

Has it Been That Long?

Lewis Willis

I would like you to indulge me for some personal reminiscences. (When I mentioned to Joyce that I was going to reminisce in this issue of the paper, her reply was: “*I guess you realize that doing that means you’re old.*”) And, she’s right! But, here I go anyway.

I made a decision at Christmas-time in 1958, that I would return to Texas after I finished my college work at Florida College. I didn’t have any idea what I would do for a living when I got home, but I felt certain I could find work that would support me, Frankie, and a child which was on the way. I had preached for a small Florida congregation for only one summer (twelve sermons), so preaching was not on my mind.

My brother, Cecil, was living in Kansas City at the time. He called and asked us to come to Kansas City to visit with them on the way back to Texas. Explaining that I would be pulling a trailer with all of our belongings, I tried to decline his invitation. He would not accept “No” for an answer.

Later that week, Cecil called and told me that he had to be in Macon, Missouri that week and he would like us to just meet him there. After explaining to me how to get to Macon, we headed into the cold, snowy “north” at the end of January 1959.

When we arrived in Macon, the small town of fewer than 4,000 people made less than a great impression on us. We finally located Cecil. He took us out to eat and to visit with some folks he knew there.

Well, these folks just happened to be members of the small church there. Not only that, but that little church did not have a preacher at the time. In fact, they were looking for a preacher to work with them and Cecil was trying to help them get a man. They had actually gone so far as to rent a furnished trailer for their new preacher — when they got one!

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accountants,
airline pilots, and
computer experts.
However, *the world
also needs to hear
the gospel!***

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Preaching Christ

Mike Willis

Everyone is agreed that men must preach Christ. Paul spoke of the need for men to preach Christ when he said,

To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus (Col. 1:27-28).

Other passages emphasize the same need to preach Christ and him crucified.

And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God (1 Cor. 2:1-5).

But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world (Gal. 6:14).

Indeed, our message must focus on Christ. To preach any message without relating it to Christ is misguided, despite its best intentions. The theme of Christianity is focused on a person — not merely a doctrine, a theory, a book, an institution, a code of morals, or a system of philosophy. Preaching any of these things without relating them to Christ is a mistake.

That Christ was central to the first century message is evident from the sermons preached. On Pentecost, Peter began and ended with Christ (Acts 2:22-23, 36). Before the Sanhedrin, Peter said, "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Regardless of where the message began, it always ended at Christ. Here is the heart of the gospel in a nutshell —

See "Preaching Christ" p. 281

Commitment

Connie W. Adams

Peter said that in the suffering of Christ he did not revile or threaten his tormentors “but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously” (1 Pet. 2:23). Here the word “committed” means to entrust to one’s charge, to turn over to the object of one’s trust. Paul told Timothy to “commit to faithful men” the word which he had been taught. Paul said that God had “committed to my trust” the glorious gospel (1 Tim. 1:11). Paul had “committed unto him against that day” and urged Timothy to keep by the Holy Spirit “that good thing which was committed unto thee” (2 Tim. 1:12, 14). Here the idea involves a putting with, a deposit, a pledge of fidelity.

That God expects commitment on the part of his children cannot be denied. We have committed all to our God and with good reason. He always keeps his promises. Our commitment is to Jesus Christ as well. “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Matt. 16:24). We are committed to the word of God. To the Ephesian elders Paul said “And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified” (Acts 20:32).

Total Commitment

This commitment must be total, complete with nothing held back. Partial obedience to the Lord and what he requires is not obedience at all. When Saul greeted Samuel with the news that “I have obeyed the commandment of the Lord,” Samuel asked “What meaneth then the lowing of the oxen and the bleating of the sheep in my ears?” (1 Sam. 15:12-14). Indeed, does the Lord have as great delight in sacrifice as in obeying his voice? Paul warned of a perverted gospel in Galatians 1:6-9. Oh, it had elements of truth in it, but it was not total truth. Jesus clinched the matter when he drew the conclusion from his two illustrations of the importance of counting the cost when he said, “Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14: 33). Some of your heart is not enough. He will be Lord of all of it, or else of none of it.

Persistent

This commitment must remain constant under every circumstance. Under the strongest *temptation* we must remain committed. Peter said, “abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul” (1 Pet. 2:11).

continued next page

Has It Been That Long?

Lewis Willis front page

Preaching Christ

Mike Willis 2

Commitment

Connie W. Adams 3

Indulge Me

Larry Ray Hafley 5

Personal Lessons From a National Disgrace

Richard J. Boone 6

Pilgrimage of a Stranger

Eddie K. Garrett, II 8

The Year 2000 and Evangelism

Rufus R. Clifford, III 13

The Heavens Declare the Glory of God!

Donald Willis 14

The Longsuffering of God

Samuel Csonka 16

The Lord’s Supper

Larry R. DeVore 18

Free in Christ

Ron Halbrook 20

Reading About Sleep

Donnie V. Rader 22

Cheerleading

J.S. Smith 23

Even in the face of peers who would entice us into error we have to remember that “evil companions corrupt good morals” (1 Cor. 15:33). We did enough succumbing to the desires of the flesh before we obeyed the gospel and even if former friends “think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you” (1 Pet. 4:2-4), we are not to weaken.

Under the threat of the most severe persecution we must not betray our commitment. “Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified . . . Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf” (1 Pet. 4:12-16).

Our commitment must be persistent when choices are to be made. We must be predisposed to put the spiritual above the material. “But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:33).

That means pulling children out of ball games in time to get to Bible study or a gospel meeting. It means not permitting scouting trips on Sundays when worship is to be omitted. It means skipping the prom. It means not putting family reunions above worship. It means planning ahead on trips and vacations so we can find brethren with whom to worship faithfully on the Lord’s Day.

Pervasive

Our commitment must be pervasive: it must involve every part of life. Not only must we be committed to the Lord and his will when we assemble to worship, but that commitment to the Lord and his word must follow us home. In the family circle the principles of truth must prevail in all the relationships which concern the *home*. Commitment to the Lord will make a woman a better wife and a man a better husband. It will make better parents and more respectful and obedient children.

Commitment to the Lord goes to *work* with a Christian. It determines his attitude toward superiors and toward the task to be done. It regulates relations with other workers. It controls the tongue so that it avoids gossip, profanity, or vulgarity and becomes marked by grace, seasoned with salt (Col. 4:6). It goes into the athletic contest with a Christian. He gives his best but does not retaliate for the late hit or the elbow to the jaw under the backboard, or the trash talk from others in the game.

Sacred Trusts Committed To Us

Gospel preachers have been entrusted with a sacred message. Paul said he had been “put in trust with the gospel” (1 Thess. 2:4). It is not our message to treat as we please. It is a *great* commission. We must deliver the message without change.

Elders have a sacred trust. They are to “tend the flock over which the Holy Spirit made them bishops” (Acts 20:28). They shall “give account” for their watch over souls (Heb. 13:17). They must stand before the “chief shepherd” (1 Pet. 5:4).

All *saints* have a sacred trust. The faith was “once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). We are the custodians of that same message delivered by inspired men. We must be faithful to the task. We must not only hold to the faithful word in our own lives, but also see to it that it is handed down to the next generation faithfully. We are rapidly losing a whole generation of gospel preachers but more than that, a generation of faithful saints who have stood the test of time and remained true to the Lord to the very end of their days. The younger generation must be prepared to step up and go forward with the greatest work in the world. What kind of a trustee are you?

Our *children* are a sacred trust committed to us from the Lord. They are an “heritage” of the Lord (Ps. 127:3). That means they are a legacy, a gift. Their training and development are of paramount importance. Take care to bring them up “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4).

Marriage is a sacred commitment. It is God who “binds” husbands and wives together (Matt. 19:6; Rom. 7:1-4). The privileges and duties of this special relationship are ordered by the Lord.

Our *souls* have been committed to us by the Lord. Soul is used here to mean spirit. We are not our own, but have been bought with a price. God is to be glorified in our bodies and spirits which are his (1 Cor. 6:19-20). This is the only part of us that will survive the death of the body. “We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2 Cor. 5:1). What are you doing with that immortal spirit which God committed to your trust?

Are you truly committed to the Lord?

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Have you studied your Bible today?

“. . . penitents who do a charitable deed or give up cigarettes or alcohol for a day can earn an ‘indulgence’ to eliminate punishment on earth or in purgatory.”

Indulge Me

Larry Ray Hafley

From off the Internet, via *Pulpit Helps*, we note the following:

The New York Times News Service reports from Rome that Pope John Paul II “has announced that in celebration of entering the third millennium of Christianity, penitents who do a charitable deed or give up cigarettes or alcohol for a day can earn an ‘indulgence’ to eliminate punishment on earth or in purgatory.”

While some Catholic officials emphasize that indulgences are linked to sincere repentance, others were embarrassed by a practice that “seems to offer a simplistic shortcut to salvation.” The Protestant Reformation was begun as a protest by Martin Luther against the sale of indulgences. Since Vatican II, the news service said, the Roman Catholic Church played down their importance.

The Pope declared the year 2000 as a holy year, and “throughout the millennial celebration believers will be offered a wider selection of ways to receive a plenary indulgence (to cancel the punishment for repented sins). In addition to traditional means, such as attendance at Mass in a designated church, they can choose an act of private sacrifice.” According to Cardinal William Baum, “this would include abstaining for at least one whole day from unnecessary consumption (e.g., from smoking, or alcohol, or fasting)” (*Pulpit Helps*, published by AMG Publishers, Chattanooga, TN 37422).

Well, I do not know about you, but I am certainly relieved that the present Pope was in a good humor when he issued his insignificant little puff of air. In times past, Popes have had folks seized and burned at the stake, so it was with a sigh of relief that I learned this Pope wears a white hat. Wonder if he will indulge and permit me write this article without incurring any singed clothing or powder burns (Dan. 3:15-18)?

(Before I forget, perhaps Cardinal Bill could define for us what constitutes the *necessary* “consumption” of cigarettes [“smoking”]. Many priests smoke and drink. Wonder how many of them will de-ash and de-tox for a day? Cuban dictator, Fidel Castro, is a friend of the Pope. Will he give up his cigar for one less day of eternal smoking?)

How many of the well known, so called “Protestants” of our day will join with those “Catholic officials” who “were embarrassed” by the Pope’s pronouncement? Where are the voices of those who are *protesting* the profane and profound presumption of the Pope’s proclamation? Will they speak out and speak up? Nay, verily, they will give in and give up.

Where, too, are the voices of those, our brethren, who constantly warn us against “*our* traditions in the Church of Christ”? Since they denounce us for our alleged “traditions,” where are their denunciations of the Pope’s “vain jangling” and “vain babblings”? It is strange how that some of our brethren will rail against the traditions of God (weekly Lord’s supper, weekly giving, singing, etc.), yet remain silent in the face of the blatant blasphemy of papal prattle (1 Cor. 11:2, 23; cf. Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; 2 Thess. 2:15). Frankly, I might be more inclined to listen to their murmuring and complaining if they would speak against the Pope’s pretensions as belligerently as they revile the right ways of the Lord.

Finally, since the Pope offers less punishment “on earth or in purgatory” if one will give up drinking for a day, I wonder if the reverse will work. What about a reformed drunk, now on his way to heaven, who hankers for just one more day of drunkenness? Will the Pope offer less joy “on earth or in heaven” if he volunteers to go back to drinking, but just for “one day”? Surely, in the name of the millennium, the ol’ Pope could be as kind to the former drinker as to the present.

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Whenever a society allows sin to run rampant in the streets and fails to uphold righteousness and justice, then it is a reproach to that nation (Prov. 14:34).

Personal Lessons From a National Disgrace

Richard J. Boone

After thirteen months of a bitter political battle, the impeachment hearings against our nation's President ended with his recent acquittal. Though conducted on the political stage, it reflects the ongoing moral war. There are moral issues — *serious moral issues* — involved. Setting aside political preferences and views, several personal lessons can be gleaned from this national disgrace.

Our Sin Will Find Us Out

In January 1998, the President flatly denied the alleged relationship with intern Lewinsky. I confidently believe he felt no one would ever learn the details of the matter. How wrong he was!

Moses, in Numbers 32:23, reminded the tribes of Reuben and Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh, if they failed to help their brethren settle Canaan west of Jordan, “be sure your sin will find you out.” How true that is! Our sins are fully known to God. “All things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account” (Heb. 4:13). Even our private sins are: “You have set our iniquities before You; our *secret sins* in the light of Your countenance” (Ps. 90:8; italics mine, rjb).

Sinful dispositions are manifested by our actions (Mark 7:20-23; cf. Prov. 4:23; 23:7). Sins against others become known (Matt. 18:15-17). Sometimes sin becomes known by the consequences it brings (Josh. 7:1-5, 19-21, 25). Rest assured that when we sin, it will become known — somehow, in some way.

Leadership Demands Godly Character and Morality

We have frequently heard: “Moral character doesn't matter; what one does in private is no one else's business

as long as it doesn't affect job performance.” Too many people have exchanged the truth for this lie (Rom. 1:25). Leadership which is not faithful in little things (private conduct) will fail in greater responsibilities (Luke 16:10; also Matt. 25:21; Luke 19:17). God has always required godly character and morality, especially from those in positions of leadership.

Kings of the Israelites were to have a copy of the law with them for reading, humility and fearful obedience, all of which would prolong their reign as king (Deut. 17:18-20). The judges whom Jethro suggested to Moses were to be “able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness” (Exod. 18:21). Why? So they might competently learn the law and render just verdicts in cases between Israelites. Within the church, elders and deacons are to be men of proven godliness and morality, especially needed in light of their serious responsibilities (Acts 6:1-6; 1 Tim. 3; Tit. 1:6ff; 1 Pet. 5:2-3). These examples sufficiently show that a key to effective leadership is godly morality and character; anything less is evil leaven.

Genuine Repentance

Throughout this ordeal we have been served a variety of apologies in differing tones and settings, so many, in fact, that one could question the apologist's sincerity. The subject of genuine repentance enters the picture. So does a pertinent text — 2 Corinthians 7:6-11. This text addresses both the motivations and actions of genuine repentance.

2 Corinthians 7:10 mentions “godly sorrow” and “the sorrow of the world.” What is the difference? There is an obvious difference in that godly sorrow “produces repentance to salvation,” but the worldly sorrow “produces

death.” The key term is “godly.” Sorrow towards God for sins committed is the realization of sin being an offense primarily against God, and it causes a change of mind leading to a change of actions; one ceases the sinful activity. Though he did not sin with Potiphar’s wife, Joseph’s mindset toward sin was right: “How then can I do this great wickedness, and *sin against God?*” (Gen. 39:9; italics mine, rjb). Godly sorrow entails a similar perspective.

Worldly sorrow, on the other hand, thinks primarily about worldly motives and consequences. It is little concerned with spiritual considerations, if at all. It has been accurately stated that godly sorrow is sorrow that one has done wrong, while worldly sorrow is sorrow for getting caught doing wrong.

Godly sorrow leads to genuine repentance as reflected in the Corinthians’ change of heart and conduct. They had tolerated an impenitent fornicator (1 Cor. 5). Paul told them to purge this leaven from among them (v. 7). This punishment was meted by a majority of them, causing the impenitent brother to repent (2 Cor. 2:6-7). Of their repentance Paul said, “For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed in a godly manner: What diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves clear in this matter” (v. 11). Godly sorrow produces this genuine repentance. Worldly sorrow acts differently.

Worldly sorrow seeks to delay, not diligently settle matters; to conceal wrongdoing, not clear it; its indignation is toward those who seek to resolve matters, not at self for sin; no fear of consequences; vehement desire, not to correct self, but to destroy accusers; zeal to protect self and status, not to cease sin; no vindication of self, but vindictiveness towards others; persuading others to try to clear you, rather than proving one’s self clear in a matter. Surely these contrasts are familiar to us in light of recent events.

Temporal Consequences Of Sin

Sin is the “Great Separator” — it separates man from God (Isa. 59:1-2). David understood this after all the events pertaining to Bathsheba and Uriah. Until he confessed his sins, he felt the weight of those spiritual consequences in his life (see Psalms 32 and 51).

David also learned that sin has temporal consequences, a fact which society often fails to realize or acknowledge. They may be small or great, immediate or delayed, individual and/or group-wide.

Nathan told David the consequences of his sins (2 Sam. 12:7-15). David had “despised the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his sight” (vv. 9, 10). Therefore he would: (1) have violence in his family’s future (v. 10); (2) experi-

ence insurrection from among his own family (v. 11a); (3) be humiliated by having his wives publicly violated (vv. 11b-12); (4) give great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme (v. 14); and (5) cause innocent people to suffer (v. 14b). Anyone familiar with David’s life and subsequent chapters in 2 Samuel can document the fulfillment of each of these foretold consequences. Though David was forgiven spiritually (Ps. 32:1-5; 51; 2 Sam. 12:13), there were still temporal consequences to his sins.

Today people may commit grave sins and be forgiven, but still have to face temporal consequences of those sins. A murderer can be forgiven by God, but still receives civil punishment. An alcoholic (or drug addict) mother can be forgiven, but an innocent baby suffers the consequences of fetal-alcohol syndrome (or “crack baby”). A thief can be forgiven, but still pays restitution. A person in an unlawful marriage can be forgiven of that adulterous relationship, but must leave it for repentance to come to fruition. In all of these cases and numerous others, one can be forgiven when they meet God’s terms of forgiveness, but may have temporal consequences of sin.

Conclusion

We are at a critical juncture in our nation’s history. Whenever a society allows sin to run rampant in the streets and fails to uphold righteousness and justice, then it is a reproach to that nation (Prov. 14:34). Many Americans are rightfully embarrassed about the reprehensible conduct of our President and his cohorts. It is a national disgrace. There are, however, important moral principles underlying these events. We must be sure to grasp and apply them because they are right and for posterity’s sake.

We can — by God’s power (Eph. 1:19-20) and longsuffering (2 Pet. 3:9) — affect a return to righteousness in our country through plain Bible teaching and consistent Christian living. God was willing to spare Sodom and Gomorrah for the sake of ten righteous souls (Gen. 18:32). Maybe he will spare America, too.

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. . . as I was reading and studying more of God's Word, some things that I had been taught I started to question.

Pilgrimage of a Stranger

Eddie K. Garrett, II

Many Christian brethren have asked me to write on my personal pilgrimage and conversion experience to the truth in Christ. I suppose that most, if not all, find it difficult to write on oneself, and I am no different, being of that same mind. However, I will attempt to do so in hope that someone, somewhere, might be encouraged and uplifted by it. Also to give them the assurance that there are others out there who are lost, as I was, who need to hear God's honest truth, that have been misled by the universality of false-teachers and their condemnable doctrines. The *only* way to combat these is for those of us who are in Christ and that have obeyed the truth of the gospel to teach, preach, proclaim, and declare it to everyone, everywhere, in every opportunity and situation we may find ourselves in our every day lives. Just as Satan has flooded the arena of our surroundings with his influence, so we must do the same as our Lord Jesus has thus commanded. As it is true that we do not have to be as great in number as those that are influenced by him and his cunning craftiness, nevertheless the lost still need to hear the truth of the gospel for it is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16; Heb. 4:12). For without that power and those that proclaim it, I would not be at this time, as a child of God, writing this to you. "How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things" (Rom. 10:15).

My friends, I was an ordained Baptist preacher of the sect known as Primitive Baptists. My father and brother were also Baptist preachers. About nine years ago I decided to "follow the Lord" and start going to church. Not knowing anything about the Bible I did what most end up doing and that is following a relative or friend to the church of their choice. In my case it was following my dad and the sect he was with. Being naive as others and not knowing any better, many are influenced by these friends and relatives that we judge to have been religious for some

time and certainly must know more than us. We allow ourselves to slowly be indoctrinated into church methodology and theology. All religions want to make converts to their own group and I was as a little child with grown-ups offering me candy, so to speak. All of us want to feel as though we're wanted and liked, and that there is a special place for us in a church. I was certainly no different. My father and his Primitive Baptist friends took me under their wings and immediately started to "teach" me the Bible. They taught me how to interpret it, what passages mean, and warned me about not associating with those of other religious sects. Little did I know that this was a part of the "grooming" process of a new convert. From the start I was taught what is commonly referred to as the "TULIP" doctrines, or as they like to refer to them as the "doctrines of grace" with the certain "proof texts" that supposedly supported these teachings. That man is "Totally Depraved" from Adam; that God has "Unconditionally Elected" certain particular individuals before the foundation of the world; That Jesus *only* died for those certain ones (Limited Atonement); that God "Irresistibly Calls" those individuals (regenerated or born again); and that once we're saved we can never be lost (Preservation of the Saints). This is what I heard week after week in our pulpits. Everyone seemed to agree and I would occasionally hear an "Amen" out of the congregation to give support to what was being taught. So I did not question this because surely these "men of God" knew far more than me. Eventually, I was licensed to preach and finally ordained to the full work of the ministry. Looking back now, I see me in those days being a pal-parrot. In other words, I was doing and saying as I saw them do and say.

As the years went by as I was reading and studying more of God's Word, some things that I had been taught I started to question. When I would pose my thoughts on certain things from the Bible to some preachers, to my surprise,

they got very upset and slowly were distancing themselves from me. As long as I was pal-parroting what they taught me and not questioning anything I was doing fine, but when I did do so troubles and problems came my way, of which I could not understand. Some would get very angry at me and dis-fellowship me all together. My preaching appointments started to dwindle. Others were being called to "Pastor" churches instead of me. It seemed all because I was diligently studying the Sacred Scripture. The more I would ask questions, the more trouble I received. This drove me to investigate thoroughly what I had been taught. I had been taught, so much against "Arminianism" and wanted to see why so many of the people I was with hated them so much. I thought to myself that I wanted to know both ends of the theological spectrum. I wanted to give their "system" a chance as I had done with "Calvinism." I reckoned that by knowing both realms of these opposite teachings that I would find out the *real* truth.

I decided the best way to know "Arminianism" was to be taught directly from them. So I enrolled into a program in a Seminary of that persuasion. I rigorously studied my heart out course by course. I took 16 courses in the one Masters program. Then I enrolled into their Doctorate program in Theology. One of my courses in this program was in "Hermeneutics" (the science of Bible interpretation). I was intrigued with what I had learned in that particular course. Just by chance, I had to do a thesis at the end of this program of which it was appointed that I do it in Hermeneutics. The research that I had done was extensive and thorough. I had to read and study this subject inside and out. I read many books of scholars on this subject. The reason why I mention this is because this was a major turning point in my sojourn to the truth. I realized that "Calvinism" approached the Bible using an "Allegorical Method" of interpretation. That is, "beyond the literal, obvious, and apparent meaning of a passage lies the real hidden secret meaning." I knew right off the bat that this was wrong. I realized that the way I was taught to interpret the Word of God was not the proper way of doing so. Then I started to re-interpret what I had read in God's Word. I wanted to challenge every doctrine that I was taught by taking the literal, plain and obvious and apparent meaning of what I would now read.

Yet, before I get too ahead of myself, I want to mention something that is of great significance to my conversion. A few years ago I was the Moderator for my father in a public debate with a church of Christ preacher named Patrick Donahue. The proposition was "For whom did Christ die?" I remember that day well. Although, I was of my father's persuasion, that debate (looking back now) had a profound effect on me. I remember during the debate while Mr. Donahue was dissecting, piece by piece, point by point, what I was taught to believe as the truth, there was a particular

After seeing the truth on baptism in the Scripture I still did not want to accept it. Yet, the nights were unsleepable for me. I could not just sweep this under the rug to lie dormant. I was searching and looking for ways to get out of baptism being a necessity for salvation.

point in that debate that I saw some truth of what he was declaring from God's Word. That debate *never* left my mind over the months to come. The seed of the truth of the gospel was planted in my heart that very day.

During my theological education I was challenging every point of the "TULIP" doctrines of which I was taught. The first major point that I challenged was "Limited Atonement." Why I started here I think was because of what was planted in me from the Donahue/Garrett debate on this subject. After much careful study, I saw the truth that Christ died for "all men" not just a few. Once I saw that truth I went to "Unconditional Election" and so challenged that point of Calvinistic doctrine. It was not long after I saw the real truth on election or salvation, that it was in fact conditional on our obedience in believing, repenting, and confessing. Of course the Calvinistic doctrine of "irresistible grace" fell down all by itself after that. All I had left was "total depravity" and the "perseverance of the saints." But, these did not fall so easily. I struggled with these for some time. Yet, I kept challenging these points with God's Word. I would stay up to sometimes 3- 4 o'clock in the morning studying and researching the Scripture. Once saved, always saved eventually fell by the wayside. When I saw that a person could fall out of grace then that convicted my soul a great deal. A struggle began in me to venture whether or not I was truly saved or not. Many prayers were prayed during this time in my studies. The hardest point to challenge was "total depravity." I was taught it since my youth. During this time I had been watching some debate tapes of my dad with fellows like John Welch, Tommy Thrasher, and Patrick Donahue that my dad had given me. At times, these discussions got pretty heated and very forceful in argument. Yet, I learned and enjoyed much from them.

One day, out of the blue, I wanted to talk to Patrick Donahue. So I called my dad and asked him for Patrick's phone number. Dad says, "What in the world do you want his phone number for?" I told him I just wanted to talk

with him. So, he gave me his number and I called him. He was very nice and cordial and sent me some literature and debate tapes on total depravity. My wanting to talk to Patrick, as I look back was because of that seed that had been planted in me during that debate with my father a couple three years prior. Eventually I saw that total depravity was not the truth of Scripture. I then left my father and the Primitive Baptists and went and joined the Southern Baptists. This was because I still wanted to “worship” and go to church and there were many Southern Baptists in my area. It was a place for me and my family to go while I got my “theology” straightened out. During this time Patrick kept in contact with me and tried (not forcefully) to help in anyway that he could. We would correspond every day on the Internet by way of E-Mail communication. Patrick showed great concern about my soul in a loving manner. He asked me to investigate the doctrine of water baptism. I laughed and said I would. But, deep down inside I “knew” that water baptism had absolutely nothing to do in the salvation of people’s soul. This I was certainly sure. I had done a lot of changing, but, this I knew with certainty. He would post arguments (debating on Internet) to me on baptism passages and I would respond in the normal usual Baptist way. Yet, every argument I had was being thrown down in defeat. This angered me tremendously and I did not like it at all. Yet, I was determined to prove him wrong nonetheless. Little did I know that when two men debate every point and Scripture that sooner or later the truth will pop right out of the discussion. And it certainly did with Pat and our discussion. I was befuddled! I did not communicate with him for a while, while I was pondering this with much conviction.

After seeing the truth on baptism in the Scripture I still did not want to accept it. Yet, the nights were unsleepable for me. I could not just sweep this under the rug to lie dormant. I was searching and looking for ways to get out of baptism being a necessity for salvation. I went to my Baptist and Protestant scholars commentaries hoping they would explain it away or give me something to grab hold of to not accept it. Yet, when these scholars went to Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38, 1 Peter 3:21 and other passages they were so very very weak and afforded me no relief. I thought, well, I’ll just get some scholarly Christian History books and prove the early church Fathers did not believe in baptismal regeneration. To my surprise, I found out, on the contrary, that the early church believed in it so much that major heresies crept in after the first few centuries. That Irenaeus, who was taught by Polycarp, who had been taught by John the Apostle, taught the necessity of baptism. That Tertullian, an early church historian said the early church believed strongly in the necessity of baptism. That they felt so strongly in it that many people refused to be baptized until near their death. So strongly that they started baptizing infants. This was only because of the new heresy of total depravity that had slowly crept in among some

in the early assemblies. Once I had seen this in the pre-Nicene Fathers, I was shocked.

I went back into my Bible to investigate more on baptism. Then when I finally saw that it was the truth of God, I came to the hardest place I had ever been in my quest of truth. What must I do? Do I go and “join” the “Campbellites” whom I have been taught to laugh at and hate with a passion? I thought, well I’ll just stay where I am in the Southern Baptists and just not say anything about baptism. Sure I could believe it is true, yet, keep it to myself. Oh! my friends, this mind set did not last too long. My convictions were too strong to pull such a stunt. My love of God’s Word and my affection for the Baptists were now at odds with each other. Days went by (sleepless) as I pondered what must I do. I started to read once again the book of Acts to find this answer. I found that I was not alone in wanting this question answered. The Jews asked Peter the question in Acts 2. The apostle Paul asked Jesus the same thing. The Philippian jailer asked the same question, etc. The answer was always believe and be baptized and thou shalt be saved. The exact words of Jesus in Mark 16:16. So I called my friend Patrick Donahue and he gave me two phone numbers of preacher brethren here in my area. I called both and we’d meet once a week and talk the Scripture. One of these men was Bobby K. Thompson of the Manatee County Church of Christ. Bobby is up in his seventies and his biblical answers soothed my weary soul. One day I asked him to take me to “his” church to view his library. He had given me a couple of books to read, but the most important thing he said to me was when we were walking out to leave, he put his arm around my neck, hugged me and said, “Eddie, you need to be in Christ, you must accept the truth of Jesus, obey the gospel and be baptized leaving your old world behind.” These few little words convicted my heart for days. Him putting his arm around me meant so much because he saw the agony I was in and the dilemma I had found myself.

One thing that intrigued me of these “church of Christ” people is that all of them encouraged me to read and study my Bible. To stay away from reading so many other books of others and just stay with God’s Word.

I talked frequently with my wife on these doctrinal issues and we would study together. My conviction was getting too strong to wait any longer. I had to obey the gospel as the Lord Jesus commanded. I called Bobby Thompson and told him to get the baptistry ready for Sunday. Those few days till then seemed as though a year. Satan was working overtime it seemed. But, I kept myself into the Scripture, the safest haven for me. My wife was stunned and shocked. “Was he going to leave all his years in the Baptist church and all his educational credentials and titles behind?” she thought. Yet, I indeed did and was baptized upon my confession in Christ Jesus on that Sunday morning.

The next day, after my baptism into Christ, I was called by a Southern Baptist church to be their "Pastor." This is what I had worked so hard for years. I turned them down because of my true conversion to Christ. Satan was working overtime with me because on that Wednesday I received another call to "Pastor" full-time another Baptist Church in my area. My wife said to me (reminds me of Job's wife), "Eddie this is what you've been working for so long and now it comes and you refuse it." But, my mind was set in the defense of the truth. I was not going to be tempted away from my Lord Jesus. I walked away from all my friends, preachers, and laymen. By doing all this, I think this gave reason for my wife to investigate what I had found.

Walking into the church of Christ building seemed strange or different than what I'd been accustomed to, the people were different as well than what I was used to, but I knew I had followed my Lord's commands. My wife and I kept studying together every day and to my wonderful surprise, she came forward a month later in the service to obey the gospel. I was so happy and rejoicing. Bobby came up to me and asked if I wanted to baptize her and thus my joy was fulfilled. I baptized my wife, Priscilla, on that very day.

We have been serving our Lord ever since and feel so blessed by our Lord. Ephesians 1:3 has certainly lived up to all the truth it declares. All spiritual blessings are indeed *in Christ*. I was experiencing them like I had never experienced them before. We are so happy and filled with joy over what our Lord Jesus has done for us.


Brethren, beloved in the Lord, there were many things

that contributed to my conversion in Christ, but it all started with viewing and attending debates. If it wasn't for the sternness of the gospel preachers in their conviction in proclaiming the truth in boldness of which I had never experienced before, my wife and I may not be where we are today. Do debates do any good? This very soul and his wife would no doubt be lost, bound for the fiery pits of Hell in torment, if not for those I experienced. Oh! blessed are the feet of those that preach the gospel of Christ.


What we need is not a backing off of doing them, but to return to publicly proclaim with a vigor that has never since been seen since the first century Christians. Let all who have the truth challenge every sectarian preacher and theologian to discuss these matters. Let us raise the proclamation flag of God's truth and not be ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God unto salvation.

The first century Christians turned this world upside down and thousands were converted to Christ. What has changed now? Is it possible that we are too sophisticated now to openly declare the truth of Christ? Let all who know the truth search, as Paul, Barnabas, Silas, etc. for avenues of discussion. Let's let our light so shine that all others can see the truth in Christ. This is a warfare with Satan and the powers of darkness that is sending poor souls to Hell, let us not give up on these precious souls that need to be saved. Let us try much harder to proclaim it and not hide our talent under the ground.

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New Publication!



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Take advantage of the time you live in and the events taking place to reach out to those who are lost and confused and blinded by the deception of the devil.

The Year 2000 and Evangelism

Rufus R. Clifford, III

I am sure you are aware of how human nature remains the same throughout the years. People have a tendency to be people no matter what age they are living in! We are by nature only interested in things that are affecting us at the moment. For example: Store owners, who are business minded, know that the best time to order snow shovels and sell snow shovels is not in the summer! Why? There is no need. People are not thinking about snow in the summer! I believe you get the gist of what I am saying. We have, in my opinion, the opportunity to make this year the most successful year for teaching others the gospel! Why is that? The fact that people will be people is what I am basing this statement on! In fact setting up Bible studies will be easier this year than any other year before. The reason for this is a simple one: human nature!

When does a person think about death? When they are around death. When does a person think about Jesus coming back? When they know that people believe he's coming back close to the year 2,000! This year will be a good year for those who are interested in personal evangelism! (which should include all Christians). The reason being is that those who teach the false doctrine of premillennialism and those who believe this doctrine are convinced that the year 2000 will be a special year for them.

What does this mean for the "snow shovel salesman"? It means if people believe it's going to snow six feet, he's going to sell a lot of snow shovels! What will he do to prepare? (1) He will have a ready supply of shovels on hand, (2) He will know all about snow shovels! Let's take this same mentality and apply it to setting up studies this year. What should I do to prepare for this opportunity? First: Have a ready supply of statements to make that will create interest in the other person to study!

Example: Hey Fred, has your preacher been talking much about Jesus coming back and the rapture? What do you believe is going to happen this year? (Let's get together next week and see what the Bible says about Jesus coming back.)

Hey Martha, are you getting ready for all this Y2k stuff they are predicting? (If she hasn't heard, fill her in.) No electricity, no food, banks shutting down! Then switch the conversation to spiritual matters: Really I'm not too worried myself, because my faith lies in God! (play it by ear from there). Have yourself questions to present to folks that will lead into religious conversations that will open the door for you to say: "Why don't we get together one night next week and see what the Bible says about that! What night is best for you?"

Second: Know your shovels! Study the following books of the Bible: Zechariah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Revelation. These are four books in the Bible which are apocalyptic in style. This means that much of their message was written with symbolic or figurative language. You don't have to become an authority on all four; you just have to know what premillennialists try to teach from each one! Below are some helpful insights:

Zechariah — Chapters 9:9-10 — Premillennialists deny that the reign of Christ as king has begun. *Chapter 14* — a favorite text used by Premillennialists who give it a literal interpretation and apply the chapter to a future point in time.

Ezekiel — Chapter 38-39 — Premillennialists believe this is referring to a literal fulfillment. Study the terms Gog and Magog and Armageddon. Familiarize yourself with what these chapters are really teaching!

Science has never delivered one person from sin. Although wonders can be done to the body, science has not yet healed one broken soul!

The Heavens Declare the Glory of God!

Donald Willis

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun, Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race. His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof. The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. Moreover by them is

thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward. Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression. Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer (Ps. 19).

In this appeal, which the Bible makes to the science of astronomy, we find the statement that this particular branch of science bears explicit testimony to the “glory” and “knowledge” of the God, who made the heavens and wrote the Book. This is clear from the fact that, while the first six verses deal with the testimony of the heavens, the latter part of the psalm, from the seventh verse onward, is occupied with the testimony of the written Word.

Daniel — Chapter 2 — Premillennialists do not believe that the Kingdom of God was to be established in the days of the Roman Empire. Learn about what Daniel prophesied about these four kingdoms that would come and go! Babylon (gold), Medo-Persia (silver), Greece (brass), Rome (iron), and about the kingdom God would set up (vv. 44-45) that could not be moved (Heb.12:28).

Revelation — Chapter 20 — Premillennialists are futurists — that is they consider the book of Revelation as an unfulfilled prophecy about future history. They place chapters 4-19 as just before the coming of Christ and then chapter 20:1-10 as the millennial reign, judgment, and the final state. Suggestions: Know why the book was written and to whom! Familiarize yourself with chapter 20 and

the 1000-year reign. Remember that the second coming, bodily resurrection, reign on earth, literal throne of David, Christ on earth, etc. are not taught in Revelation 20:4! The doors of opportunity are going to present themselves to all of us this year so let's be ready! Take advantage of the time you live in and the events taking place to reach out to those who are lost and confused and blinded by the deception of the devil. Many are in darkness and cannot see, but you and I are lights in this world for Jesus (Matt.5:14-15) and we are here to glorify him (1 Cor.10:31). So let's shine brightly and tell others the good news!

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Now it will be readily admitted that if the science of astronomy — that is to say, if any of the existing laws in connection with the heavenly bodies — really ran counter to, or in any way tended to disprove the teaching of Scripture, then the heavens, instead of declaring the glory and knowledge of the Creator, would rather witness to the ignorance and consequent dishonor of him who had written a Book which he has magnified, and which is specially called “The Law of the Lord” — but which was found to be opposed in its teachings to some of the other laws already in existence. Now, our minds shrink from such a blasphemous conclusion. However, let us consider some “scientific statements” found in the pages of holy writ; and how did these writers know such scientific facts before they were discovered?!

The oldest book in the Bible, Job reads: Job 26:7 (c. 3500 BC): “He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing.” How did Job know this? And is not this simple statement scientifically accurate. All the early physicists and philosophers (including Plato and Aristotle) believed the earth was a flat disc of land. Authorities at the Washington Observatory have discovered that there is a vast expanse in the northern heavens without a single star in it — literally an empty place! The heavens declare the glory of God!

Proverbs 8:27 (c. 1000 BC) “When he prepared the heavens, I was there: when he set a compass (or circle) upon the face of the depth.” This clearly indicates the spherical or globular shape of the earth. Isaiah 40:22 (700 BC): “It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in. . . .” Circle means an “arch” or “sphere,” demonstrating the true form of the earth! This is a most remarkable reference to the rotundity of the earth. The heavens declare the glory of God!

The Earth turns upon its axis. Genesis 1:3-5 (c. 1500 BC): “And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.” One side of the earth, being closest to light, the other side would be dark. These things commenced, yet the Sun and Moon were not set until the fourth day. But, the earth was moving upon its axis from the beginning! The heavens declare the glory of God!

Also consider: Luke 17:34-36 (c. 67 AD): “I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.”

When are men in a bed? Night!



When are women preparing flour for the daily bread? Early Morning!

When are men laboring in the field? Broad daylight!

And every student knows that, owing to the rotundity of the earth, the light falls upon only a half at a time, producing day and night at once and making the statement easily understood. The heavens declare the glory of God!

But the context of Psalms 19 establishes that the Bible is the Word of God, that it is perfect to the needs of mankind! What a wonderful proclamation!

Our duty, therefore, it to be as young Samuel (1 Sam 3:9): “Speak Lord, thy servant heareth.” Jesus is the “way, truth, life” (John 14:6). Jesus is the only way to salvation (Acts 4:12). Science has never delivered one person from sin. Although wonders can be done to the body, science has not yet healed one broken soul!

The Gospel of Jesus Christ can save us from our sins! The heavens declare the glory of God! We must live in acknowledgment of God and to the glory of God!

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The Longsuffering of God

Samuel Csonka

God throughout all the ages has continued to let man remain on this earth because he is longsuffering. . . . God is truly thinking of us, and desiring our reconciliation. He does not wish to see us continue on our pathway to destruction.

In Exodus 34:5-7, we find Moses on Mt. Sinai ready to receive the Ten Commandments from God. Before this happened, though, God came down and presented himself before Moses:

Now the Lord descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed before him and proclaimed, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation.

God described himself to Moses as "longsuffering." In this article, let's examine the longsuffering character of God:

1. God is very longsuffering, but his longsuffering has limitations. Since God created man to be a free moral agent (ability to choose right or wrong), he has had to deal with man's sin. For about 1500 years after creation, man's sin grew worse and worse; At least, until we read of God's reaction to it in Genesis 6:5-7: "Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his

heart was only evil continually. And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. So the Lord said, 'I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them.'"

Of course, we know that he kept Noah and his family alive, so that the human race was not totally annihilated. But soon after this we see man up to his old ways of trying God's patience and longsuffering, and doing what pleased himself instead of what pleased God.

Even 900 years after this, when God had rescued the Israelites from Egyptian bondage, they turned their hearts away from God. Psalm 78 provides us with a very nice outline of the things that Israel did to test God's patience:

Psalm 78:10-11 says, "They did not keep the covenant of God; they refused to walk in His law, and forgot His works and His wonders that He had shown them." Verse 17 continues: "But they sinned even more against Him by rebelling against the Most High in the wilderness." Notice God's reaction to them: "Therefore the Lord heard this and was furious; so a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel, because

they did not believe in God, and did not trust in His salvation” (Ps. 78:21-22). Continuing his longsuffering and patience with them, he provided them with sustenance and protection. But, “In spite of this they still sinned, and did not believe in His wondrous works. Therefore their days He consumed in futility, and their years in fear” (Ps. 78:32-33).

They went back and forth, back and forth, rebelling and returning, sinning and repenting. “But He, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, And did not destroy them. Yes, many a time He turned His anger away, and did not stir up all His wrath; for He remembered that they were but flesh, a breath that passes away and does not come again” (Ps. 78:38-39).

Throughout the long period of the rule of judges and the dynasties of kings, Israel continued the same oscillation — back and forth, rebelling and returning. Then by the mouth of Jeremiah, the prophet of Anathoth, God spoke these words: “If you will return, O Israel, says the Lord, Return to Me; and if you will put away your abominations out of My sight, then you shall not be moved. And you shall swear, ‘The Lord lives,’ in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness; the nations shall bless themselves in Him, and in Him they shall glory. For thus says the Lord to the men of Judah and Jerusalem: ‘Break up your fallow ground, and do not sow among thorns. Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your hearts, you men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, lest My fury come forth like fire, and burn so that no one can quench it, because of the evil of your doings’” (Jer. 4:1-4).

God gave them fair warning that his longsuffering was running out. But, still they remained disobedient. And, after the fall of Jerusalem, Jeremiah reminded them of how they had tested God and worn out his patience with them. He said, “So the Lord could no longer bear it, because

of the evil of your doings and because of the abominations which you committed. Therefore your land is a desolation, an astonishment, a curse, and without an inhabitant, as it is this day” (Jer. 44:22).

Even so, God did not utterly destroy the people. In Isaiah 48:9, he declared through the prophet: “For My name’s sake I will defer My anger, And for My praise I will restrain it from you, so that I do not cut you off.” He had promised to save a remnant of the people to bring them back into the land for he had a future purpose to accomplish.

Years later, the Levites of the remnant of Israel who returned to Jerusalem remembered God’s patience and the limit of his longsuffering. While remembering their father’s sinful ways, they exclaimed, “Yet for many years You had patience with them, and testified against them by Your Spirit in Your prophets. Yet they would not listen; Therefore You gave them into the hand of the peoples of the lands” (Neh. 9:30).

Throughout all these thousands of years, God’s longsuffering had been tested and tried. Man, due to his sin and incontinence, had revolted against the mandates of the Almighty God and received his just reward for it.

Now, come ahead several hundred years, to the New Testament age. Remember the future purpose that God wanted to accomplish? The apostle Paul in Romans 9 refers to this, and also to God’s longsuffering in order to accomplish this purpose. He says, “What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?” (vv. 22-24).

The reason that Paul gives for why God was so patient with the Israelites, was so that God, through the lineage of David, might bring forth the Messiah to be the Savior of all — both Jew and Gentile. He had also mentioned this in Romans 3:25-26, where he wrote of the Christ “whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.” God had, through his love and forbearance, offered mankind the very thing which he needed, but couldn’t provide for himself — redemption from sin. Yet, knowing this, the majority of the people of Paul’s day rejected Christ and his teaching. Why? Because of the very thing that separated man from God in the first place, and that still separates him from God — sin. Sin, in the form of selfishness, worldliness, unrighteousness, and just plain wickedness, had been the reason for their rejection of God and his Word.

Even Jesus himself, during his last days on the earth had this to say about his chosen people: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!” (Matt. 23:37). It is sad to look back on all the chances that they had to make peace with God, but squandered.

Nevertheless, God throughout all the ages has continued to let man remain on this earth because he is longsuffering. Peter reveals the main goal of God’s longsuffering in 2 Peter 3:9 where he writes: “The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.” God is truly thinking of us, and desiring our rec-

The Son of God built a memorial that has lasted 2000 years;
assembled each week from perishable elements.

The Lord's Supper

Larry R. DeVore

The Lord's supper is a solemn occasion to remember the death of our Lord and the great sacrifice he made for us on Calvary. It ought to be observed with the seriousness and dignity that befits the occasion. I do not imply that the partaking of the Lord's supper is more important than any other act of worship. They are all equally important. The Christian is to participate in each activity in spirit and in truth (John 4:24). The death of Christ was a propitiation (atoning sacrifice, 1 John 2:2) for us, that God might be able to forgive us our sins and put us into a covenant relationship with him. No other act except the death of the sinless Son of God on the cross could accomplish this.

Consider the Purpose of the Lord's Supper

The apostle Paul tells us that the purpose of the Lord's supper is to remember his death. In 1 Corinthians 11:25-26. "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes" (NKJV). We see in verse 25 that the Lord's supper is a remembrance; a memorial if you will, of the Lord's sacrifice of himself for us. Man builds memorials and monuments of stainless steel, granite or marble; material he hopes will endure. The Son of God built a memorial that has lasted 2000 years; assembled

onciliation. He does not wish to see us continue on our pathway to destruction. He wants us to return to him. God's words: "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O house of Israel?" (Ezek. 33:11), could be applied spiritually to every man. "Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?" (Rom. 2:4).

Truly God has been, and continues to be, longsuffering to those who reject him and his will. But, the time is coming soon in which sinful man will receive his just reward. For the apostle Paul through the Spirit of God says: "But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to each one according to his deeds: eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-

seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil . . ." (Rom. 2:5-9).

Now, what about you? You who have lived on this earth for "X number of years" and have still not obeyed the gospel of Christ. What are you waiting for?

In Romans 1:20, Paul proclaimed that all men throughout the ages were without excuse before God: "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse." If those who had not even heard the gospel of Christ are without excuse, what about those who have heard it time and time again? Remember — God's longsuffering has a limit, and yours runs out on the day that you die. Haven't you made him wait long enough?

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each week from perishable elements. Unleavened bread and grape juice are not enduring materials. They will mold and become stale. Yet these very elements, prepared weekly by faithful hands, become by faith the body and blood of the Lord in the communion service every first day of the week. The Lord's supper is a lasting memorial, for the purpose of observing (looking back on) the Lord's death on Calvary, and faithful Christians will continue to partake of it "until He comes."

The Frequency of Observing the Lord's Supper

The "when" of partaking the Lord's supper is found by example of what the early church did. "Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight" (Acts 20:7). There is no other example of the early church partaking of the Lord's supper on any other day of the week. Those who claim they can do so need to cite their authority from Scripture. Divine silence eliminates every day but the first day of the week. We see also that the Lord's supper is a congregational function, rather than an individual one. It is something done "when the disciples came together." I believe this eliminates carrying the communion to shut-ins in hospitals, and private or nursing homes. If one cannot assemble, then he or she is excused from partaking. We can do many things individually; we can sing and pray; study and teach others. But the Lord's supper (and the giving of one's means) is a congregational function or activity. Let us be dedicated to observe the Lord's supper with other disciples, upon the first day of the week.

The Manner of Observing the Lord's Supper

The manner in which a Christian observes the Lord's supper should be the attitude he would display in engaging in any act of divine worship. The apostle Paul tells us we can control our thinking (Phil. 4:8). So as we observe the Lord's supper, we need to concentrate on Jesus' death for us on Calvary; the suffering, the anguish he went through in order to secure our salvation. Try to block out external distractions, that we may meditate on the greatest sacrifice the world has ever known. A few well-chosen remarks by the one presiding at the table will help each disciple to meditate on Calvary.

Duties of the One Presiding at the Communion Service

The brother who presides at the serving of the Lord's supper can do a great deal to make the service meaningful to the participants. This should involve something more than simply reading Matthew 26:26-29 or Luke 22:17-20, where Jesus instituted the supper. This is fine, but tells us little or nothing about why he was instituting the supper. There are many passages that dwell on his suffering and death that would be more appropriate for the communion service. Some of these would be: Psalm 22; Hebrews 2:9-

17; 7:22-27; 9:24-28; 1 Peter 1:18-21; 2:21-25. The one in charge, or "presiding" at the service should be neatly dressed and well prepared to lead the congregation in a meaningful participation of the Lord's supper.

Duties of Those Who Serve the Communion

Those who serve the congregation are important to an orderly and meaningful communion service. They should also be neatly dressed in their best. A tee shirt and jeans are not appropriate attire to appear before the congregation (unless that is all one has to wear). We are in the spiritual presence of the Son of God, not attending a football game. Neat, clean clothing is essential. The brothers serving should strive to serve the communion in an orderly manner, seeing that no one is overlooked. Those who are serving should not partake of the communion first, but serve themselves last, at the rear of the auditorium, or where it has been decided in advance. Good judgment and common sense should prevail. The congregation is to be served first, themselves last.

Praying at the Serving of the Lord's Supper

A few words need to be said regarding the prayers offered at the table for the bread and the fruit of the vine. Too often, a brother will pray for everything and anything, and sometimes nearly forget to give thanks for the elements involved. The observance of the Lord's supper is not the time to ask for forgiveness of sins, or to pray for the sick, or for safe travel, etc. These items should be taken care of in the opening prayer. The prayers at the Lord's table should be brief and to the point.

The prayers offered at the Lord's table should keep the congregation's thinking focused on Calvary, and what was accomplished by Jesus on our behalf. The brethren who pray and serve the communion service are vital to making the service meaningful to each disciple. Don't consider this a "little duty" or chore to be carried out. Your faithful service here is extremely important to the proper partaking of the Lord's supper on the first day of the week.

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**The Lord can take our broken hearts and lives, so marred by sin,
and remold us as vessels of honor in his service.**

Free in Christ

Ron Halbrook

Jesus said, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32). Freedom from sin is provided only through the death of Christ as a perfect sacrifice for sin (Heb. 10:12). As the blood of animals was sprinkled on the first covenant, so the New Testament of Christ was sealed and sanctified by the shedding of his blood (Heb. 9:15-23). As we abide within his covenant, Christ keeps us free from sin.

Free from Separation from God

Adam and Eve were driven from the Garden of Eden by their sin. Their blissful relationship with God was broken and their access to the tree of life was blocked. God "drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the Garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life" (Gen. 3:24). Sin separates us from fellowship with God, makes us enemies of God, and denies us the blessings of God (Isa. 59:1-2; Col 1:21). When we live in sin, our prayers are not accepted through the mediatorial name of Jesus Christ.

Christ restores our broken fellowship with God, giving us "all spiritual blessings" (Eph. 1:3). Both Jews and Gentiles have access to God through the blood of Jesus Christ. "But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (Eph. 2:13). Christ frees us from sin so that we can enjoy full fellowship with God when we obey the gospel and are added to the church of Christ. Thus, we are reconciled "unto God in one body by the cross" (Eph. 2:16).

Free from Sin's Enslaving, Degrading Effects

Sin soon enslaves us, leads us further and further away from God, and makes us vulnerable to many foolish and

hurtful lusts. Mere covetousness opens the door to all sorts of temptations (1 Tim. 6:10). Step by step, King David was led deeper into sin, but he finally repented, whereas Judas followed a similar path and ended a suicide. Neither man intended to go as far as he did. Sin seems at first to be the servant of our desires but soon becomes the master of our souls! The history of the Gentile world shows that those who depart from the truth of God are soon "filled with all unrighteousness" (Rom. 1:29). Brethren who begin to compromise the truth with the best of intentions may end up as false teachers who "wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived" (2 Tim. 3:13).

When we are "baptized into Jesus Christ," we are raised to "walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4). When Christ cleanses our souls, he turns our lives around. The moment we obey the gospel, we are "then made free from sin" and become "the servants of righteousness."

For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life (Rom. 6:18, 20-22).

The Lord can take our broken hearts and lives, so marred by sin, and remold us as vessels of honor in his service. He removes the garments so spotted and stained with sin, and clothes us in the beauties of holiness as his servants.

Free from the Old Law

The Old Law prepared men for the coming of Christ but could not itself provide a perfect sacrifice for sin. Once a man sinned under that Law, he stood under the condem-

nation of sin (Gal. 3:10-13). The only hope of forgiveness was in the Christ to come, but after Christ came and offered the perfect sacrifice for sin, it was impossible to serve God under the Law of Moses. To attempt to do so, in whole or in part, is to return to the condemnation pronounced on the sinner by that covenant. Modern day Jews and sabbatarians appeal to the Old Law. Denominationalism tries to justify infant membership, a clergy or priesthood, special robes, burning incense, dancing in worship, clapping, instrumental music, and other practices on the basis of the Old Law.

Christ takes away the yoke of Moses' Law and teaches us, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." To appeal to the Old Law to justify ourselves today is to fall from grace (Gal. 5:1-6). The message of the book of Hebrews is that we serve God under a new and better high priest, a new and better covenant, with a new and better sacrifice, a new and better sabbath rest, a new and better tabernacle, and a new and better hope. "In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away" (Heb. 8:13).

Free from Commandments and Doctrines of Men

Men are often misled in religion by false teachers who depart from the truth by omitting things from it and adding things to it. We are often warned against such men who twist the Scriptures "unto their own destruction" (Rev. 22:18-19; 2 Pet. 3:16). False teachers make us "subject to ordinances . . . after the commandments and doctrines of men" (Col. 2:20-23). Such things make a fair show of religion, but are utterly worthless to God or man in the plan of salvation. Denominational churches with their man-made names, creeds, dogmas, and practices enslave men's souls to ordinances after the commandments and doctrines of men. All forms of apostasy and departure from the true gospel of Christ create the same enslavement to men.

Christ teaches us to test all teachers by God's Word in order to distinguish truth from error (Matt. 15:1-9; 1 Pet. 4:11; 1 John 4:1-6). Thus, Christ frees us from the dominion of men and the theories of men. We "are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone" (Eph. 2:20). Being delivered from the confusion and uncertainty of human traditions and creeds, we are no longer "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive" (Eph. 4:14).

Free from the Law of Sin and Death

Once we sin, we are doomed to eternal punishment in hell. Once we are cast into hell with the devil and his an-

gels, into "the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone," there is no escape, no relief from torment, and no hope of freedom (Rev. 21:8). Think of it: Sin promises us joyous freedoms but finally enslaves and entombs us in the dungeon of eternal despair! Seeing this end result of the sin's captivity, Paul exclaimed, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 8:24) "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23).

"For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. 8:2). In Christ we have forgiveness and the hope of eternal life with God in heaven (Tit. 1:2). On the great resurrection day, our bodies will be changed and "fashioned like unto his glorious body" (Phil. 3:21). Both physical and spiritual death will be defeated. We shall live forever beyond the reach of the law of sin and death "when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality."

Then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:54-57).

False Forms of Freedom

We are not free to continue in sin, or to teach and practice false doctrine. Freedom in Christ is not a license to do wrong with impunity. False teachers open the door to sin and error by promising a false form of "liberty" (2 Pet. 2:1, 19). Those who oppose this false plea are attacked as "legalists," "intolerant," "sectarian," "traditionalists," "creed writers," "narrow-minded," "negative," and "cultists." The false teacher who hardens his heart will eventually leave God's true people or else be rejected from their fellowship after repeated admonition (1 John 2:19; Tit. 3:10). He may become increasingly bitter, rash, and reckless as he waxes "worse and worse" under a false banner of freedom (2 Tim. 3:13).

Many practices not authorized in God's Word are promoted under the false banner of freedom, such as sprinkling in place of Bible baptism, women preachers, church sponsored recreation, adulterous marriages, instrumental music in worship, and unity in doctrinal diversity. These doctrines and commandments of men are no part of the covenant sealed by the blood of Christ. Anyone with sincere questions about such things can be patiently taught such passages as Romans 6:4, 1 Timothy 2:12, 1 Corinthians 11:34, Matthew 19:9, Ephesians 5:19, and 2 John 9-11. Sincere brethren seeking to learn and grow are not treated like false teachers, but neither are false teachers granted the "freedom" they demand to spread error unchallenged.

Reading About Sleep

Donnie V. Rader

It is approaching 1:00 a.m. as I write. All in the house are asleep but me. A few minutes ago I just finished reading some material on the value of sleep. I was convinced by the author's evidence that the body needs proper rest. Toward the end of the material, as my eyes got heavier, his point hit home more than ever.



family needs. Yet, in the process the very thing they need (his love and attention) is deprived (See: Prov. 22:6; Eph. 6:1-4).

It has always interested me how people engage in Bible study (be it in Bible class or listening to preaching) without a Bible. I am amazed at the person who can grasp a text being explained in its context without ever opening the covers of the Bible (See: John 5:39; Acts 17:11).

Surely it has dawned on you, as it did me, that there seems to be some contradiction in staying awake to learn more about the value of sleep. One who would stay awake to the wee hours of the morning to read about the value of sleep surely has some interest in giving his body what it needs. Yet, in the process, the very needs are denied. Isn't that a little like doing without food in order to have money to buy a book on nutrition?

I got to thinking — folks act the same way in spiritual matters.

All too often some father will work long hours (even taking more than one job) to be able to provide what the

Purity of thought (Prov. 23:7) is emphasized by parents as they train their children. They are taught about the evils of association and familiarization with sin (Ps. 1:1-3). We, as parents will not allow them to listen to music or watch TV that violates those principles. Yet, some parents will take their children to movies that use a good bit of profanity and even have suggestive scenes (see: Rom. 1:32).

Preachers have been among the worst of those who, in the name of doing good, in the end, do wrong. It is not uncommon to see some preachers who sacrifice all to study the word and go preach. Among the sacrifices (though not intentional) is their health and, even worse, their marriage and children. Preachers, like any other Christians, have the responsibility to be good husbands and fathers (1 Pet. 3:7; Eph. 6:1-4).

I have always been amused at those who will argue with you that it is wrong to debate. Or those who condemn those who condemn. And what about the ones who judge us because they think we are judgmental?

We live in a society that cries out for the poor fellow on death row. Though he may have killed a dozen people, the liberal element will tell us that he is a human being and deserves to live. Yet, the same people will contend for a woman's right to abort her child (see: Gen. 9:6).

The hour is getting late (or early). I really ought to practice a little of what I just read a while ago. I think I will go to bed.

How to Become Free in Christ

Christ frees us from sin when we accept him by faith, repentance, and baptism (Acts 2:36-38). Even when Christians fall into sin, Christ's blood is always available to us if only we will repent and seek God's pardon (Acts 8:22). Christ said of all who are willing to hear, believe, and obey his teaching, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). Indeed, Christ is "the way, the truth, and the life" which leads us into that blessed freedom of fellowship with God for time and for eternity (John 14:1-6). What good news to sinners who are tired of Satan's lies and slavery!

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Cheerleading

J.S. Smith

I am all for school spirit. I have season tickets for the Pflugerville High School football team and rant and rave with the best of them at every game. My objection to cheerleading is not about school spirit or extracurricular activities, which are both profitable. My objection to cheerleading centers on the undeniable fact that it places young women and girls into immodest costumes and engages them in lewd exercises before hundreds of boys and men.

The Costume

In days gone by, the cheerleading uniform was not immodest and I would have no problem with it at all. It consisted of a skirt that descended below the knees and a top that concealed both chest and midriff. Today's cheerleading uniform is often times nothing more than a miniskirt and halter top. Many uniforms today even bare the midriff.

If this uniform were stripped of its insignia and worn as everyday attire, most Christians would see its impropriety. Because it is associated with a school activity, considered wholesome in America, should not mitigate the clear fact that such attire is immodest and will tend to incite lust in the vulnerable hearts of young men (Matt. 5:27-28).

Paul addresses even our young women when he admonishes them to “adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation . . . which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works” (1 Tim. 2:9-10). To imagine a Christian gleefully donning such a costume in public is beyond belief. Any young women dressed in what amounts to a miniskirt is not professing godliness, but a lack of concern for the souls of men who see her. Her attire is a stumbling block that will surely help some souls down the road to perdition (Matt. 18:6-7). Can anyone seriously deny that her costume is likely to cause someone to lust?



The Bodily Movements

The Holy Spirit includes lewdness among his list of works of the flesh that will disqualify anyone from inheriting the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19-21). Lewdness is one of those words which meaning in the English language has evolved away from the intent of the original Greek Paul used. Thayer defines *aselgeia* as “wanton acts or manners, as filthy words, indecent bodily movements, unchaste handling of males and females, etc.”

Again, take the cheerleader off the sideline and have her perform the same exercises on the dance floor to music. Modern cheerleading is an exhibition of young women performing indecent bodily movements in the presence of hundreds, if not thousands, of men. It has the same power to incite lust as modern dancing and is just as lewd. We might want to excuse it as a school activity, but such a justification amounts only to situation ethics, a byword

of humanism, wherein the black-and-white nature of sin is blurred for our convenience.

Not All Bad

I am aware of at least one high school which has cheerleaders who wear modest uniforms and refrain from performing lewdness on the sideline. Their cheers are done in a respectable way and I think that is fine. These young women are engaged in a wholesome activity, which does not place them in thigh-and-belly-bearing outfits or direct them to dance about in a way that might incite lust (Matt. 14:6).

Just how important are the souls of our young people? Lewdness disappoints God and will keep them out of Heaven. Is that more important than popularity on Earth?

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“Has It Been” continued from front page

They could not fully support a man, but Cecil had gotten a congregation in Indianapolis to commit some support to a preacher in Macon. Coincidentally, Donald had gotten the church where he worked in Houston to agree to send some support as well. Everything was fully set in place when they located a man to move there.

Are You Awake Yet, Lewis?

Sure enough, Cecil had convinced them to hire me — sight unseen — and he and Don had raised the necessary support to enable me to go there. And, there I was with my wife and all our earthly belongings, and I was looking for a job! It just so happened that I didn't know I would find a job in a strange, cold place — preaching!

The same day that I realized why Cecil had insisted that I visit him in Missouri, he was pressing me for a response to the church's invitation to work with them. After all, Cecil “had to get back to KC that night!” He felt certain he could wait to leave Macon — long enough to help unload the car and trailer! I had to decide that day.

So, that day, Thursday, I accepted “the invitation” to work with the church in Macon, Missouri. I was fully prepared for the challenge. After all, I already had twelve sermons prepared! I think I had attempted to preach perhaps 20 times in my entire life. Now, I was a “full-time” preacher — according to Cecil!

Because we were so young, Frankie and I were excited when it began to snow on that Saturday afternoon. However, the next morning we had about twelve inches of snow on the ground, my “southern” car refused to start, neither of us could remember the name of a single person in the church there, and we did not have a phone to call a tow truck, nor the money to pay him if he came. Certainly calling a cab was out of the question.

So, in my best “summer” suit and a light overcoat, I started walking to the building. The temperature was in the teens, and it was *only* about a mile and a half to the building. I don't know if you have ever tried to walk a mile and a half in twelve inches of snow, but I do not recommend it. I got to the building, but I was so cold that I could not even speak to the few people who were there.

After several minutes standing over the grate of the coal furnace, I regained my speech enough to ask someone to go to the trailer and bring Frankie to the building. And, thus I began my life as a Gospel Preacher, on the first Sunday of February 1959 — **40 years ago today!**

It hardly seems possible that 40 years have passed since that day. I have worked full-time during those years, ex-

cept for two years when I supported myself while working for another small church. (I was co-owner of a telephone installation company that installed the original long-distance network for MCI, but I preached and taught all my regular classes during that time.) It has been an honor to be supported by God's people, as I have sought through the years to preach what Paul called “*the unsearchable riches of Christ*” (Eph. 3:8).

Today, getting started in preaching is somewhat different. For one thing, you can't raise support from one or two churches. It usually requires 15-20 other churches to help with your support, and getting that support is a daunting task. Many churches now hire young men who are wanting to preach, to work in a training program with their experienced preacher, as the young man learns how to do this work. That sounds preferable to me, after reflecting on my experiences through the years of my early efforts to preach.

A Word To Our Young Men

In closing, let me say a word to our young men. (Will you see that they read this article?) The world needs doctors, accountants, airline pilots, and computer experts. However, *the world also needs to hear the gospel!* We have some fine young men here at Brown Street who love the Lord. Already they have worked to develop their skills in the public functions of the worship. They have made talks in training classes. Are these young men just waiting on their parents — or their brethren — to urge them to consider preaching as a career? Parents, there is no calling so noble as gospel preaching. Your son will make you proud if you join others in encouraging him to preach the word (2 Tim. 4:2). Think about! Even after 40 years, I recommend this life to our young men.

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“Preaching Christ” continued from page 2

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures (1 Cor. 15:1-4).

What Preaching Christ Does Not Mean

Men are confused on what preaching Christ mean. We begin by looking at what preaching Christ does not mean:

A sickly, shallow sentimentalism which merely says,

“Come to Jesus! Come to Jesus!” There is a great deal of this kind of preaching today. It never explains how to come to Jesus nor explains what it means for one to come to Jesus. This message conveys practically nothing of the gospel.

An absence of doctrinal preaching. This is the kind of preaching that some have in mind when they say: (a) Don't preach doctrine; (b) Don't preach on the church; (c) Don't preach on baptism; (d) Don't preach on instrumental music, institutionalism; (e) Don't preach specifically on the sins attacking holy living.

What Preaching Christ Means

Having noticed what preaching Christ does not mean, let us examine what it means to preach Christ.

It means making Christ the center of all our preaching. Whatever doctrines are preached must be preached as emanating from and authorized by the authority of the risen Lord. Preaching on things without relating them to the authority of Christ and one's relationship to him leaves one with bare moral codes and theology or philosophy. Abstract truths cannot save anyone. These are the platitudes preached by many self-help gurus. They may help us re-focus some things in our lives in a positive way, but they can never save a soul.

Preaching Christ means preaching the church. A man once said, “I have attended the meetings there for a week, and I have heard that preacher preach on the church for a week, and tomorrow I am going back to hear him preach Christ.” If men preach on the church as it is revealed in the New Testament, Christ will be preached.

The church is the “bride of Christ” (see John 3:29; Rev. 21:9; 22:17). In comparing the husband/wife relationship to Christ and the church, Paul emphasized that the church is the bride of Christ (Eph. 5:22-32). Christ and his church are one to such a degree that one who persecutes the church persecutes Christ (Acts 8:1-4; 9:4). The church is the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23). How can one separate Christ from his body? The church was purchased by Christ's blood (Acts 20:28). To try to preach about the church separated from the Christ would result in some kind of religious institution, but without the vitality in it that Christ can give.

Preaching Christ means preaching salvation. Sometimes when men preach the conditions for salvation through the shed blood of Christ, men accuse them of preaching salvation by works. When Peter told the people on Pentecost what to do to be saved, he was preaching Christ (Acts 2:38). When Philip told the Samaritans how to be added to the kingdom, he was preaching Christ (Acts 8:12-13). To preach baptism without connection to Christ would be foolish, misguided, and wrong. We preach baptism: (a) As a

type of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-4); (b) As authorized by the authority of Christ (Matt. 28:18); (c) As the means of our coming into fellowship with Christ (Matt. 28:18-20; Gal. 3:26-27).

Preaching Christ means preaching holiness. In 1 Corinthians, Paul expressed his determination to preach nothing but Christ and him crucified (1 Cor. 2:1-5). Yet, his preaching involved a call to repentance (1 Cor. 6:9-11; 5:1-11). When Paul preached to Felix about righteousness, temperance, and the judgment to come, he was preaching Christ (Acts 24:25). We preach a holiness that is related to Christ. We should be holy because God the Father and Christ are holy (1 Pet. 1:14-16). We should be holy because our sins grieve the heart of God (Eph. 4:30). We preach a newness of life that comes because of one's union with Christ (Eph. 4:17-22). We preach a holiness that involves dedicating one's body as a living sacrifice to Christ (Rom. 12:1-2). Consequently, when we preach on such things as the following, we are preaching Christ: (a) Fornication, adultery, lasciviousness; (b) Bitterness, anger, wrath; (c) Strife, seditions, heresies; (d) Divorce and remarriage; (e) Gambling; (f) Drunkenness, revelry.

Preaching the unity of the church. We come into a common fellowship in the one body of Christ (Eph. 2:16). If God would not tolerate a Jewish church and a Gentile church in the first century, we need not think that he will tolerate the religious divisions that presently exist. When we preach unity in the one church, we are preaching Christ. The “one body” is the body of Christ! When we emphasize to men that the grounds of our unity rest on the authority of Christ, we are preaching Christ. To the degree that men preach another gospel, they disturb churches (Gal. 1:6-7). Division comes when men are exalted above Christ (1 Cor. 4:6). When we exalt Christ and his word as the grounds of our unity, we are preaching Christ.

Our Teaching Must Be In All Wisdom (Col. 1:27)

There are some things said about how we are to preach that should be respected.

- It should be done in love (Eph. 4:15).
- It should be done in proportion to how much men are able to hear (Mark 4:33).
- It should be fitted to the condition of the men who are taught (1 Thess. 5:14-15).

We recognize the failures of using poor wisdom in the dissemination of the Christian message. However, one thing needs to be emphasized: *“The truth presented in love does not have the ability to drive away honest hearted men.”*

The Motive of Our Preaching

The purpose of preaching is simple: “that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus” (Col. 1:28).

- Our purpose is not to win a religious argument. We want to save a soul.
- Our purpose is not to show that I am right.
- Our purpose is not to impose some church established code of conduct on men.

Keeping our objective in mind is essential for the gospel message coming across in the spirit of love as it is intended for non-Christians and Christians alike.

Conclusion

Let us always keep Christ the central focus of our preaching. We should not use the adage, "Let's just preach Christ," to excuse ourselves from the plain obligation expressed by Paul: "For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). Because Paul had preached the whole counsel of God, he was able to say, "Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men" (Acts 20:26). So long as we withhold from men anything they need to hear, we cannot make the same statement.

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Preachers Needed

Foster, Oklahoma: The Mt. View church of Christ is seeking a full-time preacher. The average attendance is between 35-40. They can provide \$1000 a month in support. If interested, please contact Larry Anderson, 580-432-5407 or Mike James, 580-657-2428.

Uhrichsville, Ohio: The church of Christ in Uhrichsville is looking for a full-time preacher. Partial support will be provided. Sunday morning attendance averages 30-35. Population in the area is about 7000. If interested, please contact Roger Rummell at 740-254-4066 or write to the Church of Christ, 638 Parrish St., Uhrichsville, OH 44683.

Blackfoot, Idaho: The church at Blackfoot is looking for a full-time preacher. Partial outside support will be required. Danny F. Thompson who has been there for 13 years has decided to give up full-time preaching due to health reasons. He will remain there to assist in any way he can. The church is small in number, but large in faith, love, and commitment. If you are interested in this work, please contact Ray Mitchell, 105 N. Prouse, Blackfoot, ID 83221 (208-785-6653) E-mail: mitchell.rgt@juno.com or Tom Mitchell, 838 W. 100S., Blackfoot, ID 83221 (208-684-4904), E-mail: tomme@ida.net.

Lebanon, Indiana: The church in Lebanon, Indiana is looking for a full-time preacher. The congregation averages 25-30 members. Lebanon is about 30 miles northwest of Indianapolis. Partial support will be needed. If interested, please contact Keith McDaniel, 214 N. Ann St., Lebanon, IN, 765-482-4370.



Larry R. DeVore, P.O.Box 313, Medina OH 44258: Since my last report, we have had two ladies to be restored, two families to place membership with us, and one brother "marked" as unfaithful. The first Lord's day in April was our fifth anniversary of moving into our new meeting house. If you are traveling through northeast Ohio, stop and worship with us.

Pews For Sale

The 10th Street church in Columbus, Indiana has 32 solid white oak, 16' long pews for sale. Twenty-six of them have the seat and back padded; six of them have only the seat padded. The padding is in a solid blue color. The pews are in excellent condition. They are asking \$25/foot, negotiable. If interested, contact Bill Grant at home, 812-376-8333, or at work, 812-377-7715, or E-mail: grantmben@juno.com.

Weldon Warnock Moving to Scottsville, Kentucky

Weldon Warnock has moved to Scottsville, Kentucky to work with the Gallatin Road congregation. His address is: 87 Ormond Dr., Scottsville, KY 42614, 502-237-9514. He had been in Beckley, WV for about ten years working with the Carriage Dr. church. Jeff Belknap will be moving to Beckley the first of May to work with the church there.

Strict, Conservative Churches Growing

"Strict churches are experiencing the greatest growth, according to new research by sociology professor William J. 'Beau' Weston of Center College in Danville, Kentucky. Weston, a ruling elder at Danville Presbyterian Church, identifies a strict church as one that has a clear, authoritative doctrine, rigorous religious practices, and demanding membership requirements.

". . . 'Liberal churches that work hard to accommodate the secular world by offering a refined, intellectual, reasonable faith keep losing people to the even more reasonable pleasures of the newspaper, the golf course, and the warm bed" (*Christianity Today*, [April 5, 1999], 15).