

TRUTH

Can This Marriage Be Saved?

Joe R. Price

The Bible reveals that God Almighty established marriage to meet and fulfill man's need for companionship, to provide mankind with moral cohabitation and thus furnish the appropriate environment for rearing subsequent generations (see Gen. 2:18-25; 1:26-28; 18:19; 1 Cor. 7:1-2; Deut. 6:7-9; Ps. 127; Eph. 6:1-4). Marriage is an honorable and lifelong arrangement (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:4-6; Heb. 13:4). Those who choose to dishonor it by putting it asunder will answer to the God who ordained it (Heb. 13:4). Every person who enters marriage is obligated by God to (1) abide by God's regulation of marriage (Matt. 19:9; 5:32; Rom. 7:3; Mark 6:17-18), and (2) to accept the roles and responsibilities marriage obliges them to as husband or wife (Rom. 7:2; 1 Cor. 7:39; Eph. 5:22-33).

Today, the American view of marriage is very, very different. In the year 2000 there were 5.5 million Americas living together outside of marriage, an eleven fold increase since 1960 (Wm. J. Bennett, *The Broken Hearth* 13). More than half of all marriages in our country are now preceded by a period of living together (*Ibid.*).

After people get married the picture is just as bleak. The United States has the highest divorce rate in the world (Wm. J.

Bennett, *The Index of Leading Cultural Indicators* 59). Historian Lawrence Stone has assessed divorce to be "as much a part of our culture and our lives as death and taxes" (*The Broken Hearth* 13). Currently, one out of two children will witness the breakup of their parents' marriage (*Ibid.* 12).

The breakdown of marriage and family life (which some defend in the name of personal expression, fulfillment, liberation, and happiness) is one of the very reasons for so much doubt, uncertainty, sadness, emotional imprisonment and faithlessness in our society. The promised joy of liberation from the oppression of marriage did not happen.

More than once people have presented me with their marriage problems and asked, "Can this marriage be saved"? When both parties are fully committed to restoring their marriage to what God wants it to be, their marriage can be saved. Often, the sad truth is that only one person in the marriage wants to work toward its success. Since two cannot walk together unless they are in

see "Marriage" on p. 216

***"And ye shall
know the truth,
and the truth
shall make
you free"
(John 8:32).***

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Lessons From Sodom and Gomorrah

Mike Willis

The story of Sodom and Gomorrah has many lessons for men to learn. You will recall that the text relates that God destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah because the wickedness was so great in those cities that there were not ten righteous souls to prevent the cities from being destroyed. As we think about the Lord's judgment, here are some lessons that come to mind:



The sinfulness of sodomy. The English word “sodomy” means “any sexual intercourse regarded as abnormal, as between persons of the same sex, especially males, or between a person and an animal”

(Webster). The word is derived from the name of the city of Sodom. The angels of the Lord went down to Sodom to see if the city was wholly given to wickedness, so much that it should be destroyed (Gen. 18:20-21). Abraham interceded for the city asking God not to destroy the city if so few as ten righteous souls were there. The angels came to Sodom where Lot invited them into his home. At the evening, the men of the city came to Lot's door demanding him to send out the sojourners that they might “know” them (i.e., have sexual relationship with them). The text says, “But before they lay down, the men of the city, even the men of Sodom, compassed the house round, both old and young, all the people from every quarter” (Gen. 19:4). Notice these points: (a) People from every quarter of the city were present. Most cities have a “red-light district” or neighborhood where sin runs rampant. That is where most drugs are sold, murders occur, rapes happen, etc. However, Sodom had become so corrupt that this immorality was not limited to a “red-light district”; wicked men were present from every quarter of the city, for immorality pervaded the city. (b) It included both young and old. Generally the older generation clings to the traditional standards of morality. However, immorality had been practiced so long in Sodom that it spread through all generations.

The sin that the men wished to commit was not merely homosexuality. Homosexuality is sinful and condemned by Scripture. The Law of Moses said, “Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it is abomination” (Lev. 18:22). “If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to

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Weakness and Weak Brethren

Mark Mayberry

Introduction

In this lesson, let us consider what the Bible says on the subject of weakness. God's word speaks of those who are weak in conscience and in faith; it refers to the weakness of the flesh, and also describes those who are spiritually weak. Yet, none of these conditions should be constant or chronic. No one is justified by saying, "I am weak. I will forever be weak. Therefore, I am excused." Rather, we are commanded to grow in grace, faith, and knowledge (Eph. 4:14-16; 1 Pet. 2:1-3; 2 Pet. 3:17-18). In each case, in the very context that discusses weakness, we also learn that God has made provision for the weak to become strong.

Weak In Conscience

In 1 Corinthians 8, Paul discusses those who are weak in conscience regarding meat that had been sacrificed to idols (1 Cor. 8:1-12). Apparently, such individuals came from a Gentile background. Prior to their conversion, they had worshiped in the idol's temple, and in various ways had honored false gods. Now that they were Christians, how should they view such matters? What position should they take regarding meat that had been offered in sacrifice to an idol? Paul affirms the truth that the idol is nothing, and meat formerly used in idolatrous worship is clean. Yet, not all men have this knowledge. Therefore, caution is in order. Paul admonished the brethren to treat one another with deference. He said, "Don't violate your own conscience, or do anything that would cause a fellow Christian to violate theirs." The Corinthian disciples were to be helpful and supportive towards one another. Furthermore, they were to avoid any actions that would imply an endorsement of idolatry (1 Cor. 10:14-33).

Having emphasized the need for forbearance, let us recognize that weakness should not be a permanent state. God has made provision for the weak to become strong. True, a man should not violate his conscience, but one's conscience should be reflective of a continually growing basis of knowledge. Ignorance may lead us to object to things that are not objectionable. Ignorance may also lead us to participate in things that are sinful and wrong. However, with continued growth, both of these problems should be corrected. The conscience operates according to what it has been taught, and it must be constantly instructed according to the Word of God (1 Tim. 1:5; 3:8-9; 2 Pet. 3:18).

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Weak In Faith

In Romans 14, Paul discusses those who are weak in faith regarding the eating of meats and the observing of days. Apparently such individuals came from a Jewish background. Throughout their lives, they had been taught that certain meats were to be regarded as unclean and certain days treated as holy. Now they are Christians. How should they view such matters? Paul affirms the truth that all meats are clean and days are equal. The solution is in the context. Yet, not all have this knowledge. Therefore, caution is in order. Again, Paul admonished the brethren to treat one another with deference: "Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died." Further, he repeated the admonition, "Don't violate your own conscience, or do anything that would cause a fellow Christians to violate theirs" (Rom. 14:1-4, 13-23).

Nevertheless, let us recognize that weakness should not be a perpetual condition. God has made provision for the weak to become strong. Once more, the solution is in the context. Here, as well as in other places, God's word affirms that meats are clean and days (other than the Lord's day) are insignificant (Acts 10:9-16; Col. 2:16-17; 1 Tim. 4:1-5). The weak brother is mistaken in his beliefs. Now that he has been properly instructed, he should accept God's revelation on the subject. Granted, sometimes it takes a while for teaching to sink in, but in time, his conscientious convictions should reflect this newfound understanding of God's word.

How tragic that in recent years this passage has been used in defense of Homer Hailey, an aged and learned brother, who taught error on marriage-divorce-and-remarriage. Those brethren who employed Romans 14 in defense of brother Hailey must, of necessity, have categorized him as the weak brother who misunderstands God's will, as opposed to the strong brother who knows the truth. Such application is mistaken on two fronts: (1) Although the context of Romans 14 speaks of things that are morally neutral, it has been improperly applied to matters of serious and doctrinal import. Can one commit fornication "to the Lord"? Is adultery "clean"? Are unscriptural marriages matters of moral indifference? Obviously not. (2) The weak brother of Romans 14 is expected to accept God's revelation on the disputed subject: Meats are clean and days are nothing. Hopefully, in time, his conscience will reflect this newfound understanding. Ultimately, it matters not whether he eats meats or refrains from such, but he must accept the truth of God. The weak brother is not to remain weak forever.

How amazing, therefore, that this passage has been used in defense of an aged soldier of the cross who has held an erroneous position of marriage-divorce-and-remarriage for over 50 years. First of all, his doctrine allows men and women in unscriptural marriages to remain in a state

of adultery. The eternal consequences of such teaching is grave (Matt. 19:9; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Gal. 5:19-21). Secondly, despite the repeated and prolonged efforts of faithful men, brother Hailey showed absolutely no willingness to change his position. How could such an individual be called a weak brother? If by some stretch of the imagination, the term could be properly applied, then we must ask, "How much time is required for a weak brother to become strong?" Obviously, we should give individuals time to come to a knowledge of the truth. However, if fifty years is not sufficient, how much time is required? Seventy-five years? One hundred? Patience demands that we allow adequate time for study, correction, and restoration. No one is advocating rashness. However, if longsuffering requires 50, 75 or 100 years, then the bounds of Christian fellowship can never effectively be drawn. If such a rule were applied to the restorative efforts of a local congregation, no disciplinary action would ever be forthcoming (Matt. 18:15-17; Rom. 16:17; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14; Tit. 3:10-11; etc.).

Weak In Flesh

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus made reference to the weakness of the flesh (Matt. 26:36-41; Mark 14:32-38). Indeed, honesty demands that we acknowledge "the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." However, is this an excuse of permanent weakness? Is this a justification for continually sinning? Shall we continue in sin so that grace may abound? May it never be! How shall those who have died to sin still live in it? (Rom. 6:1-2). Instead, the solution is in the context: Here, as in other passages, watchfulness and prayer are essential to overcoming temptation (Acts 20:31-32; 1 Cor. 16:13; Col. 4:2-4). If we are watchful and constant in prayer, we will be prepared to meet Satan's assault; however, if we are negligent and forgetful, we will be overthrown (1 Pet. 5:8-9; Jas. 4:7-10).

Weak In Spirit

In a variety of verses, the Scriptures speak of those who are spiritually weak. Indeed, there are many in this condition. Yet, how does one move from a state of weakness to a state of spiritual strength? The solution is in the context: Paul encouraged the Ephesian elders to "assist" the weak (Acts 20:35). The Thessalonians are told to patiently "help" the weak (1 Thess. 5:14). In writing to the Corinthians, Paul not only referred to their weakness, but repeatedly alluded to the source of spiritual strength, the gospel of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 13:1-10).

Conclusion

We have discussed those who are weak in conscience, in faith, in flesh, and in spirit. Weakness is a reality, but God does not want us to remain in this state perpetually. He wants us to become strong. Strength is derived from sharing a genuine relationship with God and abiding in his word. In admonishing Joshua to "be strong and courageous," God said, "This book of the law shall not depart from your

The Ten Commandments

John Isaac Edwards

Legislation is pending in ten states that would either require or permit the Ten Commandments to be posted in schools. Supporters claim such a move would help stem school violence. But opponents say it violates the separation of church and state. The Indiana House recently passed a bill that would permit schools to include the Ten Commandments in historical displays.

In light of the attention the Ten Commandments have received lately, it's a good time to remind ourselves of what the Bible teaches concerning the Ten Commandments.

1. Recorded in Exodus 20:1-17 and repeated in Deuteronomy 5:6-21. How long has it been since you read the Ten Commandments? Do you know what the Ten Commandments say? I urge you to sit down for a minute and read the Ten Commandments.

2. Given to the Children of Israel. God said, "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (Exod. 20:2). Deuteronomy 5:13 records, "And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them. The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day."

3. Nailed to the Cross. Paul taught, "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross" (Col. 2:14). The Ephesians were told, "Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances" (Eph. 2:15). The fact that the Ten Commandments are no longer binding does not mean that we are at liberty to kill, commit adultery, steal, bear false witness, and covet. These things are prohibited in the "law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2), to which we are subject today.

Though the Ten Commandments represented a great code of ethics, perhaps we would do better to curb violence by posting, reading, and studying the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:19-25).

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mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success" (Josh. 1:6-9). The Corinthians were admonished to "be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong" (1 Cor. 16:13). The Ephesians were exhorted to "be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might." They did this by putting on the full armor of God (Eph. 6:10-13). Timothy was told, "Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." He did this by abiding in the foundational message of truth, and sharing it with others (2

Tim. 2:1-2). John said, "I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one" (1 John 2:14). This, brethren, is the key! Like the heroes of Hebrews chapter 11, by faith we can from weakness be made strong (Heb. 11:32-34). Through faith in God's revealed word, we can be sound, knowledgeable, and, ultimately, victorious.

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Where We Are and Where We Are Going

Bobby R. Holmes

I am grateful to brother Mike Willis for his invitation to write in this special issue. I am humbled to be thought worthy of consideration. In March I will be 72 years old and February this year I will have been preaching the glorious gospel of our Lord for fifty years. My only regret is that I do not have another fifty years to give. All in all, I am grateful for every opportunity I have had. In the words of our brother Paul, “For a great and effective door has opened to me, and there are many adversaries” (1 Cor. 16:9, NKJV).

The theme of this special issue is “Where We Are And Where We Are Going.” As I meditated on the title and all it involves, my mind, of necessity, went back to the great battle of the 1950s-60s and the ensuing developments. A similar observation could have been made back then. I see so many similarities between the state of the Lord’s people then and now. One great difference I see is the multitude of *battle fronts* we face today compared to but few back then. The greatest battles then were fought over the *sponsoring church* arrangement in the area of evangelism and the *orphan home/college* issues in the areas of benevolence and edification. Today, the number of “battle fronts” are staggering to say the least. The never ending battle against false doctrine on the MDR issue, the “day” of creation (whether a twenty-four hour period or perhaps even millions of years), the controversy over the deity/humanity of Jesus, the one covenant doctrine, the false teaching on chapter 14 of Romans, false teachers and who can be labeled one, the constant battle against immodesty and immorality on every hand, and the ever threatening controversy on the subject of fellowship. The list goes on and on and seems to grow daily. Truly, Satan is never idle in his relentless attack on Gods people. Let me address the first part of the title to begin with, “*Where We Are.*”

Where We Are

We are the church of our Lord *greatly divided!* That is so sad to me and *more* so to our Lord who died for her. More and more I see less and less respect for what God has said

in his Word. An old Latin adage says, “The respect one has for a rule flows from the respect he has for the ruler.” To so many, respect for the *Great Ruler* is all but gone. There is lip service but little stand for truth. We (and I use the term in an accommodative way) are a people who, instead of correcting our failings, point accusing fingers at those who are exposing sin among us and label them as “brotherhood watchdogs,” “bulletin police,” “later day Pharisees,” and “legalists.” The ploy to take attention away from the guilty and turn it into an attack on the righteous is *not* a new one.

Ahab tried putting the blame of division among God’s people on the shoulders of Elijah, accusing him of being the one who “troubled Israel,” but Elijah faced him squarely with the truth. “And he answered, ‘I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father’s house have, in that you have forsaken the commandments of the Lord and have followed the Baals’” (1 Kings 18:18, NKJV). The “*Elijah’s*” of today are being accused in the same way, but the answer Elijah gave to Ahab applies to the “Ahab’s” of today. Where we are today is this: we are a people who have compromised plain, strong and bold preaching that carries with it a “thus saith the Lord” for soft and weak preaching. I am convinced that preaching as did those of the first century today would cause many to come down with “spiritual indigestion.”

We are told by some that *bold* preaching that exposes the compromise among us results in “building fences” that prevent unity among us. It is *my* observation that many are more interested in unity-in-diversity than they are in the unity that comes *only* from believing and preaching the truth so that good and honest hearts *can* and *will* be *united*. The *only* unity that will ever be accepted by God is that which comes from believing and obeying what he has said in his Word! One very well may have *union* in diversity but *never* will there be *unity* in diversity. *They are total opposites!*

I personally am grieved at the “war like” spirit that has exhibited itself from those who have been exposed for

compromising truth regarding fellowship with those who are unworthy. Instead of *repenting* of their sin and being thankful to the one who pointed out truth, vicious attacks are being made to destroy them. Though they portray themselves as sweet and loving persons who are only concerned with brethren being more loving toward one another and having peace among us, they have joined hands in secret as it were, to block the truth from being taught.

In the battle against digression in the 1950s-60s an article was written calling for a “yellow tag of quarantine” against those who exposed error and stood in defense of truth. There is a very real “yellow tag of quarantine” placed on preachers and local churches today by those who have become “the enemies of the cross of Christ” (Phil. 3:18-19). Those who have tried (and are trying) to put matters of doctrine into the context of Romans 14 regarding fellowship are trying their best to “whitewash” the issue. The magazines and religious papers who have taught the truth on the subject are accused of trying to divide the church. Churches that are having men speak on issues involving erroneous teaching of Romans 14 are being “branded” as a “trouble making” church.

Truth has never had any reason to be afraid, but brethren are afraid to have these issues discussed from the pulpit. I say again, *truth has nothing to fear!* Truth does not divide, but *error left unchecked* will certainly bring it about. I hear of some saying “we need to be more Christ like” and that we need “a kinder, gentler spirit.” I am not saying we have the right to be ugly and rude in our speech. We do not have that right. I am saying that Jesus never failed to address issues in whatever way was needed. Read the twenty-third chapter of Matthew for example. When the occasion demanded it, he used very strong and bold language.

Some of our brethren would be scared to death to hear something like that sermon of Jesus. Some of my preacher brethren would have heart failure if they were required to stand and speak as did Jesus on that occasion. I heard the same language years ago. “We need to preach less doctrine and more love,” “We need to preach more of the life of Christ and less on law.” Brethren, there is only one source from which this comes and that is the Devil himself! There is only one purpose of this kind of “smooth words” and that is to *water down* the old Jerusalem gospel and, when it is done, the saving power of it is lost! Old brother J.D. Tant used to say, “Brethren, we are drifting.” My words, brethren, are, “Brethren we have *drifted!*”

God has clearly set the boundary of fellowship (2 John 9-10). He has also stated clearly where we find ourselves when we fellowship those not worthy of it (2 John 11). In spite of these admonitions, some are insisting today that we can continue to fellowship those who teach/practice false doctrine as long as they have no character flaw and are not

pressing their doctrine so as to cause a problem in the local congregation. Some are even teaching that one cannot be labeled a false teacher if he fits the above description. One preacher brother told me he could and did have fellowship with W.L. Wharton (*who holds to error on MDR*) until he moderated for Jerry Bassett in his debate with Jack Holt on MDR in San Antonio, Texas. He also stated he could and did fellowship brother Homer Hailey until he came out with his book of false teaching on MDR. My question to him that has gone unanswered yet was, “Was the doctrine false before the debate and book that was written? Did the teaching lead souls toward damnation?” If this was true, and it was, how could one have fellowship and be pleasing to God? I have preached and written that “fellowship is God’s guardian for purity among God’s people” in matters of morality (1 Cor. 5:1-13) and in matters of doctrine (Rom. 16:17-18). I believe it is true with all my heart for “the Bible tells me so.” This “open fellowship” has allowed or will allow just about every thing from those living in sinful marriage relationships to social drinking, dancing, and all sorts of immorality.

Where We Are Going

The second part of the series is “*Where Are We Going.*” I do not want to come across as a “prophet of doom,” but I do not see the faithful coming out as well from this apostasy (and we are in one at this very hour) as we did from the one in the 1950s-60s. Fewer preachers are standing up for the truth and fewer elderships are as vigilant as they should be regarding these issues. We, as a people, have become more materialistic and less concerned about spiritual things. Fewer understand Bible authority and the consequences of failing to abide by a “thus saith the Lord.” We need more preaching on the subject of Bible authority, how it is established, and how it is to be applied! Indeed, there are divisions that should never take place (the result of opinions being forced on others), but if the division is the result of standing for truth, so be it. Too many today have the attitude that “it is nothing to divide over” but when truth is rejected, along with those who stand for it, a *firm* stand must be taken. Where we are going will ultimately be determined by those who *love* the truth. As I said, apostasy is already among us. Where we are going for those who refuse to “bow the knee to Baal” is to a closer walk with God, a stronger faith, a more dedicated and committed people with heaven as their final destination. The rest will go further and further into apostasy as did the liberals of yesteryear until the lamp stand is removed by our Lord. In the meantime, my beloved brethren, remember the words of admonition by the Holy Spirit, “Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong” (1 Cor. 16:13, NKJV).

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Where We Are and Where We Are Going

Lewis Willis

I must confess that I am resisting the “older men” label which the Editor has ascribed to the writers of this special issue, but my friends will assure me I need not worry over how my brethren look upon me. If, however, my observations after 43 years of preaching are of any general value, I am humbled to share them with you, the readers of this journal.

Positive Observations

Today, I see numbers of wonderful things in the family of God. Churches consist of *good people* who want to go to heaven when they die. The church is blessed with *great skills* which will be valuable in the future. Preachers, elders, deacons, class teachers, and members are better qualified today than in the past. When most preachers begin local work today, they demonstrate more talent than many of us possessed after years of service. Sound, faithful teaching is being done by these brethren throughout the land. Educational opportunities have helped in this area. Young men are interested, learning the necessary abilities to conduct the worship of the church in truth and with distinction, and this is evident to the most casual observer.

Strong faith is evidenced in every quarter, as brethren live with determination before God. Christ remains *the hope of the world*. The church’s mission is still the preaching of the soul-saving gospel of Christ. Congregations are striving to fulfill that obligation as best they can, in the most difficult of circumstances. The indifference of people is evident to everyone. I think I did see a strong movement back toward God in this nation as a result of “9/11,” but we can already see that interest fading, as we return to “life as usual.”

I am convinced that many of the strategies we have used in the past to reach the people of the world have lost much of their effectiveness. Bulletins are of interest, but usually only to the membership. This is a “TV” world, and for the most part radio is little more than a diversion on the commute to work during the week. The audience is not there. They have been “turned off” by the Jim Bakkers, Jimmy Swaggerts,

and Billy Grahams of television. Our broadcasts are viewed in the same way as theirs are. Locally, we broadcast an interactive, call-in-your-question/comment broadcast called *Bible Talk*. The program has generated much comment over the years, and many have been converted. However, this effort is producing less fruit than in the past. What doors of opportunity are open to us? I am unable to answer that question. Some are trying web pages on the Internet, but their effectiveness is not yet calculated.

Whatever methods or means we employ, *we have a job to do*. The task involves personal teaching, producing obedience. That’s person-to-person evangelism. We are tasked with taking the gospel to a lost world. We must see the challenges, devise the program(s) to reach the lost, and *do it!* Otherwise, we will fail in changing people and the future. Not only that, the doom of many local churches will be sadly written in our failures to reach future generations which are necessary to “people” local churches. No longer is it unusual to hear of local churches disbanding and selling their buildings. This trend must be reversed and soon!

Observations of Concern

Some troubling circumstances are observable throughout the brotherhood. *Worldliness* is killing us! Things which we scarcely mentioned among us in the past are being heard with increasing regularity. Divorce is affecting the church, much as it is society in general. Adultery is rampant. We only shake our heads in unbelief when we hear of a *preacher* or *elder* who has violated his marriage vows. The church suffers immeasurably in such situations. Drinking, immodesty, and gambling (lotteries) have become issues of *debate*; we are not even united in the battle against drunkenness, immodesty, and covetousness! Too many are ready to overlook the involvement of brethren in worldliness.

We are almost *strangers* in local churches. About the only contact we have with one another is at the meeting house. We can drive across town or the county for some association with family or co-workers, but we seem unwill-

ing to go out of our way to associate with other Christians, and some of them desperately need those contacts. Those social occasions afford wonderful opportunities to address privately some concern or weakness experienced by a brother, but we have no interest in discussing such.

Hospitality has almost become a virtue of the past. We do not open our homes to one another, so we do not even “know” each other anymore. We seem to be *suspicious* of one another, as though we cannot trust each other. (Since this is the charge false teachers make against men who call the church to remain loyal to truth, I suppose it is inevitable that the membership will become as suspicious of each other as they are suspicious of faithful preachers.) This is harmful to any and every local church.

Division continues to decimate the brotherhood. I do not know an area of the country which has escaped the curse of division. Every error which false teachers advocate takes numbers of brethren to damnation. Our *doctrinal vulnerability* is frightening. The old Restoration Plea, “We speak where the Scriptures speak . . .” has been lost to later generations. The validity of that plea, which guided our stand and fight for truth in the past, is not even acknowledged by some brethren today. Thus, ideas are advanced, *absent of biblical authorization*, and brethren are ill-equipped to deal with them. Entire congregations are often lost because no one in them seems qualified to see the violation of Scripture which is involved. About fourteen years ago, Ed Harrell advocated a position on Romans 14 which, according to him, tolerated contradictory teachings and practices on important moral and doctrinal issues. His aim was to find a way to fellowship brother Hailey who had taught error on divorce and remarriage. Who would ever have dreamed that such a weird notion could successfully be “floated” in the Lord’s church; that we can *teach* and *practice* different things doctrinally? Can we teach and practice different things *on instrumental music*? No, just on divorce and remarriage. Sadly, *most brethren apparently cannot see the danger in brother Harrell’s false doctrine*. Most have quietly sustained fellowship with him and with those who agree with him. Many years ago I was taught that “*the student always goes farther than his teacher.*” History validates that old saying. I’m convinced that many will “drop their chins” when they witness the application of this error in the future. And, those who advocate and defend the false doctrine will be given the credit they deserve for the destruction of the body that will come!

One final thought: I see less and less interest in *gospel meetings*. Even local members do not support their own meetings like they used to. The commitment and interest is simply not there! Few are willing to change any plans to support the preaching of the gospel. Vacations, PTA meetings, homework, golfing/fishing, and favorite TV programs all take priority over gospel meetings. In our area,

we used to have 250-300 brethren who could be counted on to support area meetings. Today, I would estimate that we have about 50-75 who support them. Area churches do not even bother to avoid scheduling meetings on the same dates. So, those 50-75 brethren try to visit two or three congregations *once* during the week, instead of several times. Furthermore, brethren don’t seem to even care that such is true anymore. Perhaps they do not expect many visitors so “we’ll just do it then — that’s as good a time as any!” When was the last time you witnessed a baptism during a meeting? When I was younger, most conversions culminated during meetings. Today, it is unusual to see even one baptism. What can we expect? We don’t even bother to invite our family and friends to attend. After all, they may show up the night we plan to be absent!

Conclusion

If the Lord allows this old world to stand, the church will have a future. The question is: *What kind of future?* You and I will be the ones responsible for defining the future of the Lord’s body. What *thought* have you given to the health of the church in the days ahead? What are you *doing* to assure that your grandchildren will even have a faithful congregation to attend? Oh, don’t worry! Perhaps some big church somewhere will one day in the future consider your city or community as a *mission field*, and send someone in to establish a church, *after you have contributed to the destruction of the one that now exists!*

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Where We Are and Where We Are Going

Bill Cavender

This essay is being written as a synopsis, an overview, of 56 years in the kingdom of God, the church of Christ, from February 10, 1946, to the present, February 8, 2002. I joined the U.S. Navy at age seventeen, two months, on January 11, 1944. I served two and one-half years and was honorably discharged on July 24, 1946.

In the course of my military service, my last assignment for eleven months was at Twelfth Naval District Headquarters in San Francisco. I had to find living quarters in the city as there were no billets for personnel in the office building where I worked. Having begun to attend the Seventeenth Street Church of Christ in the city, I asked the preacher and his wife, brother and sister George W. Dickson (her name was Ethel) if they could help me find lodging, room, and board. They offered me a room in their home, as their son, Randy, had married and was in the U.S. Merchant Marine fleet. I lived with the Dicksons and their two lovely daughters, Juanita and Ginger, for eleven months, until my Navy service was completed. They became as family to me, and I was a son and brother to them.

I was a Methodist at the time. The Dicksons, and others in the church, were so kind to me and patient with me. I attended all the services of the church except when I had duty at the office and medical dispensary which we operated in that office building in downtown San Francisco. Brother Foy E. Wallace, Jr. came for a meeting and stayed with the Dicksons for that week. I heard every sermon he preached in that meeting, sermons of one and one-half to two hours in length. I had never heard such preaching and Bible teaching. I learned that I had never been baptized, having been “sprinkled” on “Easter Sunday” when I was twelve years old. I learned that the Methodist Church came along seventeen hundred years after the church of the New Testament, the one that Jesus said, “I will build” (Matt. 16:13-19); that the Methodist Church is a man-made church and that I was not really a Christian, a child of God. Some three months later I obeyed the gospel of Christ, February 10, 1946, being immersed by brother Dickson. I thank

God to this day that those preachers spoke the truth of the New Testament boldly and plainly, without fear or favor of men, and told me the truth. Had they not done so, chances are I would never have been a Christian, as all my family background was in the Methodist Church. Most preachers in those days were honest men, prompted by noble and godly motives, desirous of pleasing God and saving lost souls, speaking the truth of Jesus Christ in love, and did not worry whether or not folks approved or disapproved of what they were preaching. Almost all brethren then wanted and demanded that preachers preach the truth and expose error(s). Preachers were “popular” who did so. They “called names,” exposed errors, upheld truth, and souls were saved. The church of our Lord prospered in numerical and spiritual growth, and in peace and love within.

That period of time, right after World War II, was a “good time” outwardly and seemingly for the kingdom of God. The churches were multiplied in numbers greatly. As for me, coming back to Bemis, Tennessee, in early August 1946, I lived with my parents, began working again in the Harold E. West drug store where I had worked for three years in high school and began college at Union University in Jackson, Tennessee, taking pre-medical courses. Harold V. Trimble (now in his eighties, in very poor health, in a nursing facility in Bremerton, Washington) was preaching with the church in Bemis. He greatly encouraged me to preach. He and the elders gave me opportunities to speak, and I decided “to try to be a preacher.” I had already subscribed to all the “brotherhood papers” (*Firm Foundation*, *Apostolic Times*, *Gospel Advocate*, *Gospel Broadcast*, the *Vindicator*, *Octographic Review*; Foy E. Wallace, Jr. had given me a year’s subscription to *The Bible Banner* which soon afterwards became *The Gospel Guardian*. I have continued that paper until this day. *The Preceptor*, *Truth Magazine* and *Searching The Scriptures* soon came along and I subscribed to them. *The Gospel Guardian* and *Truth Magazine* merged some years ago and is now *Truth Magazine*). Since I had no background in the church of Christ and was the first member of the church in my family,

I was advised to: (1) read all the brotherhood papers, and (2) attend a Bible college of the brethren, so as to obtain a “fast-track” education in the Bible, learn about churches of Christ in the USA and throughout the world, and (3) this would “make up, for much of the lost time in my life” spent in denominationalism.

I began reading and mentally devouring the writings in the papers and went off to David Lipscomb College in Nashville “for a good education in the Bible.” I began to buy books, advised by brother Trimble as to what books I most needed. Older brethren began to give books to me since I was “going to make a preacher.” As regarding the papers, in 1946-1947, there was so much excellent and scriptural Bible teaching, so many good writers, so many able, talented preachers, and so much enthusiasm and energy for the preaching of the gospel. World War II had ended in August 1945, millions of military people had returned home, peace was in the world among nations, the churches were at peace, families were intact and the divorce problems in society and in the church had not yet begun. Looking back on those very few years, as I have done so many times, it was such a pleasant period to be in the church. You could worship anywhere in the USA with brethren, you would be well-received and fellowshiped, and, if you were a “gospel” preacher, you would be received, listened to, and respected. There were some quality, well-prepared elders in those days. There were many spiritually (outwardly, they seemed to be) and numerically strong local congregations then, 55 years ago when I began trying to preach the gospel of Christ. The brethren had come out of the “Premillennial Fight” in the thirties with relatively little damage and minimal loss of congregations and individuals (pockets of this error persisted in southern Indiana, in the Louisville, Kentucky area, and a small area of Louisiana). World War II was over, and people wanted peace.

I had fallen in love with a girl in my home town, Marinel Raines, whose grandfather and great-uncle, Dr. James T. Raines (a country doctor) and John Raines (a merchant) were the beginners of the church in Bemis, Tennessee. They gave the land and built the building, for “a church of Christ.” The building was a white-painted, wooden-framed, clapboard meetinghouse. It seated some 200 people, had comfortable pews, electricity, no classrooms (classes met in four corners of the auditorium), had many windows for “natural air-conditioning,” and was heated by a wood stove in the front part of the building, near to the pulpit, in the winter. Railroad tracks of the Gulf, Mobile and Northern Railroad (formerly the Mobile and Ohio Railroad) were about sixty yards west of the building, with much rail traffic. Every service of worship would include passing trains with whistles blown at the crossing. Marinel and I were married in that building on Thursday, June 17, 1948. We have now been married almost fifty-four years. One highly opinionated brother, who thinks it is sinful to have

a wedding in a meetinghouse, told me some years ago that we were living in sin, in adultery, because we married in the meetinghouse, that God has never approved of our marriage. Too, our four sons are illegitimate children because Marinel and I had a wedding in the meetinghouse! Brother Trimble said our ceremony, we borrowed his car to go to Milan, Tennessee, to catch a Greyhound bus to go to Nashville, to have our “honeymoon” there, and then back to school on Monday.

Marinel’s father and mother, Noble and Bessie Lillard Raines, were members of the church in Bemis. They had no car, lived on their farm south of Bemis some four miles, had to walk to worship, and made the mistake of allowing their children to go to a nearby Baptist church in Malesus, Tennessee. Marinel joined the Baptist church at a young age.

When we began our courtship in the fall of 1946, she went to services with me, brother Trimble taught her the truth, I baptized her in March 1947, and we planned to marry a year or so later. That fall I went up to Lipscomb and she, along with her twin sister, Rose, went to Freed-Hardeman College, thirteen miles south of our parents’ homes in Bemis and Malesus. I began preaching some weekends in Bedford County, Tennessee, riding Trailways buses to my appointments. I rode the bus to Jackson, Tennessee on Friday nights and going to Freed-Hardeman every other Saturday in a borrowed car (Freed-Hardeman had Saturday classes until noon) to see my sweetheart, and sit in classes, free of charge, of N.B. Hardeman, L.L. Brigrance, W. Claude Hall, Robert Witt, C.P. Roland, and Jim Cope. It was then that a lifetime friendship developed with James R. Cope. He was the favorite teacher at Freed-Hardeman College in those days; he taught the “Raines twins” in his Bible classes, he welcomed me as a visitor each time, and his life touched ours until he died.

I found rather quickly at David Lipscomb, beginning in the fall of 1947, that this was not the school where I could “get a good education in the Bible.” I could see a great difference in the teachers at Freed-Hardeman and those at Lipscomb. “Fiery” Ira North, with his red suits, purple shirts, and green ties, was the prominent Bible teacher. Batsell Barrett Baxter, Thomas Whitfield, James O. Baird, Athens Clay Pullias (the college president), Willard Collins (the vice-president) taught Bible classes. Harris J. Dark, head of the mathematics department, was the soundest, strongest preacher and teacher on the faculty, but he did not teach Bible. At least, I never had a Bible class under him. Paul Matthews, who taught history and church history, was an excellent preacher, was very conservative in his views, and taught us about human institutions in his church history classes. He taught us that these institutions — colleges, childrens’ homes, aged homes, hospitals, unwed mothers’ homes, etc. were of human origin, were no

“For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ” (Gal. 1:10).

“When All Men Speak Well Of You”

Billy Norris

“A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches . . .” (Prov. 22:1). But the praise and good will of men are not to be desired above loyalty to Christ. If our lives in the service of Christ bring no reproach from any quarter, they cannot be right in the sight of God. When one teaches the gospel in its purity and lives daily by its high principles, Satan will see to it that there is opposition.

Paul not only spoke truth by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he could confirm that truth by his own life experiences. “Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12). In preaching Christ and him crucified, he knew what it was to be opposed on every hand, in almost every city. His life was twice threatened in Jerusalem (Acts 9:23; 23:15), he was

stoned in Lystra (14:19), he was beaten and imprisoned in Philippi (Acts 16:23).

When one conducts himself in such a way that all men speak well of him, he places himself in unenviable company and brings upon himself the disapproval of the one whose favor means more than all the praises of all men. “Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets” (Luke 6:26). Paul knew the impossibility of pleasing God and men at the same time. “For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ” (Gal. 1:10).

Christ came on a most benevolent mission — “to seek and save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). He “went about

part of the kingdom of heaven, were man-made and not God-authorized, and could not be scripturally supported, maintained and subsidized by the Lord’s churches. It was not difficult for me to understand that, as I had seen all of that in the Methodist Church in my earlier years. Paul was a nephew of Ernest R. Harper, of the Highland Avenue Church in Abilene, Texas and the Herald of Truth Radio and Television programs fame. After Paul left Lipscomb in 1950 or 1951, he preached for very large, liberal churches (as the institutional, liberal movement was developing so quickly in the fifties), changed his convictions, agreed with “Uncle Ernie,” as Paul called brother Harper, and died at an early age in Shelbyville, Tennessee, where he and his wife, Earlene, are buried. Paul was very dear to me and his defection from the truth and his earlier convictions hurt me deeply. He recommended me for my first two “full-time” preaching works, in Ashland City, Tennessee and

in Cooper, Texas. I would never have preached in those two cities and with those churches except for his recommendations. I owe him much from those standpoints. Only Harris J. Dark, of the Lipscomb faculty in the late forties, continued in the truth and opposing the serious errors and practices of the liberal movement. He was a great and good man. He left Lipscomb, went to Middle Tennessee State College (now University) in Murfreesboro, preached in Murfreesboro, helped in the establishment of the University Heights Church (now Cason Lane), suffered a severe cerebral hemorrhage, lingered and deteriorated in health for several years, and passed on from this earthly scene. (To be continued.)

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doing good” (Acts 10:38). He pleased his Father (Matt. 3:17; 17:5). Yet he displeased many in his day. At different times he was accused of having a demon and being crazy (John 7:20; 8:49, 51; 10:20). Why would anyone hate a character so pure in his life, so compassionate in his service to humanity? Christ has given the answer: “It (the world) hates Me because I testify of it that its works are evil” (John 7:7). It is not enough for the disciple of Christ not to have any fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness — he has the responsibility of exposing and reproving them (Eph. 5:11). When one meets this responsibility, the world will strike back, either in actual deed or by evil word.

Many years ago J.W. McGarvey wrote of the world’s reaction to exposure of its evils. “If we adhere strictly to the virtues which Christ enjoined, we shall find that the world has an evil name for every one of them.”

1. Contend earnestly for the faith and that is called bigotry. When Saul of Tarsus breathed “threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord” (Acts 9:1), he no doubt had the approval and praise of his fellow countrymen. Well appreciated, he advanced in Judaism beyond many of his contemporaries (Gal. 1:1, 4). When he learned the truth, obeyed the gospel, and contended for the faith, he became a bigot worthy of death. “But Saul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this Jesus is the Christ. Now after many days were past, the Jews plotted to kill him” (Acts 9:22, 23).

2. Teach the one way of salvation, the one church, the one faith, the one baptism, and that is called intolerance. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, this is exactly what Paul taught, “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Eph. 4:4-6).

One could take the more tolerant, more gracious, more loving view — that all are going to heaven but by different ways. Though this would be far more pleasing and popular and would leave the impression of a true loving spirit, it does not represent the revealed will of God, nor does it show true love for lost souls. One who loves the lost will want them to accept the one faith, be baptized with the one baptism, be a part of the one body, and thereby have the one hope.

3. Insist upon obedience to every command of God, and that is called legalism. The implied meaning of this term is that one can give too much attention to complete obedience to the word of God, can take a narrow-minded (another one of those ugly words) approach to the Scriptures. Have we come to a time when the commands of God are considered of little or no consequence? If we have, we are in trouble, for through the ages God has insisted upon

exact obedience to his commands. “Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice and to heed than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry” (1 Sam. 15:22, 23). Impressing the vital importance of obedience, Christ equates it with love for him, “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments” (John 14:15).

4. Put Christ’s cause first above everything else in life, and that is called fanaticism. A lady who had many disappointments in life, neglected by her husband in the last hours of her life, said, “If I miss heaven, I miss everything.” However full and pleasant our lives may be here, if we miss heaven, we miss everything. If putting Christ first in our lives, if giving up everything of earthly value in service to him is fanaticism, then this ugly term becomes a thing of beauty. The world with all its attractions has nothing to offer equal to the unending glory of the heavenly home.

Satan’s agents can conjure up ugly words to describe characteristics of the faithful — bigotry, intolerance, legalism, narrow-mindedness, fanaticism. Though they were purposefully meant to be ugly and derogatory, actually, if they represent true loyalty to Christ, they turn out to be very high compliments.

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**When you learn of God and submit to him in baptism,
you have God's law written on your heart.**

The Law Written On The Heart

John C. Robertson

Under the first covenant God made with Abraham, man was born into an agreement with God whether he so desired or not. It was a matter of ancestry. God told Abraham that he would "make thee a great nation" (Gen. 12:2). A covenant was then formed and sealed by circumcision (Gen. 17:9-12). When a child was eight days old, he was circumcised without his consent according to God's covenant. The child grew and more often than not, rejected God and chose the idolatrous practices of the surrounding people. He sinned, and the result was death.

However, all along God had a plan for his people to rid them of sins once for all. There was to be a new covenant. A system by which the ones entering into it were taught and believed. Jeremiah prophesied of this covenant by saying, "But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith Jehovah: I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, know Jehovah; for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith Jehovah: for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more" (Jer. 31:33-34). The author of the book of Hebrews quotes this in Hebrews 8:10-12. The point being that there was fault found in the first covenant in that it could not take away sins.

However, under Jesus Christ, men may receive remission of sins. This is the new covenant spoken of by Jeremiah. The difference is two fold. First and foremost is the fact that man may receive remission of sins under this new covenant (Heb. 10:12). Secondly is how one enters into this covenant with God. We said earlier that the eight-year-old child was simply circumcised and thus wore the seal of the covenant. However under Christ, as Jeremiah prophesied, God's laws would be written on the hearts of those who entered into covenant with God.

Studying the NT helps us understand how man has God's law written on his heart. In Romans 10:17 the apostle Paul told the Roman brethren that "belief cometh of hearing,

and hearing by the word of Christ." If man is to believe in something, he must hear, study, and learn of it. Chew it up and digest it. Jesus said, "No man can come to me, except the Father that sent me draw him: and I will raise him up in the last day. It is written in the prophets, and they shall all be taught of God. Every one that hath heard from the Father, and hath learned, cometh unto me" (John 6:44-45). People are drawn into covenant with God today by being taught, hearing, and learning of God. The terms "drawn" and "called" are equivalent and have to do with the gospel message that has the power to save men's souls (Rom. 1:16). The apostle Paul told the brethren in Thessalonica that they had been called to salvation by the gospel of Jesus Christ (2 Thess. 2:14). Thus when we have heard, learned, believed, and obeyed this gospel calling, we have God's laws written on our hearts or mind.

Herein is a significant difference in the first and second covenant. Under the first, the law of God was written on tables of stone. Often times this recorded law never became a part of their lives. They did not understand it or live by it. The new covenant however, requires a mental agreement and submission to its teachings if a person expects to receive its promises. Man must perceive and understand it. We are not physically born into this new covenant with God (John 1:12-13) as were those under the old covenant. We have a choice today to receive this law of God into our hearts or to reject it. The law calls for faith in the resurrected Christ (1 Cor. 15:1-5), a mental agreement and confession in his name (Rom. 10:9-11), a repentance of a sinful life (Acts 17:30), and to be baptized for the remission of those sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). This all comes from being taught, learning, and hearing. When you learn of God and submit to him in baptism, you have God's law written on your heart. The remainder of your life is spent joyfully abiding in his teachings (2 John 9).

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Tommy L. McClure — 1925-2001

Glendol McClure

He was never bashful about his stand on any Bible subject. He was always willing to study with anyone who was seeking the truth. He had little respect for brethren who compromised the truth, taught or supported error, or were just ignorant of the truth because of laziness and apathy. He was “ready always to give an answer” (1 Pet.

Tommy L. McClure at the age of 76, passed from this life on September 20, 2001 at the Saint Vincent Medical Facility in Little Rock, Arkansas. He was the son and only child of the late Sandford E. McClure and the late Alley Jane Crank McClure. He was born in Cave Springs, Arkansas on September 10, 1925 and grew up there.

On March 17, 1947, in Memphis, Tennessee, he was united in marriage to Janette Lumpkin. He was survived by his loving wife, Janette, three sons: Tommy Glendol McClure and his wife, Rowena, of Antioch, California; Curtis Lynn McClure and his wife, Aldea, of Springdale, Arkansas; Richard Dale McClure and his wife, Michelle, of Grass Valley, California; one foster daughter, Sandy R. Schefler of Smithville, Tennessee, twelve grandchildren and many other relatives and friends

Funeral services were held on September 24, 2001, at the Bob Neal & Sons Chapel in Marvell, Arkansas. Speaking at the services was brother Joe McGaw, a fine gospel preacher and longtime friend who resides with his good wife, Alma, in Pegram, Tennessee (Tommy McClure joined Joe and Alma in marriage many years ago). Interment was on the afternoon of September 25 at the Phillips Cemetery in Cave Springs, Arkansas. His grave is located at the foot of the graves of his father and mother.

Pallbearers were his grandsons: Clint McClure, Kyle McClure, and Darren McClure; nephew, Mark Lumpkin, and Chris Lanning, a relative. Honorary pallbearers were his brothers-in-law: Ray Lumpkin, Fred Lumpkin, Jake Lumpkin, Lynn Lumpkin and Walter “Bud” Lumpkin.

As many who knew him can recall, he loved to hear, lead and sing gospel songs; hence, Rick Lumpkin, his nephew, led the assembly in some of his favorite gospel songs: *Above The Bright Blue*, *This World Is Not My Home*, and *The Last Mile of the Way*.

He obeyed the gospel at a very young age and had an earnest desire to become a gospel preacher. He considered studying and preaching God’s word a very serious matter as we all should. He preached his first gospel meeting at the tender age of only fifteen.

When he started preaching, his parents did not own a vehicle, but that did not deter his desire to preach or keep him from preaching appointments when he was asked to preach. He lived with his parents about four miles out in the country, and he would walk to the morning Bible study and worship services. He said that if, he was lucky, someone would bring him home after the services, otherwise he walked. On one occasion he had a

preaching appointment which required him to catch a bus in Rogers, Arkansas, a nearby town, about eight miles from his home. After his day of preaching and worship, he had to catch the bus back to Rogers. From Rogers, he had to walk home. On this particular day, in the dead of winter, he arrived by bus in Rogers



around midnight in freezing weather without proper clothing and had to walk home without warm clothing. He often recalled this day and said he took his underwear from his suitcase and wrapped them around his head, neck, and hands in attempt to stay warm. What a sight he must have been! While walking home that night, he had to walk up and down several roads on steep hills (if you have ever been to this area of northwest Arkansas, you know what the hills are like). Not only did he almost freeze, he slipped down and fell several times due to the icy conditions. But he never let things like this stop him from preaching.

While living at home in Cave Springs and before finishing high school, he worked “on the side” at the Shores Hardware store in Cave Springs, which is still in operation. A few years ago, while I was there on vacation, he took me through the Cave Springs area and we stopped at this hardware store. The store is much like it was when he worked there, and the Shore family, who still owns the store, remembered him. That day, the Shore boys and he recounted some of the funny things that happened when he worked there years ago.

While working at the hardware store, he preached every time he got an appointment. Some of the places he preached in his early years of preaching in that part of Arkansas were: Bentonville, Black Oak, Cave Springs, Evergreen, Lowell, Mt. View, Springdale, Thorney, Elkins, Winslow,

Rogers, and Morning Star. He also preached in Japton, Caruthersville, Jane, Missouri, and Huntsville, Tennessee. His wages as a young preacher were meager, ranging from nothing to \$7.00. The most he received for an eleven day gospel meeting when he began preaching was \$60.00.

He took his love for the truth very serious, even while in high school. He was in a quartet and anyone who knew him knows how he loved to sing. He said that those who heard them sing thought they were quite good and the quartet was invited to go to many places to sing, especially on weekends. He recalls that he could see ahead that singing in a quartet on weekends was a pattern he could not pursue and be a gospel preacher, so, he had to drop out of the quartet.

His desire was to be a gospel preacher and to be the very best gospel preacher he could be. After he obeyed the gospel, he continued studying and preaching at every appointment offered. His desire was to attend Freed-Hardeman College in Henderson, Tennessee, so, he saved all the money he could from working “on the side” and his preaching appointments. His dream to attend Freed-Hardeman College came true in 1945. While a student there, he preached every weekend in Poplar Bluff, Missouri. During the summer months of 1946, he worked with brother Mears at the McLemore church of Christ in Memphis, Tennessee. After two years of study at Freed-Hardeman, he graduated. While he attended Freed-Hardeman, he met Janette Lumpkin, and they were joined in marriage on March 17, 1947.

On March 16, 1947, he started his first work with the South Parkway church of Christ in Memphis, Tennes-

see. Several years later, they moved to Mobile, Alabama, then to Blytheville, Arkansas. While in Blytheville, he conducted a daily radio program, which started as a fifteen minute program but grew to a thirty-minute program. Later, around 1955, they moved to Paragould, Arkansas to work with the brethren at the Second and Walnut Street congregation. While there, brother W. Curtis Porter met Guy N. Woods in a four-night debate on the institutional issues that were sweeping through the Lord’s church at that time. He had the honor of moderating for brother Porter during that debate, which was a very successful one.

After leaving Paragould, his next local work was with the West End church of Christ in Franklin, Tennessee. Then, several years later they moved to El Dorado, Arkansas to work with a small congregation there. While in El Dorado, he was invited to hold a meeting for the Johnson Street church of Christ in El Cajon, California, which he enjoyed very much. After going there for a meeting, the Johnson Street congregation invited him to come and work with them, so, a move way out west to California was made in December of 1962. He labored at El Cajon for six years and later moved to Antioch, California where he lived the next 24 years.

While in Antioch, he worked with the West Tregallas Road church of Christ until he was fired by elders who would not stand for the truth. Then, he helped establish and also worked with the Railroad Avenue church of Christ until May of 1990.

Since he was getting of the age when one needs so slow down, he and my mother moved to Marvell, Arkansas and built a home on Mom’s old home place. In Marvell, he worked with the congregation there for about six years and he conducted a weekly radio program on KFFA, called *A Program of Bible Truth*, which aired each Lord’s day morning at 9 a.m. Later, he was invited to work with the

Hepburn Street church of Christ in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, where he continued to preach as long as he possibly could. After leaving the work at Marvell, he continued the radio program and the expense of this program was paid out of his own pocket. Since he and my mother lived in Marvell, and Pine Bluff is some 87 miles one-way from Marvell, this required a long drive each Lord's day. He preached his last sermon at Hepburn Street on September 9, 2001, and he preached his last radio sermon on September 16, 2001. I closed the radio program in early October with a lesson entitled, *A Time To End*.

A few years after moving to Arkansas, his health began to fail and he had several stays in the hospital. Even though his health was failing, his faith never failed. He continued to study, work up sermon outlines and radio sermons, write articles, and he tried as best he could to master his computer, Windows 95, and the Internet. He was always willing to share the fruits of his study with others by sending out sermon outlines and radio sermon scripts to those he had on his E-mail address list. Many of you who are reading this, no doubt, received some of his radio sermon scripts he E-mailed. He was a master at preaching the gospel, quoting Scriptures from memory, and preaching on the radio. He always believed that proper definitions and word studies were essential in studying and understanding God's word. In the inside cover of my *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, which he gave me many years ago, he pinned this note, "Much of the confusion in the religious world results from wrong definitions. Remember the statement: 'a proposition well defined is half argued.'" His material was always filled with Scripture and necessary applications that all could understand. He had a way with words and illustrations and often used lessons learned from his hard work as a boy on the farm in his sermon illustrations. He loved good jokes and stories and had a sense of humor all could appreciate. He delighted in helping others in researching Bible subjects, especially young preachers. He leaves behind a wealth of sermon outlines, study material, articles, and a personal reference library that any gospel preacher would relish.

He was never bashful about his stand on any Bible subject. He was always willing to study with anyone who was seeking the truth. He had little respect for brethren who compromised the truth, taught or supported error, or were just ignorant of the truth because of laziness and apathy.

Jesus Christ Today

by Neil R. Lightfoot

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He was "ready always to give an answer" (1 Pet. 3:15). He never failed to defend the truth when it came under attack by either false brethren or false teachers of denominations (Jude 3). He encouraged all he taught to be the best they could be, whether in preaching the gospel, teaching a Bible class, leading singing, dressing for worship, or any other necessary work in the Lord's service. Even though he had many friends, he had, I would say, an equal number of enemies because of his stand for truth (Gal. 4:16). Like the apostle Paul was accused, he turned the "world upside down" according to some brethren — the world of those who are "enemies of the cross of Christ" (Acts 17:6). He exposed their "world" by the light of truth (Phil. 3:36). He understood well the admonition given by Paul to young Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:2-5. While he was not perfect and never claimed to be, he tried until his last day to serve the Lord to the best of his ability. I can attest to the fact that he shed many tears, as did Paul, when brethren failed to do what was right, according to the Scriptures (Acts 20:19, 31; 2 Cor. 2:4; Phil. 3:18). While in the hospital, it was not uncommon to find him sitting on the side of his bed at his hospital table working on his sermon outlines when he had been ordered by his doctor to keep his feet and legs elevated to help reduce the severe swelling.

He and my mother encountered many difficult times as they endeavored to faithfully serve the Lord and raise a family on the sometimes frugal pay of a gospel preacher. He was never one to "negotiate" with brethren for his salary or benefits. He willingly took what the brethren offered him, and sometimes that was not much. I have to conclude that he gave the brethren he worked with their "money's worth." As I reflect on the struggles he and my mother endured while he preached the gospel of Christ, I am made to wonder, are others willing to endure similar struggles for the cause of Christ he and Mother endured? And often I ask, am I?

His struggle with his failing health has ended, and he has gone to his eternal reward leaving behind my dear mother and all other family members and friends. May all brethren strive to serve the Lord faithfully, without compromise, as he did. My prayer is that all brethren will faithfully serve to their last day, ever reflecting on the assurance of the reward promised by the apostle Paul who wrote, "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).

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Contrary to the thinking of many, the phrase, “separation of church and state” is not found in our Constitution.

Honoring God’s Word

Bill Reeves

El Salvador is one of the seven countries of Central America. It is the smallest of these countries but with the most dense population. Having preached there many times, I am personally knowledgeable of the many conservative congregations in that land. The people are very religious, very God-fearing. The founders of the country named it El Salvador, meaning The Savior. They named their capital city, San Salvador, meaning Saint Savior.

I was impressed when recently I received a hand-written letter from a brother in the Lord who is of that country. I noticed that the white envelope was made opaque, to prevent one’s being able to read the writing on the letter inside the envelope. But the opaqueness effect was unusual. It appeared to me, as I examined the envelope, that there were lines of print on the inside of the envelope. Being curious, I opened the envelope with scissors, and found that the insides were covered with print. The print was in small font, but readable, and covered the entire inside of the envelope. What a surprise to see what the print said! I scanned it and here present the text on one of the inside walls of the envelope:

Let them shout for joy, and be glad that favour my righteous cause: yea, let them say continually, Let the Lord be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant. And the Lord thy God will make thee plenteous in every work of thine hand, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy land, for good. But thou shalt remember the Lord for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day. Keep therefore the words of this covenant and do them that ye may prosper in all that ye do. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither and whatsoever he doeth shall

prosper. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work. Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God. But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. I, even I, have spoken; yea, I have called him: I have brought him, and he shall

make his way prosperous. Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go.

These passages in order are from Psalm 35:27; Deuteronomy 28:11; 8:18; 29:9; Psalm 1:3; 2 Corinthians 9:8, 11; Philippians 4:19; Isaiah 48:15, 17.

Of all the material in print which the manufacturers of the envelope could have chosen to use to opaque it, they chose Bible passages! What an honor to the word of God! Someone had God’s word in his heart when he designed the envelope. But, such is not surprising to me, knowing personally how people of that nation still fear God.

In the early years of the public school system in our country, when the nation still feared God and respected his word, *McGuffey’s Reader* was commonly used. To teach the students to read, this textbook employed many passages from the Bible. Young people of today: do you think that I am making this up? Can you believe what I am saying, given the climate of culture in which you live today? (I am looking just now at a copy of this Reader that I have, dated 1857.) Didn’t the founders of our nation know anything about the vaunted “separation of church and state”? Why did the nation so honor God’s Word from the beginning



“... But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay” (Jer. 20:9).

Evangelism in East Texas As I Saw It

W.R. Jones

When I came on the scene as a very young and inexperienced preacher in 1940-41, the picture, as I look back now, was pretty bleak. I had a burning desire, however, to preach what little I knew and all I saw was a golden opportunity. I had grown up in a southeast Nacogdoches county community called Attoyac by the government, but known as Blackjack by most people. The church was inactive, it had fallen away. My grandfather Roy was a devoted Christian, but upon his passing, in the absence of leadership, the group just fell apart. Occasionally, a traveling preacher would visit us and some of the men would fix up an arbor, and have a few nights of preaching. This was typical of many places where the church was one time active. I was quite young, but I can remember these occasions.

The Christians of that time were still trying to recover from the great division over instrumental music and the Missionary Society which had given rise to what we know as the Christian Church. Of course, sound brethren were in

the minority, had lost their buildings, and were having to meet wherever they could find a place. My mother told me about the service when the organ was moved in and used in worship. She was about fifteen at the time. Grandfather had taken a wagon load to Chireno, about five miles away, to attend a gospel meeting. When they arrived, the visiting preacher had moved the organ in to be used in the service. Strong objections were offered by him and several other men, but to no avail. He gathered up his tribe and returned home. Starting over is never easy but to faithful Christians it is not the end. God will help his devoted people rebuild. He always has and he always will.

While Christians were still struggling to spread the gospel and rebuild, here comes the depression. Not a little recession, but a major depression. This did not, however, keep the gospel from spreading, but it did hinder in the sense that people were so poor that the churches had few financial resources with which to work, but the work continued.

until recent decades? Contrary to the thinking of many, the phrase, “separation of church and state” is not found in our Constitution. It is the creation of the liberal mind-set that is bent on supplanting faith in God with atheism as it seeks to legalize all forms of immorality while destroying the morality based on God’s word. The Constitution prohibits the government from establishing a particular religion to bind on the nation. This was put in the Constitution (The Bill of Rights, Article I) by the colonists that revolted against England that had a state religion, supported by public taxes. This our nation did not, and does not, want. But to say “separation of church and state,” in connection with our Constitution, is a misnomer, a misrepresentation of what the Constitution actually says. This concocted

phrase is designed to thwart any expression of honor for God and his word. A movement is already underway to have removed from our coins the phrase, “In God We Trust.” Why? Atheism!

Imagine the furor that would be caused by our government’s printing and using envelopes with the above-mentioned passages appearing on the inside in order to make the envelopes opaque! The day may come when “missionaries” from El Salvador may have to come to our nation to “Christianize” us!

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As a young preacher there were many times I kept preaching appointments and received nothing more than the few coins that were collected in the basket. In most places this did not improve until World War II came along. I considered myself most fortunate because I was getting to do what I considered to be, and still do, the most important work on the face of this earth. You might think the war would have stymied the spread of the gospel, but it did not. Soldiers and defense workers, who were Christians were scattered abroad and many of them took the message with them. Most everyone suffered during the war and their hearts were humbled. The result was more conversions and more congregations. Many years later we had to suffer another great division because of “liberal thinking.” The Lord has helped us and we have made another comeback.

The question I have often been asked is, “How did this vast East Texas area get evangelized in those early times?” First of all, things were different. TV had not polluted the minds of people and air conditioning had not enslaved everyone to their houses. Preachers could usually get an audience. I am sorry for some of the young preachers today who have the same burning desire to spread the Word, but they do not have the opportunity I had. During those days there were many little communities where the church could not afford a local preacher, and they were anxious to have the “likes of me” to come and preach. We not only got to spread the message of Truth, but we got to exercise ourselves and grow as preachers.

Preachers were anxious to preach the Word anywhere: brush arbors, vacant school buildings, front yards, or run-down buildings, it mattered not. Many of us preached in our regular places on Sunday morning and drove that afternoon to preach for some small group or to establish a new congregation. I know there are still preachers like that, but some have been spoiled with comfort, finances, and the attitude of “what can you do for me?”

Preachers and brethren were constantly challenging the strongholds of religious error. Of course, a few were obnoxious in their manner, but most were not. Debates were common and many people saw the difference between truth and error. By all means, error among brethren must be exposed, but sometimes it seems to me that we are so busy dissecting one another that the bastions of denominationalism go untouched and unexposed most of the time.

Preachers, for the most part, didn’t have much to gain by preaching the gospel. They were inclined to preach it because they had a burning desire to do so and because they loved the truth. I am glad that churches support their preachers much better today than they did in the past. Sometimes, back then, they didn’t have much to support with and sometimes it was ignorance of their responsibil-

ity toward those who have a right to live by the gospel. I know I am treading on dangerous ground when I say this, but some preachers today have become about as “price conscious” as ball players. The problem with this is they become “materialistic” and “spoiled” and are inclined to preach what “feathers their nest.” I doubt there are many like this, but there are some, and that’s too many. Gospel preachers, with kindness and love, must say what needs to be said, regardless of the consequences. “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:2).

Intellectual preachers and common preachers — they both contributed to the spread of the gospel. Some brethren had the ability to write and produce literature which was very helpful. As I see it, most of the “foot work” of spreading the message from hamlet to hamlet and sawmill town to sawmill town and rural communities was pretty much done by the common preachers. Their knowledge may have been somewhat limited, but they had the zeal.

Preachers need to have that burning desire. When John the Baptist came out of the wilderness he came with a burning desire to bring the people to repentance. Now, listen to Jeremiah; “Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay” (Jer. 20:9). Jeremiah was warning Pashur, chief of the Temple police, of impending captivity and he didn’t want to hear it. He smote the prophet and put him in stocks for a while, but it didn’t stop Jeremiah because he had a “burning fire.”

You can have all kinds of excellent scriptural programs for evangelism, but nothing can take the place of what we read in Acts 8: “Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word” (v. 4). In a far more zealous time of the past, that is how this great East Texas area was evangelized.

The Two Covenants

by Ashley S. Johnson

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There is a time “to build, and to plant,” “a time to break down, and a time to build up” (Eccl. 3:3).

“Two-Thirds Negative”?

Larry Ray Hafley

From *Good News* (July 9, 2000), the bulletin of the Timberland Drive church in Lufkin, Texas, we extract the following comment on 1 Timothy 4:2: “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.”

Convince, rebuke, exhort. I have heard some preachers say this means a man’s preaching should be two-thirds negative and one-third positive. This charge is not a mathematical equation. The context shows the preacher is to address the people’s needs, regardless of how his message is received. Convince them when they need it; rebuke them when they need it; exhort them when they need it. You can’t measure preaching in terms of mathematics, but you can certainly measure it in terms of need (Taken from *Common Sense Preaching*, Dee Bowman).

Brother Bowman is correct! Preaching is indeed about the specific need of one’s audience. That is why Peter did not denounce idolatry in Acts 2; it is why Paul did not speak against binding circumcision in his Athenian address in Acts 17. Preaching to an audience’s need explains the tone and tenor of Stephen in Acts 7 and the thread and theme of Paul in Acts 13.

Like brother Bowman, I, too, have “heard some preachers” speak of the “two-thirds, one third” equation. However, when that mathematical measure has been cited, it has not been used to say that an audience’s needs should be ignored. Those who speak of preaching that is “two-thirds negative” generally are refuting the idea that we need to “*accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative.*”

It is in that context, using 2 Timothy 4:2, that we often speak of preaching that is “two-thirds negative and one-third positive.” “I have heard some preachers say” it is too much like the rustic, ruffian spirit of pioneer preachers when we name names (Baptist, Methodist, etc.) and iden-

tify denominational doctrines. We have been encouraged to take a less “polemic” approach and not to be “adversarial” and “controversial” in our appeal to truth. I have heard “some preachers say” these things as they (quite negatively, I might add) decry and deride “negative preaching” as that which causes people to “tune out” and “turn us off.”



When such advice has been given, I, like brother Bowman, “have heard some preachers” show that “two-thirds” of 2 Timothy 4:2 is, “negative,” while only “one third” of it is positive. They form this mathematical equation, not to downplay meeting an audience’s need, but to show that they do greatly err who say that our speech and our preaching must be “positive” and “not negative.”

The same is true of Jeremiah 1:10. “See I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build and to plant.”

When need requires we must “root out . . . pull down . . . destroy, and . . . throw down.” There is a time “to build, and to plant,” “a time to break down, and a time to build up” (Eccl. 3:3).

It is only when we hear “some preachers say” that “speaking the truth in love” means that we must avoid “negative preaching,” that we hear preachers rightly observe that “two-thirds” of Jeremiah 1:10 is “negative,” while “one-third” is “positive.” It is only when preaching that roots out, pulls down, destroys, and throws down is castigated as being harmful and contrary to the spirit of

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godly gospel preaching that we hear "some preachers" speak of the "two-thirds, one-third" equation.

Preaching that reproves, rebukes, roots out, pulls down, destroys, and throws down is as much needed as is that which builds, plants, and exhorts. If not, God would not have so instructed his holy apostles and prophets.

(Surely, no one will make comments on this article that are two-thirds negative. If they disagree with it, perhaps they can address my need in a positive fashion.)

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Reflections

by R.L. Whiteside

The answers of a seasoned Bible student to many perplexing questions. Hardback. #80030.

“Marriage” continued from front page

agreement, such disparity makes it extremely difficult to achieve success (Amos. 3:3; cf. Prov. 19:13; 21:9, 19).

Here are a few things it takes to help make and keep our marriages strong, healthy and honorable in the sight of God and man.

1. When there is a problem, make things right with God and with your mate. Neither the husband nor the wife can say they have never sinned (Rom. 3:23; 1 John 1:8). When sin against a spouse occurs, the sinner needs to confess it and repent of it — not defend it, excuse it, and justify it (Matt. 18:15; 5:23-24; 1 John 1:9). If you sin against your mate, ask God to forgive you and ask your spouse to forgive you. Repent (change your mind) of your sin and act differently (Luke 3:8; Acts 26:20). Being right with God helps establish the common ground needed to solve the problems that arise in marriage.

When both partners share a common faith and want to be right with God, their faith will help them bear the fruit needed to strengthen and sustain their marriage (Gal. 5:22-23). The husband and wife are “heirs together of the grace of life” (1 Pet. 3:7). That is, you share in life’s blessings. Therefore, husbands and wives need to focus on sharing life with each other instead of destroying each other with bitter words and evil deeds (1 Pet. 3:7; Col. 3:18-19).

2. Remember to be merciful and to forgive every sin. Without a doubt, the sins committed against us by those closest to us hurt the worst (cf. Luke 22:61-62). Indeed, the defilement of the marriage bed by one’s mate is such that the Lord allows it as the only just cause for putting asunder one’s marriage (Matt. 19:6, 9).

Yet, even when fornication causes putting away, the Lord expects the one sinned against to keep a heart of forgiveness (Col. 3:12-13). Just as the Lord earnestly prayed for the forgiveness of his murderers, even so every spouse ought to yearn for his mate’s salvation (Luke 23:34).

Often, when one sins against another in a marriage, the sin is not forgiven (I’m talking about the whole range of sins, not just fornication). Unforgiven sin becomes a root of bitterness and bears the fruit of resentment, retaliation and revenge, eventually destroying the marriage (cf. Gal. 5:15). If one fails to show mercy by forgiving when his mate asks to be forgiven, he will not be forgiven (Matt. 18:33-35; 5:7; 6:14-15). Furthermore, he will be contributing to the erosion of his marriage rather than its fortification. This apostolic admonition well applies: “Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you” (Eph. 4:31-32).

3. Practice genuine love. A thorough understanding and application of 1 Corinthians 13 is in order for every marriage to survive and thrive.

Selfishness is at the heart of many broken marriages. The husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church (devoutly, sacrificially, completely), and the wife is to lovingly submit to her husband as the church yields to Christ (Eph. 5:22-27). This is where love is applied.

A lack of self-control dooms many marriages. By indulging every desire rather than resisting every temptation, sin reigns and ruins the home (Jas. 1:12-16; 1 Pet. 3:3-7).

The demand to be served by one’s mate rather than humbly serving each other drives many marriages into the rocks of destruction (1 Pet. 5:5; Eph. 5:30-33).

Can this marriage be saved? Yes, if both are willing to put God first, forgive every sin and practice real love by putting others ahead of oneself.

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“Sodom and Gomorrah” continued from page 2

death; their blood shall be upon them” (Lev. 20:13). What the men at Sodom want is not consensual homosexuality, which is sinful as described in these verses. Rather, it is *gang homosexual rape*. One is absolutely amazed that these men persist in trying to commit their sin even after the angels struck them with blindness (Gen. 19:11).

The New Testament looks back upon Sodom and condemns the practices of this city. They are not condemned for not practicing hospitality. Rather, they are condemned for their “filthy conversation” (“lascivious life,” ASV; 2 Pet. 2:7) and going after “strange flesh” (Jude 7). Despite how the TV networks are trying to shape American thought to believe that homosexuality is an alternate lifestyle, those who are governed by divine revelation will condemn homosexuality as sin.

God will punish the wicked. Modern man has lost belief in the justice of God. God will give a righteous judgment

of all men (Acts 17:30-31). "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10). As a result, there is not much fear of God left. The prophet Ezekiel described the wicked of his day saying, "Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? For they say, *The Lord seeth us not; the Lord hath forsaken the earth*" (8:12). Modern Americans have lost the concept that God will punish the wicked.

One can attend the funerals of today and reach the conclusion that no one is going to hell. When a man known for his wickedness dies, some preacher will stand before an audience and leave the impression that the little good that is in his life gives him the hope of eternal life. The consequence is that we Americans have reached the conclusion that virtually no one is going to hell.

Some religions have fostered this idea by eliminating hell from their theology. Some churches blatantly advertise their church by telling those who attend that they will not hear "hell fire and brimstone" when they visit their services. Yet, Jesus spoke more about the torment of Gehenna than any other person mentioned in Scripture.

We must never forget that God has promised to punish the wicked with everlasting destruction away from his presence. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah stands as a memorial to the fact that God intends to destroy the wicked. Jude wrote, "Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, having in like manner with these given themselves over to fornication and gone after strange flesh, *are set forth as an example, suffering the punishment of eternal fire*" (7).

The Lord himself described the punishment of Gehenna. It is "hell fire" (Matt. 5:22), a place where both body and soul will be destroyed (Matt. 10:28), a place of torment so bad that one would be better off to lose one eye and miss hell than having both eyes to be cast into it (Matt. 18:9), a place where the fire is eternal, where the fire is not quenched and the worm does not die (Mark 9:43, 47-48), and a place of torment (Luke 16:23). Paul described the torment of hell as a place of total separation from God (2 Thess. 1:7-9), a place of wrath and indignation, tribulation and anguish (Rom. 2:8-9). How can we not preach what God has revealed about the damnation of hell?

God can deliver the righteous from destruction. The Lord delivered righteous Lot from the destruction of the city of Sodom. Peter reassured the righteous saying,

For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness,

to be reserved unto judgment; And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;) The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished (2 Pet. 2:4-9).

The same God who destroyed the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah was able to deliver righteous Lot from destruction. The deliverance of the righteous is the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ. God sent his Son to die on the cross of Calvary so that those who turn from sin to serve God may be forgiven of their sins and have the hope of everlasting life. God is able to deliver such people from everlasting destruction and give to them eternal life.

Lot's wife looked back. Jesus told his disciples to "remember Lot's wife" (Luke 17:32). Jesus' exhortation reminds us that God told Lot to flee the city and not to look back. As Lot, his wife, and two of their daughters fled the city, Lot's wife looked back and was turned into a pillar of salt.

God was not punishing curiosity. What Lot's wife was guilty of was more than mere curiosity. Rather, Lot's wife was looking back to Sodom with longing eyes. In the city of Sodom were her home, her possessions, her lifestyle, some of her children, and her friends. Her looking back to Sodom was not that of one curious to see what God was doing; rather, it was the sinful glance of one wanting what he was leaving. Far too frequently, those who have left the world look back with longing eyes; soon they fall back into the very sins that they were departing.

Peter wrote, "For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire" (2 Pet. 2:20-22). May we "remember Lot's wife" lest we be guilty of making the same mistake as she made.

Let each of us guard himself from reverting to the ways of sin from which we escaped. Let us "remember Lot's wife."

One must get Sodom out of himself. The story of Sodom and Gomorrah would not be complete without thinking about the influence that wicked city had on Lot's two daughters. After Lot's family had escaped, Lot's two daughters begin thinking that there is no mate to be found for them. Consequently, each daughter induces her father to get drunk and commits incest with him on successive nights. One can see that even though Lot and his daughters had gotten out of Sodom, they had not gotten Sodom out of the daughters.

The influence of the world affects those who are God's children. The influences that were on one's life before he became a Christian are not magically removed when he is baptized. The language he learned to speak is still in his memory and the temptation to take God's name in vain, tell

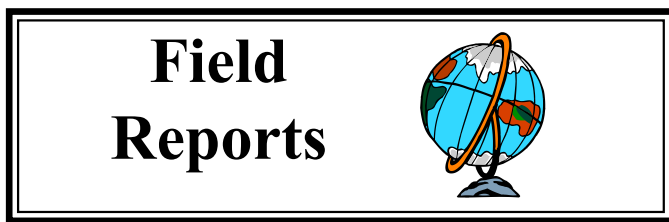
filthy stories, and do other things unbecoming to a Christian are still present. He must eradicate the desire to do evil.

This process is called *sanctification*, becoming holy like the God who made us is holy. Jesus said, "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17). As one puts the word of God in his heart, it drives out the desire to commit sin. By allowing God's word free reign in his life, one drives Sodom out of his life.

Conclusion

There are many lessons to be learned from the Old Testament story of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

6567 Kings Ct., Avon, Indiana 46123, mwillis1@cs.com



P.J. Casebolt: After nearly four years, my work with the Wilkesville, Ohio congregation ended the first of June 2000. For the next few months I filled in on Sundays at Marrtown Road in Parkersburg, West Virginia, and Pomeroy, Ohio. I taught Bible classes for the new congregation at Bethel, Ohio on Tuesday nights and at Pomeroy on Wednesdays. I began working full time with the church at Pomeroy (West Side) the first of November that year, continued Bible classes at Bethel the rest of the year, besides preaching in eight gospel meetings. The congregation at Pomeroy is small (30-40), but the work goes well, and I continue to preach in meetings as opportunity and time permit.

Around 1970, I began working with small congregations in the Ohio Valley, preaching in several meetings each year. I made three preaching trips to the Philippines (1977, 1984, 1993). Yet, the amusing rumor started that I had quit preaching and gone into construction work. When we moved from Moundsville, West Virginia to Florida, where I worked with the Chiefland congregation for four years, the rumor was that I had "retired" and moved to Florida. When we moved back north to work with the Elk Fork, West Virginia church where we labored for nine years, and then with Middle-bourne for six years (1990-96), it was rumored that I had "retired" (again) and had moved back north to be near our family. (All four children moved out of the area, and into four different states.)

Then, we supposedly "retired" again, and moved to southern Ohio. To paraphrase Mark Twain, the rumors of our retirement have been greatly exaggerated. We still have the same address and phone number. **72211 Grey Rd., Vinton, OH 45686, (740) 669-4111.**

Debate

Debate on "Is the Bible alone or the traditions of the Roman Catholic Church our authority for faith and doctrine?"

April 22-23 & 25-26, 2002 in Northwest Arkansas

Disputants: Wayne Greeson, preacher for the East 102 church of Christ in Bentonville, Arkansas and host of "Searching Daily" on KURM 790 A.M. and Bill Rutland, Education Director for the St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church in Rogers, Arkansas.

Propositions:

Resolved: "The Scriptures and 'Apostolic Tradition' as put forth by the Roman Catholic Church are our authority for Christian faith and doctrine." This will be affirmed by Bill Rutland and denied by Wayne Greeson.

Resolved: "The Scriptures teach that the Scriptures are our only authority for Christian faith and doctrine." Affirmed by Wayne Greeson and denied by Bill Rutland

Where & When:

April 22-23 at St. Vincent de Paul school gym, 1305 W. Cypress St., Rogers, Arkansas.

April 25-26 at Old High auditorium, 406 N.W. 2nd St., Bentonville, Arkansas. 7:00 P.M. each evening. About two hours discussion each night.

Contact information: Wayne Greeson, 1308 N.E. 2nd St., Bentonville, AR 72712, (479) 273-1319.

Obituary

Ned Fairbain

Brother Ned Fairbairn departed this life on January 31, 2001. His influence in the lives of the Willis family has been impressive. Ned preached in Trinity, Texas in 1944, during the time in which there was no preacher in Groveton. Ned (without any pay) came to Groveton to teach the Ladies Bible Class. Mom attended, and carried all of the children with her. Ned was wise enough to have Cecil and me prepare simple lessons on Christ, the plan of salvation, and the church. Soon thereafter, Cecil and I were baptized (August 17, 1944) in a muddy pond in Woodlake, Texas (I drive by there when I go back to the old home area). Through this good brother's life, many have been influenced to obey the gospel. The influence upon the Willis family gave direction that has led us in a spiritual work for the Lord. Ned did not continue his public preaching. He moved to Littlefield, Texas and opened his electrical shop. He used his time and money to teach in that little town, sharing the gospel to all who would listen. Ned was eccentric, but positively affected many individuals. His funeral was Friday, February 1, 2002. Brother Roberto Spencer delivered the oration. Ned was

opposed to institutionalism and the liberal trends that have affected the brotherhood. Ned furnished the building for the Spanish speaking work in which brother Spencer worked. It was my privilege in late 2001 to have Roberto bring brother Ned to San Antonio to visit in my home, visit with us at worship, and to see the saint that had immersed Cecil and me into the Lord some 57 years ago. God rest his weary soul! **Donald Willis, 4902 Corian Well Way, San Antonio, TX 78247-5903.**

Preachers Needed

West Frankfort, Illinois: The West Frankfort church of Christ at 812 W. St. Louis Street is looking for a full-time preacher. The church is able to provide \$1200 to \$1500 a month in support. The church would also help in locating more financial support. The church has 35-40 members. There is a need for someone good in personal work. If interested, contact Robert Johnson, 2740 Charley Good Rd, West Frankfort, IL 62896.

Kennett, Missouri: The church meeting at 703 Harrison St. is seeking a gospel preacher. Attendance ranges from 40-50. This is a sound congregation at peace. If interested, contact Kurt Benson at 573-888-2843.

Highlights of Italy Tour

Join Mike and Sandy Willis

Visiting — Venice, Florence, Sorrento, Pompeii, Naples, and Rome

November 2-13, 2002

In Venice the highlights include the Byzantine Basilica San Marco and the Bridge of Sighs. Going through Ravenna which is a city unsurpassed in art treasures we continue on to Florence where we will see Michaelangelo's original statute of David. Leaving Florence, we travel south through the countryside. On the way to Rome we will visit Pompeii. At Rome the sights include Vatican City, including the Sistine Chapel and the famous *Last Judgment* and *The Creation of Man*. We will also tour the remnants of "Ancient" Rome and visit the Colosseum and Trevi Fountain. Rome was an important city for the political events of the first century and was where Paul was imprisoned and later beheaded. On this trip there will be time for relaxing and shopping.

For additional information, please contact Mike Willis at mikewillis001@cs.com., 6567 Kings Ct., Avon, IN 46123 or call him at 317-272-6520.