

**BANNER OF TRUTH**

October 2002

**The Importance of Reputation**

*Reputation can be a powerful influence for good or for evil. Therein lies a great opportunity and a responsibility to contribute to that which is truly good in God's sight. Thanks be to Him, we have an all-sufficient guide to have and keep a Good Reputation.*

**REPUTATION** is something which nearly everyone has to some degree, like it or not. It may be good, bad, or in between. It may be based upon truth or error, fact or fiction. Collectively, groups of people, both secular and religious, have **REPUTATIONS**. Individual members of the church, and the congregations they help to make up, have **REPUTATIONS**.

Webster defines reputation: "1. *estimation in which a person or thing is commonly held, whether favorable or not; character in the view of the public, the community, etc.; repute.*" A form of the Greek word *dokeo* is translated "reputation" in Galatians 2:2. Thayer defines that word: "*To be of opinion, think, suppose, to seem, be accounted, reputed.*" Paul uses the word Reputation this way: "And I went up by revelation and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to them which were of **reputation**, lest by any means I should run, or had run in vain." **Reputation** is here used to mean those who were looked upon as being "somewhat" or men of importance. The men of reputation must have been James, Peter and John (v. 9).

It appears that the Judaizers had referred to these men in this way in an attempt to exalt them while discrediting Paul. In reality these men were of "reputation" in the good sense of the term, but so was Paul. Paul makes it clear that he was not dependent upon these men, but rather that he had his own independence. Paul's authority was just as authentic as that of others. This was recognized by James, Peter and John, as they extended to them "the right hands of fellowship" (v. 9). It was "no man's person" that God accepted.

Paul, unlike some today, did not have a Reputation of looking to others to see what position he should take. Too many preachers and other members of the church must see which direction the wind is blowing and what position their leaders are taking before they make a decision, even on doctrinal matters. They have a Reputation for this very thing. The Lord is not given first place.

In the New Testament record we have a number of examples of Reputation, both **good** and **bad**. We shall consider a few in each category, but there are many others which would be well to consider.

**GOOD REPUTATIONS.** Paul said of the Roman Christians, "...I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world" (Rom. 1:8). The Romans had a reputation for their faith. "Faith" covers a very wide area, and congregations of the Lord's people can today have a reputation for their faith. This is what God wants. We should want the same.

Paul, pointing out that the Thessalonians were "ensamples of all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia," said: "For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not speak any thing" (1 Thess. 1:8). That these brethren had a reputation for their faith is justified by their actions, in that they "sounded out the word of the Lord...in every place."

Some congregations today have a reputation for their interest in **sounding out** God's word in response to The Great Commission. Some small congregations do so much more than many large ones, in proportion to their ability. Over the years I have been greatly encouraged by small congregations which have helped me in mission efforts in foreign countries. They are known for their reputation.

Speaking of Titus in connection with his part in "ministering to the saints," Paul mentions an unnamed brother. "And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches. And not that only, but who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us in this grace" (2 Cor. 8:18-19). It is clear that here was a brother who had a reputation for his spiritual concern, honesty and uprightness.

The "churches of Macedonia" had a reputation of helping those in need. "...in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves....And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God" (2 Cor. 8:2-3, 5). If we first give "our selves," the giving of other things would not be a problem.

If we would take to heart the following statement by Paul to the Corinthians: "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:7), we would also have a reputation of liberality. In our abundance of wealth, we often fall far short in having God's love as "a cheerful giver." The treasures we lay up in heaven we will one day use, that which we keep for ourselves we will one day lose, or leave behind.

A faithful example will result in a good reputation by those who are honest. Paul wrote Timothy: "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in faith, in purity" (I Tim. 4:12).

What a joy it is to hear of brethren who make as the highest priority in their lives, living in such a way as to be a true example of a Christian. Such people will have a good reputation among those who love God and show the same by their actions.

**BAD REPUTATIONS.** As in the case with good reputations, we shall give a few of the many examples of bad reputations.

In Paul's letter to Titus he sets forth the qualifications for bishops or elders, the last of which is "Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers" (1:9). Paul goes on to mention the "many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped..." Then he adds, "One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, The Cretians are always liars, evil beast, slow bellies" (v. 12). Here is an example of people with a Reputation of being "always liars." What a tragic thing it is for those who claim to be Christians to have a reputation as **liars!** In present day society lying is no big thing at all. It is not unusual to hear someone say of a certain individual, "He had rather lie than to tell you the truth." The time was, that I can well remember, when people who professed no religion at all were generally honest, their word being their bond. How different it is today, when some times our own brethren will outright lie instead of telling the truth. A member of the Lord's church with a reputation of being a liar serves as a disgrace to the cause of Christ and is an example of hypocrisy. The Gentiles, which are described by Paul in Romans 1, had a reputation of ungodliness. A great many sins of which they were guilty are noted, including the sin of sexual perversion. "God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves" (v. 23).

How sad it is that in a country such as ours there are those who deserve a reputation very similar to that of the Gentiles.

Sodom and Gomorrah are mentioned a great many times in the Bible as examples of evil. That they had a reputation of evil is clear as can be. They are mentioned by Jude as follows: "Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire" (v.

7). In spite of the fact that Sodom and Gomorrah are given as examples of evil of the greatest magnitude, suffering God's vengeance, their reputation has not served greatly as a deterrent to evil in

on the road to Sodom and Gomorrah and the arrival gets nearer and nearer as every day passes. As so many in our society parade, boast and gloat over this ungodliness, one ungodliness will our society be allowed to go.

The reputation things is a bad one. It is said, in Acts 17:21: "(For all the Athenians spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.)"

In our time some seem to have a reputation of coming up with something NEW. It is my belief there are divisions within the Lord's church. When it comes to the truth of God, there is nothing new. There may be things we have not learned, but there is no new truth.

We are now seeing a great many things within the church which are new to me, and they are inviting is the lack of a "thus saith the Lord" to establish authority for them. This leaves the field open for man to do what he wants to do, regardless of God's will in the matter. The implication of this is a

The church at the seven churches of Asia about which our Lord said not one good thing (Rev. 3:14-20). They were so obsessed with their material things that they thought they had need of nothing. The Lord would repent. In their own estimation they had "need of nothing," but

How tragic it is to have a reputation of material things it not a fact that the love of material things is one of the major problems among the Lord's people? It is so often the case that the more a person is blessed materially the weaker that one becomes spiritually. I've had the opportunity to be among people in other countries where deep poverty existed, and among

have a much greater interest in spiritual things than do those who are doing much better in a financial way. We can easily understand why there are a number of warnings sounded out in the New Testament concerning the danger of materialism.

Corinth had a bad reputation in some areas. There was serious division among the brethren, for which they were rebuked (I Cor. 1:10). Paul spoke unto them as unto the carnal. As

Some who troubled the Galatians, had a reputation of "not knowing Christ" (Gal. 1:7). This is the very thing that brethren of a liberal persuasion do today. By a failure to take God at His word they are actually rejecting innovations which have been brought into the church in recent years are without any authority by the gospel which

**UNDESERVED REPUTATIONS.** Saul, later Paul, had a reputation of persecuting saying, "Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he did to thy saints at Jerusalem" (Acts 9:13). After that heard him were amazed, and said: Is not this he that destroyed them which called on his name in Jerusalem, and came hither for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests?" (v. 14) and when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join him all afraid of him, and believe not that he was a disciple" (v. 15).

Saul had gained a reputation of persecuting Christians, and this was indeed according to fact and deserved. Even after he had obeyed the gospel and was preaching Christ, he still had that reputation with many. They were unaware of the facts.

Having obeyed the gospel Saul no longer deserved the reputation as an enemy of God's people. It was "the good man Banabas" who "took him, and brought him to the apostles and relayed to them how that Saul had seen the Lord and "how he had preached boldly at Damascus" (v. 27).

After his conversion Saul no longer deserved the reputation of a persecutor, but the truth had to be known before he lost the reputation he once deserved. It is possible for one to have an undeserved reputation today. That can happen when a person once had a bad reputation, but due to repentance and a change, that reputation is no longer deserved. It seems to happen more often in the reverse way. I can't think of a better example than that of Rubel Shelly. In the early 1970s and before, he had an outstanding reputation of speaking the truth, contending for the faith, and opposing evil in every form. The truth of Rubel Shelly's apostasy from the faith has not yet reached every ear. Some still think he is faithful. In no sense of the term does he deserve a good reputation now, and has not for many years. Some unfaithful brethren still follow him.

Some have an undeserved reputation when they stand up for the Truth. For example, those who are "unmoveable" in their stand for the truth, may have a reputation among some brethren as: "a nitpicker, a troublemaker, a radical, etc." Pardon the personal reference, but I've been called the above, when not a shred of evidence was offered to show that I deserved such a reputation. Some Liberal brethren quite often try to pin a bad reputation upon those who stand uncompromisingly for the whole truth, accusing them of division. This is certainly an undeserved reputation, but faithful brethren must not allow themselves to be intimidated by such.

As we continue our discussion of **The Importance of Reputation**, and especially as it relates to Christians, let us bear in mind that what people think suppose, or the \_\_\_\_\_ they hold [our reputation] may be true or it may be false. While the reputation may be the result of misinformation. Misinformation can result from a lack of knowledge or it can result from deliberate attempts to mislead by giving false information. We may not be able to prevent false information in every case, but we can and should live in such a way as to warrant only a good things which are not seen are eternal.

those who profess to be Christians, it is extremely important to have a good reputation, based upon the proper foundation. If we conduct ourselves in such a way as to be deserving of the ideal Christian reputation our influence upon those who have any interest in God's and the "light of the world."

we shall offer a few examples for consideration.

The time was when people outside the church, much, would say: "There is one thing about those Church of Christ people, they know their Bible." ymore. losing our reputation? There is evidence that we have

believing" group. Lack of knowledge has a telling effect.

Unity within a doctrines and domineering men are wreaking havoc within the church in the disruption of the unity for which Christ prayed ( and the lust for power guide men in their actions, unity is not the highest priority. I can remember when "unity" was a subject often discussed in gospel meetings and in preaching and teaching in

general. In view of the condition which now exists that subject would seem quite hollow to some. We need not expect a reputation of unity when division is so widespread. True unity can be had only on the basis of the utmost respect for God's will, not by the joining hands with the man-made religions.

There is not now as great a basis for a reputation of "Christian living" as there could be. Too many members of the church can hardly be distinguished from the world with respect to the lives they live. Immodest dress, dancing [especially at prom time], some even drink, filthy speech, and such like, are seen among members. We are obsessed with material things and how we may enjoy the "here and now," while neglecting the only things which will endure, the spiritual. This is a case of following the majority or a "multitude" in evil.

The institution of marriage, as God originated it, does not have the profound respect among us that it should. Divorces and broken homes amongst church members are growing as a great many brethren are coming up with doctrines which try to justify just about every kind of marital situation. Few are the congregations where any action will be taken relative to unscriptural divorce and remarriage. Forty years ago divorces within the church were few and far between. That surely isn't the case now. How can we expect to have a good reputation of respect for God's law on marriage under the circumstances which exist today?

We once had a reputation of "Speaking where the Bible speaks and remaining silent where it is silent," with regard to faith and practice. It is not that way today in a number of areas. Like the denominational world about us, we have gone to providing fun, food, games, along with other forms of entertainment, while doing little to carry out the most vital work of the church: Evangelism, Edification, and Benevolence. We are doing little to evangelize the world but spending most of (P. 6) our resources on ourselves. Speaking **only where the Bible speaks** and **remaining silent where the Bible is silent** is now a matter of little or even no concern in many instances. Our reputation as a "Bible totin and Bible qotin" people is a thing that used to be. Consequently, many of our people are being "destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hosea 4:6). The prophet goes on to say that when people reject knowledge, they will be rejected by God. It is a matter of fact that liberal minded people reject knowledge in that they do not respect what God's word says. We should pray and work for the day when the Lord's people will again have a reputation of knowing and respecting God's word.

In New Testament times many Christians were known for being "faithful unto death" (Rev. 2:10), rather than renouncing their convictions. I see and hear this statement used to mean, "be faithful as long as you live." Though we are taught to do that, that is not what Revelation 2:10 is teaching. The context shows clearly that it was a matter of being "faithful unto death, not until death. A matter of keeping one's faith to the point of dying for it.

We once had a reputation of standing up for our convictions, though we were not faced with physical death. It is becoming more and more difficult to find brethren who will stand by their convictions in all circumstances, even when no threat of physical harm is involved. Our caring Lord must weep when brethren will not stand by their convictions even when the well-being of His church is at stake. Rather than hurt someone's feelings, cause any ripples, or jeopardize one's standing, the truth has been compromised. Our reason for having a reputation of upholding and contending for the faith at all costs is not as strong as it once was.

Remember the days when we had a reputation of thinking we were the only ones who would be saved? When have you heard anyone accuse us of that? We have lost that reputation and some of our brethren stand ready to apologize on behalf of those who still believe that only the church for which Christ died (Acts 20:28) will be saved. Not all the members of that blood-bought church will be saved eternally because some have become unfaithful.

There is no promise of salvation extended to those outside the church, the body of Christ, where salvation is found, that is, "in Christ" (2 Tim. 2:10).

We should strive to teach people, including those of our own brethren, as to the nature and purpose of Christ's distinctive body, the church, in God's plan of salvation. If the Lord's church is set



forth as “just another denomination,” as a growing number of our brethren are doing, there is no reason whatsoever for having a reputation for believing that the church is essential to salvation.

How can we, as members of the Lord’s church, fail to strive for a reputation for the church with which our Lord would be pleased? It becomes more puzzling to me all the time, as to why those in leadership positions: preachers, elders, teachers are involved in things which are destroying the reputation of the church. How can people who claim to believe in God do that which hurts Christ and His church, for which He gave His all? But this is happening!!! What can we do to help restore a good reputation for the church? Those who have any love for Christ and His church should: Be examples of the believers (I Tim. 4:12). Stand fast in the Faith (I Cor. 16:13). Buy the truth and sell it not (Prov. 23:23). Contend for the faith once delivered (Jude 3). Put on the whole armor of God in standing against the wiles of the devil (Eph. 6:11). Demonstrate that higher form of Love for God and Christ by doing Their will (I Jno. 5:3; Jno. 14:15).

### CONCLUSION

**Our REPUTATION is important.** Others are influenced by our reputations. When we stand uncompromisingly for the Truth, some will try to pin on us a bad reputation. But if we stand for the Truth our Lord will see us as we really are, at the day of judgment when we will be judged by His word (2 Cor. 5:10; Jno. 12:48). God-fearing brethren should be aware of the **undeserved good reputation** of the congregations, especially the larger ones, which no longer teach and practice the truth. These unfaithful congregations often influence the smaller ones in their area to be like them, as they feed on them for numbers to be added to them. A number of brethren I know have fallen prey to this device of Satan.

- - - *Walter W. Pigg*

## THE BIBLE BELT, WHERE DID IT GO?

*Bob Spurlin*

As an adolescent one of my earliest memories was hearing Christians talk about the church with a peculiar reference to “The Bible Belt.” This seem to be an odd expression as if the Bible could have a belt, but later as maturity set in this term came to represent the strength of the church and the knowledge of its members in a particular geographical area. Generally speaking the Bible Belt seemed to include Tennessee, especially Middle Tennessee, and North Alabama. Depending on where one lived usually was a factor in determining if one lived in “The Bible Belt.” [*Webster’s* definition: “an area chiefly in the S and midwestern U.S. noted for religious fundamentalism.”]

Churches of Christ were very strong numerically and doctrinally in what was termed “The Bible Belt,” during the fifties and early sixties. It was during this period that the church of Christ was the fastest growing church in America. Liberalism and the modernistic movement were not in full bloom and the spreading of the gospel by local evangelism was vigorous and souls were added to the church (Ac. 2:41, 47). The steady growth enjoyed was especially realized in the “Bible Belt.”

Regrettably there has been a slow but deliberate attempt to restructure the church of the living God due to a departure from the divine pattern (Heb. 8:5; I Tim. 1:16). Since the late fifties and the early sixties to the current day, some have been in a state of denial while multiple congregations have substituted the New Testament for strange and uncertain sounds (Eph. 4:14; Heb. 13:9). The “Bible Belt,” can hardly be recognized any longer, and little wonder, with the apostasy which has ravaged the brotherhood. A clear and unmistakable question to all lovers of truth, is: **Where Did The Bible Belt Go?**

## **IT WENT THE WAY OF “FOLLOWING THE NATIONS” ABOUT THEM**

The elders of Israel became disgruntled with God’s arrangement of governing Israel with judges. Approaching Samuel they said, “Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations” (I Sam. 8:4-5). Solomon loved strange women of foreign nations, of which the Lord said unto Israel, “Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in to you; for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love” (I Kings 11:1-2). Both Israel and Solomon made the fatal mistake of rejecting God’s law by surrendering to the heathen and those deficient of the truth. For years the church of the Lord has grown weary with the teachings of the New Testament, thinking it could be improved by following the allurements and fascination of denominationalism.

Twenty years or so ago a preacher of my acquaintance said that his elders had given him permission to visit several denominational workshops to learn how they had become successful. As a result of incorporating these denominational concepts and practices in the Lord’s church, today this congregation has sunk into the sea of apostasy. Seeking to improve or amend God’s plan will always spell disaster (Gal. 1:6-9). Why should we follow those who have no respect for the teachings of God and his word. Little wonder the distinctiveness of the churches of Christ is becoming so blurred.

## **IT WENT THE WAY OF IGNORING BIBLE AUTHORITY**

The inspiration of the Bible is well documented with more than 2,500 references attesting to its authenticity and inspiration. Paul writes, “all scripture is given by inspiration of God...” (2 Tim. 3:16). Every question underlying the church, its work, worship, and rule of faith are all mandated from the New Testament. Some have been so brazen as to eliminate the term “church of Christ” and substitute it with “Community Church” or “Family of God,” in total disregard for scriptural authority (Rom. 16:16). Some have insisted that the worship of the church is too boring and innovations have been added, like “drama” groups acting out various Bible truths like the crucifixion and other such unauthorized activities. The celebration of Easter and Christmas services with all the trimmings is becoming the norm in far too many apostate churches. The Lord’s supper served at weddings, funerals, and at special Thanksgiving Day services has become all too frequent, as an unscriptural innovation which people do not protest.

Where is the scriptural authority for such practices as the above? Some say, “It makes the service more meaningful and significant,” as if God needs help in His holy directives. The New Testament clearly authorizes vocal music with congregational singing in worship (Eph. 5:19; Heb. 2:12). We are hearing more and more about special singing groups in worship, even the strumming of the guitar. Those bringing in such liberal practices would say, “But, it sounds good and it lifts the emotions of those in the assembly.” Beloved, our worship is not to be an emotion charged, better felt than told experience. We are all participants in worship and God is the object of our adoration. The specifics of acceptable worship are set forth in John 4:24. That is, “in spirit,” and “in truth.”

Little wonder the so-called “Bible Belt” is disappearing as more and more, including some of our brethren, have lost respect for Bible authority.

## **IT WENT THE WAY OF PREACHERS UNWILLING TO “PREACH THE WORD”**

The “Bible Belt” is disappearing because there has come a de-emphasis of Bible preaching. Paul’s challenge to Timothy was crystal clear, “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Tim., 4:2). Once upon a time preachers would climb in the pulpit with Bible in hand and a reverberation of scripture reading and quotations were the rule, not the exception. Distinctive messages were heard on the church, instrumental music,

acceptable worship, heaven, hell and etc. Both positive and negative discourses were heard, as the church was edified, built up in the most holy faith (Ac. 20:32; Eph. 4:15).

Conversely preachers of today are filling our pulpits with slick, polished speeches designed to entertain and amuse their audience while dulling the senses of the church (Heb. 5:11-14). Due in large measure to the anemic pulpit among us, far too many in churches of Christ cannot differentiate truth from error. More than once I've heard it said: "I never knew that dancing, mixed swimming, social drinking, and fellowshiping denominations were wrong." How tragic for a generation of Christians who have sat at the feet of those filling our pulpits, and have become devoid of the most basic fundamental teachings of the gospel.

Far too many pulpits have been weaned from the distinctiveness of the "old Jerusalem" gospel. Some preachers have admitted that they would not preach on marriage, divorce, and remarriage because their job, financial security, and reputation would be at risk. Gospel preachers must be mindful that they will be held accountable to almighty God if they are derelict in their duty to preach the full gospel of Christ. Consequently, the Bible Belt has become so elasticized that far too many no longer recognize it.

### **IT WENT THE WAY OF ELDERS REFUSING TO "TAKE THE OVERSIGHT"**

One of the greatest responsibilities ever embraced by man is to assume the office of an elder (bishop) in the Lord's church (I Tim. 3:1; Tit. 1:5). The sober and serious nature of this task is highlighted by Peter, "The elders which are among you, I exhort, who am also an elder...feed the church of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind" (I Pet. 5:1-2). In times gone by godly elders took their work more seriously, watching and protecting the flock against "grievous wolves" (Ac. 20:29).

Frequently those in the leadership care more about protecting their liberal contributors than they do about preserving the purity of the church (Eph. 5:27). "Taking (exercising) the oversight" includes feeding, nurturing, watching, rebuking, and marking those who are in need of such. Satan will certainly take a stranglehold on the Lord's church if the shepherds of the flock stick their heads in the sand when error or immoral conduct is allowed to continue without reprisal. Those in leadership should be a positive influence in providing the much needed guidance and supervision as they watch for the flock (Heb. 13:17).

Frequently, however, an elder will change his view on a doctrinal matter, such as the divorce and remarriage question, because one of his children or family member has violated the teaching of Scripture (Matt. 19:9). It is strange to see an elder or eldership change their position on this important subject when they discover a family member is involved. Those in the leadership must come to realize that truth is "thicker than blood." Dear reader, if my son or daughter has sullied the teachings of the New Testament on the subject, or any other, it should have no bearing on the elders addressing the matter candidly.

Sinful conduct is to be rebuked. "Them that sin reprove before all, that others also may fear" (I Tim. 5:20). Recently a sister congregation made the decision to hire a female "youth intern." to work with the youth in the church. What kind of message does this send and how does eldership justify such a decision in the light of Holy Writ? Paul writes, "Let the women learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence" (I Tim. 2:11-12). One of the primary reasons that the Bible Belt has all but disappeared is the lack of leadership in taking the oversight. The very existence of churches of Christ will fall or stand in large measure upon the leadership which is provided.

All lovers of truth will want to see churches of Christ return to the "Bible Belt" as the Restoration Movement continues its march in duplicating the church of the New Testament (2 Tim. 3:16-17). It will require courage from elders, preachers, and a membership with a healthy respect for



Bible authority in all things. To accomplish such a mission is dependent upon a firm commitment to God's will without surrendering to the popular whims, which tug at the heart and soul of those in each congregation.

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**Editor's Note:** Historically, the "Bible Belt" had reference to an area in the South and Midwestern states, because of belief in the Bible as a true guide in faith and morals, and its historical record. The loss of this reputation began within denominationalism, as God's word was respected less and less as God-given authority. This loss of respect for the Bible by the denominational people has flowed into the church in a forceful way, thereby lessening our respect. Therefore, the church of our Lord and the denominations are both responsible for the loss of the true meaning of the "Bible Belt."

**Editor's Note, Number two.** Brother Bob Spurlin, the writer of the above article preached for some thirty years before coming down with Multiple Sclerosis about seven years ago. Bob is confined to bed, but is still active in writing. His health has worsened to the extent that he now must use a computer which is able to convert the spoken word into written words. He has not given up, as some would have done, though his condition continues to worsen.

A couple of years ago brother Spurlin wrote a book entitled, "Tackling Life's Troubles." The book sold well and had to be reprinted.

Brother Spurlin has since written another book, entitled, "DIAL 911: Living Right in the 21st Century." This book has also done well, but is still available. The book sells for \$11.50, and that includes postage. It may be ordered at Bob's home address: 2101 Glenwood Drive SW, Hartselle, AL 35640. Phone: (256) 773-0295. His e-mail address is: <prechteach@aol.com>

Both these books by brother Spurlin have been sold to help provide for his medical expenses.

By the purchase of his latest book, or the first one, one can have in his possession some good reading material and at the same time contribute to a very worthy need. All the proceeds from these books, with the exception of printing costs and shipping, go to a medical fund for brother Spurlin.

We don't know what may befall us in life, but brother Bob Spurlin is an example of one who has handled his physical problem in an exceptional way. In a letter to me Bob said: "Things could always be worse and I seize every day as an opportunity to serve in the limited way offered me."

## **Does Leadership Require Morality?**

*Bob Henson*

A Washington D.C. poll asked this question: "Can an individual serve in leadership who lacks moral authority?" The obvious and short answer to this is "NO." In view of recent events in the Commonwealth of Kentucky in which our Governor, Paul Patton, has been charged with numerous illegal and immoral acts, please consider the following.

In order for any individual to be a **Leader**, an individual must set the proper example. The Chief Executive in our state, the Governor, ought to be an example of personal integrity. Integrity is defined by Webster as, "unimpaired, or sound, adherence to a code of moral values." One cannot speak of integrity without acknowledging the existence of **Morality**. How could an individual ask that others follow his lead, when that person does not command the respect of those that would follow him?

One evening shortly after the above events became known, I listened to a radio talk show on WHAS in Louisville. The host of the show was fielding calls from people all over the state, voicing their views about the Governor's alleged and admitted behavior. For almost two hours, the overwhelming number of callers voiced one unanimous opinion: "Governor Patton has made himself unfit to serve further and should resign." One oft repeated statement was: "If the governor has violated the vows he made with his wife, why would he not do the same with the people of Kentucky?"

It was pointed out that at first, the Governor denied having been guilty of his adulterous behavior and then later, when evidence was brought forth, admitted his guilt. It brought back to mind the dark days of our last impeached President. Yes, Morality is an absolute necessity for true leadership. Sadly enough, there are those who are set to defend the Governor's behavior as "just between he and his wife." No, it isn't! Every Bible believing person knows IT IS A MATTER OF MORAL INTEGRITY. And if we don't know that, then maybe We ought to be impeached.

61 Darnall Cemetary Ln., Benton, KY 42025

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### **Our Recent National Election**

We live in a country which is controlled by a political system. Elections are the means by which people can have some influence upon the political climate. The political climate does have something to do with the church and spiritual matters, in that conditions can be more or less conducive to the well-being of the church and spiritual growth.

We all know that politicians are not perfect, but we also know that some are better than others. When people say, "They are all alike," they are stating an untruth and not being realistic.

The recent election of November 5th was a great upset, in the eyes of a great many people. To me the upset was a cause for encouragement. This is so because the voters made choices which were much better than they could have been. In one state the legal use of marijuana was voted down. The marriage (?) of homosexuals was also voted down by a good majority. The treatment of drug users rather than punishment was also voted down.

In a couple of states the percentage of voters in different groups was given, as to which party they voted for. One of the groups was labeled "The religious right." Remember how this group has been unfairly criticized in recent years? The vote of the "religious right" in those two states says something worth hearing. That is, by more than 70 percent they voted for the party which stands for a higher standard of morality than the other party.

It is a baffling thing to me that people who claim to be Christians encourage an even greater state of immorality by voting for those who stand for immoral behavior such as: homosexuality, abortion, using as political pawns those who could work but aren't willing, and are often among those who would banish from our society just about every vestige of godly influence. If our loyalty is to the Lord we will be encouraged by conditions in our society which are most conducive to spiritual well-being.

- - Editor

## “The Long Arm of Grace”

*Marvin L. Weir*

The above is the title of a series of printed sermons by **Gary** which were to come out in July of this year. The

The Saturday, June, 1, 2002 edition of the *Illas Morning News* De Gary Beauchamp.” This congregation that boasts of 2500 members has no respect for Bible authority

multimillion dollar facilities but meet in homes throughout the city on Sunday evening and Wednesday night. The Bible declares that Christians are not to forsake *“assembling together”* Dividing the con assemble together and makes it most convenient for false teaching to occur and thrive.

The staff writer states that “Dr. reputation for rigidity and exclusiveness. But he says he has seen a change in the church over the years.” Friends, this liberal preacher did all within his power to produce a in the **rigidity exclusive** of the New Testament church! When it comes to doctrinal matters, faithful members of the body will be rigid Lord’s church is **exclusive** denominations. “Dr. Beauchamp,” however, with his “long arm of grace,” desires to reach out and

What we hear next is absolutely appalling! “Dr. Beauchamp” declares, “People used to go to programming. The churches that only do doctrine are dying.” Folks, if you love the Lord and His Word, read again the above quote and weep. The message who change the church is clear: those who would change the church is crystal clear.

Beauchamp,”

does not quote Scripture for what he proudly pr claims. In fact, according to several sources who have visited Highland Oaks, “Dr. Idom quotes the Scriptures. Why does that not come as a rprise?

ntinues to explain that “people are not churches for what they offer them and their families.” Does this state forth righteous indignation of those who love God and His truth? Was the apostle Paul wrong in speaking *truth and soberness*” (Acts 26:25) to Festus? Wonder why an inspired apostle did not abandon truth **program** he could offer him?

“and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make your free” Jno. 8:32). The Psalmist speaks of the God “Who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is; who for ever” (Psa.

Beauchamp says that programming takes priority over truth! Those like proclaiming his version of “the long arm of grace” is the reason that the Lord’s church in many places is in such pathetic condition.

much of his 40-year career hoping to help people who may have experienced less grace than they have dogma.” The defines “dogma” as follows: “*Theology, corpus of doc by a church.*” We are not speaking of man-made dogma, but “*sound doctrine*” “*good doctrine*” “*the doctrine which is according to godliness*” (I

Tim. 6:3). Brethren, God's grace does not negate His doctrine.

Jno. 17:17), and people

One last swipe is taken at the indispensable and unchangeable Word of God. opines, "People who were born and reared in legalism generally break out of that when they become independent. Then they go out into the world and experience some hurt and pain. They want to go back to church, but want to experience something less rigid and more positive." Translation – when children Beauchamp and his kind will seek to

convince them that matter most!

Yes, we believe in God's grace, but not at the expense of His truth. God's grace is for those Beauchamp's **long arm of grace**

choose pro

- - P.O. Box 975, Rowlett, TX 75030

### A Loss of Personal Support

congregation which has supported our work in the amount of \$200 monthly informed me that they "regretted to inform me" that they were stopping our support. They have offered no reason for

stopping our support I would be "persuaded" that it was because of my failure to support their doctrinal position on a matter.

something which I believe is contrary to the teaching of God's word, even if it does involve our support or the loss of it.

for our work with *Banner of Truth*

\$1,000 per month. I've never worked harder than I'm working now, and feel that our support is not unreasonable at all.

we now receiving considerably less than the \$1,400 per month, which will lessen that fund quickly, unless we support, for

- *Edi*

### If I Were An Elder...

it would only be after some very deep and serious thinking, relative to the serious and awesome responsibility which would rest upon my shoulders. Due to that I wouldn't be out electioneering for the office. I have some reservations about those who are out "running" for the office, not that one

If I were an elder, I should have seriously studied the qualifications set forth in I Timothy 3 and

set forth in the New Testament. My work would be a matter of a **function** title. I would have the responsibility of watching for the souls of the flock as one that must give account (Heb. 13:17). It would be my duty to feed the flock, taking the oversight willingly, and not as

As an elder I would “hold fast the faithful word” that I might be able by “sound doctrine both to exhort and convince the gainsayers” (Tit. 1:9). Under my oversight no false teacher would be allowed to have an opportunity to set forth error in any church activities of the congregation. Neither would support or encouragement be given by the congregation to activities at other places where error is taught.

As an elder I would keep the congregation well informed as to the various aspects of the work. This would include all mission work being supported and the progress being made or the lack of it. A regular meeting of the brethren in which the work of the church could be discussed freely, and an input from the brethren would be encouraged.

As an elder, one who watches for the souls of the members, I would be concerned about those who have gone or are going astray. I know this would be one of my serious responsibilities, for which I would have to give an account.

Things other than the above are involved but these are of great importance. - -  
*Editor.*

## Things We Should Know About Knowledge

*Jerry R. Brown*

**Editor’s Note:** The following outline on **Knowledge** is from a lesson delivered on that subject at the Lectureship at the church at Camp Creek, Wendover, KY, August 10, 2002. I heard the lesson delivered and believe it was an excellent one which would be profitable to our readers. I’ve changed format to save space.

### I. Introduction

A. Scriptural Text (2 Pet. 1:5-8).

B. Definition of Knowledge – *Standard College Dictionary*.

1. Information acquired through experience or study.
2. Deep and extensive learning.
3. Mental apprehension and comprehension of information.

C. Related Scriptures of need for Knowledge.

1. I Pet. 3:15; John 5:39; Acts 17:11; John 12:48; John 8:32; John 17:17;
- 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Tim. 2:15; Psalm 1:1-2; Jeremiah 10:23.

D. Points of discussion about Knowledge.

1. Man’s knowledge, and expectation of God (Point C).
2. Man’s lack of Knowledge.
3. Man’s neglect of Knowledge.
4. Man’s misapplication and misuse of Knowledge.

### II. Man’s Lack of Knowledge.

A. Things a man cannot know.

1. The exact age of the earth.
2. Date and the end of earthly time.
3. Date of return of Christ.
4. Date of one’s death.
5. The number of remaining opportunities for obedience.
6. Things not revealed (Deut. 29:29).



**B. Things man can know.**

1. Time and method of beginning of the earth (Gen. 1:1).
2. Years earth will last – to eternity (2 Pet. 3:10).
3. Date Christ will return – beginning of eternity (Rev. 21:1-2).
4. Certainty of man's death (Heb. 9:27). 5. Remaining opportunities – one (Mt. 11:28-30; Gal. 6:10).
6. Things revealed by inspiration of Scripture: (Prov. 1:7; 10:14; 15:14; 18:15; Hosea 4:6; Phil. 3:8; Col. 1:9-10; 2 Pet. 3:18).

**C. Knowledge, a requirement to satisfy God.****III. Man's Neglect of Knowledge.****A. Knows plan of salvation; but neglects to teach.**

1. Importance of faith (Rom. 10:17; Jno. 8:24). 2. Necessity of repentance (Lk. 13:3; Ac. 17:30-31).
3. Beauty of the good confession (Ac. 8:36; Rom. 10:10).
4. Essentiality of baptism (Rom. 6:3-4; Col. 2:12; Gal. 3:26-27; I Pet. 3:21).
5. Steadfastness (Acts 2:42; I Cor. 15:58).

**B. Knows examples of obedience; fails to follow pattern.**

1. Pentecost (Ac. 2:37-47).
2. Eunuch of Ethiopia (Ac. 8:26-40).
3. Cornelius and household (Ac. 10).
4. Jailer at Philippi (Ac. 16:25-34).
5. Saul of Tarsus (Ac. 9:10-19; 22:6-16).

**C. Knows organization of church; fails to follow pattern.**

1. Appointment of elders, men of quality (I Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9).
2. Authority of elders (Ac. 20:28).
3. Responsibility to elders (Heb. 13:17).

**D. Any neglect of Knowledge, sin (Jas. 4:17)****E. Neglect in Pattern of Worship, a great danger.**

1. Pattern of Lord's Day: Singing (Eph. 5:19), Praying (Acts 2:42), Teaching (Tit. 2:1; Ac. 2:42), Lord's Supper (Ac. 20:7; I Cor. 11:26-29), Giving of prosperity (I Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 9:7).
2. Worship to please God, not man (Jno. 4:24).

**IV. Man's misapplication and misuse of Knowledge.****A. Names of dangerous trends today.**

1. New Hermeneutics.
2. Change agents.
3. Praise worship.
4. Contemporary worship.
5. Dramatic presentations for entertainment.
6. Choral presentations for emotional appeal.

**B. Trends from misapplication and misuse of Knowledge.**

1. Women leadership (elders, song leaders, special speakers).
2. Emotional entertainment of worship (Bible pattern now outdated).
3. Acceptance of "other" Christians without Scriptural baptism.
4. Unity of worship with denominations.
5. Special programs for special days with community churches (Christmas, Easter, Passover).

ure.

1. "Salvation" without obedience (Heb. 5:8-9; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; Matt. 7:21-23).

Ac. 20:28; Ac. 2:47; Eph. 5:23-27).

3. Contemporary worship for man instead of spiritu Jno. 4:24;

Mt. 15:8-9

D. Repeated Warning: James 4:17.

V. Conclusion

Heb. 4:11-13

B. Lack of Knowledge or misuse of Knowledge – Both unacceptable and dangerous.

C. Trend today with Scripture, Plan of Salvation, Church organization, Worship – All

D. Christians: Resist, rebuke, and demand Book, Chapter, and Verse for all matters of religious faith and practice (2 Tim. 3:16-17)

P. O. Box 215, London, KY 40743

happy holiday season to our readers & su port

May The Lord Richly Bless You In This Holiday Season As You Look To Him!

Friends And Family

My wife, Naomi, and I have greatly enjoyed our

*Banner of Truth*

their

time to help get the paper in the mail, and for those who have supported the work gene ously, and for the many positive responses from our readers. Thanks to Hickory Grove, our sponsors.

Walter & Naomi

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Total contribution, July -Sept.	3,358.00

***“That ye may be fellowhelpers  
to the truth” (3 John 8)***

We are indeed most grateful for our brethren who are most generous in supporting our efforts in the Lord's work. Contributions in whatever amount, large or small, are sincerely appreciated. Our work depends upon you. - - *Editor*

***Banner of Truth Financial Report***  
July, Aug., Sept. 2002

Balance on hand July 1, 2002	15,990.96
July - Sept. contributions	3,358.00
Total funds available	19,348.96
July - Sept. Expenses:	
Mailing labels	69.38
Postage	118.40
Service on press	125.00
Ink	144.30
Plates for printing	263.60
Phone	14.50
Paper, seven months supply	1,600.00
Mailing BOT, includes June issue	2,073.05
Misc.	8.71
Total July - September expense	4,416.94
Total funds available	19,348.96
Less July - Sept expense	4,416.94
Total on hand Sept. 30, 2002	14,932.02

You will note that we had expenses this time which do not occur often, such as: paper, plates, service call on press. As our work increases, so do our expenses, but it is most assuring to know that concerned brethren are supplying our financial needs in a great way. Thanks! - *Editor*

**A Sound Preacher Is Wanted**

The Franklin church of Christ, in Royston, GA, is searching for a sound preacher. The address is: 188 Sandy Cross Rd., Royston, GA 30662. Maurice J. Whisenant, 269 Capri Dr., Hartwell, GA 30643, may also be contacted. Sorry that I don't have the phone number. The congregation is self-supporting and has about 60 in attendance.

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**Welcome New Readers!** We are happy to have you on our mailing list. If you find *Banner of Truth* worthwhile, tell others about it. We can send a bundle of 15 copies to congregations or individuals who will make them available to others. - - *Editor*

#### **READERS' RESPONSE**

"May God bless your every effort for the labor for Jesus. I truly was very happy to be introduced to B.O.T. My cup runneth over - **Estelle Naismith.**" - **MI.** (*Thanks for sending other names to receive B.O.T. - Editor*).

"Thank you for adding me to your mailing list as per our conversation. Keep up the good work, it benefits more people than you will ever realize. Enclosed is a church for \$50. Please use this in whatever way you see fit to help with your publication or other expenses. 'Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit ye like men, be strong - **Jake Taft.**" (*Thanks for your interest and gift to help in our work. We are greatly encouraged by the influence of BOT. - Ed.*).

"I hope this note will find you doing well in body and spirit. I am a preacher with the Lord's church doing the work of an evangelist, in Harare. I saw and read your journal *Banner of Truth* and I found it good, so I have written to you that you may subscribe me. My address: Church of Christ....Harare, Zimbabwe, Africa. God bless you, AMEN - **Augustine Chigodho.**" (*We'll get BOT on the way to you - Editor*).

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### **3RD ANNUAL BANNER OF TRUTH LECTURES JUNE 23-26, 2003**

#### **OUR THEME: BACK TO THE OLD PATHS –THE GOOD WAY**

**Why not make plans in your schedule NOW, to profit from these valuable lessons. How can you afford to miss?**

**The location will be the same as this year: The Curris Center at Murray State in Murray, KY.  
Speakers are now being contacted.**

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**Editor's e-mail:** < [wpiggbot@charter.net](mailto:wpiggbot@charter.net) >

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