

Banner of Truth

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

Vol. 18

January 2009

No. 1

Let Us Move Forward by Turning Backward

Moving forward by turning backward is no oxymoron, rather a lovely paradox. There are no contradictions here; indeed, turning backward to move forward involves great issues both for the "life that now is, and of that which is to come" (I Tim. 4:8).

Let us concede, at the beginning, that in some cases "moving forward" would spell defeat, even physical and spiritual death. In other cases moving forward would mean the difference between having God's eternal approval or condemnation. We will point out the difference in our discussion.

"Turning backward" is also used in two very important senses. In some cases, turning backward spells defeat, and the loss of the greatest blessing God has made available to man. On the other hand, turning backward to God's will as our guide may well spell the difference between eternal life and eternal death.

In the following discussion, we shall give a number of applications of moving forward by turning backward. We will not exhaust the possible applications, but we trust the ones we use will cause some to think, and opt for the action which will reward them with Heaven's greatest blessings.

SOME EXAMPLES OF MOVING FORWARD BY TURNING BACKWARD

In April of 1942, I was one of a class of twenty-eight high school graduates. Our class motto was: Forward ever, backward never. The idea behind this motto was that we should move forward in success and never turn back in defeat. In this instance, moving forward was the positive objective and backward implied defeat. Many people think in these terms, but we shall consider some examples where the positives and negatives may have a different meaning.

We have all seen times when we should turn backward to achieve our goal or objective. In 1965, my family of four, my in-laws, and two cousins, set our sights on Alaska. I bought a used school bus, converted it into a camper, and the ten of us set out for Anchorage, Alaska, filled with great exuberance. Somewhere in Montana, we frustrated to learn we had taken the wrong road traveling some twenty miles before I discov- →

BANNER OF TRUTH

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Free monthly publication supported by congregations and individuals. Our aim: 1) Teach and uphold Truth; 2) encourage evangelism; 3) oppose things “contrary to sound doctrine.”

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ered the error. Hope, however, was renewed only when we turned backward to move forward on the right road which lead to our destination. What would have been the consequence had we not turned backward? We would have ended up some place we did not want to go; our hopes of seeing Alaska would have been dashed. Turning backward, though, enabled us to move forward and achieve our objective. Getting to Alaska, friends, was not a matter of life, death and eternity. This example pales in comparison and importance with many others.

A more serious example of turning backward to go forward is that of the prodigal son. The younger son took his inheritance and went into a far country, where he wasted his inheritance in riotous living. In want, he wound up feeding swine. But when he “came to himself,” he realized that to have his father’s favor he would have to turn backward in the direction of his loving father and away from his condition of want.

Let us now move on to some more important examples of moving forward by turning backward. These examples have to do with the most important part of man’s existence. They are related to a life with living hope here on earth, or a life without meaning and purpose. More importantly, they are related to eternal fellowship with or separation from fellowship with God. In short, they are related to our Lord’s prepared place for the saved, Heaven, or an eternity in the place prepared for the Devil and his angels, Hell. The obvious first move is to,

MOVE FORWARD BY TURNING BACK TO THE BIBLE

In some religious circles, we used to hear the slogan Back to the Bible. The idea behind this was that people should turn back to the Bible in order to move forward in God’s sight. Since it is the truth that makes men free (Jno. 8:32), and the gospel is God’s power to save (Rom. 1:16); it is only by the Bible, the only source of God’s inspired word, that we can know how to move forward and seek God’s approval. Knowing what a loving God requires of man, we can grow by the “sincere milk of the word” (1 Pet. 2:2).

For churches of Christ in days gone by, the Back to the Bible plea was a noble one, and it was sounded often. But that plea has waned considerably in recent times. For proof of that, just look round about at the congregations in your area, and ask yourself, How many are still seeking to walk in “the old paths” (cf. Jer. 6:16)? Today’s dangerous tendency is to move forward to what man wants. As the great apostle Paul wept relative to those who had become enemies of the cross of Christ (Phil. 3:18), so should we weep about the spirit of indifference which has overcome so many of us with respect to following God’s word, the only way to life in the world to come.

We have never seen a time in our lives when people in general, even religious people, have drifted so far from God’s word. The tragic result is that most people have no basis for hope in this life and the world yet to come. Many religious groups claiming Christian affiliation have created and subscribe to all kinds of creeds, disciplines, or other statements of belief which are either more or less than the Bible. Needless to say, since God’s inspired word is all-sufficient to the

enabling of “the man of God [to] be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:17), no other creeds or man-made rules are needed. People often put their belief in something other than God’s word, but this will never bring victory as made possible by our Lord.

Many of the Bibles today are not the complete and authoritative word. Changes have been made; some, in many instances, which teach and uphold false doctrines. The NIV version of the Bible is being used by many people, even though it has some serious errors; some versions are even worse. More people than ever are going for these new versions which are often dangerous.

Whether people who have drifted from it, or those who have never accepted the Bible in its fullness, many simply need to turn back to the Bible. Without this backward turn, they cannot have God’s approval. If people would turn back to the Bible, without compromise, addition or deletion, there would be no need to consider the many areas where people truly have not turned back to the Bible, though they may claim to have done so.

Given the forces at work now, it is imperative that we move forward,

BY TURNING BACK TO GOD’S LAW AGAINST HOMOSEXUALITY

To move forward in God’s sight, the sin of homosexuality must neither be practiced nor approved. It must rather be opposed for the sin that it is. Progressive people, so called, want society to embrace homosexuality, but the only way forward here is to turn backward to God’s law. Of the many sins mentioned in God’s word, the sin of homosexuality stands out prominently. The wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah is referred to time and again in God’s word. A concordance will show about two dozen references to Sodom and Gomorrah, and never in a positive light. Many other passages condemn under other terms and by different designations.

To note a few examples of God’s condemnation of homosexuality we begin with Genesis 13:13 — “But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly.” In Genesis 18:20-21, we find — “And the Lord said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, because their sin is very grievous....” In Romans chapter one, Paul delineates the prevalent sins of the Gentile world and addresses the

sin of homosexuality saying, “...God 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 recompense of their error which was meet (vv. 26-27). Then, as now, God gave such people over to their “vile affections.” I cannot but think of this every time I see Representative Barney Frank or some other well-known or influential person who openly and proudly practices and promotes homosexuality.

God’s punishment of homosexuality under the Old Testament is set forth in Leviticus 20:13 — “If a man also lie with 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.” Disobedience to God’s law against homosexuality in the New Testament results in spiritual death.

Even so-called *Christian* religions are now upholding homosexuality. It was a dark day in the religious world when, in August of 2003, “Rev. V. Gene Robinson” was appointed as the first openly homosexual Bishop of the Episcopal Church. Though a number of Episcopalians did not go along with this anti-Bible teaching and decision, it was reported that a legislative body of clergy and lay people approved the action by a two-to-one margin. What could be more hypocritical of people who profess Christ, than such a blatant rejection of His will.

This, however, is just one of many examples of homosexuality being accepted by religious people. A headline in a newspaper in 2004 reads: **Methodist Conservatives Propose Split over Gays**. As aberrant as it is, there are even *homosexual churches*.

This “abomination,” the practice of which warranted death under the Law of Moses (cf. Lev. 20:18), is like a steamroller in our culture and society. We can cite only a few examples—

Serious efforts are being made by homosexuals to infiltrate public schools. A message from *CNSNews.com* said: “A homosexual advocacy group is partnering with the National Parent Teacher Association at its annual conference for the first time. Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) will present its first-ever safe schools workshop at the National PTA Conference in Anaheim, →

Calif.” They call it “safe” because it supports homosexuality. It is by no means safe in the sight of God who has condemned it many times.

Jim Brown, in *Agape Press*, wrote: “*USA Today* reports that a growing number of colleges and universities are holding so-called ‘lavender graduations’ to honor their ‘gay,’ lesbian, and transgendered graduates...”

Another article bears the title: **Gay Day at Walt Disney World**, and says, “Since 1991, gay men and lesbians from around the world have converged in and around Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida for an entire weekend of exciting events centered around them parks and attractions. Gay Day at Walt Disney World attendance has grown considerably, attracting more than 100,000 gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, family and friends....” Reading this description, one who reads and respects God’s word can be reminded only of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Gays, Lesbians Receive Apology from Dr. Laura, reads the title of an article in the *Murray Ledger and Times* (2000). This well-known woman has often stood strongly for moral principles; but, like some others, she does not want to be critical of homosexuals. She is not willing to condemn what God has condemned so many times.

During the Clinton years, under the heading: **A Proclamation That Shames the Nation**, a publication I receive said, “According to an article in the Dallas morning News (June 15, 1999), President Clinton has proclaimed June ‘Gay and Lesbian Pride Month.’” What a travesty that the most powerful person in our nation, even the world, was a foremost supporter of one of the most condemned sins in God’s revelation. Others in high places are equally ardent in their support of this sinful practice.

Another article (April 2008) has the headline: **Homosexual Day of Silence – Is Your Child’s School on the list?** Among other things, it says, “On, Friday, April 25, several thousand schools across the nation will be observing ‘Day of Silence (DOS).’ DOS is a nationwide push to promote the homosexual lifestyle in public schools.” The efforts to promote homosexuality within our public schools are strong and determined.

Massachusetts Ushers in Gay Marriage is yet another headline under which it says, “With the passage of a midnight deadline, Massachusetts became the first state to process marriage licenses for gay and lesbian couples.” Since that time thousands of homosexuals have also *married* in California.

In this regard, let it also be noted that proponents of homosexuality not only flout God’s law, they also have little or no use for democracy and the will of the people. In November of last year, 52.3% of 13.5 million voters in California overturned their Supreme Courts legitimizing of homosexual marriage by voting for an amendment defining marriage as a relationship between a man and a woman. Government of, by, and for the people means nothing to some people. Even the attorney general of the state, Jerry Brown, has now declared the amendment unconstitutional.

Eugene Delgaudio, an executive director of Public Advocate of the United States, a political lobbying group, described the sinful display of homosexuals when they marched on Washington, in 2005: “It was truly a sight to sicken the soul. Thousands of men in bright neon bikinis hanging all over each other. Groups of men and women – it was hard to tell the difference sometimes –exercising their homosexual lusts upon one another in defiance of all standards of decency and morality.”

A few years ago, I was in downtown Amsterdam on my way home from Ukraine. It happened to be a *Gay Day*, or whatever they may have called it there. Reading Delgaudio’s description of the homosexual march in Washington, I could only think, “This sounds just like what I saw in Amsterdam.” What a sad thing to see such a display of moral depravity in our beloved country; a country which used to have moral standards which found such repugnant. As more people forget God, we yet will see things which we have never dreamed of seeing in the United States of America.

Boy Scouts of America have been under great pressure to capitulate and embrace homosexuality. As our politicians and judges continue to increase their affinity for homosexuals, the time may well come soon when the Boy Scouts will be forced into defeat.

Various companies or employers are supporting homosexuality by offering special consideration to homosexuals. The instance of such are too numerous to

mention them all. A prominent example are the Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae Foundations. The irresponsible recipients of *bail out* money, are reported to have contributed thousands to homosexual activists groups.

Since homosexuals began coming out of the closets three or four decades ago, there has been a corresponding and increasing opposition to faith in God. This force has gained momentum as politicians and society in general join the anti-God forces. The homosexuals' plea for equal treatment is nothing but a ploy to gain *special treatment*. To some degree they are succeeding. With our present condition, so many people are becoming desensitized with regard to this divinely condemned lifestyle. Politicians are encouraging it; in particular, our new President, Barack Hussein Obama. He is a strong advocate of both abortion and homosexual rights

One need not be an alarmist to say that our country is clearly on the road to Sodom and Gomorrah. The clouds of moral dissolution which began to appear in a trickle a few decades ago have now come to be a front; we are near the suburbs of Sodom and Gomorrah. How sad it is that a nation which to a great degree was founded upon Christian principles, now revels in aberrance and abortion. We are a nation that is forgetting God. The future will truly try those who believe in God and endeavor to serve Him. Bleak though things be, faith is still the victory that overcomes. Now, more than ever we must "draw nigh to God."

True progress must also be pursued by our,

TURNING BACKWARD TO GOD'S VIEW OF THE SANCTITY OF LIFE

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Gen. 1:27). In all of God's creation, though He said it was good, only man was created in God's image. The apostle Paul, speaking of God's creation, said, "he giveth to all, life, and breath..." (Acts 17:25). Life is a gift from God; human life is created in the image of God.

When does life begin? This has been a widely discussed question for many years. Some have even defied common sense and concluded that the child within the mother's womb is nothing more than a glob of cells, which can be removed at will and for any reason. It appears to me that those who take that view are just salving their conscience by denying a baby is

living in order to lessen any remorse they might have when they commit murder.. The position that an unborn child is not life outstrips nonsense.

If one believes God's word, the Bible, the question of whether or not a baby is alive before birth is easily answered. The Psalmist said, "... thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made..." (Ps. 139:13-14). Isaiah said of Jacob, "Thus saith the Lord that made thee, and formed thee from the womb..." (Isa. 44:2). God spoke to Jeremiah, "Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou comest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee..." (Jer. 1:5). Then Isaiah said, "The Lord hath called me from the womb; from the bowels of my mother hath he made mention of my name" (Isa. 49:1). Of John the Baptist, it was said, "And it came to pass, that when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb..." (Lk. 1:41). Elizabeth said further, "For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy" (v. 44). Women who bear children would readily testify to the fact that the baby is very active in the womb.

Graphic and moving films of babies in the womb give the lie to the claims of abortionists. Watching footage of a baby still in its mothers womb clasping, with his teensy fingers, an adult's finger, one can only feel outrage and pity and the stupidity of those who deny the preciousness of life in the womb.

Such works as *Diary of an Unborn Child* show the marvels of the development of the unborn child. It is nothing less than amazing at how early after conception the human characteristics of a child develop. Just before birth, the child is as fully developed as he will be immediately after birth with just two exceptions: His means of receiving food and oxygen to sustain life.

Honesty, if not courage, will prompt a normal person to acknowledge that a child is very much alive before birth.

Killing babies before they are born. The evidence we have considered is sufficient to show that a child has life before birth. Since this is true, we must conclude that willfully, wantonly taking the life of the innocent unborn is murder. Call it *abortion* if you will, but it no less than the sin of murder. Not by this name perhaps, but the Bible says a lot about this evil prac- →

tice of abortion. Those who truly love God cannot uphold and defend abortion.

Murder reared its ugly head in the first family, when Cain slew his brother Abel, and punishment was meted out to the murderer (Gen. 4:8-12). Society was later sanctioned by God to deal with murderers: “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man, shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man” (Gen. 9:6). Abortion is shedding man’s blood. If not, why not?

The sixth commandment is “Thou shalt not kill” (Ex. 20:13). Of this commandment, *Adam Clarke* says: “This commandment, which is general, prohibits murder of every kind.” When Jesus told the young man to “keep the commandments” if he would enter into life, the young man asked “which?” Jesus’ response was, “Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, etc. Jesus was clearly talking about the ten commandments. Here he uses the word “murder” rather than “kill.” The Lord also said, “For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders...” (Matt. 15:19).

The writer of Proverbs speaks on the subject of life. Of the six things which God hates, one is, “hands that shed innocent blood” (6:17). What greater example of shedding “innocent blood” can be cited than killing unborn babies? An unborn child has done nothing in the world warrant any kind of punishment or mistreatment. That child, in the image of God,” deserves to live. It is those who carry out this grisly act of murder who deserve to be punished; and they will in the day of judgment, unless they repent.

In Exodus 21:22, we learn that, “If men strive, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart from her, and yet no mischief follow: he shall be severely punished...” Yet, in our country today, children are deliberately and willingly murdered in the mother’s body, and that is legal. If God stood for sanctity of life under the Old Testament, has he changed his mind under the New Testament?

Gentiles, who did not retain God in their knowledge, were by God given “over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient” (Rom. 1:28). Included in those “not convenient” things is “murder.”

Have we ceased to have respect for sanctity of life? Just as many heathen people have had no respect for the sanctity of life, many of our nation have followed suit. Is not the cold blooded murder of the human

offspring about as low as people can get? Fifty years ago, would anyone have imagined the present murdering of tens of millions of our offspring? Since *Bloody Monday*, January 22, 1973, when the Supreme Court made abortion legal, many times more unborn children have been murdered than the number of people who have died in all the wars in which our country has engaged. While all the deaths due to wars in which we have engaged is just over one million, murders by abortion are said to be around 50,000,000.

Our country has laws concerning the endangered species of animals and birds, which carry stiff penalties when violated. Kill an eagle and go to prison; kill an unborn child and enjoy freedom, and perhaps taxpayer subsidization. Who would deny that endangered species have more of our concern and compassion than the innocent unborn child, a human being, made in the image of God?

The lack of conscience on the part of those who sanction killing babies by abortion is bad enough; but, it is worse that their seared consciences are seemingly not affected by the heinous methods of abortion: tearing a living human being apart, limb by limb; or, by sucking out the brains of an innocent child just before it clears the mother’s body. The sanctity of life cannot mean anything to the pro-abortionist. We are made to wonder why the abortionist attempts to make the act of abortion seem less evil than it is in reality. You will note that those who favor abortion do not use that term. By all means they avoid calling the practice murder, which it is. Their innocent sounding *pro-choice* is in reality pro-murder. Why not call it what it is? It should make no difference to those without a conscience.

What does the future hold with regard to abortion?

All indications are that there will even be an increase in abortions over the terrible condition which now exists. As disbelief grows, people will become more calloused thinking no more of killing unborn children than killing rats. Disbelievers can justify any action which pleases them.

Cause for great alarm. Chuck Norris, in *Human Events*, speaks of “Obama’s First Act as President.” Norris said: “Barack Obama emphatically promised more than a year ago, ‘The first thing I’d do as president is sign the Freedom of Choice Act.’” Freedom of Choice Act (FOCA); what a misnomer. This *act* ↑

is a “device,” a “wile” of the devil (2 Cor. 2:11; Eph. 6:11). What sin could be greater than a country killing its offspring? A horrible and black page in history is that of Hitler’s extermination of six million Jews. But what will history have to say about our murder of nine or ten times that many by legal abortion?

President Obama will likely be able to keep his word with regard to abortion, since he has a congress which will grant his wishes. If his desire is upheld, hundreds of thousands of more abortions will take place. There has been, or is now, some restrictions on abortions. The partial-birth abortion practice was overturned, and various states had laws which stipulated certain restrictions. If FOCA becomes law, all restraints with regard to abortion will be cast to the wind. That is, there will be **no** restrictions on abortion. How sad that this will be music to the ears of a great portion of our society.

If President Obama did not have multiplied millions of supporters, he would not have a chance to carry out his desire for the wholesale slaughter of human kind. Those who support him are just as guilty as he. They are bidding God speed to this evil, and will be held accountable; and, that includes *religious* people who claim to believe God’s word. By supporting proponents of murder by abortion, they show themselves to be hypocrites of the worst order.

Politicians, who pander to abortionists, also pander to other people. Some, though giving lip service to opposing abortion, yet support the pro-abortion politicians who pander to them with other promises. Faithful Christians would never give their support to merciless murderers, regardless of what they promise.

People whose consciences cannot be pricked by the atrocity of abortion, are only a short step away from accepting the murder of the aged and infirm in society, as it happened in Hitler’s Germany. We actually already have some in our country who already believe in the *merciful* ending of people whose lives are no longer viable, nor have meaning.

In addition to moral-social issues, but we must also progress,

BY TURNING BACK TO CHRIST AND HIS ONE CHURCH

The first allusion to the church, though the word “church” is not used, is in Genesis 3:15, where God said, “And I will put enmity between thee and the

woman, and between thy seed and her seed; and it shall bruise thy head, and thou shall bruise his heel.” As time passed, God’s plan for the church was carried out through the prophets. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had a great part to play in God’s plan, as well as others.

Isaiah said, “It shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow into it” (Isa. 2:2). Then Isaiah said “out of Zion shall go forth the, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem” (v. 3). The prophet Daniel said, “And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed” (Dan. 2:44). The “Lord’s house,” and “a kingdom” have reference to the church which Christ would build.

Speaking of the church which God purposed and Christ built, Paul says, “To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Eph. 3:10-11). God had the church in mind from eternity. The “manifold wisdom of God” is shown by the church. As the church is God’s manifold wisdom, it is understatement to say that it is important. However, men in general do not understand the importance of the church which was “purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.” The very idea that there is only one church, that which Christ said he would build, is foreign to many people. They seem never to have heard this import fact.

Before moving on to the building of the church by Christ, it should be noted that the “Lord’s house” and the “kingdom” are in the singular, not the plural. We will also see the same when we see the record of Christ building “His church.” It is only since the building of Christ’s church that we see “churches” as built by men. The only sense in which we see the mention of churches in the New Testament is when more than one congregation of Christ’s church is referred to, such as “the churches of Galatia” (Gal. 1:2), or “the seven churches which are in Asia” (Rev. 1:4). These “churches” are not of a different kind; but rather Christ’s church as located in different places. There were no other churches in the first century, such as we see in the denominational world. →

Christ announces the building of His church. In Matthew 16:18, Christ said to the apostle Peter who had confessed Christ, saying: “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,” “And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell [hades] shall not prevail against it.” The “rock” upon which Christ said He would build His church, was not the apostle Peter, but rather upon the truth of the confession Peter made. The Greek language, in which Christ’s language is recorded, makes clear that the “rock” refers not to Peter, but rather to the truth of his confession.

Christ’s church became a reality on the day of Pentecost, as recorded in Acts chapter two. This was in fulfillment of the prophecies of Isaiah, Daniel, and Joel. That momentous day was marked by the apostles exclusively being “baptized with the Holy Ghost” (1:5,8). Imbued by the Spirit of God, they “began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance” (2:4). These “Galilaeans” (7) were fluently speaking “language[s]...tongue[s]” of many nationalities (6,8ff). Though some foolish people passed it off to their being “full of new wine” (13), Peter said, “This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel” (Acts 2:16).

Peter continued his marvelous message to the Jewish multitude concluding that they had “by wicked hands” crucified Christ (23), and that “God hath made Jesus whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ” (36). This got the serious attention of the hearers, whereupon “they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (37). With preciseness, “Peter said unto them, 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” (38). “They that gladly received his word were baptized,” responded, “and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls” (41).

At this very point, the church of God’s eternal purpose, the church Christ said He would build, became a reality. God was “added to the church” (42) those who obeyed the terms which had been given them by the inspired word. From this point onward,

in the New Testament, the church is an existing entity. She grew rapidly as the Spirit attested saying, “Many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of men was about five thousand.” (Acts 4:4).

Note the singularity of the church. The Lord “added” obedient souls to “the church,” about which Paul acclaimed saying, “[God] hath put all things under [Christ’s] feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fullness of that filleth all in all” (Eph. 1:22-23). To the Colossians, the same apostle Paul says something similar: “He is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence” (Col. 1:18).

We see clearly, then, that the body and the church are one and the same; that helps us all the more understand its singularity. “There is one body,” Paul says, “and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, on baptism. One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Eph. 4:4-6).

In the New Testament, no apostle, no Christian in general, was a member of anything but “the body,” “the church.”

How did people become members of that one church? This a question of the greatest importance to those who want to obey God by becoming a member of the body of Christ. This is true due to the fact that Christ is not only the head of the church, or His body, but He is the savior of it. “For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church; and he is the savior of the body” (Eph. 5:23). One must be in the church to be saved.

In the book of Acts, especially, we see a pattern or the steps taken when one is converted and added to the church by the Lord. This has not changed over the ages. The first step taken is faith in God. No one can ever become a Christian without faith in God. The writer of Hebrews said, “But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that seek him” (Heb. 11:6). This faith in God comes from God’s word. Note Paul’s statement: “So then faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). †

The second step in becoming a part of Christ's church is that of repentance. When the people on the day of Pentecost asked what they should do, Peter told them: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins..." (Acts 2:38).

The third step is that of confessing faith in Christ. Paul said, "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. 10:10). Before the Ethiopian was baptized he was asked by Philip, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest [that he may be baptized]. The Ethiopian said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:36-38).

The next step is to be baptized for remission of sins, just as Peter commanded on Acts 2:38). It is by obeying the Lord in baptism that one gets "into Christ." "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27). In every conversion recorded in the book of Acts, the subjects were baptized.

No one can go forward in gaining the favor of the Lord unless he turns backward to the one church of which Christ was the builder and is the savior. People are saved today in the same way people were saved in the first century. The hundreds, yea, thousands of churches built by men are not now, and never will be the church which Christ built and purchased by His blood (Acts 20:28). Going back to the Bible, we can see the church of our Lord and press forward into that body of the saved.

Let us also press forward,

BY TURNING BACK TO OFFERING MORE TIME IN SERVING GOD

It is a general principle that the more time we put into a thing, the more reward we may receive. This would certainly hold true with regard to the time we use in serving our Lord. God's word has much to say about time, and how it is used and abused.

There are many interesting things about time and how we use it. Time is something which if not used is lost. Once time passes, it never returns. Time is fleeting, time marches on. Time does not do anything but pass, but we have a great responsibility as to how we use it. Time is one of the greatest commodities we have. We can use it or abuse it.

We want to center our discussion of time relative to how much of it we spend in serving and worshipping

God. First, we note what is said to the Ephesians. "Redeeming the time because the days are evil" (Eph. 5:16). Paul commands the Ephesians to do this, rather than failing to "walk circumspectly, as "fools," but "as wise." (v. 15). *Vine* says that redeem, as here used, means "to buy up for one's self." In other words, the individual is to make use of the time he has. The use of that time includes that which is spent in serving and worshipping God. In a similar vein, Paul also says, "Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time" (Col. 4:5). Here, *Vine* says redeeming means, "buying up the opportunity." Wise people, then, will ask themselves, "How much of my time is spent in serving and worshipping God?"

More time used results in greater growth. Peter said, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (1 Pet. 2:2). Making the use of the "milk of the word" to grow involves time.

In the early days of the church, she experienced great growth, in the face of great opposition. But this did not happen without time spent in serving the Lord. Of the three thousand who were added to the church on the day of Pentecost, it is said: "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). Just how often were these new Christians meeting? Inspiration answers that question — "And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart" (v. 46). Does that mean they were coming together every day? It does.

A very interesting thing about the daily meeting of those early Christians is the correlation between time spent in serving and the growth which resulted. Soon after Pentecost and the establishment of Christ's church, there was great growth. "Howbeit many of them which heard the word believed; and the number of the men was about five thousand" (Acts 4:4). This growth was occurring in spite of persecution. After the death of Ananias and Sapphira it is said, "And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women" (Acts 5:14). These early Christians were busy in serving the Lord and the were growing in number. →

Relative to time, how does the church of today measure up? The response to this question should cause us to shed tears of grief. As a personal point of reference, time spent in spiritual service back when your writer obeyed the gospel was much greater than now.

The traditional pattern was two hours spent in Bible study and the worship hour on Sunday morning. One hour was spent on Sunday evening. The mid-week Bible study was an hour. Gospel meetings were generally a week in length, some times including Sunday in the beginning and Sunday in the ending. Vacation Bible Schools generally lasted five days, and the study of two lessons daily, in many instances.

What about today? To sum it up, it seems that we are generally using much less time in serving the Lord and much more time in our own personal pursuits. Week long gospel meetings are almost unheard of any more. The general trend is three or four days at the most, and some times much less. Brethren declare that there is no need for longer meetings since folks, even brethren, will not attend. Such is our world today that we need more preaching, not less.

The time spent in Vacation Bible Schools has been squeezed down to five one day lessons at most, and part of Saturday at the least. Then in some situations part of the time is spent on crafts or something other than God's word.

The latest trend is the squeezing down of time in the traditional Sunday morning services. Some congregations are giving only an hour and a half, or a little more, to these services. Yet, we have just as much time as the early Christians had. And, think about the time we waste, rather than using it for the Lord's cause and our own spiritual needs.

The results of less time in serving. The Lord's church is not growing today. Instead it is becoming weaker in number and in spiritual growth. The affinity for man-made churches is growing by leaps and bounds. Our brethren in the distant past did so much to extricate us from the shackles of denominationalism, and now the trend is to go right back into that from which our older brethren left. The dwindling number of faithful thriving congregations tells us that we have a job to do and a situation to change.

The New Testament warned that throughout the "last days" many enemies of the cross of Christ would appear (cf. Phil. 3:18). Even now we are seeing those things with our own eyes. Let us be faithful and win the victory.

SOME CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

No question about it. Our nation and the Lord's church are rapidly digressing. We must put a halt to this digression by going backward to move forward.

We must go back to God's law on homosexuality. Our society has largely given up its inhibitions toward this terrible sin; many Christians are also weakening in their resolve. Let us pray for strength to be bold in speaking out against this horrible sin despite the forces at work in our world. In the political world, a majority of the politicians are aiding our arrival at the gates of Sodom and Gomorrah, and evidently many love to have it so.

We must go back to God's view of the sanctity of life. Human life is a gift from God. Man is by far the apex of God's creation created in the "image of God." Man shows the greatest disrespect for God when he upholds and practices abortion. Since our Supreme Court made murder by abortion legal, tens of millions of precious and innocent souls have been destroyed. The true servant of God has a great responsibility to speak out against this evil.

We must go back to Christ's one church. We do not hear this important truth emphasized like we once did. As affinity for man-made churches grows, the respect for Christ's blood-bought church wanes. There is no manmade church which even comes close to the distinctive nature of the church of Christ. We must strengthen members of the church of Christ to once again believe in and advocate that distinctiveness.

We must go back to giving our time in serving God. There could not be anything which serves as a greater hindrance to church growth than the lessening of the time we give to serving and worshipping God. Unless this trend is discontinued, there will be only a very small remnant of true and faithful brethren within the near future. May the Lord help us to serve Him in the sincerity and truth which He desires of us.

—Editor

An Excerpt from the Sermon on the Mount

This sermon, preached by the son of God, has rightly been called the greatest sermon ever preached. It is because of the depth and breadth of our Lord's teachings that they provide us with an ever flowing fountain of God's truth and love.

THE GOLDEN RULE

"Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets." This verse begins with the word "therefore." It was preceded by all that Jesus taught in Matthew, 5-7.

"Whatsoever things ye would that men should do to you." How do you want to be treated by others? It does not say things that you may desire that men should do unto you, but that which men "should" do unto you. That word "should" limits actions to that which has God's approval.

Why is this important? There are some so steeped in sin that they might desire that others do unto them that which is ungodly. Have you ever heard the pronouncements of silly women and men, whose eyes are filled with lust, watching the gyrations of some rock star? What would they have others do unto them? No, Jesus set limits: by teaching what men "should do."

Then, there is the converse. Do what you "should do" to others. We all have a God given duty and responsibility to live by God-approved standards. If we understand what that means, then we should be able to understand why it is that we must withdraw fellowship from fellow Christians who are living in sin. This is the manner in which we should behave, because it is an act of love to give no indication of approval of ungodly conduct. "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us" (2 Thess. 3:6). Here is an example of what Christians "should do."

When we do what God commands, we do show our love for God and our fellow man. If we are walking "disorderly" we should hope that others would love us enough to withdraw fellowship when all else has failed to reconcile us to our Lord (1 Cor. 5:11-13).

THE GOLDEN RULE — THE RULE OF LOVE

Jesus stated that "this is the law and the prophets," meaning that God's laws throughout the Patriarchal age and God's law given through Moses were all based on upon love of God and our fellow man. When the Pharisees questioned Jesus concerning the greatest commandment the reply of Jesus was, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy souls, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it; Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matt. 22:37-40).

PAUL APPLIES THE PRINCIPAL TO THE CHRISTIAN AGE

"For this, thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill [murder]. Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in the saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Rom. 13:9).

RULES OF CONDUCT

All people operate under some kind of rule or philosophy in relation to their fellow man.

THE VANDAL RULE. Aesop told a story of a dog in the manger. The dog cared nothing about the feed that had been put there for the cow, but he barked and snapped at the cow to prevent her from enjoying it. Vandals who write vulgarity on public and private property, break windows, slash tires, bash mailboxes and wantonly vandalize and destroy the property of others follow this philosophy. Their satisfaction is in making others suffer. →

THE MIGHT MAKES RIGHT RULE. What is mine is mine and what is yours is mine, because I have the power to take it from you. We are reminded of the robbers who beat and robbed and left their victim to die in the ditch on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho (Lk. 10:30). They lived by this rule, as is the case of many in the world today. David fell from God's grace when he yielded to the might makes right philosophy. He took another man's wife, lied to her husband, then committed murder. What a fool Satan make out of our weaknesses.

THE HEDONISTIC RULE. It is the philosophy of life is all about self-gratification. Carnal pleasure becomes one's desire and goal in life. Alcohol, other drugs, sexual perversion and such like dominate such lives until they destroy themselves and others. These are those who walk after the flesh, not the Spirit..." (Rom. 8:1). To be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace (Rom. 8:6).

THE DON'T GET INVOLVED PHILOSOPHY. This was the philosophy employed by the priest and the Levite who saw the man who had been robbed and beaten, but who passed by on the other side. When good people refuse to get involved evil people will rule (Lk. 10:31-32)

There are sections of cities where when murders take place in the presence of eye witnesses and the crimes go unsolved because of the don't get involved philosophy. Such places are ruled by the forces of evil; only when the people have had enough and get involved that there is any hope for a better life.

THE GOLDEN RULE OF JESUS IS THE PERFECT RULE TO LIVE BY

If you are a victim, or if a loved one of yours is a victim, don't you hope there is someone who will come to your aid, who is following the golden rule? This principle teaches to put ourselves in the others place.

The golden rule requires that we be impartial and just as our Lord is impartial. We know that God is no respecter of persons and so must we strive to be likewise. To favor one person is but to disfavor someone else. Someone is going to be hurt when

we show partiality. The truth is that we are also in fact harming the person favored as well. When people expect favoritism it often results in harm to them. Equal justice for all is the golden rule.

APPLYING THE RULE

1. I want to be able to trust and confide in a friend. This means that I must be trustworthy.
2. I do not want what I have said to be taken out of context or misquoted. I must have the same regard for others.
3. I would like for others to give me the benefit of the doubt. I must do likewise.
4. I will treat others with the same respect I would like for them to treat me.
5. I should show the same interest in bringing someone else to Christ, as I would want other to show toward me or a lost loved one of mine.
6. I will not stereotype people because of an unpleasant experience I may have had with someone of their class, race or group.

THE GOLDEN RULE IS GOD'S RULE FOR EVERY ACTIVITY IN LIFE

The business man who consistently follows this rule will be successful. Just as the individual who lives by this rule will succeed in life. No honest person can deny that they want to be treated by others with fairness, good will and respect.

CONSIDER GOD'S FAIRNESS, RESPECT AND GOOD WILL FOR MANKIND

He created us, sustains us, and has provided for us a way to have our sins forgiven so that we might inhabit the eternal home he has prepared for us. It now becomes a matter of our love for Him. If we love Him we will keep His commandments and be faithful members of His kingdom, the church that was purchased by the blood of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ His Son (Acts 20:28).

MAY WE DO UNTO GOD AS HE HAS ALREADY DONE FOR US

—Lloyd Gale

Preaching, Preachers, People, and Quality Control

Preachers do not pay nearly enough attention to: (1) the preacher's subordination to the preaching; (2) being productive, and (3) the quality of that which they produce; and I believe there is a correlation between this and the masses of brethren who have "gone out" from our midst. Like children in Never Never Land, who have yet to grow up, they are following modern day Pied Pipers whithersoever they go. How can so many leave that which they ostensibly have known and loved for so long? Perhaps going back to the beginning and pondering the people and process by which they were "brought in" might give us some clues. A sizeable section of First Corinthians (1:10–4:21) holds the key to understanding the source of much trouble and ultimate apostasy. Let us examine this section of Scripture.

THOUGHT CONTEXT

Two passages help sharpen focus on Inspiration's point at hand: "I beseech you, brethren...that ye all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you...there are contentions among you...each one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos: and I of Cephas; and I of Christ" (1:10-12ff); "these things...I have in a figure transferred to myself and Apollos...that in us ye might learn not to go beyond the things which are written; that no one of you be puffed up for the one against the other" (4:6). The point of the latter passage is derived from all that has been discussed up to that point.

We see from several of Paul's epistles that he had his detractors. At one time or another, some insinuate he is preaching for the money; others, that by his earning his own bread, he is somewhat aloof. In this section, we infer that someone has remarked upon Paul's non-excellent, non-persuasive "speech" (cf. 2:1,4), perhaps even drawing comparisons between his and that of the "eloquent" (Ac 18:24) Apollos.

So, Paul proceeds to (1) dismiss the notion that christians are "of" himself, Apollos, or any preacher [1:12-15]; (2) emphasize the fact that resident power of salvation is in "the preaching," not the preacher [1:21]; (3) show that authority lies in the inspired word not men [2:13]; (4) chastise their preacher exalting carnality [3:1-4]; (5) point out the parity of all of God's minis-

ters [vv 5-7]; while (6) setting forth the relative difference between the same [v 8]; (7) warn would-be preachers about the quality of their work [vv 10-20]; (8) admonish us not to "glory in men" [vv 21-23]; (9) speak to the fact that preachers are to focus on being faithful stewards, the judge of whose stewardship is God [4:1-5]; and to (10) warn that being "puffed up" for this preacher or that one can lead to our "going beyond the things that are written" [v 6].

PREACHER SUBORDINATION TO THE PREACHING

Inordinate Preacher Attachment was a problem then as now. *Preacher groupies* continues to be a big problem today. Instead of putting absolute faith in God and His Word, many adhere to what this or that preacher says. Brethren can get so enamored with a preacher's memory, his ability to recite, or his excellent theatrical skills that they fail to focus on the actual content of his message. It is a sad fact that not a few know, not what the Bible says, rather what someone else has said that it says. This is not railing against learning from other people; we all do. Yet, we are still obligated to personally "search the scriptures" in order to determine whether what we have been taught "is so."

Preachers come and go, but "the preaching" is God's permanent "power" to "save them that believe" (1:18,21). The ASV, in verse 21, includes the article "the" which draws attention to the objective content of the gospel message and its singularity. "The preaching" is from τοῦ κηρύγματος. The τοῦ is the genitive form of the definite article. The κηρύγματος is a form of the word for proclamation or herald. The last two letters of the word indicate that it is a substantive carrying the idea of "thing preached," thus "the preached thing" (see ASV margin).

The *thing* Paul preached came from God via the Holy Spirit, who enabled Paul to speak said *thing* "not in words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth" (2:13). Consequently, because Paul and others had "received the Spirit which is from God" (v 12), he could say, "we have the mind of Christ" (v 16). Here "mind of Christ" is a figure of speech standing for the revealed inspired Word of God: The preaching. →

We surely need more of the “mind of Christ” and less of the *mind of preachers*.

PREACHER ROLES

Paul rebuked Corinthian christians for being “carnal” and “walking after the manner of men” (3:3). He asked, “when one saith I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not men” (4)? He explained that preachers such as he and Apollos are “ministers” (5), “plant[ers] and water[ers]” (6,8), “workers” (8,9) and “builders” (10, 12, 14). He affirms that both the preacher and the preacher’s “work” (13,14,15) must be “tr[ie]d by fire” (13). Some of it will not pass muster; it will be “burned” (15). He noted that God ultimately produces “believers,” and that preachers are conduits through which this is accomplished; thus the preacher’s “work” (vv 13-15), or product, is a *believer*, a christian (v 5).

THE NEED FOR SOME SERIOUS QUALITY CONTROL

Preachers are, among other things, to produce “believers.” Jesus says they are to “make disciples” (Matt 28:19). That reasonably includes not only their initial conversion of a sinner, but his continued growth and development as a child of God. The “day” when the “fire” comes (v 13), the “fiery trials” (I Pet 1:7; 4:12) of this life—as they must (Matt 18:7)—to “believers” or “disciples,” it is a sad fact of life that many will be “burned.” What is that to a preacher whose product has been destroyed? He “suffer[s] loss” (1Co 3:15). Conversely, when a disciple comes through the fire stronger than ever, what is that to the preacher or minister “through whom [he] believed” (5)? The preacher “shall receive a reward” (14). Will the preacher be lost because one of his converts falls away? No. The preacher “himself shall be saved”; but, remember, his ultimate salvation will be down the same road everyone has to travel: “through fire” (15).

With what ought preachers to be concerned in this matter of making believers? Paul said, “I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon” (10). It ultimately is the hearer, whether the prospective convert or the christian, who is responsible for his sincerity of heart and purpose. But, the preacher still has an awesome responsibility to be sure he has “take[n] heed” in this matter of “building.” The only *control* the preacher has over this process is to be sure he has completely and accurately taught a person before baptizing him.

Accurate teaching involves both *content* and *motive*. We clearly cannot teach somebody “the whole Bible” before baptizing them; yet, there is an objective body of information that must be passed from teacher to learner if a serious disciple is to be the outcome. Preachers in foreign fields sometimes use the prospect of economic improvement as an inducement to get people to be “baptized.” Experience has shown what ought to be obvious: When the “loaves and fishes” cease, so do those who were attracted thereby. Remember the words of Peter to the beggar: “Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee” (Acts 3:6). This is not to speak against benevolence; rather, it is to warn, as did Paul, “Take heed how you build.”

By feeding brethren a steady diet of *too much preacher* and not enough of *the preaching*, preachers can produce followers of themselves rather than of Christ. By refraining from those parts of *the preaching* that demand change, and responsibility, preachers are merely piling up “wood, hay and stubble” for the burning.

There were people then, as now, who compared and graded preachers on such matters as who is the smoothest speaker, or which one has the most flair; or, even which one baptized them (1:12-16; 2:1-2). Such folly. It is “through the foolishness of the preaching” (1:21), not the too oft, foolishness of preachers, that men are saved. Preachers such as Paul and Apollos, regardless of their individual skills or differences, are both “ministers through whom ye believed” (3:5). Paul says that preachers are “God’s fellow-workers” (9). Preachers are builders. Note how many times the words “builder,” “build,” “building” are used in this chapter.

As to *what* these men build: It is God’s “building” (9) or “temple” (16). Paul says “ye [emp.] are God’s building...ye are a temple of God.” Trace this “ye” back to chapter one (vv 1,2). God’s “building” or “temple” is the “church.” As preachers “build” the church, that is add believers to the church, and edify them, they must be careful as to the quality of those people.

The only way to judge a builder is by his work. If he uses low-quality materials and shoddy workmanship, over which the preacher has some control; well, time will tell. “Each man’s works shall be made manifest” (13). When the “fire” comes, if the building is not made of fireproof materials such as “gold, silver, and

Affinity for Denominational Religion Continues To Grow in the Bible Belt

(cf. Jno. 17:20,21). Not too many years ago, the aforementioned churches of Christ would never have embraced denominations. Why do they now? It is not because the Bible has changed. —Editor

When your writer moved to Calloway County in 1968, there was little, if any, fellowship with the denominations by the churches of Christ. Since that time, though, things have changed here in our part of the Bible Belt, just as they have changed in many places in our country.

A case in point is revealed in a front-page article in the *Murray Ledger & Times* (Friday, January 16, 2009). Written by staff writer, Hawkins Teague, the article heading is: **Warming Shelters Ready for Residents**. Let us note some excerpts from the article —

“The shelter has been open since Jan. 11 and is located at 503 Maple St. in the First United Methodist Church gym. The Methodist Church’s volunteers will continue to cover the shelter through Sunday; Glendale Road Church of Christ will take over Sunday through Jan. 24; St. John’s Episcopal Church will be in charge Jan. 25-31; University Church of Christ will be Feb. 1-7 and First Presbyterian Church will oversee the operation Feb. 8-14. The shelter will remain at the Methodist gym the entire time.” Following instructions relative to those who might want to make use of the shelter, the article continues, “We’ve been getting calls and one couple was registered, but no one has come by yet....”

The “Glendale Road Church of Christ” is the largest congregation of churches of Christ in the state of Kentucky. The “University Church of Christ” is the second largest congregation of churches of Christ in Murray. What is the problem?

God has a law on fellowship. That law of fellowship approves fellowship between people of like faith, which comes from the hearing of God’s word (Rom. 10:17). Neither the Methodist Church, St. John’s Episcopal Church, nor the First Presbyterian Church can be found in God’s word. These churches did not even exist until many centuries after Christ build His church. They came to exist and continue to exist by the efforts and works of men. Each of these churches has rules and/or regulations which came from men, not from God. Their existence adds to the disunity which fosters unbelief

continued from P. 14— costly stones,” there will be serious damage. “Wood, hay and stubble” (12) just won’t stand the heat.

Let us never forget that we are all “living stones” built up into a “spiritual house” (1 Pet 2:5). Whereas the church ideally ought to be built out of tough stuff, it is unfortunate that some pretty flimsy, flammable stuff has found its way into God’s Temple. We need more serious concern over this matter of quality. No, it is not the Preacher’s task to look out into the world and decide who is or isn’t of sufficient quality. We must rather “preach the gospel to every creature.” We have no choice as to *whom* we preach, only *what* we preach to them.

Let us be about preaching the gospel, the truth, and the whole counsel of God. If we stick to the job of being “urgent in season, out of season,” in the matter of “reprov[ing], rebuk[ing] and exhort[ing] with all long-suffering and teaching,” the rest will take care of itself. Too many preachers won’t do their job. Pursuing aggrandizement, they: engage in theatrics and flamboyance; manifest “voluntary humility” (Col 2:18); seek to please and ingratiate (Gal 1:10); water down the Gospel; become masters of after-dinner stories and jokes; and play on people’s emotions. “Work” coming from such “preaching” is destined to “be burned.”

OF WHAT SORT ARE YOU?

This matter of *quality* is a two-way street. The preacher is responsible up to a certain point; but the “believer” is also under serious obligation. The ultimate responsibility as to what *sort* of christian I am rests upon me. “Of what sort” am I: Gold, silver, costly stones? Do I help to hold up “God’s building” and make it stronger by my presence? Or, am I “wood, hay and stubble”? Do I only take up space and offer no substance, rather weakness? If, in a moment of honest reflection we see that we are not what we should and can be, then let us be “transformed” (Rom 12:2).

—AA

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will not be wasted. More than ever, we need to “hear
what the Spirit saith to the churches”

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*

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