

Hickory Grove church of Christ
1131 Hickory Grove Rd.
Almo, KY 42020-9332

Return Services Requested

Sunday Services:

Bible Classes

Worship 10:00 a.m.

9:00 a.m.

6:00 p.m.

Wednesday:

Bible Study

7:00 p.m.

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to receive this bulletin. these names are people who would (I believe) make good use of every one they get. Before I send the names I would like to know how much per year each one costs. As I Said, I am impressed by the quality of this work. The three steps you list is what every Christian should be interested in. I will be waiting to hear from you. I am a widow and want to help with our Lord's work in any way I can. Thank you for this treasure - **Barbara Kist.**" - **AR.** (We will be glad to send you some copies of the BOT you mention. We have received several requests for it, and we may not have 25, but we will send what we can. As for the cost, we don't charge anything for the paper. Since it is made possible by contributions from individuals and congregations we do appreciate any contributions to keep our work going. We would like to have the names of individuals to placed on our mailing list. This is the way we usually increase our mailing list. We share your concern about the political state our country and believe we should do everything we can to bring about changes for good rather than evil - Editor).

"I have read your B.O.T. for March 2004 and I was glad to get it. I think this paper needs to be put in every Christian home to be read. So will you please send me a bundle of March issue, at least. I'd like to have a bundle sent each time they come out. Maybe I can send you some money before long, to help with postage, I hope so. You do preach the truth, and the truth is what we need. I like to go to worship services where the truth is preached. If it steps on my toes, that's what I need. The old fashion way of preaching is the best. Thank God there are still some who will preach it that way. Please send me the papers as soon as you can - **Thelma Clark.**" - **MS.** (We will get you on our mailing list right away. Sorry that I haven't gotten to it sooner. We will be sending a bundle of 15 each month. It would be wonderful if everyone wanted to hear only the truth preached. Some seem to want to please man rather than God. God's word will judge us (John 12:48) - Editor).

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Banner of Truth

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

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Preaching, Preachers, People, and Quality Control

Alan Adams

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 ministers [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

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Continued from P. 1

"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 tou/ khru, gmatoj. The tou/ is the genitive form of the definite article. The khru, gmatoj 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

Sound Preacher Sought

Though I do not personally know this church, I know of their concern for sound doctrine. They received Banner of Truth from Ken Butterworth, and are now receiving a bundle of BOT. They recently sent \$100 to BOT. I know I appreciate them. I'm sorry I don't have a phone number. Please read: —WWP

The Weaver church is located in Weaver, Alabama, about 12 miles north of Interstate 20. We are a small group of about 50-60 in attendance. We are in need of a part-time preacher, preferably a preacher who is retired and would like to preach part time. One who is sound, of course. We would be able to pay him between \$400 - \$500 per week, with an understanding that he would have the freedom to take time off when desired, if necessary. Contact: Ralph Mammatt, P.O. Box 191, Jacksonville, AL 36265.

Who Said It First?

"Writers of every age have endeavored to show that pleasure is in us, and not in the objects offered for our amusement. If the soul be happily disposed, everything becomes capable of affording entertainment, and distress will almost want a name. Every occurrence passes in review, like the figures of a procession; some may be awkward, others ill-dressed, but none but a fool is on that account enraged with the master of ceremonies." — **Oliver Goldsmith**, 1728-1774.

"But godliness with contentment is great gain: for we brought nothing into the world, for neither can we carry anything out; but having food and covering we shall be therewith content" (I Tim 6.6-7). "Count it all joy, my brethren, when ye fall into manifold trials; knowing that the proving of your faith worketh patience. And let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, lacking in nothing" (James 1.2-3) — **The Holy Spirit** through Paul the apostle, and James the half-brother of Christ, First Century A.D.

Time and again, reading the thoughts of truly erudite and thoughtful people, we are impressed that they are merely echoing what God has already said. —AA

READER RESPONSE

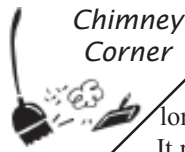
"Calvary greetings from Zimbabwe! Can you please put me on your mailing list and send us at least 10 copies to share at Mahusekwa and sister congregations in our area. I have just photocopied the copy of Banner of Truth I got from a friend. Keep up the good work you are doing to guard the truth. We left the denominations. We do not want to back there at any cost.

I am a preacher at the above congregation. I am 34 years, married with two children. A boy five years and a girl three years old. Let it be known that liberalism and anti-ism are just forms of spiritual cancer. They can destroy the Lord's church. Yours in Christ - **Farai A. Chingondi.**" - **Zimbabwe.** (Thank you for your request. We will be sending you a bundle of 15 copies of Banner of Truth. We trust they will be found useful. May the Lord bless the brethren there in their service to Him - Editor).

"In an effort to familiarize ourselves regarding the "change movement" in the church of Christ which is so prevalent at this time, my wife, Nancy, and I have been reviewing a lot of material that brother Ken Butterworth gave us. We have just read the January 1998 (Vol. 7, No. 1) issue of Banner of Truth. We want to support this work, however, a lot of time has passed since this issue. We don't want to support anything that may have drifted away from the practices of those first century churches that we read about in God's word, who were pleasing to Him. Please add us to your mailing list. We are inclosing a small initial contribution and will make a further commitment based upon the content of your current publication. We would like to provide a copy of Banner of Truth to our members (each issue). Please advise as to cost of this - **Brother and sister Ralph Hammett,** members of Waver church of Christ - **AL.**" (We thank bro. Butterworth for passing on to you a copy of Banner of Truth. Please be assured that we have not drifted from the course we were pursuing in 1998. Our work has almost doubled since 1998. Our circulation is now about 7,600. We will be glad to send a bundle of BOT for the congregation. As to the cost, we don't charge for the paper. It is made possible by the contributions of congregations and individuals. Therefore, we always appreciate contributions to keep our work going - Editor).

"I am deeply impressed with 'Banner of Truth.' I don't know who turned in my name to have it sent to me. I am grateful. The March 2004 issue I just received a couple of weeks ago. I would be very interested in getting several more copies. Could you quote me a price for about 25? I have never read anything needed more at this particular time. I would appreciate an answer as soon as possible because election time is right around the corner. Also, if I may, I would like to send several names in

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Chimney Corner

I don't know its origin, but the idea of "chimney corner Scriptures" has been around for a long time.

It refers to long and popularly held notions that the Bible says a particular thing that in reality it has never said. Some of them are cute and benign; some of them are at least closely akin to biblical sentiments; but, some of them are out-and-out misrepresentations of what the Bible actually says.

From the meaningful to the absurd, the "chimney corner" seems to be literally full. There are things like: spare the rod and spoil the child; there were three wise men; Eve ate the apple; Jesus was born on December 25; exceeding the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees means we must give more than 10%.

It's good to periodically to examine the "corner," and if need be take the broom to it. Even if the sentiment of a CCS is otherwise good, in an overall sense, it's not really good to get in the practice of spouting conclusions that 1, aren't actual Bible statements, or 2, aren't warranted by a passage to which we are appealing.

I have gathered a file quite a number of chimney corner Scriptures over the years; some of them, I used to use myself. Let's consider a few chimney corner concepts that are held regarding christians, non-christians, Divine Law and sin. None of these are cute or benign. They have serious implications.

"IT'S OK, HE'S NOT A CHRISTIAN."—

Way back when, we lived in Indiana and one summer I worked in a camp sponsored by christians. There were two swimming times for the young people: one for the boys, and one for the girls. I discovered that the lifeguard for both groups was a young man. Since the whole purpose behind different swimming times had to do with the impropriety of mixing scantily clad males and females, I thought it somewhat incongruous that someone would have chosen a man to watch over the girls.

I voiced my judgment on the matter and it was "explained" to me that there was no problem because 1, The young man was not a christian; and 2, (the above quotation). I naturally had to probe this sort of think-

ing, which probe discovered the odd thought that the young man's being a non-christian mitigated any biblical concerns about modesty, lust, and all that. This is closely akin to yet another CCS.

"LET THE NON-CHRISTIAN DO IT, HE'S LOST ANYWAY."—

This one emerged during a discussion about capital punishment in particular. The purveyor was trying to harmonize his view that a christian may not under any circumstance take the life of another, with his belief that the Bible does in fact authorize civil authorities to "bear the sword" (Romans 6:1-5) against "evildoers" (I Peter 2:13). I made the point that neither the civil authorities nor the sword were inanimate objects; some human being would, with God's approval, have to be taking the life of another; at which point he said the above. These two are closely linked to another CCS.

"THE NON-CHRISTIAN IS NOT LOST BECAUSE HE HAS SINNED, BUT BECAUSE HE HAS NOT OBEYED THE GOSPEL."—

Each of these three CSS' has an underlying sentiment: The non-christian is somehow not bound by the law of Christ in the same way the christian is.

The non-christian *is* lost because he has sinned, and sin is precisely the transgression of Divine Law. The one and only Divine Law in effect is the law of Christ, which is why Jesus said that to the "Son," God has given "authority over all flesh" (John 17:1-2).

It is precisely because one has violated Divine law that he needs to obey the gospel whereby he is forgiven (cf. Ac 2:38). This CSS is about like saying that the drowned man died, not because his lungs filled with water, but because he didn't take hold of a life preserver.

Sin is sin regardless of who does it. The ideas that 1, The non-christian may be solicited by others to commit sin because "he's lost anyway"; or 2, There are things which the non-christian may benignly do, but which would be sinful for the christian to do; or, 3, The non-christian is not under Christ's Law; or, 4, Moral concepts have different meanings for christians and non-christians (for example: christian killing as opposed to non-christian killing; christian adultery as opposed to non-christian adultery, etc.)—anyway, such ideas as these are absurd, repugnant, and wrong. They aren't in the Bible, even if people repeat them over and over as though they were. —AA

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 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" (I 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 longsuffering 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

Preaching, Preachers, and Preparation: Reflections

Having over the years much to say about preaching and preachers (e.g. foregoing article), particularly as relates to preacher shortcomings, I now have the daunting opportunity to put my money where my mouth is. For the past three years I have been working as a teacher and Dean of Students in the Northwest Florida School of Biblical Studies. I know the marvelous joy of seeing good men blossom in discipline and skills; I’ve also been enlightened as to the many difficulties that attend the goal of bringing forth a man who has the capacity for being, in all respects, a successful gospel preacher.

“The preaching” end of things, is in one sense the least complicated aspect as it relates to preacher training. By the “preaching” (again, as per the foregoing), we mean God’s Word. I don’t mean that the Bible is “easy,” rather that the Bible is really the only *constant* in the entire process. Students’ backgrounds and capabilities vary. Their personalities, egos, social skills, work experience, work ethic, and determination all vary as well. Some are married, some single; some have supportive wives. Chronological age seems to seldom be determinative of maturity.

Our academic program at NWFSBS is on a par with that of other similar programs. We are equally concerned with our students being well-rounded, normal, responsible people. We do our best to borrow from our experiences and press and press on matters of personal living and comportment which will have great bearing on whether a graduate can “go forth” and “do the work of an evangelist.”

We are determined to produce preachers, not peacocks. For my part, I have already seen enough to last

“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 by the renewing of [our] mind” (Rom 12:2).

a lifetime of arrogant twits who can’t get beyond themselves to be of serious service to others. A young Rubel Shelly was so lauded that we now have—well—what we now have. Sharp minds and excellent speaking skills are plentiful; quiet, kind, do-your-job-even-when-no-one brags on you personalities are not. I know folks mean well, but it is not really being helpful when you tell a preacher, particularly (though not exclusively) a young one, that’s he’s a modern day Apollos.

We are determined to produce men who, though unyielding in conviction, do not go out to local churches with an adversarial view of their work. I vividly recall one of my former teachers bragging, “I got the elders to put swinging doors leading outside, so I could I say, ‘If you don’t like the way things are done here, just don’t let the doors hit you in the backside on the way out.’” There is none of that at NWFSBS. Neither do we instill in our students the idea the pulpit is their exclusive domain; that they need not condescend to show up for grounds’ work, doorknocking, or hospital.

I have often wryly thought about writing a book entitled *Why Dysfunctional People Want To Be Preachers*. We greatly need men who know how to take care of themselves; know how to pay their bills; know how to govern their families; know how to interact with people—We need to find ordinary people who want to do the most extraordinary thing: “preach the word.” We work really hard at NWFSBS to paint this picture of a preacher, his work and his life.

So many are helping us in many ways. The generosity of brethren never ceases to amaze. Help us also by pointing good men our way. —AA

given among men, whereby we must be saved.” Acts 4:12.

PETER TAUGHT THE NECESSITY OF CHRISTIAN LIVING. He emphasized purity of heart. I Pet. 1:22,23; 2:1. He taught that our conversation must be Holy and honest, that we must refrain the tongue from evil. I Pet. 1:15; 2:12; 3:10. He taught that in manner of life we must be sober and vigilant, and we must abstain from fleshly lust. I Pet. 5:8,9; 2:11; 2:13. He also taught about citizenship. “Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors,” I Pet. 2:13,14.

HE STRESSED CHRISTIAN PREPARATION. He emphasized being able to give an answer to those asking the reason of our hope. I Pet. 3:5. He taught the necessity of preparing for the judgment. I Pet. 4:15-18.

HE TAUGHT ABOUT CHURCH LEADERS AND FOLLOWERS. Elders are to feed, tend and be an example to the flock. I Pet. 5:2,3. He also stressed the necessity of submitting to the leaders. We must follow the leadership of faithful elders. I Pet. 5:5,6.

HE TAUGHT HOW TO DEAL WITH FALSE TEACHERS. II Pet. 3:1-4. He also taught that we are to be diligent toward peace. II Pet. 3:14.

We Must Be Intense About Preaching The Word.

We must come to grips with the reality that people are lost without the gospel. As Christians we have the responsibility to provide opportunities for the lost to hear that they might be saved. The purpose of preaching is to give people a basis of faith, convict sinners, produce repentance, save the lost, and reprove the erring, and to strengthen the weak. Rom. 10:13-17; Acts 2:37; Acts 2:38; I Cor. 1:21; I Tim. 5:20; Gal. 7:4,5,14; Acts 20:32.

Continued from page 9 to walk in sins, but good works. Becoming adept at “good works” is as much a matter of time and practice, as is getting good at sin. The main difference being, once “in Christ” we have the incentive of God’s love, Christ’s perfect example and sacrifice, and the promise that the “blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (I John 1:7), which comes “if we walk in the light, as he is in the light.” This new walk or trek upon which one embarks after being “buried...through baptism” (Romans 6:4) is made surer if we keep in mind not only who we are but where “[He has] raised us up with him, and made us to sit

There Are Some Distinguishing Marks Of Preaching.

It must be the doctrine of Christ, to go beyond is fatal. II Jn. 9-11; Rom. 16:17. It must be presented in the right spirit. We are to earnestly contend and tearfully preach with heaviness and sorrow. Jude3; Acts 20:31; Rom. 9:2,3.

We need gospel preachers like Christ, Paul, Peter and others mentioned in God’s word. The reason the church is not growing numerically and spiritually is because there are not enough preachers who will preach the message of Paul, Christ and Peter, and there are too many who are willing to preach a perverted gospel.

At Northwest Florida School of Biblical Studies we are striving to train men who will preach the gospel in its purity and simplicity. We try to instill in them the importance of imitating such gospel preachers as Christ, Peter and Paul. The Bible message preached by our graduates is a manifestation of the instruction they receive.

BUT, WE NEED YOUR HELP. We need your voice to promote the school; we need your prayers for blessings upon the school; and, we need your financial help. We have four full time students headed our way in August; two of them are still in need of financial assistance. If you or the congregation of which you are a member can supply monthly support or a one-time contribution, it will be greatly appreciated. The program here requires full time attention. There is no time for students to work on a job to support themselves. Jamie Hoskinson and Joshua Lifford are their names. For more information, call us (850) 474-9257, 968-2207. —1644 Pine Lane Drive, Cantonment, FL 32533

with him [that is] in the heavenly *places*, in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:6).

Many marriages have gradually lost their luster. What started out with romance and sparks comes to be dull, lifeless and uninteresting. Erstwhile lovers or sweethearts become like ships that pass in the night. Love is truly many splendored. Physical attraction cannot sustain love. Kindness and a desire for another’s well-being (*philein*; *agape*) must be brought to bear so that what was once kindled by desire can be taken to far greater and more wonderful heights. It can be done one “bite” at a time. —AA

Continued from Page 5—

Matt. 23:15. He called them serpents, and vipers. “Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?” Matt. 23:33. He called them sons of hell. “...ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.” Matt. 23:15. He also called them fools and blind. “Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold?” Matt. 23:17.

We Need Preachers With The Characteristics Of Paul.

PAUL WAS VERY PATIENT. “But in all things approving ourselves as the ministers of God, in much patience, in afflictions, in necessities, in distresses.” II Cor. 6:4.

PAUL WAS UNSELFISH. “I have coveted no man’s silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.” Acts 20:33,34.

PAUL WAS A FEARLESS WORKER FOR THE LORD. This was demonstrated in Acts 27:23-25. Because of Paul’s fearless attitude the people became even bolder. “And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.” Phil. 1:14.

PAUL WAS ZEALOUS. “Concerning zeal persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.” Phil. 3:6. This was prior to his becoming a Christian. After he became a Christian he was even more zealous for the cause of Christ. Paul said, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.” II Tim. 4:7.

PAUL WAS CONSCIENTIOUS. Before the high priest, Ananias, he said, “...Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.” Acts 23:1. Before Felix, the governor, he said, “And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men.” Acts 24:16. There are some preachers of today who imitate Paul. Some preachers preach the gospel of Christ without fear or favor. They preach the gospel in all boldness yet, with patience toward those being taught. The unselfish attitude of some preachers is a joy to behold. There are those who are very zealous in their activities for the Lord and His body. There are preachers who take the initiative in their work; they are self-starters not needing someone to tell them everything to do.

Some so-called preachers of today are indifferent toward these characteristics. They seemingly have no consciousness of responsibility to preach the pure gospel of Jesus Christ. This type of preacher is not bold and fearless in his preaching for he will preach that which is popular regardless of how foreign it may be to the truth. Such preachers are selfish for they are only concerned of gaining material things. They have no zeal but are in need of someone to tell them what to do.

We Need Preachers With The Attitude Peter Had Towards God’s Word.

HE HAD THE ATTITUDE THAT GOD’S WORD IS FINAL. “Then Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.” Jn. 6:68. Some preachers of today get their sermon material from denominational papers. Years ago, while in a gospel meeting in Kentucky, the local preacher asked me attend the preacher’s luncheon (not the one in Murray) with him. The speaker that day held up “Pulpit Helps” and said, “There is good preaching material in this publication.” That publication is produced by the Southern Baptists.

HE SPOKE THAT WHICH HE HAD SEEN AND HEARD.

This statement was made before those who were making threats. “For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.” Acts 4:20. I wonder if preachers of today would have answered the same under those circumstances?

HE SPOKE AS THE ORACLES OF GOD. “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God.” This was to be done to glorify God not man. Some preachers of today seek to promote themselves. Self-promoters will not glorify God.

HE HEARKENED UNTO GOD RATHER THAN TO MEN. “But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.” Acts 4:19.

Peter Covered The Field In His Preaching.

HE TAUGHT FIRST PRINCIPLES. His sermon on Pentecost covered the things necessary for becoming a Christian. Acts 2:37-41. When he taught Cornelius and his house, he taught them what they must do to be saved. Acts 10-11. Peter taught that there is no salvation outside of Christ. “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven

Preaching, And The Training Of Preachers

Kenneth Burleson

Director, Northwest Florida School of Biblical Studies

What a great joy there is in preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. The pleasure of teaching people and seeing the expression on their faces as they begin to see the truth for the first time in their life is joy unspeakable. Then to baptize them into Christ and watch them grow as Christians; there is nothing with which to compare it.

There is such a joy in the work of training men to preach the gospel in which I am involved. To observe these men grow from the day they enroll to the day of their graduation is such a satisfaction.

As they go out to begin their new work and begin to write their bulletins and mail them back and as I read them it gives me great joy. When they call to tell about the new converts and restorations with the excitement in their voices brings tears of joy. What is this joy I feel? Because souls are being saved, congregations are growing and I feel that I have had a small part in the works of these men. Yes, it brings joy unspeakable.

It is such a privilege to preach the gospel of Christ. With this privilege brings a great responsibility. We need to prepare ourselves as best we can. At Northwest Florida School of Biblical Studies we are striving to impart to the students as much as we possibly can in the two years they are here. Brethren Jared Knoll, Tom Snyder, Alan Adams and Ervin Brantley are men dedicated to this work. They have prepared themselves well. I could not ask for a better teaching staff. Brother Alan is Dean of Students and is a full-time instructor.

We Need Preachers Who Will Follow God’s Word.

PREACHERS MUST GIVE HEED TO READING. Paul wrote this exhortation to the young man Timothy. “Till I come, give attendance to reading to exhortation, to doctrine.” I Tim. 4:13. This requires a diligent study of God’s word. II Tim. 2:15. As we read and study we must take time to mediate on the word and give ourselves wholly to it. “Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all.” Tim. 4:15.

PREACHERS MUST RIGHTLY DIVIDE THE WORD. “... rightly dividing the word of truth,” II Tim. 2:15. There are those who handle it deceitfully. II Cor. 4:2. Some wrest the scripture. “...in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest...” II Pet. 3:16. There are those who set it aside. “For laying aside the commandment of God ye hold the tradition of men...” Mk. 7:8. Instead of using the word and rightly dividing it, some use denominational material. Many today follow what men say, rather than the Bible.

PREACHERS MUST NOT ENTANGLE THEMSELVES WITH THE AFFAIRS OF THIS LIFE. “No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a good soldier.” II Tim. 2:4. They must not entangle themselves with denominationalism and secret orders. II Cor. 6:16-18; 6:14.

We Need Preachers Like Christ.

They must have the conviction of Christ. Jesus was narrow-minded. He taught that there is only one way.”... I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.” In 14:6. He taught that one will enter the “strait gate” or “wide gate.” Matt. 7:13, 14. This must be taught today. We cannot travel both at the same time. We cannot serve but one master at a time.” No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or else he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” Matt. 6:24.

We need preachers who will hold up all the good as Jesus did. He told the people to do what the Pharisees told them to do. But they were not to do as they did, for they, “... say and do not.” Matt. 23:3. Do the good but not the bad. He held up their sayings but not their practice. Jesus upheld the good in the publican. Lk. 18:14.

We need preachers that will condemn all evil as Christ did. Jesus condemned the false doctrines taught in His day. Mk. 7:6-9. Jesus called the religious pretenders what they were: hypocrites. “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees hypocrites.” —Page 12

“A Time To Keep Silence, And A Time To Speak”

These are some thoughts written several years ago, yet they are still relevant to a persistent and pernicious idea that gives rein to divisive brethren while muzzling those who would oppose them.

When my family and I first moved to the Chinese province of Taiwan, we lived on the southern end of that island. We were “strangers in a strange land.” At least, it was strange from our perspective. Language, customs, smells, tastes, sounds, sights; ideas, outlooks, concepts; everything was different. One of the greatest challenges you must face living in a foreign country is *not* to disdain, or count as wrong, things that are foreign to you, simply because they are foreign; because, after all, we were just as strange to the Chinese as they to us. This can be a tough matter to deal with.

But now, having said that, there is another tough challenge to face when in a foreign land: that, of not condoning things that are immoral, false, or unscriptural, on the basis that they are the customs and traditions of another country. You have to make a clear distinction between matters of *indifference* and matters of *doctrine*. When evangelizing in a foreign land, the missionary will definitely come up against things that are forbidden by the Scriptures, but are deeply imbedded within the history and culture of the people you are seeking to evangelize. Now, we can do like the Catholic Church and try to make everything “fit” together; or, we can do like the apostle Paul in Corinth, and boldly, with the Gospel, lead sinners out of their error (Cf. I Cor 6.10-11). Or, we can be like some weak-kneed missionaries I know of, who would not teach against the sin of “drunkenness” in the country where they were working because drinking there was such a part of their culture and habits. I know of others who would not teach the locals about the sins of “lasciviousness (the ‘unchaste handling of males and females’ as goes on, for example, in dancing),” “immodesty,” or “nakedness,” because, well, those are their ways and their garb.

Let me say clearly that I oppose anyone making *moral* assessments about matters of indifference or judgment. It is in poor taste, and can be flat out wrong for people to be hypercritical of others over matters of indifference. I used to get so tired of hearing some

Americans in Taiwan bad-mouthing some of the customs and ways of the Chinese. We have to be so careful that we don’t set up our own indifferent customs and protocols as the right way. “When in Rome,” and when the practices of Rome are purely matters of indifference, then “do as the Romans do.”

Applying this to the church: We have thousands of local congregations around the world, and each congregation is autonomous. That is, each congregation is independent of the others in carrying out what are the mission, work, worship, and service of Christians in general. In carrying out these *obligations*, many matters of option and indifference are involved. That’s why God has ordained that each congregation be “overseen” by an eldership.

Elders have authority within their respective congregations. Members are to “obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you” (Heb 13:17). Of course, the authority of an eldership applies *only* to matters of judgment or indifference. They certainly have no authority to decide matters of *doctrine*; that’s already been decided for us. In order to carry out the obligations given all of us by God, elderships will lead their respective congregations in these matters; and that often requires decisions and policies as to the *how* and *when* obligatory things will be done. They will also decide *whether* an optional thing will or will not be done based on their judgment as to whether it is in the best interests of the congregation.

For example: Elders decide whether it is best for the church to assemble in someone’s house (Rom 16.5), in a rented facility, under a juniper tree, or in a bought-and-paid-for building. This is strictly a matter of indifference: one choice is, morally speaking, no better than another. Elders also make decisions as to the wise and expeditious use of the meeting place. The only scriptural right for the meeting place to exist in the first place is in order that we might carry out our God-given obligation to “assemble together in one place” (I Cor 11.20). May the building also be used for other functions that are not inherently immoral or

ning off its young people.” In reality, their moms and dads started running them off years and years before. William J. Bennett has produced two books (*The Book of Virtues*, and *The Moral Compass*) to promote the teaching of morals and virtues within the home. Certainly his works do not compare to the Bible, but he makes some very good points, precisely because he echoes what the Bible already says.

In his first book, he identifies ten character traits: “self-discipline, compassion, responsibility, friendship, work, courage, perseverance, honesty, loyalty, and faith.” On page 11 of his second book, he says,

Children learn most of their first character lessons in the home...Those early lessons stay with children as they make their way into the world, shaping the way they see life, and to a large degree determining whether they live it well. Later, as young people and then as adults, through various stages of life, they must make countless choices that call the virtues into play.

Bennett even understands what many Christians have failed to grasp—i.e. that “the life [is] more than the food, and the body than the raiment” (Matthew 6:25),

...life is a moral and spiritual journey...we undertake it, at least in large part, to find our way morally and spiritually. Thus it makes no sense to send young people forth on such an endeavor having offered them only some timid, vacillating opinions or options about

“On Reading The Bible”

The following excerpts from Thomas Scott’s Essays were printed in the April, 1837 edition of The Millennial Harbinger, edited by Alexander Campbell—

Whether we consider the scriptures as a revelation which the Lord hath made to us of himself, that we may know, worship, and glorify him; or of his law and government, that we may submit to and obey him, and learn our true condition as sinners; or of his mercy and salvation, that we may find acceptance with him; or of the privileges of his children, in this life and that which is to come: in every view of the subject, the duty of searching them must be manifest. Nor can we neglect it, without avowing that we despise the knowledge of God and heavenly things; that we do not desire to serve our Cre-

conduct in the hope that in the course of their wanderings, they will stumble onto some more definite personal preferences which will become their “values.” We must give our children better equipment than that. We must raise them as *moral and spiritual beings* by offering them unequivocal, reliable standards of right and wrong, noble and base, just and unjust” (pp. 11-12).

Parents, please listen to Mr. Bennett,

Moral education must involve following rules of good behavior. It must involve developing good habits, which come only through repeated practice. And character training must provide example by placing children in the company of responsible adults who show an allegiance to good character, who demonstrate the clear difference between right and wrong in their own every day habits. (ibid.)

Remember these things the next time you fail to get your children to Bible school and worship. Remember them the next time you are tempted to mouth, “They (the church) are running off our young people.”

Unhappy and dysfunctional homes are so unnecessary. We have a Divine pattern deviation from which is a guarantee for misery. God must look upon the plight of modern homes and ask, Why?—“Why will ye be still stricken, that ye revolt more and more? the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint” (Isaiah 1:5-6).

ator; that we neither value his favor nor fear his frown; or that we can discover the way of peace and happiness without instruction. Nothing, therefore, can be more expressive of our ingratitude, rebellion, and alienation from God, than the general neglect of the Bible, which prevails among those who profess to believe it to be his word?

Does he then speak from heaven to us sinners about the way of eternal salvation, and shall we refuse to hear his gracious words? Does he give us a book to guide us to happiness in this world, and forever, and shall we not study it? Does he make known to us mortals those glories which angels adore with unceasing rapture, and shall we turn away?

The Home and Christian Living

Alan Adams

Simply put, Jesus came to restore that which man “messed up” and lost from “the beginning.” Two of the things originally ordained and established by God were: The Home and a Divinely mandated kind of Life.

The pristine and perfect Home involved: a *union* created by God (Matthew 19:6); a *pledge* of loyalty (Genesis 2:24); an intimate *joining* (24), and a *progeny* (Genesis 1:28). The kind of Life intended by the Creator for His creature, Man, involved: *privilege* (2:9,16); *obligation* (15); and *restriction* (17). Divine intent was that the Home would sustain and support the Life, and the Life the Home. So it is with the Home and the christian life today.

Despite the tampering with and the attacks on it, the Home, as God would have it, is still a unique, identifiable entity. It is one man, one woman, and children; and even others who of necessity are subsumed within that household. The Life is no less identifiable. It is a “way,” a “conversation,” a “vocation,” et al.

It is sad that so many, even christians, have gotten on a merry-go-round from which they can't seem to dismount. Homes are unhappy and broken because of the way the members thereof are living; and the members of the household are not, by the Home, being instructed, disciplined, and encouraged in the way they should live.

Many homes are unhappy because they do not follow God's plan which stipulates the husband/father as the “provider” (I Timothy 5:8), the wife/mother as the “worker [keepers, KJV]...at home” (Titus 2:5), and children as just that: potential adults who need “instruction” and “law” (Proverbs 1:8), the “rod” and “love” (Proverbs 13:24), and who owe their parents “obedience” (Ephesians 6:1).

Mrs. Clinton once spoke of the “silent crisis” of our country: better day care. She and others want the federal government to provide what God says parents are obligated to provide. Many whining pampered Americans will be quick to jump on this bandwagon. They're just having such a hard time making ends meet. We all know that it takes two incomes to

pay for the house, the cars, the clothes, the sports, the computers and so on. Poverty, to hear some tell it, is rampant in the Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave. I've seen poor people. It's makes me sick to hear some Yuppie talk about hard times, and then demand that Washington do something about it.

Mrs. Clinton's, husband, in a State of the Union Address (You know: the one that showed that Americans just didn't care about his personal life so long as he “takes care of us”) told us all about the big bucks he was going to spend for us. In that speech he proposed his new child care plan. Kate O'Beirne said,

The new spending over five years would include: a \$7.5 billion increase for the child-care block grant, a \$5.2 billion addition to the dependent-care tax credit, \$500 million in tax credits for employers, \$800 million for after-school programs, \$6.8 billion for new and old early-childhood education programs, and \$850 million to professionalize day-care workers. (**National Review**, “Yuppie Care,” February 9, 1998, p. 21)

God says that mothers are to be “keepers at home” and Mr. and Mrs. Clinton say, “Here, let us do it.” I know where my trust lies in this matter. Not only is this government-provided-child-care a usurpation of roles, but Ms. O'Beirne gives some statistics that show the new plan will ironically punish those who are following God's pattern for the home and child rearing:

The majority of families with children will not get a dime of these funds—because they don't use professional day care. Instead, because of the tax credit, less affluent one-earner families (median income: \$39,000) will be subsidizing the day-care costs for generally more affluent (median income: \$58,000) two-earner couples. (Ibid.)

Parents fret and blame the church, the schools, society, and the government because their children grow up and become unpleasant, disloyal, even reprobate. It is with anger and disgust, and yet sadness, that I listen to frustrated parents say, “The church is run-

otherwise forbidden? Yes: such as weddings, funerals, or as a place for christians to eat together.

The elderships of many, many congregations have decided that mechanical music, real or recorded, may not be used at weddings or funerals in order to avoid the perception that we on one hand condemn the use of mechanical music, yet on the other hand use it. The denominational world fails to understand the difference between the “church” and a “church building” (unfortunately, so do many brethren). The elderships of some congregations, however, believe this is not a great problem, thus they allow the use of mechanical music in the meeting house for such events as funerals or weddings. In either case, it is a matter of judgment.

I would *never* criticize (in the sense of declaring them to be morally wrong) another congregation for their policies relative to *optional matters*. I might personally think them to be imprudent, but going out and saying it is wrong would be another matter. Yet, here is an interesting phenomenon: Some brethren believe that the principle of congregational autonomy prohibits a member of one congregation judging as wrong, for any reason, the activities of another. This is simply and palpably false. This kind of nonsense allows false teachers a free reign and license to go about plying their trade, propagating error; and all the while, “kind” and “diplomatic” brethren say, “Well, that's their congregation and their business.”

This type of thinking would imply that if a neighboring congregation was tolerating the type of activity that the church at Corinth was tolerating (I Cor 5), then someone from another congregation would have no right to say anything about it. Did Paul violate the autonomy of the church at Corinth by censuring them for their complacency? Was he equally guilty for speaking out against the false teaching there relative to the resurrection? Come to think of it: Had Paul personally gone to these brethren before criticizing their errors? No: I believe all this was based on

reports given him by those of the “house of Chloe” (1.11). What any christian does or says, regardless of geographical or congregational boundaries; if it is in violation of New Testament teaching, I have the right, yea, the obligation, to point it out. All who “believe on” the Christ are to be “one” (Jn 17.20-21); there may be no “divisions among” them, rather they are to “be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (I Cor 1.10). When brethren from wherever [in this case the church at Estill Springs, TN] *publicly* (*Herald-Chronicle*, June 15, 1995, p. 9-B) show themselves proudly and with smiling faces holding the shovels with which they broke ground for “a new fellowship hall...which will include an inside basketball court as well as facilities for dinners, showers and teas”; when they *publicly* announce their joint participation (fellowship) in an event called South Jackson Goes Gospel which is represented by various denominational groups (and selling admission tickets on top of it all) —Well—I've just got to say something; and I reckon I'll say it just as publicly as they have announced it. These are activities for which there is *no* biblical authority. The “Gospel” has nothing to do with an entry-by-six dollar-admission-only, denominational hoedown. One of the vocalists for one of the groups is from the Church of God, and another group is called Spirit Filled. Can't you just hear the scriptural lyrics that reverberated through the halls of the “Civic Center”? Participation in such an event is a direct violation of Eph. 5:11 and II John 9-11.

Sitting quietly back, talking of love and concern for congregational autonomy, while heresy is proudly promoted, is both fantastic and inconceivable. Brethren, it is precisely because we: “love the Lord” (I Cor 16.22), “love the truth” (2 Thess 2.10), “love enemies” (Matt 5.44), “love the brethren” (I Jn 3.14), “love the brotherhood” (I Pet 2.17), and yes, love those who are promoting error (Jas 5.19-20), that we must speak up. “Open rebuke” is “better than secret love” any day (Prov 27.5).

—AA

12th Annual Laborers Together With God Lectureship

Theme: “Worship God” (Rev 22:9)

September 19—23

Church of Christ at Milestone, 2051 Stefani Road, Cantonment FL 32533 [Pensacola]

The One Way

Walter Pigg

We've heard people express the idea that "I will go to Heaven my way and you may go your way. After all, we're headed for the same place." This might seem reasonable from the standpoint of human reasoning, but God's truth is not determined by what sounds reasonable. Truth is determined by what God's word says, not by what we want it to say. Whether there are many ways to Heaven can be determined only by God's word. If the Bible teaches that you may go to Heaven one way, and I may go to Heaven another, or different way, then it is the truth that there are different ways to Heaven. But on the other hand, if the Bible teaches there is only one way to Heaven, then it is not true that there are many, or different ways to Heaven. Let us then consider a subject of great importance: THE ONE WAY.

Consider first what the Bible says with reference to the way to Heaven. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me" (John 14:6). Notice that Jesus said, "the way." That is singular. It means one way, not many ways. Jesus also said, "I am the truth and the life." That means there is one way of truth and one source of life: Jesus Christ. If "the truth" and "the life" mean only one, then "the way" would have to mean one also. If we accept the words of Christ, we must agree that there is "one" way, not many ways.

The Hebrews' writer shows that there is "one way" and not "many ways" (9:15). The passage says that Christ is the mediator of "the New Testament (covenant)." It does not say that He is the mediator of the New Testament[s]. Now if there is just one New Testament, we should surely agree that it teaches the same thing to one as it does to another. To say the New Testament teaches different ways to different people would be to charge God and Christ of being the authors of confusion and not of peace.

The one New Testament, of which Christ is the mediator, emphasizes the oneness which characterizes the whole Christian system. Paul says, "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Eph. 4:4-6). We will agree that

the word "one" as it is used seven times in this passage does not mean many. Surely there is agreement that there is one Lord, and not many; there is one God, not many. If one Lord means one Lord, and one God means one God, then "one body" must mean one body.

If we accept Paul's statement that there is "one body," we must conclude that there is one way, not many ways. In this same Book of Ephesians, Paul explains to us what "the body" is. In chapter one, speaking of Christ, he says, "[that God] hath put all things under his [Christ's] feet and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all" (vv 22,23). Since there is "one body" and the body is the church, we cannot escape the conclusion that there is "one church." But one may raise the question as to how this proves there is one way to Heaven?

We can see people often fail to see the relationship between the church and the way to Heaven. For so long people have been told that the church is not essential to one's salvation. They have not, however, been taught this from the Bible. From the New Testament we see that the church is the body. They are one and the same. Note then, what Paul further says about the "one body," the church: "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" (5:23). Since Christ is the savior of the body, the church, we see why it is necessary to be in the body, the church, in order to be saved. Remember: Jesus says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). He is the way because He will save his body, the church. The Bible does not tell us there are different ways to Heaven.

Having seen that the one way is through Christ and his body, the church, we also learn that there is only one way to enter the one body. Nicodemus, a Pharisee and a ruler of the Jews, had a conversation with Christ concerning the kingdom of God. The record reveals some great facts. Nicodemus told Jesus that he knew He was from God, because no man could do the miracles that He did except God be with him. In reply to Nicodemus the Lord said, "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Nicodemus misunderstood thinking Jesus was speaking of a physi-

cal birth, to which Jesus replied, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (John 3:3-5).

It is clear that Christ is discussing "how people enter the kingdom." It is just as clear that it is necessary to be "born again." This means the same as being "born of water and of the Spirit." Christ was not talking about two different births. But someone asks, "What is meant by the kingdom of God?" Christ teaches that "the kingdom of God," as pertains to people who obey the gospel, is the same thing as the church. Christ said, "I will build my church...and I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom" (Matt. 16:18-19). In response to those who say the kingdom has not yet come, we call attention to Mark 9:1. Jesus said, "there be some that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power." The kingdom, or church, would come during the life of some of those present. The church did come as Jesus said it would. From Acts 2:47, we learn that the Lord added those who were being saved to the church.

Since Christ said it was necessary to be born of "water and of the Spirit" to enter the kingdom of God, it is important that we understand what is meant by that expression. We have seen that the kingdom, as here used, is the same as the church. That being the case, understanding what is involved in entering the church, we can know what is involved in entering the kingdom. In Acts 2:38, we are given the answer to those who asked, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Peter said, "repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of

sins." Verse 41 says, "they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. Verse 47 says the Lord added to the church those that were being saved.

The One Way to Heaven is through Christ. That is the only way. To go through Christ one must be in Christ. Paul tells us how we can get "into Christ." "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27). Paul says, "Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore, we are buried with him in baptism into death..." (Rom. 6:3-4).

In the New Testament conversions we see that people heard God's word and believed it. This led them to repentance, and confession of faith in Christ, and to baptism at which point they came into Christ. People are converted the very same way today, and in no other way.

Although God's word clearly teaches about The One Way, many religious people have either never come to recognize this, or they are not willing to submit to God's plan. It is not only the religious people around us that need to understand this and submit to it; more and more of our own brethren are coming to accept the error that there is more than one way to Heaven. If people believe there is salvation in anything other than the church that Christ purchased with his blood (Acts 20:28), they believe there is more than one way to Heaven. Many brethren are showing an increased affinity for and fellowship with man-made religions; this is evidence of a belief in more than one way to Heaven.

Pang Dz Bu Shr Yi Kou Chr De

The title is one of my favorite Chinese idioms as nearly as you can transliterate it in English. It means "A fat guy doesn't get that way in one bite." The little idiom is a vivid way of saying that some states of affairs do not happen overnight, rather gradually.

HOW DO PEOPLE GET THE WAY THEY ARE? The apostle Paul said the saints at Ephesus had once been "by nature children of wrath, even as the rest" (Ephesians 2:3). Many people see "by nature," and assume that reference is to one's congenital makeup, that people are just born that way. Actually, the word "nature" itself comes from the Greek *phusis*, which can among

other things mean: "Mode of feeling and acting which by long habit has become nature" (*Thayer*, p. 660). A good look at Ephesians 2:1-3 will bear out the fact that the "nature" of these folks had been one developed gradually and by practice. Note the personally active concepts here: "your trespasses and sins," "walked," "disobedience," "lived," "doing." They weren't born that way, they got that way. A journey of a thousand miles starts with one step. Those people had been on a long journey.

The beautiful flipside is in verses 4-5, 8-10. God's grace, our faith makes a way for us no longer—Page 13