

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.

Nonprofit org.
U.S. Postage
Paid
Almo, KY
Permit No. 10

Readers' Response Continued

in heaven? Brother, if it is the case that your journal will be very helpful to someone in maturing the saved in the church and teaching the lost, what other purpose is your doctrinally sound journal meant for? Please brother, I want your help for a free subscription, or can you help me get someone that can pay for my subscription? Besides, I will appreciate a bulk of back/old issues of your periodical. Please, my brother, do not turn down my request. Give me a chance to benefit spiritually from your periodical. I THANK YOU IN HELPING ME IN THIS WAY - **Andrew Osathohamwen.** Nigeria. (Our brethren here in the U.S. make Banner of Truth possible. We are able and willing to send it to those in other places, even though they may never have the ability to pay anything for it. Our whole purpose is to set forth the truth, oppose error, and help people to make preparation for heaven. We shall see that you receive Banner of Truth and will try to send some back issues – Editor).

Notes from the Editor:

Please help us by sending your change of address. We just paid out \$27 for “returns.”

When sending an address, make sure the box number or complete street address is given. If you are going to be “Temporarily Away” please let us know, so that your name can be deleted.

Those sending articles for possible use in BOT should do them in manuscript form. Also check the spelling and punctuation for accuracy.

Help us increase our mailing list by sending names of those who would like to receive BOT.

5th Banner of Truth Lectures

June 24-27, 2005

Why not start making plans now to attend those four days of spiritual feast?

Editor's E-mail: wpiggbot@earthlink.net
Visit BOT at David Lemmons' website:
<http://www.hcis.net/users/dlemmons/BOTlist.htm>
Readers may get on David's *LemmonsAid* e-mail:
LemmonsAid-subscribe@YahooGroups.com

Banner of Truth

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

Vol. 13

September 2004

No. 8

“But Seek Ye First The Kingdom Of God And His Righteousness”

“The above oft-quoted statement of Christ, recorded in Matthew 6:33, is often ignored, or considered lightly. Yet, our eternal destiny will be determined by our response to it. Things of greatest importance are some times considered to be rather insignificant.

God's love and concern for mankind has been made abundantly clear by actions and statements recorded in His word. “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son” (Jno. 3:16). “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). “But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man” (Heb. 2:9).

Though God, Christ and the Holy Spirit have done all that is necessary to make salvation available to man, it is not without the complete submission and obedience to God's requirements, by man, that salvation can be obtained. It is the greatest of errors to believe that God will “take care of everything,” as many believe, to save man

in disobedience to His saving power, the gospel of Christ (Rom. 1:16).

God's provision for man's salvation was in His mind before man arrived on the scene. That His provision for that salvation would be inseparably connected to the church or kingdom which Christ would build is spelled out in Paul's words to the Ephesian brethren: “To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Eph. 3:10-11). The church, then, is the manifestation of God's wisdom in the salvation of man.

As we continue our discussion of this highly important command of Christ, we shall be giving serious attention to four specific things: *Page 2*

BANNER OF TRUTH

Published by the
Hickory Grove
church of Christ

1131 Hickory Grove Rd., Almo KY 42020

Elders:

Jimmy Lockhart (270) 753-4460

Mike Smith (270) 437-4616

Preacher:

Tim Hester (270) 767-0625

Editor

Walter W. Pigg (270) 753-3675

164 Coles Campground Rd., Murray, KY 42071

Assistant Editor:

Alan Adams (850) 937-2460

1653 Pine Lane Dr., Cantonment, FL 32533

Published monthly and sent free to interested persons. Made possible by the contributions of congregations and individuals. Our purpose is to: 1) Teach and uphold God's truth; 2) Encourage mission efforts to seek the lost; 3) Oppose that which is "contrary to sound doctrine" and not in harmony with the "doctrine of Christ."

(Continued from page 1)

1) Seek. 2) First. 3) The kingdom of God. 4) God's righteousness. Without a good understanding of these four things our discussion will not be very fruitful. Therefore, we urge our readers to give serious attention as we begin by a consideration of:

"SEEK" AS CHRIST USES THE TERM

The context of Christ's command is that rather than place our care and concern in the physical and material things, "as the Gentiles seek," we should "seek ye . . . the kingdom of God and his righteousness." This principle, though ignored by many, is still as valid as it was when Christ spoke it, and always will be so.

SEEK is a word which is used quite frequently in every day conversation. But at the same time, words are often used with different shades of meaning or importance. Therefore, it is possible that very important words can be used in such a way that

very little thought is given to their meaning and importance. This is certainly true in the area of spiritual things. Even the words God and Christ are often used in a flippant way, and some times by those claiming to be Christians. But when it comes to Bible words, it is to our own loss that we fail to consider the words in a most serious manner. Our salvation depends on the understanding of God's will, which is set forth in words. With this in mind, let us consider the word **SEEK**.

SEEK: Defined As Used In Matthew 6:33. When Christ used the word in the command it was by all means of great significance. *Vine's* says of the word: "of seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness, in the sense of coveting earnestly, striving after." The word "covet" can be used in a good sense or a bad sense, but in *Vine's* definition it is only used in the good sense. Paul told the Corinthians to "covet earnestly" the best gifts (I Cor. 12:31), and "covet to prophesy" (I Cor. 14:39).

Some Evidence of Seeking. Seek as used in this instance has to do with the greatest thing in the world, "the kingdom of God and His righteousness." A desire to know God's will. It is only on the basis of God's word that we can "seek" as God has intended. The person who has little desire or interest in knowing God's word will have little interest in seeking. We show forth evidence, or lack of it, by the use we make of our Bible classes, the way we listen when God's word is being preached. In no sense of the term least, is our consistency in attending the worship services. Work or the lack of it testifies rather loudly. Paul told the Corinthians to be "steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord" (I Cor. 15:58). The way we live before God and before others says much as to how interested we are in knowing and doing God's will.

The person who takes seriously Peter's command, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby" (1 Pet. 2:2), will

READERS' RESPONSE

"I am an American soldier in Iraq. I am also a member of the church in Arab, AL. Our brotherhood there is also strong in the Lord as it ought to be. I have been a reader of Banner of Truth for many years. I, for one, deeply appreciate your stand for our Lord and His church. Those in error should be called in question. The reason I am writing you is a matter of concern. I received a care package from the Mayfair church of Christ in Huntsville, AL. In this box was a copy of the Bible by the International Version-Zondervan. Shame on this church of Christ. They stand condemned of the blood. I really do not believe they knew I was a member of the church, but they know it now. They do not seem to write as much. This is my first time to experience this Bible. I have heard of it but I did not pay much attention to it until now. I would deeply appreciate it if you have done any work on this Bible to please send it to me. I find myself in a need to know more. To add insult to our Lord, they had the gall to call the church of Christ a denomination. Brother Pigg if you can help me with this I would be most grateful. All articles of religion that come into Iraq must be concealed or I will not get them. If you wish you may send to my wife and she will see I get it. – Your brother in Christ, **Lewis H. Smith.**" – **Iraq.** (Lewis, it is so good to hear from you. Our prayers for you is for your safety. It is indeed a shame that our brethren want to veer away from the truth of God, but that such is happening is a matter of sad fact. I will be sending you some material about the NIV by way of your wife. May the Lord richly bless you as you endeavor to serve Him. – Editor).

"I am the full-time preacher for the church of Christ in Lindsay, OK. We number around 150-180 on Sunday morning. The congregation has returned to the scriptures and we have been blessed with 18 baptisms this year. We have many young families and children. Our emphasis is strong on 'sound doctrine.' I appreciate your paper, as many in our congregation read it. This is my first full-time work, and my wife and I have only been here one year, but things are going great. The liberal group that split off about seven years ago have all but fizzled out. They call themselves 'New Heights Church,' but the true church of Christ in Lindsay is once again growing and we are content with the 'old paths.' Please pray for my wife and me. Thanks for your strong stance for truth – **Brant Stubblefield.**" – **OK.** (So good to hear of the Lord's church growing. What a blessing it is to have many young people and children. Our prayers are with you. – Editor).

"Thank you for the opportunity to receive the fruit of your labors for the cause of Christ. It is appreciated very much. I shall look forward to your publication to enhance my quest for truth and the sharing of the same. Your time is appreci-

ated and your offer is unbeatable. Thank you for offering these materials at no charge. Would you please send your publication to – **Herb Carnagey.**" – **AZ.** (We are thankful that we can send Banner of Truth to those who wish to receive it. We are also thankful for our brethren who make it possible – Editor).

"First, let me say I enjoy reading Banner of Truth and appreciate the information you give and the stand you take. As you know, not every member of the Lord's church shares that feeling. Sad but true. Some members of the church here read your May-June issue and have told me to remove them from our racks and have you stop sending them to us. They said you were out of line and even brutal in dealing these issues. Personally, I believe we need to stop sitting milk and cookies before these folks and pray with them about some 'issues.' Please keep sending it to me. One copy is sufficient. I will keep working on these folks – **Mac Ballard.**" – **AR.** (It sure appears that the brethren there need someone to work on them to encourage them to stand up for the truth. I would imagine that what was said about Lipscomb was what teed them off. Instead of facing the facts, and dealing with reality, they, like many critics, don't believe in the fair play which should characterize Christians. In other words, they don't have the courtesy or nerve to point out to me wherein they have a basis for castigating me so severely. The "some members" you mention are obviously in control of things there and will not allow truth to prevail. If you are the only one to take a stand, your future is uncertain. As I have said time and time again, some brethren appear to be more loyal to their school than to the Lord. But we will not stand before "our school" in the day of judgment – Editor).

"We always look forward to Banner of Truth. A wonderful publication. Will you please put this person on your mailing list. Thank you – **Loraine Hunter.**" – **OK.** (Thanks for sending us a name to be added. – Editor).

"Please my brother in Christ, I know that it cost you a lot to print such a doctrinally sound journal, but the truth is that I am a young man of 29 years, working as a gospel preacher in my locality here. I am not able to afford to pay the cost. I am pleading for a free subscription. Just think of it, your journal is a way to reach the world with the gospel. You as a person may never come to my city to preach the gospel, but if your journal reaches me here regularly, your evangelistic efforts have reached my state as well. The journal will help me in my study, in my teaching of Bible study classes in my congregation, and it will also help me in teaching the lost and confronting religious dogma. The truth is that you can never know what good your journal will to me and those that I teach the gospel until we get to heaven. It is only eternity that measures the result. After all, what is the use of anything we do in this world if not done in view of eternity

A Note of Personal Request

This year is the 13th year of publishing Banner of Truth. For several years I have received some financial support for my work with the paper. The amount of my support has remained the same for at least four years.

I have been working with the church at Dexter for more than three years. I do not receive full support from the church. During the past four years I have lost a considerable amount of our support, and our “balance on hand” is about gone. Of that support lost, \$450 per month was due to my stand for truth without compromise. Some other support may have been lost for the same reason, but no reason was given by the supporters.

My support for working with the church and Banner of Truth is less than the average full-time preacher receives. I have never asked for big support. But I do feel that the work my wife and I do is worthy of the support we have been receiving for at least four years.

To anyone interested, I will gladly give a complete report of finances received. I do know that my work takes just about all my time, and much of my wife’s time. Therefore, I’m asking for help, though I wish it were not necessary for me to do so. I do have confidence in my brethren that there are those who would have a part in the work we are doing.

I’m making this public appeal to save time. Any help will be sincerely appreciated. For years there has been no need to worry about financial support, but that has changed.

-- Walter & Naomi

DID YOU KNOW?

As you walk up the steps to the building which houses the U.S. Supreme Court you can see near the top of the building a row of the world’s law givers and each one is facing one in the middle who is facing forward with a full frontal view – it is Moses and he is holding the Ten Commandments.

DID YOU KNOW? As you enter the Supreme Court courtroom, the two huge oak doors have the Ten Commandments engraved on each lower portion of each door.

DID YOU KNOW? As you sit inside the courtroom, you can see the wall, right above where the Supreme Court judges sit, a display of the Ten Commandments.

DID YOU KNOW? There are Bible verses etched in stone all over the Federal Buildings and Monuments in Washington, D.C.

DID YOU KNOW? James Madison, the fourth president, known as “The Father of Our Constitution” made the following statement, “We have staked the whole of all our political institutions upon the capacity of mankind for self-government, upon the capacity of each and all of us to govern ourselves, to control ourselves, to sustain ourselves according to The Ten Commandments of God.”

DID YOU KNOW? Patrick Henry, that patriot and Founding Father of our country said, “It cannot be emphasized too strongly or too often that this great nation was founded not by religionists by Christians, not on religions but on the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”

DID YOU KNOW? Every session of Congress begins with a prayer by a paid preacher, whose salary has been paid by the taxpayer since 1777.

DID YOU KNOW? Fifty-two of the 55 founders of the Constitution were members of the established orthodox churches in the colonies.

DID YOU KNOW? Thomas Jefferson worried that the Courts would overstep their authority and instead of interpreting the law would begin making law...an oligarchy...the rule of few over many.

DID YOU KNOW? The very first Supreme Court Justice, John Jay, said, “America should select and prefer Christians as their rulers.”

How, then, have we gotten to the point that everything we have done for 220 years in this country is now suddenly wrong and unconstitutional?

--Received from Ed F. Allard via e-mail

have an interest in seeking that which God has to offer. Christ said, “seek, and ye shall find” (Matt. 7:7), but the half-hearted seeker will not find all that God has to offer the true seeker. Christ said, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me” (Matt. 16:24). The word “will” used here also means desire. Those who truly desire to know God’s will seek to do so.

Things Which Hinder Seeking. A whole catalogue of things could be justly mentioned here. We shall mention only a few of the many.

We begin by suggesting laziness. Christianity is a working religion. The lazy person is not likely to study God’s word very much. To that person attending the church services often comes as a matter of convenience. If it is convenient, that is, if there is nothing considered more important, then that person may show up. But let something come along which is more appealing, it is self desires first, the Lord’s desires second or even less.

False teaching also hinders people in seeking. If a person thinks one is accepted on the terms of less than what the Lord demands, why seek to do all the will of God?

Another hindrance is close association with those who have little or no interest in spiritual things. Paul warns that “evil communications corrupt good manners” (I Cor. 15:33). It is quite often the case that when a member of the church begins a very close association with unfaithful members, that member will become like those with whom he associates, that is, unfaithful.

“FIRST” AS USED IN MATTHEW 6:33

To serve God acceptably there are a number of things which must come First, or not at all. In fact, God must be first. He is not going to accept second place or less. It is a sad thing that a number of people in our society are trying hard to have God completely rejected, cast out, of our society. One political action committee has as their goal a “Godless America.”

First, as here used by Christ, means to be first among a number of things. In this case, the seeking of the kingdom of God and His righteousness was to come before the material and physical things, which the Pharisees valued. First is the opposite of last, and before all others. Webster defines it as, “being before all others with respect to time, order, rank, importance, etc.” First in importance would suggest the highest priority.

We have several examples in the New Testament of the importance of being first, or putting something first, other than the one under consideration. With respect to following our Lord, one of Christ’s disciples said unto him, “Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father” (Matt. 8:21). “But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead” (v. 22). That is, let those who are spiritually dead take care of those who are physically dead. “Is this not going to the extreme?” some may ask. Not if we are dead serious about putting God first. As far as I can remember, I’ve never missed a worship service because someone was dead. I would not want my brethren, even family, to miss a worship service because I’m in the funeral home. The Lord comes before me.

Christ speaks a parable of a certain man making a great supper, and inviting many to come. All of those invited “began to make excuse.” One had bought a piece of ground. Another had bought five yoke of oxen, another had married a wife (Lk. 14:16-20). The bottom line of the parable is that “none of those men that were bidden shall taste of my supper” (v. 24). Is not the lesson of this parable that those who make excuse and refuse the Lord’s invitation, will not be accepted? That is, they made excuse for not putting the Lord first.

Examples Of Brethren Not Putting The Lord First. Again, we could give a whole catalogue of examples of this. We see some every time the church meets. We see some in the conduct of brethren. We see some like those of the church in Laodicea, that is, lukewarm,

Page 4

and indifferent. We shall note a few specific examples which have occurred in congregations with which I have worked.

I knew a sister in Christ, who would have been counted among the Lord's faithful. Unless sick she was almost certain to be at every service of the church. She was known for putting the Lord first. But there was one time each year, when a group of former teachers got together. On this one occasion, our sister, would not put the Lord first. She would forsake him for that association with friends. Many people that I have known would not even dare think of being critical of this one occasion of forsaking the assembly. It is a fact that this sister was doing much better than many others. But that is not the question. Was she justified in putting the Lord second on this one occasion every year? If someone suggests the affirmative, a sensible question would be, "If it is permissible to not allow the Lord first place on one occasion, what about two, or three, or four?" It is a matter of a fact that in many cases when people begin to put the Lord in second place "once in a while," it grows to a somewhat regular practice.

A rather common excuse for forsaking the assembly and failing to put Christ first is that of visiting with relatives or friends. Some times people will stay home because they have company. It is a great thing to have friends and relatives. It can make life more satisfying, but just how far can we go in this direction? Christ speaks on this subject when He said, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" (Matt. 10:37). If we forsake the assembly to be with friends and relatives, are we not violating these words of Christ? Aren't we showing more concern for them than for our Lord who went to the cross for us? Who can with a good conscience say NO? The fact is, we can usually find a way to visit with friends and relatives without denying our Lord who gave Himself for us.

Compromise For Overtime. More than once I've known of people who would completely forsake the assembling of God's people on the Lord's day because they had an opportunity to earn more money by overtime pay. Is that not saying a little money is more important than putting Christ first? The church at Laodicea must have thought so, but Christ would "spew" [vomit] them out unless they repented.

Sitting With The Dead. Earlier we noted the example of the person who wanted to bury his father before following Christ. People will some times go to a funeral home to sit with dead people and others while putting our Lord in second place or less.

Sunday Sickness. It is quite common for brethren to be "sick" on the Lord's Day and unable to attend the assembly. That is actually some times a fact, and the Lord would not expect one to assemble if not physically able to do so. But that is not the kind of sickness under consideration here. Take for instance the person who is too sick to attend services on Sunday but without any improvement that person shows up for work on Monday as usual. Doesn't that raise a question as to what is considered most important, work or meeting to worship God?

Too Tired. Tired people go to work but fail to assemble with the Lord's people. Don't you imagine that the apostle Paul and others often got so very tired, that resting would have felt better? In various cases even physical persecution didn't bring about compromise of duty, much less being too tired doing so.

THE FALLOUT OR INFLUENCE OF FAILING TO SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Our influence is an important factor in serving God acceptably. Christ says we are "the salt of the earth" (Matt. 5:13), and "the light of the world" (v. 14). He goes on to say that men should see our good works and our Father in heaven glorified. Not only is the Lord aware of our activities, but also the same

Brethren Adopt The Social Gospel, As They Endeavor To Narrow The "Achievement Gap" Between Black And White Students

An article entitled, "**Churches help narrow school 'achievement gap'**" appeared in the *Murray Ledger & Times*, A Murray newspaper, Sept. 3, 2004. The content of the article is by Charles Wolfe, Associated Press Writer. The article by Wolfe appeared in other papers in this area. We shall note some excerpts from it.

PADUCAH, Ky. (AP) – The 5,000 square-foot addition under construction at Ninth Street Church of Christ in Paducah is for more than a growing congregation.

Pastor Mark Rowe is getting ready for an increase in a different flock — the pupils from Paducah elementary schools who for two years have been coming to his church on Wednesday nights for homework help, a meal, and tutoring in math, English and writing.

Rowe's western Kentucky congregation is at the forefront of an effort by local churches and community organizations to help Paducah Independent Schools narrow the "achievement gap" between black and white students.

Rowe's congregation collaborates with another, Broadway Church of Christ, which has a Monday night tutoring program that complements the Wednesday program at Ninth Street.

The "Social Gospel" as an organization began many decades ago. It has since been adopted by many denominations and is now being adopted by a great many congregations of the church, the account above being a very current example.

The Social Gospel is known for its emphasis upon the "here and now," not the hereafter. It is concerned with providing for people whatever they want, and in areas that have nothing whatsoever to do with the area of spiritual things. There is much emphasis upon the secular.

To the influence of the Social Gospel can be attributed the providing of recreation by the

church to pacify the entertainment craze now seen in many churches, including the Lord's church in a great many places.

Not only is the providing of recreation in vogue now, there are a great many other secular things being provided which are not authorized works of the church. It has long since been recognized that the authorized work of the church includes and is limited to three areas: Evangelism, Edification and Benevolence. Years ago, when the denominational people went all out to provide secular things in the name of religion, it would only be a matter of time until our brethren were copying the activities of those around them. This trend is gaining momentum now.

The activity of the Ninth Avenue church of Christ is being applauded by various sources, but God's approval is completely lacking. That the black students are behind in secular education is a matter of fact, but that is not a problem for the Lord's church to settle.

The above article zeroes in on the activity of the Ninth Street church, but the Broadway church of Christ collaborates with them in their secular endeavor. The Broadway congregation has been known for its unauthorized activities before now. Some time ago a Broadway building program was to cost just over three million dollars. The program included a Family Life Center for one million dollars. This was to provide for their "Recreation Ministry" as well as other things. Dan Owen, preacher at Broadway says they bring in high school students to help them with their homework.

Brethren, we, our brethren, should get back to the work our Lord has given us to do. It is the work of the home, not the church, to educate children, provide entertainment for them, and provide other secular needs.

--Walter Pigg

remember that when Moses did not return from the mount when the people thought he should (cf. Isa. 55:8-9), they asked Aaron to make them gods to go before them (Ex. 32:1), Aaron complied with the people's request (Ex. 32:2-6), and then in attempting to defend his willful sin seeks to place the blame on the people and the fire (Ex. 32:22-23,24). A tremendous lesson that all need to learn is that each person is responsible for his own deeds (2 Cor. 5:10). No one inherits the sins of someone else, but the soul that chooses to sin will die unless he repents and turns from that sin (Ezek. 18:20; Lk. 13:3).

We live in a society today where the majority of folks refuse to accept the responsibility for their actions. Most people want to pin the blame for their sins on someone else. So many always see their sins and shortcomings as the fault of someone else. Some are convinced the government owes them a living and thus blame the government for all their troubles. Children blame their parents, parents blame their children, a wife blames her husband, and a husband blames his wife. Juries play a game by blaming the gun instead of the one who commits the murder. The cry is then heard by those who refuse to think or reason either logically or correctly, "Ban firearms; outlaw guns." Do these same people take the position that it is not the fault of arsonist but the fault of the match? Is gasoline at fault that arsonists use? Do we hear demands that we ban matches and gasoline? Surely one can see the truth that those guilty of sin cannot successfully pin the blame for their wickedness on something or someone else. One can overcome his environment, but one's environment cannot overcome a person who is determined to make the right choices!

Some today claim to be on the Lord's side without having any knowledge of what the Bible teaches. How can one claim to be a follower of the Lord and not know the Lord's teachings? Time and time again when trying to teach

others a doctrinal truth they say, "I did not know that was in the Bible." One must "*give diligence (study) to present [himself] approved of God...*" (2 Tim. 2:15). How can one be on the Lord's side and not even know what the Bible has to say about a religious or spiritual matter?

How can one be on the Lord's side without doing what the Lord said to be saved? Most people today believe they are saved because they claim they had some "religious experience." Have you tried searching the Scriptures to see if they say that having a "religious experience" is the way that one puts on Christ (Cf. Gal. 3:27)? Does salvation come by a religious experience or is it true that "*he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved...*" (Mk. 16:16)? Does "belief or faith only" justify one who so believes even though James writes, "*that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only*" (Jas. 2:24). One can believe on Christ but refuse to confess it because he thinks more of man's teaching than he does of God's teaching (Jno. 12:42-43). One is not on the Lord's side who claims to have faith but steadfastly refuses to do what the Lord says one must do (Jas. 1:22).

One can be on the Lord's side only if he submits to and obeys the Lord's will. After the golden calf incident Moses said, "*Whoso is on Jehovah's side, let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him*" (Exo. 32:26). It does no good to claim to be on the Lord's side and then refuse to answer His call. The Lord calls all today through the gospel (2 Thess. 2:14). There is only one gospel; all other so-called gospels are perversions (Gal. 1:6-7). There is only "*one body*" (Eph. 4:4), and the Holy Scripture declares that "*the church*" is "*his body*" (Eph. 1:22-23). How can one claim to be a member of a man-made church that the Savior did not build and thus is not His body (Matt. 16:18)?

Are you on the Lord's side? Are you sure?

--5810 Liberty Grove Rd., Rowlett, TX 75030

influences people, whether good or bad. There is no way for us to measure the strength of our influence, but we know it is considerable. The Lord will take into account our influence for good and He will hold us responsible for our evil influence.

People outside the church watch us. What they see carries considerable weight. When we walk upright, as a Christian should, this gives the Lord's church a good name. When we walk otherwise we cast a reflection upon the church.

We are watched in several areas: our business dealings, our language, manner of dress, honesty and trustworthiness, our religious activities, and manner of life in general.

Not only do we influence people outside the church, we influence others within the church. This can be positive or negative. All members of the church have influence, but those in the more prominent places are likely to have a greater influence. For example, consider the elders, preacher, teachers, song leaders, servers at the Lord's table, making announcements, leading prayer, etc. When such members as this demonstrate that they are not "seeking first" the kingdom of God and His righteousness, their influence can do great damage. It serves as an example to some that one does not have to be faithful to take an active part in church activities. If prominent people in the church need not be faithful, others may ask themselves, "Why should I be faithful if they don't need to be?"

It would not go over well with some in the church if the preacher were remiss in his duties of the serving the Lord, as other prominent ones may be, yet without much concern on the part of others. New Christians are some times disappointed in what they see in older members, when the influence of those members is not what it should be.

Adult's influence upon children and young people. Children and young people often look up to adults as an example in spiritual things. What a tragedy when that influence is not for good. On

the other hand, what a blessing it is when that influence is positive and edifying.

Perhaps the greatest influence of adults upon children and young people is that of parents upon their offspring. What children see parents do they are likely to follow that example. Even very small children are much more observing than many of us realize. Even two or three year olds may wonder why mother and daddy choose not to attend the worship services. Even these little ones think they should, and when they fail, it may affect their little minds.

When we bring children into the world our greatest responsibility is to "bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). When we fail to "seek first" the things of our Lord, we are teaching our children by our example to do the very same thing. This may cost them their soul, and we are to be blamed. The example we set before our children is indeed an excellent way of showing our Love for God and for our children, as well as for our own souls. Our children can see when we are putting our Lord first, and when we are doing otherwise.

Just as it is all-important to understand what it means to "seek first," it is all-important to understand and consider what we are seeking. It is in this important area that there is overwhelming misunderstanding. Let us note some easily understood teaching on this subject.

"THE KINGDOM OF GOD"

The terms "Kingdom of God" and "Kingdom of Heaven" are used many times in the New Testament. They are often used interchangeably. It is the "Kingdom of God" in the sense of the sphere of His dominion. It is a "kingdom" from the standpoint of government. It is also the "Kingdom of Christ." It is the "Kingdom of Heaven" (used 32 times in Matthew) in that it is from heaven. While it exists here on earth, it is "not of this world." It would be difficult to overemphasize the importance of "The Kingdom of God," inasmuch as it involves God's plan of salvation for man.

That is why we shall give some serious attention to it.

The Kingdom Of God Is The Church. This clear and forceful fact is misunderstood and denied by multitudes. The Jehovah's Witness teach that the kingdom is yet to come, although they teach that it came in 1914 and people didn't recognize it. They do not accept the fact that the kingdom is the church, though the New Testament shows that the church that Christ built was in existence then. The Premillennialists teach that the Kingdom is to be established in the land of Palestine some time in the future. Even some of the followers of Christ failed to understand that His kingdom would be a spiritual one and not an earthly kingdom. So many religious people fail to understand the clear teaching of the New Testament on this essential subject. This puts their soul in jeopardy.

That the Kingdom is the church couldn't be made clearer than what it was by the words of Christ himself, when he said, "...upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven..." (Matt. 16:18-19). Paul wrote that God "hath delivered us out of the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Col. 1:13). The kingdom of Christ is also referred to as "the body" of Christ. Paul said of Christ, "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he should have the preeminence" (Col. 1:18).

John spoke of Christ's kingdom, saying, "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mk. 3:2). Jesus preached, "...Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17). The twelve were told to preach, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 10:7). Christ said, "...That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom come with power" (Mk. 9:1). Peter, speak-

ing of David, said, "Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up one to sit on his throne; he seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ" (Acts 2:30-31). Christ is now reigning on the throne of His kingdom, which is His church.

God's rule through His kingdom, the church, began on the day of Pentecost, as recorded in Acts 2. This is also the church which Christ said He would build, a kingdom of which he would be the head, the "King of kings."

The importance of the kingdom. In spite of the fact that many, if not most, of those calling themselves Christians do not believe it is necessary to be a part of Christ's kingdom or church in order to be saved, God's word teaches exactly the opposite.

Paul says that "Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body" (Eph. 5:23). In the very beginning of the church "...the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47). To be "in Christ" is to be in His body where salvation is found (2 Tim. 2:10). The body of Christ is the church and the church is the kingdom of God and Christ. Those outside Christ have "no hope" and are "without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12). Paul says that God has blessed us "with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph. 1:3). Those blessings are available only in the body of Christ, which is His church.

The importance, even the essentiality, of the church should be recognized by its purchase price. The church which Christ said He would build, of which the prophets had prophesied, was "purchased with his own blood" (Acts 20:28). Why would Christ have suffered on the cross for that which is not essential? He "tasted death for every man" (Heb. 2:9), but benefit from His death is found only in His church.

How to enter His church or kingdom. Since we have seen that salvation is found only in His church or kingdom, it is of the greatest impor-

version was based on what they heard. Teaching us that Christianity is based upon the facts as revealed in God's word and not on emotions or feelings as some falsely allege. How sad that many base their salvation upon their feelings, not on a "thus saith the Lord." The Apostles told the now believing Jews that they were to, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38).

This demonstrates that when the gospel is preached in its purity and totality that it has the effect that God desires. The gospel is a separating agency. It separates the saved from the lost. It is the power of God unto salvation and never returns void. It accomplishes its purpose. A watered down or abbreviated gospel loses its power to save and is no longer effective. This is the tendency of mankind with the passing of time, therefore God's people must always hold to the fundamentals, and if we stray we must return again to them.

As long as the basic, fundamentals were followed the church grew and prospered, just as was true of Israel of old. But in the process of time the basics were neglected and apostasy followed. It was not long before the creeds and doctrines of men replaced the gospel of Christ, and so entered the dark ages. When the foundation of the Lord's church stands upon the bedrock of the gospel it will weather all storms but when the foundation becomes the sandy soil of human creeds it will fall. The doctrines of men profit nothing (Matt. 15:9).

Throughout the years there have been departures from the once delivered faith, as the appeal of the idols of self-will have been erected and bowed down to. The grass of denominations seems so green and appealing and many no longer desire the sincere milk of the word. But as long as God's people hold to the fun-

damental truth revealed in His word, the gates of Hades shall not prevail against His church. Those who cry for a new gospel for a new age and the abandonment of time tested and proven hermeneutics, and seek to replace the truth with their self concocted idols which they bow down to and worship. It is their golden calf. They have nothing new. It is just the old, old error in a new dress. Our Lord has already spoken of this false philosophy. Jesus has warned us that on the judgment day those who concoct their own "good works" will be accountable. "I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matt. 7:23).

The challenge for every generation of the Lord's church is that we not grow weary in well doing, but that we remain steadfast and unmovable. We honor Jesus by keeping His word. We show our love for our Lord by keeping His commandments (Jno. 14:15). --1186 Martha Leeville Rd., Lebanon, TN 37087

Who Is On The Lord's Side?

Marvin L. Weir

Last Lord's Day morning I preached a sermon by the above title. It is a challenging and soul-searching question that every person needs to seriously consider. There is coming a day of reckoning — a day of judgment — when every knee will bow and every tongue will confess "*that Jesus is the Lord, to the glory of the Father*" (Phil. 2:10-11). We are commanded to love God with all our heart, soul, and mind (Matt. 22:37). We are required to "*seek...first his kingdom, and his righteousness...*" (Matt. 6:33). We must possess the attitude of the Savior and always worship and serve only the true and living God (Matt. 4:10; Jno. 4:24). One is not able to divide his loyalties between "*two masters; for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to one, and despise the other...*" (Matt. 6:24).

It is, therefore, of utmost importance as to who is on the Lord's side. You will

Page 12

The Need to Return to Foundational Truth

Lloyd Gale

When a professional golfer who has been the top of the leader board for a long time finds that he is no longer making the cuts in competition, what does he do? He goes back to the practice tee and works on the basics. The same principle applies to a football team that has suddenly began to lose games that they should have won. The coach watches the game films and notices how tackles were missed and blocking assignments were not properly performed. The coach notices that on the offense that the pass receivers were not running their pass routes correctly. You may rest assured that the next practice will be a return to the basics.

For a number of years I earned a living for my family and me in sales work that involved selling to professional buyers. A sales presentation had to be brief and yet it had to cover all the reasons why the buyer should buy. These sales presentations were carefully crafted with the buyer in mind. When the basics were carefully followed the results were usually good. But some times I would become bored with the same presentation over and over again and would shortcut my presentation. When I did this sales that I should have made were lost. I would have to review what I was doing wrong and return to the basic presentation.

When the gospel first began to be preached it was preached in its purity and perfection. The results were spectacular. The Apostles and others who were preaching in the beginning made no apology for its distinctive message of salvation. The Apostle Paul said: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16).

An honest and sincere student of the New Testament will learn that the majority of the Jews

rejected the truth that one must be a Christian to be saved in the last days [the Christian age]. Only those Jews who were intellectually honest and sincere about their salvation would hear, believe and obey the gospel. On the day of Pentecost after the Lord ascended in heaven a multitude of devout Jews from various nations gathered. They had been guilty of asking for the crucifixion of Jesus. But they were also witnesses of the recent events concerning Jesus. These devout Jews were from many different nations and they spoke the languages of those nations.

When the day of Pentecost had fully come the promise of Jesus to send a Comforter to His ambassadors was fulfilled. They would be given a perfect memory of all that Jesus had said and did and would be guided into all truth. But they were Galileans and so the Holy Spirit performed a miracle enabling the apostles to preach the first gospel sermon in the several languages of those assembled. It is called the gift of tongues. Tongue speaking as revealed in God's word is not unintelligent gibberish or some sort of prayer language but a known, and understood language by some nation. This enabled the Jews who were assembled on that Pentecost, to hear the first gospel sermon ever preached in their own language.

As Peter and the other apostles spoke to those devout Jews in their own native language they were first reminded of what the Old Testament prophets had spoken concerning the coming of the Messiah. They were told plainly, "this is that." As they reflected on the words of the prophets and combined that with the recent events they were convinced that Jesus is the Messiah and realized their sins in seeking His death. Perhaps they wondered what will God do and they cried out, "men and brethren what shall we do?" Now the scripture records that their conviction and con-

science that one know how to enter it, if there is a desire to be saved from sin and inherit eternal life. We are blessed in the fact that God's word tells what we need to know in order to enter Christ's church. Churches of men have various ways for people to enter them. Since a church built by men is not the one which Christ built, we need not expect its terms of entrance to be the same as those of Christ's church. Terms of entrance are extremely important in that a church whose terms of entrance are different to that which we find in God's word, shows that it is the wrong church.

Though the church, the kingdom of God and of Christ, was in the mind of God from the beginning (Eph. 3:10-11), it would be many centuries down the stream of time before the church became a reality. The prophets prophesied of it, John, Christ, and the apostles spoke of it as being "at hand." But Christ would offer Himself as a sacrifice, shedding His blood by which His church would be purchased, before the church actually became a reality. We find a record of this happening in Acts 2.

Peter and the other apostles preached the word as guided by the Holy Spirit. Jews, realizing their guilt in the crucifixion of Jesus, who was "both Lord and Christ," asked Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). In response to that question those Jews were informed as to how they might become a part of the kingdom, the church of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Spirit guided response to this all important question of how to make right their wrongs is recorded in Acts 2:38: "The Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...." Peter spoke "many other words," warning the Jews to save themselves from "this unto-ward generation." The result was, "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls" (Ac. 2:40-41). Then, in verse 47,

we learn, "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." From this point onward in the new Testament we see the New Testament church, or the kingdom of God and Christ in existence.

In a study of the conversions recorded in the book of Acts we see a pattern of conversion. In every case God's word was heard. This was necessary to make possible the faith which God requires, as stated in Hebrews 11:6: "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." The required faith must be such that it will lead one to repent of sins, another requirement of God, as shown in Acts 17:30 and Luke 13:3. Conversion includes that good confession one makes in confessing faith in Christ. The eunuch, taught by Philip when he "preached unto him Jesus," was asked to confess his faith in Christ, before Philip baptized him (Acts 8:35-40). Paul, referring to the confession of faith in Christ, said "...and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. 10:10).

The next step to take in conversion is that of baptism for remission of sins. When this step is taken one has been "delivered from the power of darkness," and has been translated "into the kingdom of his dear Son, In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sin" (Col. 1:13-14). We noted earlier that those in Acts 2, were commanded to be baptized "for the remission of sins." In Acts 22:16, Ananias told Saul to be baptized "and wash away thy sins...."

It is interesting to note that in the recorded cases of conversion, those converted heard God's word, as a basis of faith. It is also interesting to note that in every single case of conversion, baptism was the consummating act. When one is scripturally baptized a number of things happen. One is baptized "into Jesus Christ," and also reaches the blood of Christ when "baptized into his death" (Rom. 6:3-4).

When one is baptized into Christ, the Lord adds that person to the church. When this happens one is then a member of “the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (I Tim. 3:15).

It is such a common teaching that conversion, the means by which one gets into the kingdom or church, as we have noted, does not include baptism. This means that one is not “in Christ” where salvation is found (2 Tim. 2:10). This means that one is not in the body of Christ, of which He is the head and Savior. This means that one is “without Christ...having no hope, and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12). Without baptism one does not have access to “all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. 1:3).

From the above, and things pointed out in other places, one can see why one should **seek first the kingdom of God**. However, as important as it is to seek first the kingdom of God, there is another matter of great importance, which must be considered in order to receive the blessings of the kingdom which are in store for the faithful. That matter is:

“HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS”

Vine's definition of God's “righteousness” as it is used in Matthew 6:33, is very clear and easy to understand: “the sum total of the requirements of God, Matt. 6:33.” We can be thankful that we can know what is meant by the “righteousness” which we are to “seek first.” Now that we know that it is “the sum total of the requirements of God,” it is simply a matter of knowing what God requires of us. Again, we can be thankful that the “scripture inspired of God” (2 Tim. 3:16-17), instructs or guides us completely. There is no lack inspired instructions as to how we are to live to please God.

“...all thy commandments are righteousness,” so said the Psalmist in Psalm 119:172. The idea behind righteousness is that of being **right**. In this case it is being right with God, by doing His will,

by keeping His commandments. God's will, which includes many commands, promised blessings and the opportunity to know His will, is found only in His word.

It is highly important to realize that seeking God's kingdom, or church, is necessary to have God's approval. But it is also highly important that we seek God's “righteousness.” One could have great zeal in seeking the kingdom of God, yet fail to seek God's “righteousness.” Paul said of Israel, “that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge” (Rom. 10:2). He goes on to say, “For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God” (v.3).

When people don't seek and understand God's righteousness, they may go along with all manner of things which are nothing more than the ideas of men. In our time an increasing number of people are going about to “establish their own righteousness,” and do not submit themselves to the righteousness of God.

It is impossible for one to seek and to **find** God's righteousness without understanding and submitting to God's authority. God's word is truth (Jno. 17:17). To transgress God's authority [law] is sin (I Jno. 3:4). I have been recently corresponding with a young man who is very confused about what it means to do God's will. Instead of taking God's word as the only authority in faith and practice, he thinks that what a man comes up with as to what the word teaches, including one's opinion, is right. This places the meaning of God's word in the minds of men rather than in the unchanging word of God. On that basis just about anything man wishes to do can be justified. In fact, we are seeing a great amount of this very thing.

Seeking the righteousness of God includes many things which are clearly “requirements of God.” It might be well for us to do a little self examination, just to see how we

Page 9

stand as member our Lord's body, the church. Paul told the Corinthians to “Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith” (2 Cor. 13:5). The following questions could be helpful in that examination.

1. Am I truly trying to seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness? Yes. No.

2. Do I transgress and fail to abide in the “doctrine of Christ”? Yes. No. If my answer is “Yes,” I do not have God's approval (2 Jno. 9).

3. Do I forsake the assembly of the saints in violation of Heb. 10:24-25? Yes. No.

4. Do I make it a habit of being late for the church services? Yes. No.

5. Are some things more important to me than meeting with the saints? Yes. No.

6. Do I try to teach and encourage others to become Christians and/or be more faithful in serving the Lord? Yes. No.

7. Do I break God's law by fellowshiping brethren in error? Yes. No.

8. Is my study of God's word sufficient to help me to be edified, to become stronger in my faith as Peter commands? Yes. No.

9. When I have two things to do; one in serving the Lord and the other serving myself, do I always choose the first? Yes. No.

10. Is my speech and dress such as would be a good example as a Christian? Yes. No.

11. Do I believe God's word will be the same on judgment day as it is now? Yes. No.

12. Am I sure there is only one cause for divorce and remarriage? Yes. No.

13. Is it possible that one may find salvation in a man-made church? Yes. No.

14. Is it my belief that one can be forgiven of a public sin without repentance? Yes. No.

The above questions are but a few of the many that could be asked. If you would, check each question and see what your score is. If you answered “Yes” or “No” more than seven times, are you able to defend your answer?

Many brethren would answer the questions in a different way than they would have thirty or forty years ago, or even less.

SOME CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

What a great change there would be if our brethren really took to heart the words of our Lord when He said: “**But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.**” It is no less than amazing that so much is comprehended in so few words. Our destinies will be determined by the way we respond to these great words of Christ who died for us.

The above words are quoted so often, and rightly so, but just how much meaning do we attach to them. Are we dead serious about doing the Lord's bidding in this instance? It is possible that we could become like the scribes and Pharisees to whom Christ spoke. He said, “This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their hear is far from me” (Matt. 15:8). Note that I said we could become like the scribes and Pharisees. In view of reality and the way some of our brethren fail to put the Lord first, in various ways, this is not just an imaginary possibility.

As I see it, from my study of God's word, our Lord **Must Be First**. I don't see how anyone could reach any other conclusion that is based on the teaching of His word. It is not a matter of seeing someone “once in a while” who doesn't put the Lord first, it is a common thing. Much of it is not because we don't know better, but rather that we just don't choose to do better, and what is right in God's sight.

We are indeed living in what Paul called “perilous times.” Our society is morally corrupt, but I firmly believe that if we would take to heart our Lord's command, making it the most important thing in our lives, as it should be, that our influence would reach out to others who truly want to do God's will in making preparation for the day of judgment, when we shall be judged by His words (John 12:48).

Let us pray, and work with all our might, that the precious words of our Lord will be taken seriously.

--- Walter W. Pigg, editor