

Banner of Truth

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

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God's Plan for Elders in the Church

*Will God's plan work? Or, is the plan flawed.
Where can we go to get the true answer?*

EDITOR'S NOTE: This article appeared in *Banner of Truth* almost ten years ago, and was greeted with positive response. With the subsequent addition of many readers, and given the importance of the subject at present when the church is facing many problems, we are carrying the article again. —

Banner of Truth readers have periodically commented on the real and urgent need to give attention to the study of elders and the part they play in God's plan for the church. Experience derived from the past several years, present observations, and what we are hearing from others cause us to certainly concur. It would appear, in fact, that this is one of the most important aspects of the church to which attention needs to be given.

In this present time of distress, following God's plan for elders holds forth the greatest prospect for the well-being of the church. On the other hand, if God's plan for elders is not put into action, there is bound to be a continued weakening of the church resulting in God's word being trea-

sured and respected less and less.

With these realities in mind, we set forth the following thoughts on the subject of elders; we trust that the study might provoke serious attention, even ideally that of brethren putting God's plan into action. Due to the extent of material on elders and our limited space, we can do little more than scratch the surface. May our study encourage a further study of this important subject.

God's plan for the church was not made on the spur of the moment, nor was it made to meet some unforeseen need. God's "manifold wisdom" was (and is) evidenced by the church; it is the "eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph. 3:10-11). Even before man's creation and fall, the omniscient God of Heaven knew the church would be needed, and knew what it needed to be in order to fulfill its divine purpose in the salvation of man. Recognizing and believing that the church was planned as God wanted it, we proceed to discuss the highly important subject: God's Plan for Elders in the Church. →

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From what is seen within the church today, it appears that there some actually doubt whether or not God's plan for elders will work. Could it be that some think God's plan is flawed? We have never heard anymore actually affirm such misgivings about God's plan, but actions imply it.

By analogy, we recall a preacher once affirming, "Church discipline doesn't always work." He may well have meant that disciplined person is not always restored, while yet failing to understand that restoration is not the only purpose in discipline. If the individual cannot be restored, then discipline serves the purpose of removing that bad influence from the congregation. Paul commanded the Corinthian brethren, "not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornication, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat." Then he added, "...put away from among yourselves that wicked person" (I Cor. 5:11, 13).

Our point is that God's plan for discipline will always work if done according to God's plan; and, likewise, God's plan for elders will always work when followed.

WILL GOD'S PLAN FOR ELDERS IN THE CHURCH WORK?

At first glance, one might suggest that such a question is disingenuous; and, in one sense, I would agree. Those who have a genuinely living faith "which worketh by love" (Gal. 5:6) do not doubt that God's plan for elder will work. They do not question God's plan on any matter. Though not by words, the fact is that many brethren demonstrate by their actions that there is some doubt as to whether God's plan for elders will work. In such cases, an implicit faith in God's word is lacking. Let us note some instances of implied resistance to, if not downright rejection of, God's plan for elders.

Though God has set forth by inspiration the qualifications to be met by those serving as elders (to be later delineated and discussed), there are a number of ideas relative to selecting elders which settle for less than the God-given qualifications. Consider four such *ideas* —

Choose the Best You Have. In my first full time work, a well known preacher suggested to me that some brethren just select the "best men" in the congregation and make them elders. It is difficult to understand how brethren could do this and still claim to have respect for God's word. If this could be done could be done with respect to elders, then why not apply the same principle in other areas? Why not settle for less than God has specified in other areas? If God had intended for us to *settle*, would not He have added at the end of the qualifications for elders: "Or, the best you have in the congregation?" This best-you-have idea comes from the wisdom of man, not God.

Collective Qualifications in the Eldership. This view is that no one elder must possess all the qualifications. In fact, all the elders could be lacking in one or more qualification as long as all were found in the combined eldership.

How would this work? For example, in the positive qualifications one man could be "apt to teach," another "given to hospitality," another could "rule... well" ↴

his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity,” and at least one could be “able by sound doctrine to convince the gainsayer”; and so with other positive qualifications.

In the negative qualifications one man must “not be given to wine,” but others could be. At least one of the elders must not be: “a brawler,” “covetous,” “a novice,” “self willed,” “soon angry,” etc.; but, others could be lacking in these qualifications.

As absurd and outrageous are such view, some nonetheless practice them. God’s word gives no credence to such wild ideas.

Call Elders by Another Name. In some congregations certain men are appointed as “leaders,” but they actually assume the authority of elders. They are serving as elders but under another name, since they do not qualify as elders. We are not talking about committees who serve in various ways, subject to the authority of the congregation. So far as I know, there is no authority for a leader-*cum*-elder arrangement. If there is no authority for something from the New Testament, then the authority is from man.

No One Qualifies As an Elder. The qualifications for elders admittedly demand men of the highest standard in the spiritual realm. But at the same time, it must be recognized that absolute perfection is not demanded in most of the qualifications. If it were, there would be no elders. But God would not have set down requirements which would be impossible to meet. The qualifications in general involve a matter of degree. For example, does the qualification “apt to teach” mean that one must be perfect as a teacher? Does “not soon angry” demand that one have perfect control of himself with regard to anger? In these and a number of other areas, it is necessary to make a judgment as to whether or not a man meets the God-given qualifications. In some cases it appears that perfection is demanded by the congregation, and this accounts for the absence of elders in some cases. It should be pointed out, however, that though perfection cannot be expected, this does no mean that qualifications can be ignored as is some times done.

In each of the above four cases, the congregation involved is without elders; that is they are without elders who are qualified according to God’s standard. This is indeed a most serious matter since God’s plan

for His church does include qualified elders. Needless to say that we are presently seeing the frightening results of the lack of qualified leadership. Not only is there a real problem relative to the qualifications of elders, there are serious problems with regard to other matters regarding elders.

OTHER UNSCRIPTURAL IDEAS RELATIVE TO ELDERS

Once an Elder, Always an Elder. One case of this involved a man who had once served as an elder, but the eldership was dissolved. He wanted to continue to exercise his authority as an elder. The man was not trustworthy and had a bad reputation in the community. He was obstinate, impenitent, and tried to interfere with the work of the congregation to the extent that it was necessary for the church to withdraw fellowship from him. Since it is possible for a man to become qualified to serve as an elder, it is just as possible that one can become *unqualified*; and, it would be without God’s approval for such a man to persist in his quest to be an elder.

Elders Control the Number of Elders. This view maintains that the existing eldership of a congregation has the authority to limit the number of elders, even to the point of rejecting a qualified man.

The rule which is generally followed, with which I agree, is that the congregation is to select men to serve as elders. The account in Acts chapter 6 (v. 3) where the apostles told the brethren to, “look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom ye may appoint over this business,” serves as an example of congregational selection of men to serve; in this case, the seven were to “serve tables,” but the principle of selection works quite nicely with the matter of a congregation, according to a set of qualifications, “look[ing]...out among [itself for men to] appoint over this business.”

If elders have authority to control the number of elders, this would enable them to maintain a self perpetuating eldership. I have no seen scriptural arguments to uphold this idea.

Elders Are Holy Spirit Appointed. There is a sense in which this is true, but there is also a sense in which this is not true. When qualified men are selected as elders, there is Holy Spirit approval. But on the other →

hand, one case comes to mind where the elders of a congregation were going to appoint a man as an elder over the stated objections of more than a dozen members. When these objections were made, the elders said no one would be made an elder. A preacher, speaking in defense of the elders, said they were “Holy Spirit appointed.”

It would be a serious charge to maintain that many of those serving as elders today were appointed by the Holy Spirit. Take for example, elders in our own area who bring rank false teachers to influence their flocks. The Holy Spirit in no sense of the term sanctions such evil as this. The spirit behind such action is not *holy*. The Holy Spirit is not going to uphold that which is contrary to the revealed word of God. He does not oppose Himself.

Elders Have No Authority. A number of years ago, there was a considerable discussion of this idea. Some maintained that elders could only serve as “examples,” that they had no authority. This is an outright disregard for the teaching of the New Testament. The passage which first comes to mind as verifying the fact that elders have authority is Hebrews 13:17 — “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls as they that must give account...” To the Thessalonians, Paul wrote, “And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you” (1Thess. 5:12). Elders are to take the “oversight” over the “flock of God” (1Pet. 5:2). Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor...” (1Tim. 5:17). The terms “bishop” and “overseer” suggest authority which has been given elders. The idea that elders have no authority came from men, not God.

It should be noted, however, that the authority of elders is limited. They cannot make laws of faith or in any way change or limit God’s word. Their authority applies to matters of expediency, optional matters. Matters of expediency, optional matters, must be handled in such a way that God’s will is not violated.

Elders Have Dictatorial Power. The idea that elders are *bosses*, as we commonly use that term, that they have power to dictate, is foreign to God’s word. The Holy Spirit, through the apostle Peter, expressly forbids this notion: “Neither as being lords over

God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock” (1 Pet. 5:3). The desire for power constitutes a serious problem with some elders. They have the idea that they are sort of “above the law,” that they are not to be questioned about anything. They have the spirit of Diotrephes. In some instances the flock is kept completely in the dark concerning the business of the church. A few years ago brethren in an Arkansas congregation went to court to force the elders to make available to the congregation the finances of the congregation. The elders maintained they had authority to keep that information from the members. When elders fail to keep the flock informed as to what is going on, they are violating Peter’s instruction not to “Lord it over God’s heritage.” Elders are not dictators.

Elders Are Mere Figureheads. In some instances this is true, but God’s approval is lacking. In some congregations, the shots are called by someone behind the scene. The “elders” have little to do with decision-making.

We have all heard the expression *she-elder*. Such certainly ought not to be, but in some cases it is a fact that the wife of an elder may actually do the decision-making. Several years ago, we visited a congregation with a *she-elder*. She invited us to have breakfast at her home. Upon our arrival, we learned that hospitality was not on the menu. She let us know that she had invited us over in order to question us about a number of things. In fact, she proceeded to give me a going-over for what I had preached that Sunday morning even though she had not even been present. She had the audacity to ask me if I could work with the congregation. Her husband, one of the “elders,” sat there closemouthed.

The “Main,” or “Chief” Elder. There is no indication in the New Testament that a single elder has authority over a congregation, but rather the eldership, the plurality of elders. History confirms that the apostasy in the early church, which ultimately resulted in the Roman Catholic Church, had its beginning in part when one individual elder in a congregation became the “chief” elder as a matter of fact. This is contrary to God’s will, and the elders who allow one man to become chief are not without guilt.

THE QUALIFICATIONS OF ELDERS

In First Timothy chapter three and Titus chapter one, God's qualifications for elders are set forth. To suggest that these requirements are not binding is to say that we are at liberty to disregard God's word as our complete, all-sufficient guide. Yet, it should be a matter of grace concern that in the selection of elders these qualifications are virtually ignored. Men are sometimes appointed as elders on the basis that they are successful business men, or that they a lot of money. In some cases, it is a matter of kinship, friendship, or popularity. Some become elders because they literally electioneered for the position.

In First Timothy 3:1, Paul says, "This is a true saying, if a man desired the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work." I time and again have heard people say, "The first qualification is that one must desire the office." This is not a qualification, rather it speaks of one's desire to use his talents in serving the Lord. One must serve willingly, not because of force. When a man measures up to the stated qualifications it is understandable that he would desire to be used in this important way.

I am, however, based on experience fully convinced, that this *desire* thing should be considered very seriously as to the nature of it. There is no question but that serving as an elder is one the most awesome responsibilities one could accept. It is not a matter to be considered lightly. The sincere individual would likely reflect upon his qualifications for such an important task. A lesson might be learned from the appointment of Moses as the leader of the Israelites. Though he did accept that great responsibility, he was not out electioneering for it. The individual who desires to be an elder so much so that he is out running for the job, may be seeking a place to exercise authority, because he has never had a place where he was able to exercise before.

Let us briefly delineate, define and describe elder qualifications. We encourage a more detailed study than we are able to do here.

Blameless. (I Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6). Above reproach; Nothing laid to one's charge.

Husband of one wife. (I Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6). Literally a one-woman man.

Vigilant. (I Tim. 3:2). One who is watchful, alert, on guard against danger.

Sober. (I Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8). Of sound mind, able to make good judgments.

Good behavior. (I Tim. 3:2). Orderly, modest, well-behaved, upright.

Given to hospitality. (I Tim. 3:2). One who is friendly and generous to guests, who enjoys fellowship and association with others.

Apt to teach. (I Tim. 3:2). Skilled in teaching; able to give instructions.

Not given to wine. (I Tim. 3:3). One who does not even get "one drink drunk."

No striker. (I Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7). Not a brawler, quarrelsome, or quick tempered person.

Not greedy of filthy lucre. (I Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7). Not a materialistic person whose goal is gain.

Patient. (I Tim. 3:3). Gentle, forbearing, mild, not easily disturbed.

Not a brawler. (I Tim. 3:3). Not abusive, quarrelsome, or looking for a fight).

Not covetous. (I Tim. 3:3). Not a lover of money, who values spiritual treasures less.

Ruleth well his own house. (I Tim. 3:4). A man who is head of his family, having his children in subjection.

Faithful children [Having children that believe, ASV] (Titus 1:6). Has children who are believers, faithful Christians.

Not a novice. (I Tim. 3:6). Not new in the faith; not a new convert.

Of good report by those without. (I Tim. 3:7). Of good and honorable reputation by those who are outside the church.

A lover of good men. (Titus 1:8). One who loves good things, including good men.

Just. (Titus 1:8). Right in character.

Holy. (Titus 1:8). Not wicked or defiled by sin; a godly person.

Temperate. (Titus 1:8). One who is able to exercise self control in speech and actions.

Holding fast the faithful word. (Titus 1:9). Able to keep the word when opposed; able to "exhort and convince the "gainsayers" by "sound doctrine."

Not selfwilled. (Titus 1:7). Not one who must have his way in everything; not stubborn.

Not soon angry. (Titus 1:7). Not one ready to "fly off the handle"; not hot tempered.

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THE WORK OF ELDERS

It is very evident that there is a widespread misconception of the work of elders. It reminds one of a game of tag: One is tagged and proclaimed to be "it." To be an elder in the Biblical sense of the term, is much more than wearing a title. It is a function, a work to be done. When one ceases to function, or work, that one has ceased to be an elder and should no longer claim to be one.

In Acts 20:28-30, Paul notes some of the primary duty of elders. As "overseers," they were to "take heed" unto themselves. This would involve serious attention as to their responsibilities in this great work, making certain that they were conforming to God's will in the matter. In the second place, they were told to "feed the flock." Just as a literal flock will weaken and die without food, so will the spiritual flock, a congregation of God's people.

One of the qualifications of an elder is to be "apt to teach." (1Tim. 3:2). We have all heard the word "apt" used in the sense of: "You just can't tell about that man; he is apt to do most anything." This assuredly is not the sense in which it is applied to an elder; rather, it means to be "skilled in teaching." [*Vine*]. This involves the knowledge necessary to teach. One can hardly teach that which he does not know. Closely related to this qualification is Paul's statement to Titus, "Holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and convince the gainsayers" (Titus 1:9). Aptitude to teach God's word cannot be minimized.

To effectively serve as "overseers," it is essential that elders be knowledgeable and able to teach. Not only is this necessary to "feed the flock," but also to be able to withstand the "gainsayers" and so protect the flock against this danger. Peter points out that elders are to: "Feed the flock of God...taking the oversight thereof." He also says that it not to be done by "constraint, but willingly..." Rather than being "lords over God's heritage," they are to be "ensamples to the flock." (I Pet. 5:2-3). It cannot be expected that the flock will rise above the examples set forth by the elders.

As rulers of the congregation, the elders "watch for your souls as they that must give account..." (Heb. 13:17). It goes without saying that if elders are to "watch" for the souls of the flock, they must know those who make up the flock. It is also true that there must be a deep concern for everyone. If signs of spiritual sickness occur, attention should be given as quickly as possible, in order to bring about a cure and prevent a worsening of the condition, even to the point of spiritual death.

When the various words and terms used with regard to elders are considered, it is clear as to the high standards which they must reach, and the nature of their work can be seen. In this connection it should be pointed out that if elders are able to accomplish their highly important and God-given task, it is necessary for the flock to "obey" and "submit" to the rule of the elders in the area of authority (Heb. 13:17).

If we will be honest with God and with ourselves, it will be admitted that there is a most serious problem within the church today due to the lack of qualified elders. The nature of the problem is such that it can be rightfully called,

THE ELDERSHIP CRISIS

The lack of qualified elders is not something new, but the failure to carry out God's plan for elders in the church has become much more serious in the past two or three decades. The statement that "Elders are the greatest problem within the church today," is being heard more often now. With this statement, we agree, and give the following reasons.

Churches which have true, God-approved elders, doing the work which God intended, are fortunate and blessed. On the other hand, congregations which are not so blessed, lacking competent leadership among the men, are in a very precarious state.

It would be most interesting to know just how many scriptural elderships would be found if a hundred congregations were surveyed. We would not hazard a guess as to the exact number, but fear it only to be a frightening few. Many of our own brethren would agree with this assessment. We are seeing the tragic results of this condition in that congregations are leaving the "old paths" as never before in our lives. It is so sad that many have become denominational in so many

ways and yet claim to be Christ's church.

Elders, if they function as God intended, will take their work seriously, always striving to the utmost to fulfill their duties. When this occurs, the congregations will prosper in spiritual growth and maturity, and numerical growth will result. When this is lacking, when the elders do not function properly, the Devil will be successful in bringing great hurt and lack of progress upon the congregation. We shall note a few things which are happening today due to the eldership crisis. All these things are not true in every congregation, but some are in many. In some instances, a number of problems are evident in a single congregation.

Lack of Proper Teaching. A primary duty of elders is to see the flock is properly fed; but, in general we are no longer "people of the book," as we once were. It is evident that people are not studying as they should; and, much of what is being learned is not in harmony with God's word. Not only is proper feeding not being provided, in some instances "elders" are actually bringing in false teachers. This is happening right here in Murray, Kentucky with sister congregations, but it is also happening all over the country. In some cases elders do not know what is being taught in classes. Teaching material is not examined closely. Unreliable versions of the Bible are being used more widely. Meetings with teachers, by the elders, in some cases never take place. Some times elders are not capable of teaching.

Church Discipline Is Not Practiced. This is such a common problem that when it is done, it is an exception and not the rule. Members can be involved in all sorts of sinful practices and elders often never do a thing about it. Elder should take the lead in discipline, and see that members participate.

Lost Sheep Are Not Sought. It is not uncommon for members to drift away and the elders never put forth any effort to bring them back to a state of faithfulness. All members have a responsibility in this area, but elders are to take the lead.

Fellowship with Error Is Allowed. If the New Testament teaches anything, it teaches that faithful christians cannot fellowship error; yet, many members have fellowship with very liberal congregations and have no rebuke from their elders who are supposed to

"watch" for their souls. Announcements of activities of liberal congregations are sometimes made by those claiming to be sound. The elders allow this to happen.

False Teaching Is Tolerated. Some elders will not take issue with false teachers seemingly thinking that if nothing is said; the false teaching will simply go away. The teaching of error by preachers, teachers, or any member, should not be tolerated, "not for an hour" (Gal. 2:5).

Input from Congregation Not Desired. The church is not a democracy, but people cannot be led effectively when their minds are unknown. In close relation to this is the failure to keep members informed. In some instances there is never an opportunity given for members to be informed about the work of the church and various things related to it. The work of elders is to lead, not drive. There is a big difference.

Elders Standing for Error. Not only is error sometimes tolerated, the number of elders who outright uphold and teach error is increasing. Some of most blatant false teachers are allowed access to congregations, because the elders themselves are false teachers. The members who allow this to happen are not guiltless.

Untaught Elders. Some elders do not hold "fast the faithful word" because they have never been taught. They are not able to "convince" anyone by "sound doctrine." The ability to distinguish truth from error is often lacking. In our estimation, this has contributed greatly to the spread of error.

Uninformed Elders. With all the error that is floating around in our brotherhood today, elders who are not informed as to what is going on are running a great risk. A false doctrine can be brought into a congregation and take root without its being known by the elders until it is too late to deal with it effectively. Elders who are too busy to keep informed, are just too busy.

"Lords Over God's Heritage." God has given elders authority to "rule" over the flock; about this there should be no doubt. But this authority is not as a dictator. Most members of the church resent being "bossed" in their congregational relationship. Whereas it is not difficult to "submit" to elders who serve as exemplary leaders, submitting to those who rule with an "iron hand" is a different matter. If the →

weighty responsibilities in serving as an elder were given serious thought, the desire for assuming unauthorized power might be curbed.

Failure To Support Preachers. If a preacher is preaching and teaching the truth with the right motive, it is for the good of the congregation that the elders, at least occasionally, let it be known that they stand behind the preacher. A preacher should never be left out on a limb when the truth he presents is not accepted by some members. Elders, in such instances, should stand by him. If the preacher is not preaching the “whole council of God” (Acts 20:27), he should be stopped immediately. Error is never deserving of more time.

Special Interest Influence. In some cases, elders may listen to certain individuals or groups while closing their ears to others. A very liberal giver may carry much more weight than the average member. Sometimes just one or two members have enough influence that they can make a big difference in the decisions made by elders. Kinfolks can influence decisions.

Lack of Trustworthiness. Every member of the church should be trustworthy, but with those serving as elders it is a must. It is a sad day when elders do not keep promises or even state things which are not true. This should never happen, but unfortunately it does.

The Solution to Elder Problems

We have noted a great many problems, and others could be mentioned. Each of these problems could be solved by completely submitting to God’s word in the matter. If men were selected to serve as elders in accordance with God’s qualifications, problems for the most part would be solved. It is that simple. Problems arise when men take the matter into their own hands and select, or allow, men to assume the position of an elder when they are clearly not what God has demanded to serve in that all-important capacity.

If ever there were a time when those who love the Lord and His church should do everything within their power to improve the elderships within the church it is now. It is already too late for many eternity-bound souls who have been led astray from the way of righteousness. No doubt there are many men who could become qualified elders if their love for God was strong enough that they would be willing to make that their

goal. True, spiritual growth and maturity are desperately needed.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

The foregoing has not been written to discourage men from serving as qualified elders, but rather to encourage such, and to call attention to the great need for more elders. We are convinced that godly elders constitute one of the greatest things which can be done to contribute to the well-being of the church. Men who are qualified to serve, or who could qualify themselves, should think seriously of their duty.

Over the past forty, many good schools have been established to train preachers. We are grateful, but perhaps we should be amazed that so little has been done to help train men to be qualified elders. Young men, early on, should be encouraged to prepare themselves to serve as elders in the Lord’s church. More attention should be given to the financial support of elders who are qualified and able to devote their time to that important work.

There is no doubt: **God’s Plan For Elders In The Church** will work. Why not try it? —*Editor*

SAVING STEPS OF FAITH

“walk in the steps of that faith” (Rom. 4:12)

Hear the Gospel

Jn. 20:30, 31; Rom. 10:17

Believe

Rom. 1:16; Acts 18:8; Heb. 11:6

Repent

Lk. 13:3; 24:47; Acts 3:19; 17:30

Confess Faith in Christ

Rom. 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37

Be Baptized

Mat. 28:19; Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; 10:47, 48; 22:16; Rom. 6:1-6; Gal. 3:27; Col. 2:12; 1Pet. 3:21

Be Faithful Unto and Until Death

Mat. 25:21, 34; 2Pet. 1:1-11; Rev. 2:10; 1Jno. 1:6-9

Buying a “Pig in a Poke”

Lloyd Gale

If the word “poke” is unfamiliar to you, it was once to me. Having been raised in the city, I remember the first time I heard the word. I had stopped by at a farm house to buy some fresh eggs. The farmer agreed to sell me some, and said, “I will fetch a poke and go out to the henhouse and get some.” Not desiring to expose my ignorance of what he said, I waited until he returned with a sack full of eggs. It was then that I figured out what he had said.

Now who would purchase “A Pig In A Poke,” something sight unseen? Most people are more cautious with their financial resources. Yet, just how many have bought into the notion that one church is just as good as another, considering that the wrong choice might cost them their eternal soul?

SOME IMPORTANT QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Just who is the author of the unfounded conclusion that “one church is as good as another”? Is there someone or some group who has investigated and studied every church in existence and made an impartial authoritative judgment? If so, what criteria, what constant, what standard did they employ?

God gave mankind the ability to reason and to make righteous judgments based upon facts in evidence. Jesus said, “Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgments” (John 7:24). The standard for righteous judgment is God’s word. It is able to furnish the man of God unto every good work (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Yet, many have accepted the “pig in a poke” that one church is as good as another, without investigation or question. They have even repeated this false notion. One man, who once knew better, has stated publicly that there are “devout knowledgeable Christians” in man-made churches. That is just another way of saying that one church is as good as another. Did the man who made this statement offer any proof or evidence for such a claim? No. Well, why not? Because there is none. If you, dear friend, have bought this pig in a poke you are certainly no alone, you are traveling the wide road with many others. It should make you angry that you were easily deceived. The Devil has tricked you and all those who hold the same speculation.

LET’S TAKE THE PIG OUT OF THE POKE

Then, we can see what we are buying. To believe that one church is as just as good as another we would have to conclude that every man-originated church is just as good as the church that was in the mind of God from the foundation of the world. Paul said, “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love” (Eph. 1:4). It is very clear that Paul was talking about the only church which existed at that time. The church had been purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ (Acts 20:28). It is here stated that those who constituted that church were “chosen in him before the foundation of the world.”

Again Paul said, “Who saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began” (2 Tim. 1:9). It was by means of God’s grace (the gospel) that God’s people were called out of darkness into his marvelous light (1 Pet. 2:9).

God, who knows everything past, present and future, knew before He created the world that man would sin and need redemption. He had the plan of salvation and the church in His mind before he formed the world. There would not be many Saviors or churches. However, the church, which was in the mind of God from the foundation of the world, would be for all who would obey Him — “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). It would be, and is, by means of the sacrifice of the Lamb of God that man’s sins are forgiven.

At the exact right moment in time, Jesus Christ left His exalted place in heaven and came to this world to be born of a virgin. He came to seek and to save the lost and to prepare for His kingdom (church). Jesus experienced a human existence; He was tested, tried and tempted with every temptation common to mankind and yet he did not sin. After having taught →

the foundation principles of the soon to be established kingdom (church) and having chosen his ambassadors (the apostles) Jesus promised to establish His church. He then humbly submitted himself as the sacrificial lamb of God for the sins of mankind.

WHEN WAS CHRIST'S CHURCH ESTABLISHED?

Before Jesus left this world He told his ambassadors to go to Jerusalem and wait until they would be endowed with power from on high (Lk. 24:49). That is where the apostles were on the first Pentecost after Jesus returned to heaven to be seated at the right hand of God on David's throne. It was on that day that the promise of Jesus Christ began to be fulfilled. The Holy Spirit descended upon the Apostles giving them supernatural power and knowledge. They were given a perfect memory of all that Jesus taught, and were guided into all truth. It was then that the first gospel sermon was preached to a great company of devout Jews. When they came to believe that Jesus Christ was the Messiah, and [remembered] that they had cried out for His death, they were pricked in their hearts and cried out, "men and brethren, what shall we do?" They were told to "repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Acts 2:37-38). Those Jews who gladly received God's offer of pardon were baptized the same day and the Lord added the saved to the church (Acts 2:41; 2:47). One should note that the saved constituted the church.

Now, here is the church that was in the mind of God from the foundation of the world. It is the church that Jesus promised to establish, the church that was purchased by His blood. It is the only church to which the Lord has added anyone.

Now, what intelligent and honest person would claim that any latter day church established by men who have written their own creeds is just as good as the one established by God? Can man save himself? The Old Testament prophet, Jeremiah, did not believe he can — "O Lord, I know that the way man is not within himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps" (Jer. 10:23). Neither did Christ believe that man can save himself. He said, "Not everyone that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the king-

dom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is heaven." (Matt. 7:21). If there is any thing more clearly taught in God's word than the fact that he has never allowed man to alter, change, add, subtract, or modify His word, I know not what it is. Every man-made church, every human creed or doctrine, is an insult to God. [Many arrogant men are in essence] saying, "not thy will but my will be done."

When the end of time comes, we are told, "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall put down all rule and all authority and power" (I Cor. 15:24). What will Christ deliver up to the Father? "The kingdom," singular; that is, the church. Which kingdom, which church? The one in the mind of God from the foundation of the world. The one Jesus promised to establish and did establish and purchase with His own blood. Who, then, will say that one church is as good as another?

I cannot imagine the anger God has toward those who dishonor the church purchased by the blood of His Son and Savior Jesus Christ.

From Ephesians 4:1-6, we learn that there is but one body (church). As defined by Ephesians 1:22-23, the body is the church. It is just as simplistic to argue that there are many Gods the Father, [many] Holy Spirits, as it is to claim [there are] many valid churches. It is also clearly stated in these verses that there is but one faith, and not many, as some falsely believe and teach.

The pig is now out of the poke. Do not buy him, for he is decayed to the core. He will contaminate all who purchase him. Just as Satan appeared to Adam and Eve as a serpent, so does he appear as a pig in a poke. He, as exposed by Jesus, is the source of all false doctrine: "Ye are of your father the Devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie he speaketh his own; for he is a liar and the father of it" (John 8:44). The Devil has opposed the truth from the time of Garden of Eden. God gave us one church for all, and the Devil has counterfeited it to confuse those who do not diligently seek truth.

Our appeal is to seek the church which Christ claims as His own. Your soul is too precious to risk

—1186 Martha Levell Rd. Lebanon, TN 37090

READERS' RESPONSE

We greatly appreciate the response we receive from our readers. This helps us to know what people think of the work we are doing with Banner of Truth. In the past few issues of Banner of Truth we have failed to keep pace with our Readers' Response, thus we are giving more space to it in this issue. We welcome reader comment, negative or positive; yet, we are encouraged by the fact the positive response runs at least at ninety-five per cent.

"This is to help with the mailing of my BOT. I enjoy it. Keep up the good work. Tell David L. hello." – **Jamie Smith, AR.** (*David has moved to Dublin, GA. His personal email is on page 16. Thanks for your gift* – Editor).

"Thanks for sending me Banner of Truth. I got them the day after our meeting. I understand Paul Curliss will be at Murray in June. Hope this check will help some." – **Curtis Hollis, TN.** (*Yes, Paul will speak on our lectures. Thanks for your help* – Editor.)

"I picked up a copy of your publication, Banner of Truth, and I was impressed by it. I would like to receive a copy of this publication. I would like to get a copy sent to my two brothers. I would also like to get a copy for my dad. I thank you for this and keep the good work." – **Darrell Harris, IL.** (*Thank you for the new subscribers. If you have others, send them* – Editor).

"I just finished reading the March issue of BOT. I enjoyed the thoughts on unity. I also felt much sadness and even anger thinking about those troubling the church... When you see brother Hogan, tell him I said hello. I have not seen him in a while. Godspeed in your work." – **Mac Ballard, AR.** (*Not doubt by now you have heard the sad news of brother Hogan's passing. What a great great loss to our brotherhood. He is already greatly missed* – Editor).

"I read an article you wrote, A Noble Example of Effective Preaching, that was published by The East End Church of Christ, McMinnville, TN. That was the home town of my mother and father... Back to your article. It was well written and I appreciate it very much. I love to read powerful sermons written by a dedicated preacher as is evident by your article. I was baptized by Willard Collins of Old Hickory, TN, in 1942. I'm 84 years old now, still going strong. The church I go to here in Costa Mesa is small in size with 60-70 members at present. It has been up to 200 in the past. The church in California is not doing well in my mind. I'm from the 'old school' and few are of us are left out here in CA. I just work harder for the Lord as time passes on. Your article also mentioned that you edited 'Banner of Truth.' I would like to get on your mailing list and will send

whatever you want in mailing or other costs. Thanks again for your article and your love and devotion to God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit." – **R.C. Snoddy, CA.** (*It is a pleasure to hear from you. I grew up in Wayne County, TN. I'm 82 years old, so we have seen many changes in our time. You say that the church there is not doing well. Sadly, that is the same condition that exists all over our country. But the New Testament warns us that such times as this will come. We are now seeing things first hand. We don't charge for the paper. If anyone wants to contribute to its cost, that is appreciated, but it is not essential. May the Lord richly bless you with many more years, in keeping on* – Editor).

"I would appreciate it if you would send me Banner of Truth. I have read my parent's bulletin and have benefited. God bless your works." – **Deborah Young, OH.**

"I would like to receive your paper 'Banner of Truth.' Your articles are so enlightening and spiritually uplifting. Please add me to your mailing list. God speed, God bless – **Ronald E. Boyles, TN.**

"I am writing to request that you add... to your mailing list for Banner of Truth. I have given him your address twice and he said he had written but had never received any, some time ago. I told him I would see if I could get him on it... I have been receiving your paper for a number of years and enjoy the many fine articles it contains. I appreciate very much the fine work you are doing for the cause of Christ through it." – **Jerry W. Cook, – AR.** (*I'm thankful that you have called attention to the brother who has not received BOT. I trust that he may be receiving it now. I do make mistakes; and, sometimes a name is lost. When something goes wrong, I want to be informed* – Editor).

"We moved from Batesville, AR to CA. We are sure missing Banner of Truth. Our new address is... Hope to get one soon – **Richard Harper, – CA.** (*Thank you so much for sending us your change of address. That helps to keep our cost down and an issue of BOT is not missed* – Editor).

"I considered myself fortunate to be invited to a ladies day at one of our local churches of Christ in CA... While there, I discovered a newsletter called, Seek The Old Paths. What a blessing to find your article about effective preaching. I appreciate your candor in speak[ing] out on matters relating to the body, the church. What we hear from the pulpit today is not always the word of God. It is comfortable 'feel good' preaching, made to make allowances for desires of this world. I appreciate your boldness in speaking out on this subject. At the bottom of the article, a notation was made that you are the editor of a publication called 'Banner of Truth.' It stated it was a publication well worth →

reading and I'm writing to be put on your mailing list for future issues. I look forward with excitement in receiving my first issue. Please find enclosed a check to help cover the cost of mailing and help further the cause of bringing souls to Christ. Thank you for your consideration." – **Carole Smiley, CA.** (*We are happy to put you on our mailing list. The publication, Seek The Old Paths, by my good friend Garland Robinson is very worthwhile. If you know of others who would like to receive our publications, just send us their names – Editor.*)

"I have been taking BOT for a long time and I just wanted you to know that I consider the above issue, THE LORD'S CHURCH – AS I HAVE SEEN IT – FROM 1953 UNTIL NOW, one of the best that I have read. I especially enjoyed what you had to say about the modern versions of the Bible. I don't know why but that is a subject some teachers, elders and preachers are afraid to mention because they don't want to 'offend' anybody. I spent six years studying this subject and I think I know a little bit about it. But what I've learned is most people consider a non-issue...But so much for that, I just wanted to let you know how much I appreciate all the things you talked about in the October issue. What made it so interesting was the fact that I can relate to the whole issue. May the Lord bless you in your effort to present the truth." – **Carl Monin, TN.** (*so much has changed since the 1950s. But with the right devotion and determination we can overcome those things by standing uncompromising for the whole truth and nothing but the truth – Editor.*)

"I wanted to find out if you are still mailing your 'Banner of Truth' paper. If so I would like to be added to your mailing list." – **Joe D. Gray, TN.** (*I am now in my 17th year of publishing Banner of Truth. I intend to continue as long as I am able. There is such great need today to inform and encourage people to remain faithful to our Lord – Editor.*)

"I read your interesting article in 'Seek the Old Paths'. I noticed at the end it said you are editor of 'Banner of Truth.' I would like for you to send me your free publication. May God continue to bless you as you serve our Lord." – **Oleta Trigg, TN.**

"What about 'authentic community,' 'basic relational ministry building' and appealing to the post modern generation. You know no one believes in absolute truth anymore. So why not build a church on close relationships and 'narrative evangelism.' One 'church growth expert' predicted that churches must change or they will cease to exist. The changes originate in secular learning which includes psychological theory and group dynamics. Of course this is swill. But members of the Lord's church are reading this and trying to fit these ideas into what we do!" – **John W. Smith, VA.** (*There is evidence that some want to completely secularize the church and the gospel of Christ. some people who used to be satisfied with the plain truth of the New*

Testament are no longer so – Editor.)

"How is my dear brother in Christ? I pray that there are encouraging developments with your medication. I believe the Lord is working providentially and I hope for that for you my brother. The church in General Santos is doing great for the Lord's cause. I want you to know that your faithfulness since we first met in Manila has influenced me a lot to go on for the Truth regardless of how great the adversity will come our ways in our path to heaven. Brother, I do treasure the time of knowing you and having worked with you for a while during your visit to Mindanao last 1996. Your publication has given me more enlightenment in handling the word of Truth aright. I am glad you are my brother in the Faith. I am glad I am fellowshiping with. As I said before, I believe you have the thought of Paul in Phil. 1:22-23. Brother Walter, I envy your situation considering your age, you have more confidence to say, 'I have fought a good fight, finished the race, and keep the faith.' And there is a crown of righteousness waiting.' Me? I am pressing onward to the prize and still starting the fight. I will continue the fight you and host of faithful brother in the struggle for the truth, for the souls of many. I'm praying for you. With brotherly thoughts and prayer." – **Jozel, Philippines.** (*Jozel, we are so thankful for you and your devotion to the cause of Christ. I would like very much to be able to visit with you, your family and the brethren there. I will never forget the times that I have been able work with you. When I was there the last time, your wife did so much to help in the work. Give her our regards. May the Lord bless you and yours greatly – Walter.*)

"Will you please put me on your mailing list for Banner of Truth publication. I enjoyed your writing that I read in Seek The Old Paths. I will be looking forward to receiving Banner of Truth." – **Ralph Simpson.**

"Bro. Pigg, I would like to be placed on your subscription list for Banner of Truth. Thanks." – **Levi Rutledge, VA.** (*You should be receiving it by now – Editor.*)

"Thank you so much for publishing the article, Must a Christian Forgive Others When There is no Repentance? in the October issue of Banner of Truth...My prayers are with you and Mrs. Pigg for good health so you can continue the great work you are doing." – **Name withheld.**

"I haven't written to you in a good while. I get a bundle of 15 papers from you each time, but I also get a single copy. Thought you might want to drop the single...A friend would like to be put on your mailing list... Bro. Pigg, would you print in B.O.T. all the information you can about what's wrong with the NIV Bible. So many people in the church are using it." – **Name misplaced.** (*The NIV is the rage with a great many members of the church. That version has a number of errors. Perhaps I can do something on that version soon – Editor.*)

"Greetings in the gracious name of Christ our



Eighth Annual Banner of Truth Lectures Murray, KY June 23-26

THEME: *Serving God in an Evil World*

Speaker Roster:

Alan Adams, Rick Knoll, Lloyd Gale, Michael Willey, Leon Cole, Virgil Hale, Damon Lundy, Paul Curless, Tom Snyder, Garland Robinson, Rusty Stark, Jeff Bates, Jimmy Bates, Steve Baisden, Walter Pigg, Ken Friel, Glen Tattersall.

*We will have specific sermon topics in the April issue of BOT.

For accommodations this year, we will be using the Best Western Motel this year. The price for a room with double beds will be \$47.75. This includes all the tax. People making reservations on their own should make clear that they are a part of the Hickory Grove church of Christ. We have made the arrangement through the congregation. The motel number is: 270- 753-5353. We will be making reservations for the speakers, and others who want us to do that for them.

In these “perilous times” there is much need for the spiritual food which will be made available at the lectures. We urge those who love the truth and enjoy hearing it taught, to make plans to attend this spiritual feast at the lectures.

— Editor

Master in whom we live move and have our being. I wish you Godspeed, His divine blessings. Thank you for the great work you are accomplishing in the name of Christ and the spirit-filled material ‘Banner of Truth’ which I have been receiving over the years. It has always been a companion, a source of encouragement and inspiration to me, the church and others that I give some copies to them. I use them in youth classes and other ministrations in the vineyard and outside. I do hope you keep us in the list of constant supply of the materials...In addition to the many youths in the church, I have twenty two students in the school that I need to share materials with...Please if you have other materials that could be useful to the school such as: Bibles, Bible concordances, Why we believe the Bible, World Religion, Hermeneutics Scheme of Redemption, How We Got the Bible, etc. we would appreciate your assistance.” – **Christian C. Nwachukwu, Nigeria.** (*I am not in a position to send such materials. If someone who reads this could do that, I would be glad to give them your address. Nearly all of my times us used in the publication of Banner of Truth* – Editor).

“I appreciate the good articles you are writing in BANNER OF TRUTH and hope that your readership will have a good increase in 2008. We at Powel Grove recommend it to all who come our way and give them a copy of the latest edition.

“Would you please send Banner of Truth to my sister in law I have been sending them to her, but I would like to keep them. There is so much information in them that I want to keep them. She likes the paper very much. Bless you and keep the good work for the Lord.” – **M.B.**

“Keep up the good work in the fight against liberals in the church, church schools, preachers, congregations. Love your paper.” – **Clifford Brewer, TN.** (*Thanks for your liberal help in our work* – Editor).

“Please put me on your mailing list to receive you ‘Banner of Truth.’ A friend gave me a copy and I love it!! Thank you in advance.” – **Glen Martin, MI.**

“Thank you very much for adding me to your mailing list. I would like to receive a copy that precedes Jan.08 with the first part of “All That Will Live Godly in Christ Shall Suffer Persecution, if it is still available. Thank you very much.” – **Mrs. Joy Kilgore, TN.**

“Thank you for your wonderful publication.” – **Joshua and Christie Dement, AR.**

EDITOR’S NOTE: We yet have many Readers’ Responses which will have to wait till the next issue of Banner of Truth. We encourage our readers to write us and express their views.

Fellow-Helpers

Barbara Kist	100.00
Bill Procter	20.00
Phyllis Mitchell	110.00
Pine Ridge church of Christ	200.00
Anonymous	600.00
Anonymous	100.00
Levi Rutledge	20.00
Cynthia McIntyre	120.00
Clifford Brewer	100.00
Anonymous	20.00
Anonymous	100.00
Robert M. Price	1,000.00
Charles Verkist	125.00
V. Genn McCoy	100.00
Shirley Phillips	20.00
Jim & Jackie Patchell	50.00
Leadale Simpson	67.00
Donald R. Arbaugh	100.00
Larry Kent	50.00
Gloria L. Carter	12.00
Shirley M. Mathis	50.00
Saks church of Christ	240.00
Mrs. John Brown	100.00
Damon Road church of Christ	150.00
Pilot Oak church of Christ	25.00
William L. Schewegler	25.00
Johnnie & Delores Wade	200.00
Clarence Hall	400.00
Darrell Cunningham	200.00
Beth Foster	30.00
E. W. McDonald	50.00
Berea church of Christ	100.00
Anonymous	150.00
Crandull church of Christ	200.00
Carole Ann Smiley	10.00
Anna M. Sider	25.00
Elmer Scott (In memory of his wife)	50.00
Mary Nell Gilland	200.00
Elois Shires	10.00
C. A. Monin	20.00
Joe C. Turbeville	10.00
Anonymous	50.00
Oak Ridge church of Christ	50.00
Total Contribution	<u>5,334.00</u>

Financial Report

Nov. 2007 — Feb. 2008

Mailing labels	132.60
Envelopes and staples	136.20
Stamps, returns and other postage	97.41
Plates	121.65
Mailing BOT	3,237.70
(Nov./Dec '07; Jan./Feb. '08)	
Toner cartridge	149.39
Misc.	5.74
Total Expenses	3,880.69
Balance on hand, Nov. 1, 2007	<u>5,545.14</u>
Total contribution	5,334.00
Total funds available	1,0779.14
Total expenses 3,880.69	
Balance on hand, Feb. 29,07	<u>6,898.45</u>

Words are inadequate to express how deeply we appreciate the generosity in treasure, time and talent from those who for so long have made the Banner of Truth work possible. In an ideal world, I would have the time and opportunity to personally thank each of you.

From beginning to end, from top to bottom, there is so much that leads to the completed product arriving at a given mailbox. Composition involves hours of thought and writing; proofing and layout involve many more hours; printing involves days; and the same is true of folding, stapling, addressing, sorting, and delivery to the post office.

We fondly cherish those who help us as “fellowhelpers to the truth” (3Jno. 1:8), and all of us together as “labourers together with God” (1Cor. 3:9). One thing is for sure: we could not do this without you. Pray for us that we may be able to continue our work for years to come.

— Editor.

“Typing In” and “Keying In”

TO SALVATION—A typewriter key strikes the paper and leaves an impression; we call it *type*. Greeks called such an impression a *typos*. Impressions match — are types of — the keys which made them; so, the Old Testament is an impression, a type, and it matches the New Testament, the key. Only God, of course, could manage to give us the type before the key appeared. Paul said the Red Sea crossing and the following events “were our examples” (1Corinthians 10:6); that is, these things are our *types*.

We still thrill to hear Moses tell old Pharaoh, “Let my people go” (Exodus 5:1). Ten plagues forced him to; the Hebrews left and God “went before them in a pillar of cloud to lead them the way” (13:21). Pharaoh, destructively stubborn, changed his mind, pursued, and caught up with them at the Red Sea. The Hebrews panicked and Moses said, “stand still and see the salvation of the Lord” (14:13). God split the waters of the Red Sea by a “strong east wind” (14:21); the Hebrews crossed “upon the dry ground” (22); as they tried to follow, God “overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea” (27); and so, “the Lord saved Israel that day” (30). This is a *type* of salvation; let us look at the *key*.

Paul wrote: “our fathers were under the cloud [and] passed through the sea” (1Corinthians 10:1); thus, he said, they “were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea” (2). First Corinthians was addressed the “church of God... at Corinth” (1Corinthians 1:2), which church was there because Paul had before preached there that “Jesus was Christ” (10:5,6); and, “many of the Corinthians hearing believed and were baptized” (8).

Red Sea “baptism” was essential to the Hebrews’ salvation; so today, water baptism is essential to a sinner’s salvation. One greater than Moses said, “he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16). It is hard to picture a Hebrew that day arguing with Moses that water cannot save. It is equally hard to understand today anyone arguing with what the Lord said. Match the type to the key; they fit perfectly.

TO CONTINUED SALVATION—Keep reading. Paul was not through “typing in” and “keying in” to the salvation which Jesus makes possible, the “salvation of your souls”

(1Peter 1:9). Though the Hebrews were delivered, saved, from Pharaoh and bondage, they were not finally, or ultimately saved because “with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness” (1Corinthians 10:5). In fact, 23,000 of them “fell in one day” (8). The type and the key come together to show us that baptism is the point of deliverance, salvation; now they come together to show us that a person once delivered, saved, can ultimately *fall* or be lost.

Look first at the type. The Hebrews once saved from Pharaoh enjoyed great blessings; “They did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual rock that followed them: and that rock was Christ” (4). Now look at the key. Those who are “in Christ” enjoy “all spiritual blessings in heavenly places” (Ephesians 1:3).

Look again at the type. The saved and blessed Hebrews went on to “lust after evil things” (1Corinthians 10:6); they were “idolaters” (7); they “sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play” (7); they “commit[ted] fornication” (8); they “tempt[ed] Christ” (9); and they “murmured” (10). As a result: “God was not well pleased [with them]” (5); they “were overthrown in the wilderness” (5); they “fell” (8); and, they were “destroyed” (9). Now, the key. To the Corinthians who “hearing believed, and were baptized” (Acts 18:8), Paul warned, “these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted” (1Corinthians 10:6). Saved people should not “lust after evil things as they also lusted” (6); nor, “be idolaters as were some of them” (7); nor, “commit fornication as some of them” (8); nor, “tempt Christ as some of them” (9); nor yet, “murmur as some of them” (10).

The summary lesson, the *key* of which the Israelites were the *type* is: “Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall” (11,12).

Christians just cannot be too serious about being “obedient children” (1Peter 1:14), and not “fashioning [themselves] according to the former lusts” (14). They must work hard to “be...holy in all manner of living” (15).

Type in, key in; be a faithful and obedient child of God.

—AA

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1131 Hickory Grove Rd.
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Return Services Requested

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

Churches Raising Money

We surely remember the time when it was virtually never the case that congregations raised money in any way other than that set forth in First Corinthians 16:1-2. Well, things sadly are changing with some congregations.

The Granny White Church Of Christ recently announced the “Usborne Book Fair” to raise money for a “Mother’s Day Out Program.” The Book Fair was announced for February 24, 4:00-5:30. Granny White was to receive a percentage of the book sales. There was a time, I think, when the Granny White church would not have used this means to raise money.

* * * * *

Pleasant Valley Church of Christ in Little Rock

This congregation now has the “Breakin’ Bread Café.” This café, open Monday – Friday, has a menu, and the prices for each item; such as: “Toasted Bagel \$.99; Ham and Cheddar Cheese Scone \$1.69; Ham, Egg and Cheese Croissant Sandwich \$3.69; Sandwiches or Wraps \$5.19.” This is only a part of their menu.

Such fund-raisers remind us of man-made churches and their practices. I have personally seen the Catholic Church use gambling to raise funds. Since gambling is becoming the rage of the day, will some of our brethren go that far in raising funds? Please do not say, “That’s ridiculous; it will never happen” By now, it should be obvious that some brethren will pursue the ridiculous.—*Editor*

FOR YOUR ADDRESS BOOK

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