I. GOD-APPROVED UNITY DEFINED

Some might ask: Why discuss the negative subject of evil division as well as the positive subject of God-approved unity, since those new in the faith might not be mature enough to understand? Our main emphasis in the following discussion will indeed be on the subject of unity. However, in a fair and profitable study on unity it is necessary to discuss the antithesis to unity, division. Division prevents and destroys unity; therefore, an integral part of God’s plan of salvation for man involves both unity and division, and both must be considered.

Members of the church, even those new in the faith, need to consider and learn what God’s word teaches on all the subjects possible. In Paul’s charge to the Ephesian elders he says, “...I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27). As the elders needed the whole counsel of God, so does the new Christian, that there might be a balanced growth in spiritual things. The Hebrew Christians had not grown as they should. When they should have been teachers, they needed to be taught the first principles again. They had failed to develop as they should and still needed some “meat” (Heb. 5:12-14). While the babe in Christ starts off with milk, the diet must also soon include meat if proper spiritual growth is expected.

The words “unity” and “division” are found only a few times in God’s word, but the idea of both “unity” and “division” is still a great misunderstanding of the true meaning of the unity God desires for man. As God’s awesome power of influence through unity is weakened by evil division, the Lord’s church suffers greatly, and fewer souls are being saved. But let God be thanked that unity is attainable, and He has provided the instructions to make it so.

The Blessings of God-Approved Unity in Christ

As God’s awesome power of influence through unity is weakened by evil division, the Lord’s church suffers greatly, and fewer souls are being saved. But let God be thanked that unity is attainable, and He has provided the instructions to make it so.
in God’s word, but let us first note what Webster has to say about unity: 1) the state of being one; one-ness... 4) absence of diversity; unrivaled or uniform character... 5) oneness of mind, feeling, etc., as among a number of persons; concord, harmony, or agreement.” Thayer defines unity as, “Unanimity in the state of being one; one-ness.”

Unity, in the sense of oneness, is found in Genesis 2:24 — “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.” This passage is quoted in the New Testament (Eph. 5:31), where Paul explains that his analogy is “…concerning Christ and the church” (v. 32). The point being: from the beginning, God intended the type of oneness that should characterize husband and wife also characterize Him and His church.

The New Testament emphasizes unity in many places. In the early days of the church, it is said of the converts, “…the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul” (Acts 4:32). Paul exhorted the Romans: “Be of the same mind one toward another” (Rom. 12:16). He said, “…the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus; that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 15:5-6). To the Ephesians He speaks of “En-deavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is “one body, and one Spirit…” (Eph. 4:3-4). To the Philippians he wrote: “…stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel”; “Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind” (1:7, 2:2). These are just a few of the many biblical references to unity.

Perhaps the most expansive passage about unity is in First Corinthians: “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1:10). This is Paul with the full authority of Christ speaking to Christians. To be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment is the ultimate in the sense of unity.

This imperative of Paul is some times wrested from its context. Not uncommonly it will be applied to the denominations for the purpose of showing that they should be united and speak the same things. But Paul is speaking to the “church of God” at Corinth, not to those who are not true Christians. Before the passage would apply to the denominational people they would have to be “in Christ,” members of the one church. So, all who would serve our Lord must be in His church, and then Paul’s command for unity would apply to them; but there are certain things which must be done in order to be “in Christ,” members of one church. All, who would serve our Lord must be in His church, and then Paul’s command for unity would apply to them; but there are certain things which must be done in order to be “in Christ,” and a member of His blood-bought church. Though this is a fact clearly set forth in God’s word, many still do not understand.

Becoming a member or part of Christ’s church involves a number or actions or steps to be taken. This we notice when the conversions recorded in the New Testament are examined. Let us note those steps: (1) FAITH in God. No one ever became a Christian without first coming to believe in God. The writer days later to hear from the ostensible wool-puller that he has had “his eyes really opened.” Whom should one follow into the fray? The wool-puller, or the eye-opener? It is folly to “strike hands” with people like this.

There can surely be a no more pathetic sight than that of preachers flitting around looking for relevance and so attaching themselves to a “somewhat” (Gal 2:6), or that somewhat’s cause or fight. Let your sense of relevance and worth come from thinking for yourself and working hard to build up the congregation where you preach. The Lord, through Jeremiah, in- vited Juda to go and check out “Shiloh” and see what had become of her (Jer 7:12). It would be enlighten- ing — actually depressing — to go and check out the state of some of the churches where these relevance-seekers and their power brokers work. I am thinking of a church that played a big role in my life. She was once thriving and vital with over two hundred in attendance; she is now barely a shell of her former self. She was once thriving and vital with over two hundred in attendance; she is now barely a shell of her former self. It has all been for a noble cause; we’ve been fighting for “rats.”

I humbly speak as one who does not have an un-blemished record in these matters of relevance and attachment. My moment of clarity came roughly twenty-three years ago in the city of Manila. I attached myself to an erudite whose teachings I admired. We went forth to challenge some folks who indeed needed challenging. I challenged them. Right in the middle of a tense, yet civil, meeting of brethren, any sense of a tense, yet civil, meeting of brethren, any sense...
When observing warring sides and their battles, there is nothing wrong with looking at who the principals are. Can it be, in this present slugfest, other than odd to see folks who were former confederates in sticking it to others, now sticking it to each other? As a having-been-by-both-sides stuck one, this whole thing gives me a surreal sense of watching the Ham Dog and Calico Cat. Even granting that other factors contributed to this awful war, it would be hard to contest this man’s conclusion. What a horrible irony that most of the Southern blood that was shed in that war was by people who could not afford to buy and take care of slaves who had wanted to. No, that horrible commodification was purely the prerogative of the powerful few. Reckon, then, who convinced average Southern men to die by the tens of thousands, and to do so thinking they were in fact “fighting for their rats”? As a Southerner, I think about that and wonder what I would have done? There is little value in subjectively declaring: I would have done thus and so. It so often is the same old thing: Big man’s war, little man’s fight.

Jesus taught that the “sons of light” can learn something via the “sons of this world” (Luke 16:23). Let us do so.

Speaking only of those I know about, there have been so many battles waged between brethren during my thirty plus years of preaching. Such conflicts are apparently inevitable (cf. Matt 18:7), and I concur with the pronouncers that have decided that truly faithful people must fight with them. Before, however, you cut cordwood for some burning issue stop, think, ask: How long has it been burning? When did the fire start? What started it? Who are the folks putting wood on the fire? Why? Good preaching friend: Do not so readily be a joiner, lest you find yourself being cannon fodder for someone else. Be mightily careful with whom you “strike hands” (cf. Prov 22:26). Things are not always as simple as “fighting for our rights,” or even, “truth.”

When observing warring sides and their battles, there is nothing wrong with looking at who the principals are. Can it be, in this present slugfest, other than odd to see folks who were former confederates in sticking it to others, now sticking it to each other? As a having-been-by-both-sides stuck one, this whole thing gives me a surreal sense of watching the Gingham Dog and Calico Cat eat each other up. It is not at all unlike the Pharisees and Sadducees, who, where Jesus and his disciples were concerned, could go from common cause to enmity and back again. Some conflict has been to recently hear one side say of their former confederates: “He really pulled the wool over our eyes”; and, then, if Hebrews says, “...without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him” (Heb. 11:6). (2) If one truly believes in God he will be willing to take the next step required of God, REPENTANCE. This is a change which takes place in the mind, which is demonstrated by a change of life. Speaking to the Athenians at “the Mars’ hill,” Paul said, “...the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commanded all men everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30).

(3) The penitent believer will take another essential step, CONFESSION of faith in Christ. Paul said, “...with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Rom. 10:10). The Ethiopian made confession saying, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God” (Acts 8:37). (4) Now the would-be convert is ready to take the step which puts one into Christ, BAPTISM, which is the consummation of action and act in conversion. One will note that in every conversion recorded in the New Testament, baptism is the final act. In Acts 2, when some of those guilty of crucifying Christ, asked Peter and the other apostles, “what shall we do?” Peter by the Spirit told them: “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...” (Acts 2:38).

Those who responded to the words of Peter were baptized [about three thousand souls] (v. 41). “And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (v. 47). Those who will not take this last step are still outside Christ, where salvation is found (2 Tim. 2:10). Paul said to the Galatians, “For as many of you has been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (v. 27). True Union is found in death to sin (Rom. 6:3-4) and for “the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38), and of one who is mature enough to “believe” ( Mk. 16:16).

Now that we have pointed out what is involved in becoming a part of Christ’s church, where true unity is found and which pursuit is commanded (1 Cor. 1:10), we shall note a few things which are some times considered unity, but are not true unity at all. It is only “truth” which makes men free (Jno. 8:32). Misunderstandings never set men free from sin.

Over the years there have been various ecumenical efforts or movements. That is, a group of denominations would come together to advocate a sort of “union” among them. Agreements might be made for different groups to be involved in some activity. There was a “union” in the sense of people coming together, but true unity was always absent. The people were not united in the “same mind and same judgment.” They still believed, taught and practiced different things. There was union but not unity. All of these efforts have failed thus far. Underlying this failure is the fact that God’s word was not accepted as the only basis for God-approved activity. Somewhere years ago I heard this rather crude illustration pointing out the difference between unity and union. It went something like this: Tie the tail of a cat and tail of a dog together and hang them over the clothesline. There would be union but not unity.

“Unity in diversity” is an effort, even by some of our brethren sometimes it is the thing they call unity. But such efforts do not make sense. Unity and diversity are opposites. How can people speak the same thing, be of the same mind and judgment, when they are different? One of Webster’s definitions of unity is “lack of diversity.” That corresponds with things said in the New Testament about unity.

“Unity by compromise” is rarely admitted, but more often attempted. That is, in order to have what is mistakenly called unity, certain compromises are made. Certain subjects are “out of bounds” for the preachers and teachers. “Old leaven” is not purged out that there may be a “new lump.”

Some seem to have the idea that all that is necessary for unity to exist is for all to profess to have faith in Christ, and that different teachings and practices do not prevent that so-called unity. It appears that some have the idea, when it comes to unity, that God can be sort of a bystander and not know what is going on among people, even within the church.

Lack of understanding of and respect for the unity which God demands is evidenced by the hundreds of “churches” claiming to be a part of the “one church” which Christ said He would build and did purchasing it with His blood (Matt. 16:18; Acts 20:28). These people are not even “in Christ,” the only place where God-approved unity can be found. People without Christ are also without “hope and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12) It will be a tragic thing for accountable people to face the reality of all this false hope for salvation. Yet, Christ says many will be lost and few will be saved (Matt. 7:13-14). Dare we doubt His words? —
As we look round about us on a divided religious world, we must know that the Father and the Son are not well pleased. The true Lord's Prayer is found in John 17. In His prayer to the Father for the apostles He prayed: “Neither pray for these alone, but for them which shall believe on me through their word: that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they may also be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (Jno. 17:20-21).

An important point which may be overlooked is that the unity for which Christ prayed would be that which is found only in Christ. The belief in Christ for which He prayed is certainly the condition which now exists in so-called Christianity, and that is because of the absence of the true unity for which He prayed. In view of this important fact we can see the urgent need for that unity.

II. THE CRUCIAL NEED FOR UNITY

We have already called attention to the divided religious world of today and the fact that this is not what our Lord wants. He did not give Himself to die to bring about such a condition as this. As we noted from His Resignation, He wants unity, that which God approves, not that which man mistakenly calls unity.

In our continued discussion of God-approved unity, we shall primarily give attention to the need for it within the Lord's church. Christ's Great Commission — “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations” (Mat. 28:19-20); “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mk. 16:15) — presents us with the opportunity and responsibility to take the gospel to the lost of the world, so that they might be saved becoming a part of the church which Christ purchased with His blood (Acts 20:28). As people are converted, and only then, they may enjoy the blessings of that true unity which is found only “in Christ.”

The Lord's church is suffering from evil division: more now than anytime since I have been a part of it. The condition grows worse rather than better, as many people act in irresponsible ways and contribute to evil division. Our precious Lord and Savior must be terribly saddened over this. I often think of Christ's entry into Jerusalem. Luke describes it this way: “And when we were come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it” (Lk. 19:41). Lewis says, “he sobbed over it.” This shows something of the intense sorrow our Lord felt, as He viewed the city of Jerusalem from some distance. Why was He made to sob or weep? The city had rejected Him. They had rejected that which was and is the only way to peace, God's powerful word. Now, destruction was about to come upon them, and they would not hear. Now, even within the church, more than a few will not heed His word, that there might be unity.

If Christ would pour out his heart, as He did because Jerusalem had refused Him, does He not now also weep over the evil division which is wreaking such havoc within His blood-bought body? Do we forget that our Savior still lives today (cf. Heb. 7:25)? We must surely realize that, but some act as if they do not. From early on there has been some evil division within the church, but it has never been pleasing to God. But the division which now exists dwarfs that which existed fifty years ago and earlier. Why is this so? God's provisions for unity have been ignored and cast aside, and the will of man has prevailed in so many instances. The evil division which now exists should not serve as a discouragement to those who want to serve God in sincerity and in truth. There are many warnings in the New Testament that people would cease to love the truth and turn away from it. What we are seeing now is the strongest evidence of the fact that God's word is true, and that which has been predicted has so often come to pass.

I have been using the term “evil division” several times, as you have noticed. Why so? It is time that this should be explained. So, here goes: Not all division is “evil.” Evil causes division, but does not make those who are innocent evil. Paul rebukes division in the church at Corinth, but he also said, “For there must be also heresies [sects] among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you” (I Cor. 11:19). When division of this kind occurs it has a beneficial effect by showing who the “approved” are.

Christ said, “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man's foes shall be those of his own house hold” (Mat. 10:34-36). This shows that those standing up for the truth may have to withstand those of their own house, or family. This shows that true unity in the truth is more important than family unity, or .

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**SCHEDULE FOR BOT LECTURES — JUNE 25-28, 2007**

**MONDAY, JUNE 25**

10:00 a.m. **The Need and Basis for Optimism within the Lord’s Church**

Alan Adams

11:00 a.m. **Fight To Lay Hold on Eternal Life**

Rogers Scull

1:30 p.m. **Power To Overcome Temptation**

Rick Knoll

2:30 p.m. **Overcoming the Influence of Busybodies**

Garland Robinson

3:30 p.m. **Always Abounding in the Work of the Lord**

Guyton Montgomery

7:00 p.m. **He That Winneth Souls Is Wise**

Roger Campbell

8:00 p.m. **God’s Faithful People Will Be Saved**

Ken Burleson

**TUESDAY, JUNE 26**

10:00 a.m. **Some Will Turn Away Their Ears from the Truth**

Roger Campbell

11:00 a.m. **Being an Example of Believers**

Steve Baisden

1:30 p.m. **Committing the Truth to Faithful Men**

Ken Burleson

2:30 p.m. **Overcoming the Devil by God’s Armor**

Caleb Campbell

3:30 p.m. **The Blessings of True Unity in Christ**

Walter Pigg

7:00 p.m. **A Crown Laid up for Me**

Garland Robinson

8:00 p.m. **Overcoming Non-Contenders for the Faith**

Leon Cole

**WEDNESDAY, JUNE 27**

10:00 a.m. **A Rest for the People of God**

Leon Cole

11:00 a.m. **Beware EAR ticklers and the Tickled**

Jacob Campbell

1:30 p.m. **The Eyes of the Lord Are over the Righteous**

Jeff Bates

2:30 p.m. **False Prophets in the World**

Lloyd Gale

3:30 p.m. **Loyalty to Christ, Not People or Places**

Richard Guill

7:00 p.m. **The Lord Is Not Willing That We Perish**

Virgil Hale

8:00 p.m. **I Know Whom I Have Believed**

Alan Adams

**THURSDAY, JUNE 28**

10:00 a.m. **On the Right Hand, Eternal Life**

Robert Alexander

11:00 a.m. **Food To Prevent Spiritual Starvation**

Rusty Stark

1:30 p.m. **Continued Forgiveness by Walking in the Light**

Jimmie Bates

2:30 p.m. **Beware the Influence of Lukewarmness**

Paul Curless

3:30 p.m. **The Lord Is with Us When We Take His Word**

David Lemmons

7:00 p.m. **Victory for the Overcomers**

Roger Scull

8:00 p.m. **No Death, Sorrow, Crying or Pain in Heaven**

Lenard Hogan
15th Annual
Labourers Together With God
Lectures

This recent lectureship (February 18–22, 2007) was hosted by the Milestone congregation in Cantonment, Florida, home of The North Florida School of Biblical Studies.

Although the lectureship is in years before, I was able to attend each of the twenty-eight lectures.

The theme of the lectures, Issues Destroying Homes and How to Build Fire Walls of Protection was indeed a timely subject. The home as God intended it has never been under such great assault in our society as at the present time. Therefore, there has never been a greater need to encourage the strengthening of the home by the faithful people of the Lord’s church.

A number of NAHS graduates spoke on the lectures and did an excellent job. This served as good evidence for the training those students have received. The school is small, but this has some advantage in that students can receive more personal attention. As far as the quality of teaching the students receive, I don’t know of any school where the quality would be greater.

One of the greatest needs within the church today is that of well-trained and devoted preachers who will uphold the truth. Few and far between are those who put family or others before Christ are “not worthy” of the truth at the cost of division within a family. On the sad side, when brethren will not carry out that which God commanded by God, and results in that which is right in God’s sight when it is practiced; but this is an area where there are many failures. It seems that sometimes brethren have the idea that the way they think is an improvement over what God’s word clearly teaches. I have heard members of the church who had the audacity to say with regard to withdrawing of fellowship, “I just don’t believe it will work.” I have known of instances, more than a few, where brethren thought division was just about the most evil thing that could happen, regardless of the need for it. I do not mean “evil division,” but that which God has commanded. When God says to do something, it is right; whether men think so or not. It is indeed a sad day when brethren will not carry out that which God’s word teaches, just because they “don’t think it will work.”

We are living in a time when a great portion of society doesn’t believe that which is right in God’s sight will work. There is an increase in efforts to get God’s influence completely out of society. More and more are saying the family as God ordained it “won’t work.” Multitudes don’t think the divine moral standards will work. Therefore, lying, cheating, stealing, laziness, drug use, immorality in dress, abortion, homosexuality, and sexual permissiveness are on the increase. People “don’t think” God’s way will work. We are fast becoming a nation which has completely forgotten God. Ruin, temporal and eternal, will be the outcome, when it doesn’t have to be so. As just about everything God demands is being hindered by one means or another, it comes as no surprise that the same is true of the unity which God approves.

III. OBSTACLES TO GOD-APPROVED UNITY

The apostle Paul speaks of Satan’s “devices” and “wiles” (2 Cor. 2:11; Eph. 6:11). These are employed against those who would be servants of the Lord. When things hinder or serve as obstacles to the doing of God’s will, we may know that somehow or somewhere the Devil is behind it. One of the greatest evils I can think of is that of preventing of destroying the unity which God wants among His people.

Although our society in general is a hindrance to the unity we are discussing, we are limited our discussion primarily to obstacles within the church, where true unity must be found. We will not exhaust the list of such hindrances, but mention a few that it may encourage some to be more mindful of the opportunity and responsibility we have to contribute to the well-being of the church and the unity which should exist therein.

Failure To Accept God’s Word. By this we mean a failure to accept what God’s word teaches about unity, and accept it as the only basis for the unity which God wants. Since God’s word furnishes us completely unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:16-17) we may know that by following it we can be a part of the true unity. When God’s word is followed in the true sense of the term, it serves as an unfailling guide in accomplishing that which our Lord wants. As our brethren have been generally lax in the study of the word, division has increased. Not only has there been a lack of study, but also a failure to accept and respect what is known. God said, “My people are destroyed for the very same reason today?” Brethren, we are not the “people of the Book” that we used to be and that is having a telling effect →

A Medley of Matters

Unsigned Correspondence. Occasionally we receive correspondence with no name attached. Since it is usually of a critical nature, we are inclined to think the writer has been overcome by cowardice or a lack of courage. That which is said by one who lacks courage to stand behind what he says is seldom worth a reply. We invite our readers to respond to what we carry in Banner of Truth, and appreciate those who have the courage to do so when they disagree with something.

Joe Beam at Brentwood Baptist Church bldg. The Church of Christ at Joelton, TN, has the following announcement in their bulletin of February 4, 2007: “2/24 — Love, Sex and Marriage Seminar with Joe Beam hosted by Family Dynamics @ Brentwood Baptist Church bldg. — 8:30 AM — 6:00 PM — Cost: $75 per couple or $65 per couple for groups of five or more couples — For more information contact Tonya Hagan at 627-0751.

Send Your Friends Banner of Truth. Each issue has several copies returned because people have moved and did not send their change of address, or “Temporarily away.” If you have friends who you think would be profited by BOT, do send their names to us to be added to our mailing list. This keeps our mailing list up, and we also encourage new names to increase our mailing list.

Readers’ Response. We encourage our readers to respond to the material we carry. This helps us to know what people are thinking, and what is happening that is of interest within our brotherhood. We solicit your personal comments about the paper. Many of our readers like to read what others are thinking. We are not carrying Readers’ Response this month, but will do so in the April issue.

Is Your Request Ignored? Gathering material for publication, responding to calls and requests is a one-man operation. It is inevitable that some times fail to enter a name for our mailing list or answer some question. Accept my apology; call it to our attention. We appreciate it.

— Editor

any unity with men. Perhaps we all know of divisions that have occurred within families when one obeys the gospel of Christ. This is a division that must occur when the truth is at stake, and is not “evil division” on the part of those putting God and His will first. On the sad side, however, sometimes a person will not stand up for the truth at the cost of division within a family. But those who put family or others before Christ are “not worthy” of Him.

Another division which is approved, or actually commanded of God, is that of separation or withdrawing from those in error who will not repent. Paul said, “… I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause division and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them” (Rom. 16:17).

In Ephesians 5:11, he said “and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather prove them.” Other passages teach that the faithful servant of God must not have fellowship with and bid “God speed” to those who are not in fellowship with God.

As stated, this kind of division is not evil since it is commanded by God, and results in that which is right in God’s sight when it is practiced; but this is an area where there are many failures. It seems that sometimes brethren have the idea that the way they think is an improvement over what God’s word clearly teaches. I have heard members of the church who had the audacity to say with regard to withdrawing of fellowship, “I just don’t believe it will work.” I have known of instances, more than a few, where brethren thought division was just about the most evil thing that could happen, regardless of the need for it. I do not mean “evil division,” but that which God has commanded. When God says to do something, it is right; whether men think so or not. It is indeed a sad day when brethren will not carry out that which God’s word teaches, just because they “don’t think it will work.”

We are living in a time when a great portion of society doesn’t believe that which is right in God’s sight will work. There is an increase in efforts to get God’s influence completely out of society. More and more are saying the family as God ordained it “won’t work.” Multitudes don’t think the divine moral standards will work. Therefore, lying, cheating, stealing, laziness, drug use, immorality in dress, abortion, homosexuality, and sexual permissiveness are on the increase. People “don’t think” God’s way will work. We are fast becoming a nation which has completely forgotten God. Ruin, temporal and eternal, will be the outcome, when it doesn’t have to be so. As just about everything God demands is being hindered by one means or another, it comes as no surprise that the same is true of the unity which God approves.
with regard to the evil-division which has overflowed within the church. This ought not to be so, and we know it.

**False Teachings.** False teaching was an evil in the early days of the church, and many warnings are set forth. John said, “...try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (Jno. 4:1). Christ said, “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing...” (Matt. 7:15). Just as Christ warned of vain worship of those who were “teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matt. 15:9), we need to be warned now, today. I can well remember the time when a false teacher got unfavorable attention within the church, and there were few of them. But that has changed greatly. False teachers are on virtu- ally every hand, and the sad thing is that so many people “love to have it so.” There is evidence that many want to hear that which is false, since it suits their needs, or what they want, better. The words of Isaiah should be ringing in our ears and arousing us to action. Through Isaiah the prophet God said, “Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight” (5:20-21). This must apply to brethren who would join hands with the Christian Church, use instru- mental music in worship, and replace true wor- ship with a variety of entertainment. Others are to be included, and all are contributing to division by their disregard for God’s word.

I suppose that just about every gospel preacher has had some to oppose the truth that was taught. But it has only been during the past couple of decades that I have been opposed to the extent of being fired for standing up for what is right. I have been the brunt of false witnesses more than once. I believe the same would be said by a great many brethren who have preached for any length of time, if they stood un- compromisingly for the truth. This is evidence that the love of truth has waned and the love of error has increased. Only the Lord knows just how much divi- sion has resulted from false teaching, and I will op- pose it as long as I preach and teach God’s word. There is no other option for me.

**Poor or Unqualified Leadership.** A congrega- tion will seldom rise above its leadership. Whereas elders are to be “apt to teach” (I Tim. 3:2), it is often the case that they are, as we used to use the word, “apt” to teach almost anything, or allow it to be taught. It is not uncommon for elders to fail to qualify in the area of “Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers” (Tit. 1:9). In the absence of elders, the brethren have the same re- sponsibility to “hold fast the faithful word” to the best of their ability. Not only is error allowed to be taught, the leadership is sometimes in the forefront of it.

A Desire for Preeminence. Humility should be a crowning virtue for every Christian, but that is not the way it is. It is not unusual for a person to want to have the preeminence among those with whom he is associated. Paul cautioned, “every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think...” (Rom. 12:3). Some times this instruc- tion is not respected, as individuals vaunt themselves. Making the matter worse is the fact that often such people over rate their ability, and their efforts are harmful rather than that which is edifying.

A splendid example of a desire for preeminence is that of Diotrephes. John said, “I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loved to have the pre- eminence among them, receiveth us not” (3 Jno. 9). There have been many Diotrephes since the time of John, or at least close cousins to him. An elder is not to be “self willed” (Tit. 1:7), but this applies to others as well. But it is this kind of person who is more likely to desire preeminence. Such people as this often contribute to the kind of division which is sin, by leading people into error.

**Following Men rather than the Lord.** The main problem at Corinth was the following of different men. The brethren are not charged with false doc- trine. We find the same thing today in a great many instances. Brethren become followers of men, and though they may not teach a false doctrine, they join themselves to certain men and become followers of them, in whatever direction they take. The above is a current problem which is

**HOW DO YOU REAR A CHILD?**

William H. King

If a person could bottle the perfect formula to an- swer this question and market it, he could, as the saying goes, “laugh all the way to the bank.” We all know that there are no patents on rearing children, but God’s word offers some much needed help. We are taught that God’s word is to be taught always, “…when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up” (Deut. 6:7). To teach children, Proverbs 22:6 and Ephesians 6:4 generally always come to mind, but other scriptures should be considered also.

Luke 2:52 should be considered for the ways our children should grow. In this verse we find that Christ grew in four areas. Our children should and must do likewise. These are: (1) wisdom (mentally); (2) nature (physically); (3) in favor with God (spiritually); (4) in favor with men (socially). David and Karen Mains, in their book, Living, Loving, Leading, made the point that we as parents must stop and ask ourselves, “Is my child growing in each of these areas and what more can I do?”

As a helpful guide to teaching children, I offer the following thoughts on Romans 12:11-18 —

*Not slothful in business.* In all your business deal-ings to you give your all or just enough to get by? Are you always fair in your dealings? The eyes and ears of our children, like the eyes of the world, are watching. “Rejoicing in hope...” Parents must live in ways that show they are grounded on God and Christ. The child needs to know how we as parents accept the trials and tribulations that come. The child must know that life goes on, that the parent goes to God in prayer when there are no problems just as they do when there are problems.

**Distributing to the necessity of the saints, given to hospitality.** If parents do not give to the Lord’s work, and train the child to give as he or she has prospered, how are they going to learn? If a child never sees guests, other than friends and family, in the home, even those new in the neighborhood, how will they learn to be hos- pitable and know its true meaning?

“Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.” How do we as parents treat those who have wronged us? A child will never speak well of a play- mate that has wronged him, if the parents have hard feelings against a co-worker, a boss, a neighbor, or worst of all, a brother in Christ.

“Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.” It is difficult for a child to be happy when he doesn’t receive a gift similar to that which a friend received, but if we parents let our children see us happy for another’s good fortune they will soon learn to be happy also. The same is true about teach- ing them to weep with a friend or letting another know that their shoulder is there to lean upon to help share the load.

“Be of the same mind one toward another...not wise in your own conceits...” Parents must treat all people in like manner. Don’t show favorites because of financial status. Don’t feel that you have all the answers. This verse could do much to stop racism in our world. Be aware that your child, regardless of how old he may be, is both listening and watching (v. 16).

“Recompense to no man evil for evil...” Next is one, which really must be worked at. When we are wronged, human nature says, “get even” (wrong him back). We parents must do good and teach the child that “getting even” is putting self on the enemy’s level. Be honest in all your dealings and with all people great or small. “If it be possible...live peaceably with all men.” Live at peace with everyone as best you can; showing your child how to live peaceably. Don’t forget the child, because the first time he sees or hears a par- ent, mom or dad, downgrading a family member or neighbor, any verbal lesson that has ever been learned, is lost.

These verses from Romans give a fuller meaning to Deuteronomy 6:7, in that they teach that training is an around the clock activity and responsibility. Being a parent is not an easy task, but by using God’s word as our guide, both we parents and our children have a better chance of succeeding.

—8607 Rainbow Place, Nashville, TN 37204
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The president’s name is R. Albert Mohler Jr. and is said to be “one of the country’s pre-eminent evangelical leaders.” It is interesting to note that his stand on homosexuality has incurred attacks by people on both sides of the issue of homosexuality. How could that be?

In the first place, we can understand how that people who believe God’s word would be opposed to the position that God would make people homosexual, and then condemn them for the practice, as He has clearly many places in Scripture. The example of the homosexuality of Sodom and Gomorrah is used throughout the Bible a number of times as an example of God’s condemnation of this sin. I think that most Baptists would be opposed to the sin of homosexuality, as certainly all people who take God’s word seriously are.

But, then again, why would people who are homosexuals, and those that uphold the sin, be opposed to Mohler’s position? Though Mohler says, “he would strongly oppose any move to encourage abortion or genetic manipulation of fetuses on grounds of sexual orientation, but he would endorse prenatal hormonal treatment — if such a technology were developed — to reverse homosexuality.”

Endorsing Mohler’s stand was “a prominent Roman Catholic thinker, the Rev. Joseph Fessio, provost of Ave Maria University in Naples, Fla…” Fessio said, “Same-sex activity is considered disordered,” and “If there are ways of detecting disorders of children in the womb, and a way of treating them that respected the dignity of the child and the mother, it would be a wonderful advancement of science.”

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If a man also lieth with a mankind, as he lieth with a woman both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them” (Lev. 20:13). Abomination! Can that be considered disbelief in God, and more and more religious people are falling into that category. Anyone who claims that homosexuality is not immoral and not a sin in God’s sight is a hypocrite.

We have already mentioned the example of Sodom and Gomorrah being used several times to show that homosexuality is a sin, and that God punishes sin. Scripture abundantly teaches that homosexuality is a violation of God’s word — A wholesome, right thinking person, as he walks in the paths of the righteous, shall fear God” (Psalm 34:11). God’s way, not man’s way.

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The Influence of Our Schools.

The time was that many of our schools rendered a great service, as they provided a good environment in which young people could get an education, and be taught by God-fearing teachers, who upheld the truth. Great changes have taken place in the past fifty years. We can no longer look to any of our larger schools that I know about, to uphold God’s truth. In fact, some are known for their far-out teaching. When young people sit at the feet of teachers who do not have the proper respect for God’s word, the chances are great that this will rub off on the student. I say without reservation that some of our schools are a disgrace to the cause of Christ.

Another danger we see issuing from our schools is their hurtful influence on congregations, as they are ready to send out preachers, and render other services to those congregations. It is a personally at-

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**V. THE BLESSING OF GOD-APPROVED UNITY**

We now come to the heart of our discussion. We have given considerable attention to that which prevents or destroys true unity, but we believe it is needful to point out that which may prevent the blessings of the unity which God has made known to us. The various blessings which God has made known and promised to man are of paramount importance, and should be sought by every person.

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Not only is unity a blessing for those doing God’s commandments, but it will encourage others to seek those blessings. In Christ’s prayer to the Father, one of the benefits of unity for which He prayed was that “the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (Jno. 17:21). Brethren, our plea for unity in Christ, is shot full of holes by division amongst us. While living in Taiwan was asked by some as to why there are so many churches? That is indeed a valid question. The answer is simply that people will not abide by God’s will. If the question is raised as to why there are so many divisions amongst us, the answer is exactly the same. Just think what a blessing it would be if we were all working together in the unity and harmony that God intended. The church would be greatly strength- ened and more able to do the Lord’s bidding of tak- ing the gospel into all the world. The number of breth- ren involved in mission work today is far less that it used to be. Why so? One reason is that our strength is being wasted by division.

True unity encourages greater love (agape) among brethren. The Lord hates discord among brethren (Prov. 6:19). Even with our limited understanding, we can understand why; it destroys the love which fosters unity and brings blessings. The will to work and serve is a great blessing which comes from unity. This involves a spirit of brother- hood and closeness among brethren. One great bless- ing, which has come to me as a result of working with brethren in other parts of our country, and espe- cially in foreign countries, is that I have come to know other brethren, not as foreigners, but as spiritual brothers in Christ. This is the way that it should be. We are working for the same Master and for the same blessings which are there for those who serve Him. We come to realize that we are indeed, “all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28).

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Experience is the best aid in spotting crooks. I refuse to naively be taken advantage and have always encour- aged churches where I worked to be prudent. I have a certain feeling about people who ask for help. If I know, or the habit is obvious, I do not believe in helping people who smoke or buy booze. One time a man came by the preacher’s house and asked me for help. I told him I could not help him financially, but that I could give him some food which we had in the church building. On the way to the building I asked him, “Do you smoke?” His quick reply was, “Yes, but I’m going to quit.”

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The March 15, 2007 issue of The Paducah Sun carried a front page article — Mohler Views on homosexuality angers opposing sides. By David Cravy, AP National Writer, the article’s sub-title is: Baptist seminary president says orientation may have biological basis that could be altered before birth. The first paragraph of the article reads:

NEW YORK — The president of the leading Southern Baptist seminary has incurred sharp attacks from both the left and the right by suggesting that a biological basis for homosexuality may be proven, and that prenat al treatment to reverse gay orientation would be biblically based.

The president’s name is R. Albert Mohler Jr. and is said to be “one of the country’s pre-eminent evangelical leaders.” It is interesting to note that his stand on homosexuality has incurred attacks by people on both sides of the issue of homosexuality. How could that be?

In the first place, we can understand how that people who believe God’s word would be opposed to the position that God would make people homosexual, and then condemn them for the practice, as He has clearly many places in Scripture. The example of the homosexuality of Sodom and Gomorrah is used throughout the Bible a number of times as an example of God’s condemnation of this sin. I think that most Baptists would be opposed to the sin of homosexuality, as certainly all people who take God’s word seriously are.

But, then again, why would people who are homosexuals, and those that uphold the sin, be opposed to Mohler’s position? Though Mohler says, “he would strongly oppose any move to encourage abortion or genetic manipulation of fetuses on grounds of sexual orientation, but he would endorse prenatal hormonal treatment — if such a technology were developed — to reverse homosexuality.”

Endorsing Mohler’s stand was “a prominent Roman Catholic thinker, the Rev. Joseph Fessio, provost of Ave Maria University in Naples, Fla…” Fessio said, “Same-sex activity is considered disordered,” and “If there are ways of detecting disorders of children in the womb, and a way of treating them that respected the dignity of the child and the mother, it would be a wonderful advancement of science.”

Jennifer Chirster “of Family Pride, a group that supports gay and lesbian families,” was “dismayed.” She alleged that it would be wrong because it would be wrong to “perform medical treatments on them because of their own moral convictions, not because there is anything wrong with the child.”

“Many of our schools rendered a great service, as they perceived a good environment in which young people and not some individual or party thinks everybody else should ride with him. Much guess one cannot deal with them all.

THough Mohler says, “A driver of one such bandwagon, after castigating others for not joining up, turns his castigating gun toward me. I have known this brother for have known for many years, though we have had little or no association. Now he recognizes me as another target. Though I have never told this brother what to write or what not to write, I am not being the same with me.”

Another editor who has never been known to be shy agrees stating: “But the silence is exceedingly strange. Anyone who claims that homosexuality is not immoral and not a sin in God’s sight is a hypocrite. We have already mentioned the example of Sodom and Gomorrah being used several times to show that homosexuality is a sin, and that God punishes sin. Scripture abundantly teaches that homosexuality is a violation of God’s word. — “If a man also lieth with a man, as he lieth with a woman both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them” (Lev. 20:13). Abomination! Can that be misunderstood? Because the Gentiles had no respect for God, He gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiv ing in themselves that recompence of their of their error which was met” (Rom. 1:26-27). The “…unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God,” which category includes “the effeminate” or homosexuals (1Cor. 6:9).

Thank God that homosexuals, like all sinners, can be “washed…sanctified…justified” (v. 11) through obedience to the gospel, God’s power to save. — Editor

ffecting the proper unity among brethren. This might be aptly described as “playing church politics.” Make no mistake about it, lest anyone misunderstand — We are opposed every practice and teaching of error. Those who have known me over the years know this is true. But that does not mean that I am not castigated by a church politician whose bandwagon I am not riding.

A driver of one such bandwagon, after castigating others for not joining up, turns his castigating gun toward me. I have known this brother for have known for many years, though we have had little or no association. Now he recognizes me as another target. Though I have never told this brother what to write or what not to write, I am not being the same with me.”

In an e-mail (dated January 31, 2007) to more than two dozen people, not including me, Dub McClish makes the following statement:

Another editor who has never been known to be shy agrees stating: “But the silence is exceedingly strange. Anyone who claims that homosexuality is not immoral and not a sin in God’s sight is a hypocrite. We have already mentioned the example of Sodom and Gomorrah being used several times to show that homosexuality is a sin, and that God punishes sin. Scripture abundantly teaches that homosexuality is a violation of God’s word. — “If a man also lieth with a man, as he lieth with a woman both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them” (Lev. 20:13). Abomination! Can that be misunderstood? Because the Gentiles had no respect for God, He gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their of their error which was met” (Rom. 1:26-27). The “…unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God,” which category includes “the effeminate” or homosexuals (1Cor. 6:9).
There's word. "Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse have a better chance of succeeding. Being a parent is not an easy task, but by using God's love of truth has waned and the love of error has compromisedly for the truth. This is evidence that there have been many Diotrephes since the time of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (Jno. 4:1). Christ said, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing..." (Matt. 7:15). Just as Christ warned of vain worship of those who were "teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt. 15:9), we need to be warned now, today. I can well remember the time when a false teacher got unfavorable attention within the church, and there were few of them. But that has changed greatly. False teachers are on virtually every hand, and the sad thing is that so many people "love to have it so." There is evidence that many want to hear that which is false, since it suits their needs, or what they want, better. The words of Isaiah should be ringing in our ears and arousing us to action. Through Isaiah the prophet God said, "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter. Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight" (5:20-21). This must apply to brethren who would join hands with the Christian Church, use instrumental music in worship, and replace true worship with a variety of entertainment. Others are to be included, and all are contributing to division by their disregard for God's word. I suppose that just about every gospel preacher has had some to oppose the truth that was taught. But it has only been during the past couple of decades that I have been opposed to the extent of being fired for standing up for what is right. I have been the brunt of false witnesses more than once. I believe the same would be said by a great many brethren who have preached for any length of time, if they stood uncompromisingly for the truth. This is evidence that the love of truth has waned and the love of error has increased. Only the Lord knows just how much division has resulted from false teaching, and I will oppose it as long as I preach and teach God's word. There is no other option for me. Poor or Unqualified Leadership. A congregation will seldom rise above its leadership. Whereas elders are to be "apt to teach" (I Tim. 3:2), it is often the case that they are, as we used to say, the word, "apt" to teach almost anything, or allow it to be taught. It is not uncommon for elders to fail to qualify in the area of "Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainayers" (Tit. 1:9). In the absence of elders, the brethren have the same responsibility to "hold fast the faithful word" to the best of their ability. Not only is error allowed to be taught, the leadership is sometimes in the forefront of it. A Desire for Preeminence. Humility should be a crowning virtue for every Christian, but that is not the way it is. It is not unusual for a person to want to have the preeminence among those with whom he is associated. Paul cautioned, "every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think..." (Rom. 12:3). Some times this instruction is not respected, as individuals vaunt themselves. Making the matter worse is the fact that often such people over rate their ability, and their efforts are harmful rather that that which is edifying. A splendid example of a desire for preeminence is that of Diotrephes. John said, "I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them, receiveth us not" (3 Jno. 9). There have been many Diotrepheses since the time of John, or at least close cousins to him. An elder is not to be "self willed" (Tit. 1:7), but this applies to others as well. But it is this kind of person who is more likely to desire preeminence. Such people as this often contribute to the kind of division which is sin, by leading people into error. Following Men rather than the Lord. The main problem at Corinth was the following of different men. The brethren are not charged with false doctrine. We find the same thing today in a great many instances. Brethren become followers of men, and though they may not teach a false doctrine, they join themselves to certain men and become followers of them, in whatever direction they take. The above is a current problem which is... If a person could bottle the perfect formula to answer this question and market it, he could, as the saying goes, "laugh all the way to the bank." We all know that there are no patents on rearing children, but God's word offers some much needed help. We are taught that God's word is to be taught always,..." when thou sittest in thine house, when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up" (Deut. 6:7). To teach children, Proverbs 22:6 and Ephesians 6:4 generally always come to mind, but other scriptures should be considered also. Luke 2:52 should be considered for the ways our children should grow. In verse we find that Christ grew in four areas. Our children should and must do likewise. These are: (1) wisdom (mentally); (2) stature (physically); (3) in favor with God (spiritually); (4) in favor with men (socially). David and Karen Mains, in their book, Living, Loving, Leading, made the point that we as parents must stop and ask ourselves, "Is my child growing in each of these areas and what more can I do?" As a helpful guide to teaching children, I offer the following thoughts on Romans 12:1-11 — "Not slothful in business." In all your business deal- ings, to you give your all or just enough to get by? Are you always fair in your dealings? The eyes and ears of our children, like the eyes of the world, are watching. "Rejoicing in hope..." Parents must live in ways that show that their hope is grounded on God and Christ. The child needs to know how we as parents accept the trials and tribulations that come. The child must know that life goes on, that the parent goes to God in prayer when there are no problems just as they do when there are problems. "Distributing to the necessity of the saints, given to hospitality..." If parents do not give to the Lord's work, and train the child to give as he or she has prospered, how are they going to learn? If a child never sees guests, other than friends and family, in the home, even those new in the neighborhood, how will they learn to be hos- pitable and know its true meaning? “Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not.” How do we as parents treat those who have wronged us? A child will never speak well of a playmate that has wronged him, if the parents have hard feelings against a co-worker, a boss, a neighbor, or worst of all, a brother in Christ. “Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.” It is difficult for a child to be happy when he doesn’t receive a gift similar to that which a friend received, but if we parents let our children see us happy for another’s good fortune they will soon learn to be happy also. The same is true about teaching them to weep with a friend or letting another know that their shoulder is there to lean upon to help share the load. “Be of the same mind one toward another...not wise in your own conceits...” Parents must treat all people in like manner. Don’t show favorites because of financial status. Don’t feel that you have all the answers. This verse could do much to stop racism in our world. Be aware that your child, regardless of how old he may be, is both listening and watching (v: 16). “Recompense to no man evil for evil...” Next is one, which really must be worked at. When we are wronged, human nature says, “get even” (wrong him back). We parents must do good and teach the child that “getting even” is putting self on the enemy’s level. Be honest in all your dealings and with all people great or small. “If it be possible...live peaceably with all men.” Live at peace with everyone as best you can; showing your child how to leave peaceably. Don’t forget the child, because the first time he sees or hears a parent, mom or dad, downgrading a family member or neighbor, any verbal lesson that has ever been learned, is lost. These verses from Romans give a fuller meaning to Deuteronomy 6:7, in that they teach that training is an around the clock activity and responsibility. Being a parent is not an easy task, but by using God’s word as our guide, both we parents and our children have a better chance of succeeding.

—3607 Rainbow Place, Nashville, TN 37204

William H. King

HOW DO YOU REAR A CHILD?
15th Annual
Labourers Together With God
Lectures
This recent lecturership (February 18–22, 2007) was hosted by the Milestone congregation in Cantonment, Florida, home of the NORTHWEST FLORIDA SCHOOL OF BIBLICAL STUDIES.

Though health concerns prohibited my speaking on the lecturership as in years before, I was able to attend each of the twenty-eight lectures.

The theme of the lectures, Issues Destroying Homes and How to Build Fire Walls of Protection was indeed a most timely subject. The home as God intended it has never been under such great stress, such as we mentioned in our society as at the present time. Therefore, there has never been a greater need to encourage the strengthening of the home by the faithful people of the Lord’s church.

A number of students graduate each year from the home who plan to serve in the field. We are thankful that we can have a number of these students who are paying for their tuition with their own resources.

As far as the quality of teaching is concerned, I was indeed a most timely subject. The home as God intended it has never been under such great stress, such as we mentioned in our society as at the present time. Therefore, there has never been a greater need to encourage the strengthening of the home by the faithful people of the Lord’s church.

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A number of students graduate each year from the home who plan to serve in the field. We are thankful that we can have a number of these students who are paying for their tuition with their own resources.
As we look round about us on a divided religious world, we must know that the Father and the Son are not well pleased. The true Lord’s Prayer is found in John 17. In His prayer to the Father for the apostles He prayed: 

Neither pray for these alone, but for them which shall believe on me through their word: that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they may also be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me (Jno. 17:20-21).

An important point which may be overlooked is that the unity for which Christ prayed would be that which is found only in Christ. The belief in Christ for which He prayed is certainly not the condition which now exists in so-called Christianity, and that is because of the absence of the true unity for which He prayed. In view of this important fact we can see the urgent need for that unity.

II. THE CRUCIAL NEED FOR UNITY

We have already called attention to the divided religious world of today and the fact that this is not what our Lord wants. He did not give Himself to die to bring about such a condition as this. As we noted from His religious He wants unity, which that God approves, not that which man mistakenly calls unity.

In our continued discussion of God-approved unity, we shall primarily give attention to the need for it within the Lord’s church. Christ’s Great Commission — “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations” (Matt. 28:19-20); “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mk. 16:15) — presents us with the opportunity and responsibility to take the gospel to the lost of the world, so that they might be saved becoming a part of the church which Christ purchased with His blood (Acts 20:28). As people are converted, and only then, they may enjoy the blessings of that true unity which is found only “in Christ.”

The Lord’s church is suffering from evil division: more now than anytime since I have been a part of it. The condition grows worse rather than better, as many people act in irresponsible ways and contribute to evil division. Our precious Lord and Savior must be terribly saddened over this. I often think of Christ’s entry into Jerusalem. Luke describes it this way: “And when we were come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it” (Lk. 19:41). Louisi says, “he sobbed over it.” This shows something of the intense sorrow our Lord felt, as He viewed the city of Jerusalem from some distance. Why was He made to sob or weep? The city had rejected Him. They had rejected that which was and is the only way to peace, God’s powerful word. Now, destruction was about to come upon them, and they would not hear. Now, even within the church, more than a few will not heed His word, that there might be unity.

If Christ would pour out His heart, as He did because Jerusalem had refused Him, does He not now also weep over the evil division which is wreaking such havoc within His blood-bought body? Do we forget that our Savior still lives today (cf. Heb. 7:25)? We must surely realize that, but some act as if they do not.

As people are converted, and only then, they may enjoy the blessings of that true unity which is found only “in Christ.”

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<td>10:00 a.m. Some Will Turn Away Their Ears from the Truth</td>
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<td><strong>THURSDAY, JUNE 28</strong></td>
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<td>10:00 a.m. On the Right Hand, Eternal Life</td>
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<td>2:30 p.m. Beware the Influence of Lukewarmness</td>
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<td>3:30 p.m. The Lord Is with Us When We Take His Word</td>
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<td>7:00 p.m. Victory for the Overcomers</td>
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<td>8:00 p.m. No Death, Sorrow, Crying or Pain in Heaven</td>
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The Killer Angels is a historical novel about the horrible carnage at Gettysburg, that decisive battle of the Civil War. Our title is actually a sadly humorous quotation from that book. At one point during the battle, a subordinate tells Union Colonel, Lawrence Chamberlain about an exchange he had had with a Confederate prisoner: "...you want to hear a funny thing?" We were talking to these three Reb prisoners, trying to be sociable, you know? But mainly trying to figure 'em out. They were farmers. We asked them why they were fighting this war, thinkin' on slavery and all, and one fella said he was fighting for 'their' rats. ‘‘They keep on insistin' they wasn't fightin' for no slaves, they were fighting for their rats. (Shaara, 170-171).

Further conversation, the subordinate said, had clarified that the Rebs were fighting for their "rights"—which to the unschooled non-southern ear may sound like "rats"— but, that they could not identify the specific rights which they believed were being violated. When the battle was over and the field was strewn with corpses, yet another subordinate said to the same colonel: "How can they fight so hard, them Johnnies, and all for slavery?" (Shaara, 34). Then the first subordinate said, when you ask them prisoners, they never talk about slavery. But Lawrence how do you explain that? ‘‘Well, I think about that and wonder what I would have done? There is little value in subjectively declaring: I would have done thus and so. It so often is the same old thing: Big man’s war, little man’s fight. Jesus is quoted as saying the "sons of light" can learn no other things via the "sons of this world" (Luk 16:8). Let us do so.

Speaking only of those I know about, there have been so many battles waged between brethren during my thirty plus years of preaching. Such conflicts are apparently inevitable (cf. Matt 16:7), and I concur that倾向于 the right thing to "fight" and "war" (cf. 1Tim 6:12; 2Co 10:4). Let us be sure, though, that we are not marching into battle on someone else’s pretext, or for that matter, pretense.

The latest battle royal has been dubbed by one of the power brokers as "the current raging fire." Not only has this pronouncement been made, but the preachers have decided that truly faithful people must fight with them. Before, however, you cut cordwood for some burning issue stop, think, ask: How long has it been burning? When did the fire start? What started it? Who are the folks putting wood on the fire? Why? Good preaching friend: Do not so readily be a jury, lest you find yourself being canon fodder for someone else. Be mightily careful with whom you "strike hands" (cf. Prov 22:26). Things are not always as simple as "fighting for our rights," or even, "truth."

When observing warring sides and their battles, there is nothing wrong with looking at who the principals are. Can it be, in this present slugfest, other than odd to see folks who were former Confederates in sticking it to others, now sticking it to each other? As a having-been-by-both-sides-stuck one, this whole thing gives me a surreal sense of watching the Ging-ham Dog and Calico Cat eat each other up. It is not at all unlike the Pharisees and Sadducees, who, where Jesus and his disciples were concerned, could go from common cause to enmity and back again. Some conflicts have been to recently hear one side say of their former confederate: "He really pulled the wool over our eyes!" and, then of Hebrews says, "...without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6). (2) If one truly believes in God he will be willing to take the next step required of God, REPENTANCE. This is a change which takes place in the mind, which is demonstrated by a change of life. Speaking to the Athenians at “Mars’ hill,” Paul said, “…the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commanded all men everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30).

(3) The penitent believer will take another essential step, CONFESSION of faith in Christ. Paul said, “...with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Rom. 10:10). The Ephesian elders were saying, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God” (Acts 8:37). (4) Now the would-be convert is ready to take the step which puts one into Christ, BAPTISM, which is the consummating act or step in conversion. One will note that in every conversion recorded in the New Testament, baptism is the final act. In Acts 2, when some of those guilty of crucifying Christ, asked Peter and the other apostles, “what shall we do?”, Peter by the Spirit told them: “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins….” (Acts 2:38).

Those who responded to the words of Peter were baptized [about three thousand souls] (v. 41). “And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (v. 47). Those who will not take this last step are still outside Christ, where salvation is found (2 Tim. 2:10). Paul said to the Galatians, “For as many of you has you been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (v. 27). True baptism is a burial in water (Rom. 6:3-4) and for “the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38), and of one who is mature enough to “believe” (Mk. 16:16).

Now that we have pointed out what is involved in becoming a part of Christ’s church, where true unity is found and which pursuit is commanded (1 Cor. 1:10), we shall note a few things which are some times considered unity, but are not true unity at all. It is only “truth” which makes men free (Jno. 8:32). Misunderstandings never set men free from sin.

Over the years there have been various ecumenical efforts or movements. That is, a group of denominations would come together to advocate a sort of “union” among them. Agreements might be made for different groups to be involved in some activity. There was a “union” in the sense of people coming together, but true unity was always absent. The people were not united in the “same mind and same judgment.” They still believed, taught and practiced different things. There was union but not unity. All of these efforts have failed thus far. Underlying this failure is the fact that God’s word was not accepted as the only basis for God-approved unity. Somewhere years ago I heard this rather crude illustration pointing out the difference between unity and union. It went something like this: Tie the tail of a cat and tail of a dog together and hang them over the clothesline. There would be union but not unity.

Unity in diversity is an effort, even by some of our brethren sometimes it is the nothing they call unity. But such efforts do not make sense. Unity and diversity are opposites. How can people speak the same thing, be of the same mind and judgment, when they are different? One of Webster’s definitions of unity is “lack of diversity.” That corresponds with things said in the New Testament about unity.

“Unity by compromise” is rarely admitted, but more often attempted. That is, in order to have what is mistakenly called unity, certain compromises are made. Certain subjects are “out of bounds” for the preachers and teachers. “Old leaven” is not purged out that there may be “a new lump.”

Some seem to have the idea that all that is necessary for unity to exist is for all to profess to have faith in Christ, and that different teachings and practices do not prevent that so-called unity. It appears that some have the idea, when it comes to unity, that God can be sort of “halfway welcome and not know what is going on among people, even within the church.

Lack of understanding of and respect for the unity which God demands is evidenced by the hundreds of “churches” claiming to be a part of the “one church” which Christ said He would build and did purchasing it with His blood (Matt. 16:18; Acts 20:28). These people are not even “in Christ,” the only place where God-approved unity can be found. People without Christ are also without “hope and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12). It will be a tragic thing for accountable people to face the truth in all this is a false hope for salvation. Yet, Christ says many will be lost and few will be saved (Matt. 7:13-14). Dare we doubt His words?
in God’s word, but let us first note what Webster has to say about unity: 1. the state of being one; one- ness… 4. absence of diversity; unvaried or uniform character… 5. oneness of mind, feeling, etc., as among a number of persons; concord, harmony, or agreement.’ Thayer defines unity as, “Unanimity, agreement.”

Unity, in the sense of oneness, is found in Genesis 2:24 — “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.” This passage is quoted in the New Testament (Eph 5:31), where Paul explains that his analogy is “…concerning Christ and the church” (v: 32). The point being: from the beginning, God intended the type of oneness that should characterize husband and wife also characterize Him and His church.

The New Testament emphasizes unity in many places. In the early days of the church, it is said of the converts, “…the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul” (Acts 4:32). Paul exhorted the Romans: “Be of the same mind one toward another” (Rom. 12:16). He said, “…the God of patience and consolation grant you to be of like-minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus; that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 15:5-6). To the Ephesians He speaks of “Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is “one body, and one Spirit…” (Eph. 4:3-6). To the Philippians he wrote: “…stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel”; “Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be of like-minded; having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind” (1:17; 2:2). These are just a few of the many biblical references to unity.

Perhaps the most expansive passage about unity is in First Corinthians: “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1:10). This is Paul with the full authority of Christ speaking to Christians. To be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment is the ultimate in the sense of unity.

This imperative of Paul is some times wrested from its context. Not uncommonly it will be applied to the denominations for the purpose of showing that they should be united and speak the same things. But Paul is speaking to the “church of God” at Corinth, not to those who are not true Christians. Before the passage would apply to the denominational people they would have to be “in Christ,” members of the one church. So, all who would serve our Lord must be in His church, and then Paul’s command for unity would apply to them; but there are certain things which must be done in order to be “in Christ,” and a member of His blood-bought church. Though this is a fact clearly set forth in God’s word, many still do not understand it.

Being a member or part of Christ’s church involves a number or actions or steps to be taken. This we notice when the conversions recorded in the New Testament are examined. Let us note those steps: (1) FAITH in God. No one ever became a Christian without first coming to believe in God. The writer

days later to hear from the ostensible wool-puller that he has had “his eyes really opened.” Whom should one follow into the fray? The wool-puller, or the eye-opener? It is folly to “strike hands” with people like this.

There can surely be a no more pathetic sight than that of preachers flitting around looking for relevance and so attaching themselves to a “somewhat” (Gal 2:6), or that somewhat’s cause or fight. Let your sense of relevance and worth come from thinking for yourself and working hard to build up the congregation where you preach. The Lord, through Jeremiah, in- vited Judah to go and check out “Shiloh” and see what had become of her (Jer 7:12). It would be enlighten- ing — actually depressing — to go and check out the state of some of the churches where these relevance-seekers and their power brokers work. I am thinking of a church that played a big role in my life. She was once thriving and vital with over two hundred in at- tendance; she is now barely a shell of her former self. She is a church, and then Paul’s command for unity would apply to them; but there are certain things which must be done in order to be “in Christ,” members of the one church. So, all who would serve our Lord must be in His church, and then Paul’s command for unity would apply to them; but there are certain things which must be done in order to be “in Christ,” and a member of His blood-bought church. Though this is a fact clearly set forth in God’s word, many still do not understand it.

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Reluctant Addendum

In connection with the preceding article (Page 14), if I have the cast straight — a roster, I might add, would be helpful — the “eye-opener,” as opposed the “wool-puller,” has taken a less than charitable view of the recent Laborers Together With God lectures, which were held at the Mile- stone church of Christ. Brother David Brown says, “…the whole Milestone lecturership is manifesting the spirit of com- promise on several issues” (Contending for the Faith, Feb ’07, p. 3, and so on, all following quotations). The lectures are an adjunct of the Northwest Florida School of Biblical Stud- ies, and both are works of the church at Milestone. Since I am teacher in the school, and a member and elder of the church, the comments concern me.

Brother Brown says, “…Milestone and Bellview congrega- tions have had no fellowship for years…” I have been here nearly six years, during which time several Bellview members have several times attended our lectures and meet- ings. Several Milestone members have likewise attended Bellview functions. Milestone’s preacher, Kenneth Burdison, was asked by a now deceased Bellview elder to speak at his wife’s funeral. At that service, Milestone members were asked to stay and “rat” with Bellview members. What part of this does not bespeak fellowship? On top of all that, in recent times we received a communi- cation from the Bellview church which, among other things, explicitly says Bellview has never withdrawn fellowship from Ensley [Milestone]. Being an elder at Milestone, I know for a fact that Milestone has never withdrawn from Bellview. Brother Brown, Where’s the beef?

Brother Brown links his erroneous claim of “no fellow- ship” to “the late Max Miller and friends’ rebellion in 1988…”and their having been “withdrawn from.” He calls it “this mess”; I concur. To many brethren, equally as astute and well-intentioned as the gentleman — and certainly closer to the events and facts — the best one could conclude about “the mess” is that many things were done by many people that ought not to have been done.

Brother Brown doesn’t present, he knows no more or less about the “mess” than anyone else. He knows what he has been told and he has decided to believe that. He surely knows that it is not as easy as asserting that “So ‘n So has withdrawn from this ‘n So.” If it were, what then of brother Brown’s predecessor, the late Ira Y. Rice? He was by a church in California charged with specific sins and withdrawn from, and “[no repentance] was forthcoming.” Perhaps overtaken by “the spirit of compromise,” brother Brown did not himself “withdraw” from brother Rice?

Brother Brown also spearheaded efforts several
Blessings of God-Approved Unity in Christ

As God's awesome power of influence through unity is weakened by evil division, the Lord's church suffers greatly, and fewer souls are being saved. But let God be thanked that unity is attainable, and He has provided the instructions to make it so.

Some might ask: Why discuss the negative subject of evil division as well as the positive subject of God-approved unity, since those new in the faith might not be mature enough to understand? Our main emphasis in the following discussion will indeed be on the subject of unity. However, in a fair and profitable study on unity it is necessary to discuss the antithesis to unity, division. Division prevents and destroys unity; therefore, an integral part of God's plan of salvation for man involves both unity and division. Members of the church, even those new in the faith, need to consider and learn what God's word teaches on all the subjects possible. In Paul's charge to the Ephesian elders he says, "...I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20:27). As the elders needed the whole counsel of God, so does the new Christian, that there might be a balanced growth in spiritual things. The Hebrew Christians had not grown as they should. When they should have been teachers, they needed to be taught the first principles again. They had failed to develop as they should and still needed "milk," though they should have been taking some "meat" (Heb. 5:12-14). While the babe in Christ starts off with milk, the diet must also soon include meat if proper spiritual growth is expected.

The Blessings of God-Approved Unity in Christ

We send forth more soundly and clearly the "whole counsel of God" than many who just talk about it. We have been a sound and active church. Our pulpit and classrooms are second to none when it comes to reproving, rebuking, exhorting with all long suffering and doctrine. As a result, more than a few ears have been turned to us by brother Burleson, he and brother Bobby had a cordial relationship including mutual participation in preachers' gatherings initiated by brother Burleson; this again belying brother Brown's "no fellowship" assertion. Brother Bobby Brown charges that the son was speaking with people "...that sought the undoing of Bellview all of the time Bobby was their preacher." As said, I am an elder at Milestone; and, if brother Brown can point out anybody here, or on our lectureship, who has sought the demise of a sister church, I will do my duty. Milestone is a sound and active church. Our pulpit and classrooms are second to none when it comes to reproving, rebuking, exhorting with all long suffering and doctrine. We send forth more soundly and clearly the "whole counsel of God" than many who just talk about it.

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Banner of Truth

"The truth shall make you free." (John 8:32)

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The words "unity" and "division" are found only a few times in God's word, but the idea of both is still a great misunderstanding of the true meaning. The idea of "unity" is emphasized and found in many instances in God's word, there is still a great misunderstanding of the true meaning of the unity God desires for man. We are limiting our thoughts to God-approved unity and now proceed with a definition of terms.

1. GOD-APPROVED UNITY DEFINED

We shall note several examples of unity found...