

BANNER OF TRUTH

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denotes (a) the act of building (*oikos*, a home, and *demo*, to build); this is used only figuratively in the N.T., in the sense of edification, the promotion of spiritual growth (lit. the things of building up)...” As a verb, OIKODOMEO “(b) is used metaphorically, in the sense of edifying, promoting the spiritual growth and development of character of believers, by teaching or by example, suggesting such spiritual progress as the result of patient labour...” (*Vine’s* pp. 357, 358). *Vine’s* goes on to say that the term applies to local churches, individuals toward one another, and of individuals with regard to themselves.

From the above definition of edification we can clearly see its importance, even its essentiality, with regard to spiritual growth, which is the basic meaning of edification. If we want to “build” or grow spiritually we must avail ourselves of the means which have been provided to make that possible.

SPIRITUAL. Spiritual has to do with the invisible part of man, “the inner man.” Man is a physical and a

spiritual being. We do not see the spiritual person but the evidence of the “inward man” is often seen in the physical man. Secularism is not concerned with spiritual man, only the physical.

James says “For as the body with the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also” (2:26). The word “soul” is some times used to refer to the inward, invisible part of man. Christ said, “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul...” (Matt. 10:28).

When we speak of “spiritual” edification in our discussion, we have reference to that inner man and his spiritual growth.

CHALLENGE. According to *Young’s Analytical Concordance*, the word “challenge[th]” is used only one time in the Bible (Ex 22:9). But the idea of a challenge is used many times. *Webster* defines challenge as: “1. a summons to engage in contest, as of skill or strength. 2. something that by its nature or character serves as a serious test... 3. a call to fight, as in a duel.”

Though not in a duel, the Christian has been called to fight. Paul told Timothy to “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called...” (1 Tim. 6:12). Paul said of himself, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith” (2 Tim. 4:7). Paul had met the challenge of fighting a good fight and keeping his faith. There are many challenges set forth in the New Testament which apply to us. The Corinthians were challenged to be “stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58). Jude said, “it was needful to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend [as a combatant — *Vine’s*] for the faith which was once [once for all, ASV] delivered unto the saints” (v. 3). Christians are told to “run with patience the race that is set before us” (Heb. 12:1). This is a serious challenge.

One great problem within the church today is the fact that many fail to realize that true Christianity is a militant religion. Militancy was well demonstrated in the early days of the church, when the members faced so many enemies. The church would be much stronger today if all its members had a spirit of militancy in fighting for the faith. We are indeed to be fighters for the cause of Christ. But some times ↴

Open Your Life and Say, “AAH”

It was back in 1985-86 that I was accepted for enrollment into the Mandarin Training Institute of Taiwan Normal University. The university notified me that I would have to present a *jyan kang jeng ming* — a health certificate. I could have gotten one through a private doctor and it would have run me about \$24, but I learned that by going to a public clinic, I could get one for about \$2. It’s not in my nature to spend a dime if I don’t have to, so I decided on the public clinic.

In a Chinese public clinic, to get a physical examination, you first go to a main desk, get some forms, fill them out and get them chopped, and pay your two dollars. Then you take your papers from department to department where each doctor checks a specific thing and chops (rubber stamps) your form, then you go to the next department. Being the only white man in that whole clinic, I caught quite a bit of undesired attention; but, it was when I got to the dental department that things got really interesting.

There must have been about 200 people sitting and waiting to be called. I discreetly put my paper in the basket and waited my turn. The moment came when a little nurse loudly called, *An Ai-lwun* (my Chinese name). I walked toward the front with about 200 pairs of eyes watching me. When the nurse saw me she got flustered and spoke rapidly to another saying, “What are we going to do with this foreigner.” Further discussion followed, and finally the doctor just came out, and in front everyone said, “Open your mouth.” I did and he looked inside, counted my teeth, said, “OK,” and sent me on.

I laugh about the whole thing now, but I was very embarrassed at the time. As distasteful as the matter was, if I wanted my health certificate, there was nothing for me to do but open my mouth

and say, “Aah.” This entire event, however, leads me to think of something far more serious in nature; the idea of opening my entire life and saying, “Aah,” not merely to be exposed to the curiosity of others, but exposed before the “Judge of all the earth” (Genesis 18:25).

The writer of Hebrews says,

...the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do. (Hebrews 4:12-13)

This goes way beyond somebody counting the number of your teeth—the thoughts and intents of the heart,” “all things...naked and laid open.”

What about you my friend? Does it bother you to know that He, “with whom we have to do,” knows not only the number of your teeth, the number of hair strands on your head (Matthew 10:30), but He also knows: the kind of language you use; things you say about people; places you go; things you look at; jokes you tell. He is looking at you when you are sitting in front of the TV, or at a ball game, while your brethren are meeting together for worship or Bible study. Gets kind of scary, doesn’t it? Are you simply momentarily embarrassed, or will it bother you enough that you will make some changes? —AA

READERS’ RESPONSE

“Please include my name on your list to receive Banner of Truth. This is a good teaching tool which I can use in my work as a minister...” — **John Tracy, GA.**

“Thank you so much for putting me on you mailing list...” — **Barbara Neighbors, AL.** (*Thanks for the gift. Any amount is always sincerely appreciated. Editor.*)

“Just a quick note to let you know that you are in our prayers. ‘If God be for us, who can be against us!’” — **Jake and Rose, AL.** (*We sincerely appreciate the prayers of*

Priority and Relative Value

It is Sunday morning at my home church, our yours. 10:00 arrives; a christian is still in bed. That person chose sleep over Bible Study. It is 6:00 PM; a christian still has company at the house and chooses to stay home and entertain guests. That person chose hospitality over worship. This sort of thing is a regular feature in the lives of not a few christians.

Many times a day and thousands of times during our lives we are forced to choose what particular thing we will do at a particular time, and in so choosing, we coincidentally decide what we will *not* do at a particular time. In our minds, we each have a set of values by which we decide what the most important thing to us is at the time. That “mind-set” will mean the difference between Heaven and Hell for every person. “For the mind of the flesh is death; but the mind of the Spirit is life and peace” (Romans 8:6).

The Holy Spirit has recorded for us several instances where God is essentially saying to us: “This is more important than...” Let’s consider a few—

LEARNING THE WILL OF JESUS IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN HOSPITALITY. Imagine hosting Jesus of Nazareth; Martha and Mary did just that (Luk 10:38-42). Having “received him into her house” (v. 38), Martha, determined apparently to be an excellent hostess, was “cumbered about much serving” (v. 39). In the meantime, her sister Mary “sat at the Lord’s feet and heard his word” (v. 39). Martha complained saying, “Lord, dost thou not care that my sister did leave me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me” (v. 40). The Lord gently chided, “Martha, Martha, thou art anxious and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: for Mary hath chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.”

SEEKING GOD AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN DAILY NECESSITIES. “Be not therefore anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? For after all these things do the Gentiles seek; for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first his kingdom, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Be not therefore anxious for the morrow: for the morrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof” (Matthew 6:31-34).

DOING WHAT GOD SAYS IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN EATING, EVEN IF YOU’RE STARVING. “And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he afterward hungered. And the tempter came and said unto him, If thou art the Son of God, command that these stones become bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:2-4).

DEVOTING ONE’S LIFE TO JESUS IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN ALL OF HIS POSSESSIONS. “Jesus said unto him, If thou wouldest be perfect, go, sell that which thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me. But when the young man heard the saying, he went away sorrowful; for he was one that had great possessions” (Matthew 19:21-22).

PREACHING IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN A FUNERAL FOR YOUR FATHER. “And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. But he said unto him, Leave the dead to bury their own dead; but go thou and publish abroad the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:59-60).

TELLING PEOPLE THE TRUTH IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THEIR FEELINGS. “...I bear you witness, that, if possible, ye would have plucked out your eyes and given them to me. So then am I become your enemy, by telling you the truth?” (Galatians 4:15-16).

Let me challenge each of you to find other instances of the Bible’s value system when it comes to choices. The general rule is: “If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth. For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:1-3). Many important things in our lives are yet of relative value when compared to others. —AA

true fighters for the faith are put down as unloving, uncaring and in other such belittling ways.

II. GOD DESIRED AND PLANNED FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH

The Great Commission, an integral element of God’s eternal purpose for Christ and His church (Eph. 3:10-11) necessitates the growth of His church. Christ said, “Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you...” (Matt. 28:19). Christ also said, according to Mark’s account, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature...” (Mk. 16:15). If the gospel was to be taken to every creature in all the world, there would be a great need for spiritual growth on the part of individual Christians and the various congregations, working together to carry out this urgent command.

Time after time in the New Testament there is great emphasis upon spiritual growth (edification), and the need to carry out God’s plan of taking the gospel to the whole world. Paul’s missionary journeys are an example of great effort to teach others.

A splendid example of God’s intentions that His servants should grow spiritually is seen in the many warnings of things which would hinder that desired growth. Had there not been the intention of growth, why mention the things which would impede it?

The writer of Hebrews said, “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man” (Heb. 2:9). God gave his only begotten Son (Jno. 3:16), in order to make spiritual growth possible. Another example of God’s desire for spiritual growth is seen in the fact that “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9). Edification or spiritual growth which has been made possible, makes it possible to avoid being with those who perish and end up in eternal punishment.

The blessing of God’s plan of salvation, contingent upon the new birth and spiritual growth, are available

to man. Without growth the individual dies spiritually; thus, God planned for spiritual growth in order that man might be saved. Speaking of “God our Savior,” Paul says he “will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth” (I Tim. 2:4). If God will have all men to be saved, then he has assuredly made plans for spiritual life and growth, without both of which men cannot be saved.

It was never God’s intention that men pursue and be overcome by materialism and secularism such as we are seeing now. Yet, we are warned time and time again that many people will not love and accept His truth.

III. GOD HAS PROVIDED MAN WITH ADEQUATE MEANS FOR EDIFICATION AND SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Just as God desired and planned for spiritual growth, He has graciously provided the means by which this can be accomplished. How is it that most of mankind can totally reject what God has to offer man, when it is so evident that God has loved mankind beyond our ability to completely comprehend? By the same token, how is it that many of us within the Lord’s church are so neglectful of the means that God has provided for spiritual growth? The world loves darkness rather than light, but we who are in Christ, our love for the light of truth ought to be of the highest priority.

Spiritual Food Is Necessary. It is all too obvious that physical growth depends upon physical food. But whereas physical food can be a great danger, spiritual food can only be for good. That many are unmindful of the harm of physical food is seen in the rapidly increasing number of obese people. This brings on many physical problems. On the other hand, there are many problems due to the lack of spiritual food. Many are they who are seriously underweight spiritually. This results in much greater harm than over eating physical food, which may bring only physical problems.

The great source of spiritual food which God has made available is his word. But before this spiritual food will bring about spiritual growth, there must be a desire for that food. There are ways of force-feeding people physically, but that is not true in the spiritual realm. Speaking of desire for spiritual food, Peter said. “As newborn babes, desire the sincere →

milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (I Pet. 2:2). What a powerful analogy Peter gives. We know that a newborn, if healthy, desires food, and will eat about as long as food is available. Spiritually speaking, this desire for food is not limited to babes in Christ, but includes those who are no longer babes. Peter was not writing to babes, but simply used that example of desire for food which should characterize every member of the church.

When we consider the food that is being fed to many a flock today, it is understandable that spiritual malnutrition is a serious problem. Elders are exhorted to “feed the flock of God...” (I Pet. 5:2), but in far too many cases it is about like a cattle farmer sending his flock out to forage on sage grass. No growth is forthcoming since there is little food in sage grass. Some elders feed their flocks entertainment, fun and frolic. Too many times “meat” is not a part of the diet, since the flock doesn’t like “meat.” “Milk” is for “a babe” (Heb. 5:12-14). There are those in our flocks who don’t want anything meaty. That is, if something is above a third grade level, they don’t want to put forth the necessary effort to make use of that food. Some effort is involved in feasting upon strong, meaty things where the most spiritually nutritious food is found. It is easy to see why so many are unable “to discern both good and evil” (Heb. 5:14).

Spiritual Food Is Available. Think of so many of our brethren scores of years ago; what they accomplished should mean something to us. Some having little formal education yet became very knowledgeable in God’s word. After hours, when not involved making a living, they studied, sometimes by coal oil lamps. They were able to defend the faith against error, both in private settings as well as in public, teaching, preaching, and debating. As a result, many were they who came to a knowledge of the truth and obeyed it.

Those “old timers” committed large portions of the word to memory. Today? How many could guide a searching person to the steps of conversion as set forth in God’s word? Peter says we are to “sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (I Pet. 3:15). How many of us can actually do that? If we

can’t, whose fault is it? From personal observation, fifty years ago, there were many more of our brethren, than now, capable of “handling aright the word of truth” (2 Tim 2:15, ASV). Not coincidentally, that is when the church was growing, rather than declining as is the case today. Back then, even critics said of the church of Christ, “They know their Bibles.” When have you lately heard that?

Tools That Can Help Us Learn God’s Word. Of course, only God’s word is inspired. But there are tools which can be very helpful in our learning of God’s word. Just to read God’s word is good, but it is so very much better to study it. There are so many needful and useful study tools: A. A good Bible Dictionary. B. An extensive Concordance. C. *Vine’s Expository Dictionary Of New Testament Words*. D. A good English Dictionary. E. *Wilson’s Word Studies Of The Old Testament*. F. Reliable Commentaries on both the Old and New Testaments can be used effectively, with the understanding that commentaries are not inspired. Anything taught in a commentary must be upheld by the Bible, or rejected.

Things Which Hinder Spiritual Edification. Just as there are tools which can be used effectively in the learning of God’s word and spiritual growth, there are also things which can hinder spiritual growth.

FALSE TEACHERS. The numerous Bible warnings about false teachers would make for a long list indeed. Let us consider only a few examples sufficient to call attention to the reality and danger of false teachers: “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing...” (Matt. 7:15); “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); “there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ” (Gal. 1:7); “enemies of the cross of Christ” (Phil. 3:18); “the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith” (I Tim. 4:1); “the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth...” (2 Tim. 4:3-4); “there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall

Cultural Crisis Or Defiant Clash With God’s Word?

Marvin L. Weir

The Tuesday, December 21, 2004 *Dallas Morning News* has an article in the metro section by Kent Fischer about an 18-year-old honor student at Trinity Christian Academy who was forced from school because he is “gay.” The student was active in practically every activity at school and well liked by everyone. However, upon discovering that the teen “had created a Web site where teens chat about homosexuality,” the administrative board gave him a choice to “leave quietly or face expulsion for ‘immoral behavior.’”

While we would disagree with much of the doctrine of the religious group, we do applaud them for standing firm against the sin of homosexuality. The school’s decision has caused quite a stir by people within and without the school. Let us consider some of the things being said.

First, the newspaper states that “students, teachers and administrators at Trinity Christian are left debating whether forcing the withdrawal of a popular lifelong student was the ‘Christian’ thing to do.” I must ask, “Would these same people be questioning this decision if the teen had been “unpopular” and a relatively new student? Do you get the idea that people are treated differently because of **who** they are? Does the same thing not occur time and again today with popular, over paid athletes? Is it right when some people are exempt from rules that **should** apply to everyone? The problem is far reaching in our country — from the halls of Congress to the oval office of the Whitehouse.

The second part of the quote really needs exposing. Was forcing this popular student out of school “the ‘Christian’ thing to do?” So many go the extra mile to leave the impression that Christianity has to accept sin and wrongdoing. Where does one read in the Bible where Christians are to embrace sin? Where does the Bible teach that Christians are to be supportive of sin? Does Jesus teach that sin is to be ignored and tolerated? Does the Bible teach that man has the right to do as he pleases to do regardless of what he chooses to do? Absolutely not. The Lord promised that the Holy Spirit would teach

the apostles “*all things*” (Jno. 16:13). Paul taught that homosexuality is a sin and those who practice such will not inherit Heaven (Rom. 1:26-27; I Cor. 6:9-11).

Second, the student says, “I feel completely violated....The big lesson here for me is that you can’t really trust anybody. That, and I should have kept my mouth shut.” Here is a perfect picture of the warped, twisted thinking of today’s society. The student chooses a sinful, homosexual lifestyle while attending a “Christian school,” and then claims he has been “violated” when the school administration asks him to leave. The thinking of many today is that religious groups must tolerate any type of behavior from their members. The Bible, on the other hand, teaches that church discipline is to be respected and exercised (2 Thess. 3:6).

Third, the newspaper article states that “simmering under the surface are questions about forgiveness, compassion and redemption.” Let us consider these subjects, one at a time.

Does the Bible teach that we are to forgive those who sin? Yes, but only when they repent (Lk. 13:3). There is a “*sin unto death*” for which we are not to make request unto God for forgiveness (I Jno. 5:16). This is any sin one refuses to turn from in repentance. The “*sin not unto death*” is any sin that one will confess and cease to practice.

Those who have no desire to give up sinful activities are fond of making a plea for “compassion.” The homosexual’s idea of compassion is for one to feel sorry that some reject their ungodly life style.

One cannot live in sin and expect to be redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. People toss around the word “redemption” as if it belongs to everyone.

Fourth, “the student said several school administrators and teachers, in an attempt to help keep him from being expelled, coached him on how to handle the situation.” It appears that the Trinity Christian staff is not all on the same page. Let sin rear its ugly head and you will quickly separate the chaff from the wheat! Even in the Lord’s church, some will buck popular sentiment and stand with Christ, and some will not. The homosexual problem may be called a “cultural crisis,” but in reality it is a “Defiant Clash With God’s Word” (Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Rom. 1:26-27; I Cor. 6:9-10).

—815 SW 42nd St, Paris, TX 75460

“I went through years of school at Foothill and they taught me logic and they taught me freedom of speech. God’s the biggest part of my life. Just like other valedictorians thank their parents, I wanted to thank my Lord and Savior,” Brittany said.

Because she refused to bow down to the ACLU’s idol of gold, she did not get her wish. She was censored. This young heroine deserves praise and a thank you from those who believe in free speech”

Donald Wildmon is the chairman of *American Family Association, P.O. Drawer 2440, Tupelo, MS 38803*; cerand@blomand.net. Mr. Wildmon has for many years been warning the nation of the evil attacks on the home and family.

EDITOR’S NOTE: The above is from *Bulletin Briefs*, August 2006, a publication by Jim Waldron.

ACLU Sues Georgia School District

Ann Coulter

“The ACLU sued a school district in Cobb County, Georgia, merely for putting stickers in biology textbooks that urged students to study evolution ***‘with an open mind, studied carefully, and critically considered.’*** According to the ACLU, an open mind violates the separation of church and state, which appears in the Constitution just after the abortion and sodomy clauses (which do not exist). In Lebec, California, parents represented by Americans United for Separation of Church and State sued to prevent the school from even offering an elective philosophy class on intelligent design, creationism, and evolution.

“In Dover, Pennsylvania, a small group of parents backed by the ACLU and Americans United for Separation of Church and State sued to prevent any discussion of intelligent design in the ninth-grade biology class. The judge ruled in their favor and ordered the school district to pay the plaintiffs’ legal fees, which will probably exceed \$1 million. So that’s that! After Dover, no school district will dare breathe a word about *‘intelligent design.’* unless they want to risk being bankrupted by ACLU lawsuits.” (*Ann Coulter, Godless, The Church of Liberalism, p. 200. Crown Publishing Group, New York, www.crownpublishing.com, 2006*

Editor’s Note: The above article is also from *Bulletin Briefs* by Jim Waldron.

Would Jesus Discriminate?

Gay activists are posing this question in their campaign for social justice in central Indiana

The above is a headline from the RELIGION page of *The Paducah Sun*, July 14, 2006. The article by Ken Kusmer of AP, says the above question has been popping up on billboards, yard signs and in newspaper ads in central Indiana in a “Bible-based appeal for acceptance of gays and lesbians.” The campaign is said to be organized by a “predominately gay and lesbian denomination, Metropolitan Community Churches, and a Jewish gay activist.”

Rev. Cindy Love, the executive director of MCC, which has congregations in 240 cities, is quoted as saying, “We want the dialogue to take place in every city where we operate, in some way.”

Mitchell Gold is said to be underwriting much of the \$100,000 media campaign. Gold, who said, “I’ve suffered a good amount of discrimination by people holding up their Bible,” said the campaign began in Indiana since it’s “middle America,” and that “the Indianapolis gay and lesbian community provides a good base.”

Some in Indiana have voiced their disapproval of the effort to promote homosexuality by the aforementioned campaign. An independent Baptist congregation, located near a major thoroughfare, posted a message on their sign: “God Discriminated at Sodom.” The American Family Association of Indiana distributed radio ads saying, “Not only did Jesus discriminate; he is going to discriminate again.”

That the question, “Would Jesus discriminate?” with regard to homosexuality, be asked by an organized group of people who claim to be religious, shows just how far our society has plunged into ungodliness. It is a good example of just how far evil people will go in promoting their ungodly actions when they use religion to advance their cause. How about Gold claiming to suffer “a good amount of discrimination by people holding up their Bible.” Those who believe what God’s word teaches on homosexuality (Lev. 18:22; 20:13; Rom. 1:26-27; I Cor. 6:9) will “hold up their Bible.”

Our recent election will encourage wider acceptance of homosexuality, but not yet all agree. Eight states passed amendments outlawing so-called marriage of homosexuals. Thank God for them. —Editor

be false teachers among you...” (2 Pet. 2:2); “believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (I Jno. 4:1).

If these stark warning are insufficient to convince one of the soul-destroying danger of false teachers, a consideration of the rest of the long list would not likely carry any weight. There are those who — sincerely no doubt — decry the mere mention of false teachers, saying things like, “I don’t believe in calling names.” Sincerity notwithstanding, those who don’t believe in the calling of the names of false teachers find themselves at variance with Paul, who often did just that. Surely good brethren do not desire to be crosswise with things taught in God’s word, yet the fact is that is a great problem we now face within the church. False teachers are a reality, and they are among the greatest hindrances to spiritual edification. Spiritual growth is never enhanced by false teachers; but false teachers are not the only hindrance. There are a number of others.

SQUEEZING DOWN OF BIBLE TEACHING. A part of Christ’s Great Commission to “teach all nations,” is “teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you...” (Matt. 28:20)? Teaching is the lifeblood of edifying the church, yet we continue to squeeze down our efforts and opportunities for teaching. Instead of finding time for more study of God’s word, it is the opposite; we see, rather, to think of ways to spend less time providing the means for spiritual growth. It is not uncommon now to hear of “half-day Vacation Bible Schools. Gospel Meetings are often no more than three days. Evening services are in some instance being done away, or replaced by a “Devo.” Several years ago, we visited the church in Oak Harbor, Washington. It was announced that for the evening service they would have a “Short Devo, and a baptism of fire for their new grill.” I preached for that church back in the 1970s; they would not have done such a thing then. But many things “are a changing” within the church.

If things continue, wholesome edifying church activities will be finally squeezed out of existence. By contrast, we used to have five-day Vacation Bible School with two lessons being taught each day. The emphasis was upon learning from God’s word rather

than spending time with “crafts.” The literature used for VBS was effective in teaching the truth, rather than being developed to suit the religious beliefs and tastes of whoever would buy it.

Years ago I preached in Gospel Meetings which lasted for a week, and actually with day services as well as evening services. Sermons presented in the meetings were usually strictly on important Bible subjects. The distinctiveness of the New Testament church was emphasized. Preachers who specialized in joke-telling and other entertainment activities found few places of welcome.

For a long, long time after becoming a Christian I never heard of “Praise Worship,” “Praise Choruses,” and “Contemporary Worship.” Back then, the church was growing.

MODERN VERSIONS. The time was that the King James version of the Bible and the American Standard of 1901 were used by most of the congregations. But as our religious neighbors began to go for the modern versions, so did some of our brethren. A number of “reasons,” none of which make sense to me, began to be cited as criticisms of the King James and American Standard versions. In reality, the church was experiencing much more growth before the modern versions came into wide use. It is not insignificant that I cannot think of even one congregation which has become spiritually stronger by the use of the modern versions. To the contrary, when a congregation adopts the modern versions there is also a tendency to become more liberal in other areas. Many of our more liberal congregations now go for the NIV. This version has many errors, as is the case with a number of others. Since I did all my memory work from the King James version, I am now somewhat confused when a Bible class teacher or a preacher uses versions with which I am not familiar. In Bible classes some times a number of versions are referred to by the students and/or the teacher. I do not know of any truth taught in the modern versions which is absent in the King James or American Standard.

IV. THE HEARTBREAK OF THE LACK OF SPIRITUAL EDIFICATION

Heartbreak in this earthly life is certainly not something new; knowledge of that fact, however, →

does not lessen its blow and seriousness. It helps, as noted, to think about spiritual growth in terms of physical growth and development. There are many instances in this world where physical growth is a serious problem. Having spent time in other countries, especially India, I have seen heartbreaking instances of beautiful, innocent, children with their little bellies bloated because they were suffering from physical starvation. Sights like those will overwhelm you emotionally; yet, how easy it is to lose sight of the more important matter of the lack of spiritual food, and spiritual growth. This state is far worse and more serious.

Even among our brethren, who ought to make spiritual growth the highest priority of all, we some times seem much more concerned with the physical state of people than the spiritual. It is indeed good to be concerned about the benevolent physical needs of our fellowman, but the concern for spiritual needs should be of much greater concern.

Concern For Our Children. My wife and I have four children, two boys and two girls. I have always loved our children and had concern for their well-being. But as I grow older, it seems that my mind more often is drawn to the precious boys and girls, who are facing an uncertain future. I see boys and girls, in their early years that are being so unfairly treated by their parents. In so many cases, the children don't have a chance. Some parents may not provide adequately for the physical needs of their children; but even when they do, they may provide nothing for them spiritually. That is a tragedy in every sense of the word.

In the case of the newborn, caring parents are so thrilled and thankful, as they should be. As I look upon the newborn, they are precious, made in God's image. But I often wonder what the future holds for those innocent human beings. Will their parents give them any chance to grow up with spiritual values? The greater majority will never be fed with spiritual food as secularism continues to engulf our society. That means eternity will bring destruction rather than an existence of untold happiness which God has provided for them that love

and serve Him.

Concern For Children Within The Church. By this, I mean the children whose parents are members of the church. Children, though safe, are not members of the church until they become of age to obey the gospel and do so.

More and more, children are growing up under circumstances where the truth of God is not set forth in its fullness. They do not know of the time when the church was much more committed to following God's word than is the case today. In many cases the parents are to blame.

Children are now more often conditioned to think of church activities as "fun." The influence of a pleasure mad generation is having a telling effect within the church. The children are seeing this way of thinking in their parents.

Think About What God Has Done For Us. Every day that we walk on this earthly journey, we should think of what God has done for us. He gave his Son to die for us, and his Son was willing to go to the cross for us. The instructions as how to be well pleasing in God's sight have been made available. Even in this life on earth we have so much for which to be thankful. When I pillow my head at night, I know that if I do not awake, there is something far better in the world to come than anything I can ever know in this life.

To enjoy what God has provided for His faithful servants, the requirements are within reach. We do not have to be rich in the world's goods, nor highly educated. We do not have to be prominent in our society. The requirements are simple: faith in God, Christ, and the Gospel (Heb. 11:6; Jno 8:24; Mar 16:15,16); repentance of sins (Acts 17:30); confession of Christ as Lord (Rom. 10:10); and, baptism for remission of sins (Acts 2:38). By these steps, as sinner is saved and is "in Christ" (Gal. 3:27). From that point, there is the necessity of growing spiritually, being faithful, and confessing Christ in our daily walk (Matt. 10:32). Accepting the challenge of spiritual edification, our efforts will be well repaid. Surely, we state a great truth when we sing, "Heaven Will Surely Be Worth It All." — Editor

from those in error, the church cannot be without spot or blemish (Eph. 5:27).

Some people will call the above negative teaching, but again – we've got to be just as negative with our teaching as the word directs, toward them that are covenant breakers. Our Lord is.

Many members of the church want to go to Matthew 18:15-17, to settle nearly every sin that comes up in the church. But this passage is for one having a personal offence against another. It is to be settled between these two, two or three more, or the church. Then the unrepentant sinner is to be as a heathen (withdrawn from). It is very clear that this is a personal offence of one against another.

When one blatantly brings reproach upon the Lord's church by the life lived (I Cor. 5), there is no doubt but that there is a need for reproving, rebuking and exhorting. That one is to be turned over to Satan before the whole lump is leavened (2 Cor. 5:5; I Tim. 1:20).

When one teaches falsely from the pulpit, classroom, or anywhere, the false teaching should be corrected then and there. Paul didn't give place to such for even an hour (Gal. 2:1-5). After one or two admonitions the false teacher is to be rejected, withdrawn from (Tit. 3:10).

If the above teachings had been followed down through the years gone by, by all, the church would be much stronger today. But what is it going to take to get the job done? — Preachers with enough faith to teach it, elders with enough faith to enforce it, and member with enough faith to back the elders and the preachers and teachers. Success will not come overnight. And it is going to take courage, courage and more courage.

Shouldn't we grow our faith and muster the courage to declare the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27) in the pulpit; classroom, and one on one? May the Lord help us to abide in His truth and reject all that is not in harmony with His will?

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EDITOR'S NOTE: In my almost 53 years of preaching, I have seen church discipline carried out only a few times. This is one area where we are failing to respect God's law. God has a law on fellowship, just as He has on many other important subjects.

High School Valedictorian Refuses To Bow Down

Donald E. Wildmon

Editor's Note: *As you will see in the following article the school authorities named, were not only determined to do what the United States Constitution forbids, that is, the stopping of a young woman's free speech and "prohibiting the free exercise (of her religion)," (2nd amendment), but they submitted her speech to the ACLU for their approval, in order that it might bear their imprimatur. One major point that stands out in the article is that the school authorities were determined to please ACLU. This organization, which calls itself the American Civil Liberties Union, is clearly the Anti-Christian Liberties Union and we need more people who will stand up against them like the young woman from Henderson, Nevada.*

"**Brittany McComb** was the valedictorian at Foothill High School recently (June 15, 2006). She graduated with a 4.7 GPA. She earned the right to address the other graduates at Foothill, located in Henderson, Nevada.

She gave a copy of her graduation speech to the school administrators. It contained some Biblical references and even mentioned (one time) the name "Christ." The school administrators censored some of the Biblical references. They also censored the single reference to Christ. Then the school officials handed the speech over to the ACLU for approval and/or more censoring. After getting the OK from the ACLU, Brittany's speech (minus the censored references to the Bible and Christ) was approved. Brittany was warned that if she deviated from the ACLU approved language, her mike would be cut off.

Then the moment came for her big decision. She would not bow down, she decided. She would go with her original version. She stepped to the mike and began her speech. But just before she could utter the name "Christ," her mike went dead. School officials silenced her. The crowd of 400 jeered for several minutes, angry at the action of the school officials. The ACLU was happy. They had silenced another Christian. →

Things Observed As A Christian Over 62 Years

Joe C. Turbeville

Since I was a teenager I have studied the withdrawing of fellowship. Why did I start doing this? Because what I heard from the pulpit about it was just the reading of passages pertaining to it. I was taught to not have anything to do with people that were “mean,” not even do as some people do that are in the church; but I never really heard the subject preached on from the pulpit. As I said, the passages were just read.

Lots of people dwell on the positive, loving attitude toward the wayward Christian, and I certainly agree to a certain point (cf. I Cor. 13), but let me ask a question. Since the church is to judge those within (I Cor. 5:12); how much more positive and loving can one be than to do toward the wayward, whose souls will be lost because they won’t abide by the Word, than to do what God says to bring them to repentance?

I have been called a “negative” person because of my conviction on this subject. There are many negative commands in the Bible. Why do there have to be negative commands? Because there are negative Christians! Why do faithful Christians have to be negative? Because they are the ones Christ left on earth to reprove, rebuke, and exhort those Christians that act in a negative manner. (2 Tim. 4:2).

When one obeys the Gospel, that one makes a covenant with God; according to the terms found in the law of Christ. When we deny ourselves (Matt. 16:24), our attitude will be “whatever the word teaches, I’ll do.” Christians are taught to observe all things Christ commands (Matt. 28:20).

When a Christian will no longer listen to the teaching of the Truth, or ceases to practice the Truth on any given Bible subject, that one becomes a negative Christian. Therefore, this calls for negative teaching. When one won’t study the word to know the truth that one has forsaken God, leaving Him out of life. Apart from God, there can be no fellowship with Him (I Jno. 1:6-7). Such people are walking disorderly, and God has told us to withdraw from everyone who walks so (2 Thess. 3:6).

There are those that are “overtaken in a fault” to be restored (Gal. 6:1). Then there are those who sin willfully by doing what they want to do. Those who sin will-

fully often do not want to study God’s word to correct their error. They become covenant breakers and out of fellowship with God. When one is out of fellowship with God, then faithful Christians are fellowshiping “unfruitful works of darkness” when they try to extend fellowship to such a one (Eph. 5:11). Such fellowship doesn’t have God’s approval.

It is the duty of elders, preachers, and members in a congregation to be watchful enough of other members life and knowledgeable enough of the word to know when one drops from fellowship with God (Gen. 4:9; I Cor. 5:12). It is a sin to fellowship someone not in fellowship with God (I Cor. 5:6-8).

Some members of the church do not understand the meaning of fellowship and the withdrawing of it. When one is converted in South Dakota, Tanzania or Tennessee, that one is in fellowship with every faithful Christian in the world. (I Jno. 1:3). When one willingly stops following God, the covenant is broken, and a covenant breaker can’t go to heaven (I Cor. 6:9-10; Rom. 1:28-32).

The purpose of withdrawing is: 1) Making one ashamed (2 Thess. 3:4); 2) for punishment (2 Cor. 2:6); 3) removing the bad influence (I Cor. 5:7); and, 4) to save the soul of the offender (I Cor. 5:5). It is not “kicking one out of the church.” That one has already cut himself off from Christ. Some think that because of this the church can’t withdraw. The Bible tells the church, and as individuals, to do the withdrawing. Even after this, the individual is to be taught and encouraged if they will listen (2 Thess. 3:15). Withdrawing is a tool given by God for the restoring of those who depart from God.

I am thoroughly convinced that the main trouble with the Lord’s church today is because some elders, preachers and church members were not strong enough in the faith to carry out the “forgotten commandment.” I’m also convinced that there are members in every congregation that do know the truth about withdrawing, but have difficulty in acting on it as the Bible teaches.

For the above reasons we have false teaching on a great many things. Therefore, until the members back faithful preaching and teaching and the withdrawing

Which Statement Is Correct?

Paul Curless

Recently while viewing a religious program on television, I observed a man who seemingly was explaining how he became a “Christian.” His exact statement was, “I accepted Jesus as my Savior.” It is only fair to state that at the end of this very program those who supposedly “accepted Jesus” were told to go back to their communities and join the church of their choice. It is not uncommon to hear such statements as this. Is this God’s plan for saving man or is obedience to the Gospel required? The real question being considered is this, “Is the teaching of simply ‘accepting Jesus as Savior and being saved,’ found in the Bible?” If this doctrine is true, all should proclaim it. On the other hand, if such teaching is not found in God’s word, this doctrine should be terminated immediately.

It is important to recall what Jesus said in John 12:48, “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.”

All mankind (past, present and future) will appear before the judgment seat of Christ (Rom. 14:10). In 2 Cor. 5:10, we are informed that “...all (will) appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” It is evident that all of us will be judged according to Bible teaching and our deeds.

If God only requires one to believe (Heb. 11:6) and “accept Jesus as his Savior,” certainly nothing would be wrong with this doctrine. But, if God requires more than this, the teaching is false (2 Jno. 9-11). We must turn to the Bible, which is our authority in religious matters (2 Tim. 3:16-17), to determine if “accepting Jesus as one’s Savior” is enough or if “obedience to the Gospel” is necessary.

I have searched the Scriptures, high and low, for a command to “accept Jesus as your Savior to be saved,” and have found none that would even imply this teaching. No doubt, those who advocate this “heart-felt-action” would go to John 1:12 which says, “But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.”

But any God-fearing person would have to admit that this verse does not say that all one has to do is “accept Jesus as their Savior and be saved.” It does say that all who will receive Jesus’ teachings would have the right (power) to become Christians (sons of God). This verse only teaches that faith is the starting point. “But without faith it is impossible to please him...” (Heb. 11:6). Some might turn to John 3:16 as a “proof-text” for this doctrine, but again this verse does not say this. For one to use this verse and advocate “faith only” or “belief only” will save, is to overlook the rest of God’s instructions pertaining to man’s salvation.

The phrase “faith only” is found just one time in the entire Bible. “Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only” (Jas. 2:24). The works here are the works of obedience. Peter says he “that worketh righteousness, is accepted with him [God]” (Acts 10:35).

Does obedience to the Gospel require action or “doing” on the part of the believer (Jas. 1:25)? We agree completely with Ephesians 2:8, which says, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.” Grace is God’s part and faith is man’s part. No one can earn salvation by their works of obedience which come through faith (Jas. 2:26).

At the transfiguration of Jesus (Matt. 17:1-5), God the Father says, “...this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.” So, what would Christ, who has all authority (Matt. 28:18), tell a person to do to be saved? First, He would say, to those who believe in God, “if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins” (Jno. 8:24). Secondly, He would say “...except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Lk. 13:3). Thirdly, He would say to those who have repented to confess Him as the Christ, the Son of God (Rom. 10:10). Next, He would say to those who confess their faith in Him, “...arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16).

In conclusion, let us consider Paul’s words, “...rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ...” (2 Thess. 1:7-9).

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A MUSLIM IN THE HOUSE

We are not speaking here of a Muslim occupying someone's personal person's dwelling. In a way, it would be better it would be if such were the case. We speak rather of a Muslim from a district in Minnesota being elected to the House of Representatives in our federal government. On election eve (November 7, 2006), a message repeatedly flashed across the TV screen announcing a "First," that being the election of a Muslim to the U.S Congress. This is certainly a "first" in our nation's history: Note the following excerpts from an article by BBC NEWS:

First Muslim congressman elected
Keith Ellison, a Democrat, has become the first Muslim to be elected to the US Congress by winning a Minnesota seat in the House of Representatives.

He has called for the immediate withdrawal of US troops from Iraq.

Although he follows Islamic law in his personal life, he stresses that he is not the "Muslim candidate" for Congress.

"But I do hope if we win, inshallah [God Willing], in November, that it will signal to Muslims that we should engage in the American political system. It will signal to people who are not Muslims that Muslims have a lot to offer the United States and the improvement of our country."

The Reverend Jesse Jackson, a former candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination, also campaigned for him.

He has also broken from more conservative Muslims by favoring gay rights and abortion rights, the Associated Press news agency reports.

"You don't know how much this will be a turnover for the Muslim community that live in the United States in their involvement in the political life," he told the BBC.

"I don't want to be very much optimistic, but at least I can see that my son one day might be the president of the United States."

This is chilling and portends future problems; but, will America hear and act? From my study of Islam, not only have I learned of the many barbaric acts carried out by this

evil religion, 9-11 being only one of many. This greatly concerns me for the future of our nation. Islam makes no bones about their goal: a world dominated by Islam.

There is sufficient, if not overwhelming, evidence that these people have violent and aggressive plans which will affect us all. I am, however, deeply concerned that most of us are oblivious to this danger. Is it just plain ignorance of the evil aims of Islam; or, worse yet, is it that we simply do not care. I personally believe both to be true to some degree, and that is too much.

Just after the November election, I mentioned to several people the election of a Muslim to Congress. Other than here in my own house, I found no one who seemed to know about this tragic event. It is in such an environment of ignorance and apathy that evil grows.

Of course, this Muslim would favor withdrawing our troops from Iraq. They are his religious brethren. Since he "follows Islamic law in his personal life," it is his duty to fight against, even kill those of us, whom by Islamic teaching are "unbelievers" or "infidels." Of course, this Muslim believes his election is a "signal" that Muslims "should engage in the American political system." The Muslims are not yet able to subdue or conquer our country by the sword, as they have done in many places in years gone by. But the political system is a way of gaining control and influence in our country. That Jesse Jackson campaigned for this Muslim tells us more.

That this Muslim favors "gay rights and abortion rights" places him among a growing number of people in our country who have renounced moral standards. I don't believe "Islamic law" condones abortion and homosexuality, but he is willing to go against that law in order to court favors.

As to how much "this [will constitute a] turnover for the Muslim community that live in the United States in their involvement in the political life" remains to be seen, but whatever the amount it will be too much.

He is right. This Muslim's son could become a ruler in our country. Were that to happen, and were his son to be a serious Muslim, he would not be a president in way we think of president, because Islam does not have presidents, they have dictators, who oppose all other religions.

One poll says that 70% of the people surveyed believe that the U.S. will be in all-out war against Islam within twenty years; yet, we do not see folks particularly geared up for such a way. Unless more people awake from their indifference, the world of our grandchildren and their children could be a dark one. Brethren, we need to *think*. —*Editor*

A First: Woman Becomes Head Bishop Of Episcopal Church

Our title is actually the headline of a CNN.com article, posted November 4, 2006. In the following we shall set forth some information from an AP article.

It is said that Katharine Jefferts Schori took office as the presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church in the United States. This is a first in the worldwide Anglican Communion. The well-wishers at the Washington National Cathedral were said to number more than 3,000.

This woman bishop approves of the ordination of homosexuals, but says she will not impose her views. She supported V. Gene Robinson of New Hampshire in his election in 2003, as the first homosexual bishop. Schori is quoted as saying with regard to those who oppose the ordination of women, "They'll have to 'get over it.'"

The Episcopal Church is said to be a 2.3 million member denomination. Some Episcopal members are opposed to this woman bishop, but only time will tell how long they will hold out.

What difference does it make that a woman, the first, has become the head of the Episcopal Church? In reality it makes little difference when the overall situation is considered. You see, the Episcopal Church has never had God's approval. The recent action will not change that fact. Christ didn't die to purchase the Episcopal Church. The apostles knew nothing about such a church, and no one was ever a member of it in New Testament times. The Episcopal Church is man-made, as are the hundreds of others that are unknown in God's word. Christ is not the Savior of it now and never will be.

Perhaps one observation about the Episcopal Church and its first woman head is this. A church which had its beginning off the shores of Truth in the first place, is now simply drifting farther away in the sea of error. Therefore, the action really doesn't matter. This church is no more without authority from God now, than before this took place. Something contrived in error will always be in error as long as it remains. Error doesn't become truth. —*Editor*

Happy Holidays!

To our readers, our supporters and to all who have any part in making Banner of Truth possible. Without you our work could not be done.



We are encouraged as we look back over fifteen years of our work. More than 7,500 copies of the paper go out each month, hundreds to other countries. The thanks we receive from readers are many. Brethren have been so good to support our work in a financial way as well as in other ways.



Although our national holidays are not observed by us as religious days, they do afford a great opportunity to be with friends and loved ones more than at most other times.

We wish for everyone a very safe and happy holiday season. We pray that the New Year will bring many blessings to you and us as we serve the Lord in sincerity and truth.

With Christian love, Walter and Naomi

Note: This is a bit early, but we know not for sure that we will get out another issue, in time.