-shirts and bumper stickers help spread the pornographic word. Sexual abuse, even that of small children, is rising at an alarming rate.

Crime per 100,000 capita breaks down as follows: violent crimes, 609.7; murder, 8.3; rape, 37.4; robbery, 212.7; and aggravated assault, 351.3.

Tragic, however, as the shambles is that sin has made of our society, yet by far its greatest toll exacted is death--eternal death: *"The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son: the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him."* (Eze. 18:20) *"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."* (Rom. 6:23) *"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."* (Matt. 25:41)

THE GREAT COMMISSION, GOD'S MESSAGE OF REDEMPTION

And what a commission it is! *"Go ... teach all nations."* (Matt. 28:19) *"Go ... preach the gospel to every creature."* (Mark 16:15) *"And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."* (Luke 24:47) The gospel to five billion souls in our generation! The task staggers our imagination, but we must seriously set our hands to it. Here are some reasons why.

The gospel is God's only remedy for sin.

When Paul raised his poignant question, *"O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?"* he could find but one answer, *"I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord."* (Rom. 7:24,25) *"For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe."* (I Cor. 1:21) If the world is ever going to be saved, it will not be by escapism, politics, sports and entertainment, or smooth words and fair speeches. It must be by the pure gospel of the Son of God. *"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."* (Rom 1:16)

The Lord's church is the only institution to carry out the commission.

The powers that be can't do it. They have a divine commission, but not that of preaching the gospel. (Rom. 13:1-4) Social clubs and human organizations won't do it. Their main concern is the life that now is--social advancement, entertainment, and civic matters. Denominationalism won't do. It is too entwined in error and human tradition to disseminate the pure gospel. If the gospel is to be preached at all, the church must do it. It alone is the pillar and ground (support) of the truth. (I Tim. 3:15) Paul charged the church at Corinth, *"Not boasting of things without our measure, that is, of other men's labors; not having hope, when your faith is increased, that we shall be enlarged by you abundantly, To preach the gospel in the regions beyond you and not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hand."* (2 Cor. 10:15,16)

We must free ourselves from the blood of the lost.

God warned Ezekiel, *"Son of man, I have made thee a watchmen unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul."* (Eze. 3:17-19) Paul recognized the same principle as binding under the great commission. (Acts 20:26,27)

METHODS FOR CARRYING OUT THE GREAT COMMISSION

How do we meet the challenge presented us by the great commission? There are so many means we may use that were not available to the early church. (1) Modern means of reproducing the printed page, enabling almost anyone to effectually spread the gospel of our salvation. (2) Modern means of communication--radio, television, recording devices--making it very simple to pass the word along to someone else. (3) Modern means of transportation, bringing the world to our door-step. (4) Financial prosperity, making possible the use of all other means afforded us. But essentially, carrying out the great commission comes down to about three premises: (1) loving the truth and lost souls enough to want to preach the saving message of the gospel (Rom. 1:14,15; 1 Cor. 9:18-22); (2) imbibing the zeal manifested by the early church in spreading the good news of the Kingdom of God (Acts 8:4); (3) each Christian assuming a responsibility for teaching others. (2 Tim. 2:2)

We are simply without excuse for not getting the job done. It was said of the accomplishment of the early church, *"But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world."* Rom. 10:18

What will be said of our generation?

Things We Must Not Forget Or Leave Behind

by James Watkins

The theme of this lectureship is "Revive Us Again!" I certainly believe that is a good and timely theme for our consideration. When one looks closely at the work being done in the church today, it becomes readily apparent that there is a need for revival. It appears that Satan has made very good use of his tools of lethargy, indifference and apathy!

This school is vitally concerned with raising the necessary funds for its operation. Students who come to the school, in most cases, must raise funds for their support while attending school. Does the difficulty in raising funds give you the impression that we need a revival among God's people when it comes to the Lord's work?

Why is it so difficult to find teachers for all the Bible classes in local congregations? Why is it so difficult to get people involved in visitation and teaching the Bible to others? Why can't many who wear the name of Christ even be convinced of the spiritual value to be gained by attending all the services of

J.C. Watkins



J.C. Watkins was born in Chattanooga, Tennessee. He is married to the former Ann Roberson, and they have three daughters and seven grandchildren. He is a graduate of the USAF Senior Non-Commissioned Officer Academy.

Brother Watkins began preaching in 1963 in North Charleston, South Carolina. He has preached in South Carolina, Vietnam, Louisiana, Guam, Ohio and Nebraska while serving in the Air Force. He has done local preaching in Ringgold, Georgia; Chattanooga, Tennessee; and presently preaches for the Edgewood Church of Christ in Greenville, S.C.

Brother Watkins served 23 years in the U.S. Air Force. He served as an elder in Guam and Nebraska. He is a former radio and television speaker and preaches in several gospel meetings and lectureships each year. He is former editor of *Arise to Truth*, a quarterly publication of the White Oak Church of Christ in Chattanooga; contributing author for *Carolina Christian* and other publications.

the church? Why are members of the Lord's church so reluctant to give as they have been prospered to enable the church to preach the gospel to a lost and dying world?

I believe it is because Satan is so effective in using his tools of lethargy, indifference and apathy! Satan wants every soul! And he will use anything and everything he can to devour your soul. (I Peter 5:8) The sluggish inaction and lack of interest seen in many local congregations is a genuine cause for concern. Like the Psalmist we need to cry to God, *"Wilt thou revive us again: that they people may rejoice in thee."* (Psalms 85:6)

I sincerely believe there is a great need for revival in the Lord's church today! And I'm thankful for any good efforts put forth to bring about that revival. I believe there are some sincere efforts being made to revive us again. But there appears to be a tendency to move away from "the old paths" to new theology, ideas, methods, gimmicks, and/or entertainment to bring about that revival. But we must remember that there are some things which we cannot forget or leave behind if we are going to bring about the kind of revival God wants among his people! Our purpose in this lesson is to examine some of those things.

LOVE FOR GOD'S WORD

A deep and abiding love for the Bible as the word of God must never be forgotten or left behind! There needs to be a healthy respect for the Bible as God's word because it comes to us from the mind of God. It is authoritative because it includes all that God wants us to know or to do and excludes all things it does not authorize. As the Creator of man, God knew what he wanted from man, and how to reveal his will to man. The weakness of man renders him incapable of inventing a way to please God. (Jer. 10:23) His ways and his thoughts are superior to the ways and thought of man. (Isa. 55:8-9) Therefore, man needs to love the Bible as the revealed will of God. David emphasized that when he said, *"O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day."* (Psa. 119:97)

We should love the Bible because it came from our Creator! The opening words of the Bible set forth the eternal

God as the Creator of all things. (Gen. 1:1) Praising God as the maker of all things the Psalmist declared:

Before the mountains were brought forth, or even thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou are God. Psalms 90:2

Therefore, because God is the Creator and because he is love (I John 4:8), we know that he has revealed himself to the creatures he made in his own image. (Gen. 1:26-27) Beginning about Exodus 4:22 we find the expression, "Thus saith the Lord..." used over and over again in the Bible. Samuel said, "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me..." (II Sam. 23:2) In the Old Testament prophets we find the expression, "The word of the Lord came unto..." or some similar statement used numerous times. In the New Testament we read:

For the prophesy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. (II Peter 1:21)

There can be no doubt in the mind of those who believe in God and trust his word that all scripture is truly God breathed or inspired. (II Tim. 3:16-17)

We must not forget to love God's word because it will be the standard by which we will be judged when we stand before the throne of God to give account of our lives. (John 12:48; Rom. 14:12) Each day of our lives we move closer and closer to the judgement and the time will come when we will be there. (Heb. 9:27)

Love cannot be separated from action! If we truly love God, we love his word and obey it. (Luke 6:46; John 14:15) In our efforts to revive the church we cannot forget or leave behind a love for God's word which will be manifested in our adherence to all its commands and teaches!

THE PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH

It appears that some have the concept that the church is the same as a civic club, lodge or other man-made social order. That is not true! The Lord's church is not the same as any man-made organization! God's word teaches that there is

only one body (Eph. 4:4), which is the church (Eph. 1:22-23), of which Christ is the head. (Col. 1:18) The Bible teaches that God is to be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ. (I Peter 4:11) That is the sole purpose of the church!

Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen. (Eph. 3:20-21)

God is glorified when:

1. The gospel, his power unto salvation, is preached. Rom. 1:16; II Tim. 4:2

2. The gospel is heard, believed and obeyed by souls being baptized into Christ. Acts 18:8

3. Those who are baptized are taught to "... observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you...." Matt. 28:20

4. Those who have been added to the church (Acts 2:41,47) continue "... steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." Acts 2:42

5. His servants "...grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever." II Peter 3:18

6. Those in the church are shining as "...lights in the world; holding forth the word of life...." Phil. 2:15-16

7. Members of the church are "...steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord...." I Cor. 15:58

8. Christians "...continue in the faith grounded and settled...." Col. 1:23

9. The followers of Christ do and say everything they do "...in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him." Col. 3:17

10. The church holds fast to the apostles' doctrine and teaches it to other faithful Christians "...who shall be able to teach others also." II Tim. 2:2

As we do all we can to revive the church, let us never forget or leave behind that fact that the purpose of the church is to glorify God as souls are saved by obedience to God in all things!

THE DISTINCTIVENESS OF THE CHURCH

The churches of Christ pictured in the New Testament were distinctive. In order to be a church "OF CHRIST" they had to be authorized by Christ and constructed according to his will. Thus Paul said, "*The churches of Christ salute you.*" (Rom. 16:16) Any man-made church has no scriptural right to exist! But the church of Christ does because it is distinctive in nature as authorized and built by Christ.

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 make to drink into one Spirit. (I Cor. 12:12-13)

The church of Christ is distinctive because to be the church of Christ, it must have Christ as its head and law giver. (Col. 1:18; James 4:12) It must accept his doctrine and guidance in all religious activity or else it is not the church "OF CHRIST."

The church of Christ is distinctive because Christ built it. (Matt. 16:18) The tabernacle of the Old Testament was a type of the church that Christ would build. Moses was told by God that he must build the tabernacle "...according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount." (Heb. 8:5) God had a distinctive church of Christ in mind when he gave the type for it in the tabernacle of the Old Testament. To be distinctive the church of Christ must allow no changes to the doctrine or teaching of Christ. (I Tim. 1:3; II John 9,10; Jude 3; Rev. 22:18-19) Christ meant for his church to remain like he built it! No man or any set of men has any authority to change the church from the distinctive body which Christ built! All authority from Christ now rests in the New Testament. (John 14:26; 16:13; 17:8,14,20,21; Matt. 16:19) The only thing authorized in the New Testament is "...church of Christ...." Rom. 16:16

Only churches patterned after the churches of Christ in the New Testament are churches of Christ now! A church ceases to be "OF CHRIST" when it ceases to be patterned after the will and authority of Christ as revealed in the New Testament. Nothing can be "of God" or "of Christ" unless it is patterned after the will and authority of Christ. In our attempts to put life back into the church, we must never forget or leave behind the distinctiveness of the church of Christ which is established according to the pattern. (Heb. 8:5)

THE CHURCH AS THE PILLAR AND GROUND OF THE TRUTH

The church must never forget or leave behind the fact that she is the pillar and ground of the truth. Paul told Timothy:

But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. (I Tim. 3:15)

The church must never cease from teaching, supporting, and defending the truth as revealed in the New Testament. To please God, one must always choose the way of truth. (Psa. 119:130) God expects those who lead his people to be men of truth. When he instructed Moses concerning the kind of men needed to lead his people, he told him that they were to be "...men of truth...." (Ex. 18:21) Certainly that would still hold true today. God gives us leaders and elders who are men of truth! The Psalmist declared "...the truth of the Lord endureth for ever...." (Psa. 117:2) The church must always uphold that eternal truth!

The New Testament reveals that "...*grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.*" (John 1:17) Christ taught, "*Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth.*" (John 17:17) The Bible assures us, "*But we are sure that the judgement of God is according to truth....*" (Rom. 2:2)

Jesus clearly stated that we are saved by truth. (John 8:31-32) But in order for the truth to save, it must be obeyed. (Rom 2:8) To be saved one must love the truth because God will let one who does not love the truth believe a lie and be damned. (II Thess. 2:10-12) Jesus is the author of eternal salvation ONLY to those who OBEY the truth! (Heb. 5:8-9)

As the pillar and ground of the truth, the church of Christ must always be found "...*speaking the truth in love....*" (Eph. 4:15) Christians are to "...*speak every man truth with his neighbor....*" (Eph. 4:25) Since we can err from the truth (II Tim. 2:8), the church must never forget or leave behind the fact that she is "*the pillar and ground of the truth.*" Therefore, as we work to revive the church of Christ; let us always remember that we must follow the pattern of truth!

CONCLUSION

In this brief study we have but touched the hem of the garment concerning the things we must not forget or leave behind in reviving the church. As we go onward in our efforts, may God help us never to depart from a love for his word; a proper understanding of the purpose of the church; a deep appreciation for the distinctiveness of the church, and faithfully carry on her work as the pillar and ground of the truth!

The World at the End of the 20th Century

by Jack James

No one can question the fact that Jesus wants all the world in every age to know about the Gospel. (Mt. 28:19,20; Mk. 16:15-16; Lk. 24:46,47; Acts 1:8) So much of our success in carrying out the Great Commission rests upon our understanding of the people we are trying to reach with the truth. In the next decade, as the Twentieth Century comes to a close, it is vitally important that the Lord's church awaken to the fact that the success of future evangelism depends upon our sensitivity to our society.

In what kind of society will the Christian at the threshold of the 21st century discover himself?

If present trends continue, perhaps society much the same as has been experienced in the previous decade. Events of the past will perhaps continue to shape a society that has few absolutes, questions authority and is ambivalent toward religion. In all probability the world at the end of the twentieth century will be materialistic and secularistic. Like Demas, many will love this present world. (2 Tim. 4:10)

Jack James

Jack James was born in Chattanooga, Tennessee. He and his wife, Kathy, have two daughters. He attended the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga and graduated from the East Tennessee School of Preaching and Missions in 1987. He is currently attending Alabama Christian School of Religion and expects to graduate in June 1990, with a B.A. Degree.

Brother James has taught Bible classes since age 19 and served as youth minister at Bryan Street Church of Christ in Rossville, GA. He is presently with the Chickamauga Church of Christ in Georgia.

But one might question how one could possibly love a world filled with problems, prejudices and injustices. How could one love a society with degrading standards? Just imagine what this next decade might bring?

Will the home continue to find itself in desperate straits? Will it be an age in which homes that stay together experience difficulties in functioning as homes in the kind of society where each person goes his own way, where members of the family often have only a passing acquaintance with one another? This could be dangerous for children who should learn many values in the home. Also, will there continue to be multiplied thousands of children living in single parent homes because of divorce?

Will the idea of changing sexual standards persist, with many promoting sexual promiscuity? Will great numbers still believe "living together" before marriage is a good idea? Because of this type of behavior will sexually transmitted diseases continue to threaten society including the innocent? What about homosexuality? Will promiscuous, anti-biblical behavior keep on destroying the moral fabric of society?

Will drugs and crime remain rampant in the final decade of the 20th century? Will these immoral practices keep on growing simply because more and more people find themselves engaged in such and justify their actions by simply saying, "Everybody is doing it?" Because of a lack of moral right and wrong, will society go on being prey to these evils?

No one can know with certainty what the next decade will bring. The questions just raised seem to portray a dismal prospect. And this may be the lot of the world at the end of the 20th century. However, there are some encouraging signs. There seems to be a wistfulness beginning to pervade society, a longing and yearning for spiritual things. Books dealing with spiritual problems become best sellers and many persons are looking for spiritual answers to their problems. Deep concern for society's moral situation is often expressed in print and on platform. What encouraging signs as the 20th century comes to a close!

Whether one looks at the dismal picture or the encouraging picture of society at the end of the 20th century, one fact is apparent -- Jesus Christ provides the answers, either for a troubled world or a searching world.

At the end of the 20th century the church will have a tremendous opportunity serving that "present age." The church must be committed to bring men face to face with the glorious Lord who has the power to change men from within and therefore, affect the shape of their actions in society. To the Christian, every situation that may arise in the next decade is a challenge and an opportunity. (2 Cor. 4:7-8) The church must arise to the occasion at the end of the 20th century to teach the world God's Word with its great moral and spiritual truth. (2 Cor. 2:14-17) The church has a world to confront with God's Word!

The relationship between the church and the world is not a new issue. The first century church was faced with the same problem that faces the church at the end of the 20th century - the necessity to infiltrate society with the gospel of Christ. The confrontation remains. How will the church relate to the world? Three possibilities are before the church: flee out of the world; become like the world; or strive to make the world like Christ wants it to be.

If the church chooses to flee out of the world and stay uninvolved, responsibility is being shirked. (Mt. 28:19 cf. Jn. 17:15) Disobedience to the will of God can never change the world in which man lives. If the church chooses to become like the world, she will destroy herself spiritually. Paul warned, *"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."* (Rom. 12:2) Christians are to find themselves *"denying ungodliness and worldly lust, ... living soberly, righteously and godly in the present age."* (Tit. 2:12) The church must every guard against becoming too much at home in the world. The final possibility for the church, it is apparent, is the correct one. The church must strive to make the world like Christ wants it to be. The church must stand apart from the norm of society and challenge society's values with the truth of the gospel. The church must be wary of meeting "false needs" of the world. The

church must awaken to turning to the gospel and meeting the "real needs" of society. The responsibility of the church is to stir spiritual action and spiritual change in individual lives and ultimately in society as a whole.

The world at the end of the 20th century will be a world in desperate need of the God's Word, as is the case no matter what time in history. The world will be one in which God will provide open doors and make opportunities available to confront the human situation. Whatever the world will be, God will need Christians who will stand up and be counted for that which is right. Christians who are willing "*to stand in the gap*" for that which is doctrinally right and morally right. (Ezek. 22:30)

When Jesus looked out on the vast multitude of lonely people, insecure, and bewildered like sheep, Matthew tells us how he was moved with compassion, for he saw them as sheep without a shepherd. He called his disciples to pray the Lord of the harvest that he would send forth laborers into his harvest. (Mt. 9:35-38) Jesus saw them not as a vast throng, but as lonely, troubled, and helpless individuals, each one in need of the Lord. That will be what the world at the end of the 20th century will be like. Will the church, react in the way its head, Jesus, intends?

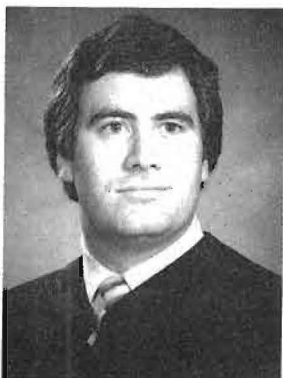
Reviving Our Personal Touch in Evangelism

by Tim Shoulders

A few years ago an incident occurred which would forever change my attitude and outlook toward personal evangelism. For years my contact with personal evangelism had simply meant that someone expressed a desire to study, we went to their home and held a series of studies which usually, in a majority of cases, ended up with someone obeying the gospel. This time I found myself faced with a crisis I had never dreamed could happen.

It was a Friday morning following Thanksgiving. I had stopped at one of the local restaurants to get a cup of coffee and sit in on the community townhouse type meetings that usually are a part of the atmosphere at a small eating place in a rural southern town. In the course of the conversations that morning one story seemed to dominate everyone's thoughts and concerns. Apparently, on the night before Thanksgiving, two young boys had been out riding around in their car, obviously happy to have a few days off from school. Both boys were only sixteen years old, and were members of some rather large extended families in the area. So just about everybody

Tim Shoulders



Tim Grew up in Old Hickory, Tennessee, and obeyed the gospel at 14 years of age. Within a month he had preached his first gospel sermon. The desire to preach had been instilled in him by his father, the late Paul E. Shoulders. Tim attended Freed-Hardeman College for two years and finished his B.A. degree in Speech and Bible at David Lipscomb College in 1984.

Tim and his wife, Valerie married in 1982. They have two children, Paul Robert, age 4, and Bethany, age 1. Tim has worked with churches in Tennessee, Virginia, Texas, and North Carolina. He is presently serving as the pulpit minister for the Karns Church of Christ in Knoxville, Tennessee.

in town knew them. The boys weren't the best in the area, but they weren't the worst either, just a little mischievous.

About midnight Thanksgiving eve they had driven down to a nearby town to visit with friends. On their way back home they decided to stop at a convenience store to get something to drink. While in the store they met a man who said he needed a ride back to the town where they lived. He seemed friendly enough, so the boys offered him a ride. On the way back home, it's still a bit unclear why the boys did this, they stopped at an open area by the side of the road to shoot a pistol one of the boys had in the car. When the stranger went to take his turn, instead of shooting at the target, for no apparent reason, he turned the gun on the boys. In a matter of seconds both boys were on the ground. One of the boys had been hit in the right shoulder, the other had been shot in the back and upper part of his body. The gunman took the car off to a deserted area and set the car on fire, then fled on foot.

The boy who had been wounded in the shoulder was able to get up but was extremely disoriented. He saw the light of a house off in the distance; it was about three-fourths of a mile away. It took him almost two hours to reach the house. He had apparently passed out several times due to the shock and loss of blood. The people immediately called the police and rescue squad and within thirty minutes they had transported him to a nearby community hospital. He was going to be alright. The bullet hadn't hit any vital organs so his only real danger was the amount of blood he had lost.

After being at the hospital he asked how the other boy was. Their response was, "what other boy?" In his disorientation he had failed to tell them about his friend. Immediately, they dispatched the police and an ambulance to the area. Approximately four hours had passed since the shooting. The temperature had dropped to around forty degrees so there was little hope of finding the boy alive. But he was alive, barely. The bullet that entered his lower back had not hit any major organs and had not severed any vital arteries, although he did have a considerable amount of internal bleeding. The other bullet that entered his upper body had gone in around his shoulder blade and tumbled upward lodging next to his spinal column on his neck.

The community hospital did the emergency surgery, removing both bullets and stopping the internal bleeding in his abdomen. They then transported him to a regional hospital where he would be for the next three months. The doctors gave him about a fifty-fifty chance of survival.

It became apparent that one of the waitresses in the restaurant was related to the more seriously injured boy. When she found out I was a minister she sat down to explain the situation to me in detail. The boy, Bill (this is not his real name), was her nephew, and her sister (the boy's mother) had attended church in the past but at present had no affiliations with any church in the area. She asked me if I could go to the hospital and visit with them. She had heard that her nephew had asked for a minister and some pentecostal had come and done some ritual the family was very uncomfortable with. I agreed to go, and later that afternoon drove to the hospital to visit with the boy and his family. I had no idea of the impact those next few hours would have on my life.

I'll never forget the moment I walked into the Intensive Care Unit. I can still remember all the sights, sounds, and smells as if it happened yesterday. The ward was full. There were about six beds in this wing with no separate rooms for each patient. They had curtains to pull around each bed, but none were drawn. The ward was apparently left open so the nurses at the desk could watch each patient. Bill was in a bed to my far left, his mother was standing by the bed holding his hand. I walked over and introduced myself to her and explained that I had talked with her sister. She was very grateful and began to explain to me about Bill's present condition. The bullet that entered his shoulder and lodged in his neck had shattered his spinal column and had driven some of the bone into the spinal cord, paralyzing him from his neck down. Doctors had told her if he lived he would be permanently paralyzed.

He had been a typical healthy sixteen year old. A tall, good-looking boy, well liked by his friends at school. His mother said he was the more religious one in the family. She said he carried his Bible in the car with him all the time. The look on her face reflected the strain and the hope for survival she was experiencing for her youngest son. Needless to say, I

was deeply moved. A few years ago it wouldn't have had as great an impact on me. But now that I had a two-year old son at home, I could empathize with the horrible pain this mother must have been feeling.

Bill was on a mobilized bed, often used with paralysis patients. His limbs were extended out away from his body and held in place by padding. The bed periodically rotated from side to side and up and back by some sort of hydraulic system under the bed. Bill had an incision that ran from just below his throat all the way down to his abdomen. It was held together by staples and three clamp-like structures which extended about two inches on each side of the incision. His head was locked in place by mounts that had been secured to his skull in order to keep him from moving and further damaging his spinal column. A respirator was doing his breathing for him and periodically it would kick in and his chest would rise as it filled with air and then relaxed again. Tubes were everywhere, the sound of monitors, beeping, the hissing of the respirator and the hydraulics, the smell of betadine and alcohol filled the air. Here was a young boy fighting for his life.

I'll never forget the look in his eyes. Sheer terror; he was afraid he was going to die. Today was the first day he had been aware of what was happening. Due to the equipment noise, he couldn't always hear what the nurses and others were saying. He thought there was something they hadn't told him. As I leaned over so he could hear me, I told him who I was and asked him if he was afraid he was going to die. He tried to nod his head and speak, but the respirator tube made talking extremely difficult. His answer was obviously yes. I tried to reassure him that he had made it through the worst part and that he was not going to die. As he strained to speak, I could barely understand what he was saying. He mouthed it again; I looked to his mother for some help. He then waited till the respirator filled his lungs with air and said, "I want to be saved." Never had that statement had an impact on me as it did at that moment. Here was a soul fighting for his life, afraid he would die any minute; all that mattered to him now was that he wanted to be saved.

As I tried to come up with a response, a thousand questions rushed through my mind. I knew baptism was out of the

question. How much did he know? What was his religious background? What type of mind set was he in right now? Could he make a rational decision under the medication and trauma he was in? I did the only thing I knew to do; I prayed. In the prayer, I asked God to take care of him, to give him the strength to live and to grow in a better understanding of His word. I even asked God to forgive him. My prayer was that God would grant me the opportunity to teach him and his family the whole counsel of God until the situation would permit his complete obedience to the gospel of Christ. We talked some more and I encouraged him to place his trust in God and all things would work themselves out. I assured him I would be back and that he would be in my prayers. After talking with his mother and his nurse, I left to return home.

The hospital was about eighteen miles from home, so I had plenty of time to think about the events which had just taken place. I had been to the hospital hundreds of times before. I had seen death many times; I had been with families and friends in emergency rooms as they awaited for news about the fate of their loved ones. I had rejoiced with couples over the birth of a child, but I had never been so profoundly moved by what I had just experienced. Never before had mankind's predicament been so vividly displayed as in the eyes of that young boy; the fight for the preservation of one's physical life and the intense emotion in an attempt to secure eternal life for one's immortal soul. It was then I realized how truly personal is the work of a minister.

The doctors were his hope for staying alive, and I had become his hope for securing his spiritual well-being. What a tremendous responsibility! Personal work was not supposed to be this way. You are supposed to sit around a table and study an outline, or show some filmstrips. No class could have ever prepared me for that day. This was life.

For the next two months I would drive to the hospital two to three times a week. Bill showed steady improvement. The paralysis abated some as the swelling went down, eventually he would be able to breath without the respirator, but he would be permanently paralyzed from his chest down. After each visit the hospital provided us with a meeting room where I would conduct a Bible study with his parents. The studies

seemed to progress well; I even began a study with his grandmother and several of his uncles. The studies went on for three months. Although we studied all facets of understanding God's word and obedience to it, they never obeyed the gospel. I tried time and time again to get their family to services, but they never came. They moved him to a rehabilitation facility in another state. All that time and effort, all the emotions, and yet they chose not to accept the gospel. That was the hardest part of the whole situation to accept. Not only had I dealt with the most demanding emotional situation I had ever faced, but the end result was a failure to bring someone to Christ, someone I had come to love deeply.

The experience has helped me to see what our Lord must have seen when he saw the lost state of his people and their unwillingness to accept the truth. The anguish that he felt when he wept over Jerusalem, and the impending doom that awaited them. (Matt. 23:37-39) What amazes me is that the Lord knew he would be rejected by his own (Isa. 53), and yet he came anyway. He gave us the glory of heaven, suffered in the flesh as a man, and yielded his will to the will of the Father in order to save you and me. (Phil. 2:5-11)

Personal Work is exactly what the title implies; it is extremely personal. It involves you directly in the lives of the individuals you are trying to reach. There is nothing that can be more personal than the salvation of one's soul. Anytime you allow yourself to get involved in the lives of people, you are taking a risk. To truly touch people personally you must be able to convey to them that you love them and that your teaching them is deeply seeded in the fact that God loves them too. Our Lord did what he did because he loved God and he loved you and me. (John 17:23) Can you get hurt? Yes! Will it take time? Yes! Will they obey the gospel? Maybe. Will they fall away? Yes, they may. They may also become great leaders in the church. Whatever the outcome, we must continue to do the work God has sent us to do, *"Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."* (2 Cor. 5:20)

We must revive the personal touch in our evangelism. Our professionalism and age of specializationism has led us away from the walk of our Master. We too often forget he

walked among the people. He ate with publicans and sinners. (Luke 19:9-10) He talked with a Samaritan women who had five husbands. (John 4) He permitted a sinful women, in her penitence and sorrow, to wash his feet with her tears and dry them with her hair as those in the house looked at Jesus with contempt. (Luke 7:36-50) We are not in the business of promoting ourselves as great evangelists. We are servants of the Master, instruments of His peace, vessels used to carry the precious grace of God to the lost. You can't do that in the office, or just in the pulpit. Sooner or later you have to get out and meet people where they are, in their daily walks of life.

Why has God left such an important message in our hands? Why? When we often fail and ignorantly mishandle so many important situations. You and I will have to wait until eternity for God to answer that question. All we know is that God says this is the way he chose to reveal his will to men. (2 Tim. 2:2) An unknown author once wrote:

Isn't is strange

That princes and kings

And clowns that caper in sawdust rings

And common people like you and me

Are builders of eternity?

Isn't it strange?

Each is given a bag of tools

A shapeless mass, a book of rules.

And each must shape e'er life is gone,

A stumbling block or stepping stone.

The message conveyed is clear, either we are becoming a stepping stone or we are a stumbling block. What are you? If you're afraid to teach others because you don't know the Bible, then learn it! (2 Tim. 2:15; 1 Pet. 3:15) If you fear rejection, remember the Lord was rejected too. Never forget, God

is the one who gives the increase, we simply "plant and water." (1 Cor. 3:6)

Above all we must have the courage to go and let the Lord take care of the rest. The true tragedy is when we fail to take advantage of the opportunities God gives us. We often pre-judge someone before we offer them the privilege of making their own decision. We decide they are too poor and uneducated, or too educated and wealthy, or too busy, or they have a marriage problem, and we definitely don't want to deal with that. So we simply say to ourselves, they won't listen, and we go on our merry way. Having offered nothing, we have lost nothing. Or so we believe.

Five years ago we lived in an apartment type complex with three units in each building. When we moved into one of the side units we met our neighbor in the apartment next to ours. She was about thirty years old; she had a three-year old daughter and had recently moved there after a separation from her husband. She was in the military and traveled a good bit and, and although she was separated from her husband, they were on speaking terms, and he would often keep the girl while she went away. We had engaged in casual conversation but never anything beyond the usual how-do-you-do's and how's the weather? She knew I was a minister, and I knew she was a Catholic, but unfaithful. I never felt comfortable talking to her about her spiritual welfare, so I simply didn't bring the subject up.

Late one Saturday night around eleven thirty, Valerie and I were about to retire for the night when we heard a loud noise from the apartment next door. The noise was followed by someone running rapidly up and down the stairway in the apartment. While Valerie and I looked at each other puzzled as to what was going on, there was a knock on the door. It was our neighbor's husband holding his daughter. Scared and shaking, he told us his wife had fallen and was hurt badly. I told Valerie to call an ambulance and we left the little girl with her, and I went next door to help. When we got inside she was at the foot of the stairs face down. It was obviously apparent she was not breathing. He thought she might have broken her neck and was afraid to move her. By this time she was turning an ash color, and I told him we had to move her. We im-

mediately began CPR and continued for about two minutes until the paramedics arrived. Her color came back, but we still couldn't get a pulse. The paramedics worked on her about forty-five minutes and then transported her to the hospital where they got her heart started again. Due to the lapse of time without oxygen the brain had been severely damaged. She died four hours later. Thirty years old, healthy and strong, now she was gone. The autopsy would show she had not broken her neck, but for some unexplained reason her heart and breathing had stopped. Death was due to the lack of oxygen to the brain.

For several weeks I grieved over the fact that I had never mentioned Christ to my neighbor. Would she have listened? Maybe not, but I'll never know. I have asked God to forgive me, and I've forgiven myself, with the resolve that I'll never allow myself to go without talking to my neighbor about the church and their relationship to Christ. I can't change the past, but I can do something about the future.

The stories I have shared with you are true, exactly as they happened. However tragic, they are real situations in real life. People get hurt, people suffer, and people die. One day all men will appear before the judgment seat of God and give account for what they did and for what they didn't do. (2 Cor. 5:10) Their salvation and ours may be a result of what we did or didn't do in this life. Let us be resolved to lay aside our fears and prejudices and let us reach out and personally touch the lives of those around us with the person that can give them true life, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Reviving the Inner Man

by C.W. Bradley

Our generation is overwhelmingly materialistic and naturalistic. Man is obsessed with his physical body. Think of the time, effort and money which many spend every year on their bodies.

If possible, would you like to make some changes in your physical appearance? Perhaps you would like to be either taller or shorter, heavier or lighter, change the color or texture of your hair or the color of your eyes, change the size of your feet or your hands, your nose or your ears. Many spend fortunes on diet plans, body building techniques, plastic surgery, etc.

This is not to suggest that the human body is unimportant or that we should either abuse or ignore our bodies. Indeed, the body is very important. It is important because God wants to dwell in it. (I Cor. 3:16) It is important because we are to glorify God in our bodies. (I Cor. 6:20) The body is also important because it is to be presented to God as a living sacrifice. (Rom 12:1) We also need to remember that the

C.W. Bradley



C.W. Bradley was born in Trenton, Tennessee. He is married to the former Roberta Brandon, and they have four children. He attended David Lipscomb College, Harding University, Syracuse University and Harding Graduate School, and has earned B.A. and M.A. degrees.

Brother Bradley has preached in Syracuse, NY; North Carolina; Memphis, TN; and is presently with the church in Olive Branch, Mississippi. He has taught in the Harding Graduate School and Freed-Hardeman College.

Brother Bradley helped begin the Carolina Christian and served as staff writer for several years. He was staff writer for World Evangelist, and is presently staff writer for Truth for Today.

body is important because it is the dwelling place of our own spirit while we live on this earth.

But millions today who place so much emphasis upon their physical bodies give almost no thought to that part of them which in importance far exceeds that of the body. Inside every man's body, there exists an inner man which will live on after the body has decayed in the grave.

The topic assigned to me is "Reviving the Inner Man." In the little country church in Hickman County, Tennessee, where I spent my boyhood days, we seldom heard any preaching except once a year when we had preaching twice a day for one or two weeks. This special event was called a "big meeting" or a "revival meeting." Recently a young Christian came to me somewhat disturbed because she had seen a sign on the lawn of a neighboring congregation advertising a "Revival Meeting." She wondered if perhaps it might be unscriptural.

To revive means "to renew, restore, revitalize, regenerate, breathe new life into." There are some indications that this may be one of the greatest needs in the brotherhood today. Especially is there a pressing need for a revival of the inner man.

BIBLE EMPHASIS ON THE INNER MAN

After God's rejection of Saul as king over his people, he sent Samuel to Bethlehem, to Jesse's house, to anoint one of his sons as the new king. When Samuel arrived and he looked upon Eliab, he exclaimed, "*Surely the Lord's anointed is before him.*" But he was mistaken for "*the Lord said unto Samuel, look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: For the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.*" (I Sam. 16:6-7)

In looking forward to the day when he would make a new covenant, God said to Jeremiah, "*But this shall be the covenant that I make with the house of Israel, After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts....*" (Jer. 31:33)

Jesus emphasized the importance of the inner man when he said to those hypocritical Pharisees, "*Woe unto you...for ye are like unto whited sepulchers, which outwardly appear beautiful, but inwardly are full of dead men's bones, and all uncleanness. Even so ye outwardly appear righteous unto men, but inwardly ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.*" (Matt. 23:27-28)

In several of Paul's letters, great emphasis is placed upon the inner man. To the Romans, he wrote, "*For he is not a Jew, who is outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter....*" (Rom 2:28-29) "*For I delight in the law of God after the inward man.*" (Rom. 7:22) To the Corinthians, Paul also wrote, "*Wherefore we faint not; but though our outward man is decaying, yet our inward man is being renewed day by day.*" (II Cor. 4:16) For the Ephesians, he prayed that God "*would grant, according to the riches of his glory, that ye may be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner man.*" (Eph. 3:16)

In instructing wives how to convert their husbands by their own chaste behavior, Peter stressed the importance of the inner, "*Whose adorning let it not be the outward adorning of braiding the hair, and of wearing jewels of gold, or of putting on apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in the incorruptible apparel of a meek and quiet spirit....*" (I Pet. 3:1-4)

WHY IS THE INNER MAN SO IMPORTANT

There must be some good reasons why so much emphasis is given in the Bible showing the importance of the inner man. We shall consider some of them:

1. The inner man is the center of human personality---the reservoir of life. What we are and become begins on the inside. The Wise man knew this long ago and he stated it so simply and clearly, "*As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he*" (Prov. 23:7) and "*Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.*" (Prov. 4:23) The ability to think, to imagine, to dream and to plan is man's uniqueness. This lifts us high above the animals around us. Man can think himself up or down, sick or well, sad or happy, strong or weak. Our moral battles are fought, and either won or lost, in the inner man.

2. The reality of our communion with God and loving God centers in the inner man. *"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind."* (Matt. 23:37) James assures us, *"Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you,"* (James 4:8) but note, *"Let us draw near with a true heart."* (Heb. 10:22)

3. The "new birth" or conversion takes place in the inner man. *"That which is born of flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."* (John 3:6) Thus it is the human spirit or the inner man that is transformed in conversion.

Though faith expresses itself in outward acts, it originates on the inside. *"For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness."* (Rom. 10:10) Though repentance produces outward fruit, it, too, originates on the inside. *"For godly sorrow worketh repentance,"* (II Cor. 7:10) and sorrow takes place in the inner man. Haven't we all preached that repentance means "a change of mind"? Though obedience will show in submission to outward acts, yet it also must originate in the inner man. *"...Ye became obedient from the heart..."* (Rom 6:17) This is why no man can be forced to obey God. What good would it do to tie a person and bury him in water? This would be similar to the little boy whose Daddy told him several times to sit down and finally literally forced him to sit. Looking up with a snarl, the determined little boy said, "I may be sitting on the outside, but I'm still standing on the inside." All obedience must spring from a loving heart.

4. All true worship must originate in the inner man. We often speak of the "acts of worship," and God has indeed given some acts or avenues through which we express our praise and devotion to him, but all outward acts of worship are meaningless unless they serve to express that which originates within. Jesus called people hypocrites because *"this people honoreth me with their lips; But their heart is far from me."* (Matt. 15:8)

We are to sing *"psalms, and hymns and spiritual songs,"* but note also, *"singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord."* (Eph. 5:19) Also *"What is it then, I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also."* (I Cor. 14:15) The Lord's Supper is not just an outward act. *"This do in memory of me...But let a man examine himself, and so let him*

eat of the bread, and drink of the cup." (I Cor. 11:25,28) And what about our giving? This, too, must originate in the heart. *"Let each man do according as he hath purposed in his heart...."* (II Cor. 9:7) And the same holds true in the study of God's word. *"They received the word with all readiness of mind, examining the scriptures daily...."* (Acts 17:11) Without love, reverence and adoration in the inner man, all worship is vain. *"God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and in truth."* (John 4:24)

5. Every act of the Christian life must center in the inner man. Paul admonished the Ephesians, *"Not in the way of eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart."* (Eph. 6:6) Though Paul was speaking specifically in reference to helping the poor saints in Jerusalem when he wrote, *"For if there be first a willing mind..."* (I Cor. 8:12) would it not equally apply to all service rendered in the name of Christ?

6. The inner man is the prime target of Satan's attacks. This should not surprise us since his purpose is to destroy us and we've already noted that the very center of our life is the inner man. Speaking of Satan's beguiling Eve, Paul warns lest *"your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity and the purity that is toward Christ."* (II Cor. 11:3) It is no wonder that he also urged, *"Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that is exalted, against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ."* (II Cor. 10:5)

7. Our getting to heaven depends to a great degree on what happens in the inner man. We'll never reach heaven unless we heed Paul's admonition to *"set your mind on the things above, not on the things what are upon the earth."* (Col. 3:2) The desire for heaven must become the motivating force in our lives. Abraham *"looked for the city which hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God."* (Heb. 11:10) Peter admonished, *"Looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God...."* (II Pet. 3:12) Our hearts must precede us to heaven. Though we live on earth, our citizenship is in heaven; whence we wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. (Phil. 3:20)

WHAT IF THERE WERE A REVIVAL OF THE
INNER MAN?

What would happen if a great revival of the inner man spread throughout the entire brotherhood? What changes would be produced by such a revival? In what areas of our lives could these changes be seen?

1. A revival of the inner man would produce a change in one's view of doctrine. I am confident that we all agree that doctrine is very important. What we are and how we live are determined by what we believe. Paul knew this and urged Timothy to *"take heed to thyself and to thy doctrine."* (I Tim. 4:16) Jesus plainly stated, *"Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free."* (John 8:32) The beloved John warns that *"whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God."* (II John 9)

But have you ever met those who demonstrate a rather cold attitude toward doctrine? They consider doctrine as something to be quoted and argued. The person whose inner man is revived will view doctrine very differently. He will know not only what he believes, but he will also know *"him whom he believes."* (II Tim. 1:12) Almost all of us know what we believe, but how many of us truly know *"him whom we believe"*? All true doctrine must center in Christ. I firmly believe that I could have never been forgiven of my sins and come into a saved relationship with Christ without being buried by baptism into his death (Rom. 6:4), but my faith is not in baptism, but rather in him who commanded me to be baptized. I have never questioned the importance and necessity of assembling with other Christians each first day of the week for the purpose of remembering my Lord's death in partaking of the Lord's Supper, but my faith is not in the unleavened bread or the fruit of the vine, but rather in him who said, *"This do in memory of me."* (I Cor. 11:25)

A revival of the inner man will help us center our faith in a person rather than in a doctrine. Though we will never question anything taught by our Lord and will diligently seek to obey every command that he gave, we will do this because of our faith in him and because we love him. A great performer had just completed his program by quoting the 23rd Psalm and everyone in the audience stood and screamed and applauded. In the audience was an old preacher who was urged to go to the platform and quote the Psalm. Finally, he agreed to do it

and was assisted down the isle by some friends. After he had finished, there was no clapping of hands or sound of voices, but there was not a dry eye in the audience. When someone asked the performer what made the difference, his response was, "I know the Psalm, but he knows the shepherd." Many of us know the Psalm, but how many of us truly know the shepherd?

2. A revival of the inner man would give us a different concept of what it means to obey the gospel. Some seem to look upon this as a mechanical process. It's easy to quote rapidly the "steps of salvation." It's easy to emphasize the technicalities of the outward acts and lose sight of the real significance of those acts. It is told that once while David Lipscomb was preaching, a man stood up in the audience and boldly said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and I am ready to be baptized for the remission of my sins." Brother Lipscomb stopped his preaching and immediately baptized the man. Later, someone questioned the validity of the baptism on the basis that "Brother Lipscomb did not take the man's confession." How easy it is to make the good confession a mere formality! And what about insisting on a specific formula of words which must be strictly followed by everyone who baptizes someone? I have personally known of cases where someone insisted that one had to be immersed the second time because the one doing the baptizing did not use the right words. If there is a particular expression which must be used in baptizing people, will someone please find the scripture which teaches it?

The person whose inner man is revived will never de-emphasize the outward acts of obedience, but he is able to see beyond those outward acts to him who gave him. He sees beyond the water in which one is buried in baptism to the precious blood of Christ. He does not see baptism as the Saviour, but as the way by which the sinner comes into the Saviour.

3. One whose inner man has been revived will have a different concept of the church. How easy it is to place too much emphasis on physical things such as buildings, budgets, attendance charts, membership lists, etc.! These things are important, but only as they help us achieve some other things that are far more important.

How easy it is to lose sight of the real purpose of a local congregation! What is that purpose? How would you answer? Would you agree that the overall purpose of a local congregation is to help Christians to live the Christian life? This is to be done in three main ways: (1) By providing an atmosphere that is conducive to personal spiritual growth, (2) By providing an atmosphere that is conducive to reaching the lost with the gospel of Christ, and (3) By providing an atmosphere that is conducive to helping heal the hurts and heartaches of human beings and to engage in good works of all kinds. Any congregation that is failing to do this is failing in its God-given purpose.

If projects and programs, buildings and budgets, attendance charts and membership lists serve to help Christians live the Christian life---if they serve to help Christians to become more spiritually minded, to motivate them in seeking and saving the lost and to give them more love and compassion for others, then they can be justified; otherwise they are of little value.

A revival of the inner man will change our views on many things related to the church. We'll come to see the work of elders, deacons, preachers and teachers in a different light. There will be some radical changes in those sessions which we call "business meetings." We'll not spend so much precious time discussing some rather petty things and will spend much more time discussing some exceedingly important things such as soul-saving, improving our worship, more effectively teaching God's word and winning back those who have drifted from the Lord. We'll do more planning and praying and may even do some weeping together. May God help us to have such a revival!

4. A revival of the inner man would help us avoid the tendency to attach Christianity primarily to a church building. How many think of Christianity as only one phase of their lives which can be taken care of by "going to church" once or twice each week, but do not see it as vitally relating to every phase of their lives? No concept could be further from the truth.

God intended that his word guide the Christian in his work as well as in his worship, in the office or plant or home

as well as in the pew, and on Monday as well as on Sunday. The gap between what we preach on Sunday and what we practice on Monday is often too big. We refer to certain people as giving their lives in "full time church work," and we know what is meant, but in reality, aren't all Christians to give their lives in total service to God? Is there any time, any place or any situation when I can press a button and turn off my relationship to Christ? Perhaps we make too much distinction between what we call the "sacred" and the "secular." If there is any part of the Christian life that is not sacred, will someone please tell us what it is?

Paul apparently believed that every act of a Christian is sacred. *"And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ giving thanks to God the Father through him."* (Col. 3:17) *"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."* (I Cor. 10:31) Surely all will agree that there is a great need for a revival of the inner man.

5. A revival of the inner man would bring about a change in our philosophy of life. How easy it is to measure success and greatness in terms of material accumulations! We often forget that Jesus said, *"A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."* (Luke 12:15)

Our attitude toward life's trials, sorrows, hurts, hardships and disappointments are often distorted. God isn't trying to break us; he's trying to make us. Study the lives of any of the great Bible heroes and you will come to see that you admire and love them, not because they never faced any problems, but rather because of the way they dealt with life's problems. Paul said, *"For our light affliction, which is for the moment, worketh for us more and more exceedingly an eternal weight of glory...."* (II Cor. 4:17)

Many of us need to grow in our attitude toward death. To many, death means the end of everything, but this is a distorted view. We need to give greater emphasis to the New Testament view of death. A revival of the inner man would help us to see death as Paul saw it. Hear him, *"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."* (Phil. 1:21) John *"heard a voice from heaven*

saying, Write, blessed are the dead who die in the Lord...." (Rev. 14:13)

Too often we think of death as coming to destroy everything for which we have lived; as Christians we should think of death as coming to save those whom we love. Many think of death as the end of life; as Christians we should think of death as the beginning of a more abundant life. We often think of death as losing; as Christians we should think of death as gaining. We think of parting, but we should think of arriving. True, it is the closing of the door to this earth, but it is also the opening of another door into eternity. It is natural that we mourn over the passing of a loved one, but if that loved one is a Christian, we should rejoice because of his promotion. It is not all regret; it is also reward.

HOW CAN THE INNER MAN BE REVIVED?

It's much easier to discuss the importance of the inner man and why it needs reviving than it is to tell how to do it. The story is told of a man who kept calling Washington during World War I and insisting that he knew how to end the war. Finally, after continuing to call again and again, he was brought to the city to meet with some of the top officials. He told them that the war could be brought to an end immediately if they would simply drain all the oceans. When he was asked how he proposed that this be done, he answered, "Gentleman, I don't have the answer, that's in your department." I feel somewhat the same way. I certainly don't claim to possess any special knowledge regarding the way to bring about a revival of the inner man. All I can do is to make what I hope will be a few helpful suggestions.

1. Before there can be any kind of a revival of the inner man, there must be a sincere dis-satisfaction with our present spiritual standing and a strong desire to change. Self-satisfaction makes spiritual revival impossible. Even God cannot help those who feel no need for improvement. To those lukewarm and indifferent Laodiceans, Jesus threatened rejection "*Because thou sayest, I am rich, and have gotten riches, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art the wretched one and miserable and poor and blind and naked....*" (Rev. 3:17) Look at that haughty Pharisee who stood and thanked God

that he was *"not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican."* (Luke 18:11) Is it any wonder that he left the temple unjustified? He received nothing because he asked for nothing and he asked for nothing because he felt no need for anything.

Without a deep sense of need and strong desire, there can never be a revival of the inner man. Until we become aware of our spiritual deficiencies and sincerely want to improve, we will never change. When there arises within us a genuine spiritual hunger, we'll then begin to make progress. *"Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled."* (Matt.5:6)

It is very difficult to honestly examine our own hearts and lives. It is much easier to keep certain parts of us hidden beneath the surface because we really don't want to see what we know is there. Someone has said that most of us are similar to an iceberg---one tenth above the surface and nine tenths below. How many of us can truthfully say that we do recognize a real need for revival of the inner man and that we are determined to do something about it?

2. In addition to a sincere dis-satisfaction with self and a powerful desire to change, there must be also a strong belief in man's ability to change. Without this belief there can be no revival of the inner man. If we think it is impossible to do anything about it, we are doomed.

But we can change! God made us capable of changing. Thank God for this ability! *"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become sons of God, even to them that believe on his name...."* (John 1:12) Not only does God give human beings the power to become his children, he also gives us the power to become the kind of children he wants us to be.

Jesus believed in man's ability to change. He was constantly demonstrating his confidence in human beings. Look at Zacchaeus, that little man whom some called a sinner. See him climb up into a tree so he could see Jesus as he passed through Jericho! Perhaps he was somewhat set in his habits of life and gave little thought of changing. That is until he heard Jesus calling to him, *"Zacchaeus, make haste, and come*

down; for today I must abide in thy house." (Luke 19:5) Something happened to this man on that day and he became convinced that he could be a different man. Who would question that there was a revival of the inner man? Jesus helped him to see possibilities in himself which he had never seen before.

Look at Saul of Tarsus! Our first picture of him in the New Testament is not very encouraging. How many of us would have chosen him as a good prospect with whom to set up an appointment to view the Jule Miller films? Yet Jesus saw this man, not only as he was, but as he had the ability to become. Just think of the marvelous changes that came in his life! Wouldn't you agree that he also had revival of the inner man? And he gave the Lord all the credit. *"I can do all things through Christ which strengthened me."* (Phil. 4:13)

Do you recognize your need for a revival of the inner man? Do you truly want such a revival? Then believe that with the Lord's help, you can begin to become the kind of person you want to be. You don't have to walk the low road. You don't have to be mediocre. God has given you the ability to "press on the upward way."

3. Another suggestion which should help in the revival of the inner man is to form an image in your mind of the kind of person you would like to be. Look at the Prodigal Son! It was easy for him to see where he was---far from home, tired, weary, lonely, hungry and engaged in a detestable job of feeding swine. But in his mind, he could see something else---where he used to be and where he would like to be again. He saw that home from which he had run away and he saw a loving father in a way which he had never seen before. And it was this picture that led him to say, *"I will arise and go to my father...."* (Luke 15:18) We, too, need to see where we now are, and also where we might be.

Listen to Paul's admonition, *"But we all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory."* (II Cor. 3:18) Here we see God's supreme purpose for all of us---to grow into the image of his son and thus to become like himself. This has always been God's purpose for man. The first man, Adam, was made in God's image. (Gen. 1:27) This is the way he wanted

all men to be, but through sin, that Divine image was blurred. However, this did not change God's eternal purpose. To the Israelites, he said, "*Ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy.*" (Lev. 11:45) Wasn't he saying, "I want you to be like me"? Isn't this what Jesus meant when he said, "*Ye therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect*" (Matt. 5:48)?

Many of us will recall the story of the young boy named Ernest who lived near a huge mountain which had the face of a man carved high upon the stone. As far back as he could remember, Ernest had heard people say that one day a man would come into their community who would resemble the great stone face and when he came, the people would crown him their king. Every day, Ernest walked out near the mountain, sat down and very intently studied every feature of that face. Each night he went to sleep with an image of that face in his mind. He dreamed of that day when someone with a face like that would arrive in their community. The years passed and Ernest grew to manhood and the image of the great stone face became even more indelibly stamped into his mind. Then one day, he heard a messenger shouting that their king was in their midst and that the crowning would take place in the town square the next day at noon. Ernest slept very little that night. He could hardly wait for the hours to pass. Early in the morning, he went into town to await the great event. When the time came, he did not understand why he was ushered to the platform where the crowning was to take place. Then he learned that it was he who was to be crowned as their king. Indeed, he had grown into the likeness of the great stone face.

We, too, by continually looking at the image of Jesus, our Saviour, as we look into the mirror of the New Testament, can be transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. **This is the pathway to a revival of the inner man.**

CONCLUSION

The revival of the inner man does not come about overnight. There are no "ten easy steps" which will bring about such a revival. It "takes time to be holy," but it's worth all the time and the effort. It's easy to become discouraged and to stop trying, but we must not let this happen.

Look at the little child learning to walk! How many times will he stumble and fall and how often will his knees be skinned? But if he keeps on trying, one day he will run and jump. We, too, will often stumble and fall and sometimes get hurt. But if we keep on keeping on, that glorious day will come when the Divine image will be perfected in us. *"Beloved, now are we children of God, and it is not yet made manifest what we shall be. We know that, if he shall be manifested, we shall be like him; for we shall see him even as he is."* (I John 3:2)

Perhaps some will say, "But I'm not very much like him and there are times when I'm not like him at all. I want to be different, but I'm so very weak, and I've waiting so long, God can't change me now." If God can change an ugly caterpillar into a beautiful multi-colored butterfly and if a plastic surgeon can completely remake a physical face, who are we to say that God cannot transform us into the kind of people we want to be and that he wants us to be? But we must continue to learn, believe, meditate, struggle, long for, dream and pray, and bow in submission to his will. **May each of us seek constantly for a revival of the inner man!**

Reviving Interest In Influence

by Dewey Fogerson

Although the reasons why people are attracted to Jesus Christ and become His disciples are varied, the most common feature in conversion is that one person is positively influenced by another person.

In a recent class on evangelism, 60 Christians responded to the question, "What, or who, led you to Christ?" All of them affirmed that they are Christians because of the influence of a parent, a mate or a friend. In that particular group, no one made the decision to become a disciple of the Lord because of a radio or television presentation or as the result of an evangelistic campaign. As important as these tools are for evangelism, when people hear of Christ through the media, they usually become Christians and grow toward maturity because someone becomes a friend and *"teaches them the way of God more perfectly."* (Acts 18:26) Most of us are Christians because of the influence and gentle persuasion of another Christian.

The power of our influence does not come primarily from any personal quality we may have. It is not because we may be especially good at teaching others, or have a winsome personal evangelism technique that there is power in our lives. (II Cor. 3:5) The power to change the direction of another's life and point it toward Jesus occurs when He is

Dewey L. Fogerson

Dewey L. Fogerson was born in Clovis, New Mexico. He is married to the former Loretta Fletcher and they have five children.

Brother Fogerson holds the B.A. and M.A. degrees in Religion from Eastern New Mexico University. He has done local work in Texas, New Mexico, and now preaches for the Laurel Church of Christ in Knoxville, Tennessee. For six summers he led groups of young people in mission vacation Bible schools on the Navajo Reservation in Northwestern New Mexico.

He is author of a book, *The Witnesses' Jehovah*, a tract entitled *"The Perfect Life"*, and articles published in *"La Vox Eterna"*, a publication of the Spanish gospel outreach.

Brother Fogerson was elected to "Outstanding Young Men of America" in 1977 and elected to appear in *Who's Who* in Houston in 1979.

in us and *"through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of Him everywhere."* (II Cor. 2:14) With Christ living in us, though our capabilities may be limited, our power to influence others is great.

I am a Christian today because of the influence of my grandfather. He was a simple man, a farmer and a carpenter, without much formal education. But he showed me how attractive a life in Christ can be. His influence is with me today even though he has been gone from this earth many years. I knew very early in my life that I wanted his peace, his assurance, his joy, his hope and his love and he let me know in countless ways that these things in his life came from Christ. He spoke often and easily about his trust in the Lord. He revealed his confidence that though this life is full of trouble and death is its end, a better life awaits all the people of God.

He never preached to me, or, that I can remember, he never had formal Bible studies with me. But the truth of the word of God and the goodness of Jesus Christ were emphatically communicated by his life. I suspect that he never knew what a profound influence his life had on mine. My faith in Christ is, in a large measure, the result of the Lord communicating himself to me through the great commitment of my grandfather.

The power of our influence is awesome. The early church grew rapidly and spread throughout the world because of people like the woman at the well who influenced others to "come and see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" John adds that *"they went out of the city and were coming to him."* (John 4:29,30)

No stronger a testimony for Jesus Christ exists than the life of a person who really believes Him. There is a subtle, but important, difference between someone who **believes in Jesus** and one who **believes Him**. We believe in Jesus, in God and in the inspiration of the Bible. But what I'm referring to is the person who has taken Jesus at his word and, like Peter, has *"left all and followed Him."* (Lk. 18:28) Our life should indeed be one of belief in Jesus, but the source of our powerful influence is when we **believe Him** and thus live confidently as His disciples.

The source of the profound influence of the early Christians was that the nature of Christ permeated their existence. Jesus emphasized this truth when he said, *"Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good deeds and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."* (Mt.

5:16) He also said, *"By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit..."* (Jn. 15:8), and, *"By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."* (Jn. 13:35) Peter echoed his Lord when he wrote, *"Maintain good conduct among the Gentiles, to that...they may see your good deeds and glorify God...."* (I Pet. 2:12)

The early church spread around the world because of the day-to-day influence of Christ's disciples. He was in their lives and they talked about Him and lived like Him. His love, His truth and His glory were therefore communicated to the world.

Christians today are failing to draw many others to Christ. Our failure may have at least four causes:

1. We may place too much confidence in "promotions" and "productions." The use of the mass media, campaigns and gospel meetings are indispensable tools to help us reach many people with the word of Christ. But they are only tools, and they sometimes become the focus of our efforts while we lose sight of the source of the real power to win other which is Christ in our lives.

2. We may depend upon others to do our evangelism for us. The conviction that all Christians are priests before God (I Pet. 2:5,9) and are thus responsible for communicating His word and love to others has been eroded in our thinking and teaching. More and more, evangelism is seen as the ministry of a talented few. In this way, many Christians step back from the line of commitment in communicating Christ. They no longer see themselves as a part of the Commission to tell the world the gospel of Christ through word and deed. Their influence is therefore greatly diminished.

3. We may place too little value on our Christian influence. Many presume that if they "cannot sing like angels or preach like Paul" they have no effective voice. Yet the greatest voice we have is in the way our life is lived. Our influence, good or bad, will be felt by many people before we pass from this earth.

4. We often send out conflicting messages. Sometimes our influence is not what it should be because our loyalties are divided. That is, we assert our love for Christ, but also have a strong desire to "make it" in the world. Material pursuits and the preoccupation with careers and worldly success are placed alongside our professed love for Christ. When this happens, our influence is blunted. We are simply not taken

seriously by others. We "*cannot serve two masters.*" (Mt. 6:24) If we try, the message of Christ will be silenced in our lives.

Our influence; nothing is more powerful. If Christ is in us, who we are and how we live is spiritual dynamite! Not everyone we come into contact with will turn to Jesus for salvation, but everyone will know that we talk with Him and **they will be affected.** "*We are the aroma of Christ to God to those who are being saved and to those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life.*" (II Cor. 2:15,16)

