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Hickory Grove church of Christ
1131 Hickory Grove Rd.
Almo, KY 42020-9332

Return Services Requested

Sunday Services:
Bible Classes 9:00 a.m.
Worship 10:00 a.m. 6:00 p.m.
Wednesday:
Bible Study 7:00 p.m.

to one of the most important needs within the Lord's church of today. The lack of proper leadership is responsible for much of apostasy we are seeing. I have suggested more than once that there is a great need today for "Elder Training Schools." The lack of proper leadership within a congregation just encourages a continuation of the same. The responsibility for leadership within a congregation to a degree devolves upon members of the congregation. The members of the congregation are the ones who are supposed to appoint elders, and this should be done in accordance with the qualifications set forth in I Tim. 3 and Titus 1, and not on some other basis, as is often done. Your suggestion on articles on these points is appreciated, and will be kept in mind for the future. – Editor).

"Please send me 25 Banner of Truth. I want to place them in hospital and Dr.'s waiting room, as I attend a lot of them, being 88 years old. I use local paper to write gospel truth. You used all the scriptures I use in this issue. Vol. 13, Nov. 2004. Send me a bill. Thanks – Lewis V. Mock." – AR. (Your bundle of 25 BOT is on the way. We will send no bill. BOT is available to those who want it without charge. It is made possible by gifts from individuals and congregations. – Editor).

"I want to thank you for B.O.T., and for your stand for the truth. I am sending you a little for help on your expenses – Ronnie Trip." – SC. (Thanks for your interest and concern and for the help you sent. – Editor).

"Greetings to you in Christ's name. I wish to commend you for the work you do, that or reproving error in BOT. I pray this New Year will hold numerous blessings for you. God Bless – Oben Anthony." – Cameroon.

"Hello Walter & Naomi, I hope all is well. We are doing fine except busy. Here is a small check to help with BOT. We certainly don't want you to stop publishing it. BOT is a great resource. Take care and keep up the good work. In Christian love – Jim & Jinny Green." – TN. (Thank you dear friends. - WWP)

"Please send me Banner of Truth. I enjoy it so much. Thank you – Gene Neese." – AL.

"Walter, would you Please make the change in our P.O. Box number. We continue to appreciate every good work you do. Brotherly – Ted Clarke." – AR.

FOR YOUR ADDRESS BOOK

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"I Don't Like The Idea, But... I'll Go Along With It Anyway"

The compromise of convictions may, and often does, lead to complete apostasy. Consider the causes of compromise and how this device of Satan works among brethren to capture their souls for eternal destruction.

The successful Christian life involves an intense struggle, a battle, which the apostle Paul describes as "the good fight of faith." Victory in this fight is "eternal life" (I Tim. 6:12). In Paul's "Proper Farewell," the great apostle said, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4:7). His victory was "a crown of righteousness" (v. 8), which is also available to other good fighters.

The main theme of the Book of Revelation is a depiction of a struggle between the forces of good and evil, with victory assured to those who do not give up the fight for our Lord's way, the way of right. This was reason enough to stand fast in the struggle until the end.

We call attention above to the prize of victory to help us realize the tragic loss for those who compromise their convictions, and face the great day of judgment in that condition.

Our Definition Of Compromise And Con-

viction. Due to the varied use of many words we shall define these words as we will for the most part be using them.

Conviction. Webster defines it as: "a fixed or firm belief." It is in this sense that we use the word. It is some times the case that people profess to have "firm belief" when such is not true. Compromise of convictions would hardly fit the case where convictions were not true in the first place. To "get in out of the rain," one has to first be in the rain. In some instances people's convictions are not what they should be in the first place. Their "belief" is not a true belief, but a compromised one.

Compromise. We are using this word as variously defined by Webster: "to weaken or give up (one's principles, ideals, etc.) as for reasons of expediency"; or another definition by Webster is: "to make a dishonorable or shameful concession: to compromise with one's principles." ↵

BANNER OF TRUTH

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Continued from page 1

Our lord does not allow the compromise of convictions, "fixed or firm belief," in any shape, form, or fashion. The word compromise is often used to mean the giving-in or concession on the part of both parties in a dispute or difference. In spite of the fact that many of our brethren are now giving-in or giving up their convictions, this will never have God's approval. God's word will remain unchanged regardless of how many disbelieve it.

I. THE TOPIC OF OUR DISCUSSION EXPLAINED

The topic came to mind as a result of actual cases I have seen over many years and in many different places. Brethren are quite often faced with a decision, about which they have serious reservations. This may be expressed by the following statement or a similar one: "I don't like the idea." That is, there is a recognition that some-

thing is involved which is not in harmony with the individual's belief, based on the teaching of God's word. "But," the person reasons or thinks, perhaps based on a variety of reasons, in view of this or that reason or reasons, "I'll Go Along With It Anyway." This is where the *compromise of convictions* sets in.

Later in our discussion we shall give attention to several things which may precipitate a decision to give-in, to the compromise of convictions based on the teaching of God's word. The extent of these "things" or reasons had not fully occurred to me until I began to give more serious attention to the matter and realize just how widespread the problem is.

II. THE EXTENT OF COMPROMISE

Compromise is in the air of society. Moral convictions, in the widest form, have been seriously and dangerously compromised. A great many seemingly morally conscious people now do things which two or three score years ago would have been considered unthinkable. Now, with so many, anything goes. Even laws against many immoral acts are often ignored, or severely watered down until virtually meaningless.

The recent election has been very encouraging from the standpoint of people awaking to the stark reality of moral values. This showing of concern for moral values, without doubt, was a very major factor in the outcome of the election. It is no less than frightening to God-fearing people, that the losing party had staked its hopes for winning on the propagation and encouragement of the rejection of moral values.

The battle between acceptance of God or ungodliness is still very much alive. The fight is still on. Those who are willing to compromise their convictions and engage in error should stop and think seriously.

To me, the most frightening compromise is that of those who are religious, claiming to believe in God. In the first place, the convic-

MISCELLANEA

B.O.T. Financial Report for the months of Oct., Nov. and Dec. will appear in the January 2005 issue. This will enable us to get started back on a two-month schedule for the New Year of 2005.

Please Excuse Our Mistakes. We try to avoid mistakes in spelling, punctuation, etc. in the material in Banner of Truth, but we do know that we make some. I do my own proof reading and it is difficult to notice one's own errors.

Do Send Us Names. If you know of those who would want to receive Banner of Truth, do let us have their names and addresses. Every month we delete quite a few names due to a failure to send us a change of address. We are now running about 7,600 copies of the paper each month and would like to increase that to 8,000 during the New Year of 2005.

Readers' Response. We greatly appreciate the response we receive from our readers. We reserve the right to publish that response, unless we are asked not to do so. We receive considerable response that we do not publish, due to a lack of space. We do publish both positive and negative responses.

Readers' Response

"We enclosed \$8.00 to help in the publishing of Banner of Truth. I appreciate receiving it, and your stand for the truth - **Jimmy Clark.**" - TX. (Thank. - Editor).

"I'm sorry we've been so neglectful. We appreciate your paper so much. Keep up the good work - **Carlos and Bernice Perrett.**" - MS. (Thanks for your concern and for the generous check to help in our work. - Editor).

"The bulletins have been excellent (all of them). I'm proud to be getting them. The October issue was so appropriate for this time of year and went so well with 'Politics and Christians.' I have stretched them as far as I could. I know they have to be a big help in the election this year. ... Thank you for all the work that goes into this bulletin. I want to send some more names a little later, and hope each will send a contribution in return. I plan to send a monthly contribution myself. It may vary from time to time but I will do what I can. Thank you and God bless your work at Murray, Kentucky - **Barbara Kist.**" - AR. (We

appreciate those who send us names of people who will benefit by reading Banner of Truth. - Editor).

"We receive your publication Banner of Truth each month. We want to thank you for standing up for the truth. We want to help you with some support, knowing you lost support standing for the truth. We will be sending you \$100.00 per month for the rest of next year, hoping it will help. Thank you so much for your work for the Lord - **The elders at River Road church of Christ.**" - AL. (Your support certainly will be a great help to us in our work and it is sincerely appreciated. - Editor).

"This is to help on your Banner of Truth. I enjoy them so much and I appreciate what you stand for and speak out - **Clodine M. Jordan.**" - AR. (Thank you so much. We've never seen a time when there was a greater need to stand up and speak out for the truth. - Editor).

"May God bless you and keep you during this holiday season and in the coming New Year. Thank you for all the work you do! It is greatly appreciated! Happy Holidays - **Jake and Rose Taft.**" - AL. (We trust that you will have had a safe and happy holiday season, and that the New year will be a prosperous one. Thank you so much for your help with our work. - Editor).

"I have enclosed a check for \$200.00 to help with the publishing of Banner of Truth. The work you are doing is important and much appreciated by many - **V. Glenn McCoy.**" - CA. (Thanks for your generous help. We are grateful for brethren like you who are "fellowhelpers" to the truth which we get out to many thousands. - Editor).

"I'm in the process of reading the April issue of your always outstanding Banner of Truth. Coming to page 5 and your statement concerning the need of leadership, I put it aside to send this comment. Prayerful reading of your article on Joshua can only do leaders and prospective leaders good. Often articles concerning the need for leadership are published, but seldom, very seldom, is it ever addressed in specific ways as to who is responsible for the teaching/training that is needed for those who are given leadership positions. A sermon, or article or two on the qualification of elders does not get the job done. To my knowledge this is not addressed in any of our Universities, Colleges or Schools of Preaching to any degree and little published on the matter. Who appointed the incapable and uncourageous men with a lack of faith and conviction to positions of leadership without teaching/training/proving them as the scriptures teach? Over the past 25 or more years we have witnessed over and over, once supposedly strong, sound congregations going into apostasy. Specific articles on these points could help immensely. Will you please consider providing some. God bless you and be with you - **Ed Allard, Jr.**" (You have called attention

Saved By Grace—When?

That man is saved by *grace* is clearly stated by the apostle Paul: “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph. 2:8-9). Grace, as it is here used, means God’s favor toward undeserving man. That which Paul refers to as, “not of yourselves: it is the gift of God,” is the salvation which is by God’s grace. It is not faith, which many erroneously believe.

There is, then, no question that salvation is by God’s grace, but *when* does that salvation by grace become a reality? This is a most important question, and one about which there is much lack of understanding. But thankfully, we can look to God’s word and come to a clear understanding.

From the above passage it can be seen that salvation is not by “grace alone,” that is, in the sense that no conditions involving man are involved. We are saved by grace “through faith.” God’s grace, then, would not save in the absence of faith. Faith, on the part of man, is a necessary condition of salvation. And even though God has given sufficient evidence for faith, it is still up to man to believe. God does not give man faith, only the basis or evidence for it, and the capability of man to believe. If God gave faith to man without any conditions on man’s part, he would be a “respector of persons” (Acts 10:34), if He did not give to all men alike.

Grace will not save “through faith” until that faith has been demonstrated through acts of obedience to God. Faith “without works is dead” (Jas. 2:20). James even says, “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not be faith only” (Jas. 2:24). Jesus said, “This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent” (John 6:29). Therefore, belief or faith is a work. Further evidence that salvation is through the faith which obeys God is seen in the Hebrew writer’s

statement that Christ is “the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him” (Heb. 5:9). Christ said entrance into the kingdom of heaven was limited to “he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 7:21).

Grace saves when its “teaching is obeyed.” Paul said, “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Tit. 2:11-12). It would not make sense to believe that God’s grace will bring salvation if the teaching of God’s grace is not respected and obeyed.

When are people saved by God’s grace? The Bible answer is: When they have obeyed God’s will with respect to faith (Heb. 11:6). When they have obeyed God’s will with respect to repentance (Acts 17:30). When they have confessed their faith in Christ as the Son of God (Rom. 10:10). When they have obeyed the Lord in baptism (Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom. 6:3-4). When one’s faith has led to obedience to God’s will in the above matters, it is then that one is saved from past sins by God’s grace, His unmerited favor toward undeserving man.

It was grace on God’s part that the gospel of Christ, “the power of God unto salvation” (Rom. 1:16), was given unto man or made available unto him. The “gospel of Christ” must be obeyed by man, or he will suffer the vengeance of God in the sense of “everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power” (2 Thess. 1:7-9).

What a sad day the Judgment will be for those who have been led to believe that God’s grace will save those who refused to obey His will. God’s grace will save, only when man does what which God requires of man.

—Editor

tions of many of these people were never based on the Truth of God’s word.

In the past, for the most part, those religions claiming to be a part of the Christian religion, had certain beliefs that they generally stood by, or at least claimed to do so. Even though those beliefs were not based on the clear teaching of God’s word, they were respected to some degree. Now, things are quite different.

A splendid example of this is what has happened within the Roman Catholic Church relative to homosexual relations. Numerous cases of priests molesting young men or boys have been made public. The financial burden on the Catholic Church in settling the many cases brought against it has caused severe financial strain. If the Catholic Church has taught against homosexuality, which I believe it has, then a great compromise of convictions has occurred.

Another example of the above is the appointing of a homosexual bishop in the Episcopal Church. This has caused quite a stir, but on the basis of the latest that I’ve heard, there will not be a church split as was first predicted. In other words, just cast convictions aside and opt for a compromise of the same.

There is now a widespread movement among various denominations to accept a wide variety of things which they have in the past spoken out against. Convictions have now been so compromised that almost anything goes.

The compromise of convictions is not only occurring within the denominations, the same is happening within the body of Christ at a frightening rate. The time was that most of our brethren believed in the distinctiveness of the one and only blood-bought church. Times have changed. The outright fellowship with denominations, even the Catholic Church, is occurring at a rather rapid rate. In many places, especially within the larger congregations, one is not likely to hear lessons on the “oneness” of the Lord’s church, and its

essentiality for salvation. This is so because brethren have compromised their convictions relative to God’s law on fellowship.

In addition to the compromise of convictions relative to God’s law on fellowship, a virtual catalogue of other things could be added. For example: God’s law on marriage; scriptural worship; work of the church; direct operation of the Holy Spirit; church provided entertainment, to name only a few. I have lived in a time when most brethren had convictions relative to those things and they were unwilling to compromise those convictions. That “time” has not been since several years ago.

Another area of compromise has been within “our schools.” Who can point to a single one of our schools of any considerable size which has not compromised the convictions which one time characterized most of them? As a result of these compromises, it not unusual for brethren to now have a greater loyalty to their favorite school than for the Lord and His will.

III. THE SADNESS OF COMPROMISE

As I write these very words at 4:30 a.m., I have been thinking of my brethren, some of whom I have known for years, who have completely compromised their once solid convictions, and others who are on the way of doing the very same thing. I have also been thinking of those precious and innocent children, as well as others, who are being carried along with this tragic compromise. How sad it is that children have parents who will not give to them one of the most precious gifts, that of a faithful and uncompromising father and mother to follow.

We have those in the congregation where I preach who are compromising their convictions. There is hardly a congregation that I know of where this sad thing is not occurring. No wonder that we are seeing more problems than we’ve ever seen before. The battlefield of faith and conviction is strewn with the victims of compromise like we’ve never seen before. ↵

Even “Sound Brethren” May Fall For Compromise. We all realize that brethren who are weak in the faith are more likely to succumb to error. But brethren who are considered to be sound and who would not engage in such sins as the “works of the flesh” or teach outright false doctrines, are some times known to “go along with” something or an idea which they “don’t believe is right.” This involves a compromise. The action of such brethren may have a strong influence in the encouraging of others to engage in compromise. We are responsible for influence we have upon others.

How sad it is when brethren who have learned the truth and served faithfully for years, allow themselves to be led from their steadfastness. People expect the unfaithful to engage in things which are wrong, but error on the part of those considered faithful is somewhat different. The same may lead some to turn away from the truth, when those unfaithful in general would not have so influenced them.

IV. THE DECEITFULNESS OF THE SIN OF COMPROMISE

The writer of Hebrews warns against “an evil hear of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Heb. 3:12). To guard against this deadly condition, he warns in verse thirteen: “But exhort one another daily, while it is called today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.” That compromise of the truth is indeed sin, no one can deny. That sin is “deceitful” no one can deny. God’s word says so.

When considering the deceitfulness of sin our minds should be turned to the warnings of Paul. To the Corinthians he wrote of Satan, “. . . for we are not ignorant of his devices” (2 Cor. 2:11). Paul instructed the Ephesians to “put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Eph. 6:11). The “devices” and “wiles” of the devil represent devices or means by which the devil goes about deceiving people. Therefore, we shall note a thing

or two which can be employed by the devil to lead people to engage in the sin of compromise.

Compromising Convictions “Just Once.” It may be that some think: “If I compromise my convictions just this one time, it will not be so bad.” Such thinking could hardly be more dangerous. Once one has engaged in compromise there is no way of knowing where it will lead. For example, the drunkard would never have become a drunkard without taking that first drink. One who is a true believer will not become an apostate without first compromising a conviction of truth.

Who could be planting the idea that just one compromise is not so bad? Could it be the Lord? Of course not. Our Lord never fights against himself. Who, then, could it be that plants this evil idea in the minds of men? It can be none other than the “father of lies,” the devil himself. The wise will heed the warnings.

When one item of truth is compromised, it would be easier to compromise another, and another. There seems to be something about violating one matter of truth that leads to another. It opens the gate. Growing up on a little farm in Tennessee, we had several sheep. If those sheep were confined to a fenced-in lot and one of them discovered a hole in the fence, the whole flock would follow. Many have been the cases where brethren violated one item of truth and it opened the gate to violate many others.

Small Errors Grow To Be Larger Ones. Error is error, but brethren some times tend to consider one “small” error less dangerous than a “large” error. But it is the very nature of error to begin in a small way and then grow larger. What may be thought of as a “large” error seldom happens overnight, but grows from a “small” error over a period of time.

Most of our brethren, who have any knowledge of God’s word to speak of, will agree that one of our duties as a Christian is

Questions About Sunday Night

Our loving God has been so very, very good to us,
By His inspired word revealing things wrong and right.
And, it is from this important spiritual standpoint,
That we pose these questions about SUNDAY NIGHT.

Living the Christian life requires one’s honest efforts!
It is a faithful action described as a most valiant “fight.”
And, if we would stand with the conquering victors,
Can we fail our Captain, even on a SUNDAY NIGHT?

Serving the Lord is a most gracious Christian privilege,
In which all God-fearing people will certainly delight.
But that serving is not limited to only Lord’s day morning!
Don’t you agree that it also includes each SUNDAY NIGHT?

The Lord’s day must be a very special time to all of us,
And the assembly of the saints is well pleasing in His sight.
But why would anyone who claims to truly love the Lord,
Stay away from His assembly when it is SUNDAY NIGHT?

The church of our Lord is God’s living spiritual family,
In which the lasting bond of kinship should be very tight.
And if our Master only commanded assembly Sunday morning,
Wouldn’t our love also bring us together on SUNDAY NIGHT?

Think of the influence upon countless others you are having,
When you as a Christian light so often fail to shine bright.
Aren’t you as a living example to many others saying,
The Lord isn’t worth my time, no, not on SUNDAY NIGHT?

Beloved, the solemn day of judgment will some day appear!
With the lost on His left hand and the faithful on His right.
My dear friend, where will you stand on that great day,
If in cold indifference you forget the Lord on SUNDAY NIGHT?

—Walter W. Pigg

wearing the name church of Christ no longer believe that one must obey the gospel to be saved? Those loving brethren accept one into their fellowship who is a Baptist because he pleads that he has been baptized, and he knows he is saved.

Any Baptist preacher will quickly tell you that you are saved the moment you believe and accept Jesus into your heart as your personal Savior. They will also tell you that baptism does not save you. Jesus taught, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mk. 16:16), and the apostle Peter preached that baptism is for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38). But such teaching will drive folks away today, and besides, if they are comfortable with their religious experience, then we should accept them. Have you not read, “Judge not, that ye be not judged” (Matt. 7:1)?

The truth of the matter is this. People had better begin reading and believing the Bible instead of some eloquent pied-piper peddling a damnable doctrine of profit. The “wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23), and the gospel is “the power of God unto salvation” (Rom. 1:16). Christ is the head of the church which is His body (Eph. 1:22-23). How many “heads” and “bodies” do the Scriptures say there are? One. The church of my Lord was purchased with His blood (Acts 20:28). One must after obeying the gospel and becoming a Christian worship in spirit and truth (John 4:24).

Truth must be preached before people will see the need to change. If truth is believed, repentance and confession of Christ occurs, then one can be immersed into Christ. Let us never be ashamed of the Lord’s church or His glorious gospel.

—P.O. Box 975, Rowlett, TX 75030

EDITOR’S NOTE: The two articles above have been carried because of their relation to each other. I knew of a person in Taiwan who was talked into being baptized, but when he was told about the church and his duties, etc. he rebelled. A fellow worker in Ukraine said he would not preach from Ephesians to non-Christians. He didn’t believe in informing the non-Christian about the church. Therefore, I know something of what brother Weir discusses in the articles. If one is “converted” without facing and believing the truth, to what has that one been converted? Not to the truth for sure.

Personal Matters And Others

For the past several weeks I have had some physical problems. I’ve had severe pain in my left leg. After having two tests done I’ve learned nothing as to the cause for the pain, though I was assured that I had no circulation problem or muscle disease. After having a colon exam I began to have stomach pain. It turned out to be an ulcer [preacher’s disease]. I’m taking medicine which is supposed to cure that problem. I have been able to keep going with my work, though I have been hindered a little at times.

OUR PERSONAL SUPPORT. In the September BOT, I made a request for personal support. We are sincerely thankful that several have responded to our request. I don’t know at this time the exact amount of monthly support we have been promised, but several have sent one-time contributions. We are confident that our brethren will supply our need. Not many people knew that some had stopped their support quite some time ago, due to the fact that we would not compromise our convictions.

OUR NEW E-MAIL ADDRESS: Please note that my email address has changed to: wpiggbot@myshadetree.com

REMINDE US. If our readers have sent us names to be added to our mailing list, or questions have been asked that received no response, please remind us. I some times lose things and at times forget things. I try hard to keep up with my work but at times, in fact most of the time, I stay behind.

OUR SINCERE APPRECIATION. A great many people have some part in our work. Those who support the work financially; those who donate labor to help get the paper out, contribute articles, and words of encouragement, are to be thanked. We used to send more Thank You notes to contributors, but our work has grown to the point that we cannot do as we used to do, but we are very thankful.

—Editor

to attend the services of the church. However, some tend to think that missing just one of the services is not all that bad.

We’ve seen brethren who were generally faithful in attending the services of the church miss just once, perhaps for some special occasion. This seemed to be just a small error. But missing just one service makes it easier to miss another, and then another, etc. I’ve had different people tell me that once they started missing services it became easier to do so.

It may go something like this: A faithful member starts missing Wednesday evening Bible classes. After a while of missing Wednesday night, Sunday evening services are missed. As that happens more often, even a failure to attend Bible classes on the Lord’s day may be expected. The end result is — one who attends one service per week. When this state is reached, that is a “great big error,” so big that one cannot be considered a faithful member of the church by any means. Christ said, “He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad” (Matt. 12:30). When people care not enough to attend the services of the church, by stretch of whose imagination can it be said that they are “with me [Christ],” and not against Him?

Although deceit plays a big part in leading people to compromise relative to truth, there are some more direct causes in which deceit is evidenced. We shall note a few examples.

V. CAUSES OF COMPROMISE

If Others Do It, Why Can’t I? If we would abide in the truth, then we must not base our actions upon what others are doing. To the Corinthians Paul said, “For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves...” (2 Cor. 10:12). Though it is in no sense of the term justified, some seem to think that if other brethren do something, it is alright for them to do the same. This is one of the great harms which is encouraged by improper influence.

The above is one of the reasons why brethren who are used in the services of the church should be faithful men who set a good example for others. If those who are not faithful, in word and deed, are used, it may leave the impression with some that it is not a serious thing to be unfaithful in various things.

To please the Lord we must realize that we are held accountable for our own deeds, not the deeds of others. The Israelites were told, “Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil...” (Ex. 23:2). It makes no difference how many people are doing something wrong, we are not justified in doing the same. Christ warned that if, “the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch” (Mt. 15:14). Only the Lord knows how many will be found unfaithful at the day of judgment because they followed in the steps of some preacher of error, because they thought if he could compromise the truth, they could do likewise. That we are accountable for our own actions could not have been made clearer than what Paul made it when he said, “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).

To Gain The Favor Of Men. It is my opinion that one of the greatest causes for compromise of truth among our brethren is the desire to please men rather than God. With a great many, a “Thus saith the Lord” is no longer the standard by which things are taught and practiced. This is in spite of what Paul said to the Galatians, some of whom he said would “pervert” the gospel of Christ. Paul asks: “For do I persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ” (Gal. 1:10).

Yes, we have men followers within the church. They follow men because the men say what they want to hear. The men are willing to accommodate their followers by pleasing them. ↵

Whether or not God is pleased seems not to matter. In order to please men these preachers and teachers are careful to avoid things which might be displeasing to those who follow them. In other words, they are willing to compromise the truth in order to have the praise of men. Much of denominationalism has been built on this very thing. It is not unusual for these people to make changes in what they teach and practice strictly on the basis of what pleases the most people.

The time was, within the Lord's church, that people were drawn by men who stood up for the whole truth without the fear or favor of man. This "time" was before the great drift into liberalism. People traveled great distances to hear a number of our well known brethren who have since passed on to their reward. We owe much to these brethren because of their loyalty to the cause of Christ, and the example they left, by which they still speak.

In my time a new generation has come to be. This new generation, obviously influenced by the religions round about, are of a different stripe. With a majority it is obvious that "people pleasing" is a major goal. This accounts for much of what is now going on which has no justification whatsoever from God's word. Much of the preaching has been watered down in order to appeal to our religious neighbors. In some cases this new generation makes no bones about ridiculing those who have gone before who stood for the whole truth without compromise to any degree.

To Justify Error On Part Of Family Or Friends. Within the past two or three decades much error has been taught on the subject of divorce and remarriage. Indications are that in some instances error has been adopted due to family or friends being in an unscriptural situation. This makes no sense at all, since God's word still stands, regardless of who may violate it. It is not truly honest to try to bend God's word to fit a particular situation, rather than try to conform the

situation to fit God's word.

Some times preachers and teachers go slow on condemning what is called "social drinking" because they have friends or family members who engage in such. This is just another example of people trying to please people rather than God. To elevate family or friends at the expense of the compromise of the truth is a most serious matter. Christ said, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" (Matt. 10:37). To bend God's word to fit anyone under the guise of love, is error of full strength. True God-ordained love seeks to persuade men to conform to God's word, not vice versa.

To Justify One's Evil Desires. Some people profess to be a Christian, but also expect their desires to be accommodated. It is not at all unusual for people to choose a certain congregation on the basis that they will not hear preaching against some of their favorite sins. They don't want the whole truth and will not stand for it; they want a compromised version of truth. This brings to mind the Israelites in the days of Isaiah and Jeremiah. Isaiah said of the rebellious people who would not hear the law of the Lord, "Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits" (Isa. 30:10). It is hard to understand why people actually want to hear error, but such is the case. Jeremiah said, "The prophets prophesy falsely...and my people love to have it so" (Jer. 5:31). Does that condition exist now?

If anyone is not aware of the desires of many of our people today to hear things which are not according to truth, just consider how people flock to hear some of our well known false teachers, such as Max Lucado and Rubel Shelly. A great many are just as far out as these two but they may not be as well known. But a gospel ↵

"What we want here is something that doesn't look like church." Do you ever read in the Scriptures where the Lord, His apostles, or any disciple ever attempted to deceive the people they were teaching? Does the Bible teach that we are to try to "slip up" on people with religion? God forbid. Paul told Timothy, "And the things which thou hast heard from me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2).

Third, "Big Time" is a contemporary performance where children and parents are encouraged to "dance and sing." They are heavy on the "social graces" of society but light on reverence and respect for God.

Fourth, they get their curriculum from a denomination. This is exactly what this Farmers Branch church has become. May people learn before the judgment that their worship *must* please God instead of themselves.

How To Convert One Who Is Lost Without The Lost One Knowing He Has Been Converted

Marvin L. Weir

It is a denominational ploy that is catching on fast with brethren who are enamored with their own wisdom and have no respect for the Word of God. The first rule of "soul-winning" is to make sure that the prospect doesn't know anything about the lord's church or the gospel. Some congregations are now saying that the last thing they want is for their assemblies to remind one of "church." You see, words like "church," "gospel," "sin," and "worship" turn people off. Congregations will never attract crowds by using such offensive words. A congregation in the Dallas area that claims to be a church of Christ has blatantly stated they do not want those who assemble to feel like they are "in church." God forbid that a service would have any structure or order to it – that would do too much for some to bear.

The Lord and Savior came to earth "to seek and

save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). He did not use soothing terms that pleased the religious leaders of His day. Neither did the Lord camouflage the words He spoke so that false teachers and those worshipping incorrectly would not feel threatened. To His apostles He said, "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:19-20). If one is to become a New Testament Christian and a member of the Lord's church there are *certain* truths that he *must* be taught. A person cannot submit to and obey that which he does not know.

This damnable practice of disguising worship and the church so that they will not be recognized must be refuted and rejected by those who love the Lord. The apostle Paul reminded the Corinthians that he was "to preach the gospel: not in wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made void" (I Cor. 1:17). The Bible makes it abundantly clear that "the word of the cross is to them that perish foolishness: but to those who are saved it is the power of God" (I Cor. 1:18).

Can you conceive of one attempting to convert an atheist without ever mentioning God? Perhaps all non-believers can be converted by suggesting that they allow some peaceful "force" to enter their lives. Of course, the Bible teaches that "without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him" (Heb. 11:6). Such strong words, however, are offensive to non-believers and will surely keep them from feeling comfortable in our assemblies.

Can you believe that some who call themselves Christians have the audacity to teach that there is more than *one* body that is the Lord's body (Eph. 4:4)? Everyone knows that people are more comfortable with the church of their choice. No one wants to be a member of a church that claims to be the *only* true church. That is an arrogance that today's society will not tolerate. So let's encourage people to come into a building that says church of Christ but its members do not believe that there is only "one body" and "one faith" (Eph. 4:4).

Can you believe that some congregations ↵

“Big Time” Performance at Farmers Branch church of Christ

Marvin L. Weir

How many faithful congregations of the Lord’s church make the headlines of the religious section of a major newspaper? The news media will, however, gladly assist in portraying the Bible and unauthorized religion as boring, out-of-touch, and obsolete. An “action-packed ministry” is the rave today, and most young families are willing to let their children select what appeals to them in the religious realm.

How it must grieve God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit to see such disdain for the New Testament pattern of worship. Humanism has succeeded in convincing man he is his own “god,” and that “worship” must be entertaining and exciting. Children who should be taught God’s word and right from wrong (Deut. 6:1-14; Eph. 6:4), are always eager to support that which is akin to three-ring circus.

The Saturday, November 20, 2004, *Dallas Morning News*, contains an article written by Elizabeth Langton, about the Farmers Branch church of Christ (Dallas area). She notes that “the church started Big Time two months ago after investing in professional light and sound systems and an elaborate set. More than 50 volunteers brings the show to life.”

Many congregations of the Lord’s church today when approached to do mission work have no available funds to contribute. Yet, they can invest in professional equipment for the sole purpose of entertaining their audience. The Lord never commanded His church to entertain people, but He did command us to take the precious gospel into all the world (Matt. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16). Entertainment may send chills up one’s spine and give him goose pimples, but the gospel will save his soul (Rom. 1:16). A perverted gospel (Gal. 1:6) isn’t worth the proverbial plugged nickel, and yet thousands who fancy themselves to be Christians are supporting that which will destroy the soul. Will these same 50 volunteers knock doors?

If you love the Lord’s church, the following words are enough to make you weep. The article says:

The atmosphere at Farmers Branch Church of Christ’s children ministry seems more rock concert than worship service. But behind the strobe lights, dancing singers and high-energy music lies a biblical message aimed at young children and their parents, said Eddie Plemmons, children’s minister for the church.

“What we want here is something that doesn’t look like church,” he said. “We can’t compete with music videos and television, but we can provide quality live drama. That’s one area where we can connect with kids that they may not get elsewhere.”

Big Time, a 45-minute session held between the church’s two worship services, targets families with pre-school and elementary school age children. Each month, the program focuses on teaching a value, such as initiative or respect. The singers start Big Time by performing contemporary, upbeat Christian songs written for the program. Children and parents are encouraged to dance and sing along....

Big Time draws directly from the curriculum of Family Times, a program developed by North Point Community Church in Alpharetta, GA.

Let us make some observations. **First**, a freelance newspaper writer realizes that the “atmosphere” at this so called church of Christ “seems more rock concert than worship service.” She is right and it is tragic. Yes, the Bible message if one at all, is far “behind the strobe lights [and] dancing singers and high-energy music.” So many today want to conceal the word of God so that folks will not realize they are being exposed to it. Have they not read what the Lord said: “For whosoever shall be ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of man also shall be ashamed of him, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels” (Mark 8:38). The apostle Paul was never ashamed of the gospel (Rom. 1:16), and neither should one who professes to be a Christian ever be embarrassed by the word of God.

Second, something is drastically wrong when one who claims to be a member of the church says, ↵

which is perverted is actually no gospel at all, since it is not the whole truth.

Loyalty To A Political Party. Another cause of compromise of convictions is greater loyalty to something other than the Lord and his church. We shall consider one. The recent election brought forth a great deal of discussion in our area relative to the Christian and politics. Some took the position that “Politics and Religion don mix.” The bottom line of those taking that position seemed to be that in politics one could support that which is opposed to God’s will. This is a clear example of putting something above the will of God, and that is a case of the most serious compromise.

We see the same thing as the above with regard to “our schools.” To raise the ire of some, just say something critical about their favorite school. With some, you may be critical of error within the church, but not their favorite school.

VI. THE COST OF COMPROMISE

There is no true way to measure the cost of compromise of the truth. We have ways of measuring the cost of earthly things, but not those heavenly things of a spiritual nature. The ultimate cost is just beyond our comprehension.

The cost of compromise involves our souls. Nothing even compares in value with one soul. Our Lord makes a comparison when He said, “For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matt. 16:26). The world, in spite of its great value, is only temporary. It is going to perish (2 Pet. 3:10-12). Our souls are eternal. What a foolish thing it would be to trade our souls for the whole world, much less some of the trivial things for which people sell their souls. A great point is made by Christ in the parable of the great supper. When all things were ready, those invited began to make excuse: one had bought a piece of ground; another had bought five yoke of oxen; and, and another one had married a wife. The point is, they turned down

the invitation, just as many are turning down the Lord’s invitation to salvation and eternal life.

The cost of compromise measured in souls of the unfaithful is both staggering and frightening. In many communities where a congregation has existed for a number of years — it might surprise some at the number of unfaithful members of the church which would be found if a survey was taken. Some would be found who were at one time considered faithful. What happened? Chances are that the downfall of many started when they went ahead and did something which did not believe to be right. They just went along with it anyway.

VI. PREVENTION OF COMPROMISE

Paul said, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Phil. 4:13). To the Corinthians he said, “There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful,, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it” (I Cor. 10:13). Does this not prove that we can overcome any temptation to compromise God’s truth?

We must not, however, think that the ability to overcome temptation is without conditions. Peter said that we, “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word that ye [we] may grow thereby” (1 Pet. 2:2). John says that the victory which overcomes the world is our faith (I Jno. 5:4). Our faith must not falter but grow stronger day by day. God’s all sufficient word makes that possible (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Our ears must remain open to the truth which makes us free (Jno. 8:32) and keeps us free (I Jno. 1:7).

Regarding Hymenaeus and Philetus, who taught the resurrection was past overthrowing the faith of some (2 Tim. 2:17-18), can we imagine Paul saying, “Well, I know these men, and I don’t believe in what they are doing, but I’m just going to go along with them anyway.” I can’t imagine such. Why? Paul did not compromise truth.

—Editor

Put Not Thyself Forward

Alan Adams

Having said it before, “so say I now again”: The trickiest part of the life and work of the preacher falls in the general area of what I broadly and fondly call *public relations*. The concrete, objective aspect of the preacher and his work is the Bible. This part of our lives is only precarious as it relates to our efforts to study, ascertain, make appertain, and proclaim; it is not however precarious from the perspective that it is a closed universe of ideas, it never changes.

I suppose there is not a preacher who has never wryly reflected that he loves everything about his work except dealing with people, which of course is impossible. Preaching is all about people; and people are fickle, temperamental, moody, inconsistent, sometimes obstinate and so on. Frustration sometimes prompts preachers to boldly affirm, “I don’t care what people think of me.” Then again, upon quiet reflection, we are forced to admit that 1) that is not really true, and 2) it is not really practical. We do and should care about people and their perceptions of us as preachers. It is in this area of cultivating perceptions that preachers can be their own worst enemy.

This is particularly true when the preacher focuses his *perception cultivation* toward those whom he deems “reputed to be somewhat.” The wise man gives great advice in this matter: “Put not thyself forward in the presence of the king, And stand not in the place of great men: For better is it that it be said unto thee, Come up hither, Than that thou shouldest be put lower in the presence of the prince, Whom thine eyes have seen” (Prov 25.6,7). We, of course, do not deal with “kings” and “princes,” and “great men”—well—that’s relative, and too often only in the eyes of self assessors. But the principles here are similar to the Lord’s warning against seeking “the chief seat” (Luk 14.8ff) and winding up being bumped on down when someone “more honorable” enters the room.

Avoid, my preacher friend, promoting yourself. “Study to be quiet.” That is, expend your efforts at not being seen and noticed by others. “Humility” or “lowliness of mind [*tapeinophrosunei*]” (Col 3.12; 1Pe 5.5; Ac 20.19), a premium christian characteristic, among other things carries the idea of “self-ef-

acement.” This is the idea of quietly making yourself inconspicuous. Learn to take satisfaction from personally knowing that you have done your job well. If others take notice and approve: Fine. If they do not: Equally fine. This can be said no better than: “But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man’s judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing against myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord” (1Co 4:3).

This *put not yourself forward* philosophy is actually a good way to cause people, even perceived to be important people, to like and appreciate you. When you are not spending time promoting or drawing attention to yourself, that means there is more time to concentrate on doing your job well. Wisdom says, “Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; He shall not stand before mean men” (Pro 22.29). Then again, “A man’s gift maketh room for him, And bringeth him before great men” (18.16). Some think the “gift” here is a bribe, but for contextual and lexical reasons, I concur with Keil and Delitzsch who say the word “is an indifferent idea, and the proverb means that a man makes free space, a free path for himself, by a gift, i.e., by this, that he shows himself to be agreeable, pleasing where it avails, not niggardly but liberal.” It can be used in a bad or good sense as determined by the context. In this case the preacher’s “gift” can be honest diligent effort, civility and kindness, integrity and so on. Such things will “make room for him” and “bring him before” truly “great” men. Let your deeds speak for you, not yourself, nor some one-man political action committee.

Practicing this philosophy also pays dividends in personal relations. It gives you more time to listen to other people and show an interest in them, their ideas, interests and concerns. “Love vaunteth not itself” (1Co 13.4) is after all not just flowery pulpit-speak. “Rejoice” and “weep” (Rom 12.15) with others in their various circumstances; “let each one of us please his neighbor for that which is good, unto edifying” (15:2);

“do good unto all men” (Gal 6.10). These are all difficult to do for a person devoted to putting himself forward.

In Greek mythology there is the story of Daedalus and his son Icarus. Both had been imprisoned in a tower by a king. Daedalus contrived a plan to make wings using feathers, string and wax. The day came, Daedalus counselled his son to fly at moderate height warning if he flew too low the damp would clog his wings, and if too high the sun would melt the wax. Icarus carried away soared upward and as his father feared the wax melted and the boy fell into the sea and perished. Some Latin commentator cited by Adam Clarke, summed the matter up:

Why was it that Daedalus winged his way safely, while Icarus his son fell, and gave name

to the Icarian sea? Was it not because the son flew aloft, and the father skimmed the ground? For both were furnished with the same kind of wings. Take my word for it, that he who lives privately lives safely; and every one should live within his own income. Envy no man; pray for a quiet life, though it should not be dignified. Seek a friend, and associate with thy equals.

Not bad advice; but of course, the wise man, by the Spirit of God had already long since said: “Put not thyself forward in the presence of the king, And stand not in the place of great men.” Too many young preachers get their wings melted by trying to fly too high. Put not thyself forward.

The Total Product

Many BOT readers are also supporters and encouragers of the preacher training work of the Milestone church of Christ (Pensacola, FL) via the Northwest Florida School of Biblical Studies. This noble work continues to go forward with both its trials and its triumphs.

As to triumphs, we have several that we both savor and which humble us. When members of churches being served by our graduates call us just to say “thanks” for the men now working among them: well, let’s just say that on a bad day that does wonders for morale. Several churches once in the doldrums are now seeing stability and growth. NWFSBS of course does not take credit for that, but we are happy to be connected to it in the person and work of our graduates.

Most of the men who come our way are bright academically, but when we hear of these generally younger brothers showing poise, class and maturity as they deal with the inevitable challenges of preaching, we are “bound to give thanks.”

As to trials, you see, they stem mostly from what seems to be the least under our control: ego, character, temperament, demeanor, civility, politeness and so on. With a good sound curriculum and good teachers, both of which we have at NWFSBS and at other

good schools, one can essentially control the academic end of things. The other things are more difficult and often elusive, yet nonetheless necessary in the production of the total product we call “preacher.” Reading the preacher epistles (1,2 Timothy, Titus) it cannot escape notice as to the emphasis given to the matter of a preacher “purg[ing his] vessel.” Only recently I received the news of a bright young preacher “losing it” in public, indecorously raising his voice, showing disrespect for his elders and drawing untoward attention to himself, and sadly to the church through his misbehavior. This sort of thing can set churches back of years to come.

At NWFSBS we are sobered by the reality that preacher training graduates sometimes do more harm than good; not because they can’t “string a phrase” or quote a passage, but because of character flaws. With the combined years of experience our faculty brings together, we are able to “admonish” in these areas.

We are working hard producing a total product. We thank each of you who supports our work and beseech your continuance. We rely on your good judgment: knowing young men who are among you, you can also help us by pointing mature responsible gentlemen our way. This dearth of sound and solid preachers can only be defeated by our working together.

—1653 Pine Lane Dr., Cantonment, FL 32533