

Paul's Dying Words

Lewis Willis

In about the year A.D. 68 Paul wrote the book of 2 Timothy. In this book he addressed the young preacher with what were essentially his dying words. Such words and thoughts are often viewed with a greater fervor and pathos because they are the final utterances of one who is beloved. Paul had been condemned to die because of his faith and work, though he did not know exactly when his execution would come. Those who research such matters say he died by decapitation.

When a loved one dies, sometimes weakened by disease, we remember the final words spoken as we bent an ear to hear those final struggling utterances. However, Paul's dying words seem to come from a clear mind, using emphatic words, with a strong voice. His words speak of great and touching truth.

"For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (2 Tim. 4:6-8). Note the messages:

Perfect Resignation. He says in triumph: "I am now ready to be offered." The Greek word signifies: "For I am already being poured out as a drink offering" (NKJV).

Like the Old Testament drink offering, poured out beside the altar, his life was now about to be offered or sacrificed. He, with nobility, declared he was "ready" for the sentence pronounced upon him. Earlier in his life, he was in a strait between life and death (Phil. 1:23), but not anymore. He was "ready" to be offered. He was as one packed and ready to depart to another place.

Assured Success: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." Three metaphors are employed by the apostle.

As a *soldier*, he had no apology to offer for his militant stand for truth and right; his had been a "good" fight. He had taken Satan and his armies to task, and he had taken the truth to distant places. He had conquered the foe.

As a *athlete*, he had finished the race. One of the saddest scenes on earth is to see a Christian run faithfully, only to fall away toward the end of his life. Paul had not fallen away; he had finished the race. He was ready for his crown of victory.

As a *steward*, he had kept the faith; he had fulfilled the charge placed upon him. The work had cost him his status among his countrymen and inflicted much pain, but he did not abandon the faith or the gospel.

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— Subscription Rates —

- \$24.00 Per Year
- Single Copies — \$2.00 each
- Foreign Subscriptions — \$25.00

— Bulk Rates —

- \$1.75 per subscription per month

Manuscripts should be sent to Mike Willis, 6567 Kings Ct., Avon, IN 46123, (317) 272-6520. E-mail: mikewillis@indy.rr.com.

Subscriptions, renewals and other correspondence should be sent to Truth Magazine, P.O. Box 9670, Bowling Green, KY 42102.

Book orders should be sent to Truth Bookstore, P.O. Box 9670, Bowling Green, KY 42102. Phone: 1-800-428-0121.

Web Address: www.truthmagazine.com

Postmaster: Send change of address to P.O. Box 9670, Bowling Green, KY 42102.

Truth Magazine (ISSN 1538-0793) is published twice a month by Guardian of Truth Foundation, P.O. Box 9670, Bowling Green, KY 42102. Postage paid at Bowling Green, KY and additional mailing offices.

Child or Children?

Mike Willis

For all of my life brethren have discussed the qualification of children with regard to the elder. The texts say,

... one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the church of God?) (1 Tim. 3:4-5).

... if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination (Tit. 1:6).



Brethren have cited biblical evidences to show that “children” can be used in cases when one child is intended. For example, Sarah is said to have given “children” suck even though she only bore Isaac (Gen. 21:7). The Law of Moses stipulated levirate marriage for a woman who had no children when her husband died (Deut. 25:5; Matt. 22:24). Would she qualify for levirate marriage if she had one child? Obviously, not. 1 Corinthians 7:14 says that the children of a marriage between a Christian and a non-Christian are holy. If that couple only had one child, would he also be holy? Furthermore, if we require that elders must have more than one child to meet the qualification for elder, we are going to have to make the same requirement of “widows indeed” in 1 Timothy 5:4, 10. These evidences have convinced most brethren that “children” includes those with one child and, therefore, a person who has only one child and otherwise meets the qualifications for elders is qualified to serve as an elder.

English parallels to Paul’s statement have been cited to show how Paul is using the phrase. A statement from a school might be sent out, “Those parents with children entering the first grade should pre-register their children by August 1st.” Would a parent with one child think that he should register his child? A form might ask, “Do you have any children?” Would a person with one child think he had “children” and answer “yes”? This is the normal use of the word in English.

This material is introduction to an additional piece of evidence that will be useful to Bible students. First century Roman law regulated inheritance. “Only if a couple could prove that they had reared one child to the age of puberty, or two to the age of three, or three who survived the first week or so of life, could they be sure they had qualified by reason of children”

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A Little Soul Winner For Jesus

Geddes Ray Smith

Heather obeyed the command of the Lord to remember him in the days of her youth. At the early age of eight, she understood and obeyed the gospel. She is now nine years old, and has been brought up thus far by godly parents who are raising their children in the fear and admonition of the Lord.

Heather is the daughter of Aaron and Cari Smith, faithful members of the Spruce Pine church of Christ in Mitchell County, North Carolina, which is situated in the beautiful mountains in the western part of the state. But the beauty of God’s marvelous creation that surrounds us here will never excel the beauty of this young girl. Both within and without, she is an angel, and a perfect little lady in every sense of the word. As I tell this story, it is impossible to keep tears from welling up in my heart and eyes.

Heather is on fire for the Lord, so full of zeal that she almost embarrasses her parents when they go out into the community. She passes out invitations and verbally invites to worship services the clerks at Wal-Mart, the people in line at the grocery store, and others they encounter. And she always has a big smile on her face.

The results of Heather’s actions became so wonderfully fruitful recently that I wanted to share the story with others. In a trip to the local park not long ago, Heather met some little girls and began to play with them. It wasn’t long until she had invited them to services. One of the girls, Emily, is the same age as Heather, and she has two younger sisters. They are the children of Mike and Chrissy Reid, a couple in their mid-thirties from Englewood, Florida, who happened to be visiting in our area of the mountains. The family accepted Heather’s invitation and joined us for services in August of 2005.

The Reid family fell in love with the congregation here, and the feeling was mutual. They began attending services regularly and during the several weeks they were here, I believe they only missed services one time. At the same time, some of the brethren invited them into their home for several nights of Bible study, which sometimes lasted way into the night. As a result, Mike and Chrissy and daughter Emily were baptized into Christ one Wednesday night in September. Unfortunately, I had already left for home when they made their decision, but many of the brethren were still there, and I soon heard the story. Since our baptistery was being repaired, they decided

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to go to the river. Aaron said there was a caravan of folks, late at night, who went “down to the river” and shined their headlights on the water for the baptisms.

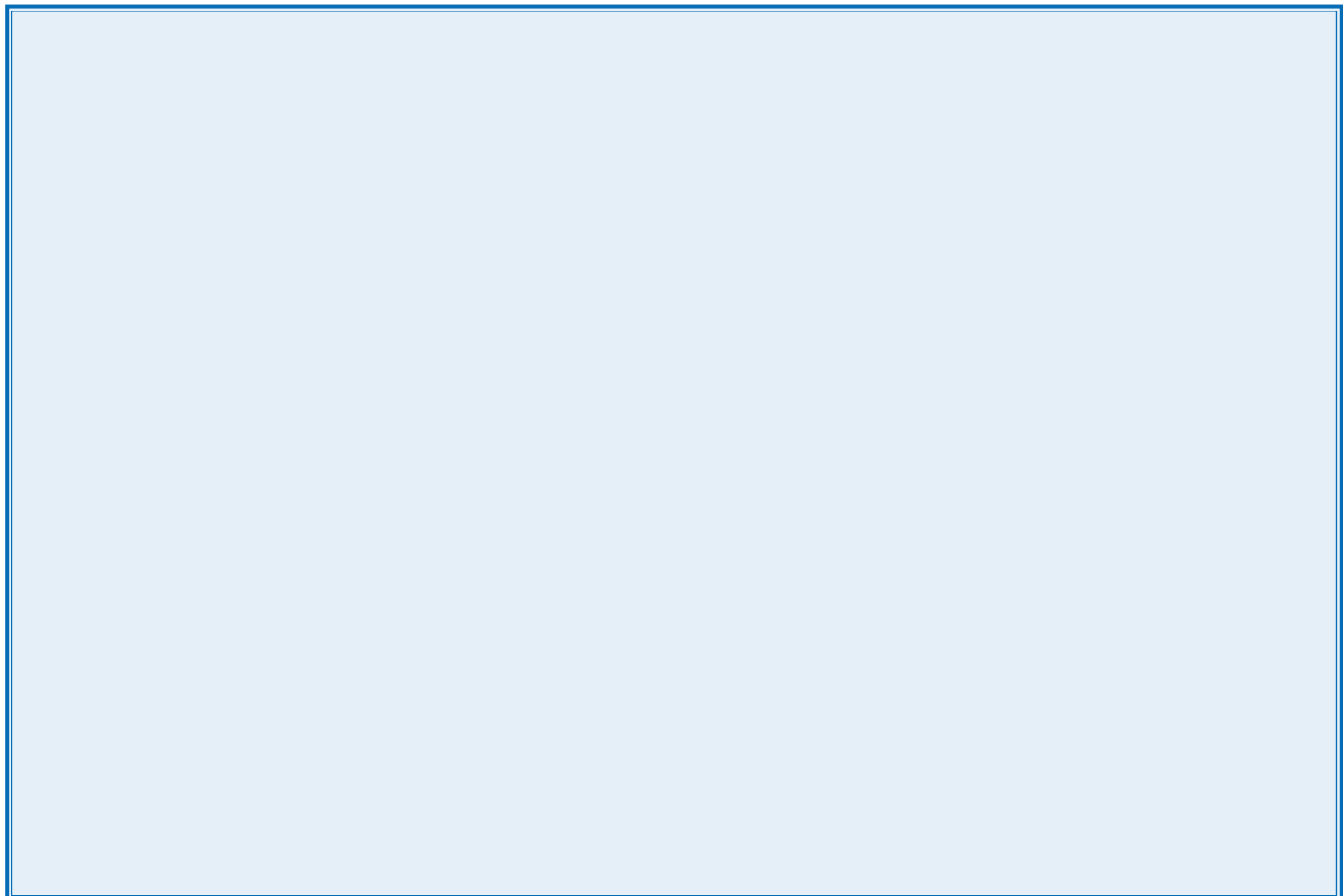
Our preacher had asked little Emily, “What is baptism for?” and she replied, “To make you clean.” He then asked her, “Why do you want to be baptized?” and she replied, “To make me clean!” What greater joy can fill the hearts of Christians here on this earth, than to hear these words?

But that is not the end of the story. Not only did this good family fall in love with the church here, they fell in love with the area and made up their minds to go back to Florida, sell their house, and move here. Tears flowed in abundance when they departed for Florida. Before they left, some of the brethren got busy and located a faithful church in Florida where they could attend, so they were not left to wander in the dark. They got in touch with the church in Osprey, Florida, which is a forty-five minute drive from their home in Englewood. We heard that they were greeted warmly in Osprey, and they are happy worshiping with the good people there. One of the members of the Osprey church happens to live in Englewood also, and he has taken a special interest in Mike and his family.

But that is still not the end of the story. When Mike and Chrissy and the children went to services at Osprey for the first time, who did they run into but Mike’s own brother in the flesh, who had been invited by another member at Osprey. Neither had any idea that the other was going to be there. With all the masses of people who live in the area, this amounts to quite a coincidence. As far as I know, Mike’s brother has not yet obeyed the gospel, but who knows what results will follow, especially with the kind of influence, teaching, and prayers that are being offered.

We at the Spruce Pine church of Christ are eagerly waiting for Mike and his family to make their move to this area where they will surely be a blessing and encouragement to all of us. They are part of the family of God because of the love that Heather has in her heart for the Lord and the souls of precious people. What a great example of genuine faith that all should copy. Heather’s father, Aaron, is my nephew, and I am so thankful that he and his family are not only part of my fleshly family but also that we are all children in God’s family.

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Jewish Feasts and Festivals (2)

Kyle Campbell

Last time we introduced our study by examining some background concerning the Jewish calendar and then examined the Sabbath. We now turn our attention to the new moon observance and the seven yearly festivals in Jewish life. The Sabbath and new moon were the only two observances that occurred more than once a year.

New Moon

The new moon was reckoned by actual personal observation, not by astronomical calculation. The Sanhedrin required two or three independent witnesses as to the appearance of the new moon. This was so important that the Sanhedrin permitted the witnesses to travel on the Sabbath and make use of a horse or a mule.

The references in the Bible to the new moon celebration include Numbers 10:10; 28:11-15; and Psalm 81:3. The law specified that two bullocks, one ram, seven lambs and one kid were to be offered in connection with this celebration. Meal mixed with oil accompanied the offerings, and a trumpet blast introduced this feast. The sins committed and not expiated during the previous month were covered by the offerings of the new moon. Thus, sinners received atonement and were reconciled with the Lord.

Passover/Feast of Unleavened Bread/Pesach

The Passover was the first of the three great festivals of the Jewish people. It referred to the sacrifice of a lamb in Egypt when the people of Israel were slaves. The Jews smeared the blood of the lamb on their doorposts as a signal to God that he should “pass over” their houses when he destroyed all the firstborn of Egypt to persuade Pharaoh to let his people go.

References to the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread include Exodus 12:1-13:16; 23:15; 34:18-20, 25; Leviticus 23:4-14; Numbers 28:16-25; Deuteronomy 16:1-8; Joshua 4:19-23; 5:10-12; and 2 Chronicles 30:2-15. Passover was observed in the spring on the fourteenth day

of the first month, Abib or Nisan, with the service beginning in the evening. It was on the evening of this day that Israel left Egypt. The Passover meal was eaten after nightfall in a family group of at least ten persons, so individuals and small families combined for the celebration. They could not leave Jerusalem during the night of the meal. In addition to roast lamb the meal included unleavened bread and bitter herbs as a reminder of the bitterness in Egypt. It was eaten reclining, a symbol of being free persons.

Passover commemorated the hasty departure from Egypt. Unleavened bread was used in the celebration because this showed that the people had no time to put leaven in their bread as they ate the final meal as slaves in Egypt. Several regulations were given concerning the observance of the Passover, including the cleansing of homes of leaven on the first day of Unleavened Bread, which was a symbol of corruption and evil (Lev. 2:11). Passover was to be observed “in the place which he shall choose” (Deut. 16:16). This implied the sanctuary of the tabernacle or the temple in Jerusalem.

In New Testament times, the Passover became a pilgrim festival. Large numbers gathered in Jerusalem to observe this annual celebration. It was during this time that Jesus and his parents went to Jerusalem, and Jesus was left behind (Luke 2:41-52).

Perhaps the most well known reference to the Passover in the New Testament was the crucifixion of Jesus, which occurred in Jerusalem during one of these celebrations. He and his disciples ate the meal together on the eve of his death (John 13:1). Like the blood of the lamb which saved the Jewish people from destruction in Egypt, his blood, as the ultimate Passover sacrifice, redeems us from the power of sin and death (1 Cor. 5:7).

Pentecost/Feast of Weeks/Feast of Harvest/Shavout

References to Pentecost in the Bible include Exodus

23:16; 34:22; Leviticus 23:15-21; Numbers 28:26-31; Deuteronomy 16:9-12; and 2 Chronicles 8:13. This feast was observed on the sixth day of the third month (Sivan) on the fiftieth day after the offering of the barley sheaf at the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Since Pentecost fell on the fiftieth day after the Sabbath of the Passover, it was always on the first day of the week. Like Passover, it included a holy convocation with the usual restriction on manual labor.

Numbers 28:26-31 describes the number and nature of offerings, and Deuteronomy 16:9-12 describes those who were to be invited to this feast. They included servants, sons and daughters, Levites, the fatherless, the widow, and the stranger or foreigner. Israelites were to be reminded of their bondage in Egypt on that day.

Pentecost was also originally a harvest festival, celebrating the conclusion of the spring grain harvest. Grain was planted in Palestine, as in other Mediterranean countries, in the fall, allowed to grow during the winter and harvested in the spring.

Pentecost is forever significant to Christians because it was the day in which the Holy Spirit was poured out and the first gospel sermon was preached by Peter. In that sermon, the terms of God's salvation were first revealed after Christ's death on the cross, thus signifying the beginning of the Lord's church (Acts 2:1-47). Acts records that about 3,000 souls were added to the church on that day.

Feast of Trumpets/New Year's Day/Rosh Hashanah

This feast commemorated the beginning of the civil or commercial year for the Jews. It was celebrated on the first day of the seventh month (Tishri or Ethanim). This was the beginning of the autumn equinox and was a special day because of the symbolical meaning of the seventh or sabbatical month in which the great feasts of the Day of Atonement and Tabernacles occurred.

Josephus and other Jewish historians believe that the Jews had kept the distinction between the civil and the sacred years since the time of Moses. The festival is mentioned in Leviticus 23:24-25 and Numbers 29:1-6. The Feast of Trumpets was introduced with the blowing of trumpets in Jerusalem all day long, festive burnt offerings and the halt of labor.

Day of Atonement/Yom Kippur

This was the highest and holiest day of the Jewish year. It was held on the tenth day of the seventh month. The Day of Atonement was not a feast day; it was a solemn, holy fast day accompanied by elaborate ritual (Lev. 16:1-34; Heb. 10:1-10). On this day Israel sought atonement for its sins (Lev. 23:26-32; 16:29; Num. 29:7) and all men would stand cleansed of their sins before God (Lev. 16:30). This was the only fasting period required by the Law (Lev. 16:29;

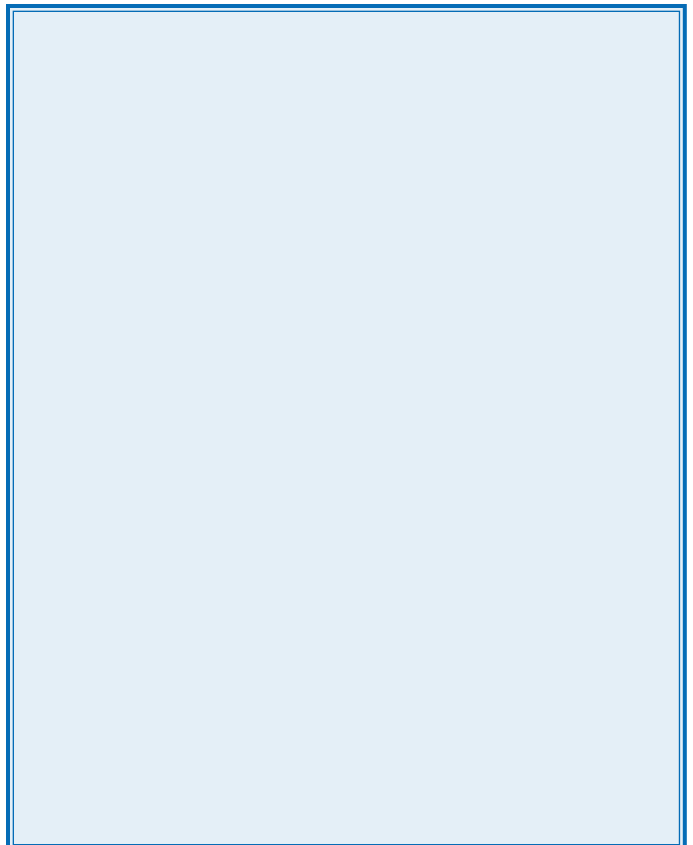
23:31). The Day of Atonement was a recognition of man's inability to make an atonement for his sins.

The high priest who officiated on this day first sanctified himself by taking a ceremonial bath and putting on white garments (Lev. 16:4). Then he had to make atonement for himself and other priests by sacrificing a bullock (Num. 29:8). God dwelt on the mercy seat in the temple, but no person could approach it except through the mediation of the high priest, who offered the blood of sacrifice.

After sacrificing a bullock, the high priest chose a goat for a sin offering and sanctified it. He then sprinkled its blood on and around the mercy seat (Lev. 16:12, 14-15). Finally the scapegoat, bearing the sins of the people, was sent into the wilderness (Lev. 16:20-22). This scapegoat symbolized the pardon for sin brought through the sacrifice. Jewish people today continue to observe Yom Kippur as a holy fast day.

In the next article, we will examine three final Jewish feasts and festivals, including one which is very well known but initiated by the Jews in the period of time between the testaments.

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Why? A Good Question To Ask

Why We Are Not Converting the World

Donnie V. Rader

God's people have a responsibility to teach the gospel to those who are lost. (1) This obligation is laid upon us by the Great Commission which said to go preach to every creature (Matt. 28:18-19; Mark 16:15-16). (2) Furthermore, the church is the pillar and ground of truth (1 Tim. 3:15). (3) Add to that the fact that the early disciples spread the word. They were so effective that they were accused of having filled Jerusalem with their doctrine (Acts 5:28). When these Christians were scattered because of persecution, they went everywhere preaching the word (Acts 8:4; 11:19-20). These three principles tell us that we ought to be working to convert the world.

There are a number of ways we might seek to get the gospel to the lost. We might invite our friends, family, and neighbors to a gospel meeting. We might tell someone about our radio program or direct them to our web page. Giving someone a gospel tract is a good way for them to not only learn the truth, but reflect on it over a period of time. Bringing someone to our regular services (not just during gospel meetings) may lead them to the Lord. One might ask a friend if he would take a correspondence course.

However, one of the most effective tools is to set up a Home Bible Study. It may be that you could teach the study yourself. If not, you could arrange for such a study in your home with a friend or neighbor and have a capable teacher (the preacher or one of the elders) come and teach that class. Brethren have home studies available in VHS and DVD format that make it easy to have such a study in your home.

Why are we not being more effective in reaching the lost? Why are we not converting the world to Christ? Let's consider a few reasons.

The World is Not Interested in the Gospel

We do not mean that no one is interested. Certainly, there are people who are pricked by the gospel and want

to do what is right. As a whole, the world has little interest in the gospel of Christ.

Why is there such little interest? The word is choked out by the cares, riches, and pleasures of life (Luke 8:14). Most are seeking their own interests and not the things of Christ (Phil. 2:21). The gospel demands changes the world is not willing to make. The world loves darkness rather than light (John 3:19). Those lost in sin can easily hear messages that give them a false sense of security just as some heard a message of "peace" when there was no peace (Jer. 6:16; 8:11).

The gospel was not popular when Jesus taught in his ministry. Jesus said few would enter the narrow gate (Matt. 7:113-14). His own nation did not receive him (John 1:11-12). In fact, many of this disciples turned back from walking with him (John 6:66).

Our job is not to convert, but preach the gospel. The Great Commission commands us to teach (Mark 16:15). We, like Ezekiel, are told to do our job even if people don't listen (cf. Ezek. 3:16-21). Jesus did not convert everyone he taught (John 1:11-12). Neither did his apostles (Acts 13:45; 17:32).

The very one that seems to be the most "unlikely" candidate just might listen and obey. We may want to dismiss one who *has a religion*, because we think they would not change. Yet Cornelius did (Acts 10). We may want to dismiss one who is *non-religious*, thinking that Bible things mean nothing to him. Yet, Simon's interest was perked and he obeyed (Acts 8:9-13). We may want to dismiss one who is *worldly*, because he is so far gone into sin. Yet, the Corinthians turned from fornication, homosexuality, stealing, drunkenness, and idolatry (1 Cor. 6:9-11). One who is *ignorant*, knowing little about the Bible, wouldn't be interested in a Bible study, we may think. Yet, the Jews

on Pentecost (who killed Jesus ignorantly) obeyed (Acts 2:23; 3:17). Perhaps a neighbor who is *mean and hateful* would be overlooked as a candidate for conversion. Yet, Saul listened to and obeyed the gospel (Acts 8:1-3; 9:1-2; 1 Tim. 1:15).

We Don't View the World As Lost in Sin

The world is lost in sin. All men are sinners (Rom. 3:9, 23; 1 John 5:19). Their sin separates them from God (Isa. 59:1-2; Jas. 1:15). If one dies in sin, he will spend eternity in hell (Rom. 6:23; 2 Thess. 1:7-9). Thus, anyone who has not obeyed the gospel is lost and on the road to hell.

How we often view people of the world. All too often we have friends and neighbors who we view as good people who just happen to believe different than we do. We focus on our friendship and how "likeable" they are, with little or no attention to the fact that they are lost. This may be because our focus has shifted to the here and now rather than on things eternal.

We might be motivated to greater evangelism if we viewed our friends, neighbors, and family from their spiritual condition. If we viewed them as people without hope (Eph. 2:12) who are lost and headed toward a lake that burns with fire and brimstone (Rev. 21:8), we might work a little harder at reaching the lost.

The Message Preached is Not Redemption

The gospel message is a message of salvation. The gospel is the power of God unto salvation for in it is revealed God's plan for making men right with God (Rom. 1:16-17). The first gospel sermon preached under the great commission focused on salvation (Acts 2). The first sermon preached to the Gentiles dealt with salvation from sin (Acts 10). The great sermon on Mar's Hill was about salvation (Acts 17:22-31). Paul preaching on his first missionary journey centered around the fact that Israel has a Savior who is Jesus the Christ (Acts 13:16-41).

The message of salvation demands a change of life. The apostles preached repentance for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 17:30-31). This change of heart demands that we stop or cease the sin in our life (Rom. 6). It requires that we give up our old religious practices (1 Thess. 1:9). But more, we must start doing works that are demanded by repentance (Acts 26:17-20).

The message has shifted and changed. In many pulpits among us the message you will hear is more of a social message that focuses on relationships and how to be a better person.

Sermons that make one "feel good" about themselves. I listened to an entire gospel meeting once (thirteen sermons) and never heard one thing about what to do to be

saved. Some of the preaching being done today has robbed the gospel of its redemptive message.

We Are Content to "Keep House"

What is meant by "keeping house"? Some brethren assemble and worship and do little more than that. They are interested in maintaining the "status quo." The thinking may be that we have a church that we are a part of, we have a place to worship, so we meet on Sundays and Wednesdays, and we have accomplished our task. Little or no effort is made to reach the lost. If we have a gospel meeting, we do very little advertising and expect the world to come and see what we have to offer.

Why are we content? With some, they don't want the local church where they are members to grow. They don't like "big" churches. Some think their mission is to merely show up at service time. Others may view the church as some kind of "religious club" that is good to be a part of, but may not be for everyone. Often, we don't worry about growth as long as our numbers on the register board stay about the same.

The church at Antioch did not "keep house." There were many teachers in this church (Acts 13:1). They sent out Barnabas and Saul on the first missionary journey (v. 2). Later, they sent out Paul and Silas for the same purpose. Here was a church that was interested in spreading the gospel not only in their own community (Acts 11:26), but to the rest of the world as well (Acts 13-21).

We Have a Fear of Offending and Alienating Others

The fear of offending. We must understand that the nature of the gospel is such that it will offend some people (Luke 12:53; Acts 13:45-48). It offends because it is distinctive (1 John 4:1, 6), narrow (Matt. 7:13-14), and convicts men of their sin (John 16:8; Acts 2:37).

We sometimes have a fear that the gospel will make someone mad—they may get upset. We become uncomfortable when we bring a friend to a service and the sermon deals with some error that our friend believes. We are afraid it will "turn them off" or they may dislike us. We can never teach the lost if we are constantly fearful of hurting their feelings. We must understand, that many have obeyed the gospel after they first got mad. It very well may be that the person who does get mad will try to prove his belief to be right. In the process of doing that, many have learned the truth.

The fear of alienating a friend. Again, the gospel will alienate close friends and family (Luke 12:53). We can't change that! If we try to convert a friend or family member, it could cause a strain. So, we often deem it not worth the risk. A closer look at the rich man (after his death) would suggest that he thought it worth the risk of offending and alienating for someone to reach his brothers (Luke 16:28).

Qualifications of the Apostles of Christ

Joe R. Price

An apostle is literally “one sent forth” (Vine 30). The word is applied in the New Testament to any number of individuals who were sent forth on any number of tasks (Heb. 3:1; Acts 14:14; 13:3; 2 Cor. 8:23).

Our interest here is to consider the men whom Jesus chose, appointed, and sent into the world to bear the particular fruit of preaching and confirming the gospel that would be revealed to them by God: “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain” (John 15:16; cf. 6:70). Thus it is recorded that Jesus “chose twelve whom He also named apostles” (Luke 6:13). The Lord replaced Judas (who fell from his apostleship and betrayed Christ) with Matthias (Acts 1:24-26; John 6:70-71). And, the Lord selected Saul of Tarsus to be his “chosen vessel” whom he sent to the Gentiles with the gospel of salvation (Acts 9:15; 26:16-18).

The apostles are a gift Christ gave to the world and to his church for the purpose of salvation and edification (Eph. 4:7-16). Entrusted with the gospel of salvation, the apostles of Christ fully preached its saving message to the world (Mark 16:15; Acts 20:20-21, 27; Col. 1:23). As a result of the fruit they bore (in revealing and preaching the gospel, the “word of the cross,” the New Testament of Jesus Christ), one can be saved from sin, grow to spiritual maturity in Christ, and have a sure hope of glory (Rom. 1:15-16; 1 Cor. 1:18; Eph. 4:12; Col. 1:27-28).

Perhaps there are many more reasons why we are not converting the world to Christ. This short list is sufficient to remind us that we need to be busy trying to reach our friends and neighbors with the gospel.

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False Apostles

The New Testament also warns of “false apostles” (2 Cor. 11:13). These made false claims of apostleship, declaring to have been chosen and sent by Christ. But, unlike the genuine apostles of Christ, these were “deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ” (2 Cor. 11:13). They were not to be believed or followed.

The veracity of their claims was put to the test: “And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars” (Rev. 2:2). It was not enough to merely *claim* to be an apostle of Christ. There were “signs of an apostle” as well as qualifications to be an apostle by which one could distinguish between true and false apostles (2 Cor. 12:12).

There continue to be those today “who say they are apostles” and are not. For example, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (the Mormons) boasts of having “living apostles” today. When these are tested against the New Testament qualifications of apostles, their signs, powers and works, they miserably fail. They are not to be believed or followed by those seeking to please Christ (Gal. 1:6-10).

Some may challenge whether or not we can test modern-day claims of apostleship as the Ephesians did in Revelation 2:2. We believe we can, and must, do so (1 John 4:1, 6). All agree the New Testament apostles were selected by Jesus Christ and sent into the world by him to preach the gospel. It is reasonable and scriptural to use the New Testament as our guide to know the qualifications and work of the apostles of Christ. Claims of apostleship can be tested by (1) The words of the New Testament apostles (what they taught, 1 John 4:1-6; Gal. 1:8-9), (2) Their works (what they did and why they did it, 2 Cor. 12:12; Acts 8:18), and (3) Their qualifications (Acts 1:21-26). We now turn our attention to the New Testament qualifications of an apostle of Christ.

The Qualifications of the Apostles of Christ

How did a man become an apostle of Christ? There were no nominations or campaigns to become an apostle. Apostles were not elected by the members of the church. Jesus personally chose his apostles: “You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you” (John 15:16). Some have mistakenly concluded that the eleven apostles selected Matthias to replace Judas, but in truth, Jesus selected Matthias and revealed his selection to the eleven:

And they prayed and said, “You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.” And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles (Acts 1:24-26).

Concerning Saul of Tarsus, the Lord said, “Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel” (Acts 9:15). Jesus appeared to Saul in order to choose him and qualify him to be an apostle (Acts 26:16).

The apostles of Jesus Christ were thoroughly familiar with him, having been in his presence throughout his personal ministry on earth.

Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection (Acts 1:21-22).

They heard Jesus teach; they saw his works; they touched him. And, they declared these things to us so we can have life and fellowship with our God:

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life—the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us—that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ (1 John 1:1-3).

When promising the apostles that the Spirit of truth would be sent to the apostles from the Father, Jesus affirmed, “And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning” (John 15:27). The Holy Spirit empowered the apostles with full remembrance of what Jesus taught and directed them in what to say and write (John 14:26; Matt. 10:19-20; 1 Cor. 2:6-13; Eph. 3:3-7). As a result, we can have complete confidence in the apostles’ testimony concerning the life and teachings of Jesus. It is by their message we are brought to faith in Christ and eternal life in him (John 20:30-31; 1 John 1:3-4).

It is obvious that no one living today was with Jesus when he was on the earth. Nobody meets this qualification, and on this basis is not an apostle of Christ. If someone raises Paul as one who did not meet this qualification, it is true that Paul was an exception—an exception which Jesus himself made. Paul regarded himself as “the least of the apostles” because he persecuted the church of God (1 Cor. 15:9). Yet, the Lord was gracious to him and appointed him to be an apostle (Rom. 1:5; 15:15-16; 1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:11). To point out the exceptional nature of Paul’s apostleship does not prove some one today is an apostle. The Lord had the right to make an exception, which he did in Paul’s case. He made no others.

In addition to having been with Jesus before his death on the cross, the apostles were also eyewitnesses of the resurrected Christ. Their appointed work was to be witnesses who would give competent testimony that Jesus was raised from the dead:

Him God raised up on the third day, and showed Him openly, not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, even to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead. And He commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that it is He who was ordained by God to be Judge of the living and the dead (Acts 10:40-42; cf. 1:8; 2:32; 3:15; 5:30-32).

Jesus appeared to Saul of Tarsus so that he, too, would be an eyewitness of the resurrected Christ (Acts 22:14-15; 26:16). Paul noted that after Jesus had appeared to the other apostles, “Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time” (1 Cor. 15:8; cf. 9:1).

The eyewitness testimony of the New Testament apostles is competent, having been confirmed “in signs and wonders and mighty deeds” (2 Cor. 12:12; Rom. 15:18-19; Heb. 2:3-4). Their testimony was inspired of God and sufficiently upholds the message that “this Jesus God has raised up” (Acts 2:32; 1 Cor. 2:1-5; 10-13; Gal. 1:11-12). No additional apostles are needed to testify that Jesus was raised from the dead. Those who claim to be apostles of Christ are “false apostles” who deceive the innocent (2 Cor. 11:13).

Conclusion

The New Testament qualifications of an apostle of Jesus Christ are:

1. He was chosen by Jesus (John 15:16; Acts 1:24; 9:15; 26:16)
2. He accompanied Jesus during his earthly ministry (Acts 1:21-22; John 15:27; 1 John 1:1-3)
3. He was an eyewitness of the resurrected Christ (Acts 1:8, 22; 2:32; 22:14-15; 26:16)

The apostles accomplished the work Jesus gave them. The gospel was preached, confirmed, and written. We

In A Sound Church, But Yet Without A Clue!

Dennis L. Reed

The expressions “non-institutional” and “conservative” are often being commonly used by brethren today to describe an assembly of brethren who do not support the sponsoring church or human institutions and who are not what is viewed as being liberal minded in their spiritual thought. But we need to be aware that these terms are also now being used among a great many brethren to describe congregations where brethren gladly advocate and practice the false teachings of “unity in diversity” and where the endorsement and fellowship of brethren who teach and/or practice soul destructive error is a common occurrence.

So it had better become most obvious to faithful brethren that “soundness” in teaching and practice involves a great deal more than simply describing an assembly of brethren as being non-institutional or conservative. I am confident that we could all profit from a full examination of what constitutes the acceptance and practice of “sound doctrine” among our brethren, but suffice it to say for our purposes in this particular article that we recognize that a sound and faithful group of brethren will be those who abide in the doctrine of Christ (John 8:31-32), and who will not receive anyone who does not bring this teaching (2 John 9-11). These are brethren who have fellowship

with God and one another because they walk in the light (1 John 1:5-7), and they are very concerned and careful that they have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness (Eph. 5:6-14).

Brethren, I would like to tell you in as plain and straightforward manner as I can, that I am also genuinely concerned about a great many of my brethren who are in churches where “sound doctrine” is considered the criteria for faith and practice and where brethren contend that they oppose the support and endorsement of false teachers and their doctrines. These are churches where brethren do not accept the errors of “unity-in-diversity” and where they will tell you that they understand and hold to the truth on “fellowship issues.” These are churches which do have men who profess a love and respect for the word of God to hold meetings for them and to fill the local pulpit. But I greatly fear that far too many of these are also churches which are filled with many brethren who still don’t have a clue as to what is really happening in the church today! This is the serious issue that I am seeking to raise by saying that we have brethren who are **“In A Sound Church, But Yet Without A Clue.”**

Possibly a good place to start would be with the quality and quantity of teaching which is being done in these churches. I am persuaded that far too many of the preachers who fill the pulpits of these churches are not really on the “firing line” in the battle which is raging between truth and error among the Lord’s people. They will tell you about their sound convictions if you ask them, but the fact remains that some are not doing enough public preaching and teaching on these issues to fill a thimble! If you were to ask these preachers for a copy of their sermon outlines or tapes of their sermons which they had preached in the local church or in gospel meetings on such matters as unity-in-diversity, false teachers, fellowship of false teachers, the false teaching being done on autonomy, the fellowship of those who teach error or practice error on

have their testimony of Christ in the inspired Scriptures of the New Testament, the incorruptible word of God (1 Cor. 14:37; 1 Pet. 1:22-25). There is no need for “living” apostles today because we have the “living” word of God that was preached by the first century apostles. No one today meets the scriptural qualifications to be an apostle of Jesus Christ. Those who claim otherwise fail the test and show themselves to be false (1 John 4:1, 6; Rev. 2:2).

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divorce and remarriage, the error that fellowship doesn't exist between brethren except in a local church, the issue of justifying sinful doctrines and practices on the basis of Roman 14, the issue of using preachers who believe and uphold soul damning error to preach in meetings just as long as they don't "teach it here," or a host of other matters which seem to arise almost on a daily basis, then you may be greatly surprised to find that you will have very little material which can be provided for you to consider. That concentrated teaching is just *not* taking place in these churches. How many gospel meeting sermons on these issues have been preached in these local churches? How many articles in local bulletins, or on the Internet, or in papers published by brethren are being written on these issues by these supposedly "sound" preachers? Brethren, I am persuaded that some of these "soldiers" are missing *from* action! Instead of being on the "front lines," they are staying well hidden behind the trees and in the bushes! And what you end up having from all of this is a "sound church" which is filled with brethren who don't really have a clue as to what is actually happening in churches today! It amazes me that in some of these same churches there seems to be a constant emphasis on "balance" in preaching. I don't know of any faithful brother who would deny the need for balance in what is preached, but why is it that the balance scale doesn't seem to contain any preaching on the matters just mentioned above? Brethren, it is rank hypocrisy to say that you are "sound" and that you do "sound preaching" when you are not even touching your finger to the issues which are currently tearing the church to threads. And the end result of such neglect is that you have brethren in these supposedly "sound" churches who don't have a clue as to what is happening in churches all over this country. Do you suppose that this local preacher might feel that if he can just keep these brethren ignorant of these issues, then surely it "can never happen here"?

And, it therefore becomes a sober reality that we have a tremendous number of brethren who are persuaded that they are in "sound churches" and who are being ignorantly carried down the road of digression at the speed of a bullet train! Brethren, it is time to tell preachers among us to wake up and become much more vocal and aggressive in opposing these errors than many of them have been in the past. Yes, some of them might have to pack up and move somewhere else if they did. Yes, some of them might have to suffer financial hardship. Yes, some of them might have to get out and get a job "making tents" in order to support their family. Becoming aggressive in the battle might cost the cancellation of some of the gospel meetings which they have planned. But let it be made very clear that continuing to hide behind the trees and avoiding the conflict is not going to slow the progress of error and false teaching. These churches will eventually be lost because some of these preachers and elders do not have the intestinal fortitude to stand up and be counted in the battle to uphold righteous-

ness and condemn sin! If ignorance and a lack of awareness is allowed to prevail, you can be assured that error will flourish and that these churches will be a "lost cause" before they even know what is happening to them. "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I also will forget thy children" (Hos. 4:6).

Are there really preachers professing to be "sound" who will remain *quiet* because they don't want to look for another place to preach and have to uproot their families? You know the answer, don't you? Are there preachers who will remain *quiet* because they don't want to suffer loss of income or have their gospel meetings canceled? Again, you know the answer, don't you? What other explanation can you give for their not boldly speaking out on these matters? They can preach about "balance" until Rome burns to the ground, but their inconsistency is certainly obvious to the Lord, and I can assure you that it is obvious to faithful brethren who are beat upon and bloody because they have had the courage to meet the enemy on the front line of battle! I don't have a moment's problem with preaching on "balance" if you will just *practice what you preach!*

There are brethren all over this country who are teaching and converting people out of the grips of sin and error and at the same time having to teach them that many of our own brethren are upholding sin and error under the guise of "unity-in-diversity." Do you think that this is an easy task? We are pleading with them to leave the world behind and find the "peace that passeth all understanding" in the one true church, and then at the same time having to teach and ground them with the reality that many of our brethren are exchanging the truth for a lie and are doing everything within their power to "bring the world into the church"? Do you think that such is an easy task? Do you think that it is easy to tell new converts that most of the churches of Christ in your area support "unity-in-diversity" (the fellowship of moral and doctrinal error) and that most of these churches will support and uphold preachers who teach and practice soul damning error? And then, are we naïve enough to believe that we can solve all of this by just preaching a sermon on "balance in preaching" and then proceed with our practice of "whistling past the graveyard"?

As long as we have "sound churches" with brethren in them "who don't have a clue," then we are going to lose ground to Satan on a daily basis! As long as we have preachers who, for whatever reason, are not joining the front line of battle against this encroaching enemy, then Satan's forces will continue to surround and destroy one church after another because of their ignorance and complacency.

Brethren, there is only one answer and you and I know what it is.

Did These Really Happen?

Johnie Edwards

There would be those who tell us that many of the great events of the Bible did not really happen but were merely figurative myths to illustrate a point. Such is happening among us today in some quarters. Let's take a look at some areas where this is being done.

1. Days of Creation. Some are telling us that the days of creation in Genesis were not literal twenty-four hour days but rather long periods of time. The Scriptures will not allow such teaching! Six times in Genesis 1 the phrase, "And the evening and the morning were the first day, second day, third day, fourth day, fifth and sixth day. . ." (Gen. 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31). There is nothing in the text to indicate that these days were long periods of time. Moses makes it clear that these were just ordinary twenty-four hour days when he said, "For *in six days* the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and the Lord rested the seventh day" (Exod. 20:11). Had the Lord intended to make these days long periods of time, rather than twenty-four hour days, how would he have said it? Some one asked, "How did God do all these in such a short time?" "And God said," that's how (Gen. 1:6)! If these Genesis-days were

long eons of time, when did they start to be twenty-four hour days, since they are twenty-four hour days now?

2. The Genesis Flood. We are being told that the flood of Genesis 6 was not a universal, world-wide flood but only a local one. The Bible teaches that the flood waters "prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and *all* the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered. Fifteen cubits upward did the waters prevail; and the mountains were covered" (Gen. 7:19-20). Ever check to see how high Mount Ararat is? If we deny the Genesis account of the flood, it but undermines what the Bible said really did happen and this is an attack on the inspiration of the Scriptures.

3. The Serpent. We are now being told by some of our own that the serpent in Eden was not really a serpent but a myth to represent something else! The Bible calls it a "serpent" (Gen. 3:1, 2, 4). New Testament inspiration called it a "serpent" (2 Cor. 11:3). Scary, isn't it?

4. Jonah Swallowed by a Great Fish/Whale. There are those who just laugh at such a thought as a man being swallowed by a whale. The Bible says he was. "Now the Lord had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights" (Jon. 1:17). Jesus said it really did happen (Matt. 12:40).

5. The Virgin Birth of Christ. Isaiah said Jesus would be born of a "virgin" (Isa. 7:14). Man comes along and says this is not biologically possible. Matthew reported that Jesus really was born of a virgin (Matt. 1:18).

6. What's Next? Once there is denial of these great Bible truths and events, there is no stopping. How long will it be before we deny the resurrection, Bible miracles, the church and the list goes on. Around and around we go and only God know where we will end up!

I charge thee in the sight of God, and of Christ Jesus, who shall judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be urgent in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine; but, having itching ears, will heap to themselves teachers after their own lusts; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside unto fables. But be thou sober in all things, suffer hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfil thy ministry (2 Tim. 4: 1-5).

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The Sunday Evening Lord's Supper Second Chance Or Mere Convenience?

Phil T. Arnold

At various times and places there has been much discussion over the scriptural authority for the Lord's supper being served by a congregation at a second Lord's Day service. On occasion these discussions have escalated to division, while more often brethren have dealt with their differences without such breeches in unity. One of the prominent objections sometimes set forth is that the practice of offering the supper at a second service (generally in the evening) has led to the abuse of forsaking the morning worship service merely for the sake of one's own convenience.

While I believe that the essentials set forth within Scripture are to be found in the serving of the Lord's supper at a second service, I too am troubled by the abuses that have sometimes resulted. I have difficulty in defending the abuse of absenting one's self from the morning assembly for just any reason and feeling compelled only to attend Sunday evening in order to fulfill our obligation to observe the supper each first day of the week. Of course, the same could be said for those who attend on Sunday morning and fulfill their obligation to observe the supper and fail to attend on Sunday evening because of their lack of desire to be there.

The Hebrew writer gives instruction, "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" (Heb. 10:25). Does this exhortation pertain only to the assembly in which one observes the supper or does it not pertain to anytime the saints are called to assemble? Again, I realize that "forsaking" may not merely refer to a given number of times one is absent from the assembly but may well be more indicative of a state of mind that is reflected in our actions. Yet, one time may be "forsaking" or abandoning depending on the thought behind it. How many times does one have to leave his children for it to be "forsaking"? Does it make any difference if he leaves them with a baby sitter while

he goes to work, or if he leaves them at a bus station unattended and drives off to go to a ball game? Certainly it does! The one action indicates care and concern while fulfilling one's responsibilities. The other indicates a selfish choice to abandon one's children. The same must be considered with our assembling. Would we rather be at the assembly but necessity demands that we be elsewhere temporarily? Or are we simply absenting ourselves for selfish reasons and personal convenience sake?

Under the Old Law God made provision for those who were unable to observe the Passover to have another opportunity to do so (see Num. 9:1-12). These individuals "could not keep" the Passover on the prescribed day. They were "providentially hindered" (that is, they had to deal with unexpected and unplanned matters). They desired to observe the Passover and, in fact, felt deprived by not being allowed to do so. It was as a result of their complaint that a second opportunity was extended to them by God. How does this compare with those who plan to absent themselves from the morning worship service and the supper merely for convenience sake trusting in the fact that they will have another opportunity on that day to assemble with the saints and partake of the supper? The state of mind and attitude of heart are in sharp contrast. What did God think of that person who merely chose not to observe the Passover? "But the man who (is) clean and is not on a journey, and ceases to keep the Passover, that same person shall be cut off from among his people, because he did not bring the offering of the Lord at its appointed time; that man shall bear his sin" (Num. 9:13). Using the Old Testament as our example (1 Cor. 10:11) and as a source of learning (Rom. 15:4), what might we conclude concerning the Lord's thinking about those who partake on Sunday evening merely as a matter of their personal convenience?

My objection is not to the serving of the Lord's supper at a second service on the Lord's day. My objection is to

What Would Jesus Really Do?

David Dann

Concerning the example set by Christ, Peter writes, “For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: ‘Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth’” (1 Pet. 1:21-22).

We understand from Peter’s exhortation that every Christian’s aim ought to be to conduct himself according to the example set by Jesus. In other words, our behavior in every situation should be modeled after the behavior of Christ, as it is revealed to us in the Bible.

It is common today to hear people speak of doing what Jesus would do in a given situation. In fact, many even wear bracelets inscribed with the letters “W.W.J.D.” in order to remind themselves that they should often ask the question, “What would Jesus do?” before plotting a course of action. Those who declare a determination to follow the example of Jesus are, no doubt, expressing a noble desire. However, we must realize that before we can base a course of action upon what Jesus would do, we’d better make sure we know

what Jesus would do. It does no good to act according to what we think Jesus might do, if we do not really know Jesus. A man may lie, cheat, and steal based upon what he thinks Jesus would do. Before we do what we think Jesus would do, we’d better stop and make sure we’re prepared to do what Jesus would really do.

1. Jesus would do what is right. With regard to the regularity with which he did the Father’s will, Jesus said, “I do always those things that please him” (John 8:29). To our Savior, doing what was right was not just one available option. To Jesus, doing what was right was the only option. If we find ourselves wavering between doing what the Bible says or taking some other course, then we are not doing what Jesus would do. Jesus would do what God’s word says to do.

2. Jesus would resist temptation and sin. Peter refers to Jesus as the one “who did no sin” (1 Pet. 1:22). Don’t think you’ve done what Jesus would do by giving in to sin once in awhile. Jesus would never sin. When faced

turning the observance of the supper memorializing our Savior’s death into a mere matter of convenience rather than a proclamation of our convictions. Should we stop serving the Lord’s supper on Sunday evening? The abuse of a matter does not necessarily make the matter itself wrong. Because an elder abuses his power does not mean that we should abandon God’s plan for the church. Because a man selfishly abuses his authority in the home does not mean that we should throw away God’s plan for the home. Let us strive to eliminate the abuse and maintain the practice that is right and authorized. Let me suggest that we honestly ask ourselves when those occasions arise that cause us to choose about assembling: Would we be missing on Sunday morning if there were no Sunday evening opportunity to observe the supper?

On the Lord’s day, unleavened bread and fruit of the vine are to be partaken of in the assembly of the saints in remembrance of our Lord’s death. All of these essential elements of Scripture are found in both the first and second assembly at which the supper is offered. It is the individual worshiper (his or her heart and life), that will determine whether or not that observance is ultimately acceptable to the Lord.

Would you miss Sunday morning worship if you knew there would be no opportunity to observe the supper on Sunday evening?

From Evangelizer, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, May 27, 2001

with Satan's temptation, Jesus responded by quoting the appropriate Scriptures to fit the occasion (Matt. 4:1-10). How many of us do what Jesus would do when it comes to dealing with temptation?

3. Jesus would tell the truth. Jesus is so inseparably connected with the truth that he could even say, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). Even when faced with those who desired his death, Jesus could innocently say, "But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God" (John 8:40). Many people feel that it is okay to tell a lie, or at least bend the truth when in a tight spot, or when it is thought that a greater good can be accomplished through a "little" lie. After all, wouldn't Jesus do the same thing? No, Jesus would not do the same thing. Jesus would tell the truth.

4. Jesus would expose the doctrines of men. The toleration of contradictory doctrines and practices is a popular religious idea of our day. Many seem to think that Jesus would be a proponent of such toleration. He would not. Jesus rebuked the scribes and Pharisees for "teaching as doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:9). If we're going to do what Jesus would do, then we're going to have to expose false doctrine in the light of truth.

5. Jesus would warn against those who promote false doctrine. Jesus warned his disciples against corrupting influences, saying, "Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod" (Mark 8:15). We often hear the cries of those who denounce the practice of warning against the promoters of error. Such a practice is

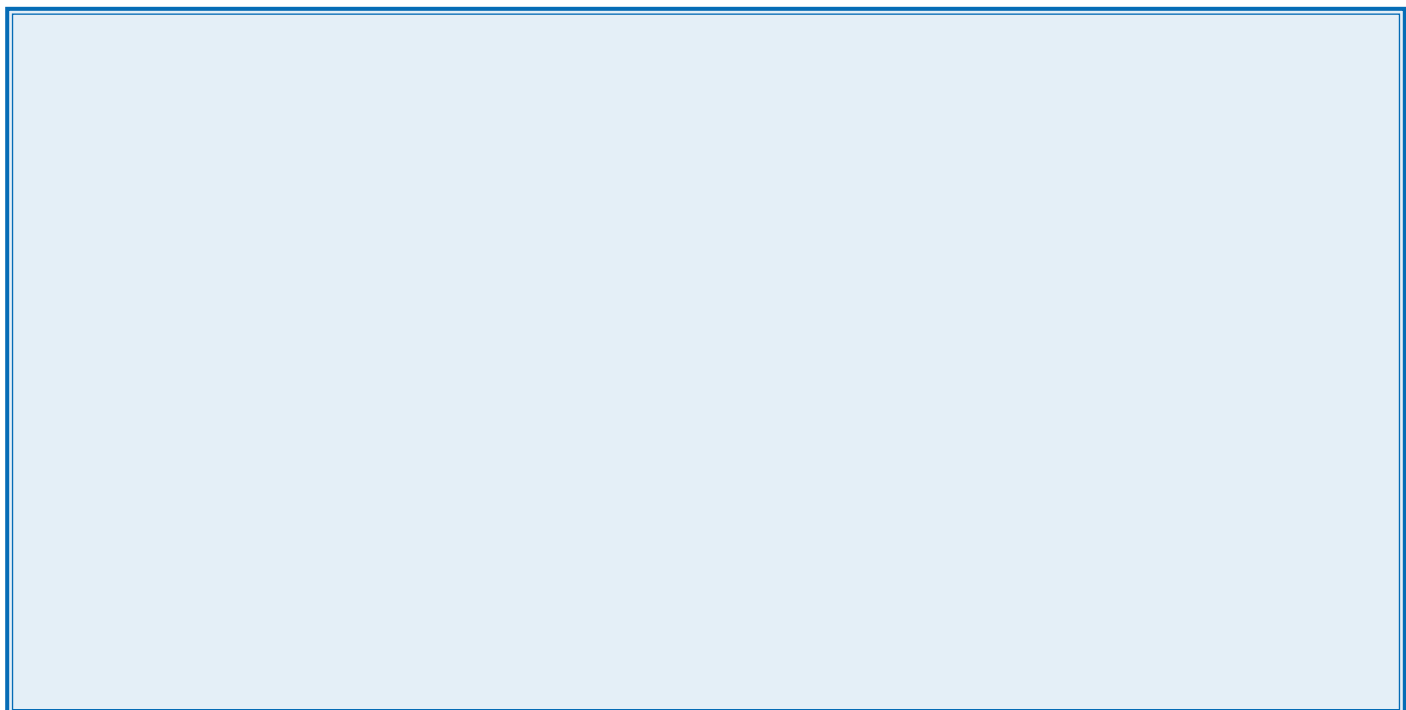
viewed as unloving and unchristian behavior. But, what would Jesus do? After all, it was Jesus who, "in the hearing of all the people" said, "Beware of the scribes, which desire to walk in long robes, and love greetings in the markets, and the highest seats in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts" (Luke 24:45-46).

6. Jesus would not compromise with sin and error. When his disciples urged him to strike a compromise with those who taught error, Jesus said, "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" (Matt. 15:13-14). Let us remember that "destructive heresies" lead people into sin and, ultimately, eternal destruction. Unfortunately, some have the idea that Jesus was primarily interested in compromise, and therefore, we will compromise if we are to do what Jesus would do. Before we endorse those who are involved in soul-condemning error, we'd better take another look at what Jesus would really do.

Conclusion

The Hebrew writer exhorts us to "run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith" (Heb. 12:1-2). Yes, it is admirable to want to do what Jesus would do. Much sin and sadness could be avoided if we made every decision on that very basis. But remember, such a disposition will serve as an unsafe guide if we don't really know what Jesus would do.

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Girls Pushing for Modest Fashion Options

Steve Wallace

Does the above title catch your eye? It caught mine. You see, it is not mine. I simply copied it from the heading of an AP news article (Kristen Gelineau, *Yahoo News*, June 2, 2004). I could hardly believe my eyes, but there it was! As the writer of Proverbs wrote, “As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country” (25:25). Living outside of the U.S. and having long since become accustomed to the kind of fashion promoted both there and here in Europe, it was truly refreshing to read the contents of this article. Hopefully, this review of it will be encouraging and instructive.

The article told of the experiences an eleven-year-old girl had in shopping for clothes. She “became frustrated with all the low-cut hip-huggers and skintight tops. So she wrote to (Nordstrom’s) executives to complain.” As a result of this, the shy, bespectacled redhead has since become an instant media darling appearing on national television over the past two weeks to promote modest fashions instead of the saucy looks popularized by the likes of Britney Spears.

“We like to call this new girl Miss Modesty,” said Gigi Solif Schanen, fashion editor at *Seventeen* magazine.

Shoppers are starting to see higher waistlines and lower hemlines, and tweeds, fitted blazers and layers are expected to be big this fall, Schanen said. “. . . I think people are tired of seeing so much skin and want to leave a little more to the imagination.”

The Web sites *ModestApparelUSA.com* and *ModestByDesign.com*—where the slogan is “Clothing your father would be proud of”—report that sales have skyrocketed over the past eighteen months. Many youngsters are frustrated by the profusion of racy teenage clothing, according to Buzz Marketing, a New Jersey-based firm that compiles feedback from teen advisers.

While this is just now making the news (in the experience of this writer), it has been pushed from the grassroots level for some time.

In 2002, a group of Arizona teens submitted a petition to the Phoenix division of the Dillard’s department store chain asking for more modest clothes. The chain began carrying more conservative styles. Nordstrom spokeswoman Deniz Anders said the company has been hearing for about two years from customers who want more modest looks, and Nordstrom tries to carry a broad array of styles in its stores.

One cannot help but be encouraged by such news. Further, we hope that it will cause some of our brothers and sisters in Christ to reconsider their thinking on the subject of dress. There are some clear lessons to be drawn from the Scriptures that this news article reinforces.

1. Modesty is reflected in the way one dresses (1 Tim. 2:9). Yes, it can also be reflected in other ways, but our point is clear for all to see: Society, as represented by the writer and many young people in this article, sees a connection between modesty and dress. It is helpful to remember that the writer is using the word “modest” as it is used in our society. Webster’s definition of the word in this connection is, “. . . decent; pure; now especially, not displaying one’s body” (*New Universal Unabridged Dictionary* 1155). Decency and purity (Webster) are something we can show in many different ways, but let it never be forgotten that among them is in how we dress. Our next point naturally grows out of this one.

2. Immodesty is reflected in the way one dresses. Let us note again a line from the article under consideration. It said that the young lady featured in the story was trying

“to promote modest fashions instead of the saucy looks popularized by the likes of Britney Spears.” Modest fashions are contrasted with the clothes worn by Miss Spears. Her clothes are characterized as “saucy.” This word means, “impudent; rude; transgressing the rules of decorum” (*Ibid.* 1611). I do not know if I have ever heard a song by this pop diva. However, you cannot miss seeing pictures of her. She has appeared on news sites on the net, posters at fast food restaurants, billboards, etc. Decency generally demands that one avert his eyes when seeing her pictures as she is so often dressed in some kind of revealing attire. She is an example of immodesty. This leads us to our next point.

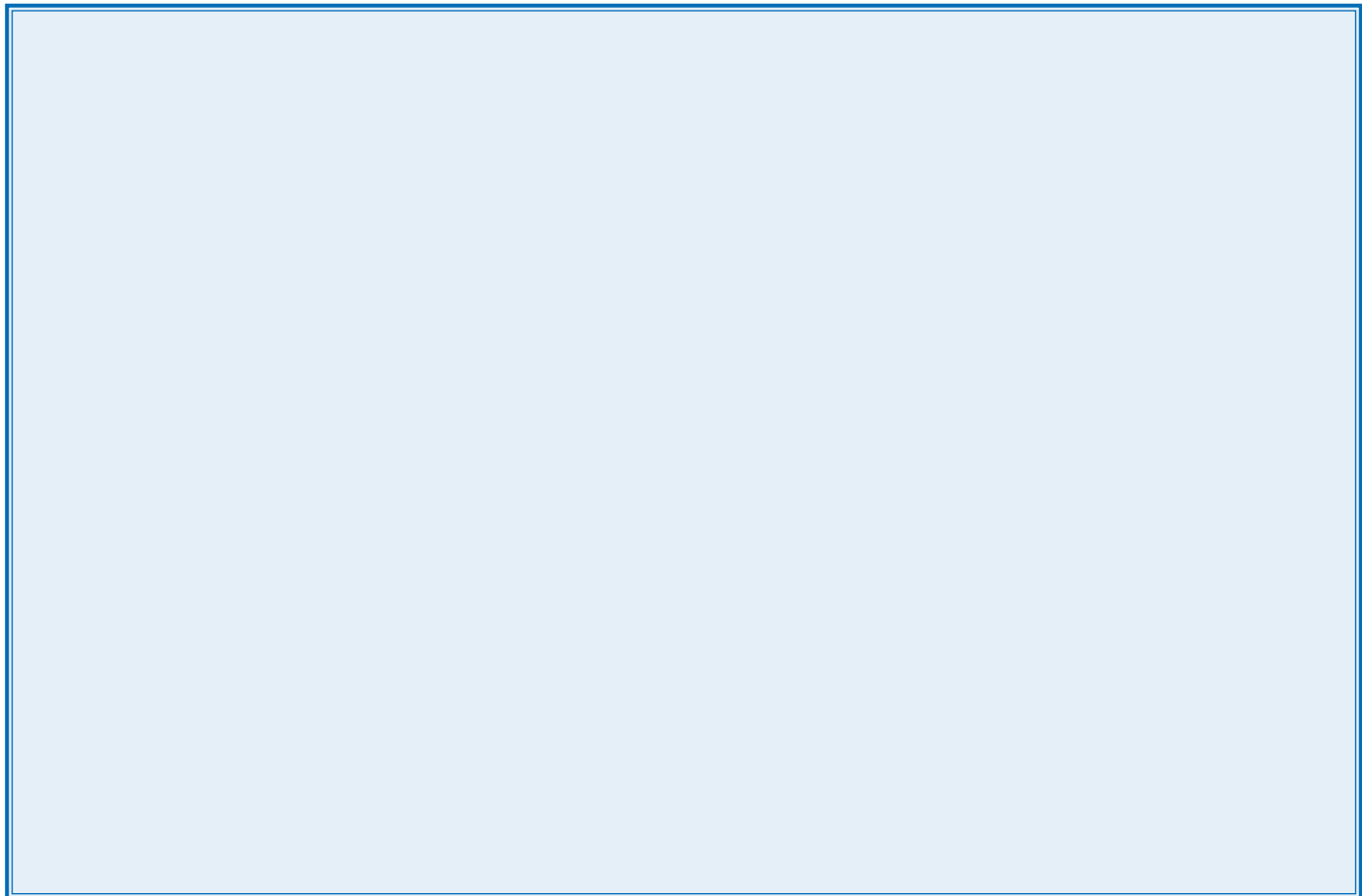
3. What is modest attire and what is immodest? All Christians should want to appear modest before our God as well as before mankind. Does our article contain any clues as to what clothes should or should not be worn? For starters, it is interesting to note that “higher waistlines and lower hemlines” are viewed as being desirable while clothes that show “much skin” are seen in an opposite light. Included at the end of the article under review were three web sites dedicated to modest clothing. These sites were revealing in a way that is not usually connected with modern fashion. That is to say that they revealed women in

clothes that answered to Webster’s definition: “. . . Decent; pure; now especially, not displaying one’s body.” Even the swim suits that were pictured covered from the shoulders to the knees! Just as helpful in answering the question posed in our point here is what was not on these web sites. There were no split skirts, backless dresses, necklines that reached inches below the underarm in the front, clothing above the knee, bare midriffs, tube or halter tops, etc. That is to say, nothing that would fit Britney Spear’s wardrobe. Such clothing is obviously not modest. Does the clothing you wear fit the description of modesty or immodesty?

Conclusion

Finally, the world is starting to take another, refreshing look at fashion. Hopefully, God’s people will do the same. All Christians recognize there are things that one should not wear. May more of us wake up to the whole truth on these matters. May offenders reconsider, reflect, and repent in order to bring purity and decency to this part of their lives (Acts 8:22; Tit. 2:11-12). As our news article shows, it is a part of our lives that the world sees and understands. God is watching as well (Acts 15:8).

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“Paul” continued from front page

Joyful Hope: “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.” The emperor of Rome had pronounced upon him a sentence of death. The ruler of heaven and earth had pronounced upon him the victor’s crown of righteousness. The Lord, the righteous Judge, would give this reward to him at the last day. The Romans were mistaken if they thought the great apostle would despair at this trying time. He lifted up his eyes in joy and hope. He had told Titus he was “in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began” (Tit. 1:2). Paul knew he was going for that reward for the Holy Spirit inspired him to pen these words describing his eternal rest.

Painful Experiences: Paul asked Timothy to come to him before winter (4:21). There were painful reasons why he sought Timothy’s presences with him. Demas had forsaken him, having loved this present world (4:10). Alexander the coppersmith had done him much evil. Paul said God would reward him according to his works (4:14).

Forgiving Love: He said, “. . . no man stood with me, but all men forsook him” (4:16). Life would have been endangered had people stepped up in his defense. Paul knew that. “I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge” (4:16b). One is reminded of the words of Jesus: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). Or perhaps, one remembers the prayer of Stephen: “Lord, lay not this sin to their charge” (Acts 7:60). Paul’s dying spirit was one of understanding and benevolence.

God’s Faithfulness: Paul said, “Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me” (4:17). While men on the earth, some good and some bad, had forsaken him, Paul did not doubt that the Lord would be faithful to his promise: “. . . I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Heb. 13:5). God is trustworthy, not only in times of peace and freedom, but also in times of distress and dying. No mere philosophy can impart such consolation.

Unfailing Confidence: “And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom” (4:18). The confident delivery from “every evil work” rested in the knowledge that no power is greater than God’s power. God would transport him to glory, in spite of the efforts of evil to destroy him. Not only had Paul lived and served in God’s *earthly* kingdom, but he knew that God would surely grant him entrance into the *heavenly* kingdom. To the Roman Christians Paul had said: “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Rom. 8:18).

A Final Praise: When Paul thought of what awaited him beyond his suffering of death, he said of God, “to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen” (4:18b). These were the dying words of edification, warning, comfort, joy, and confidence from the apostle Paul. Will we have this triumphant spirit at the hour of our departure?

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“Child or Children” continued from page 2

(Susan Treggiari, *Roman Marriage* 71). Treggiari raises the issue,

Moderns have worried about whether one child sufficed to allow a person to take an inheritance. But Gaius is quite explicit (and correct in logic): . . . (quotation of Latin text *Digest* 50:16.149 *Gaius viii ad legem Iuliam et Papiam*, is omitted and what follows is Treggiari’s translation of Gaius’ text, mw):

A person is not without children if he or she has one son or one daughter, for this expression, “he has children,” “he does not have children” is always used in the plural number, as are notebooks and writing-tablets.

. . . (another Gaius Latin text, *Digest* 50.16.149, *Gaius x ad legem Iuliam et Papiam* is omitted and what follows is the translation, mw)

For if we cannot say that a man is without children, we have to say he has children (*Roman Marriage* 73).

This discussion is relevant because it pertains to contemporary use of the phrase for Paul’s audience. It shows that Paul’s first audience would have been familiar with such language and would have understood that a person with one child met the qualification of “children,” whether we are speaking of an elder or a “widow indeed.”

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