

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

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Worship 10:00 a.m. 6:00 p.m.

Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 p.m.

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why then do you suppose he left out the date of the most famous birth in history? I guess we don't *need to know*. Not only that, given the grand-scale nature of the religious celebration of Christmas, why didn't the Holy Spirit put anything in the Bible about *when* and *how* it ought to be done? If we don't *need to know* anything about such a celebration, then we surely do not need to be doing what the Lord said of the Samaritans: "worship[ping] that which [we] know not" (Jno. 4:22).

Think about James, the half-brother of Jesus. Undoubtedly he had to have known the month and day on which his brother was born as surely as I know the same information about my brothers. He was one through whom the Holy Spirit set forth things we *need to know*, and yet he makes no mention of what millions fervently believe they do know and need. Dear reader, think about the "green" grass and December 25th with all the religious pageantry and circumstance that goes with it. Let's stick with the "green" grass and all the other things set forth in Holy Writ: need them; know them, and do them with all your being.

There is **one** day — no, (are) two days — about which the Holy Spirit has given us information which we *need to know*. One is the first day of the week. On this day, the Savior arose from the dead. On this day, the gospel was preached in fact, and saved persons were "added to the church" (Ac. 2:47). On this day, Christians came together as a body, in each locality, for worship (I Cor. 11:16–16:2). On "the first day of every week" (NASB), Christians will commemorate every aspect of the life of Jesus, including His birth; but most especially his death and resurrection (I Cor. 11:26).

The other day is the Day of Judgment (Rom. 2:5–10). We *need only to know* that it is coming and we must be prepared. "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith" we *need to know*. —AA

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The Urgent Need For And Basis Of Optimism Within The Lord's Church

The need for optimism within the Lord's church is indeed a pressing one, but thanks be to God that the basis of optimism is adequate to insure it. True belief in God cultivates optimism.

In the following discussion we shall reflect upon the two items suggested in the title. In Section One, we shall consider the urgent need for optimism within the Lord's church. In Section Two, we shall examine the powerful and adequate basis of that needed optimism. It goes without saying that every God-loving and Heaven-seeking person should concentrate on these two important things.

Though the term "optimism" is generally understood, let us allow *Webster* define it: "A tendency to look on the more favorable side of events or conditions." The antonym of optimism is "pessimism." We have heard the two terms exemplified in the following way. The optimist says, "Every cloud has a silver lining," whereas the pessimist says, "Every silver lining has a cloud." In other words, one looks on the bright side and the other looks on the dark side. The former we urgently need to cultivate and the latter we need to

eliminate. It is probably the case that just about every one of us needs to work on these two things. As we continue our discussion we trust that we may point out some things which will help us to be more successful in accomplishing this objective. We begin this effort by considering:

SECTION I – THE URGENT NEED FOR OPTIMISM WITHIN THE LORD'S CHURCH

In order to emphasize the need for optimism it is needful to consider some of the things which must be overcome. There are various things which hinder optimism. Where pessimism prevails, optimism will be more difficult to obtain. We need to be aware of those things, in order that we can cope with them. It is, however, very important that we always keep in mind that we can overcome those hindrances and maintain a spirit of optimism, if that is our never-failing objective. →

BANNER OF TRUTH

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Continued from Page 1

We shall now consider some things which impede optimism, though the list is not exhaustive.

A SOCIETY OF MORRAL CORRUPTION. Those who have been around for any length of time have seen the encroachment of moral corruption within our society. Anymore it is: About anything goes. We have seen the breakdown of the home, where half of the marriages fail and millions live together without marriage. Sexual permissiveness has become so common that few even lift an eyebrow under virtually any circumstance. It has come to the point that virtually no one is responsible for his actions; someone else is always to blame. Dishonesty is so common that a person's word often means little or nothing. Such immoral things as abortion, homosexuality, and laziness are favored in political circles to gain support. Even some of the religions which claim to be Christian, are now upholding immoral things which are clearly condemned by God's word.

THE OPPOSITION TO EVERY VESTIGE OF GODLY INFLUENCE. Just a few decades ago, who would have thought that there would now be concerted efforts to do away with God's influence in virtually every area of society? Immorality is "IN," but God is "OUT." As we look to the future, there is little reason to think things will return to the better condition known to many of us in days gone by. Why is this so? Indifference in society has never before reached the present degree. When people do not care what happens, things get worse, not better.

Having generally considered some things about our society, we shall call attention to some things within the Lord's church which encourage pessimism and make optimism more difficult to maintain. To deny these things is to deceive ourselves, and impede the optimism which is necessary to serve God in an effective and acceptable way. Please bear in mind that there are many warnings set forth in the New Testament about conditions which would come to pass. Equally important is the fact that we are assured that we can overcome all evil things which would destroy our soul. To this we shall give much attention later in this discussion. The items we shall mention are not in particular order. We begin with a major impediment to optimism.

FALSE BRETHREN. "False brethren" are mentioned twice in the New Testament. In 2 Corinthians 11, Paul lists a catalogue of things which he had faced in his serving Christ. In verse 26, he mentions a number of "perils" which he faced. One of those was, "in perils among false brethren." In Galatians 2:4, Paul says, "And because of false brethren brought in unawares, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage."

"False brethren" is from *pseudadelphos* and it means "a false brother, i.e. one who ostentatiously professes to be a Christian, but is destitute of Christian knowledge and piety" [Thayer, p. 675]. Ostentatious means: "1. characterized by pretentious show in an attempt to impress others. 2. intended to attract notice" [Webster]. In other words, a "false brother" is one who pretentiously attempts to impress others that he is something he is not.

Having observed "false brethren" for more than five decades, the definition is apt. Only the Lord

to know; we conclude quite naturally, that nothing in that which God has given us (the Word) is superfluous, or trivial. There are *no space fillers* (anyone who's ever written a high school term paper knows what this means.) in the Bible. Even the seemingly tedious, common, personal, incidental things recorded in Scripture, if mulled, turned over and pondered will be seen to meet that *need to know* requirement. We don't have space to list them all, but let's consider a few —

1, Paul's personal concern over Timothy's "stomach" (I Tim. 5:23). It's easy for us to get so wrapped up in our own problems and infirmities that we forget about other people. Maybe, thinking about the plight of others would help put our own in the background. Look at the very man who writes with concern about young Timothy's problem— Paul. Who has covered the ground traversed by this man?

2, Paul's request that Timothy bring his "cloak...books, especially the parchments" (2 Tim. 4:13). Another sermon. This epistle was written somewhere around 67 to 68 A.D. Paul is quite on in years, and after all his hard and honorable work, he's in prison. Perhaps a cold and dank place; he needed something for warmth. A christian, even one as great as Paul, is not a superman. He gets cold, he gets lonely (9), not to mention dealing with bitterness at being treated unjustly, and the fickleness of fair-weather friends. But, when we live in the Lord and the Lord in us, we do what we can for ourselves (the cloak), and if we are one of those "who have loved his appearing" (8), we somehow keep it all in perspective. Deny him freedom and maltreat him in other ways, but you can't keep a good man down; you can't lock up his soul, his mind — thus, the books and parchments. You can bet these weren't comic books; and, they sure weren't the TV. Wouldn't it be wonderful if American christians, free as birds, fat and sassy, were as concerned with study and meditation upon things holy and Divine?

3, Mark said the grass was "green" (Mk. 6:39). The setting is the feeding of the five thousand. This was an unusual preacher's problem: too many people! The Master and his disciples went "apart" to one "desert" place, only not "apart" enough. When people want to find the Lord, there's no stopping them. They got on a boat to go to another place of solitude; nothing doing, they "ran...on foot from all the cities and

outwent them." Imagine every local church today with members like this. I'll guarantee there was not a single clock watching, whining person there. Anyway, to the point.

Each of the Gospels records that marvelous meal that seemed destined to disaster. Each records the Lord's order that the people "sit down" (I'll resist this sermon!). Luke tells us He told them to "sit down in companies, about fifty each," and Mark speaks of their sitting in "ranks." People simply need order and organization; the notion that one can be a christian without being a part of a local, organized church is not in the Bible. Matthew shows that the Lord told them to "sit down on the grass." Our Lord is never inconsiderate or unthoughtful, neither should we be. John adds the element "much grass," and then beloved John Mark says it was "green grass."

This is not space filler. Each writer, though imbued with and guided by the blessed Spirit of God, was concerned with historical detail. You see, this is one among a million things that separates Christianity from every human religion. It has been meticulously recorded as it unfolded from Adam to Jesus, then own through the Acts. Try as he might, the infidel has never found Holy Writ in error, on even the quaintest detail.

True, "flesh and blood" are not going to ultimately "inherit the kingdom" (I Cor. 15:50), but we do start out the journey encamped in this "tabernacle" (2 Cor. 5:1). Mark's "green" grass appeals to the aesthetic part of man, reminding us that "God giveth us all things richly to enjoy" (I Tim. 6:17), and that we ought to, periodically, "stop and smell the roses." It also tells me that the Savior was concerned about comfort and beauty. If he was that concerned about "green" grass, even "much" grass on this planet that will one day be "burned up" (2 Pet. 3:10), then can you imagine what He has prepared for us *over there* (Jno 14:2)? It would be fun to look at even more of this, but we must finally consider,

WHAT'S THIS GOT TO DO WITH CHRISTMAS?

It is generally conceded of Christmas that it is **not in the Bible**. But now, think about it from this angle: If the Holy Spirit — given our *need to know* what we need to know — used such incidentals as "green" grass, Timothy's "stomach," Paul's "cloak," as well as literally thousands of other such incidentals; →

Inspiration, Incidentals, The “Need To Know,” And Christmas

REVELATION

“Revelation” is connected to the idea of *information*. *Information* is potential knowledge. In last week’s article, we dealt with I Corinthians 2 wherein Paul spoke of the “mystery,” and “[hidden] wisdom” of God. He called such the “things” or the “deep things” of God. At one point he said the “rulers of this world” did not “know...” these “things,” in fact could not have “known...these things” because God had not “revealed” them. These “things” are no longer a mystery because “unto us God revealed them through the Spirit...yea, the deep things of God.” What did Paul and the other apostles do with this “revealed” *information*? In Ephesians 3:1-4, he says essentially three things: 1, I got what I know “by revelation”; 2, I “wrote” what was “revealed” in “words”; 3, You can “read” what I wrote; and, 4, You can thereby “perceive my understanding in the mystery of Christ. Thus, the *information* has moved from God, through the Holy Spirit, through Paul, into the written words of Paul, and finally to us. Let’s then think about,

INSPIRATION

Were Paul and the others left to use their mortal, fallible brains and abilities to put into words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs this Divinely-given *information*? The Bible claims to be the very Word of God. Literally hundreds of times, we read mere mortals making such claims as “Thus saith the Lord,” or “This is the commandment of the Lord.”

One writer has said, “Christ was a divine as God and as human as Mary...In like manner the Bible is divine in that every single original word thereof was chosen and dictated by the Holy Spirit; and it is human in that human instruments were used to receive the revelation and accurately pen the words selected by the Holy Spirit.”

Jesus calmly promised His apostles, “...be not anxious how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of you Father that speaketh in you” (Matt. 10:19-20). Here Jesus couples the *what* (the information) with the *how*. Paul described the extent, the pervasiveness, of this marvelous promise of power when he said of the apostles’ words, “Which things also we speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit

teacheth; combining spiritual things with spiritual words” (I Cor. 2:13). Jesus viewed the Scriptures as being Divine and authoritative right down to the very “jot [and] tittle” (Matt. 5:18).

That Heaven-sent *information* was too priceless to be allowed to come by way of a mere mortal process. What we have: the Bible, words on pages, is “every Scripture inspired of God” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). “Inspired” — far different from our common usage — comes from the Greek *theopneustos*. This is a compound word, formed from the word for “God,” and the word for “breath.” Mouth, breath, words: these things tend to travel together. What we have at our disposal, the Bible, is from the mouth of God.

Think, for a moment, about the omniscience of the Holy Spirit, whose task it was to bring to man, through man, the complete Will of God. Because, when the Spirit spoke “by the mouth” (Cf. Acts 1:16), or the pen (cf. Eph. 3:4) of Paul: He (the Spirit) so thoroughly knew and infused the mind, experiences, memories, tastes, vocabulary, etc. of Paul, that what came through Paul sounds so very much like Paul. The same, when He communicated through Luke, the physician. One cannot but notice the telltale medical terms used throughout those books penned by Luke. This, in turn, leads us to ponder...

PERSONAL, INCIDENTAL (NEVER TRIVIAL); YET, INSPIRED THINGS

This brings us back to the discussion I mentioned; the one which prompted this article. Divine Revelation has provided us with all the *information* we need to know. Sometimes in movies and books, we come across that phrase, *need to know*. Usually it refers to “intelligence” matters, top secret or classified things. Such information is said to be given out only on a *need-to-know* basis. Well, in a sense, as seen above, God’s ultimate purpose — the Christ and His church (Eph. 3:9-10) — was for a long time classified; even angels were cut out of the *information* circle (cf. I Pet. 1:12). But, to finish the analogy, ever since the First Century, the Freedom of Information Act has been in effect and we have access to **everything** we *need to know*.

Operating under the premise that God has given us everything we *need to know*, and that on the basis that we *need to know* everything he has given us ↓

knows how many brethren have been led away from the truth by false brethren. Brethren too often fail to heed the warnings give in the New Testament. Christ said, “beware of false prophets” (Matt. 7:15). The apostle Paul sounded the following warning: “For I know this that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things to draw away disciples after them” (Acts 20:29-30). Peter warned, “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you...” (2 Pet. 2:1-2). John said, “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1).

The number of false brethren is surely at an all time high. To make it even worse, that number is increasing, as people leave the “old paths” and opt for a more “up to date” gospel. Respect for God’s truth has waned and efforts to please people by giving them what they want have increased by leaps and bounds. Reports come from all across our nation that teachers of error are prevailing at an unprecedented rate. It is not uncommon for families to worship at home because they cannot find a sound congregation with which to worship. Brethren living in areas where there are numerous local churches struggle to find a sound church. In the Nashville area, with as many as 150 congregations, few are they which still seek to walk in the “old paths.” Right here in our own area, where we have lived for twenty years, it is the case now that the majority of congregations have gone off into left field. Not that many people seem to be concerned. We commonly hear readers say, “It is the same way here.”

COMPROMISE WITH DENOMINATIONS. When I obeyed the gospel in 1953, the distinctiveness of the Lord’s church was heralded far and wide as the only church which Christ built and purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28). This appealed to those who were sincerely looking for the truth, as set forth in God’s word.

I have sadly seen a drastic change in a many brethren. I never thought that I would see so many of them give up their convictions with regard to the Lord’s church and the true gospel of Christ. As I look back and review all the warnings about false teachers and

departures from the faith, I realize that what I see now, as sad as it is, should not constitute a surprise. A vivid example of such departure was recently reported in the very liberal paper, *The Christian Chronicle*. In the August 2006 issue, they report on the “North American Christian Convention” was held in Louisville, Kentucky, an annual event of Independent Christian Churches.

One feature of the Convention was the exchange of Bibles between members of the Christian Church and churches of Christ. The exchange of Bibles had absolutely nothing to do with doctrinal matters, but the Convention did have a great deal to do with doctrinal matters. Some prominent leaders from the churches of Christ displayed their affinity for compromise with the Christian Church, thereby disavowing their belief in the one, distinctive, church of our Lord Jesus Christ. Present at the event were: Jeff Walling, Marvin Phillips, Jerry Taylor, President Royce Money of Abilene, and Rochester College President Mike Westerfield. Walling and David Stone, of the Southeast Christian Church in Louisville, exchanged Bibles. Walling is quoted as saying to Stone, “I want to tell you tonight, you are my brother.” From all indications, Walling is not the only one to think that way.

Such compromise with the Christian Church is just one of several examples. Abilene Christian University, with near five thousand students, represents no small influence. Not only is ACU compromising with the Christian Church, they are also compromising with a number of man-made churches. When thinking about the sad fact of compromise, we need to think of all those who are partakers in this error, not only at Abilene but at a number of other places. A matter which concerns me so much is that many of my brethren are not disturbed.

A LEADERSHIP CRISIS. If the church had been blessed with the leadership which God intended, we would not have been discussing much of the above. Not only has the lack of God-pleasing leadership allowed much error to creep in, in an increasing number of cases the leadership has been in the forefront of promoting error. True elders can be the most effective means of protecting the Lord’s church from error, while unqualified elders can be one of the most effective means by which error thrives and grows. What a great need there is for “Elder Training Schools.” →

FAILURE TO STUDY GOD’S WORD. A lack of spiritual knowledge invites all manner of error. It is all too evident that we are not studying God’s word as we should. I suppose this is more evident to me than to some given my fifteen years of publishing Banner of Truth and the contacts with many people it has afforded me. It is readily evident as to the difference in Bible knowledge when comparing older Christians to the younger. It is not a matter of intelligence, rather study. Not only is it important to know what God’s word teaches, it is equally important to have the proper respect for what it teaches. The oft quoted statement of years ago, “A thus saith the Lord,” is not heard nearly as regularly as it used to be. The results are very telling.

GOD’S LAW ON FELLOWSHIP IGNORED. God has a law on fellowship, as well as on many other important subjects. That law is clearly set forth by Paul: “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Eph. 5:11). “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them” (Rom. 16:17). “But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat” (I Cor. 5:11). John adds the following: “Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son....For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deed” (2 John 9-11).

In spite of God’s law on fellowship, many brethren are freely extend fellow to those, who according to God’s word, they ought not. Not only are brethren fellowshipping people in man-made churches, they are fellowshipping all manner of false teaching. The withdrawing of fellowship, which God’s word teaches, is seldom done. Some brethren are so bold as to say, “I just don’t believe it will work.” On a congregational basis, congregations advertise and fellowship congregations which are in error. When this happens, only harm can come from it. When error is fellowshiped it is encouraged.

SPIRITUAL INDIFERENCE. Not only do we see this in society in general, we see it within the Lord’s church. It is the case now that few things seem to disturb many brethren. When error occurs, even of a most serious nature, a few, comparatively speaking, may be disturbed. But then, with the passing of time, this concern may wane.

Why Write About Such Things?

We have no desire to demoralize, rather to point to the reality of some of the things we, as Christians, face. Paul said, “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come” (2 Tim. 3:1). We need to realistic and realize the things we face which could jeopardize our needed optimism. Some do not like to be reminded of these things, but their dislike is not based on the teaching of God’s word.

To defeat our enemy, the Devil, we need to be aware of his “devices” and “wiles.” The Devil, the “father” of lies, would have us believe that there is no way that we can overcome his efforts to gain control over us. But that is the greatest of lies.

As pointed out earlier, our discussion involves two Sections. In this Second Section we shall emphasize the basis for optimism. If we truly believe God’s word to be true, we can be and will be optimistic. We must be optimistic. Optimists are victorious whereas pessimists are failures and defeated.

SECTION II — THE BASIS OF OPTIMISM WITHIN THE LORD’S CHURCH

When thinking of the “perilous times” in which we live today, and they are indeed perilous, it’s good to reflect upon the Lord’s people in the first century. Why so? They faced many obstacles, some of which were even much more severe than anything we face today. Yet, in spite of this, they were able to maintain their faith, and leave this life victoriously. If they could do that, then there is no reason why we cannot do the same. Those early Christians faced a variety of severe persecutions, even to the point of having to give up their lives in death. We do not face anything nearly as severe. We are not even threatened with imprisonment for being a Christian and serving the Father and the Son, much less put to death. †

Readers’ Response

“Thanks for the bundle of back issues of Banner of Truth. They went like hot cakes. If you have any more of the Vol. 14, No. 10 I would like a couple more copies. I appreciate your stand for the truth of God’s word. So many have departed from it. I pray that you and your wife’s health will permit you many more years in the service of our Master.” – **Charles Miller.** *(We are happy to send back issues since we have copies of many issues. – Editor).*

“Please remove us from your mailing list. Thank you.” – **TN.** *(Thank you for letting us know that you no longer wish to receive BOT. – Editor).*

“Thank you very much for sending the extra copies of BOT. I plan to put them to good use. Enclosed is a bit for postage. This Outrage article makes me remember Ezekiel 9:4 – and how few it seems to me sigh and cry about it today. I thank God for preachers who cry aloud and spare not. God bless you and your wife and family.” – **Hibernia Weaver.** *(You are certainly right in that few seem to sigh and cry about the condition which exists today. Indifference has never been so prevalent. – Editor).*

“I recently saw one of your Banner of Truth booklets, the July 2006 edition. I would like to receive these booklets starting with the July edition. If you could, put me on you mailing list. Thank you.” – **Ellen Pace, KY.** *(You have been added and I put the August issue in the mail today. I’m working on the September issue. You will receive it. – Editor).*

“To Whom It May Concern: We wish to request at this time that you drop us from your mailing list.” – **AL.**

“I would like to subscribe to Banner of Truth monthly Publication. Please put me on your mailing list. Also, if you have past issues, kindly send them too. Thank you.” – **Francis Rajathurai, Singapore.**

“I’m enclosing a small token for your work on Banner of Truth. I would like all back copies. Please put me on you mailing list and send me a statement when needed. Thanking you in advance.” – **Mrs. Lola Mae Highbee, AR.** *(BOT is sent free to those requesting it. We do appreciate gifts, since this is the means by which it is made possible. – Editor).*

“Your efforts are fruitful for our Lord and his church!!! Your recent BOT was excellent and ‘Right On’ with the Truth. We, in the church are not ‘drawing the line’ as you so aptly stated. The enclosed check is for you. I will try to help periodically. May God give you good health and many more years to teach His word.” – **Billy Witt, MO.** *(Thanks for your help and concern for my health. That’s my wish. – Editor).*

“Thanks for sending us Banner of Truth. We really appreciate receiving a sound paper like this.” – **Downtown church of Christ, AR.**

“Here’s some personal help. We admire you and your good work. We pray that God will continue to help you in living a long life...Please show this as “anonymous.” *(We deeply appreciate those who make our work possible and the prayers for a longer life in which to work. I’m thankful that God has blessed me as He has. I had my 81st birthday last month, and my health is much improved over last year. I look forward to several more years. – Editor).*

“Although we appreciate your effort with ‘Banner of Truth,’ we must ask you to take us off your mailing list. At present we are overwhelmed with publications from various congregations, including our own. We are a very small rural congregation with very little space and very few men to take care of all our efforts. Although yours is a good publication, we end up throwing away most if not all of the newsletters we receive because our members have so many other weekly and monthly documents before them. We feel it is a waste of the Lord’s money to continue to receive these from your congregation. Good luck with your continued efforts to strive to reach out to others.” – **Stout Hill congregation, AL.** *(We are encouraged by the thousands who receive Banner of Truth, but when it is no longer considered useful by anyone, we very much appreciate being informed so that the Lord’s money will not be wasted. We encourage those who receive BOT to let us know if they receive more than they need, or if more are needed – Editor).*

“If the congregation where you worship publishes a church bulletin, would you please add me to your mailing list? I am in poor health with very limited mobility and am having difficulty obtaining enough doctrinally sound reading material to occupy my time. Thanks for any help.” – **Sharon Daniel, AR.** *(If others who have sound material to offer would like to send to this sister, her address is: P.O. Box 8, Reyno, AR 72462).*

“I’m very glad to introduce to you about this kind of letter, in my view. I’ve been reading Banner of Truth, as I can get it. And therefore, I would like to receive Banner of Truth and any back issues you have would be appreciated. So please put my name on your mailing list to receive Banner of Truth. Thank you for your good work. May God bless you all.” – **Francis Abboah Nyamekeh, Ghana, Western Region.**

“Thank you for sending Banner of Truth each month!” – **Church of Christ, Rockford, IL.**

“Please don’t send Banner of Truth until I notify you as I am in the process of moving. I have enjoyed the paper very much.” – **Mildred Ledkins, GA.**

they were caught in some evil, but never have a change of mind that results in a change of actions. Paul said, “For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repent of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death” (2 Cor. 7:10). True repentance is when a person has a change of mind which says in effect, “I’m going to follow Christ, “the author of eternal salvation,” and I’m going to turn away from sin and error. Christ says it is “repent or perish” (Lk. 13:3). Paul said “And the times of ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent” (Acts 17:30). True repentance is shown by actions.

The next essential in conversion is **Confession of Faith in Christ**. From the record of the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8, we learn of the essentiality of confession of faith in Christ. An angel of the Lord directed Philip to go and join himself to the chariot of the eunuch, who was reading from the prophet Esaias (vv.26-29). The eunuch inquired of Philip as to the identity of the prophet. At this point “Philip opened his mouth and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus” (v. 35). When “they came to a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?” (v. 36). Philip’s response was, “If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God” (v. 37). Upon this good confession of faith in Christ, Philip baptized him.

The fourth essential in conversion is **Baptism**. We have seen this in the two examples already cited. In Acts 2, the inquiring audience was told to “repent and be baptized for the remission of sins.” In every conversion recorded in the Book of Acts, baptism was the last essential to conversion. Converts were baptized “into Christ” (Gal. 3:27), where salvation is found (2 Tim. 3:15). Christ said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mk. 16:16).

When a person is converted, that one has been “delivered from the power of darkness” and translated “into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins” (Col. 12:13-14).

Once a person is “in Christ,” they have the blessing of continued forgiveness of sins on the condition of “walk[ing] in the light, as he is in the light. . . .”(1 John 1:7). Thank God for His instructions. — *Editor*

Al Queada And The Pope

A few weeks ago a prominent subject in the national news was the pope’s statement in a speech about Islam and the outrage by Islamic leaders and individuals. There were attacks on churches and a nun was slain in Somalia. Many Muslims demonstrated in various places.

What did the pope say to cause such uproar? In an article by Lee Keath of AP, *The Paducah Sun*, Sept. 19, 2006, it is said of the pope, “His comments made in a speech last week, in which he quoted a medieval text characterizing some of the Prophet Muhammad’s teachings as ‘evil and inhuman’ and calling Islam a religion spread by the sword.”

Let it be understood that I have no respect for the pope. Pope’s claim to be “vicars” of Christ on earth, that is, they claim to take the place of Christ. The Catholic also claims the pope is “infallible.” The Catholic Church is a religion of error, a work of men and not of God. Authentic information relative to this and much more is available to all who want it.

So much for the pope and the Catholic Church, but in this case the pope indeed spoke the truth. Anyone who has access to the Koran and the history of Islam may know that Muhammad’s teachings are evil and inhuman, and that Islam was spread by the sword. This is a case where Islam doesn’t want the truth to be spoken. Many are still in the dark as to the goal of Islam, world conquest. Note the following statement from the AP writer referred to above, in that same article in *The Paducah Sun*.

CAIRO Egypt – Al-Qaida in Iraq warned Pope Benedict XVI on Monday that its war against Christianity and the West will go on until Islam takes over the world, and Iran’s supreme leader called for more protests over the pontiff’s remarks on Islam.

How much longer will we remain asleep, unaware that Islam is the world’s greatest enemy against Christianity, and that world conquest is their goal? Hardly does a day pass that there is not more evidence that we are in a world-war with Islam. Even the pope wanted to backtrack on the truth he spoke so clearly. But, then, the Catholic Church has a doctrine of “Mental Reservation” which allows them to lie if it be for betterment of their religion. — *Editor*

Without question, the most valuable area of man’s existence is not his pursuit of things in the material world which are of temporary existence, but rather those unseen things of a spiritual nature which have to do with eternal existence. God, in His creation of man, had in mind something of far greater importance than a period of existence on earth, which we call life. This is a reason for optimism.

That God had in mind something far more important than existence on earth is evidenced by the fact His “manifold wisdom” was made known by the church, “according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Eph. 3:10-11). The fulfillment of God’s eternal purpose is first noted in Genesis 3:15, where it is said the seed of woman would bruise the head of the serpent, the devil. From that point onward, God’s plan unfolds through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The Old Testament points to God’s purpose for the salvation of man, as a golden thread which reaches to Christ and His gospel where salvation is found (Rom. 1:16).

That God’s eternal purpose involved Christ and His church, suggests that man, endowed with the power of choice, would choose to violate God’s will and sin thereby. Since God’s plan for the salvation of man was eternal, and since it involved the once and for all sacrifice of His Son, is there any reason to doubt that salvation is possible for those who seek it in harmony with God’s provisions? Is not this a great reason to cultivate within our minds a great spirit of optimism? Paul said, “If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. 8:31). There is no doubt but that God is “for us” when we do His will.

Let us now turn our attention to a number of things which serve as a basis for optimism. With regard to this, it is necessary that we accept only valid reasons for optimism. By valid, we mean that which God has stated in His word to us. It is a sad fact that multitudes of people are very optimistic in their belief that they have fulfilled God’s requirements for salvation, when in fact, they have been misguided, and have no assurance of salvation. Their optimism is based upon faulty evidence. Their hope is false, but many will never become aware of this until it is too late.

We shall note a number of examples of optimism but there are a great many others. We would do well to

keep our minds centered on these examples. I trust it will help us to increase our optimism.

JOSHUA AND CALEB. In Numbers 13 and 14, we have the record of the twelve spies sent out by Moses to spy out the land of Canaan. Ten of the spies were pessimists, who said the land could not be taken. Joshua and Caleb were optimists, who said, “If the Lord delight in us, then he will bring us into this land, and give it us. . . .” (14:8). The Lord did delight in Joshua and Caleb, and gave Israel the land.

DAVID AND GOLIATH. First Samuel 17 is the record of the account of David and Goliath. Goliath, a champion of the Philistines, was a giant of a man and armed to the teeth. Saul and Israel were afraid when they heard the challenge of Goliath. They were pessimists, but not David. David reminded Saul that “The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear” would “deliver him out of the hand of this Philistine.” David said to the Philistine that he came to him with a sword, a spear and a shield, but, David said “I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom thou hast defied.” (v. 45). We know the rest of the story, how that David prevailed against Goliath, believing that the Lord would “deliver” Goliath into his hand. God did just that. With true faith in God, we can overcome the efforts of Satan to conquer us.

WE HAVE AN ALL-SUFFICIENT GUIDE. It is not — thanks be to God — like we are wandering in darkness, not knowing what God’s will is for us. Just think; would God have made all the provisions for the salvation of man, including the death of His only begotten Son, and then fail to give the needed instructions to the recipient of that salvation? Whereas many religions of the world are instructed by man-made ideas and doctrines, the Christian can rejoice in the fact that God’s inspired word is his guide. What a blessing Paul makes known to us when he said, “Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness: that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17, ASV). This fills a great need of man, as Jeremiah realized, when he said, “O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jer. 10:23). The psalmist said, →

“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Ps.119:105). How thankful we should be that we can know that we are walking in the light of truth rather than in the darkness of error.

AS CHRISTIANS, WE ARE PRIESTS. Peter said, “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (I Pet. 2:5). We need not to go through infallible man to approach God, as some erroneously teach. We have a “mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (I Tim. 2:5). We should take great comfort in the fact that we have a “high priest” to whom we can go and be heard. The writer of Hebrews emphasizes the great blessing we have due to this. “Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:14-16). Should not this encourage our spirit of optimism, knowing that we “may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need”? Mercy and grace, we need.

FORGIVENESS OF SINS IS AVAILABLE. Without the forgiveness of sin we would be without hope, since “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). John says, “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (I John 1:8). He goes on to say, “If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us” (v. 10). That we have sinned and stand in need of forgiveness could not be made plainer. In view of this, how thankful we should be that provisions for forgiveness have been made. Note what John says, “But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (I John 1:7). Then in verse 9, he says, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” It is worthy of note that the walking in the light and the cleansing of sins is a continuing action. That is, as long as we walk in the light the blood of Christ continues to cleanse us of our sins. What could give us more encouragement, in

that we know the cleansing of our sins is assured, on the basis of the condition set forth? Since we know that sin cannot enter heaven, but that provisions have been made for forgiveness, should not we rejoice evermore? Shouldn’t we be optimistic?

If we are a Christians, our initial forgiveness of sins occurred when in obedience to the gospel of Christ, we were baptized for remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16), but as John points out, we sin as a Christian. But thanks be to God that we can have the forgiveness of that sin also.

NOT TEMPTED ABOVE WHAT WE ARE ABLE TO BEAR. Many excuses are made for committing sin, but in reality we are assured that we can overcome the temptations which confront us. This Paul makes clear when he says, “There hath no temptation take you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it” (I Cor. 10:13). But when, due to our weakness, we sin, provisions have been made for forgiveness, as pointed out above.

WE HAVE FOOD FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH. When one is born again by the spiritual birth (John 3:5), that one is as a babe, spiritually speaking. But God has provided the means for growth toward maturity. How thankful we should be that God has provided the food for spiritual growth — His Inspired Word. As time passes the new Christian’s faith should grow. The means for this growth is available: “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). Peter speaks of “purify[ing] your souls in obeying the truth...” (I Pet. 1:22). Then he says, “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby” (2:2). A sad sight is that of a spiritual dwarf. But the fault is not with God, who has made the spiritual food available. If we would grow spiritually, we need to be able to take “strong meat” and not continue on “milk” (Heb. 5:12-14).

WE CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST. Paul makes a great statement of assurance of victory when he said, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Phil. 4:13). Living the Christian life is not a matter of just walking alone in facing

singing of spiritual songs can both teach and edify. Instruments of music cannot worship God.

Worshipping God in Faith. The apostle Paul points out the importance of faith when he said, “for whatsoever is not of faith is sin” (Rom. 14:23). Though Paul was speaking of the eating of meats, he sets forth a principle which applies to other things. This would include worship. Paul, by inspiration, tells us how faith is acquired, “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). The hearing of God’s word involves divine authority. Paul puts it this way to the Colossians: “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.

Since it is impossible to cite book, chapter and verse in the New Testament for the use of instruments of music to worship God, we must conclude that the unauthorized use of instruments is sinful. It is not possible to employ them as an act of faith. The scriptures are filled with examples of those who acted without God’s authority, and their actions were rejected by God.

The answer as to why the true church of Christ does not use mechanical instruments of music in worship to God is because He has not authorized their use. To use them in sinful. Such use is no more an “expedient” than was Cain’s unauthorized addition in his attempt to worship God.

Instruments of music were introduced in worship to please men, not God. Christ said, “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). When we worship God it is to please the Creator and edify the creature. Christ warns us of acting without faith, “But in vain do the worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matt. 15:9). When men add to God’s word and employ instruments of music, their worship is vain.

All agree that singing is acceptable and authorized worship to God. Why trust one’s eternal destiny to that which cannot be shown to be God approved? The scriptures teach us to make our calling and election sure, “Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet. 1:10-11).

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ESSENTIALS IN CONVERSION

The Book of Acts is known as “The Book of Conversions,” and rightly so, since it contains the record of conversions. These conversions, as recorded in God’s inspired word, are authentic. In view of this, these examples are of unlimited value to those who have a desire to be converted to Christ and inherit all the blessings therein, including “eternal salvation to all them that obey him” (Heb. 5:9).

The first essential in conversion is **faith or belief in God.** In the first conversion recorded in the Book of Acts, chapter two, the people heard the apostles speak “the wonderful works of God” in their own tongues (v. 11). Then “Peter, standing up with the eleven,” explains that the speaking in other tongues, “is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh...” (vv. 16-17). “Peter, standing up with the eleven,” declared to this Jewish audience that “God hath made this same Jesus, whom ye crucified, both Lord and Christ” (v.36); “they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (v. 37). They were told to “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins...” (v. 38). Being a Jewish audience, they did not have to be told to believe in God; that was a given. The first step, then, taken by these people was faith in God. The writer of Hebrews reminds us that, “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” (Heb. 11:6).

Faith in God includes faith in Christ, who is also God. Christ told the Jews “that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:24).

The second essential in conversion is **repentance.** There is much misunderstanding as to what true repentance is. “In the N.T. the subject chiefly has reference to repentance from sin, and this change of mind involves both a turning from sin and a turning to God’ [*Vine’s*, p. 963]. People may be sorry for some deed but never come to repentance. That is, the change of mind doesn’t occur. Some times people are sorry →

authority do we offer our sacrifice of worship. More specifically, what is our source of authority as members of the blood-purchased church of the Lamb of God? An example of worship by faith and an attempt to worship God by an act not of faith is that of the offering of Cain and Abel. Abel's sacrifice was pleasing because it was offered by faith (Heb. 11:4). There is no indication that Cain's sacrifice was offered by faith, and it was not acceptable.

In Matthew 16:13-18, Jesus asked His apostles who men said that he was. Peter answered by divine revelation that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. It was upon this great truth that Christ said "I will build my church." Jesus did what he promised to do, and He is the head and only head of His church. The only way to God the Father is through Christ, the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6). After the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus He commissioned His Ambassadors, the apostles, who were guided into all truth, to preach the gospel to every creature.

We have in the New Testament what Jesus and His apostles did and taught with regard to the New Testament church. But it is perfectly clear that there is no mention of any New Testament church employing instruments of music in worship. There is no direct statement, approved action, or inference that authorizes the use of the instrument. In fact, it was hundreds of years after the death of the apostles before man introduced instruments of music in worship. To this fact no knowledgeable and honest person disagrees. Numerous attempts to find some New Testament authority for instruments in worship have all failed.

Peter said, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as the ability which God giveth; that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever, Amen" (1 Pet. 4:11). This verse, in connection with many others, sets the limits of our worship and service to God. John said, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son" (2 John 9). Since the doctrine of Christ does not include the use of instruments of music in worship, those who use them are void of God's approval in their lives.

PASSAGES RELATING TO ACCEPTABLE WORSHIP

There are passages which relate to each of the items of worship in which we are authorized to engage.

Teaching and Preaching. What we teach and preach is limited to the "oracles of God." To go beyond is sin. Paul instructed Timothy to study for God's approval and then "preach the word." We are warned not to add to or take from God's word.

The Lord's Supper. The elements of the Lord's supper are limited to "fruit of the vine," and "bread." It might taste better with a little strawberry jam, but that would be sin. The Lord's supper, by approved example, is to be observed on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). It is observed as a memorial.

Acceptable Prayer. Christians are to pray to God the Father through the mediator, Christ Jesus (1 Tim. 2:5). Christians are not to pray to Mary, or to any other person. Praying to others is a doctrine of man, not of God.

Acceptable Christian Giving. We are to give as God has prospered us (1 Cor. 16:1-2). Also involved in acceptable giving is our attitude. Paul said, "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:7).

Praising God in Song. To praise God in song acceptably we are instructed as follows: "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19). In the inspired instructions to the Colossians Christians are to, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Col. 3:16).

From the above we note that in singing to praise God and edifying one another, we are limited to "psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs." This rules out songs which appeal to the fleshly emotions of mankind, such as the contemporary music of our time. It is with the "heart," the intellect, that we praise God and at the same time edify one another spiritually.

Also ruled out would be "humming" and "playing" on some mechanical instrument. The toot of a horn and the beat of a drum can edify no one, but the ↴

the evil powers. Christ is there to give us the strength we need for victory.

OUR LABOR IS NOT IN VAIN IN THE LORD. In the things in this earthly life we may indeed labor in vain, receiving no reward for our efforts. It is not so when we labor in the Lord. Paul said, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58).

THE ETERNAL REWARDS OF VICTORY. We some times sing, "Victory In Jesus." That is indeed true, that victory is in Jesus and in Him alone. How great it is that we can be among those who are victorious in Christ. God has amply warned us of His wrath which comes upon those who are disobedient, but He also sets forth in a great way the eternal rewards of victory. Those who are victorious not only receive the greatest blessings ever, but they at the same time escape God's wrath.

In view of all that God has done for us and the protection and assurance He gives us, how can we fail to prepare for that crown of righteousness which is laid up for those who faithfully serve Him? Our optimism should be increased as we think about some of what God has in store for us, as His faithful children, not only now but in the world to come.

In The Father's House. We have often used the words of Christ at funeral services, wherein we urge the living to prepare for a mansion in the Father's house. Jesus, about to be separated from His disciples, gives them (and us) great words of encouragement. "Let not your hearts be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me, in my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (Jno. 14:1-3). Just think; this mansion is available for us if we seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness (Matt. 6:33).

Paul's Crown Of Righteousness. Paul, a former persecutor of Christians, had a desire "to depart and be with Christ; which is far better" (Phil. 1:23). In his last letter, 2 Timothy, he writes to Timothy and manifests his great assurance of his future reward, which

can also be ours as well. From all indications Paul was near the end of his earthly sojourn when he wrote: "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them that love his appearing" (2 Tim. 4:6-8). We can have that crown.

The Book Of Revelation. The figurative language of this book may be difficult to understand fully, but there is one great lesson that all may learn when the book is considered in its entirety: that is, a great battle or struggle is depicted between the forces of good and evil. Good, God's side, is victorious and the forces of evil, the Devil's side, are defeated. Heaven is pictured for the he who overcomes, while hell is pictured for the disobedient. In each of the seven letters to the seven churches of Asia, a promised blessing is made to he or him "that overcometh." How blessed we are that with God's help we can be among those that "overcometh." We know that the Lord wants us to be saved, since He is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Pet. 3:9).

As the book nears its end, God's wrath is being brought to bear upon those who have not served God. But then a beautiful picture begins to unfold, showing the eternal and glorious destiny of God's faithful servants. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things have passed away" (Rev. 21:4). Among the other encouraging words we find this: "Blessed are they that do his commandments that they may right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Rev. 22:14). With many other words the joys of heaven are described.

We have only touched upon a few of the descriptive words of what is in store for those who serve God faithfully in this life. The things prepared are simply beyond our ability to comprehend. The great assurances that we can have those things as our very own should embolden our spirit of optimism. →

SOME CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

We have tried to set forth some of the things of adversity that we face in living the Christian life. We would be very unwise to ignore those things which can cause us to lose hope and become discouraged. We have seen brethren come to have a heart of unbelief, departing from the only way of salvation. The writer of Hebrews warns of this when he said, “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (3:12).

We have mentioned the above things, not to discourage, but to encourage the overcoming of those things which can cause the loss of the spirit of optimism. This can be done as we have tried to point out. We are living in “perilous times,” there’s not doubt about it, but so were the early Christians and they endured and maintained their faith. It they did, so can we.

In view of the difficult times we face, no one could sensibly deny that there is a great need for optimism. That need is even much greater now than in years I have seen go by. But with the realization of need for optimism, we should constantly remind ourselves that we have an all-sufficient basis for optimism. If we truly believe in God and take Him at His word, we can be optimistic. But at the same time, we have an all-important to play. As the apostle Paul put it, we must “Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called” (1 Tim. 6:12). John said, “. . . He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son” (2 Jno. 9). Since we can abide in the doctrine of Christ, we can have the approval of both the Father and the Son, a powerful basis of optimism.

I give the following lines to stir our needed optimism—

Life is a vapor that passes away,
A reminder that we are not on earth to stay.

Our bodies grow weak and frail,
But a better place awaits us, not affected by cavil.

As life on this earth is passing by,
We can look forward to a home in the sky.

From a tabernacle where we dwell in this land,
There awaits in heaven a house not made with hands.

What a tragedy for the devil to cause our fall,
For Heaven will surely be worth it all.

— Editor

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Does a person have to be “faithful unto death” to be saved? Do you know of anyone who has been “faithful unto death”? Before you quickly answer both questions, Yes, let us consider a few things.

The phrase, “faithful unto death,” is regularly used in bulletins, Bible classes, and in sermons. We use it in the invitation pointing out that people must believe, repent, confess, be baptized, and be “faithful unto death.” I appreciate, and agree with, the sentiment, but I believe it means something different. I have no doubt that I have personally used the phrase out of context.

The phrase, “faithful unto death” is found in Revelation 2:10. Christ is warning Christians that they would suffer persecution, which was a common thing in the early days of the church. Verse ten says: “Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer; behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: **be thou faithful unto death** (emphasis, wwp), and I will give thee a crown of life.”

When that phrase is used to mean “be faithful as long as you live,” it is used out of context. It is indeed true that one must be faithful until the end of life to be saved, but that is not what Rev. 2:10 teaches. It rather means to be faithful **unto the point of dying**. One does not have to exclusively be faithful unto the point of dying to be saved, otherwise, only those who suffer physical death would be saved.

In response to question 2, I don’t know of anyone who has been put to death because of his faith in Christ. In fact, I don’t even know of anyone personally who has been even cast into prison for serving the Lord.

I suppose we some times get in a habit of using things out of context. The confession of Matthew 10:32 is another case in point. There reference is to the ongoing confessing of disciples, whereas the confession involved in the steps of conversion is referred to in Romans 10:10: “For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” An example of confession is that of the Ethiopian in Acts 8:37, where he confessed his faith in Christ.

Why The True Church Of Christ Does Not Use Mechanical Instruments Of Music In Worship

Lloyd Gale

This discussion is for the benefit of new members of the church of Christ, our children, and those who aren’t members of the church of Christ who would like to understand why the church of Christ is different from man-made denominations.

SOME THINGS WHICH AREN’T THE REASON

It is not because some members of the church of Christ are unable to play instruments of music. My wife and I were blessed with three children and they all were taught to play an instrument of music. Many other members of the church of Christ have that ability.

It is not because members of the Lord’s church cannot afford to purchase and maintain instruments of music, nor is it because they do not enjoy hearing the sound of instruments of music, for most enjoy good music. Christians understand that worship is not about what pleases man but what pleases God.

It is not because members of the church of Christ follow some man-made creed, or such like, which forbids the use of instruments of music. But contrariwise, only that which God’s word allows is practiced, and that excludes the instrument.

REASONS WHY THE TRUE CHURCH OF CHRIST DOES NOT WORSHIP GOD WITH MECHANICAL INSTRUMENTS OF MUSIC

Since “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:16-17), if a thing is not authorized it is not a “good work.” It would not be a good work for the church.

A diligent study of the scriptures reveals that there are three ways by which things are authorized: 1. Direct statements. 2. Approved actions or examples. 3. Things which are clearly inferred or implied.

An example of a direct statement is found in Mark

16:16, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. . .” This shows that belief and baptism are essential to salvation. Another direct statement is found in James 1:27. “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.” This direct statement authorizes a good work.

An example of an approved action is the apostolic example of coming together on the first day of the week to break bread. Paul and his company abode seven days in Troas, and “Upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight” (Acts 20:7). This action of taking the Lord’s supper on the “first day of the week” is an approved example or action.

Not all examples are approved examples. For instance, in Acts 8 we find the record of Simon trying to purchase the gift of God for selfish reasons (vv. 18-24). “But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.” Such unapproved examples must not be followed.

There are many examples of things which are implied, which are binding upon those who serve the Lord. A good example is that of what we call the “Great Commission.” Christ said, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” (Matt. 28:19). It is implied that means of going are authorized. But the how of the means is not specified. That is left up to man. Another example is the command to assemble (Heb. 10:25). A place of meeting is implied. But the kind of place and time of the assembly are not specified.

It being the case that the scriptures furnish the Christian to every God approved work (good work) then we must consult the scriptures to learn how He desires that we worship Him. It is a question of by what →