



Influence and Example

Lewis Willis

I was surprised when I discovered that only one Bible passage uses the word “influence” (Job 38:31). Even there very little is said of it. Yet, *influence* is a mighty force in the affairs of men. I deem it beneficial for us all to reflect upon our *influence* and *example* upon those whose lives we touch.

Probably the passage of Scripture that comes to mind with most of us is Matthew 5:13-16. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, “Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” Two comparisons or metaphors are used by the Lord in this passage: *salt* and *light*. Salt is a blessing when it retains its saltiness. Light is a blessing when it shines.

Salt

“Ye are the salt of the earth.” This statement came to signify a compliment in the eyes of men: “People like that are the salt of the earth” (Wm. Barkley, *Commentary on Matthew* I:114). Salt has at least three qualities worthy of note.

1. Purifies. The Roman world in which Jesus lived regarded salt as the purest of all things. If Christians are going to be salt in the world, they must be *examples* of purity. The world lowers its standards of honesty, diligence at work, and morality. By contrast, the Christian holds forth and exemplifies purity in speech, in actions, and in thought. The Christian does not withdraw himself from the world, he keeps “himself unspotted from the world” (Jas. 1:27). The apostle John wrote: “And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (1 John 3:3). Our world desperately needs the salt of purity radiating in the lives of God’s people.

2. Preserves. A second quality of
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Two Young Men Baptized

Mike Willis

I recently conducted a meeting in which two young men were baptized on Thursday night prior to the services beginning. It was the highlight of a good meeting. On Friday night when the meeting came to a close, as the father of the two young men came out I said, "This will be a meeting that you will never forget." He agreed and then began to thank me for my part in their baptism. I have long thought that most of those who are baptized in a meeting are baptized because of the work done beforehand by those who influence one's life. Therefore, I minimized the part that I had played and expressed my appreciation for the influence of the mother and dad in the conversion of their sons. He protested saying, "You don't understand what part you played." He then proceeded to relate the following story, which I have supplemented to make it more understandable.

He stated that he came to worship services on the Sunday morning the meeting started with the van loaded with camping gear to take his sons to a Boy Scout camp that afternoon. The father and sons were expecting to be away through Tuesday night. It just so happened that I preached a sermon on Sunday morning entitled "What It Takes To Survive." The gist of the lesson was to make some points about what it takes for a person to survive spiritually. The first point in the lesson is "Commitment." In this point, I develop the idea that one must love the Lord above everything else in the world. Jesus said that this is the greatest commandment: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment" (Matt. 22:37-38). To emphasize this point even further, I quoted and commented on Luke 9:57-62 which reads as follows:

And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.

see "Two Baptized" on p. 505



What Will It Take?

Stan Cox

In Matthew 26:16 we read, “For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” This passage teaches the reality of “selling our souls” and departing the faith. In life it often takes something drastic to get us to change our practices. We put up with a few extra pounds, until the doctor tells us it is going to lead to heart disease, stroke, cancer, or sugar problems. We endure disrepair around our house until we are told that major structural problems will arise if we do not do the needed maintenance. A person ignores the invitation and refuses to be baptized until some tragic event happens to humble him. Why do we behave this way? The Lord warns us of the real danger of selling our souls. I am afraid that many may be doing this spiritually today, when it comes to standing up for the truth at all costs. Consider these points:

What Will it Take For Some to Take a Stand on These Issues?

1. The Day/Age Theory? This error strikes at the core of biblical reliability. Some do not see any “big deal” about it. It ignores the plain teaching of Exodus 20:11: “For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.” Six literal twenty-four hour days is what the Bible teaches. Will it take someone denying the inspiration of the Bible before some slow-minded brethren will see the dangers of this teaching?

2. Romans 14 and Fellowship. Some naive brethren are teaching that “doctrinal matters” can be placed within the teaching of Romans 14. Which doctrinal matters matter? Only the ones they choose? Why not all doctrinal matters? What will it take for some to see the silliness and danger of this view? Can we fellowship error on any doctrinal issue and please God?

Brethren, will someone in the church have to start teaching that we can fellowship those who have not been baptized for remission of sins in order for brethren who are slow to “draw lines” to realize the end of their Romans 14 theories and start defending the truth? I hope not.

3. Immodesty. Will it take someone’s young lady being molested for some to see the scriptural teachings on modesty? Will they think teaching along these lines is narrow-minded and judgmental, when it affects them and their children personally?

4. Drunkenness and Social Drinking. 1 Peter 4 and Galatians 5:19-21 teach that a Christian should abstain from alcohol to any degree socially.

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Will it take a child getting killed or hurt or hurting someone or killing them for many to see and understand what the Lord said in Proverbs 20:1; 23:29-35. Will it have to go this far for some to change their ways and their teachings? I pray not.

5. Divisiveness and Strife. Certainly the Lord commanded in 1 Corinthians 1:10 and in John 17 that we should all be one and do our best to speak the same things. However, we must balance this with the reality that there is not a bear behind every bush. Everything is not wrong and sinful, The Lord did allow for us to have varying views on matters of personal scruples (Rom. 14:1-6). He goes on to say in verse 19 that we should “follow after the things which make for peace and things wherewith one may edify another.” We dare not be extremist in either direction (adding to or taking from). There is a balance that is scriptural, and we must find it. Some are much too tolerant and are hesitant to draw any lines of fellowship, while others are so myopic that they may well end up fellowshiping only themselves and their family. Both extremes are sinful. Will it take the dividing or splitting of church after church for some to see the futility of being divisive, contentious, and a sower of discord among brethren? If truth divides, then that division is good, but if division occurs because of sinful selfish opinion binding then that is sinful and those who sow that type of discord will be lost.

6. Evangelism. Will it take a neighbor or family dying for some to wake up to the command of the great commission (Mark 16:15, 16)? Brethren, people are dying in sin every day and what are we doing to sow the seed in their hearts? If they do not obey the word that is their problem, if we do not tell what we know to tell, that is our problem and we will be lost for “knowing to do good and doing it not” (Jas. 4:17).

7. Praying. What will it take for us to pray as we should (Jas. 1:5, 6)? Will it take tragedy? Will it take illness? Read 1 Thessalonians 5:17. “The effectual fervent prayer of the righteous man avails much” (Jas. 5:16).

A simple, elementary understanding of the Old Testa-

ment reveals that things had to get really out of hand for Israel and Judah to see the error of their way. The prophets were sent to them to warn them of the dangers they were heading for, but they refused to hear the prophets. They killed them and made fun of them when they tried to give the message of God to a rebellious people. You see, the Israelites fell because they did not believe what had happened to others could happen to them. They thought that since they were God’s chosen people, that somehow God would not punish them for their disobedience. They refused to see the trends that were pointing to their apostasy. Many do the same today.

We need to understand that the beginning of a trend does not necessarily mean apostasy is here yet, but it is certainly on the way if warning are not heeded. I fear that the winds of apostasy are blowing among brethren today. Many do not want to heed the warning signs. Some believe that if we just “accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative” that strength and faithfulness will come. Some are unwilling to draw any lines of fellowship on current issues, while others are too quick to presume error, where there is none.

What will it take for we, as brethren, to see the errors that are static among us? Some, sadly, may never see them. They have developed an insipid attitude of “live and let live” and “let’s not judge.” These are those who cry, “peace, peace when there is no peace” (Jer. 6:14). The church at Laodicea in Revelation 3 had an attitude of the world. They stood for some good things, but they were tepid and lifeless and made God sick. Ephesus “left her first love” (Rev. 2:1), the church at Pergamos was tolerating those who taught error and the Lord told them to “repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth” (Rev. 2:16). Thyatira had some who taught error and they were told to repent (Rev. 2:21-29). Sardis had a few names who had not defiled their garments (Rev. 3:4). In many churches today the same problems exist. Some brethren are condoning others in sin because they do not want to be courageous and speak out against worldliness and false doctrines of every sort. They must repent if they want to please the Lord. It is also time that we in the body of Christ not just stand up for what is right but also “reprove” that which is wrong (Eph 5:11). Silence is acceptance and “bids godspeed.”

It is not easy to follow a position of error to its ultimate conclusion. Years ago a brother wrote a great article about “brethren drifting.” Some did not want to see it and left the faith, others heeded it, awoke, and took a stand for truth. Indeed, what will it take for some today to wake up and take a stand? Pray brethren!

From Sound Words, January 2003

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by Randy Blackaby

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“Seeing Ahead by Looking Back”

(6)

H. Osby Weaver

“Truth,” it is said, “is the first casualty of a war.” This

is not only true in civil wars, but apparently true in spiritual realms as well. When men begin to apostatize from the faith, they will be found misrepresenting and castigating those who oppose them in their departure. This was seen in 1958 in an article labeled “Another Gospel” that appeared in many church bulletins of those who were departing from the Scriptures with reference to the organization and work of the church. Instead of attempting to justify their position from the Bible, at times, they chose to defame those who questioned their views. By looking at what they said back then, we should be able to see where we are headed today by looking at where they are today. — HOW)

Another Gospel

“According to the reprints which we have seen,” the author of the article said: “I recently received a tract from a preacher who opposes the Children’s Homes we have among us. The conclusion of the tract was that you cannot help a needy person of any kind, man, woman, or child, unless they are members of the congregation where you worship, or members of a congregation that has more needy than they themselves can care for.

“This clears up some difficult points. Now I know why the priest and the Levite passed by on the other side in Luke 10. They both had received copies of this tract. The priest came along and saw the poor wounded man in the ditch, looked at him, pulled out his church directory and said, ‘I can’t help him, he’s not a member of my congregation.’ The Levite came along, looked at him and said to himself, ‘I know him. He is a member over at X congregation. He’s a good faithful man, but I happen to know that X congregation doesn’t have more needy than they can care for, so I can’t help him.’

“The poor Samaritan hadn’t ‘received’ one of these tracts and just didn’t know any better than to ‘help’ the poor man.

“What a wonderful feeling it must be to lie down at

night with a clear conscience that I have no obligation of any kind to help anyone in need that isn’t a member of my own little group. Why, if I’m careful as to who I take in, I may never have to help anybody! A most wholesome doctrine, and about as full of comfort as ‘faith only.’ What a conception of Christianity!

The purity of the Lord’s church means too much to me to be concerned about who is more adept at sarcasm and cute remarks. The author of this article continued: “Peter, at the house of Cornelius said, ‘God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him.’ He evidently had not read the tract either.”

I am not acquainted with the author of this tract, hence I would be an incompetent witness for him. Neither am I acquainted with the tract to which he refers, but I am aware of the ridiculous things that have been written and absurd positions which have been taken in our time, and in spite of all this, I am going to stick my neck away out and tell the brother who wrote “Another Gospel” that I do not believe that he received a tract that reached any such conclusions which he ascribes and call upon him to produce the tract for examination. The conclusion which he attributes to the tract smacks more of misrepresentation on his part than it does of error on the part of the tract. It sounds too much like the hackneyed charge that is being bandied about today that certain ones do not believe in taking care of poor little orphans.

If the brother will produce the tract that reaches the conclusions which he claims this one teaches, we will join him in opposing such pleas and will make as full and complete apology as we know how to make for having questioned his integrity. But if he refuses to produce such a tract, it will only heighten our suspicions. If he has no such tract, then he should repent and apologize for lying. If this he refuses to do, we can only exclaim with him, “What a conception of Christianity!”

This brother did not quote from the tract — not one line. He merely reported that he had such a tract and that certain conclusions were set forth. Then he went on to attack such conclusions. Why did so many of his persuasion reprint his attack? Could it be that the cause which they have espoused is so languid and frail in light of the Scriptures that they welcome anything true or false which seems to lift up the hands that hang down? Is their dislike of their brethren with whom they disagree so acute that they will grab anything that seems to support their position without regard to facts?

We would like to ask the brother some questions regarding this tract that he says he has received:

1. Does the tract say that the preacher that wrote it opposes the children’s homes among us, or does he op-

pose churches building and maintaining them? There is a difference you know.

2. Did the tract conclude that an individual Christian cannot help a needy person unless he is a member of the congregation where he worships, or did the tract say that the church in all New Testament days never helped any but poor saints? There is a difference between the church and an individual Christian, you know? 1 Timothy 5:16 sets this forth.

If this brother received such a tract and if he will reveal who this false teacher is that wrote such a tract, we will help him oppose him. On the other hand, if he has no such tract, then we must oppose him as the one who is false.

No response to this response of mine was ever made.

Worshiping While On Vacation

Kyle Pope

As you travel from place to place the next time you’re on vacation think about some reasons it is important to take the time to find a faithful group of Christians to worship with while you are away.

It encourages other Christians. All over the world Christians struggle with faithfulness, both as individuals and as congregations. Especially in smaller congregations it can offer a real “shot in the arm” to brethren to meet those who love the Lord from other places.

It teaches our children. Taking the time to find a local church to worship with teaches our children who travel with us that while vacations may be fun there is also a place for the Lord in our times of relaxation.

It teaches those who are with us. Often vacations involve time with friends or family who do not share our faith. It can have a strong impact on those we love to see us happily and anxiously set aside our entertainment for awhile to focus on spiritual things.

It edifies us. Brethren in other places are doing great work. They have great insights, energy and zeal. Learning from their strengths and weaknesses can help us better serve the congregation we work with and (in some cases) be more thankful for what we have.

It pleases the Lord. When the Lord instructs us in Hebrews 10:24, 25 to “. . . consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching” (NKJV), he is talking about the way we should live our lives all year round. We should never adopt a mentality that looks for the “minimum daily requirements” that fulfills these instructions. While worship on the Lord’s day with the local church where we regularly worship is important, that is not all that Hebrews 10:24, 25 addresses. Mid-week studies, gospel meetings in the area, and worship services in other places, are all assemblies of God’s people striving to grow. We must remember that fellowship with the Lord means that we have fellowship with his people, whether locally or in other places (1 John 1:1-4).

8927 Widmer Rd., Lenexa, Kansas 66215

“Who Did Hinder You . . . ?”

Edward O. Bragwell, Sr.

False teachers seldom hit the church with a frontal attack. They usually begin covertly long before becoming overt. A wolf in sheep’s clothing may secretly introduce his little leaven and let it do its initial work with as little fanfare as possible.

“Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth?” (Gal. 5:7). “You were running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth?” (NIV).

These words, addressed to the churches of Galatia (1:2), suggest the ease with which good churches can be hindered. In chapter 1, Paul expressed his surprise, not just that they were turned away, but that it happened so soon. “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel” (1:6).

Paul did not ask, “*What* did hinder you?”, but “*Who* did hinder you?” When *something* goes wrong with a church, *somebody* causes it. It may not always be possible to positively identify the culprit by name, but he exists. When the *who* can be identified, he needs to be dealt with sternly by brethren (Gal. 2:4, 5; Tit. 3:10; Rom. 16:17, 18). While many may become involved, usually there is one or two key persons at the center of the unrest — either provoking or enticing the others to get involved. Identifying and dealing firmly with the key person(s) will go a long way in solving the unrest caused by the problem. At Antioch, Paul had to deal with a problem caused by Peter’s hypocrisy (Gal. 2:11-21). Now, Peter was not the only hypocrite in the crowd: “And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy”

(Gal 2:13, NKJV). Was Paul unfair in singling out Peter for this public rebuke? No. Peter was the ringleader and core of the problem. He was the principle *who* of that problem.

Paul indicates that while he knew *what* the trouble was in the Galatian churches, he may have not specifically known *who* the troublers were. Even though Paul may not have known *who* they were, he did not try to mask how he felt about them — whoever they were. “The one who is throwing you into confusion will pay the penalty, whoever he may be. . . . As for those agitators, I wish they would go the whole way and emasculate themselves!” (Gal. 5:10, 12, NIV). Oh, can’t you just hear some whining brethren complaining as to why Paul could not “have been more loving, understanding, and patient” toward these agitating brethren, even though they had thrown the church into confusion? No, this was no time to be tentative or timid, the churches of Galatia were in trouble — troubled by three timeless hindrances to the purity, peace, and progress of churches.

False Doctrine

The false doctrine that said “you must be circumcised and keep the law” (Acts 15:1, 24) troubled many of the first century churches. The churches at Jerusalem, Antioch, Corinth, Rome, and possibly others were disturbed by it as well as Galatians (5:1-6, 11). Like most doctrinal error, it worked like leaven and

threatened the whole lump (Gal. 5:9). A little leaven, secretly and strategically placed in a lump of dough, may go unnoticed for a while. Even when it is noticed it may seem too little and insignificant to be concerned about at the time. However, if left unchecked, it will eventually spread through the whole lump.

False teachers seldom hit the church with a frontal attack. They usually begin covertly long before becoming overt. A wolf in sheep's clothing may secretly introduce his little leaven and let it do its initial work with as little fanfare as possible. "False brethren *unawares* (secretly brought in) their doctrine (Gal. 2:4). The idea is that they "smuggled" (*Strong's Concordance*) or "infiltrated" (NIV) it into the church. Peter also spoke of the secretive work of false teachers (2 Pet. 2:1). Once the leaven is in, it will continue to work until it destroys the church — unless someone is wise enough to spot it and courageous enough to deal with it decisively.

Few churches are destroyed and/or divided by words or deeds that are publicly initiated. Error is usually introduced privately — private conversations, home classes, and counseling sessions — often designedly kept out of ear shot of seasoned veterans of the Cross in the congregation. After enough disciples have been indoctrinated to form a power-base, the chief advocates then feel confident enough to spring it on the whole church. The leaven is now out in the open, but it has already done its major damage. The whole church either embraces the doctrine or, as is more often the case, the church divides. During the last century we saw churches disturbed by premillennialism and institutionalism in this fashion. We are seeing signs that the same pattern is being repeated in the divorce and remarriage issue.

Once divisive teachers have gone public or have been exposed, they usually try to reinforce their positions

by attempting to destroy the influence of faithful, knowledgeable, and respected brethren, who stand in their way to gaining the preeminence that they, in their selfish ambition, desire (cf. 3 John 9-11). With their "smooth words and flattering speech" (Rom. 16:18, NKJV), they have won the hearts of enough naive brethren to feel confident enough to openly attack those who stand in the way of their ambitions. Often whole churches are turned against godly men, like Paul, who have unselfishly built up the church and justly earned their respect by toil and sacrifice. Factious men are good at stirring up a hornets nest and then skillfully shifting the blame for the confusion to those who, for truth's sake, must step in and sharply oppose them.

Those whom Paul called, "false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ" (2 Cor. 11:13), had apparently succeeded in turning many of the Corinthians against Paul (2 Cor. 10-12). Paul laments, "the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved" (2 Cor. 12:15). While pleading with them "by the meekness and gentleness of Christ" (10:1), he did not step aside and let them have their way. He directs some of his strongest words toward those who were getting carried away with these teachers. He asks them to bear with him in a little foolishness (11:1) as he defended himself against their unfounded charges. With biting irony, he writes:

For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him . . . I say again, Let no man think me a fool; if otherwise, yet as a fool receive me, that I may boast myself a little. That which I speak, I speak it not after the Lord, but as it were foolishly, in this confidence of boasting. Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also. For ye suffer fools gladly, seeing ye

yourselves are wise. For ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you, if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you on the face. I speak as concerning reproach, as though we had been weak. Howbeit whereinsoever any is bold, (I speak foolishly,) I am bold also (2 Cor. 11:4, 16-21).

Feeling the pinch of rebuke, brethren who are being corrected often try to relieve the pressure by charging those who are correcting them and other brethren with wrong doing. Not wanting to appear self-righteous, the rebukers are often hesitant to deny their charges. This leaves the one who leveled the charges with a sense of victory in the confrontation and feeling less a need to correct his wrong — for after all, at least in his mind, he has shown that his critics in the church are just as guilty of wrong as he is. Paul was not willing to allow the Corinthians this luxury. He knew he had done them no wrong and flatly said so: "Receive us; we have wronged no man, we have corrupted no man, we have defrauded no man" (2 Cor. 7:2). We need more men of the character and courage of Paul to deal with those who are sinning against the Lord and hindering his churches, without letting them shift attention away from their mischief to the faults of others — real or imagined. One is not going to be helped until he faces up to his unfaithfulness and ungodliness — regardless of what anyone else has done or has not done.

Discord

After dealing sharply with false teachers, using some of the sharpest language in all Scripture, Paul now warns the Galatians against another hinderance — internal discord: "For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of

another (Gal 5:13-15).

While false doctrine is at the root of much of the strife and division among churches, it is by no means the cause of all of it. Brethren are quite adept at generating and perpetuating internal strife by other means. One does not have to teach a destructive doctrine to be a divisive or factious man (cf. Tit. 3:10). Of the original word, *hairesikos*, Vine says, “causing division . . . not necessarily ‘heretical,’ in the sense of holding false doctrine.” While one who introduces into the church unscriptural doctrines and practices is certainly a divisive man, generating strife, there are other ways to stir up trouble. One can generate strife with his sinful *disposition* as well as his false *positions*.

One may create discord with his contentious disposition. There is a vast difference in contending for the faith and just being plain contentious. We can abuse that militant spirit needed to “contend earnestly for the faith” (Jude 3; cf. Gal. 2:5, 11-14) by approaching every disagreement, no matter how minor, insignificant, or inconsequential with the same degree of militancy. While it is absolutely necessary to contend earnestly for the faith, it is not necessary to turn every point of discussion that might arise among brethren into a major issue within the congregation.

There is such a thing as being “obsessed with disputes and arguments over words” (1 Tim. 6:4, 5, NKJV) or “unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions, and constant friction between men of corrupt mind” (NIV).

Paul urges Timothy to “avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife” (2 Tim 2:23). He gives a similar admonition to Titus (Tit. 3:9).

One may destroy unity with his overbearing and never bending disposition (cf. Eph. 4:1-3). If one has a forceful personality and is also inclined to be highly opinionated, self-willed, and unwilling to yield, he will generate strife sooner or later. Any over-bearing and/or self-willed member hurts himself and the church, but if he is allowed to lead, he may make havoc of the church. One with this type of disposition should never be allowed to serve as an elder (Tit. 1:7; 1 Pet. 5:3) — or any other position of influence for that matter. He will cause trouble sooner or later.

One may create unrest with a zeal untempered by knowledge and good judgment (cf. Rom. 10:1). If one’s

zeal for God runs ahead of his knowledge, wisdom, and judgment, he can create more racket than a dozen wise men can quite. He is like a car equipped with a souped up engine, oversized fuel tank and reinforced body — with no steering system nor brakes. Such a one often has his own idealistic concept of how things should be and tries to push and shove the brethren into his visionary mold. Even if his view is correct, he needs to learn to *gently teach* the brethren into conformity (cf. 2 Tim. 2:23-26).

Such zealots, in their over-heated enthusiasm to get on with things, often rush into matters with little or no forethought or preparation. Their method is to act now, think later. In their fervor and self-confidence coupled with ineptness, they usually tear up far more than they fix. It is this kind of mentality that James is countering when he warns against many becoming teachers (Jas. 3:1-12).

One may cause problems with a meddlesome disposition. (Read about busybodies in 2 Thess. 3:11; 1 Tim. 5:13; 1 Pet. 4:16.) If this disposition happens to be blended with the overly zealous personality described above, then stand back and watch the fireworks! A busybody tends to *inject himself* into every problem he can find among the brethren, thinking he must instantly solve it without regard to the nature of the problem. He cannot see, while some problems can and must be solved immediately, before they have time to do irreparable damage, others are less urgent and menacing and should be left alone — giving time for long-term spiritual growth to solve them. Too, before one injects himself into *every* problem he spots among his brethren and makes it his problem he needs to remember: “He who passes by and meddles in a quarrel not his own is like one who takes a dog by the ears” (Prov. 26:17, NKJV).

He may even infuse himself into problems that have been dormant for years. I have known some preacher (or other member) to come into a congregation and learn of an old problem that brethren, who were on the scene at the time, had done their best to solve. Because of the complexity of the problem, they may have not have been able to resolve it ideally, but were able to reach a workable solution that would leave the brethren at peace without compromising the gospel. Now this intruder, armed with an unshakable faith in his ability and a few fragments of information about the background, details, and complexity of the situation, jumps right in and proceeds to impose his ideal (?) solution. (Brethren, as much as we might like it, all problems

and solutions are not simple.) It is not only highly unlikely that he will be able to help the affair at this late date, he is far more likely to get brethren to biting and devouring one another again over things that they probably would never thought about again, had they not been reminded.

One can generate strife with an overly talkative disposition. “In the multitude of words sin is not lacking, but he who restrains his lips is wise” (Prov 10:19). “So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath” (Jas. 1:19). Constant critics, gossips, talebearers, can cause endless strife within a church. The book of Proverbs tells of the damage that such can do:

A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter (11:13).

A froward man soweth strife: and a whisperer separateth chief friends (16:28).

A fool’s lips enter into contention, and his mouth calleth for strokes (18:6).

He that goeth about as a talebearer revealeth secrets: therefore meddle not with him that flattereth with his lips (20:19).

Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth. As coals are to burning coals, and wood to fire; so is a contentious man to kindle strife. The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly (26:20-22).

Worldliness

The third hindrance that Paul deals with in Galatians 5 is *worldliness* — the lusts or works of the flesh (vv. 16-26, cf. 1 John 2:15-17). These things mentioned spring from a carnal mind rather than a spiritual one (vv. 16, 17). We might categorize the “works of the flesh” as follows:

1. Worldly sensuality — Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness.
2. Worldly cults — Idolatry, witchcraft.
3. Worldly dispositions — Hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, envy.
4. Worldly strife — Strife, sedition, heresy, murder.
5. Worldly pleasures — Drunkenness, revelry.

All of these hinder the church when found among its members. Again, “a little leaven leavens the whole lump” if left unchecked (cf. 1 Cor. 5:6). Those who have been redeemed by the precious blood of the Lamb must live above this level.

How well are we running, individually and collectively? Are we helping or hindering the church? Are we guilty of false teaching, generating strife, or worldliness? Are we allowing ourselves to be adversely affected by those who are? We all need to reexamine our positions and dispositions from time to time lest we become a hindrance to the congregation and the Lord’s cause in general.

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Big Problem

Aaron Erhardt

The church of Christ is the one and only church that Christ promised to build (Matt. 16:18). It is called “the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15). Its mission is spiritual in nature, not carnal. However, many local congregations are preaching and teaching the truth, while neglecting other areas of importance.

Mediocrity

Picture yourself as a first-time visitor at the congregation you attend. What is your impression? Was your visit appealing or appalling? Allow me to illustrate:

John and Sue have just moved into the area, and are looking for a church to attend. They see a church of Christ nearby and decide to visit. They arrive at 9:20 on Sunday morning, thinking they are ten minutes early. They soon realize that the sign needs to be changed to 10:00. They sit patiently in the car and wait for someone to finally unlock the door.

As they approach the building, they notice that the grass was cut yesterday — good thing, because it was badly needed. They can tell because nobody raked, and the front lawn looks like a hayfield.

As they walk in the door, a man greets them with a melancholy “Good morning” and then quickly turns away. Another man stares at them from a distance. They both grab a bulletin from the rack. The bulletin has a line through it because the copier hasn’t been serviced in a while. They slowly head toward the auditorium.

At 10:04 a man finally walks to the pulpit and begins reading the announcement sheet. He mumbles so softly that John and Sue have no idea what is being said.

After the announcements, another man walks forward to lead the congregation in prayer. It takes him a minute because he sat two pews from the back. After the prayer, the song leader, wearing a wrinkled Chicago Bulls shirt, stands up and says, “I put the wrong number on the board, please turn your songbooks to page 64, not 67.”

After a few songs, it is time for the Lord’s supper. Three men get up from various parts of the auditorium. One of them nods to a fourth man, who either forgot he was scheduled to participate or was needed in someone’s absence. The fourth man, in a brief panic, drops his songbook on the floor, gets up hesitantly, and follows the other three to the front.

The service continues in equally haphazard fashion. When the sermon is delivered, John and Sue struggle to stay awake during a message that is long on time and short on content. When the invitation is given, no one responds. After another prayer, the service is over.

Is that reminiscent of the congregation you attend? Unfortunately, many local congregations can relate to that illustration. That’s because they no longer strive to give their best to God. Do we not know that this mediocre attitude is detrimental to church growth? It sends the wrong “message” to visitors, long before the “message” is ever proclaimed from the pulpit!

It is very important for us to realize that mediocrity breeds indifference, but quality attracts. When a person in the community comes to a congregation and the grass is not cut, the paint is chipping off the walls, the bulletin boards have missionary letters tacked on top of each other dating back to 1974, the members are sloppily dressed, the children’s class has no teacher, and the service is slipshod, not only is it unworthy of Jesus Christ, it also negates our efforts to evangelize.

Excellence

There is a big difference between doing a “pretty good job” on something and doing it with excellence. Excellence takes a lot more time and effort, but the results are clearly evident. It is time that members of the Lord’s church raise their standards and strive for excellence!

5300 Skylight Dr., Louisville, Kentucky 40258 chadaaron01@msn.com

“Whosoever Looketh Upon A Woman . . .”

Jim McDonald

In Matthew 5:27-28 Jesus warns against lust. Again he quotes the Ten Commandments: “Ye have heard that it was

said, Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, that every one that looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.” The passage quoted is from Exodus 20:14. God regards one guilty of adultery who lusts after a woman in his heart. What is it to lust, to admire a woman’s attractiveness? To be sexually aroused by looking at her? Not necessarily. Potiphar’s wife made overt efforts to seduce Joseph. So bold was she that Joseph fled from the house lest he succumb to her advances. What man would not be “aroused” by such a woman? Was Joseph guilty of sin? No, his flight from the site of temptation lest he sin proves that he had not “lusted” after Potiphar’s wife. To lust is to be of the mind set that should opportunity arise, one would commit adultery with the woman he lusted after. Infrequently the question arises, “Suppose the man does purpose adultery and God regards him as guilty of adultery. Does his wife, (if he has one) have a right to put him away and marry another?” It does not. Only God knows the heart, whether actual lust is there or not and whatever one’s feelings toward another may be.

Our law does not try a man for murder because he “hates” a man. While God regards a man who hates his brother as a “murderer,” our law does not and cannot execute him for murder (1 John 3:15). Even should the person whom he hates be murdered, unless he actually killed the other or contributed in one way or another to his death, he is not guilty of murder by the law of our land. A man may purpose a lie, but it is not until he has told his lie that he is a “liar.” Ananias and Sapphira agreed together they would lie about how much they had received for a certain possession they sold (Acts 5:1-2).

When Ananias brought his portion to Peter, the apostle said, “Ananias, why hath Satan filled thy heart to lie to the Holy Spirit, and to keep back part of the price of the land? . . . How is it that thou hast conceived this thing in thy heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God” (Acts 5:3, 4). One is not to conclude from these words that Ananias never actually told Peter the purported lie he intended to. This is another occurrence of expressions described as “not/but”

expressions: a figure of speech in which one part of the statement is made negative to emphasize the more important part, see similar incidents of this in John 6:27, Romans 6:15, and 1 Corinthians 1:17. To get the proper meaning of the statement one may add the word “only” after “not” and “also” after the word “but.” Thus, the statement is properly understood by reading: “You have not (only) lied unto men, but (also) unto God.” Three hours after Ananias had told his lie and had died as a consequence of it, Sapphira brought in her portion. Peter gave her opportunity to tell the truth instead of a lie when he asked, “Tell us whether thou sold the land for so much” (Act 5:8). Peter gave her opportunity to change her story. Because she did not, she suffered the fate of her husband.

Some, reflecting upon what Jesus said, say that should a woman catch her husband looking at pornography, he has given her a right to put him away because he has “lusted” in his heart. “Pornography” is lewdness and uncleanness, but although it may lead to adultery, it is not adultery. The wife caught him in an unclean thing, but she did not catch him in the act of adultery. So, even though a man may have adultery in his heart, because he has not committed adultery he has given his wife no cause to put him away. Remember, if a man is of the notion to commit adultery, he will ultimately do it. Then, and only then, his wife will have just cause to put him away and to marry another.

P.O. Box 155032, Lufkin, Texas 75915-5032 jim_mc@juno.com

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friend.*

Are Your Kids' Words Useless?

Johnie Edwards

According to the October 23, 2002 issue of *The Columbus, Ohio Dispatch*, "Kids' word worthless these days." Let's take a look:

74% Cheated

The newspaper stated that of 12,000 students polled by the Josephson Institute of Ethics, 74 percent admitted to cheating on an exam once in the past year. We need to get to teaching our children that cheating is wrong. We must learn to be honest. Paul taught the Corinthians, "... that ye should do that which is honest" (2 Cor. 13:7).

93% Lied

The article also stated that "ninety three percent confessed to lying to their parents." It's hard to know when to trust folks who lie. Parents must teach their children to tell the truth at any cost. The Ephesians were told, "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another" (Eph. 4:25).

50% Stole

Of the kids surveyed, almost fifty percent acknowledged stealing from a store. Stealing causes stores to have to mark up their merchandise about fifteen percent to cover stealing! Parents need to start teaching their children, while they are young, that stealing is wrong and sinful. A good Scripture to install in our young are these words: "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth" (Eph. 4:28).

Parents To Blame

According to Tom DeCair, a spokesman for the institute stated, "We adults have nobody to blame but ourselves. Parents cheat on taxes, teachers deceive and sleep with their students, corporate CEOs swindle money . . . even priests have violated the trust of children. We are raising today's cheats and thieves to become tomorrow's leaders."

Laws Without Penalties

There can be all kinds of laws about cheating and stealing, but unless the laws are enforced with penalties, the laws are not worth the paper they are written on! "Because

sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" (Eccl. 8:11). In countries where stealing is punished by cutting off a finger, stealing is not a problem!

No Discipline

We live in a society where there is little or no discipline. Schools are not allowed to correct children the old fashioned way and few parents seem to do much correcting at home. Ethical behavior must be enforced at home, in school, and in church. Most churches are afraid to practice discipline as taught in the Bible. The wise man stated, "The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame" (Prov. 29:15). Again it is said, "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction will drive it far from him" (Prov. 22:15). Churches can help the cause by withdrawing "from every brother that walketh disorderly" (2 Thess. 3:6).

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“The Party Line”

David Halbrook

Any departure from the doctrine of Christ must be rejected (2 John 9-11). Error is always, to some degree, discouraging, but as Christians we must fight it with all of the might that God grants us. We can be confident of victory over error, “For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith” (1 John 5:4).

I recently scanned through a bulletin article which was rightly pointing out that the Bible warns of those who will preach in order to earn an earthly reward (2 Pet. 2:3, 14). The author then went on to tell of a young man who once had the desire to preach full-time but changed his mind. His change of mind came “from observing the necessity of following the party line. He hasn’t quit preaching — does it regularly” and also holds a secular job.

There is obviously no shame or disappointment from God in one who works with his hands and preaches also. Paul did this (Acts 18:1-3), however, I do have several questions about “the necessity of following the party line.”

What Is “The Party Line”?

Generally, the reference to “a party line” refers to a particular belief or set of beliefs to which a group of individuals adamantly adhere. Those who, for whatever reason, are not a part of that group, usually believe that the group draws unnecessary lines of fellowship. We are not told in the bulletin what defines this “party line.” If this “party line” refers to following the majority to do evil, that is certainly condemned by God (Exod. 23:2). A few party lines in Scripture are the Israelites at Mount Sinai who offered sacrifices to the golden calf, the majority of the Israelites during the ministry of Isaiah, some Christians in Antioch (who chose to line up with certain brethren to the exclu-

sion of others), and some Christians in Corinth who identified themselves with men (Exod. 32; Isa. 6:13; Gal. 2:11ff.; 1 Cor. 1:10-17). These party lines formed as a result of people not giving proper respect to God’s word. The existence of these party lines did not cause God’s faithful people to fear but rather to fight. Such party lines today need to be boldly opposed.

Sometimes men falsely perceive the existence of a party line. Apparently, as Christianity was being spread, it was viewed by some as merely “a sect” (Acts 24:14). This same attack is often made today by those who will not endure sound doctrine (2 Tim. 4:3).

The denominational world views strict adherence to truth as the formation of a “party line.” When they hear teaching about one body, one faith, or one baptism, they often are embittered by the narrow way. We as Christians know that unity in the one faith is fundamental to the unity of the Spirit (Eph. 4:1-6).

Some forms of liberalism scoff at the alleged “party line” that they label “patternism,” but we know that we are not to conform to this world but rather follow the “pattern of sound words” (Rom. 12:2; 2 Tim. 1:13).

Even some Christians view the God-given responsibility to address and expose error as an attempt to form a “party line,” and they often label such efforts as “unedifying.” In

this case, the charge of “partyism” is false, and the real problem is that the accusers are failing to truly strengthen their brethren and are choosing to ignore erroneous practices and teachings. Timothy was fulfilling his duty to give heed to “godly edification” when he charged “some that they teach no other doctrine” (1 Tim. 1:3-4). The result of an atmosphere of tolerance with persistent error, which is often promoted by those who accuse others of forming “party lines,” is that “the whole lump” is leavened (1 Cor. 5:6).

What Should We Do When We Recognize A “Party Line”?

Maybe someone reading this article feels that a strong party line exists. If so, what ought to be done when someone senses that spiritual danger is active? As ought to be done in all spiritual matters, we all should ask how God has directed his people to identify party lines and how to deal with them.

Jesus repeatedly clashed with one of the most powerful creators of party lines ever — the Pharisees. They were guilty of binding the commandments of men, not content to reside within the “oracles of God,” and Jesus consistently rebuked them and warned others because of that (1 Pet. 4:11; Matt. 15:23; 16:6). Yet, despite their resistance to the truth, Jesus was undaunted in his mission “to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). The example of Jesus teaches us that, for souls to be saved, the party leaders must be confronted, refuted, and exposed while the work of teaching others who are lost continues. It isn’t an “either-or” matter, both need to be done.

In Antioch, the party line, led by the apostle Peter, showed preference to certain brethren because of prejudice and thus separated themselves from the Gentile brethren. Did “observing the necessity of following the party line” deter Paul from speaking out against “the party line”? Thank God

that Paul was not intimidated but broke through to the leader of the line, by open discussion taught him, and brought him back to the truth. It is not surprising that Peter could appreciate the work of his “beloved brother Paul” (2 Pet. 3:16).

Paul did not refuse to speak out even after “observing the necessity of following the party line” of the influential Judaizing teachers who were binding a system of law that had been nailed to the cross (Col. 2:14). In fact, he saw it as his responsibility to expose the party line and try to bring people back to the Christian line (Gal. 5:7).

Paul recognized the party spirit in Corinth as some aligned themselves with men instead of being satisfied with Christ alone (1 Cor. 1:10ff.). From “observing the necessity of following the party line” in Corinth, did Paul decide it would be better to dwell on something more positive and ignore the error in Corinth, instead of addressing the issue with the Corinthians? Or did he decide he would be better off by devoting more time to making tents? No, he lovingly talked to those with whom he had an influence who were caught up in this party spirit for the purpose of turning them away from such an attitude and continuing in his work of preaching the gospel (2 Cor. 2:1-4). If Paul had chosen to be less involved in the work of preaching, he would not have helped to get the Corinthians away from the party spirit.

When we feel that there is a party line, let us follow these examples and have the love to help those who are “entangled again with a yoke of bondage” (Gal. 5:1). The message of the party line(s) needs to be publicly exposed, its error defeated publicly with the sword of the Spirit, and its messengers who refuse to repent, marked (Rom. 16:17). Open discussion and rebuke will bring truth seekers out of any party line and will bring the party spirit to its proverbial knees. There is

disappointment and grief when men remain in error, but there is reason to rejoice and draw encouragement when the truth has been defended and men dwell in it. (2 Cor. 12:21; 2:3-4; Acts 15:30-31).

Can “The Party Line” Be Defeated?

As mentioned earlier, the party spirit has existed among God’s people in the past, and when it exists today, God desires that Christians address it. If a party line forms, composed of a group of people teaching false doctrine, let us remember our duty to “Cry aloud, spare not; lift up your voice like a trumpet; tell My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins” (Isa. 58:1). Any departure from the doctrine of Christ must be rejected (2 John 9-11). Error is always, to some degree, discouraging, but as Christians we must fight it with all of the might that God grants us. We can be confident of victory over error, “For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith” (1 John 5:4).

If a party line forms that is binding where God has not bound, we can be confident that, if we will follow the example of Christ in dealing with the party line, then those who want to follow Christ alone will be drawn to the truth. However, someone must be willing to step forward and fight so that the followers of the party line will recognize the leaven that is working (Matt. 16:6).

Let us be strong in the Lord (Eph. 6:10) and not afraid of any opposition, whether in word or deed, to the truth (Rom. 8:31; Phil. 4:13). Our faith needs to be in God’s word so that we have no fear of the influence of men, knowing that the power of God’s word can overcome it (1 Cor. 2:5; Rom. 1:16). 2 Corinthians 10:5 reminds us that God has given us spiritual weapons for the purpose of “casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself

against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” When a party line similar to the Corinthian party line exists today, every Christian must be prepared to use the whole armor of God to fight its destructive influence. We need to be reminded of the faith of David when he went out against Goliath. Although Goliath had great experience and ability, truth was not on his side, and therefore David knew that Goliath could be defeated (1 Sam. 17).

Do We Please God By Making Our Decisions Based On What Others Are Doing?

It is intimidating to be in the minority, but “perfect love casts out fear” (1 John 4:18). God’s people have always faced the task of being in the minority and being oppressed, even at times by those from within (Acts 20:29-30). If we remember that God is on our side when we boldly stand for truth, no fear can overcome us.

Did Moses reduce his leadership role, when the party line was caught up in worship to the golden calf? No, he recognized the problem, publicly dealt with it, and helped God’s people to turn back to the one standard of truth and One God. Did Elijah step aside when the party line flocked to worship Baal? No, he recognized, challenged, exposed, and defeated the error by truth. Today, we need bold Christians who will not back down from exposing error *wherever* it comes from — whether it is from the mouth of the one who baptized us or the one who raised us (1 Cor. 2:1-5).

No one will be able to force us into any line that stands opposed to truth. Each Christian must have the courage to stand alone among other members, if all others are opposed to truth (Exod. 23:2). Preachers must have the courage to stand alone among all other preachers (Gal. 2:11ff.). Christians must have the courage to stand alone among their friends (1 Pet. 4:4). Christians must have the courage to stand alone among their family (Matt. 10:32ff). The point is, that as a Christian, there will be problems, even among brethren, but that can’t prevent us from serving God with all our heart. This is equally true for every Christian, whether he stands behind the pulpit or sits in the pew. We need to trust in God to provide opportunities for us to

know and understand his will, and then we must have the determination to stand in that truth alone, no matter what direction a party line goes.

What Are The Consequences Of Not Following “The Party Line”?

Is there anything that we should fear and that should cause us to shrink back from standing against evil? If one fears that he won’t be accepted by his fellow men by not following “the party line,” then his priorities are out of line (Gal. 1:10). If it means he won’t be recommended to write articles or hold meetings, then he can make every possible effort in the area where he preaches to bring lost souls to Christ and to edify the brethren. The Jews stopped at nothing to damage the influence of the apostles and prevent the spread of the gospel, but the apostles simply shook the dust off their feet and sought people who desired the truth (Acts 13:51ff.).

If a preacher has the desire to join a party, as the bulletin pointed out, the church is better off without such people in the pulpit. God won’t judge us based on which or how many men approve of our work. We’ll be judged based on how we followed the Bible line (John 12:48). That is the only line that we ought to observe as being necessary to follow. If we do that, then God will save us in the end (2 Tim. 4:7-8).

Conclusion

Our focus is not on the young man but rather on the reason that was given for not preaching full-time as stated by the author of the bulletin. This article is not written to convince this individual to preach full-time but rather to encourage us not to let anything keep us from doing with our whole heart what needs to be done.

The author of the bulletin article was vague regarding “the party line” he referenced. Whether or not that particular “party line” and any danger associated with it still exists, we do not know. Real party lines have existed throughout the history of God’s people. Moses, the prophets, Jesus, and Paul all faced the party line and overcame it, rather than being forced to follow it.

We must also be aware that those who will not endure sound doctrine will often label those standing in the truth as “forming their own party.” Paul continued in his work for “the Way” despite the accusation that he was simply promoting “a sect” (Acts 24:15).

Let us be determined to do all that we can for the Lord, even if it means that we must stand alone against a party spirit or be unjustly labeled as one who is part of a “party line” for the sake of truth.

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Get Out of God's Way

J.S. Smith

In Acts 21, a prophet named Agabus approached the apostle Paul and stole his belt. Well, “stole” is a little strong, but the prophet took the apostle’s belt and then bound his own hands and feet and said, “Thus says the Holy Spirit, ‘So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles’” (v. 11).

Luke and the other disciples who witnessed this disturbing event began pleading with Paul not to go to Jerusalem until the apostle answered that they were breaking his heart. The folks in Tyre had warned him of the same thing, but he was pressing forward because the Holy Spirit was choosing his route (Acts 16:6). Luke writes, “So when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, ‘The will of the Lord be done’” (Acts 21:14).

In this brief event, we see how easy it is for the most committed disciple to place himself in opposition to God’s apparent will. Sometimes, we want a particular outcome so badly that we are willing to overlook or undermine God’s greater plan for things.

Examples? The Bible is replete with them. So often, man simply cannot get out of God’s way.

Abraham and Sarah were challenged in extraordinary ways, being told to leave their home and family to become wanderers and travelers. All this they gladly did, but when God announced that elderly Sarah would soon bear a child, the couple could not believe it, let alone conceive it. When the promise was not fulfilled quickly enough, they stepped in the way and schemed with fornication to produce the heir God had not. Jehovah dismissed Ishmael and bore Isaac anyway.

Achan got in God’s way. The Lord desired to give Joshua and Israel victory over the city of Ai, but Achan had already stolen the wares of Jericho and hid them in his tent. Israel was soundly defeated at the first battle of Ai and Joshua experienced a rare crisis of confidence. The entire regiment can be deterred when one member chooses

to get in God’s way with his sin.

Ironically, **Jonah** got in God’s way by trying to flee from his presence. The Lord wanted to send a rebuke to the heathen at Nineveh, but Jonah was deterred, either by fear of persecution or fear of success. He fled to Tarshish and into the sea, all in an attempt to get in God’s way by refusing to participate. Even when his preaching succeeded in converting Nineveh to repentance, Jonah sulked and pouted.

Moses and Jeremiah tried to get in God’s way with flimsy excuses. Moses was too inarticulate and Jeremiah was too young, or so they thought. God knew better and these two men became giants of Old Testament faith through their courage and conversation.

The **apostles**, of all people, were constantly getting in God’s way, with weakness of faith and carnal perceptions. Just after he made the good confession about Christ’s identity, Peter is found rebuking Jesus for predicting the crucifixion. “Far be it from you, Lord; this shall not happen to you” (Matt. 16:22). Perhaps Peter thought that Jesus was being pessimistic or looking for spirited encouragement, some assurance that the disciples would take up swords to prevent his arrest. That misconception led Peter into God’s way. Jesus answered him, “Get behind me, Satan! You are an offense to me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men” (v. 23).

Looking in on events from the outside always makes it easier to discern when one is getting in God’s way.

Haman, the high minister of Persia’s King Ahasuerus, let selfish ambition and foolish pride lead him into God’s way. As God was elevating Mordecai and Esther in order to protect Israel’s remnant population, Haman made plans to kill them. Haman’s wife supported his madness until the tide began to turn as the king providentially discovered the good deeds of Mordecai and decided to honor him. Suddenly, Haman’s wife said, “If Mordecai . . . is of Jewish descent, you will not prevail against him, but will surely fall before him” (Esth. 6:13). Haman could have used that

advice a little sooner; now he was in God's way and could not get out.

As the Sanhedrin considered how to punish the apostles for preaching Christ, the learned Pharisee, Gamaliel, stood to speak: "And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it — lest you even be found to fight against God" (Acts 5:38-39). Gamaliel was correct — fighting against God's will is a losing proposition.

Saul of Tarsus continued to try until his murderous march was interrupted outside Damascus one day. The Lord appeared to him in a bright, heavenly light and said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads" (Acts 9:5). Saul had lived in all good conscience, but his conscience was troubling him nonetheless. Like a stubborn ox, he was kicking against the goads of the reasonableness of Christianity and he was ready to stop fighting against God and getting in his way.

God has a mission, a plan, an objective, a path for all of us. Yet how often we find ourselves getting in his way because of selfish concerns. The model prayer teaches us, not only to pray, but to be completely committed to the ideal that God's will should be carried out on earth as it is in heaven (Matt. 6:10). We might readily accuse the pornographers, thieves, and idolaters of thwarting God's will, but all too often, it is the very children of God who set themselves in shortsighted opposition to the Almighty.

God's will can be difficult to ascertain in certain situations, but it must always be defined by certain characteristics and it can be understood (Eph. 5:10, 17).

1. His will must always be governed by his holiness of character and purpose (1 Pet. 1:13-16). It will never include provisions that would bring spots upon the church or diminish the holiness of the individual. God's will includes rebuke and reproof, even discipline and the withdrawal of fellowship. Yet it is perfected by patience and love.

2. God's will is never contradictory. It may seem like the church could assure its growth by making appeals to the flesh with hot dogs and racquetball, but such a program would go forward without scriptural precedent (1 Tim. 4:8; 1 Cor. 11:34).

3. God's will is never grounded in fear. "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind" (2 Tim. 1:7). Often, like Jonah, we are afraid to preach truth or broach the subject of faith with people for fear of their reaction. Or we get settled into a comfortable rut and fear anything that might disturb it. The church needs class teachers and conscientiously, we are kicking against the goads in refusing even to try, but we just continue kicking like a stubborn, unproductive ox.

4. God's will is for spiritual increase, even at the expense of material fulfillment, for he is better able to judge matters from an eternal perspective. God's will calls for effort and growth, not apathy and atrophy (2 Pet. 3:18).

5. God's will does not call for compromises of faith. At the edge of a sword, the saint does not receive a right of mental reservation to deny Jesus falsely so that he can save his neck to repent on the way home (Rev. 2:10). Working back from that extreme, we have no right to compromise the truth to save our jobs, our marriages, or our friendships.

6. God's will is furthered by disciples willing to serve as his instruments of providence, cogs in his machine. There is Isaiah, saying "Here am I; send me." There is Phoebe assisting Paul.

God's will goes on with or without you, through you or over you, so you might as well participate. Don't judge matters selfishly, carnally, or myopically, for that will just ~~get you in God's way.~~
Jssmith@woodmontchurch.org.

The Gospel Plan of Salvation

by T.W. Brents

The power of the gospel is readily seen in these studies on the new birth, faith, repentance, confession, baptism (what, who, why), and the establishment and identity of the New Testament church. Superb refutation of Calvinism. #80022

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What Is the Difference Between “Elders,” “Bishops,” and “Pastors”?

David Dann

Toward the conclusion of Paul’s first

preaching journey, we find that he and Barnabas return to the churches they previously planted and appoint, “elders in every church” (Acts 14:23). Later, we find that Paul addresses the church at Philippi as, “the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the *bishops* and deacons” (Phil. 1:1). But, Paul mentions neither elders nor bishops in writing to the Ephesians concerning those who are to build up the local church. Instead he writes, “And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, *pastors* and teachers” (Eph. 4:11).

The longstanding tradition of many denominations is that elders, bishops, and pastors represent three different classes of individuals. Current popular denominational concepts hold that pastors are simply preachers, elders function in some capacity within the local church, and the bishops preside over the local churches of a given region. Many denominations have established a hierarchy in which the elders of a local church must give account of their actions to the bishop who presides over that church or region. Since this traditional distinction between elders, bishops, and pastors is so prevalent in the world today, it is only reasonable for us to wonder if these distinctions are “from heaven or from men” (Matt. 21:25).

What does the Bible say about elders, bishops, and pastors? Are these terms descriptive of three separate offices? Do the Scriptures suggest that these form the hierarchical system we see among denominations today? Let’s consider the Scriptural use of the terms “elder,” “bishop,” and “pastor” as presented in the New Testament.

Definition of Terms

1. The Greek word *presbuteros* is translated “elder” or “presbyter” in our English Bibles. This term is translated “elder” in several New Testament passages, including Acts 14:23, Titus 1:5, and 1 Peter. 5:1. According to *Vine’s Expository Dictionary*, the word literally means “old man.” However, in the context of the local church, it refers to the

“maturity of spiritual experience” of the men who serve as elders (195). According to Thayer’s *Greek-English Lexicon*, the term refers to “those who presided over the assemblies, or churches” (536).

2. The Greek word *episkopos* is translated “bishop” or “overseer” in our English Bibles. This term is translated “bishop” in such passages as Philippians 1:1 and Titus 1:7. Vine defines the term as “an overseer” (67). Thayer adds that the term describes “a man charged with the duty of seeing that things to be done by others are done rightly” (243).

3. The Greek word *poimen* is translated “pastor” or “shepherd” in our English Bibles. This term is translated as “pastor” in Ephesians 4:11 and a form of the same word is translated “shepherd” in Acts 20:28 and 1 Peter 5:2. Vine defines a pastor as one who guides as well as feeds the flock (462). According to Thayer, the term is used metaphorically in the New Testament to refer to “the overseers of the Christian assemblies” (527).

4. According to the definitions, elders, bishops, and pastors are identical to one another. These definitions show that the three terms merely emphasize different aspects of the same office, namely, that of overseeing the work of the local church.

The Qualifications

1. The qualifications given for those who wish to serve as elders are the same as those given for bishops or pastors. In his first letter to Timothy, Paul writes that, among other qualifications, “A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach” (1 Tim. 3:2). Paul gives virtually the same list of qualifications to Titus, however, it is given in the context of a discussion of the appointment of elders (Tit. 1:5-9).

Conform To the Image Of His Son

Brian Anderson

In Romans 8:29-30, Paul said, “For whom He did fore-know, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, . . . (those) He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified.” There is a lot of confusion in the world today about this idea of predestination. In this passage, Paul teaches that God did predestinate people unto salvation. Not, however, as the Calvinist teaches, in which individual people are chosen and others discarded. But rather, God has chosen the type of people that will be saved. In this passage Paul states that those that “conform to the image of His son” shall be justified.

You see we all have a choice to make. We will either, conform to the image of God’s dear Son, or we will conform to the image of the world. Paul warned, “And be not conformed to this world” (Rom. 12:2). Most folks have little trouble conforming to the image of the world. But those of us who want to be “justified, and glorified” by God, must learn what to do to conform to the image of his

Son. Let’s take a look at the characteristics of his Son.

Spiritually Minded

This is one of the characteristics of Jesus that we must emulate in our life. Paul exhorted “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil 2:5). Christ’s mind was wholly devoted to spiritual things. Jesus once asked his parents “. . . wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” It was to his disciples that Jesus explained, “I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day” (John 9:4). Jesus was spiritually minded, and we must be as well (1 Pet. 4:1-2; Phil. 3:19; Gal. 6:7-8; Col. 3:1-2).

Clothed With Humility

Although Jesus was equal with God, when he found himself fashioned as a man, he humbled himself (Phil. 2:6-8). If Jesus Christ, the Son of God, can humble himself, I know that I can and should humble myself. Peter once taught,

2. The same qualifications are given because the same office is under consideration. This is made clear by the fact that Paul uses the terms “elder” and “bishop” interchangeably when instructing Titus concerning the qualifications (Tit. 1:5-7). Furthermore, the fact that these are the same qualifications one would have to meet in order to serve as a pastor is made certain by Paul’s statement that the bishops (or elders) are to “take care of the church” (1 Tim. 3:5).

The Work

1. The work of elders, bishops, and pastors is to oversee and shepherd the local church. Paul told the Ephesian elders that they were to serve as “overseers, to shepherd the church of God” (Acts 20:17, 28). Here, the elders are given the same work described by the terms “bishop” and “pastor.” Similarly, Peter instructs elders to “Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers” (1 Pet. 5:2). Again, the elders, bishops, and pastors are assigned identical work.

2. The same work is assigned because the same office is under consideration. In the New Testament, the work of bishops is also the work of elders. And, the work of pastors is the exact same as the work of the bishops and elders. Obviously, the Scriptures use the terms bishop, elder, and pastor to describe the same office in the local church.

Conclusion

According to the Bible, an elder is a bishop, a bishop is a pastor, and a pastor is an elder. The undeniable facts of the New Testament show that the Scriptures do not allow for the denominational hierarchies that are so prevalent today. The distinctions that are made between elders, bishops, and pastors are just another of many ways in which denominations are “teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Mark 7:7).

3400 The Credit Woodlands, Unit #48, Mississauga, Ontario
L5C 3A4 Canada

“. . . and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourself under the mighty hand of God, that He might exalt you in due time” (1 Pet 5:5-6). I learn from this that we all shall be exalted at some point. We choose whether we will do the exalting or God. If we do the exalting, then God will do the humbling! Let’s all humble ourselves before our God, and conform our lives to the image of his son (Mark 10:45; John 13).

1. Meek. Many see meekness as weakness. Nothing could be further from the truth. Meekness is one of the grandest characteristics of our Lord. Although he had all power, he surrendered his will for the benefit of others (Mark 10:45; Matt. 26:39). Jesus taught, “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth” (Matt. 5:5). He said of himself, “. . . for I am meek and lowly in heart” (Matt 11:28-30). The opposite of meekness would carry the idea of self-assertiveness or self-interest. In our dealings with our brethren and our fellow man, we must show the spirit of meekness that Jesus showed in his life (2 Cor. 10:1; Tit. 3:2; Col. 3:12; 1 Tim. 6:11; 1 Cor. 4:21).

2. Compassionate. Many of our brethren are just too hard hearted. In their actions or demeanor they seem totally unconcerned about the problems of their neighbor or even their brethren. Of Jesus we read, “but when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them” (Matt. 9:36). Jesus is a very compassionate individual (Matt. 14:14; 15:32; John 11:35). Paul exhorts us to “rejoice with those that rejoice, and weep with those that weep” (Rom. 12:15). As a Christian, we must conform our lives to the image of Jesus. We must be compassionate, caring individuals (1 Cor. 12:25-26).

3. Love. Every thought and motive that Jesus exhibited while on earth was rooted in a deep love for man. Jesus once said, “As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you” (John 15:9). The Apostle John wrote and told us of the love that Jesus had for his brethren, “. . . having loved His own while in the world, He loved them unto the end” (John 13:1). Noting his example, Jesus commanded the same from us, “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:34-35). Based upon this standard of love, does the world see that we are the disciples of Jesus? They will, if we are conforming to the image of his son.

Interested In Saving The Lost

Jesus once said, “for the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). Paul explained that “this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1 Tim. 1:15). Jesus Christ wants men to be saved (1 Tim.

2:3-4; 2 Pet 3:9). You and I must conform to this image. We must have a burning desire to save as many lost souls as is possible. The wise man once noted, “He that winneth souls is wise” (Prov. 11:30). Are you wise? Are you conforming to the image of his son?

Overcame Suffering

One of the things in this life that is assured, is problems. All of us at sometime in our life will suffer and be full of sorrow (Job 14:1; 1 Pet. 4:12-14; John 15:20; 2 Tim. 3:12). Jesus was not exempt from sorrow while upon earth. As a matter of fact he is described as “a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief” (Isa. 53:3). The Hebrew writer said, “We have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feelings of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are” (Heb. 4:15). What sets Jesus apart from most is that he overcame his troubles. In this life we are either overcome by our problems, or we overcome our problems. Jesus has left us an example of how we should react to problems and sufferings. Peter said, “Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow his steps” (1 Pet. 2:21). Even in suffering we must conform to the image of his dear son.

Obedient

One of the things that many people never seem to grasp is the importance of being obedient to the commands of God. The wise man once said it this way, “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter, fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man” (Eccl. 12:13). Once again, Jesus is our ultimate example of this concept. Jesus once said, “Even as I have kept my Father’s commandments” (John 15:10). In all circumstances, Jesus obeyed God. The Hebrew writer noted: “Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which he suffered” (Heb. 5:8). Jesus was obedient even to the point of suffering death to obey the commands of God (Matt. 26:39). In turn, “He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him” (Heb. 5:9). Are you obeying God’s commands? You must, if you are going to conform to the image of his dear Son.

P.O. Box 106, Orleans, Indiana 47452 Andersonbrianpeg@aol.com

The religion of some people
is well developed at the
mouth, but lame at the
hands and feet.

Pity For Nineveh, Tears For Jerusalem

Larry Ray Hafley

Through his priests, preachers, and prophets, both in the Old and New Testaments, we are told that God loves, that he has mercy and compassion for sinful man (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8). Nowhere is this more evident than in the book of Jonah and in the lamentation of the Lord over Jerusalem (Luke 13:34).

Nineveh of Jonah's day and Jerusalem of Jesus' era appear to have little in common. One fact binds them. Yes, they were both objects of God's wrath and divine judgment, but that is the end of the story. It is not the heart of it. Alike they are in the pity, mercy, and compassion of God. Despite their savage, barbarous cruelty (which will later destroy them), God will spare Nineveh in their repentance. Despite their equally brutal behavior (worsened by the fact that it was carried on under the hypocritical guise of sheep's clothing), Jesus was ready to die for Jerusalem and forgive her before he could bring himself to see her later devoured and destroyed (Luke 13:34).



“But, did not God say, ‘Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown’” (Jonah 3:4)? Indeed, he did. “And, did not God say of Jerusalem’s beautiful buildings, ‘There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down’” (Matt. 24:1, 2)? Certainly, he said it. However, those words were the fruit of impenitent rebellion, not merely the absence and abdication of mercy. “Why will ye die, O Israel?” was asked more than once. Compassion compelled. Pity pled. And a Savior bled.

However, are we a little like Jonah? Do we want to see our Ninevehs repent? Think of the wickedness of the cities of our present world — Las Vegas, San Francisco, Tehran, and Baghdad. Would we see them saved, or are we anxious for their judgment and destruction? Jonah wanted one thing. In effect, he said, “Let them be accursed. I knew I should not have gone to Nineveh, ‘for I knew that Thou art a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness, and one who relents concerning calamity’” (Jonah 4:2). Are we, too, full of fury and indignation toward the wicked, wishing for their damnation rather than their salvation?

While we rightly preach impending judgment against impenitent men and nations, let us not forget that God yet desires their deliverance. Even as he sharpens his “terrible swift sword” of justice, he awaits with healing in his wings those who will relent and repent. Dare we be any less loving and merciful as we face the same court

4626 Osage, Baytown, Texas 77521

“Influence” continued from front page

salt is preservation; salt preserves and prevents corruption. Before canning and freezing techniques were developed, meat was preserved from spoilage by being salted. Christians are to have that preservative effect upon the people around them. There are some people in whose presence it is easy to be good and upright. Even worldly folks do not use profanity or tell a sordid story in their presence. A Christian is to have this effect on the environment in which he lives. The world needs his preserving *influence*.

3. Gives flavor. Food without salt can be tasteless. The Christian’s *influence* and *example* is to be to the world, what salt is to food. Life can be very distressing, depressing, and drab. The Christian can handle each of these situations with faith and resolve, without sacrificing his hope and joy. The Christian realizes this life is not everything; there is a life to come. The Christian lives in joy, in preparation for that other life, and can handle the problems that come in this one through faith in God’s promises.

These are the qualities of *salt*, but if the *salt* loses its savour or effectiveness, it is good for nothing but to be thrown out; trodden under the feet of men. Christian, don’t let that *salt* fail in your life. Be an *influence* and an example.

Light

“Ye are the light of the world.” Paul said, “For ye were sometimes darkness, but *now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light*” (Eph. 5:8). *In the Lord and from the Lord*, Christians derive their light. Jesus said, “. . . I am the *light* of the world” (John 9:5). Christians are to be like Christ in this respect. Paul charged the church at Philippi, “That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, *among whom ye shine as lights in the world*” (Phil. 2:15). The *darkness* of this sin-cursed world desperately needs the *light* of Christ and his people. But, what does this mean?

1. A light is meant to be seen. Jesus said a city on a hill could not be hidden. Nor would one light a candle and cover it with a basket. The city and the candle are to be seen (John Calvin, *Commentary on Matthew* 274). So is a Christian to be seen.

Barclay noted, “There can be no such thing as secret discipleship, for either the secrecy destroys the discipleship, or the discipleship destroys the secrecy” (*Op. Cit.*, 119). The light of the Christian is not seen only at the hour of worship; it is seen everywhere, all the time. In all our dealings with our fellows, we demonstrate how the *light* of Christ and the gospel has touched and changed our lives. On the job, at school, at sporting events, and in the family living room, the *glorious light* of Christ is seen day by day.

2. A light is a guide. We need to know how to live in

this world. We turn to Christ and his word to learn the secrets of successful and faithful living. The world around us needs that same *light*. “Let your light so shine.” Make the way plain and clear; show the people around you the direction they should go. That’s the message of the *light*. It takes courage and strength to lead as a guide. Not only must one know the right way, he must have the courage to lead others in it. If only one will lead, others will follow. The duty of the Christian is to take the stand, give the leadership, and guide those under our *influence* and *example* to the salvation which is in Christ Jesus!

3. The result of being lights. Jesus said two things will happen when the Christian is the *light* he is taught to be. (1) Men will “see your good works,” and (2) “glorify your Father which is in heaven.” We are affecting the lives of the people around us; we have either a *good* or a *bad influence*!

The eyes of the people of the world are on us, the people of God. What are they seeing? Are we helping them? Are we showing them the way they should go and live? Are we guiding them in such a way that they will finally glorify God and know the glory God intends to give to his people? These are important questions!

491 E. Woodsdale, Akron, Ohio 44301

“Two Baptized” continued from page 2

In emphasizing this text, I point out that Jesus would not accept as a disciple one who put burying his father above his service to Christ, or one who placed telling his friends goodbye above his service to Christ. I emphasized that serving Christ demands a commitment that places loyalty to him above every other thing in the world. Then I made application of this: Commitment to Christ is going to take precedence over watching a TV show, attending school functions, participating in family events, etc. I was totally unaware of this brother’s circumstances when I preached the sermon.

Without me or anyone else knowing it, this brother went into the preacher’s office between Bible study and worship and called the Boy Scout leader to tell him that he and his sons would not be going on the outing that was scheduled to begin that Sunday afternoon. He related to me that he felt sorry for what his sons were missing all week.

On Sunday afternoon, the congregation conducted a men’s training class to develop its younger boys. The two sons participated by leading a song and offering a short invitation — reading the Scriptures related to the plan of

salvation. As I watched them speak and knew that these two boys had not yet obeyed the gospel, I thought, “You ought to obey what you just read.” On Thursday night they did!

What do you think would have been the result if the father had chosen to take them to Boy Scout camp instead of making the choice to put the gospel meeting and service to Christ above the Boy Scout outing? Do you think we would have baptized them that week? What lesson do you think that this father taught his children about priorities that week?

And, by the way, the young boys related to their father

later that week that they were glad that he made the decision to cancel their Boy Scout trip. The attitude these young men displayed tells me something about them. They did not resent their father, pout about his choice all week, or otherwise act rebelliously or disappointed. When I was visiting in their home they were involved in the conversations that were conducted. We expect to hear great things out of these two young men in the future.

6567 Kings Ct., Avon, Indiana 46123, mikewillis001@cs.com

The Religion of Just Enough

Rufus R. Clifford, III

There is a religion that has been around since the dawn of time that many people follow but few admit! One can trace in the Bible the three dispensations (1) Patriarchal, (2) Mosaical, (3) Christian and find the religion of “Just Enough” present throughout all of them.

The leaders of this religion have come and gone throughout history and yet when one seems to disappear another will emerge. There is always someone willing to fight for the religion of “Just Enough.”

Cain was a practitioner of this very popular religion! Instead of doing exactly what God told him to do, as his brother did, he did just enough to make himself feel good (Gen. 4).

Then we have several during the Mosaical dispensation who we could point to who practiced this popular religion, but I shall only name a few! Nadab and Abihu were strong followers of this religion and they decided in Leviticus to get fire from a place they were not authorized to get it from according to God. Yet in their mind they had all the authority they needed — the authority of their religion “Just Enough.” They did just enough to make themselves feel good (Lev.10:1-2; 16:12).

Under the Christian dispensation, followers of this popular religion were everywhere! Ananias and Saphira believed and followed the principles of this religion in Acts 5. The early church was hurt by many Christians turning to the religion of “Just Enough.” I suppose most every church in New Testament times had to fight against this

popular man-made religion. Jesus condemned the church at Laodicea for being lukewarm (Rev. 3:15-16) and said how upset he was with them! Many there probably didn’t understand what the fuss was all about because they were not following Christ but the religion of “Just Enough.” To them they were just fine!

Today this religion is found in every country, city, town, and church across our great land! Few admit to being followers of “Just Enough” for fear of being labeled hypocrites as Jesus labeled some in (Matt. 23).

When asked what they stand for, they cannot say “The doctrine of Christ” because to do so would mean giving up the religion of “Just Enough!” (2 John 9). Its popularity is due to the great comfort it brings its followers! To be in the religion of “Just Enough” one only has to practice “Just Enough” religion as he desires and of course it varies with each member because each person feels differently. The name Christian means “Christ like” and the name disciple means “a follower of Christ.” I wish more people today would call themselves what they really are. If you truly are a follower of Christ call yourself a Christian! If you claim to be a Christian, a follower of Christ, then act like it! But if you practice the religion of “Just Enough” call yourself what you are: “A Just Enough.”

What are some signs that you are a member of the religion of “Just Enough?”

1. When you come to church “Just Enough” to make yourself feel good (Heb.10:25). Yes, you are a “Just

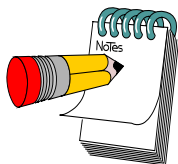
Enough!”

2. When you only follow Christ until some type of persecution comes (Rev.2:10). Yes, you are a “Just Enough!”

3. When you only follow the Bible as long as it makes you feel good and agrees with what you claim to believe! (Matt. 7:21). Yes, you are a “Just Enough!”

We could go on and on, but I think we all get the point. The religion of “Just Enough” is widespread and very popular today. Its leader is the Devil (Matt. 6:24) and its followers are everywhere! Just like their leader, they are fighting a secret and deadly war. The core of their religion lies in “feelings” and “deception” and its appeal is found in the fact “You do just enough to make you feel good!” To become a member all you have to do is start practicing “Just Enough.”

Quips & Quotes



Preston-Thrasher Debates

A public debate on the A.D. 70 doctrine is scheduled for Saturday, September 20, 2003 in the auditorium of Athens Bible School, 507 S. Hoffman, Athens, Alabama 35611. Three sessions are to be held (10:00 a.m., 2:00 p.m., and 7:00 p.m.). In the first two sessions, Don K. Preston of Ardmore, Oklahoma will affirm: “Resolved: The Bible teaches that the resurrection of the dead occurred at the time of the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.” Thomas N. Thrasher of Decatur, Alabama will deny. In the third session, Thrasher will affirm: “Resolved: The Bible teaches that all the dead will be raised to life at the end of the current Christian age.” Preston will deny. A second debate in Indianapolis on the same propositions is set for Saturday, March 13, 2004. The location will be the Embassy Suites North, 3912 Vincennes Road, Indianapolis, Indiana 46268. Thrasher will affirm at the 10:00 a.m. session and Preston will affirm at the 2:00 p.m. session. There will be only two sessions. For additional information, you may contact Thomas N. Thrasher, 1705 Sandra Street S.W., Decatur, AL 35601-5457 (E-mail: tnthrash@hiwaay.net).

Studies Link Child Care to Stress, Misbehavior

“By Susan Gilbert — Two recent studies build on evidence that youngsters who spend long hours in child care may experience more stress and are at increased risk of becoming overly aggressive.

“One of the studies found that the more time children spent

I find it strange that those who practice the religion of “Just Enough” are unwilling to stand up and proclaim their allegiance. You won’t find anyone answering the question, “So, what religion are you?” with “Oh, I’m a Just Enough!” You won’t find any church buildings with a sign in front saying “Church of Just Enough” or “Just Enoughers Meet Here!”

We must never forget that Jesus knows who practices the religion of “Just Enough” and one day everyone will give an account for what he has done while here on earth (2 Cor. 5:10). I pray there are no “Just Enoughers” reading this, but if there are, I pray I have said “JUST ENOUGH!”

107 CR458, Killen, Alabama 35645

in child care, the more likely they were to be disobedient and have trouble getting along with others, though it suggested that factors such as a mother’s sensitivity to the child’s needs could moderate that outcome.

This report is from the Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development, the largest long-term study of child care in the United States.

“... Researchers found that the more hours the children spent in child care, the higher the incidence of problem behavior and the greater its severity.

“... ‘These children struggle in group situations and find them stressful,’ said the study’s lead author, Dr. Megan Gunnar” (The Indianapolis Star [July 20, 2003], A21.

Study of Church History

by Aude McKee

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