The urgent need for and basis of optimism within the Lord’s Church

The need for optimism within the Lord’s church is indeed a pressing one, but thanks be to God that the basis of optimism is adequate to insure it. True belief in God cultivates optimism.

In the following discussion we shall reflect upon the two items suggested in the title. In Section One, we shall consider the urgent need for optimism within the Lord’s church. In Section Two, we shall examine the powerful and adequate basis of that needed optimism. It goes without saying that every God-loving and Heaven-seeking person should concentrate on these two important things.

Though the term “optimism” is generally understood, let us allow Webster define it: “A tendency to look on the more favorable side of events or conditions.” The antonym of optimism is “pessimism.” We have heard the two terms exemplified in the following way. The optimist says, “Every cloud has a silver lining,” whereas the pessimist says, “Every silver lining has a cloud.” In other words, one looks on the bright side and the other looks on the dark side. The former we urgently need to cultivate and the latter we need to eliminate. It is probably the case that just about every one of us needs to work on these two things. As we continue our discussion we trust that we may point out some things which will help us to be more successful in accomplishing this objective. We begin this effort by considering:

SECTION I – THE URGENT NEED FOR OPTIMISM WITHIN THE LORD’S CHURCH

In order to emphasize the need for optimism it is needful to consider some of the things which must be overcome. There are various things which hinder optimism. We need to be aware of those things, in order that we can cope with them. It is, however, very important that we always keep in mind that we can overcome those hindrances and maintain a spirit of optimism, if that is our never-failing objective. —
Having observed “false brethren” for more than five years, we have concluded that “false brethren” are men- tioned twice in the New Testament. In 2 Corinthians 11, Paul lists a catalogue of things which he had faced in his serving Christ. In verse 26, he mentions a number of “perils” which he faced. One of those was, “in perils among false brethren.” In Galatians 2:4, Paul says, “And because of false brethren brought in unawares, who set themselves up over the apostles’ labor.”

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Inspiration, Incidental, The “Need To Know,” And Christmas

REVELATION

“Revelation” is connected to the idea of information. Information is potential knowledge. In last week’s article, we dealt with 1 Corinthians 2 wherein Paul spoke of the “mystery,” and “[hidden] wisdom” of God. He called such the “things” or the “deep things” of God. At one point he said the “rulers of this world” did not “know” “these things,” in fact could not have known “these things” because God had not “revealed” them. These “things” are no longer a mystery because “unto us God revealed them through the Spirit...yea, the deep things of God.” What did Paul and the other apostles do with this “revealed” information? In Ephesians 3:1-4, he says essentially three things: 1. I got what I know “by revelation”; 2. I wrote what was “revealed” in “words”; 3. You can “read” what I wrote; and, 4. You can thereby “perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ. Thus, the information has moved from God, through the Holy Spirit, through Paul, into the written words of Paul, and finally to us. Let’s then think about.

INSPIRATION

Were Paul and the others left to use their mortal, fallible brains and abilities to put into words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs this Divinely-given information? The Bible claims to be the very Word of God. Literally hundreds of times, we read mere mortals making such claims. Thus saith the Lord; or This is the commandment of the Lord.” One writer has said, “Christ was a divine as God and as human as Mary. In like manner the Bible is divine in that every single original word thereof was chosen and dictated by the Holy Spirit; and it is human in that human instruments were used to receive the revelation and accurately pen the words selected by the Holy Spirit.”

Jesus calmly promised His apostles, “...be not anxious how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of you Father that speaketh in you” (Matt. 10:19-20). Here Jesus couples the what (the information) with the how. Paul described the extent, the pervasiveness, of this marvelous promise of power when he said of the apostles’ words, “Which things also we speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth; combining spiritual things with spiritual words” (I Cor. 2:13). Jesus viewed the Scriptures as being Divine and authoritative right down to the very “ jot [and] tittle” (Matt. 5:18). That Heaven-sent information was too priceless to be allowed to come by way of a mere mortal process. What we have: the Bible, words on pages, is “every Scripture inspired of God” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). “Inspired” — far different from our common usage — comes from the Greek theopneustos. This is a compound word, formed from the word for “God,” and the word for “breath.” Mouth, breath, words: these things tend to travel together. What we have at our disposal, the Bible, is from the mouth of God.

Think, for a moment, about the omniscience of the Holy Spirit, whose task it was to bring to man, through man, the complete Will of God. Because, when the Spirit spoke “by the mouth” (cf. Acts 1:16), or the pen (cf. Eph. 3:4) of Paul: He (the Spirit) so thoroughly knew and infused the mind, experiences, memories, tastes, vocabulary, etc. of Paul, that what came through Paul sounds so very much like Paul. The same is true when He communicated through Luke, the physician. One cannot but notice the telltale medical terms used throughout those books penned by Luke. This, in turn, leads us to ponder...

PERSONAL, INCIDENTAL (NEVER TRIVIAL); YET, INSPIRED THINGS

This brings us back to the discussion I mentioned; the one which prompted this article. Divine Revelation has provided us with all the information we need to know. Sometimes in movies and books, we come across that phrase, need to know. Usually it refers to “intelligence” matters, top secret or classified things. Such information is said to be given out only on a need to know basis. Well, in a sense, as seen above, God’s ultimate purpose — the Christ and His church (Eph. 3:9-10) — was for a long time classified; even angels were cut out of the information circle (cf. 1 Pet. 1:12). But, to finish the analogy, ever since the First Century, the Freedom of Information Act has been in effect and we have access to everything we need to know.

Operating under the premise that God has given us everything we need to know, and that on the basis that we need to know everything he has given us.

I knows how many brethren have been led away from the truth by false brethren. Brethren too often fail to heed the warnings give in the New Testament. Christ said, “beware of false prophets” (Matt. 7:15). The apostle Paul sounded the following warning: “For I know this that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:29-30). Peter warned, “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you...” (2 Pet. 2:1-2). John said, “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1).

The number of false brethren is surely at an all time high. To make it even worse, that number is increasing, as people leave the “old paths” and opt for a more “up to date” gospel. Respect for God’s truth has waned and efforts to please people by giving them what they want have increased by leaps and bounds. Reports come from all across our nation that teachers of error are prevailing and growing. It is not uncommon for families to worship at home because they cannot find a sound congregation with which to wor- ship. Brethren living in areas where there are numerous local churches struggle to find a sound church. In the Nashville area, with as many as 150 congregations, few are they which still seek to walk in the “old paths.” Right here in our own area, where we have lived for twenty years, it is the case now that the major- ity of congregations have gone off into left field. Not that many people seem to be concerned. We com- monly hear readers say, “It is the same way here.”

COMPROMISE WITH DENOMINATIONS. When I obeyed the gospel in 1953, the distinctiveness of the Lord’s church was heralded far and wide as the only church which Christ built and purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28). This appealed to those who were sincerely looking for the truth, as set forth in God’s word. I have sadly seen a drastic change in many brethren. I never thought that I would see so many of them give up their convictions with regard to the Lord’s church and the true gospel of Christ. As I look back and review all the warnings about false teachers and departures from the faith, I realize that what I see now, as sad as it is, should not constitute a surprise. A vivid example of such departure was recently reported in the very liberal paper, The Christian Chronicle. In the August 2006 issue, they report on the “North American Christian Convention” was held in Louis- ville, Kentucky, an annual event of Independent Chris- tian Churches.

One feature of the Convention was the exchange of Bibles between members of the Christian Church and churches of Christ. The exchange of Bibles had absolutely nothing to do with doctrinal matters, but the Convention did have a great deal to do with doctrinal matters. Some prominent leaders from the churches of Christ displayed their affliation for compromise with the Christian Church, thereby disavowing their belief in the one, distinctive, church of our Lord Jesus Christ. Present at the event were: Jeff Walling, Marvin Phillips, Jerry Taylor, President Royce Money of Abilene, and Rochester College President Mike Westerfield. Walling and David Stone, of the Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, exchanged Bibles. Walling is quoted as saying to Stone, “I want to tell you tonight, you are my brother.” From all indications, Walling is not the only one to think that way.

Such compromise with the Christian Church is just one of several examples. Abilene Christian University, with near five thousand students, represents no small influence. Not only is ACU compromising with the Chris- tian Church, they are also compromising with a number of man-made churches. When thinking about the sad fact of compromise, we need to think of all those who are partakers in this error, not only at Abilene but at a number of other places. A matter which concerns me so much is that many of my brethren are not disturbed.

A LEADERSHIP CRISIS. When the church had been blessed with the leadership which God intended, we would not have been discussing much of the above. Not only has the lack of God-pleasing leadership allowed much error to creep in, in an increasing number of cases the leadership has been in the forefront of promoting error. True elders can be the most effective means of protecting the Lord’s church from error, while unquali- fied elders can be one of the most effective means by which error thrives and grows. What a great need there is for “Elder Training Schools.”

Inspiration, Incidental, The “Need To Know,” And Christmas
 SPIRITUAL INDIFFERENCE. Not only do we see this in society in general, we see it within the Lord's church. It is the case now that few things seem to disturb many brethren. When error occurs, even of a most serious nature, a few, comparatively speaking, may be disturbed. But then, with the passing of time, this concern may wane.

Why Write About Such Things?
We have no desire to demoralize, rather to point to the reality of some of the things we, as Christians, face. Paul said, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come" (2 Tim. 3:1). We need to realize and realize the things we face which could jeopardize our salvation or needed optimism. Some do not like to be reminded of these things, but their dislike is not based on the teaching of God's Word.

To defeat our enemy, the Devil, we need to be aware of his "devices" and "wiles." The Devil, the "father" of lies, would have us believe that there is no way that we can overcome his efforts to gain control over us. But that is the greatest of lies.

As pointed out earlier, our discussion involves two Sections. In this Second Section we shall emphasize the basis for optimism. If we truly believe God's Word to be true, we can and will be optimistic. We must be optimistic. Optimists are victorious whereas pessimists are failures and defeated.

SECTION II — THE BASIS OF OPTIMISM WITHIN THE LORD'S CHURCH

When thinking of the "perilous times" in which we live today, and they are indeed perilous, it's good to reflect upon the Lord's people in the first century. Why so? They faced many obstacles, some of which were even much more severe than anything we face today. Yet, in spite of this, they were able to maintain their faith, and leave this life victoriously. If they could do that, then there is no reason why we cannot do the same. Those early Christians faced a variety of severe persecutions, even to the point of having to give up their lives in death. We do not face anything nearly as severe. We are not even threatened with imprisonment for being a Christian and serving the Father and the Son, much less put to death.

Readers’ Response

"Thanks for the bundle of back issues of Banner of Truth. They went like hot cakes. If you have any more of the Vol. 14, No. 10 I would like a couple more copies. I appreciate your stand for the truth of God's Word. So many have departed from it. I pray that you and your wife's health will permit you many more years in the service of our Master." — Charles Miller, (We are happy to send back issues since we have copies of many issues. — Editor).

"Please remove us from your mailing list. Thank you." — TN, (Thank you for letting us know that you no longer wish to receive BOT — Editor).

"Thank you very much for sending the extra copies of BOT. I plan to put them to good use. Enclosed is a bit for postage. This Outreach article makes me remember Ezekiel 9:4 — and how few it seems to me sigh and cry about it today. I thank God for preachers who cry aloud and spare not. God bless you and your wife and family." — Hibernia Weaver, (You are certainly right in that few seem to sigh and cry about the condition which exists today. Indifference has never been so prevalent. — Editor).

"I recently saw one of your Banner of Truth booklets, the July 2006 edition. I would like to receive these booklets starting with the July edition. If you could, put me on your mailing list. Thank you." — Ellen Pace, KY, (You have been added and I put the August issue in the mail today. I'm working on the September issue. You will receive it. — Editor).

"To Whom It May Concern: We wish to request at this time that you drop us from your mailing list." — AL.

"I would like to subscribe to Banner of Truth monthly Publication. Please put me on your mailing list. Also, if you have past issues, kindly send them too. Thank you." — Francis Rajathurai, Singapore.

"I'm enclosing a small token for your work on Banner of Truth. I would like all back copies. Please put me on your mailing list and send me a statement when needed. Thanking you in advance." — Mrs. Laos Mae Highborn, AR, (BOT is sent free to those requesting it. We do appreciate gifts, since this is the means by which it is made possible. — Editor).

"Your efforts are fruitful for our Lord and our church!!!! Your recent BOT was excellent and 'Right On' with the Truth. I am not sure because 'drawing the line' as you aptly stated. The enclosed check is for you. I will try to help periodically. May God give you good health and many more years to teach His word." — Billy Witt, MO, (Thanks for your help and concern for my health. That's my wish. — Editor).

"Thanks for sending us Banner of Truth. We really appreciate receiving a sound paper like this." — Downtown church of Christ, AR.

"Here's some personal help. We admire you and your good work. We pray that God will continue to help you in living a long life... Please show this as "anonymous." We deeply appreciate those who make our work possible and the prayers for a longer life in which to work. I'm thankful that God has blessed me as He has. I had my 81st birthday last month, and my health is much improved over last year. I look forward to several more years. — Editor).

"Although we appreciate your effort with 'Banner of Truth,' we must ask you to take us off your mailing list. At present we are overwhelmed with publications from various congregations, including our own. We are a very small rural congregation with very little space and very few men to take care of all our efforts. Although yours is a good publication, we end up throwing away most if not all of the newsletters we receive because our members have so many other weekly and monthly documents before them. We feel it is a waste of the Lord's money to continue to receive these from your congregation. Good luck with your continued efforts to strive to reach out to others." — Stout Hill congregation, AL. (We are encouraged by the thousands who receive Banner of Truth, but when it is no longer considered useful by anyone, we very much appreciate being informed so that the Lord's money will not be wasted. We encourage those who receive BOT to let us know if they receive more than they need, or if more are needed. — Editor).

"If the congregation where you worship publishes a church bulletin, would you please add me to your mailing list? I am in poor health with very limited mobility and am having difficulty obtaining enough doctrinally sound reading material to occupy my time. Thanks for any help." — John 9:11). John adds the following: "Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son….For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deed" (2 John 7:11).

In spite of God's law on fellowship, many brethren are freely extend fellow to those, who according to God's Word, they ought not. Not only are brethren fellowship offspring people in man-made churches, they are fellowshiping all manner of false teaching. The withdrawing of fellowship, which God's Word teaches, is seldom done. Some brethren are so bold as to say, "I just don't believe it will work." On a congregational basis, congregations advertise and fellowship congregations which are in error. When this happens, only harm can come from it. When error is fellowshiped it is encouraged.
they were caught in some evil, but never have a change of mind that results in a change of actions. Paul said, “For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death” (2 Cor. 7:10). True repentance is when a person has a change of mind which says in effect, “I’m going to follow Christ, “the author of eternal salvation,” and I’m going to turn away from sin and error. Christ says it is “repent or perish” (Lk. 13:3). Paul said “And the times of ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent” (Acts 17:30). True repentance is shown by actions.

The next essential in conversion is Confession of Faith in Christ. From the record of the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:26-39, we see the essentiality of confession of faith in Christ. An angel of the Lord directed Philip to go and join himself to the chariot of the eunuch, who was reading from the prophet Isaiah (vv.26-29). The eunuch inquired of Philip as to the identity of the prophet. At this point “Philip opened his mouth and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus” (v. 35). When “they came to a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?” (v. 36). Philip’s response was, “If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God” (v. 37). Upon this good confession of faith in Christ, Philip baptized him. The fourth essential in conversion is Baptism. We have seen this in the two examples already cited. In Acts 2, the inquiring audience was told to “repent and be baptized for the remission of sins.” In every conversion recorded in the Book of Acts, baptism was the last essential to conversion. Converts were baptized “into Christ” (Gal. 3:27), where salvation is found (2 Tim. 3:15). Christ said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mk. 16:16).

When a person is converted, that one has been “delivered from the power of darkness” and translated “into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins” (Col. 12:13-14). Once a person is “in Christ,” they have the blessing of continued forgiveness of sins on the condition of walking in the light, as he is in the light…” (1 John 1:5). Thank God for His instructions.

Al Queada And The Pope

A few weeks ago a prominent subject in the national news was the pope’s statement in a speech about Islam and the outrage by Islamic leaders and individuals. There were attacks on churches and a man was slain in Somalia. Many Muslims demonstrated in various places. What did the pope say to cause such uproar? In an article by Lee Keath of AP, The Paducah Sun, Sept. 19, 2006, it is said of the pope, “His comments made in a speech last week, in which he quoted a medieval text characterizing some of the Prophet Muhammad’s teachings as ‘evil and inhuman’ and calling Islam a religion spread by the sword.” Let it be understood that I have no respect for the pope. Pope’s claim to be “vicars” of Christ on earth, that is, they claim to take the place of Christ. The Catholic also claims the pope is “infallible.” The Catholic Church is a religion of error, a work of men and not of God. Authentic information relative to this and much more is available to all who want it.

How much longer will we remain asleep, unaware that Islam is the world’s greatest enemy against Christianity, and that world conquest is their goal? Hardly does a day pass that there is not more evidence that we are in a world-war with Islam. Even the pope wanted to back-track on the truth he spoke so clearly. But, then, the Catholic Church has a doctrine of “Mental Reservation” which allows them to lie if it be for betterment of their religion. —Editor

Without question, the most valuable area of man’s existence is not his pursuit of things in the material world which are of temporary existence, but rather those unseen things of a spiritual nature which have to do with eternal existence. God, in His creation of man, had in mind something of far greater importance than a period of existence on earth, which we call life. This is a reason for optimism.

That God had in mind something far more important than existence on earth is evidenced by the fact His “manifold wisdom” was made known by the church, “according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Eph. 3:10-11). The fulfillment of God’s eternal purpose is first noted in Genesis 3:15, where it is learned of the essentiality of the head of the serpent, the devil. From that point onward, God’s plan unfolds through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The Old Testament points to God’s purpose for the salvation of man, as a golden thread which reaches to Christ and His gospel where salvation is found (Rom. 1:16).

That God’s eternal purpose involves Christ and His church, suggests that man, endowed with the power of choice, would choose to violate God’s will and sin thereby. Since God’s plan for the salvation of man was eternal, and since it involved the once and for all sacrifice of His Son, is there any reason to doubt that salvation is possible for those who seek it in harmony with God’s provisions? Is not this a great reason to keep our minds centered on these examples. I trust it will help us to increase our optimism.

Joshua and Caleb.

In Numbers 13 and 14, we have the record of the twelve spies sent out by Moses to spy out the land of Canaan. Ten of the spies were pessimists, who said the land could not be taken. Joshua and Caleb were optimists, who said, “If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us: . . . (14:8). The Lord did delight in Joshua and Caleb, and gave Israel the land.

David and Goliath.

First Samuel 17 is the record of the account of David and Goliath. Goliath, a champion of the Philistines, was a giant of a man and armed to the teeth. Saul and Israel were afraid when they saw him, but they were called to faith. David said “I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.” (v. 45). We know the rest of the story, how that David prevailed against Goliath, believing that the Lord would “deliver” Goliath into his hand. God did just that. With true faith in God, we can overcome the efforts of Satan to conquer us. We have an all-sufficient guide. Its not just “thanks be to God” — like we are wandering in darkness, not knowing what God’s will is for us. Just think; would God have made all the provisions for the salvation of man, including the death of His only begetter Son, and then fail to give the needed instructions to the recipient of that salvation? Whereas many religions of the world are instructed by man-made ideas and doctrines, the Christian can rejoice in the fact that God’s inspired word is his guide. What a blessing Paul makes known to us when he said, “Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17, ASV). This fills a great need of man, as Jeremiah realized, when he said, “O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jer. 10:23). The psalmist said, →
Continuing action. That is, as long as we walk in the light the blood of Christ continues to cleanse us of our sins. What could give us more encouragement, in fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (I John 1:7). Then in verse 9, “If we say that we have not sinned, we are liars, and the truth is not in us” (I John 1:8). He goes on to say, “If we say that we have sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us” (v. 10). That we have sinned and stand in need of forgiveness could not be made plainer. In view of this, how thankful we should be that provisions for forgiveness have been made. Note what John says, “But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (I John 1:7).

In Instruments of music were introduced in worship to God is because He has not authorized their use. To use them in sinful. Such use is no more an “expedient” than was Cain’s unauthorized addition in his attempt to worship God. We need not to go through infallible man to approach God, as some erroneously teach. We have...
authority do we offer our sacrifice of worship. More specifically, what is our source of authority as members of the blood-purchased church of the Lamb of God? An example of worship by faith and an attempt to worship God by an act not of faith is that of the offering of Cain and Abel. Abel’s sacrifice was pleasing because it was offered by faith (Heb. 11:4). There is no indication that Cain’s sacrifice was offered by faith, and it was not acceptable.

In Matthew 16:13-18, Jesus asked His apostles who men said that he was. Peter answered by divine revelation that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. It was upon this great truth that Christ said “I will build my church.” Jesus did what he promised to do, and He is the head and only head of His church. The only way to God the Father is through Christ, the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6). After the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus He commissioned His Ambassadors, the apostles, who were guided into all truth, to preach the gospel to every creature.

We have in the New Testament what Jesus and His apostles did and taught with regard to the New Testament church. But it is perfectly clear that there is no mention of any New Testament church employing instruments of music in worship. There is no direct statement, approved action, or inference that authorizes the use of the instrument. In fact, it was hundreds of years after the death of the apostles before man introduced instruments of music in worship. To this fact no knowledgeable and honest person disagrees. Numerous attempts to find some New Testament authority for instruments in worship have all failed.

Peter, said, “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as the ability which God giveth; that God in all things should be exalted in you in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Col. 3:16). From the above we note that in singing to praise God, the oracles of God are to be used. The Bible warns us not to add to or take from God’s word.

Passages relating to acceptable worship.

There are passages which relate to each of the items of worship in which we are authorized to engage. Teaching and Preaching, What we teach and preach is limited to the “oracles of God.” To go beyond is sin. Paul instructed Timothy to study for God’s approval and then “preach the word.” We are warned not to add to or take from God’s word.

The Lord’s Supper. The elements of the Lord’s supper are limited to “fruit of the vine,” and “bread.” It might taste better with a little strawberry jam, but that would be sin. The Lord’s supper, by approved example, is to be observed on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). It is observed as a memorial. Acceptable Prayer. Christians are to pray to God the Father through the mediator, Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 2:5). Christians are not to pray to Mary, or to any other person. Praying to others is a doctrine of a man, not of God.

Acceptable Christian Giving. We are to give as God has prospered us (1 Cor. 16:1-2). Also involved in acceptable giving is our attitude. Paul said, “Every man according as he purposed in his heart, let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:7). Praising God in Song. To praise God in song acceptably we are instructed as follows: “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (Eph. 5:19). In the inspired instructions to the Colossians Christians are to, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Col. 3:16). From the above we note that in singing to praise God and edifying one another, we are limited to “psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.” This rules out songs which appeal to the fleshly emotions of mankind, such as the contemporary music of our time. It is with the “heart,” the intellect, that we praise God and at the same time edify one another spiritually.

Also ruled out would be “humming” and “playing” on some mechanical instrument. The toot of a horn and the beat of a drum can edify no one, but the...
Some concluding thoughts

We have tried to set forth some of the things of adversity
that we face in living the Christian life. We would be very
unwise to ignore these things which can cause us to lose
hope and become discouraged. We have seen brethren
to have a heart of unbelief, departing from the only way
of salvation. The writer of Hebrews warns of this when he
said, “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in you an evil heart
of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (3:12).

We have mentioned the above things, not to discourage,
but to encourage the overcoming of those things which can
cause the loss of the spirit of optimism. This can be
done as we have tried to point out. We are living in
“perilous times,” there’s no doubt about it, but so
were the early Christians and they endured and main-
tained their faith. It they did, so can we.

In view of the difficult times we face, no one could
sensibly deny that there is a great need for optimism.
That need is even much greater now than in years I
have seen by. But with the realization of need for optimism,
we should constantly remind ourselves that we have an
all-sufficient basis for optimism. If we truly believe in
God and take Him at His word, we can be optimistic.
But at the same time, we have an all-important to play.

As the apostle Paul put it, we must “Fight the good fight of
faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also
called” (I Tim. 6:12). John said, “...He that abideth in the
domain of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son”
(2 Jno. 9). Since we can abide in the doctrine of Christ, we
can have the approval of both the Father and the Son, a
powerful basis of optimism.

I give the following lines to stir our needed optim-
ism—

Life is a vapor that passes away,
A reminder that we are not on earth to stay.
Our bodies grow weak and frail,
But a better place awaits us, not affected by cavel.

As life on this earth is passing by,
We can look forward to a home in the sky.
From a tabernacle where we dwell in this land,
There awaits in heaven a house not made with hands.

What a tragedy for the devil to cause our fall,
For Heaven will surely be worth it all.
— Editor

Questions and answers

Does a person have to be “faithful unto death” to be
saved? Do you know of anyone who has been “faithful
unto death”? Before you quickly answer both
questions, Yes, let us consider a few things.
The phrase, “faithful unto death,” is regularly used
inbulletins, Bible classes, and in sermons. We use it
in the invitation pointing out that people must believe,
repent, confess, be baptized, and be “faithful unto
death.” I appreciate, and agree with, the sentiment,
but I believe it means something different. I have no
doubt that I have personally used the phrase out of
context.
The phrase, “faithful unto death” is found in
Revelation 2:10. Christ is warning christians that they
would suffer persecution, which was a common thing
in the early days of the church. Verse ten says: “Fear
none of those things which thou shalt suffer; behold,
the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye
may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days:
be thou faithful unto death (emphasis, wwp), and I will
give thee a crown of life.”

When that phrase is used to mean “be faithful as
long as you live,” it is used out of context. It is indeed
true that one must be faithful until the end of life to be
saved, but that is not what Rev. 2:10 teaches. It rather
means to be faithful unto the point of dying. One does
not have to exclusively be faithful unto the point of
dying to be saved, otherwise, only those who suffer
physical death would be saved.

In response to question 2, I don’t know of anyone
who has been put to death because of his faith in
Christ. In fact, I don’t even know of anyone personally
who has been even cast into prison, that ye
may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days:
be thou faithful unto death (emphasis, wwp), and I will
give thee a crown of life.”

Reasons Why the True Church of Christ Does Not Use
Mechanical Instruments of Music in Worship

Lloyd Gale

This discussion is for the benefit of new members
of the church of Christ, our children, and those who
aren’t members of the church of Christ who would like
to understand why the church of Christ is different
from man-made denominations.

Some things which aren’t the reason

It is not because some members of the church of
Christ are unable to play instruments of music. My
wife and I were blessed with three children and they
all were taught to play an instrument of music. Many
other members of the church of Christ have that abili-

It is not because members of the church of Christ
cannot afford to purchase and maintain instruments of
music, nor is it because they do not enjoy hearing the
sound of instruments of music, for most enjoy good
music. Christians understand that worship is not about
what pleases man but what pleases God.

It is not because members of the church of Christ
follow some man-made creed, or such like, which for-
bids the use of instruments of music. But contrari-
wise, only that which God’s word allows is practiced,
and that excludes the instrument.

Reasons why the true church of Christ does not worship God
with mechanical instruments of music

Since “All scripture is given by inspiration of God,
and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction,
for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God
may be...” (2 Tim. 3:16-17), if a thing is not authorized it is
not a “good work.” It would not be a good work for the
church.

A diligent study of the scriptures reveals that there
are three ways by which things are authorized: 1. Direct
statements. 2. Approved actions or examples. 3. Things
which are clearly inferred or implied.

An example of a direct statement is found in Mark
8:37, where he confessed his faith in Christ.