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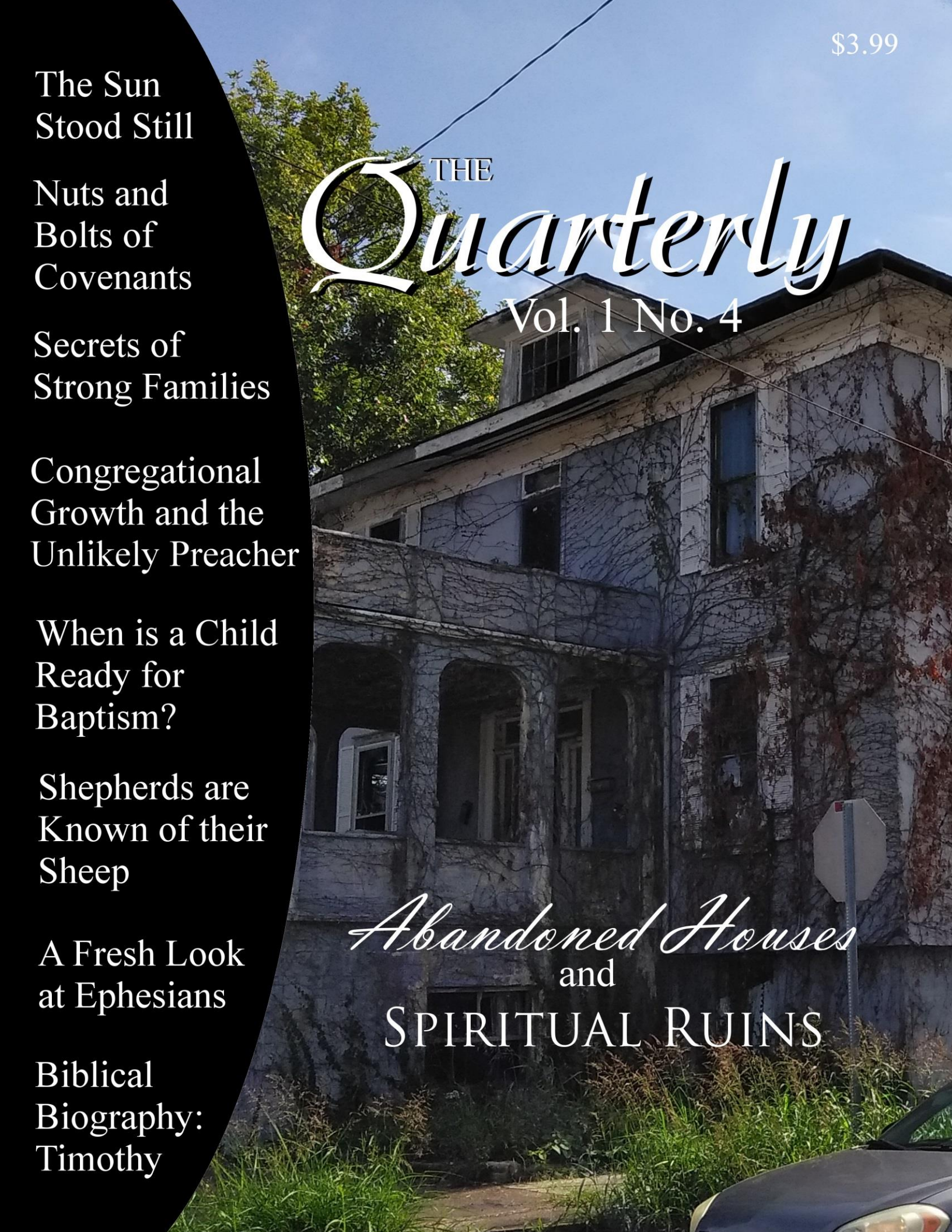
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THE *Quarterly*

Vol. 1 No. 4

Abandoned Houses
and
SPIRITUAL RUINS



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**OVERSEEN BY THE
OOLOGAH CHURCH OF CHRIST**

The Quarterly

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Send Fourth the News!

Hey, thanks for taking the time to read *The Quarterly*. Before I tell you about some of the great reads you'll find in this issue, I need to mention a couple things of importance. *First*, Cobb Publishing has an official address now. We have been in the moving/house-buying process since March, so we are very glad to finally have a permanent address. It can be seen on the left-hand side of this page. *Second*, this is the final issue of Volume 1. That means it's time to renew! For less than a single trip to Wal-Mart, you can strengthen your faith, build your biblical understanding, and encourage your evangelistic courage for a year! *Third*, a price change (a **good one**) on the electronic edition. A digital subscription to *The Quarterly*, starting with the next issue (Jan. 2018) is just \$6.99 a year—a 30% savings. Now, onto a brief overview of this issue!

We would like to welcome some new contributors to our happy family: **Michael Shank** (author of *Muscle and a Shovel*) writes on "Secrets of Strong Families." **Keith Stonehart** tells about how the congregation he works with has been effectively converting people in their community—you won't want to miss it! **Terry Gardner** reviews a new book on the letters of Lloyd Cline Sears, an influential advocate of Christian education of the past century.

Kyle Frank begins a new series on *Songs of the Kingdom*, a look at the history and meaning of songs we sing. Jamie Beller returns with another installment of his series on elders: *Learning from the Chief Shepherd*. **Shane Fisher** (a new contributor) discusses elders "Holding to the Word of God"; and **John Ratliff** (also a new contributor) weighs in on motivations for becoming an elder. Jim Mitchell encourages a fresh look at Ephesians, and Jim Stutts asks "When is a child ready for baptism?" These and many other great articles are at your fingertips in this issue of *The Quarterly*!

We are preparing article topics and themes for 2018, and **YOU** can help us!

Let us know what you'd like to see covered in upcoming issues, what topics you think are needed, questions you'd like addressed, or send in something you've written for inclusion in *The Quarterly*.

So please, email, call, text, or mail us your thoughts, using the contact information to the left of this page.

THANK YOU!

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The Quarterly

Vol. 1, No. 4

October, 2017

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What do you think?

We are always interested in hearing from our readers about things they would like to see in the Quarterly.

We have a lot of things planned, themes to cover, series to present, topics to delve into—but we would really like to know what *you* want to read.

We’ve got a great staff of writers, and several contributors who I’m sure can cover just about any topic or theme that you can throw our way.

Please give us your input.

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Abandoned Houses and Spiritual Ruins

An Editorial

I am intrigued by old, abandoned houses. I'm not sure what it is about them, but they just fascinate me. Maybe it's realizing that people used to live there, and that there are so many stories the house could tell if it could talk. Maybe it's seeing the potential in what could be done with the house (though admittedly, some of them are beyond repair). Maybe it's because, quite frankly, I like seeing houses that aren't just like every other house in the neighborhood (with slight alterations). Earlier this month, my family and I went to Cairo, IL, where there are a *lot* of these old, abandoned properties. (Yes, the pun was intended.) There were a couple 1800s mansions-turned-museums that we wanted to see, but one of them is no longer open, and just sits there—with vines beginning the process of taking over the property. There are many old houses on what was once called “Millionaire’s Row” which now sit empty and abandoned. Honestly, those were much more interesting to me than seeing the inside of the mansion/museum that was still open.

As we drove through this town—a town which once saw itself as a rival to Chicago—we were struck by how impressive it would have been in its heyday. This was a city that Mark Twain spoke of in *Huckleberry Finn*; a city that Ulysses S. Grant visited both before and after his time as president; a city that president Theodore Roosevelt made speeches in; a city that boasted industry, importance, and was at one point a transportation hub (the Ohio and Mississippi rivers meet at the southern edge of the city). It had mansions, hotels, businesses—but that was then.



The city is full of houses that would have been *amazing* when they were first built along the brick-lined streets. But the years have come and gone, and these houses have been left to the elements. At some point, people stopped maintaining these once-beautiful homes, and they have fallen into disrepair. Some of them are ruins, past the ability to rescue.

This is a fitting picture of the spiritual state of some people—people you might know. Their faces break through the water as they are lifted up, having reenacted the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ in baptism. Their souls are *pure, amazing, and beautiful*—worth far more than the grandest mansion anyone could ever build. But as time goes by, they slowly stop taking care of their souls. They stop thinking about spiritual things. Their spiritual life falls into disrepair. They could once boast of being completely clean, washed in the blood of the Lamb, but now their spiritual life is like a ruin—a shell of its former glory.



Now, how does this affect you? Maybe you, like so many other people, look at older houses and desire to restore them, to bring them back to their former glory. People literally spend thousands upon thousands of dollars, hundreds of hours, to fix up these houses, because they're worth the work, worth the investment. And there's nothing wrong with that (we're actually in the midst of fixing up our new 84-year old house). But the pressing question is this: *Would you make the same investment in restoring a soul?* Would you spend a

hundred (or even a dozen) hours in working to restore a soul to its pristine purity by bringing him/her back to Christ? Would you invest thousands (or even hundreds) of dollars to help a soul in need, showing the love of Christ in your assistance to them? Eternally, which is more important—a house, or a soul?

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From Questions in the Shadows TO PROCLAMATION IN THE LIGHT

Jim Mitchell

He was a Pharisee, a ruler of the Jews, and a teacher of the Law (John 3:1, 2, 10). One of the most famous statements ever recorded from Jesus was uttered in a conversation He had with this man (John 3:16). Of the three events recorded in scripture in which this man played a part, the first – his coming to Jesus under the cover of darkness with questions (John 3) – usually overshadows the other two. In fact, in the other two events recorded in scripture in which he is involved, John clarifies who he is by referring to him as the one who “*came to Jesus by night*” (John 7:50; 19:39). These three events involving Nicodemus, though brief, say much about the change which is brought about when faith in Jesus and His message finally takes hold of one’s life. Note the change in Nicodemus.

First of all, the questions he had concerning Jesus of Nazareth were asked under the cover of darkness. You can almost envision the scene: Nicodemus quietly moving from shadow to shadow, purposefully avoiding detection by everyone along the way to where Jesus was. The questions Nicodemus asked were significant enough that he felt they *had* to be asked, yet he did everything possible to make sure that his position among the elite of Israel would not be jeopardized. Dealing with principles of dedication, commitment, and spiritual change, Jesus voiced surprise that one who was a “*teacher of Israel*” (3:10) could not comprehend the meaning of His words (John 3:3-12).

The second time Nicodemus is mentioned is during the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7). The Pharisees and chief priests sent soldiers to arrest Jesus (7:32), and they came back empty handed (7:44-46). During the conversation between the Pharisees and priests which followed, “*Nicodemus (he who came to Jesus by night, being one of them) said to them, “Does our law judge a man before it hears him and knows what he is doing?”* (7:50-51). Here is one who previously would not approach Jesus in the light of day now coming to His defense. Somewhere, between the night-time discus-

sion of chapter three and the controversy of chapter seven, there is a change within Nicodemus. Now, instead of being concerned with what others might think about his questions or comments, he makes a bold statement which shows the inconsistency of those who deemed themselves the most religiously consistent and most pious Jews of their generation.

The last mention of Nicodemus is at the crucifixion of Jesus. “Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took the body of Jesus. And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds. Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury” (John 19:38-40). Participation in the removal of the body of Jesus from the cross and preparing it for burial is not the action of one desiring anonymity, but of one whose love for the Savior is more significant than social prominence or personal safety – for since the body would need to be removed before sunset and the beginning of the Sabbath (19:31), the actions taken to perform the task would have been carried out while it was still day.

The desire to remain in the shadows exists whenever anyone *quietly* states his or her belief in or commitment to Jesus to a very select number of friends, but yet talks and acts, when they are in the general public, in ways which show no difference from the speech or lifestyle of those who obviously do not follow the word of God in general or the teachings of Jesus in particular. Jesus made such an impact upon the life of Nicodemus that Nicodemus could NOT remain in the shadows. Ultimately, his actions placed him in the light of public attention. For the child of God, spiritual maturity cannot co-exist with keeping our faith in the shadows—we will and we must proclaim it from the light.



THE SUN STOOD STILL

(Joshua 9 – 10:14)

Mark McWhorter

The Battle

Joshua and Israel have very recently entered the Promised Land. They have taken Jericho and Ai. Joshua has had the Law read, with its blessings and cursings, between Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim.

The kings and leaders of the Jebusites, Hittites, Amorites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Lebanites gathered their armies together to fight the Israelites.

The king of Jerusalem, Adonizedec (Lord of Righteousness), is a possible reigning descendant of Melchizedek (King of Righteousness). Whether a blood descendant or a title descendant, it is obvious that Adonizedec had apostatized from God. He heard that the city of Gibeon had made peace with the Israelites and were in fellowship with them. He also knew what the Israelites had done to Ai and Jericho. Thus, he feared Gibeon.

Gibeon was larger than Ai and was a royal city (Joshua 10:2). By the main road it was about 6 ½ miles northwest from Jerusalem. The inhabitants were Hivites. No king is mentioned, so many think it was a Republic. The existence of the city was verified in the 1960s by archeologists. Its location made it a very good place to have strong influence

over all of Canaan. There was the pool of Gibeon on the north side, the great waters mentioned in Jeremiah 41:12. This pool was a well 82 feet deep and 37 feet in diameter with a 79 step spiral staircase. There was a 167-foot tunnel through solid rock that connected the city to the water source outside of the city. There was a great rock (2 Samuel 20:8) and a great high place (1 Kings 3:4) which are mentioned in Scripture that suggest the prominence the city had in the land of Canaan. The city stood on a hill 200 feet above the plain. The city had walls from 10 to 26 feet thick that surrounded it. The city had wine cellars with 25,000-gallon capacity.

Adonizedec contacts the kings of Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon asking for aid to destroy Gibeon. All five kings with their armies come together, camp around the city of Gibeon, and attack it. This was a strategic move since they believed there was no way to defeat Israel if Gibeon was fighting with them.

The Gibeonites manage to send a messenger to Joshua at Gilgal asking for help. They remind Joshua that he is in a covenant relationship with

them. Joshua has a commitment and must abide by it. So, Joshua and all the men of war of the Israelites go to Gibeon.

The Lord tells Joshua to not be afraid. God is going to deliver all the enemy into his hand. Joshua gains confidence from this and hurries his army all night to get to Gibeon. This involved a climb of 3000 feet and 20 miles; not an easy task (in 9:16-17, it was a three-day journey), but it demonstrates to God their willingness to do what is necessary to defeat the enemy.

According to the Samaritan version of Joshua, Joshua and his men cry out “God is mighty in battle.” This is similar to the cry of Gideon and his army. They surprise the Canaanites with an early morning attack.

The Israelites severely defeat the five enemy armies and chase them down the western pass from the city. God sends hail that kills more than the Israelites do (10:11). This was not a normal hail storm since the stones found their marks in the heads and bodies of the enemy and not one fell on an Israelite. (God foretells incidents like this and may be telling of incidents Job knew of from his time. Job 38:22-23, “Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow? Or has thou seen the treasures of the hail, Which I have reserved against the time of trouble, against the day of battle and war?”) This would have also been confusing to the Canaanites since they had gods of nature that should have been helping them. Actually by this time they probably were figuring out that the Gibeonites had joined the right side.

Then, Joshua speaks to the Lord. He tells the sun and moon to stand still (10:12).

The results, if this happened without God’s control, would be devastating. The earth spins at 1040 miles per hour at the equator. Alabama and Jerusalem are about 600 miles per hour. If the spin stops, all the water bulging at the equator runs toward the Poles. Massive tsunamis would rush into land. Everything on earth at the equator would be flung into the air at 1000 miles per hour. There would be a single land mass running around the equator dividing two large oceans. The earth is traveling at 67,000 miles per hour around the sun. The solar system is traveling in a circular fashion at 490,000 miles per hour. Stop any of this speed and there would be complete annihilation.

Evidently the sun was rising in the early morning and the moon was falling toward the horizon. Joshua desired to have more hours with the early morning temperatures for his tired soldiers. We know this is the case because he wants the sun to be still over Gibeon and the moon over the valley of Ajalon. The Israelites were chasing the enemy westward, probably over the main road that descended from Gibeon, the ‘Way of Beth-horon.’ This was the only road which was not in a streambed. Thus, it was a strategic road.

For the moon to be over Ajalon, and the sun to be over Gibeon, it is morning, not evening. This was also a military tactical move. The sun would be behind the Israelites. When the enemy turned toward Israel, the early morning sun would be in their eyes making it more difficult to see. Add to this the fact that the Canaanites would be running downhill, the sun would be peeking over the top of the hill. Those rays coming over the horizon are especially bright.

There has never been a day before or after like this in which Jehovah hearkened to man. Jehovah fought for Israel! (And he was fighting for Gibeon.)

(See a note at the end of the article regarding historical records supporting the Bible account.)

The Preview

The Israelites had been prohibited by God to make any covenant with those in Canaan (Exodus 23:32; 34:12; Numbers 33:55; and particularly Deuteronomy 7:2). But, they had done so with the Gibeonites. Joshua 9 gives the background to why the Israelites were fighting with and for the Gibeonites.

The Gibeonites were terrified of God and the Israelites (9:24). (Notice Exodus 15:14-16 where the Israelites were told that the Canaanites would be terrified of them.) They sent men dressed as if they had been on a long journey (9:4-5). The men took old bread, torn bags and clothes and shoes in order to reinforce this deception. They told Joshua and the princes that they had come from a far land and wanted to make a treaty with the Israelites (9:6). (God allowed treaties with distant kingdoms, Deuteronomy 20:10-18). After questioning, Joshua and the princes agree and make a vow to them in the name of Jehovah. They did this without talking to God.

So, why did God not bring instant judgment against Joshua, the princes and the Gibeonites?

Faith and Commitment

The Gibeonites recognize “The Lord thy God” and use the Hebrew terms *Jehovah* and *Elohim* (9:9-10, 24). Jehovah is the covenant name. Using *Elohim* shows they understand there is more than one person in the Godhead. (In some respects the same understanding that Moses’ father-in-law had in Exodus 18. He recognized Jehovah as Moses’ relationship with Elohim. But he could only offer sacrifice to Elohim because he was not in that covenant relationship with Jehovah.)

They remembered and believed what Jehovah had done to Egypt, the kingdoms of Jericho and Ai, and to the kings of the Amorites (Sihon of Heshbon and Og of Bashan) (9:3, 9).

They were similar to Rahab at Jericho (Joshua 2:6).

They had thought deeply about how not to be killed by the Israelites and their God. They planned their approach. The city was united in the plan.

They were willing to humble themselves.

They were willing to be servants. They would be hewers of wood and drawers of water for the Tabernacle. (Many commentators do not believe this was an actual thought of the Gibeonites. Rather, it is simply a form of speech of the people of the time declaring the desire for a friendly alliance between kingdoms. Thus, they would be able to remain free.) Their belief in God and their ready willingness to actually become slaves when told (9:24-25), would seem to indicate that they really did originally approach with the humility of servants.

After Joshua tells them they will be servants, their response includes the fact that Moses was God’s servant. They use the same word that is used for their servanthood (9:24). Therefore, they communicate that they will be servants as Moses was a servant. They do not see their servanthood as a bad thing. Rather they see a fellowship with Moses. Notice in 10:2, the men are called “mighty.” Yet, they had humbled themselves before God.

The Gibeonites chose life over death (9:15)

The Gibeonites had heard about Jehovah; they believed what they had heard; they repented of their life of association with those against Jehovah; they confessed before others that they believed in

Jehovah not only with their speech but with their actions; they did what was necessary to join themselves to Jehovah and his people. What a great example the Gibeonites are!

The Gibeonites are examples of those who are truly seeking God and finding God. Seek and you shall find (Matthew 7:7). The Israelites had been told this in Deuteronomy 4:29-31. While the covenant was not made with the Gibeonite fathers, the rest of that passage applies to anyone who follows them.

The Consequences of Their Sin

They were made hewers of wood and drawers of water to the house of God (9:21). Their choice is in agreement with the Psalmist, Psalm 84:1 “*For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of wickedness.*” Also look at Psalm 27:3-6. While there it is David speaking, it very well applies to the Gibeonites. It is likely that the well and the water tunnel were the sources of the water which they drew for the Tabernacle.

They did not receive what many would consider prestigious positions and work. They had to answer for their sin of lying. Thus, they were given menial labor after having had royal positions in their royal city. [In the Canaanite nations of that time, this kind of work was for women and children.][This made them co-workers with some of the strangers that had traveled with the Israelites out of Egypt and throughout the wilderness wanderings, (Deuteronomy 29:11)].

Their children and descendants would live forever with that role. This may be a long-term fulfillment of the prophecy made in Genesis 9:25-26 by Noah, “And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. And he said, Blessed be the Lord God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant.”

But, they were rewarded for their faith by being allowed to serve God at the Tabernacle by supplying wood and water.

The Vow

The agreement was kept by Joshua and the princes because they had made the vow in God’s name. If they did not keep the vow, God’s wrath would be upon them (9:19-20). This was in accordance with the principle that one should not break a

vow, even if that vow eventually led to one's harm, (Psalm 15:4).

Deuteronomy 23:21, "When thou shalt vow a vow unto the Lord thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the Lord thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee."

Ecclesiastes 5:4, "When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou has vowed."

Numbers 30:2, "If a man vow a vow unto the Lord, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceedeth out of his mouth."

The vow became the basis of this important battle. Providentially it brought several major Canaanite kings and their armies to one place. Because of that and because of Joshua asking for help from God, these kings were destroyed. Rather than having to go to individual battle several times, these were all defeated at one time.

Old Friends, New Enemies

Their covenant with Joshua and the Israelites put them at odds and in danger from the kingdoms around them (10:4). The Gibeonites chose peace with God rather than peace with evil. They made the choice knowing it would put them at odds with those they had been aligned with originally. The differing Canaanite kingdoms were not completely buddy-buddy with each other. There was constant war between kingdoms. However, the kingdoms were united in defending their land from the Israelites.

Historical Results of Their Faith

Gibeon was given to the tribe of Benjamin (Joshua 18:28). It was one of the Levitical cities (Joshua 18:25; 21:17). These were given to the Levites as inheritance. Saul was born in the city (1 Chronicles 8:29-30, 33). So a neighbor of the Gibeonites was made King.

Saul broke the covenant with the Gibeonites by killing many of them (2 Samuel 21:1-2), leading to a 3 year famine during David's reign. The Gibeonites did not want silver or gold as recompense from David. They did not want David to kill any Israelites for them. But they did want seven of Saul's

descendants to be given to them to hang in front of God. This would be to them the just reward to Saul for what he had done to them. They hung them in Gibeah in front of the Lord. This was done in the first of the barley harvest.

The Tabernacle was placed there and remained until Solomon built the Temple (1 Chronicles 16:39-40; 21:29; 1 Kings 3:4-5; 2 Chronicles 1:3). This shows how significant the location was for the whole Canaan territory.

One of David's mighty men, Ismaiah, was from Gibeon (1 Chronicles 12:4).

God spoke to Solomon there (1 Kings 3:4). Solomon sacrificed 1000 animals on the Altar at that time. It was here that God asked Solomon what Solomon desired. Solomon followed his father's instructions (1 Chronicles 28:9) and asked God for wisdom.

There were prophets from there in the days of Jeremiah (Jeremiah 28:1), even though the one we know by name prophesied falsely.

Gibeonites were among those who rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem after the Captivity (Nehemiah 3:7; 7:25). There were 95 children of Gibeon. This means that they chose to join Judah in captivity rather than go back to their Canaanite roots and avoid present punishment. It also demonstrates the love for God that the Gibeonites had. They were involved in returning control of the land back to the Israelites. And the freedom given to them to return to Palestine is paired with the role of servants that they still were required to fulfill and in which they voluntarily continued.

It is considered by many that they were later called or included in the Nethinims ('given ones' – God gave them to the Tabernacle for service). These could also be other nations that had joined Israel as servants. These are mentioned in 1 Chronicles 9:2 with the Israelites and Levites. They are numbered among those returning from Captivity (Ezra 2:43, 53; 7:7; 8:20; Nehemiah 3:7; 10:28; 11:3, 21). From those passages it is seen that they had been God-fearing proselytes. They gathered with the people to hear the reading of the Law. The Gibeonites are further proof that God has always been concerned for the salvation of Gentiles. Anyone willing to submit to him is received.

Conclusion

They became a part of the Israelite nation even though they are always mentioned separately. By

being mentioned separately they became a reminder to all people for all time that there is punishment for sin, but reward for loving God. The consequences of their temporary sin did not overshadow the reward of their love and obedience.

Their desire to serve God led to one of the greatest miracles God ever performed. It was the greatest miracle God performed at the request of a man. It is of note and importance that this incredible day was not only for the salvation of the Israelites, but also for Gentiles. He fought for Israel and for Gibeon.

***Note on historical records supporting the Biblical account. 1) During the reign of the 7th Emperor of China, King Yao, he stated there was a ten day period where the sun stayed on the horizon and did not set. He stated that all were fearful that the world would be set on fire. Obviously the 10 day period is incorrect, but despite the exaggeration it is possible it is historical. Yao lived about the same time as the event happened. 2) Latin Poet Ovid tells a story that had Phoenician roots about a day lost during the time of a Canaanite prince. 3) The Mexican Aztecs told a story of an ancient man who commanded the sun to stand still. They also recorded that there had been a night that lasted a very long time. 4) The Incas also had a tale that an ancient had made the sun stand still. 5) In India there was a legend that the sun was prevented from rising one day. 6) Herodotus wrote that he was shown records by Egyptian priests which stated there had been a day twice as long as normal. 7) North American Indians – Ojibways, Wyandot, Dogrib, and Bungee – had tales of a very long night. 8) The Mayans told of an extremely long night. 9) The Fiji Islands and Hawaiian Islands had tales of a long sunset and night.

It is interesting that the side of the world including Canaan have tales of a long day. The opposite side of the world has tales of a long night. While these do not prove anything, they cannot simply be ignored.

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Messianic Pain and Power:

Introducing 2 Corinthians

Gantt Carter

Like any written document, the best way to begin getting acquainted with biblical material is to simply read straight through the text. The letter we call “Second Corinthians” is a little over ten pages in my personal Bible, and it is a single column. As we divide in our modern canon, the inspired writer penned thirteen chapters and two-hundred and twenty-seven verses to the Corinthians this time around. In fact, the average person reads the entire letter within about forty minutes. I highly encourage you to read through this letter sometime soon—at least once in one setting. If you can read it aloud to yourself, that will probably take a little more time, but reading Scripture aloud is often powerfully beneficial to you.

In his usual manner, the apostle Paul introduces himself as the human side of authorship in his opening salutation. He customarily borrowed the common letter greeting of the day and then transformed it by the good news of Jesus. After the initial greeting, he announces, “grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Master and Messiah, Jesus” (1:2). Like today, people in this time often greeted one another with “hello” (chairein in Greek) but Paul changes this to grace (charis).

Likely, the inspired apostle writes around 56-57 AD from somewhere in Macedonia (7:5). Paul sends the letter ahead as he begins to make his trek around the Aegean Sea to Corinth. As we read the letter, we must remember that Paul has endured a lot of persecution and suffering since he wrote “First Corinthians.”

Interestingly, Paul addresses “First Corinthians” to just the Christians in Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:1-2). However, this letter is to “the assembly of God” in the city and to “all the holy ones who are in the whole of Achaia” (1:1). The expanded recipient list may be due to the glorious growth of the good news in the area. Some have also suggested that it may be because of the scattering rumors about the lowly apostle and his companions.

We may well call all of Paul’s letters “occasional,” but none more than this one:

Paul writes to address some of the recent changes in the body of Jesus in Corinth: Some good...some not so good (see 2:1-11 and 3:1-3). You do not have to read very far into the letter before you realize that some were attempting to dismantle Paul’s credibility and to destroy his portrayal of Christianity. The ultimate connection between Paul and the Corinthians was the good news about Jesus and Paul’s preaching of this news (1:12-14; 2:14-17; see also 1 Corinthians 1:17-2:5). Paul writes to lift up the Man of the message, and to further clarify the attitudes and actions of the messengers.

He also writes to stir up their generosity so that they will prepare an offering for the needy Christians in Jerusalem when he returns in person (see chapters 8-9). Throughout the letter he fills them in on his recent travels with their troubles and triumphs.

There is a giant parenthetical discussion that opens around 2:14 and continues until around 7:4. Paul pauses his explanations about what occurred in Troas to expound on the ministry of the New Covenant and his role as a minister of such. He returns to focus even more on his own credibility and credentials in chapters 10-13.

Powerfully, Paul extends his heart out to touch the heart of the Christians in ancient Corinth (see 6:11-13). The letter is quite personal, dealing with the relationship of Paul and the other workers with the Corinthians. His words are far more emotionally loaded in this letter than in the previous letter written to them in our canon. He is frequently quite “defensive” of himself and others, but certainly not in some egotistical manner. He writes for the sake of Jesus and for the sake of the Christians themselves. His defense of his own life is a defense of the good news and the way any Christian should live – his parodic boasting turns out to be praise for and to Jesus.

Paul does what is sometimes called “self-fashioning” throughout the letter. “First Corinthians” centers on the congregation, but this one is clearly more biographical in style and in emphasis. He paints a certain picture of his life and ministry; a picture that is accurate and one with layers of application for every Christian in every time. The picture the apostle paints offers us a stirring perception into the heart of Paul, and therefore, insight into the heart of a real servant. One key aspect of this lifestyle is that it is an all-or-nothing type of commitment to King Jesus. In the end, Paul leaves us no room for a fence-riding form of life in the Messiah.

For your consideration, here is a literary outline of “Second Corinthians” that Leland Ryken provides for us:¹

1:1-11 – Letter opening

1:12-2:11 – Paul’s past with the Corinthians

2:12-6:10 – Paul’s explanation and defense of his ministry

6:11-7:16 – Commands along with past dealings with them

8:1-9:15 – Appeal for giving

10:1-12:13 – Paul’s apostolic boasting

12:14-13:10 – Preparation for visit

13:11-14 – Letter closing

“Second Corinthians” tells us a lot about Paul’s life, but shows us all what we ought to be like. The apostle calls us to walk with him down the dusty road of the ministry of a true apostle (unlike those “super-apostles” in 2 Corinthians 11:5, 12-15 and 12:11). We can learn so much from the apostle Paul and his loyal ministry. Now, that is not to say that we all must be ministers in the same sense as Paul, but we must all be sincere servants of the Savior (4:2-7; cf. 1 Corinthians 11:1).

Paul begins the letter by discussing suffering and comfort through the glasses of the good news. Verses three through twenty-two of chapter one are the first two or three verses of this melody. Skillfully, he continues this thought by several refrains all over the letter, but he truly comes back to the discussion at the end (chapters 10-13). The first ten verses of chapter twelve and the first four verses of

chapter thirteen could be the crescendo of this theme within the letter.

Jesus’ grace and the power He grants as we suffer for Him and in Him are key in “Second Corinthians.” His incarnation, His sufferings, and His conquest are at the heart of the message and meaning of the entire letter (see 4:6-7; 5:14-15; 8:9; 13:4).

If I had to select one or two verses to summarize the overall theme of the letter, it might be:

“But He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is made perfect in weakness.’ Therefore, I will boast even more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me. For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong” (12:9-10).

A book of paradoxes and emphasizing the need to take a second (or third) look. Consequently, it is as if Paul keeps saying, “Look again!” He warns against judging based on how things may simply appear to be. One man observed that a “two beat rhythm (death/life; distress/consolation; affliction/glory; weakness/strength) runs through the epistle.”² Finally, I propose that this paradoxical nature of the writing may be one big reason we discover so many beautiful and catchy phrases in the inspired document (see 7:1-4; 12:7-10; 13:4-6). Consider the following examples – I expect these few examples will encourage you to read them in their context (why so many “for”s?):

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Master and Messiah, Jesus, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our afflictions, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God” (1:3-4).

“For all the promises of God find their Yes in Him” (1:20a).

“We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of

¹ Literary Introductions to the Books of the Bible, Leland Ryken, 431.

² Word Biblical Commentary, Ralph Martin, 2.

Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So, death is at work in us, but life in you" (4:11-12).

"For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison" (4:17).

"For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised" (5:14-15).

"As servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love; by truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; through honor and dishonor, through slander and praise. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always

rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything" (6:4-10).

"For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death" (7:10).

"For I feel a divine jealousy for you, since I betrothed you to one husband, to present you as a pure virgin to Christ. But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ" (11:2-3).

"Here for the third time I am ready to come to you. And I will not be a burden, for I seek not what is yours but you. For children are not obligated to save up for their parents, but parents for their children. I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls. If I love you more, am I to be loved less?" (12:14-15).

"For He was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God. For we also are weak in Him, but in dealing with you we will live with Him by the power of God" (13:4).

"Finally, brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you" (13:11).

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A close-up photograph of a document, likely a contract or agreement, with a signature line and a pen. The document has text that is partially visible, including "Assignment. The Contractor shall", "Agreement, or delegate the perform", and "the prior written consent of the Comm". A signature line is visible, and a pen is resting on it. The word "SIGNATURE" is printed below the line. The title "The 'Nuts-N-Bolts' Of Covenant Relating" is overlaid on the top right of the image.

The "Nuts-N-Bolts" Of Covenant Relating

John Krivak

*"This is another thing you do:
you cover the altar of LORD with tears,
with weeping and with groaning,
because He no longer regards the offer-
ing
or accepts it with favor from your hand.
Yet you say, 'For what reason?'
Because the LORD has been a witness
between you
and the wife of your youth,
against whom you have dealt treacher-
ously,
though she is your companion and your
wife by covenant."
--Malachi 2:13-14, NASB*

The relationship tops in importance to any Christian is a covenant. If married, then the top two relationships take covenantal form. The Bible presents the reader with many covenants. And yet, the odds are good that today's Christian has not a clue what a covenant is.

Mont W. Smith (*What The Bible Says About Covenant*, Joplin, MO: College Press, 1981) writes, "The idea of covenant is inseparably connected to every major idea in the Bible." Covenant is often the "hidden connector" that ties Bible concepts together and gives them sense. Walther Eichrodt wrote a major, two-volume theology of the Old Testament. He used the concept of "covenant" as the organizing feature that made sense of the OT approach to God. Much of the uniquely "religious" language that we find in the Bible (such as faith-

fulness, righteousness, judgment, curses, blessings, and sin) is actually language that is descriptive of covenantal relating.

John Bright (*The Authority of the Old Testament*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1975) makes an important observation: "Apart from the Old Testament, indeed, it is impossible to understand the significance of our Lord's work as the New Testament writers saw it. Likewise, the New Testament tells of the making of the new covenant and understands the relationship of the believer to his Lord and to his fellow believers as a covenantal one; yet it nowhere troubles to explain what a covenant is. But, again, why should it? Is it not sufficiently clear from the Old Testament?" Our primary source must be the OT. However, there is no one passage that defines covenant, nor is there a sufficiency of "proof-texts" which can be strung together into a meaningful definition. Walther Eichrodt insists instead that the OT contains "the characteristic description of a living process." In other words, we have to fashion our understanding by observing what partners (both human and Divine) do when they relate covenantally and synthesize the results into a working definition. We can also use observations from other ancient cultures (such as Assyrian and Hittite) to strengthen the limited OT material.

Covenant Stabilizes Wobbly Relationships

Relationships are inherently unstable. Holding them together and bringing them to fulfillment takes full attention and effort from every partner,

and no relational form brings stability better than covenant. Relationships often require external restraints (church, police, legal system, etc.). However, a covenant brings internal stability and predictability to relationships. Partners in covenant treat each other in ways that few others can expect—love, faithfulness, devotion, and undivided loyalty.

This is also true for those who share a covenant with God. The most common characteristics of false gods are their unpredictability, capriciousness, and chaotic reactions. By binding Himself to covenants with people, God made Himself very predictable and reliable. The most common description of God in the Old Testament is “covenant keeper” (Ex. 34:6; Deut. 7:7-9; 1 Kings 8:23; Neh. 9:16-21).

A covenant thus brings security unrivaled by any other form of relationship. Marriage is remarkably stable and enduring. If it seems to be failing in the modern day, it is because spouses are not honoring God and are failing their covenants. The covenant never fails them. Covenants also have been very successful in creating “covenant communities”, such as the theocratic nation of Israel and the global church of Christ.

What Does Covenant Look Like?

Covenants tend to be fluid, rather than fixed or static in form. They tend toward certain characteristics, such as these:

- **a bilateral partnership: essentially two-sided.** It is a joining of partners in a relationship that fully intends mutual benefit and so requires mutual participation. Walther Eichrodt writes, “...[covenant]...was always regarded as a bilateral relationship; for even though the burden is most unequally distributed between the two contracting parties, this makes no difference to the fact that the relationship is still essentially two-sided. The idea that in ancient Israel the [covenant] was always and only thought of as Yahweh’s pledging of himself, to which human effort was required to make no kind of response..., can therefore be proved to be erroneous.”
- **often asymmetrical: equal or unequal obligations.** In parity (equality) partnerships, partners would mutually agree to identical obligations. Not so in a suzerainty/vassal ar-

rangement. The “lord” (or “suzerain”) would set down the list of obligations (similar to terms-of-surrender) and his “servant” (or “vassal”) would swear an oath to abide by them. The issue of equality may be thought of as part of the “outer structure”, while the inner dynamics of relating (such as love and faithfulness) would be essentially the same in both equal and unequal relationships.

- **religious.** God is witness and enforcer, and perhaps an actual covenant partner. Even in covenants in which God (or gods in pagan settings) was not an actual partner, God served as the witness and enforcer who brought about the blessings or curses. The text of a formal covenant, or treaty, was often stored in a temple.
- **legal: obligations in laws or vows.** It is understood that each partner must accept obligations if the covenant is to achieve the success of mutual benefit. Eichrodt writes, “The covenant becomes an expression of the fact that God and the people have been thrown together and that neither can well survive without the other.” Often these obligations are formally expressed through “vows” which are sworn-to with an “oath”. They may be stated as laws or commandments.
- **requires total personal commitment and faithfulness.** Eichrodt writes, “The covenant lays claim to the whole man and calls him to surrender with no reservations.” The solemn nature is shown in the association with animal sacrifice with its implicit threat to the partners. In ancient Mari, the phrase “to kill an ass” is equivalent to “make a covenant” (and, to “kill an ass of peace” the equivalent of the Biblical “make a covenant of peace”).
- **specific.** The obligations (covenant legislation) attached to a covenant pertain only to those bound by the covenant. Thus, the Law of Moses was not binding on Egyptians or Ethiopians. This was God’s covenant with Israel (but it took in foreign aliens or sojourners living among God’s covenant people).
- **exclusive against competing interests.** One covenant partner is forbidden to allow a third party to acquire any benefit that might be a rightful expectation of the second part-

ner. Thus, a husband and wife can share sexuality only with each other, but sharing with any other is a breach of covenant. A failure in covenant obligation is called “sin.”

- **conditional: may result either in blessings or curses.** When one partner honors the other and their relationship, the appropriate response is a reward of “blessings.” Otherwise, the response is punitive through “curses.” Partners in covenant watch one another with eagle-eyes for indications of faithfulness or unfaithfulness, and react accordingly.
- **remedial:** After a partner sins against the other, the covenant is often “gracious” and makes reasonable opportunity for a remedial course of action. Some failures or sins are understood to not undermine the essential love and faithfulness required of partners; that foundation can still sustain the partnership. Forgiveness is an essential function of covenant-relating. Other failures are so egregious and damaging that the foundation is understood to have been broken, and forgiveness becomes impossible. The covenant may be considered broken.

In general, love and faithfulness are the essential requirements and the guarantors of covenant success. Partners are not restricted in their mutual obligations to the specifics found in the fine-print of their agreement. They are bound not merely to such specific stipulations, but to the broader expectations of those who are bound by true love and sincere faithfulness. So solemn were ancient covenants that they sometimes required animals to be split in two. The partners would then walk together between the split carcasses (see Gen. 15:9-19). The meaning of this, whether understood implicitly or stated explicitly, was expressed in an imprecatory oath sworn against oneself: “*May the same fate which befell this poor beast (or something even worse!) be upon me if I should fail my new partner in the covenant that binds us, before God, to mutual love and faithfulness!*” It is probably as a lingering reference to such rituals that the Hebrew phrase for making a covenant is, quite literally, “to cut a covenant.” For a really insightful read into covenant in the OT, I recommend *Created Equal: How*

the Bible Broke with Ancient Political Thought, by Joshua Berman.

The Same “Nuts-n-Bolts”

Let’s now return to the challenge of understanding how a covenant works. We have covered helpful resources from the Bible (OT mainly) and from ancient cultures. There is another resource, which will be revealed shortly, that is abundantly available to us all for understanding the “relational-dynamics” of a covenant. I like to refer to these relational-dynamics as the “nuts-n-bolts” of the relationship. These show us how covenant relationships function in specific situations.

Being a very human covenant-partner with God (through Christ Jesus), you as a Christian may wonder (or worry) how your Divine Partner reacts when you fall short of unfailing faithfulness and untarnished love? Hey, we all fail; sometimes small, sometimes large. We may wonder if we have crossed a line that threatens our covenant-status? We wonder if God will respond with grace, or with wrath? We should take confidence from the fact that covenants are the perfect relational-mechanism for coupling distinctly different partners, such as a Perfect with an imperfect partner! Covenants have, as we said earlier, a gracious tendency that serves well a clearly remedial functioning. Covenants have a remarkable ability to turn failing or wayward partners back to success.

The same issues arise in another covenant: marriage. You may wonder how your spouse will react when you sin (fail a relational obligation) to him or to her? Will it be forgiveness and kisses? Or sleep on the couch, with real worries that the relationship is over and beyond repair? What is endlessly delightful is that the same “nut-n-bolts” that apply in Christianity are quite similarly at work in marriage—and vice versa! The same things that make for either failure or success apply in both of these covenants. That means, if you can get a good fix on the dynamics that drive one relationship, then you can apply that understanding—straight across—to the other covenant. As it turns out, marriage and Christianity are “co-instructive”—the relational lessons learned in one apply in the other. At least, that is what Eph. 5:22-33 declares.

Paul recognizes that marriage and Christianity are both asymmetrical covenants. One partner is in submission to the other partner, who has authority or headship in the relationship. The authoritative

partner is to make a full self-sacrifice on behalf of the other (“*as Christ gave Himself for her*”). And this partner in weaker position is to honor the relationship by responding with careful purity, devotion, or faithfulness. Their partnership intends fullest unity (to which Genesis 2:24 bears witness). That is vs. 22-31.

The real shocker comes in v. 32. In case you had been thinking that Paul was primarily intent on laying down rules for Christian husbands and wives, the apostle now informs you that your reading is short-sighted! His true subject, he now declares, is not Christian marriage. His aim is beyond that to another, even greater covenant: “*The mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church.*” In other words, the extended discussion on Christian marriage, with special treatment of roles specific to each partner in that matrimonial covenant, is there to provide a very meaningful analogy by which we may gain useful understanding of the covenant between the Christ and His church (aka His bride)!

Now it should be clear that the reason why Paul can make this analogy is that Christianity and marriage are both covenants. They work upon identical relational-dynamics. And although this is surely true of more general dynamics (such as the need for love and faithfulness), Paul draws out for comparison more specific dynamics. The particulars of relations between spouses of distinctly different genders has a direct analogy to Christ’s relation to us in Christian covenant (thus, C. S. Lewis surmised, “for we are all, corporately and individually, feminine to Him.”). This co-instructive play between marriage and Christianity is a gem of insight!

Let me share what I have found. If I am struggling with some sin and its implications for my covenant with God through Jesus, I try to understand it first in marital analogy. How would my wife respond if I wanted some recreational fun over time with her? How would she respond if I were viewing pics of other women on the internet? How would she respond if I caved under pressure and told her something that was, in fact, untrue? What if I had an affair? What if I played the hypocrite, feigning love and fidelity while acting the part of a player? In each of these scenarios, I could imagine a very similar one between me and God. And in each case, God tends to react quite as I im-

agine my wife would react to my failures! And the reason is not that she is just like God (although the resemblance is more strikingly similar the longer she walks with Him), the reason is that both she and God are predictably similar as partners in covenant with me, who am prone to lesser and greater failures.

Ideally, the functioning of a marital covenant should be learned in your own marriage, but some of us are called to the gift of celibacy. Even single Christians, however, may learn the “nut-n-bolts” of covenant function simply by observing any successful marriage. The lessons may come from the family of their childhood, or from observing the model of married friends. But God has placed marriage as an object-lesson on successful covenant-relating as the bedrock of every human civilization. The applicable relational-dynamics are on display. Marriage is there for us all to learn from. The mystery is great.



SECRETS

OF STRONG FAMILIES

By Michael Shank

Nearly 300 construction workers came together in Palmer, Alaska to build a house. They gathered on a Thursday morning and waited for the sound of a gun—a blast that would mark the beginning of the construction of a new house. They wanted to see just how fast they could build the new, two-bedroom house. There was a small band and a crowd of 6,000 spectators to cheer the workers on. The workers were timed with a watch.

What were the results? How long did it take 288 workers to build a two-bedroom house? Just 3 hours, 53 minutes, and 59 seconds! And to top it off, a furniture company furnished the house in less than four minutes! Total time? *Just under four hours!*

Today we can have instant houses, but we can't have instant homes! A home takes a lot more time to build. A home isn't built out of brick and mortar in just a few hours or even in a few days; a home is built out of love, patience, trust, and commitment over a period of many years. Building a house is not the same thing as building a home!

Many homes in our society are in trouble. Many homes need repairing and remodeling.

Current marriage statistics reveal that 68%—two-thirds of first marriages—end in divorce or separation. The problems families face today are severe: finances (debt), children, in-laws, infidelity, alcohol, pornography, poor communication—and the list goes on and on.

A Happy Family/Marriage is Priceless!

When he was alive, John P. Getty was one of the richest men in the world. He made his first million dollars at age 23, and his fortune eventually totaled about four billion dollars. (He made his

money in the oil business.) What you might not know is that Mr. Getty was married five times.

He once remarked, *"I would give my entire fortune in exchange for a successful marriage."* A strong marriage and a strong family are priceless. Unfortunately, that wealthy man never enjoyed those blessings. He tried several times but never learned *the secrets*.

Musician Billy Joel has won many awards, including Male Artist of the Year, Record of the Year, Song of the Year, and Album of the Year. Joel recorded an astounding twenty top-40 hits during the '80s, nine of which reached the top ten. Joel has been inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

But on a personal level, his life has been less than accomplished. "The happiest times in my life were when my relationships were going well," the 59-year-old singer said. "But in my whole life, I haven't met the person I can sustain a relationship with yet. So I'm discontented about that. I'm angry with myself. I have regrets."

Joel has been married twice; his second marriage, to model Christie Brinkley, ended in 1994 after nine years. "You don't get hugged by the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame," he says, "and you don't have children with the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. *I want what everybody else wants: to love and to be loved, and to have a family.*"

What makes a family strong?

It is with difficulty that you will find a strong, healthy, exemplary family in the Scriptures. (Instead, what you will find is a host of *dysfunctional families!*)

- Adam had a son who was a murderer.

- Abraham had Hagar & Ishmael banished.
- There was incest in Lot's family.
- Jacob & Esau (deception/grudge), "*the wives of Esau* brought grief to his parents [Isaac and Rebekah]."
- Jacob had twelve sons by four different wives.
- Eli the priest's sons were "worthless men who did not know the Lord"

Where are the role models? One thing I appreciate about the Bible is that it is true to life; it is REAL life; it is reality reading! It doesn't seek to cover up the imperfections and sins of its heroes! It is with difficulty one finds a healthy family in the Bible. So what makes a family strong?

At the University of Nebraska an extensive research project was undertaken to answer that question. Professor Nick Stinnet—Chairman of the Department of Human Development—conducted several national studies on strong families. He posted this notice in 50 newspapers in 25 states:

If you live in a strong family, please contact us. We know a lot about what makes families fail; we need to know more about what makes them succeed.

Letters began pouring in. A questionnaire was then mailed to about 3,000 families from those who had written. To be included in the research, families had to rate themselves high in marital happiness and in satisfaction with parent-child relationships. The goal was to discover what makes a strong family.

Six common characteristics emerged time and time again. We might call these the *six secrets of strong families*. More importantly, these are the same qualities that the Bible encourages time and time again.

Commitment is the forerunner to all of the other family building characteristics. Jesus said, "What God has joined together, let no man separate" (Mk. 10:9). The Apostle Paul wrote, "Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be released!" (1 Cor. 7:27).

An ad in the newspaper read, "*For Sale: Brand-new Porsche 911SC Targa, 2,300 miles. \$50.*" Since the actual value of the vehicle was around \$60,000, the interested party assumed the

\$50 was a typo—a mistake. He called the number and went to take a look.

The lady met him at the door and pressed the garage-door button to reveal a car exactly as advertised; coal-black, glistening under the garage lights with that "new car" smell coming from the interior. He looked at the odometer. It read 2,304 miles. It was gorgeous.

He asked, "*How much?*"

She responded, "Like the paper said, \$50."

He laughed at her little joke. "Ha, ha. No, really, how much are you asking?"

She wasn't laughing. She said, "Fifty dollars and it's yours."

Convinced, but still not understanding, he asked, "*But why...?*"

She took a deep breath and said, "Look, my husband ran off with his secretary. He sent me a telegram telling me that our marriage was over and instructing me to sell the Porsche and to send him the money. The price is fifty bucks."

On the one hand, we smile. We like how the wife got back at her cheating husband! He got what he deserved. But, at the same time, we notice that there is *pain* in that story. What one person thought was commitment turned out to be only a temporary promise until another woman came along. Have you ever had promises made to you by someone you loved and trusted, only to be betrayed?

Dr. Stinnett discovered through his research that strong families are strongly committed to its preservation. There is a deep sense of commitment and loyalty to the family. The family comes first! Family members are dedicated to promoting each other's welfare and happiness—and they expect the family to endure. "Bailing out," "giving up," "divorce" are words not found in their vocabulary. Those things are never an option. Strong families are committed to the preservation of their family.

The principle is this:

Strong families are determined to make it work. Weak families sit back wondering if it's going to work!

Near the end of the movie, *The Family Man*, Jack discusses with his wife a job opportunity that would revive some of his former glory. Taking the job would mean a big move for the family, but Kate says she's willing to make a sacrifice for the

sake of the family—a defining moment that helps Jack see what marriage is all about. Kate makes this statement: *“Maybe I was being naïve, but I believed that we would grow old together in this house. That we’d spend holidays here and have our grandchildren come visit us here. I had this image of us all gray and wrinkly and me working in the garden and you repainting the deck. Things change. If you need this, Jack, if you really need this, I’ll take these kids from the life they love, and I’ll take myself from the only home we’ve ever known together, and I’ll move wherever you need to go. I’ll do that because I love you. I love you. And that’s more important to me than our address. I choose us.”*

Someone has described marriage with these words: “Marriage is two people looking deeply into each other’s eyes and saying, ‘Others may come and go in your life, but I never will. If you get sick, I’ll care for you, feed you, and bathe you. I’ll do anything for you except leave you. I will never leave you.’”

Time Together is the Second Secret to a Strong Family! “For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.” (Gen. 2:24) The Hebrew word for *cleave* is the idea of cementing two objects together. If you and your spouse are cemented together, you will spend time together!

Ephesians 5:15-16 says, “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.”

Dr. Stinnett discovered that a common characteristic among strong, happy, successful, and well-adjusted families is: they spend time together! Working together, playing together, attending church together, eating their meals together, strong families like to be together, and they make time for it. It’s a priority. The principle is:

*Strong families make time to be together;
Weak families spend time on other things!*

In failing families everyone is going in a different direction, doing their own thing.

The results of a survey from a nationally-known magazine revealed that the average father spends only 3 minutes each day with his child and only 37 seconds with an infant child. The hectic, fast pace of modern culture takes a heavy toll on families!

Spending time together must be *a priority!* Making time for the family is like pruning a rose bush. To keep the plant healthy, and to make it more productive—you must periodically trim back some of the good leaves and branches. Likewise, in order to have time for the family you will have to cut off some very good things: overtime on the job, a hobby on weekends, or a night out with the guys.

One suggestion: Make one night of the week family night. Have one night when everyone in the family can be together and do something together: play a board game, go bowling or miniature golf, make a cake and take it to a shut-in, show old family movies of when the children were small.

When 1500 children were asked, “What do you think makes a happy family?” they didn’t list “money,” “cars,” or “nice homes.” They simply answered: “Doing things together!”

Next comes appreciation! “You look beautiful today!” “I’m so glad I married you!” “You’re the best friend I have!” “I really appreciate all that you do for our family!”

Ephesians 4:29 says, “Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear.”

In his research, Dr. Stinnett—at the University of Nebraska—discovered that strong families tend to show a lot of appreciation for one another. They make each other feel good about themselves. They affirm one another. Feeling appreciated by others is one of the most basic of human needs. The principle is:

*Strong families build one another up;
Weak families tear one another down.*

“You’re just like your mother!” “All you ever do is complain!” “I don’t know why I put up with you.” “Can’t you do anything right?”

Do you know what the number one predictor of divorce is? “Disrespect!”

“Oh, grow up! You’re such a baby!” When one person talks like that to their marriage partner, then the marriage is in trouble!

Strong families show appreciation for one another; failing families are very critical of one another (fault-finding / belittling).

A brother in the church was divorcing his wife. They had been married for 46 years. He had served

as an elder for two different congregations. He knew it was wrong to divorce her, but he was willing to sell his soul to get out. When asked, *Why*, he replied: “I just can’t take her criticism any longer!”

Here are the kinds of things you need to say to your spouse: “If I had to do it over again, I’d still marry you.” “I couldn’t get you out of my mind today.” “I will always love you.” “I can always count on you.” “I’m so proud to be married to you.” “I’m sorry.” “I was wrong.” “You make every day brighter.”

Here is what I want to tell my wife today:

Dear Jonetta,

Like a diamond, you sparkle. You’re strong and enduring; you’re priceless!

Like a diamond I like to take you with me when I leave the house, and show you off in public. You make me proud!

Like a diamond, I like you close to me! They say, “Diamonds are forever.” Honey, you are the diamond in my life!

Michael

Yeah, okay...some of you are getting sick, but even if this is way too mushy for your taste, this is good stuff – I don’t care who ya are!

Guard against criticism. Parents, you need to be careful about criticizing your children. It is said that it takes about 16 positive compliments to offset just one criticism. Negative criticism has a great, damaging impact upon your children and their self-esteem.

One mother wrote to Dr. Stinnett saying, “Each night we go into the children’s bedrooms and give each a big hug and kiss. Then we say, ‘You are really good kids and we love you very much.’ We think it’s important to leave that message with them at the end of the day.”

Suggestion: Once every month, get the family together and have each person spend one minute praising every other member of the family. Sometimes the sessions might become a little embarrassing, but they certainly will be inspiring!

Communication is a must! There’s a story that’s going around, and I really like it. It comes from a small-town newspaper. In the classified ad section of a small-town newspaper the following ad appeared on Monday.

“For sale: R.D. Jones has one sewing machine for sale. Phone 958 after 7:00 p.m.

and ask for Mrs. Kelly who lives with him, cheap.”

On Tuesday.

“Notice. We regret having erred in R.D. Jones’ ad yesterday. It should have read, ‘One sewing machine for sale, cheap. Phone 958 and ask for Mrs. Kelly who lives with him after 7:00 p.m.

Wednesday.

“R.D. Jones has informed us that he has received several annoying telephone calls because of the error we made in his classified ad yesterday. His ad stands corrected as follows: ‘For Sale. R. D. Jones has one sewing machine for sale, cheap. Phone 958 after 7:00 p.m. and ask for Mrs. Kelly who loves with him.”

Thursday.

“Notice. I, R.D. Jones, have no sewing machine for sale. I smashed it! Don’t call 958 as the telephone has been taken out. I have not been carrying on with Mrs. Kelly. Until yesterday she was my housekeeper, but she quit.”

Communication is important in a marriage and a family. Dr. Stinnett discovered strong families communicate well and clear up misunderstandings. They work at deciphering each other’s messages.

A husband from New Mexico writes, “My wife would say, ‘Are there any good movies downtown?’ And she’d mean, ‘I’d like to go to a movie.’ I’d answer the question literally, by telling her what was playing. Rarely did I suggest going to a show. Then I’d be surprised when she would be grumpy and wear a long face. Eventually we figured this pattern out. She’s better now about saying ‘I’d like to do such and such, instead of hinting. And I’m better about checking to be sure I understand what she really means.”

Mark Twain once said, “The difference between the almost right word and the right word is really a large matter—it’s the difference between the lightning bug and the lightning.”

The Bible states: “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver.” (Prov. 25:11)

Spiritual Faith! “Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it; Unless the

Lord guards the city, the watchman keeps awake in vain.” (Prov. 127:1)

Dr. Stinnett discovered that strong families have a spiritual commitment, spiritual faith, a set of religious values—a standard of right and wrong.

One participant wrote, “Our family has certain values—honesty, responsibility, and tolerance, to name a few. But we have to practice those in everyday life. I can’t talk about honesty and cheat on my income-tax return. I can’t yell responsibility and turn my back on a neighbor who needs help. I’d know I was a hypocrite, and so would the kids and everyone else.”

There have been several studies in recent years that show a direct correlation between church attendance and a happy, healthy life. That is, people who go to church tend to be healthier and enjoy a more satisfying marriage than do people who do not attend church. A recent book on the subject (*Marriage Savers*, by Larson & Mayo) says—and I’m paraphrasing now—“People who attend church even once a month increase their chances of staying married. Religion provides couples with a shared sense of values, ideology, and purpose in life.” (Articles on this subject have appeared in serious scientific journals like *The American Journal of Psychiatry* and *Social Science Medicine*). Faith, church, and the Bible make homes happier and marriages stronger!

Coping with a crisis!

Strong families are not without problems. But they demonstrate the ability to rise above their problems and to prevail during a crisis. The principle is this:

A crisis will make a weak family weaker and a strong family stronger.

Why the difference? I think the difference is because in strong families you have the presence of those other qualities we have already mentioned: commitment, time together, appreciation, communication, and spiritual faith. Those wonderful qualities will help a family to get through the tough times!

When Job underwent a crisis and lost everything in one day—his children and his possessions—his faith helped him to endure. He said, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I shall return there. The Lord gave and the

Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.” (Job 1:21)

Conclusion:

What is **the status of your family?** Are some repairs needed? Remodeling?

Starting today, determine that you are going to bury the past and begin to implement these six qualities of strong families:

Commitment! “What God has joined together, let no man separate!”

Time together! “Be careful how you walk ... making the most of your time.”

Appreciation! “Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification, according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear.”

Communication! “A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver.”

Spiritual faith! “Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it.”

Coping with crisis! “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked I shall return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.”

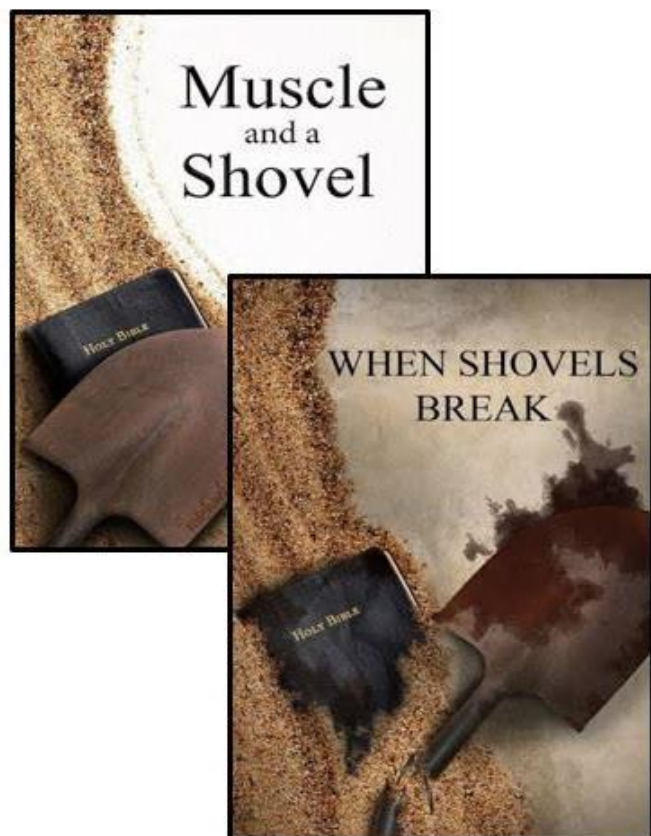
Will Durant wrote an eleven-volume series on *The Story of Civilization*. Afterwards he found himself discouraged and pessimistic about the future of mankind. He was depressed and searching for happiness. One day, at the train station, he watched as a young man approached a parked car. Inside in the car was a young woman holding a small infant in her arms. The man reached through the opened window of the car and gave the lady a soft kiss on her cheek, being careful not to awaken the sleeping little child. Then the man got into the driver’s seat, and the car drove away. Suddenly, it occurred to Mr. Durant that he had just witnessed happiness.

“Behold, children are a gift of the Lord... Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them.” (Ps. 127:3, 5)

Implement these components into your home, but begin with saving your own soul. Be the example your family needs you to be.

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Congregational Growth

AND THE UNLIKELY PREACHER

Keith Stonehart

Before the Beginning

Five Years ago, today (Sept. 20), I was driving home to Atlanta from a meeting in Fultondale, Alabama, a suburb of Birmingham five miles north of Downtown. There was a mix of both excitement and anxiety running through me as I had just accepted the offer to work as fulltime evangelist for the Fultondale church of Christ.

At 39 years old, no college education, no preaching school experience, and not even an internship under the supervision of a seasoned preacher and eldership—I was going to be a full-time preacher...

A month later, we would move and leave behind all our extended family and begin our new life in Birmingham with the weight of the world seemingly on my shoulders. I recognized full well, that eyes were on me from all sides – the congregation that had invited me, the community that welcomed me—but also, the “brotherhood of preachers”—men who had been educated, who were experienced and were absolutely waiting to see what I was going to do, were also watching...

This “outsider” with crazy hair, that preaches in blue jeans, with a shameful past that included adultery, addiction, and a rock band... Yes, I was feeling the pressure.

But I didn’t uproot and move my family from everything they have ever known to impress or prove to anyone what could I do. No, I moved here to share what the Lord has done for me and will continue to do, for and to everyone that will listen.

I am a statistic, according to the world’s standards, but I am also proof that the Gospel of Christ still works and still saves—because it saved a wretch like me. I had been moved, in the inward man—and THAT is why I was moving—to move others and to “persuade men,” not to gain their approval. This would be the beginning of hard first year.

The Beginning

There were 98 people that made up the church at Fultondale, and now we added 5 more to that number. Of the now 103 members, you could have almost sectioned each age demographic out into thirds—Elderly (over 60’s), Young families (25-50’s with young children) and High school/College (14-24). In my opinion – This was perfect for what I hoped to do.

Let me explain.

Not growing up in the church, I had no preconceived or traditional view of what a preacher was supposed to do other than teach, preach, and minister to the saints. Office hours were never going to be part of my job. If someone wants me to work from 8-5 in an office, then they don’t want me, nor do they want what I believe the 1st century church modeled. I don’t recall Paul ever keeping office hours, but rather he was out in the city, seeking the unsaved. The shepherds at Fultondale agreed with this and gave me no such restriction.

So, in my first sermon to the congregation, I lined out my plan, in a detailed description of what I had already been doing in seeking to save the lost. What I needed from them was congregational buy-in. Without the congregation working together, this was never going to work. After all, I was from another city and state and knew no one. They, on the other hand, knew EVERYONE.

One man cannot effectively evangelize a community this large—but what could 100 do? In Matthew’s account of the Gospel, Jesus didn’t say “Preacher, go into all the world.” No, he simply said “Go,” implying ALL of us.

So, we, as a congregation decided that we would collectively, “GO”.

The Going

As easy as it may sound in the previous paragraphs, getting congregational buy-in on any issue is no easy task simply done—and with evangelism,

even more so. Talking to people with the intent to persuade them, by reasoning from the scriptures or sharing faith with them, demands an exit from the comfort zone that most of us operate in. Not everyone is comfortable or equipped to do so, no matter their level of spirituality. But, everyone can do SOMETHING.

Over the next 2 years, I began teaching lessons on other aspects often overlooked in evangelism... That evangelism is much more than simply "Going into all the world." For example:

- Once we have "Gone into the world" (Matthew 18:19) and invited them to "Come and see" (John 1:39)—what then?
- What will they see? (Are our houses in order?)
- How will they be treated? (Are we hospitable??)
- Are we longsuffering through the process of conversion?
- Do they feel the love of God, or the judgement of men? Etc....

Preparing the congregation to welcome people who need the Gospel is not for the faint of heart. Most congregations consist of 3rd and 4th generation Christians who haven't been involved with people of the world on a personal level. Chances are, they won't look like us, talk like us, or behave and dress like us. This tends to make us uncomfortable, especially in the worship setting.

For this reason, lessons on hospitality and the absolute necessity of it were among the most prevalent and reoccurring themes, presented through various perspectives.

Hospitality became the focus of our Evangelism, and to this day still is.

The difference between entertaining strangers (as hospitality is often defined) and entertaining brethren is TIME. There are conversations that happen around the dinner table that simply cannot happen from the pulpit. In a sermon, I'm the only one who gets to talk – but around the table? Everyone has a voice... Everyone can have a say... Everyone can contribute and with each person's ability to voice questions, concerns, and curiosities, valuable dialogue can be born that can, and have led to the profession of faith produced by the reasoning of the scriptures.

This is ESSENTIAL, and unfortunately has been overlooked by many congregations.

Not everyone is comfortable talking to someone or trying to teach someone—but if you have a home, and can make a sandwich, you can and should absolutely practice hospitality.

As this became the common practice at Fultondale, "Going" began to look a lot like an invitation to dinner, where feeding was much more than just eating a meal, but relationships were built on dialogue and the spiritual nourishment became the focus.

And with the Going, began the Growing.

The Growing

In the last 5 years, Fultondale has grown by 56 souls saved by Christ, the most this congregation has ever grown in its 104-year existence. This is not the result of one man bearing the burden of the Lord's great commission by himself, but by 100 who committed to the teaching of the first century church... and we are still growing.

In addition to our members, we also enjoy the presence of 15-20 of what we call our regular visitors, all of which have been and will continue to be invited to eat and enjoy the hospitality of this body of Christ.

In the book of Acts, we often get to verse 38, rush people to the water to baptize and then leave them there to drown. What about verses 42-46 where they "continued in the doctrine of the Apostles, and breaking bread from house to house, receiving food with glad hearts?" (paraphrased)...

The result of verse 38 was Salvation... the result of verses 42-46 was Culminated in verse 47 where "They praised God having favor with all the people, and the LORD added to their number day by day, those who were being saved"

By the tender mercies of our Lord, he has added many to our number and continues to do so.

While there is much more that I would like to share, I am limited now – but the take away from this article (I hope) is that congregations do not grow that do not reach out. So, reach out, invite in, and then serve as though your soul depends on it... Because theirs DOES.

Remember, it is not the sole responsibility of the Evangelist to seek and save the lost but the duty and privilege of every baptized believer. When a congregation works as one with the purpose to work, the work gets done and the work will grow.

Love God, serve others, and do hard things... God will give the growth.



Unity

Among Brethren

William Howard

To understand unity in Christ among brethren, we need to look no further than the twelve apostles. Under other conditions some of these men could not be in the same room without riot and rock throwing. It is because of Christ and the maturity developed through Him that these men could work side by side. Matthew was a tax collector (Matthew 10:3). Simon was a Zealot (Luke 6:15). These two would have hated and feared each other prior to Christ in their lives. In Simon's eyes, Matthew would be seen as a traitor to Israel, a willing agent of Rome, and a corrupt official. In Matthew's eyes, Simon would be seen as a collaborator and helper of terrorists and murderers and only a step away from prison.

One man would have seen himself as working under law and order while the other saw himself as fighting for freedom against oppression, tyranny, and corruption. Who was right? Both could be thoroughly convinced and self-confident he was

right and the other wrong. No doubt they both could express their opposition by reciting injustices and assassinations done by the other side (Rome vs. Zealots). No doubt their arguments sounded persuasive and attractive. Those arguments were not of Christ but were from the loyalty to carnality and the determination to remain carnal.

One man would have seen himself as working under law and order while the other saw himself as fighting for freedom against oppression, tyranny, and corruption.

How could Matthew and Simon possibly work together as apostles? Their backgrounds would have been in aggressive opposition, having a history of bloodshed. In Christ neither Rome nor independence from Rome mattered. The political battle was of no concern. That could be cast aside along with years of bitterness, strife, and hostilities

for something greater. Here lies peace. In Christ, you learn there is something of more importance than your feelings, ego, ambitions, politics, culture, group, country and even your life. The thing of greater importance is the church and its

work. Brethren must be willing to put aside everything else for the only thing that actually matters – the kingdom of God. Anything else is wrong no matter how right it seems. Whatever is outside that kingdom can be counted as rubbish (Philippians 3:8). Unity in Christ is where all brethren submit to Christ in all things. This is done by the individual irrespective of what the other brother does or does not do. Matthew drops his side regardless of what Simon might do. That is good. Simon drops his side regardless of what Matthew might do. That is good. When this is done by both they can work together and both be useful in the kingdom of God.

Major differences can be overcome and have been overcome in a timely manner by all sides. Obviously, it did not take years for Matthew and Simon to get along. Their lives are not spent trying to come to terms with the other. That would make them unusable to the Lord indefinitely. Their usefulness would be on hold waiting for them to resolve differences. Their life was not to be a prolonged struggle to recognize the other as accepted by God. Both had to leave that far behind to serve Christ. They moved forward being changed by the teaching of Christ. Their love was no longer for politics nor the concerns of it. Their allegiance was no longer to men with the passions of worldliness. Each side seemed good. The struggles seemed just. But if it was not of Christ then it was nothing at all. If it divides the body of Christ then it is evil. If it destroys the work of the church then it is the work of the devil.

Let us now look at other problems which can test brethren's strength in unity. In Matthew 20:21 the mother of James and John comes to Jesus and asks, "Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom." Jesus simply answers that those places are not His to give. This mother's request, however did not sit well with the rest of the apostles: *And when the ten heard it, they were greatly displeased with the two brothers* (Matthew 20:24). They were not upset at her. They were troubled

with James and John who were seen as trying to surpass the rest of the apostles. Most members of the church do not try to be seen as someone great. This was a problem testing the apostles and it continues to be a problem today especially (but not exclusively) to preachers and elders. For elders, it can be the bragging rights of having the largest congregation, greater works, most faithful congregation, or best preacher. For preachers, it can become a matter of desiring recognition and praise from the right circles. It may cultivate a desire to be in high demand and spoken of in reverent tones. This is not the heart or character of a servant. There is a reason why Jesus washed the apostle's feet. The words "*Love does not seek its own*" has a meaning.

In Philippians 1:15-17 Paul speaks of differing motives of preachers, *Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from good will: The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; but the latter out of love, knowing*

that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel. Envy, strife and selfish ambition can become an enormous problem in unity. When humility is tossed out and self is overvalued and magnified, then trouble soon arrives. When men who are to be fellow servants suddenly see themselves as greater than the rest of brethren or when men preach out of envy in order to outshine or destroy someone else, what is to be done? This can destroy fellowship and

unity since there is a perceived competition and perhaps even an imagined hierarchy or ranking among brethren. Jesus gives the answer in Luke 9:46-48 *Then a dispute arose among them as to which of them would be greatest. And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a little child and set him by Him, and said to them, "Whoever receives this little child in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me. For he who is least among you all will be great."* Humility and genuineness must be matured in the self-aggrandizer and patience must be shown

... a brother does not have to change his minds on an opinion to satisfy another. Brethren, however, must love each other and understand that an opinion (regardless of whose) is only an opinion.

by the rest. Paul truly shows patience in Philippians for those who wished him harm.

Let us now move to the argument between Paul and Barnabas in Acts 15. This passage shows that a brother does not have to change his minds on an opinion to satisfy another. Brethren, however, must love each other and understand that an opinion (regardless of whose) is only an opinion. Paul and Barnabas disagreed on taking John Mark with them for their second missionary journey. Barnabas wanted him but Paul did not. The two parted company but they did so as brethren. They were united even while disagreeing on opinions. They continued their work but now in different directions – Barnabas to Cyprus and Paul onto Syria and Cilicia. They did not spend the rest of their years poisoning the minds of brethren against each other. There can be plenty of reasons why brethren part company and it not be wrong. There are personality clashes, contrasting opinions, and divergent approaches, etc. Brethren can either work through this or walk away as brothers united (as did Paul and Barnabas). Consider one another (Hebrews 10:24). Love one another (John 13:34-35). Do not sin against each other. Know that your brother is greater than any opinion—including your own. There is no method, idea, or program so great that it is worth destroying a brother. It is better to be mistreated than to mistreat (1 Corinthians 6:7). It is better to part company than to harm him, his work, or the church. In 2 Corinthians 12:20 Paul writes, *For I fear lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I wish, and that I shall be found by you such as you do not wish; lest there be contentions,*

jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, backbitings, whisperings, conceits, tumults. None of these things are done out love for the Lord or His church.

Brethren can have their feelings hurt just as quickly as anyone else. Personal affronts and insults by brethren can be devastating. It is easier to take abuse from those outside the church than from one considered a brother and fellow worker. There is a Christ-like character that must be developed: we become less offended at personal slights from brethren and less offensive to brethren. As James writes in James 1:19, *let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.* We are to become less passionate about ourselves and more passionate in serving Christ and building up our brethren. We must walk circumspectly (Ephesians 5:15) and be willing to drop certain rights just for the sake of our brethren as Paul states in 1 Corinthians 8:13: *Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.*

Bitterness and anger must be replaced by patience, maturity and endurance. Unity requires rising above it all even when brethren refuse to be above their own childishness and carnality. Do not lower yourself into a useless fight (Titus 3:9). You must rise even when everyone else sinks. The one that rises is the only one who could possibly keep unity intact and the work going. The one that rises lets the insults, the attacks, and the hurt feelings slide into the nothing from which they came. This is all part of overcoming the world (1 John 5:4).



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When Is a Child Ready For Baptism?

Jim Stutts

Since my work as a minister began in the 1960's, this question has come before me many times, whether in a church setting, home, personal counseling (parents or children) or at Bible Camp. It is an important question, because if a young person is of "the age of accountability", not having put on Christ in baptism and should they die they would be lost eternally (2 Thess. 1:7-9). Conversely, if they are too young to have yet sinned, then baptizing them to have sins washed away is useless! (Matt. 18:3). Some argue that it is better to baptize a child when they ask about it for fear they might die and be lost, even if they think they might not be. But the New Testament teaches that baptism is for sinners not for children who are "safe." Brother Marvin Bryant, former denominational preacher for 30 years, said that in the Lord's church, we are guilty of practicing infant baptism! Such would be sinful, because baptism is for "...both men and women." (Acts 8:12). There is no example of children being baptized in the New Testament. So the question is, when does a child become a man or a woman, thus accountable and a subject for scriptural baptism?

When they are consistent: One hot summer day when I was about 11 years old, I saw the preacher baptize several children (much younger than me), whose first and last visit to services was when they were dunked! Since I hadn't yet obeyed the gospel, but attended every service, I asked one of the newly baptized why he was baptized. He told me he was hot and wanted to get cooled off! I remember, he correctly answered the question, "Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?" But were his sins washed away? I doubt it, because he was not consistent in church attendance, asking questions in order to learn how to obey and requesting baptism. Children will often operate on a one-day whim (to cool off, because someone else was baptized, to be seen before an audience) rather than be baptized for scriptural reasons. That is why we must teach and guide a child (or adult!) before baptism (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 8:31).

When they are persistent: When one is old enough to be aware of sin in their life, then they experience guilt. Guilt will pressure them to do



something about their condition, if they know the remedy for sin—the truth. They will then persistently request baptism. They are not scriptural candidates for baptism unless they are persistent (Acts 2:37).

When they are insistent: The steps to salvation can be taught a parrot and it can repeat it correctly. But is it a candidate for baptism? Just because a child can parrot the steps of salvation (hear, believe, repent, confess and be baptized) doesn't necessarily make them a scriptural, baptism candidate. When the guilt of sin collides with the Word in the heart of a person, that person will insist on being baptized immediately. When anyone postpones obedience until the next church service (for convenience or an audience) they are not ready! No conversion example in Acts shows that a convert ever ate a bite, drank a drop, slept a wink, or waited for the church assembly before being baptized! Baptism is only for those mature enough to know sin and know Christ—sins remedy. If a child is not mature enough to obey their parents, they certainly are not ready to obey God!

Songs of the Kingdom:

Jesus Loves Me

Kyle Frank

This much-loved song has a history that it would behoove us to hear and share. “Yes, Jesus Loves me” can be heard rising from a myriad of voices when the saints gather to break bread and glorify our Lord in word and song. Let’s look into the history of this beloved song.

The author of the words of the hymn was Anna Bartlett Warner. She resided on Long Island, New York in 1820. Her widowed father, Henry W. Warner, was a prosperous lawyer who purchased a nice summer home on Constitution Island, which was located on the Hudson River, near to the United States Military Academy that was at West Point, New York. Unfortunately, there was a financial panic in the year 1837. Her father lost heavily and was forced to move to the summer home with his two daughters.

The father died unexpectedly, leaving the two girls, Anna and Susan, to become self-supporting. They began writing popular novels so that they might keep their home. Susan had a book entitled “Say and Seal” which was published in 1860. During the writing of this book, Susan asked Anna to write a poem which was to be recited by one of the main characters. The book was widely read by people of that day but practically no one knows it now. However, this short poem, *Jesus Loves Me*, became famous when a tune was composed for it. The writer was William Batchelder Bradbury (1816-1868). The hymn, *Jesus Loves Me*, made its first appearance in “The Golden Shower,” a songbook published in 1862 by Bradbury. The chorus of the song was added by Bradbury as well.

In comparison to her sister, who wrote another hymn named *Jesus Bids Us To Shine*, Anna

never did achieve the fame that she aspired to. However, she did write a number of novels under the name “Amy Lathrop” and also did produce two volumes of poetry.

The sisters conducted Bible classes for many years for the boys from West Point. These were conducted until Susan’s untimely death in 1885. Anna then taught the classes by herself. She died at age 95, in 1915. Her home, *Good Crag*, was willed to West Point which made it into a national shrine. Despite the fame which she had, her most enduring moment is her song, which has become very well-known and is a favorite to many children around the world.

*Jesus loves me this I know,
For the Bible Tells Me So.
Little ones to him belong,
They are weak but he is strong.*

The Scriptures tell us of the great love which God has for us. John 3:16 tells us the God so loved the world that He sent his only begotten Son!

The scriptures are full of this love and we should be ready to tell folks so if they ask. We can also look at the scriptures to see His love for the little ones: In Luke 18:16-17 Jesus said: *Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for to such belongeth the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein.*

*Jesus loved me he who died,
Heaven’s gate to open wide.
He will wash away my sin,*

Let his little child come in.

We can see that Jesus' suffering and dying made it possible for the gates of Heaven to be opened for us. Then, we can have the joy that can only be had because He was strong and also willing to suffer for our sakes.

*Jesus Loves me loves me still,
Though I'm weak and very ill.
From His shining throne on high,
Comes to watch me where I lie.*

How many times do we wonder if He is watching over us, especially when we are ill. Then, how He would be watching over us and observing our failed efforts to hold high heaven's banner during the thickest of the fight. He is mindful of all these things so let us always be mindful of our King and His battles. From the youngest to the oldest, let us always be of that mind.

Holy, Holy, Holy

Kyle Frank

This song is one of the most famous in the history of gospel songwriting. Reginald Heber wrote the text. His birth was on April 21, 1783 at Malpas in Cheshire, England. His parents were wealthy, cultured, and scholarly. He entered Brasnose College at Oxford University. His scholarly work won him several awards in both English and Latin, which was the language of Science and Religion. These attainments won him a fellowship to All Souls College.

After having graduated and won all this accord, he became a minister in the Episcopal Church and served from 1807 until 1823. His place of service was at Hodnet, near to Shrewsbury in Shropshire in the western part of the country. He was very fruitful in his songwriting—during these sixteen years he wrote sixty hymns. Some, like “The Son of God Goes Forth to War” and also “From Greenland’s Icy Mountains,” are somewhat familiar to some Christians. Most of these he never had published. In 1823 he accepted the post of Bishop of Calcutta in India. He had a wide-ranging post which covered Australia, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), and several other islands. This, besides the high humidity and heavy workload, affected his health. After having completed his sermon for the day, he went to bathe in the garden pool. When he did not return, servants went looking for him and found him drowned. Apparently he died of apoplectic stroke. His burial was in the Anglican Church at Trichinopoly. He was just 43 years of age. The date

given for “Holy, Holy, Holy” is 1826 because it was then that it was published in “A Selection of Psalms and Hymns.” It is believed to have been written during Heber’s work at Hodnet, to be sung on “Trinity Sunday.”

His widow and friends published a collection of 57 of his songs as a tribute to him. It included this one, which is most definitely his best known work. The music that we know so well was composed especially for this work by a fellow Anglican Minister by the name of John Bacchus Dykes (1823-1876). The song describes several attributes of God.

*Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty!
Early in the morning our song shall rise
to Thee:
Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and Mighty!
God in three persons, blessed Trinity*

We sing to God because he is infinitely holy (1 Peter 1:14-15). His absolute holiness is one evidence by which we, His children, acknowledge him to be the Lord God Almighty. (Genesis 17:1) Another way that His holiness is shown is in the fact that He is merciful. (Psalm 103:8)

*Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore
thee,
Casting down their golden crowns
around the crystal sea;
Cherubim and seraphim falling down be-
fore thee,*

*Who wert, and art, and evermore shall
be.*

The saints are pictured as casting down their golden crowns around the crystal sea, before God. (Rev. 4:10-11.) The angelic beings such as cherubim and seraphim are seen as waiting upon and serving before the throne of God. (Isaiah 6:1-3) God is most certainly worthy of this worship and service because He is the one “who wert, and art and evermore shall be. (Rev. 1:8)

*Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness
hides thee,
Though the eye of sinful man Thy glory
may not see.
Only Thou art holy; there is none besides
Thee,
Perfect in power, in love and purity*

Because God is so absolutely and infinitely perfect, the eye of sinful man may not behold His glory (Exodus 33:20, John 1:18). We should strive to meet His standard. Only He alone is “Perfect in power, in love and purity.” (Matt 5:48).

*Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!
All thy works shall praise Thy name in
earth and sky and sea;
Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and Mighty!
God in three persons, blessed Trinity.*

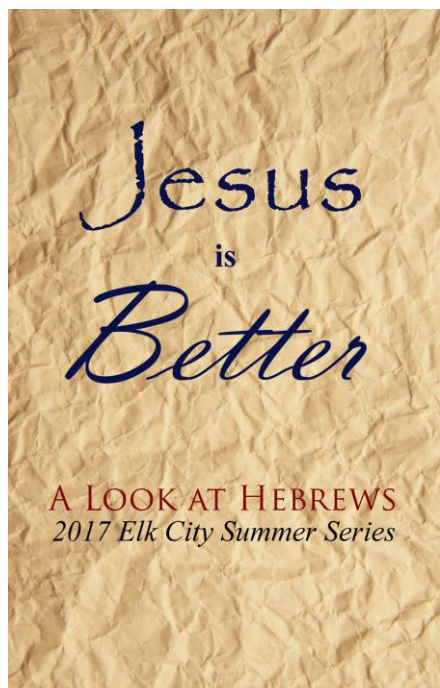
God alone is the Creator of all things (Gen. 1:1, Ex. 20:11). Everything that He created will honor Him in earth, and sky and sea. (Psalm 19:1-2, 26:7.)

“QUOTES TO PONDER”

In [the Gospel of Luke] the 3rd chapter and 16th verse, John observes that he was not worthy to stoop down and loose the Saviour’s shoes. If we are rightly informed, this was performed to a high-priest before he stepped into the water to be baptized, or consecrated.

James O’Kelly
The Divine Oracles Consulted, or an Appeal to the Law and Testimony (1820)

Funny when you mention “L-O-V-E,” people look for it instead of looking for somebody to give it [to].
Antonio Carroll
(Facebook post)



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The **CERTIFIED** Gospel

Galatians 1:6-24

Gerald Cowan

INTRODUCTION

We have reached a point in our society where skepticism, doubt, and disbelief are paramount in human affairs. Though we may want it, we are seldom able to have a high degree of certainty that we have the truth in anything. In commerce: whether it be buying and selling food and clothing, equipment, or houses and properties advertising makes claims and promises that cannot be believed. In treaties, contracts, agreements, and covenants a statement of intentions and promises of behavior can be essentially meaningless. Nobody on either side really trusts the other to be completely honest. What about politics? Partisan loyalty sometimes seems to be more important than the people a politician is elected to represent, protect, and serve. *Honest politician* is often regarded as an oxymoron, a contradiction in terms. Who really trusts politicians? Manipulation of truth may be deemed essential for political success. Even in religion, certitude is a scarce commodity. Matters stated as dogmatic truth in one religion or sectarian group may be denied and replaced by contradictory dogmatic assertions in other groups.

Religious groups are willing to excommunicate all who disagree with them in almost anything.

Joining religion and politics to certify each other often invites a travesty of truth. With his hand on a Bible one swears in the name of God that he will uphold and defend the nation's constitution. But in practice neither God, the Bible, nor the Constitution mean anything to one whose only

desire is to be admitted to the office, and he may begin campaigning for reelection the day after he is sworn in to the office. The administrator of an oath of office may know it is an exercise in futility but willingly participates in the charade. And we are left in a state of uncertainty about what it is to come.

We feel better when we have certification that our food, water, and medicines are safe to consume. We feel better when our politics can be certified as safe and valid. Those to whom religion is important want to know it is certified safe for human consumption, that it will lead to paradise and not to perdition. But there is no guarantee that the certification is valid. The certifier may not be honest, perhaps not qualified to inspect and certify the particular product. Sometimes the certifier only repeats what someone he trusts has already said about it – testimonials depend upon the public's perception of the testifier.

Perhaps we should demand certification of any and all certifiers before accepting a product as certified. If there is one falsehood anywhere in the chain, the end result is invalidated and the certification means nothing. In most human affairs we can never be certain we have the truth, because human certification cannot be trusted. Even in nominal Christianity there are countless divisions, contradictory translations of the Bible, widely different catechisms, etc. Follow me now as we discuss The Certified Gospel.

Importance of Certifying the Gospel Message.

Are churches – are *we* – doing enough to make sure we have and preach the truth of God?



We spend a lot of time emphasizing the need to know the truth of God and preaching that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, that His words in the New Testament gospel are the truth that can set us free (John 14:1-6). If truth is required to make us free (John 8:32) how can we expect that error will also make us free? It doesn't matter what you put after "free" – free from what, for what, or to do what. Error cannot make anyone free from, for, or to anything that is of eternal importance, such as the soul. The teacher of truth is not an enemy – except to the liars and false teachers (Galatians 4:16). But one who preaches something that is not true is asking for trouble from the Lord. We can say, as the apostle Paul did, "*Woe is me if I preach not the gospel of Jesus Christ*" (1 Corinthians 9:16, 1:17). Not woe is me if I do not preach, but woe is me if what I preach is not the gospel! How does anyone recognize error? How can one know what is or is not true? The words of others may be convincing without being true. If there is no way to know and verify truth, then we are essentially hopeless.

We can never be sure we have religious truth unless we go to the author and source of truth, that is, to the Lord God himself. Of course we cannot converse directly with God, as some select persons were able to do in the past. But we do have the scripture which claims to be the word of God, given to us by persons who got it directly from God. Without wanting to be overly technical we need to add something else here. None of us has direct access to the original words of scripture as written by the original authors, and most of us cannot access the original languages used by those authors. None of us has access to the original autographs, the documents written down by inspired men or dictated by them to others who wrote their words down. None of the original documents exist. We have copies, but we do not know how close they are to the originals. They may be copied not from an original autograph but from a copy or a copy of a copy, etc. The original languages are not known to most of us. In some cases they are "dead languages" not spoken or written any more.

The Greek language of today is not the Greek language used in New Testament times, and the Greek used in the translation of the Old Testament (the so-called Septuagint) produced hundreds of years before Christ is not precisely the same as the Greek of the New Testament. So our understanding is dependent upon various translations, dictionaries, vocabularies, and grammars.

If you can't go directly to the original writing and the original language, at least get as close to the source as possible. At the very least read from a reliable translation of the Bible to verify what others say is in the Bible or claim the Bible teaches about a given subject. Resources that stand between the Bible and you may or may not be helpful. Go to the Bible itself.

Have you ever wished – I confess that I often wish – that translators and publishers would **certify** the accuracy of their work? Keep in mind, as we continue here, the to be sure that a certified product is actually valid, one may also have to certify the certifier. For example, the **NIHIL OBSTAT** (certification that a writing contains *nothing objectionable*) and **IMPRIMATUR** (permission to print and circulate a writing) that appear in Roman Catholic publications, including their translation of the Bible, is only valid if the church or the spokesman is valid. The publication may be considered safe for Catholics, conforming to current Catholic doctrine and dogma and yet not be Biblically true. It may be permitted and recommended for Catholics, but that is no guarantee or certification of accuracy and authenticity of its contents. The same principle applies to translations of scripture which may be certified as safe and useful for a particular group or denomination. Some wonder why there is not an official translation or version of the Bible for *the church of Christ* or why nobody tries to produce one and impose it upon the church. It is of critical importance that we be sure we have in meaning the exact message of God, that we know for certain that we have His words. But it is not "church of Christ doctrine," but rather the truth of God that should be certified and promoted. Satisfying and yielding to the desires, understandings, prejudices, and biases of translators, publishers, churches, and

*"Woe is me if I preach not
the gospel of Jesus Christ"*
... Not woe is me if I do not
preach, but woe is me if what
I preach is not the gospel!

readers can make it very difficult to avoid misrepresenting God. The church has no creed to promote or impose. A creed is a statement of “what we believe,” but not necessarily a statement of “what God has said.” We must promote, publish, and certify God’s word and not our personal beliefs and positions.

Did you know that at least Paul directly, and others indirectly or by inference, did certify and guarantee that what they wrote was accurate and dependably true to the words given to them by inspiration from God’s Spirit? (1 Corinthians 2:6-13). In the remainder of this essay we will talk about *the certified gospel* – from Paul and others – as contained in the New Testament. We will discuss how it is certified, how we can know it is dependably true, accurate, and trustworthy. Of course if it is true and trustworthy, nobody has a valid excuse for failure to accept it, obey it, make proper application of it, and teach it faithfully to others – which is what the Lord commanded and requires.

Paul’s Certification of the Gospel He Preached. Galatians 1:6-12

“I certify (to) you brethren, that the gospel which is preached by me is not after man” (Galatians 1:11). In making his statement here Paul contrasted his message with improperly called “gospels” some others had brought to the churches of Galatia (1:7). Their message was not a new and different gospel of and from Jesus Christ. It was a perversion of the truth, which means those who preached it and those who accepted it would be *perverts*, not true Christians, in God’s sight. The perverted messages were designed to appeal to men and not to God. As such, they could not please God, nor could those who preached them please God. If one changed the message to please himself or others he could not call himself the servant of Christ (1:10). If apostles – even angels – or any others perverted the words of God they would be accursed, anathema to God (1:8-9). If they did it ignorantly they could be forgiven, but only if and when they corrected it (1 Timothy 1:13). Those who do it deliberately and knowingly and do not correct it cannot be excused or forgiven. They are

accursed. Paul did not formulate and fabricate a message on his own. Nor did he receive his message from others, or in collaboration with others (1:11-12a). He did not confer with anyone – not even the apostles – to determine what he was to believe and teach. He did not “go to a seminary” or Bible school or preacher training school to be indoctrinated with denominational dogma. But that is, by the way, how he was indoctrinated with rabbinical dogma that had corrupted the words of Moses and the prophets – at the feet of Gamaliel, a greatly revered teacher of the time. He claimed that

he received his message directly by revelation from Jesus Christ (1:12b).

Other apostles could claim they received teaching directly from Jesus – three years or so of discipling from him. They also received revelation from the Holy Spirit, as Jesus promised (John 14:16-17,

16:12-13, Acts 2:1-4). Paul was taught directly and miraculously by Jesus. He also had the Spirit of Christ, as the other apostles did (1 Corinthians 2:19-13, 1 Corinthians 7:40).

Paul’s conversion and change of character, including attitude and actions, can only be accounted for by the action of God, not the desires of Paul. This was credible evidence that his message was not from himself or other men like him (Gal. 1:13-24). He went from radical defender of rabbinic traditions and radical persecutor and prosecutor – breathing out threatening and slaughter (Acts 9:1) against all who dared to doubt or depart from them – to chief defender of Christ and his gospel, willing to endure fanatical persecution against himself and even death itself to support the faithful and the faith he had once tried to destroy. What he preached was diametrically opposed to what he had tried to impose upon others prior to his coming to terms with Jesus, being instructed and commissioned by the Lord himself (read his accounts of his conversion, recorded in Acts 9, 22, 24, 26). He often claimed to be telling the truth, saying that he did not lie, would not lie, and that the Lord God knew he was telling the truth (Galatians 1:20; compare Romans 9:1, 1 Tim. 2:7, and 2 Corinthians 11:31). If he lied there were living witnesses who could discredit him and rebut his teaching.

A creed is a statement of
“what we believe,” but not
necessarily a statement of
“what God has said.”

We Must be Able to Say We Have a “Certified Gospel” in the New Testament.

If we cannot say so, how can we expect people to accept it from us and act upon it? True, some do not care whether it is or is not. Isn't it strange that in a world where so many demand certification of so many things, there are relatively few who demand certification in things concerning the eternal spirit, in the realm of religious truth? As long as it is pragmatically useful, doing what they want it to do, that is enough and they are satisfied. Some do not want it to be true because they do not want to feel compelled to accept and obey it. But those who are searching for truth will not accept the gospel from us if we cannot support a claim to its accuracy and validity. Our attitude and intention should be the same as that which guided Luke in the production of his gospel account and the history of the early church in the book of Acts (Luke 1:1-4). Like Luke, we should attempt by personal study and research to set forth accurately and confidently the things believed and taught among Christians so that those who hear may also know with certainty. We should recognize inspiration and trust God as the true author and source of all truth, especially religious and spiritual truth. It is not wishful thinking on our part. The available evidence supports our claim and leads to certainty and certification of our faith. We will present seven lines of evidence that help to certify the gospel we preach.

1. The gospel upon which our faith is based is certified by verifiable miracles, wonders, and signs (Hebrews 1:1-2 and 2:1-4). The whole gospel system rests on the claim that Jesus was divine, the literal and true Son of God. The claim was supported in part by his words, what he said and the way he said it. “*No man ever spoke as this man did*” (John 7:46, Matthew 7:28-29). He gave information and insight with apparent authority that could only have come from God. The works that he did were proof that God was in him and with him – no man could have done such works otherwise (John 3:2). He said, “*If you cannot believe the words, believe me for the works*” (John 10:38, compare Acts 2:22 and Hebrews 2:4). The word *miracles* referred to mighty deeds outside the realm of nature, and indicated the source of what was done.

The might or power which stood behind the deed was divine, not human. The word *wonders* described the effect such deeds had on the witnesses. They filled them with awe and amazement. The word *signs* established the purpose of the works that were done. These deeds pointed to God, acting in the presence of humanity to convince men of His presence and intervention.

Miracles, wonders, and signs also attended the preaching of the apostles, verifying not only what they spoke but what they wrote, and what God preserves for us in scripture (Hebrews 2:1-4, 2 Corinthians 12:12). The words of God through the Spirit-guided apostles “*came not in word only but also in power*” (1 Thessalonians 1:5). The same line of evidence was used at Jerusalem to argue that the work of gospel preaching among Gentiles was approved by God, for they were “*declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them*” (Acts 15:12). By such astounding evidences the ministry of Jesus and the ministries of his apostles were certified: certified by miracles, wonders, and signs from God.

2. The gospel was certified by primary and secondary witnesses. Some of the men who wrote were eyewitnesses of Jesus and of the events they reported (2 Peter 1:16-18, 1 John 1:1-3). This would include the original apostles. The events and the preaching about the events was not done in secret and then “leaked” to the public after the fact – they were “not done in a corner” but in the open, in public view and with public knowledge (Acts 26:26). As we have noted before, though Paul was not one of the original company of Jesus, he did have face-to-face visits with the resurrected Christ, and got his gospel directly from him. Paul's writing reflects his own experience of Jesus and his experience with those he tried to teach in the Lord's name. Some, like Mark and Luke, were secondary witnesses. They accompanied some of the primary witnesses, such as Peter and Paul and other apostles. The author of Hebrews cannot with certainty be placed among the apostles and other eyewitnesses to the ministry of Jesus.

It is more difficult to place James and Jude, brothers of Jesus, though we should not question their inspiration. They were not believers during the ministry of Jesus but were among the initial members of the church of the Lord and were influenced by the continuing God-given signs and post-

resurrection confirmation of his ministry and teaching. Some extra-biblical writers claimed to be disciples of Peter, John, or another apostle.

3. The gospel was certified by fulfilled prophecy. Nobody but God can know the future. It is within man's ability to prevent what others plan to happen, or to do what others say cannot or will not happen. But God who alone "knows the end from the beginning and the things that have not happened as though they were already past" can state his intent, predict or stipulate an event, etc., and nobody has the power to prevent it or do anything contrary to the prophecy (Isaiah 46:8-11). Numerous prophecies or predictions fulfilled show God as the author of scripture. There are some 332 Old Testament prophecies that have to do with the Messiah. Jesus fulfilled them all – everything written about him in the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets (Luke 24:45-48). If there were no other evidence of divine inspiration this one should be enough to prove the point to every open-minded person.

Peter said, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawn and the day star arise in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet.1:19-21).

4. The gospel is certified by internal consistency. Scripture does not contradict itself, nor does it claim as true anything that can be disproved by history or other external resources. Apparent or claimed contradictions are the result of mistranslation, misunderstanding, or misapplication of scripture passages. Translators and commentators often resort to *eisegesis* (reading into it what one wants to find or pretends to find) rather than *exegesis* (reading out of it what it actually says and contains). Contradictions are resolvable by careful study of the text or texts in question. Proper exegesis and attention to context will resolve many questions.

5. The gospel is certified by being a first-hand revelation, not a second-hand system *received from others*. This recaps something said earlier about God speaking to and through chosen ones by His Spirit. They received the message directly from him. We do not receive the message directly from God, but we do receive the very message received by those to whom He gave it directly and who then delivered it for all and for all time in the scripture. "*The faith once for all delivered...*" (Jude 3).

6. The gospel is certified by infallibility. It cannot be disproved or broken (John 10:35). Of course many efforts have been made and are constantly being made to disprove the Biblical account. Historical and geographical errors are frequently claimed. Many such factors cannot be tested by reliable evidence or information, but the rise of archeological research and evidence comes down consistently in favor and support of the Biblical account. Scientific matters are more difficult. But when true science replaces assumptions and superstition, the Bible is shown to have been far ahead, sometimes

centuries ahead of received and accepted assumptions and claims of science falsely so-called (1 Timothy 6:20 KJV). True, some matters still cannot be checked or verified. But critics are not willing to trust the Bible as reliable history. Though it has been proved accurate in so many things, its enemies are not willing to admit its trustworthiness and give it the benefit of the doubt in contested but untestable matters. Prejudice and bias have not been able to disprove or destroy the Bible, but those who do not want the Bible to be true will probably never give up the effort to discredit it, even when they cannot disprove it.

7. The gospel is certified by centuries of willing martyrs. We do not have in mind only those who have been killed for refusing to deny Christ. Martyrdom has nothing to do with death, except indirectly and consequentially. Many falsely assume a martyr is "someone who dies for the faith." Catholicism has promoted and pushed that idea, giving special honors and status to those who have been killed for their faith and testimony in "the

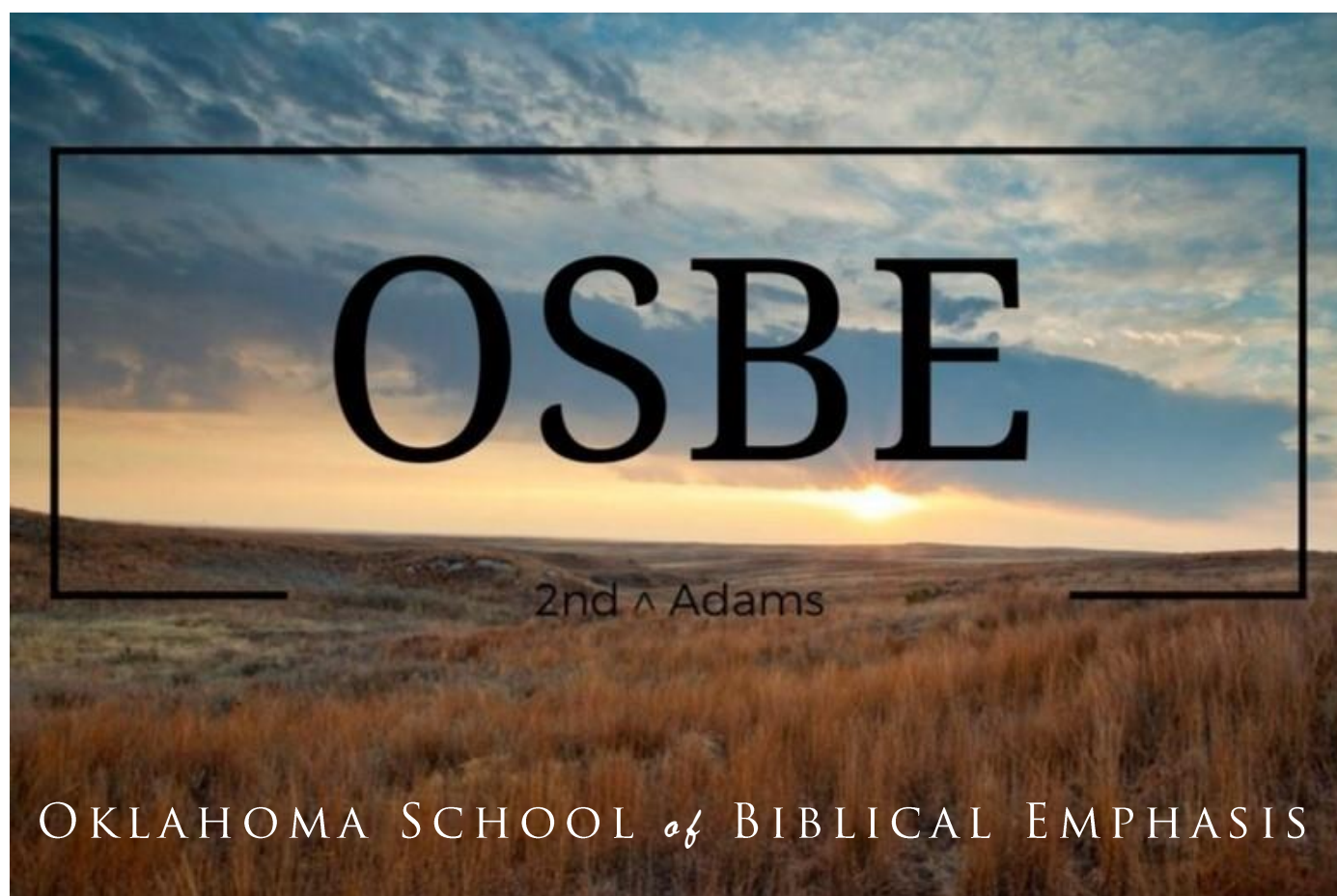
Apparent or claimed
contradictions are the re-
sult of mistranslation,
misunderstanding, or
misapplication of scripture
passages.

church.” But the New Testament word ***marturos*** translated *martyr* simply means *witness*. Peter said, “We (still living apostles) are witnesses/martys (***martures***) to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit of God (a witness/***marturos***) whom God gives to those who obey Him (Acts 5:32). Paul called upon God to be his ***martus***/witness as to the truth of what he said (Romans 1:9). Being willing to testify, acting as oracles of God to deliver His message to others (1 Peter 4:11), makes one a martyr, a witness for God. Being unwilling to deny God and Christ and his gospel – even if it cost them persecution, hardship, and death they would not give up their faith and their hope in Christ – is what made Christians martyrs while they lived, not at or after their death. The number of faithful disciples – keepers of the faith, sharers of the faith with others, evangelists who bring others into the faith and fellowship of the Lord – is unknown and unknowable to us, but the fact of their faithfulness

even to death (Revelation 2:10) should persuade us to join their number and be certain that our faith, hope, and reward are as sure as theirs.

Conclusion:

In this age of theological guesswork and blatant open attacks by moral reprobates and cynical skeptics who question every major premise of the gospel system and the faith once delivered to the saints, it is time that we stand steadfastly and, with confidence and assurance, state our case for the ***certified*** gospel. No other spiritual nourishment is acceptable. Any other has the anathema of God upon it and will end in everlasting ruin. We must also sound a warning to those who cling to the certified gospel to be sure that what we teach and practice can be located in and verified by that certified and certifiable gospel of Jesus Christ in the New Testament of the Bible.



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Biblical Biography:

TIMOTHY

Bradley S. Cobb

The Selection of Timothy

The very first thing said in the Bible about Timothy was that he was a disciple from the Derbe/Lystra area. That is, he was a Christian when Paul arrived there with Silas on his second missionary journey. It is generally assumed that Timothy was converted by Paul, because the apostle calls him “my own son in the faith” (1 Timothy 1:2).¹ If this is indeed the case, Timothy must have been converted some years earlier during the first missionary journey, either around the time when Barnabas and Paul were thought to be Greek gods,² during their visit to Derbe,³ or their return visit to Lystra.⁴ Regardless of when it took

place, Timothy owed his spiritual mindset to his grandmother Lois, and his mother Eunice, who made certain that he was familiar with the Scriptures from the time he was a child.⁵ It was from this knowledge of the Scriptures that he was “thoroughly furnished into all good works.”⁶

This young man,⁷ before Paul’s arrival on the second journey, had already become well-known among the brethren in his hometown of Lystra,⁸ but also in Iconium, some 30-40 miles away. According to McGarvey, this is a strong implication

¹ The validity of this translation is not as certain as many have assumed. Paul does not use the word “my,” nor is there anything in the text to show possession. The New King James Version renders it more literally: “a true son in the faith.” It is possible that Paul is simply calling Timothy “a true [or genuine] son [of God] in the faith.” 2 Timothy 1:2 says “my beloved son,” but just like with 1 Timothy 1:2, there is nothing in the Greek to demand the word “my” be added. It literally says, “To Timothy, a beloved son” (see the NKJV). Timothy is called (in Greek) “my son” by Paul (2 Timothy 2:1) and his relationship with Paul is described as “a son with the father” (Philippians 2:22).

² Acts 14:6-18. Some have suggested that when Paul was stoned and left for dead, he was brought to Timothy’s house, causing a deep impact on the younger man and a desire to help Paul in any way he could. No evidence was given for that suggestion, and so it remains in the arena of supposition.

³ This preaching visit in Derbe (Acts 14:20-21a) seems to be the least likely of the three suggestions for the time of Timothy’s conversion. Though Paul and Silas met up with Timothy in “Derbe and Lystra,” the young disciple was well-reported by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium—no mention of his being known in Derbe.

⁴ Acts 14:21b-23

⁵ 2 Timothy 1:5, 3:15, Acts 16:1.

⁶ 2 Timothy 3:15-17.

⁷ There is no consensus on what his actual age was. The estimates range from late teens to early 40s. The word translated “youth” (1 Timothy 4:12) speaks of the earliest years of accountability in the other places where it appears in the New Testament. It is said that men were considered “youths” or “young men” until around age 40 [some say closer to 30]. Paul says “let no man despise your youth” (1 Timothy 4:12) around AD 60-63. The events in Acts 16 took place closer to AD 48-50. Using the information at hand, knowing that at least a decade after Timothy joined Paul (more likely closer to 15 years), he was still called a “youth,” it leads us to the conclusion that Timothy was most likely in his late teens or early twenties when we first meet him in Acts 16. Barton W. Johnson, in his *The People’s New Testament with Notes*, suggests that he was twenty years old. The apocryphal *Acts of Timothy* claims that he was killed around AD 97 at the age of 80, which—were it true—would mean he was born in AD 17, and was 31 when Paul met him, and in his mid-40s when Paul called him a “youth.” While this is possible, it doesn’t agree with the general usage of the word in Greek, nor elsewhere in the New Testament.

⁸ Given that Timothy was well-known in Lystra and Iconium (Acts 16:2), and that Luke records that Timothy was a disciple that was in the area of “Derbe and Lystra” (Acts 16:1), the most logical conclusion is that Timothy was from Lystra.

that Timothy had already begun preaching the gospel in local congregations:

*...he was well spoken of by the brethren. The fact that he was thus attested not only at ... Lystra, close about his home, but also at the distant city of Iconium, renders it probable that he was already a young preacher, and that the imposition of hands by the elders of the church, which is mentioned later [1 Timothy 4:14], had already taken place.*⁹

Even though Barnabas was no longer with Paul, his effect was still being felt. The apostle Paul looked at Timothy as someone who would be useful in spreading the gospel to Jew and Gentile alike—just like Barnabas viewed Paul (Acts 11:20-26). Timothy was already well-known and well-respected by the local brethren, but Paul decided he needed another co-worker, and Timothy was the man he chose. This wasn't a slight to Silas, any more than the addition of Luke less than ten verses later was a slight to Timothy. Paul was always looking for Christians who could be of help in spreading the gospel and encouraging new congregations.

Timothy was much like the church: he was half-Jew, half-Gentile. His mother was a Jew, but his father was a Greek. That obviously wasn't an issue with the brethren in Lystra and Iconium (with whom he was well-respected), but it was an issue with many of the non-Christian Jews who knew that his father was a Gentile (Acts 16:3). So, in order to eliminate a possible point of contention with the Jews they wanted to convert, Paul circumcised Timothy.¹⁰

It is interesting that immediately after Paul circumcised Timothy, we're told that they went around to the cities delivering the decrees from

the apostles and elders in Jerusalem—the letter that said Gentile Christians did not need to be circumcised to be right with God.

The Missionary Timothy

Timothy joined up with Paul and Silas, initially traveling to the cities near Lystra and Iconium, but soon thereafter they made their way west across Asia Minor, including Phrygia, Galatia, Mysia, and Troas. It was while in Troas that Timothy met a doctor named Luke.¹¹ This physician became a trusted friend of Paul, and certainly of Timothy as well. Timothy, Luke, Silas, and Paul were all in this city one evening when Paul had a vision that they should travel to Europe (specifically Macedonia) to preach the gospel.¹²

During this missionary trip, Timothy was not the primary speaker—it's possible that he didn't do much preaching at all while in the company of Paul and Silas—but he was visible as part of Paul's company, preachers working for Jesus Christ. This is seen in the many times Paul would send Timothy back to different congregations to check on them or to serve in his place for a time.¹³

After arriving in Philippi (in Macedonia), Timothy met a devout woman named Lydia who because the first recorded convert in Europe. It is in her house that Timothy stayed for a number of days, along with Paul, Silas, and Luke.¹⁴ It was while they were in this city that a possessed slave-girl began to follow them, proclaiming that "These men are the servants of the most high God, which show to us the way of salvation!"¹⁵ Paul cast the demon out of her, which upset her owners greatly because they had used her as a source of income. The owners grabbed Paul and Silas and drug them before the magistrates before having them beaten and thrown in prison. Timothy and Luke were either deemed to be not as important by these men, or they were able to run and

⁹ J.W. McGarvey, *New Commentary on Acts of Apostles*, Vol. 2, p. 79.

¹⁰ This was done, not as a matter of doctrine, but as a matter of expediency. As a half-Jew, he would have been tolerated in the synagogue as a spectator, but because he was also an uncircumcised half-Gentile, he would not have had the opportunity to speak there. The non-Christian Jews in the area would have looked down on him as no better than a Samaritan (half-breed). Later on, Paul refuses to circumcise Titus, who was a full-blooded Gentile, because that would have been trying to bind the Law of Moses on a Gentile.

¹¹ Note the change in pronouns from "they" to "we" and "us" from Acts 16:6-10.

¹² Acts 16:6-10.

¹³ Timothy was sent to Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 3:1-6), Corinth (1 Corinthians 4:17), Macedonia (Acts 19:22), Philippi (Philippians 2:19), and left in Ephesus to guide the congregation there (1 Timothy 1:3).

¹⁴ Acts 16:14-15.

¹⁵ Acts 16:16-17.

escape.¹⁶ Timothy stayed in Lydia's house that evening, and the next day he left with Paul and Silas towards Thessalonica.¹⁷

In Thessalonica, Timothy had the opportunity to see Paul in action at the local synagogue, reasoning from the Scriptures that Timothy knew so well.¹⁸ The response was encouraging at first, with several Jews obeying the gospel and a "great multitude" of Gentiles doing so as well. But there was a group of Jews in the city who greatly resented the teaching of these missionaries and gathered a mob to find them. Jason, most likely a recent convert, had welcomed the traveling trio into his house, and it is to his home that the mob went. Where Timothy was at the time they reached the house isn't stated. It's possible he was among the brethren that were taken from Jason's house and placed before the rulers of the city,¹⁹ but was released after posting bail,²⁰ allowing him to flee the city by night with Paul and Silas to Berea.²¹

In Berea, Timothy got to witness a much different response. There in the synagogue of Berea, the Jewish congregation was open-minded to what Paul and Silas preached, checking everything by their copies of the Old Testament Scriptures to verify what they were being taught.²² Unfortu-

nately, some of the Jews who had caused such trouble for Paul in Thessalonica heard he was preaching in Berea and came to stir up the people. Paul was sent quickly to the sea, on his way to Athens, but Timothy and Silas chose to stay behind to help the congregation.²³ After perhaps two to three weeks, they received word from Paul, telling them to get to Athens as quickly as possible to meet up with him.²⁴ So they went.

Solo Journeys of Timothy

Timothy and Silas left Berea, and together they journeyed to Athens. No doubt these two fellow-soldiers of the cross talked about their experiences over the past months while on their journey, and wondered what things God had in store for them once they arrived in Athens.

Upon their arrival,²⁵ Paul was worried. He remembered the Christians in Thessalonica who had been scared by a mob of angry Jews and their band of thugs, and was concerned that the perse-

book" who would not be swayed unless they could see it in the Scriptures for themselves.

²³ Acts 17:13-14. The fact that Silas and Timothy stayed behind, even for a month (long enough for Paul to be taken to Athens and for someone to return with a message), shows that (1) Timothy and Silas loved the congregation in Berea, and (2) that they weren't in any serious danger in Berea. It appears that the Jews from Thessalonica were mostly interested in Paul, and once he left, they lost interest. It is also plausible that their attempts to intimidate the new converts failed because they had been convinced through the word of God that what Paul taught was the truth. Thus, though the people were "stirred up," it doesn't appear to have lasted long.

²⁴ The journey from Berea to Athens is approximately 200 miles—one way. By sea, it is only a few days' journey. By land, it is around 10 days (when you take into account the Sabbath Day restrictions that Paul likely observed). Some commentators argue that the phrase "as it were to the sea" means that it was an act of trickery, and that they were trying to throw the Jewish persecutors off their trail, then traveling by land. McGarvey takes the position that when they left, they didn't know exactly where they were going to take Paul, which is why he had to send word for Timothy and Silas to come to Athens (as opposed to somewhere else).

²⁵ Some are of the belief that Silas and Timothy went to Athens, but that by that point Paul had already moved on to Corinth, and so they would have had to search him out there. 1 Thessalonians 3:1-5, however, makes it clear that Timothy and Silas met up with Paul in the city of Athens. Acts 18:5, which records their arrival to meet Paul in Corinth, must have come after Timothy (and apparently Silas) was sent out to check on other congregations.

¹⁶ No explanation is given in Scriptures. It is probable that since Paul and Silas were the "leaders" of the group, the men simply grabbed them. Some have suggested that Timothy might have been spared because of his young age, though that still doesn't account for how Luke escaped. It must be remembered that they were probably preaching to a sizable group at this point, and the owners of the slave-girl wouldn't be too interested in trying to capture a group that outnumbered them by several times.

¹⁷ Luke evidently stayed behind in Philippi (notice that Luke uses "they" to describe the company that left, Acts 16:40, 17:1).

¹⁸ Acts 17:1-3, 2 Timothy 3:15.

¹⁹ It is also possible that he was safely elsewhere during this time.

²⁰ Acts 17:9. The word "security" (KJV) is often used of money to pay off a debt or bond.

²¹ Lange disagrees, saying "Timotheus, who is not mentioned in Acts 17:10 (compare 17:14), probably remained at Thessalonica, and, at a somewhat later period, repaired to Berea" (notes on Acts 17:9).

²² Acts 17:11. Paul and Silas were prophets, and could easily have performed miracles while they were in Berea to confirm their message, but these Jews were "people of the

cution of godless men and Jews who refused to obey the gospel might cause them to leave the faith. So he spoke with Timothy and told the young man that he was being sent on a mission to “establish” and “comfort” the congregation in the midst of their trials. So Timothy went on a solo journey, returning to Thessalonica (in Macedonia) to check on them. When he arrived, he was overjoyed with what he found. The Christians there, even though they’d only received three weeks’ teaching from Paul and Silas, were staying faithful and showing love one for another.²⁶ Soon after arriving and seeing their spiritual condition, Timothy brought the happy news to Paul, who had moved on from Athens to Corinth by this point.²⁷ It was upon receiving this uplifting news that Paul wrote the first letter to the Thessalonian Christians.

Timothy apparently remained in Corinth for at least a few months, for his name is included as a co-writer of the second letter to the Thessalonians, which most believe was sent between 3-6 months after the first letter. What happened next with Timothy is not spelled out for us in the Scripture. It seems most likely that Timothy stayed with Paul as he traveled from Corinth to Ephesus for a very short stay, and then went to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish feasts²⁸ before returning to Antioch to give a report to the church there.²⁹ Afterwards, having spent some time in Antioch, he would have then journeyed with Paul back through Galatia and Phrygia (in Asia Minor),

“strengthening all the disciples”³⁰ before arriving with Paul in Ephesus, which is where he shows up next in the biblical narrative.

Paul remained in Ephesus for three years (Acts 20:31), and it was during that time that he sent Timothy on a journey that would eventually take him to Corinth³¹ to give the Christians there a refresher course in Paul teaching.³² There is reason to suspect that Timothy was not able to make his planned visit to Corinth (or perhaps that Paul sent Titus instead),³³ and returned to Paul in Ephesus instead.³⁴ Sometime after his arrival back in Asia Minor, Timothy was sent on another mission, this time to Macedonia with a man named Erastus (Acts 19:22). This mission to Macedonia quite possibly included traveling to the various congregations, raising support for the poor saints in Jerusalem.³⁵

Journey to Jerusalem

Sometime thereafter, Paul joined them in Macedonia, and Timothy is listed as a co-author of the second letter to the church in Corinth.³⁶ After traveling with Paul throughout Macedonia, Timothy finally made it back to Corinth, where they stayed about three months,³⁷ and during which time, he was mentioned to the church in Rome by Paul.³⁸ Timothy had planned to accom-

²⁶ This trip is recorded in 1 Thessalonians 3:1-6.

²⁷ Acts 18:5 shows Silas and Timothy meeting up with Paul in Corinth, apparently after they had been sent to visit other congregations in place of Paul (who was a lightning rod for the unbelieving Jews). See 1 Thessalonians 3:1-6 for at least part of this evidence. Timothy went to Thessalonica, and it is guessed by many that Silas went to Philippi.

²⁸ Acts 18:21. Johnson (*People’s New Testament with Notes*) says “There are reasons for believing the feast to be Pentecost.” Most modern versions leave out Paul’s explanation of why he couldn’t stay in Ephesus, due to some faulty ancient manuscripts which they have mistakenly elevated to “most accurate” status. The visit to Jerusalem and to the church in that city is mentioned in Acts 18:22—Paul went to Caesarea, and from there “went up” to some city [Jerusalem] to salute the church there, and then “went down” to Antioch.

²⁹ These events are recorded in Acts 18:18-22.

³⁰ Acts 19:23.

³¹ If Paul had sent him directly to Corinth, then it would have been with this letter in his hand. However, at the end of the letter, he says “if Timothy come...” which implies that by the time the Corinthians receive this correspondence, Timothy still wouldn’t have been there yet. Thus, Timothy’s mission must have included other stops on the way.

³² 1 Corinthians 4:17

³³ See 2 Corinthians 2:13, 7:6, 13-14, 8:6, 16, 12:18 for evidence of Titus’ mission to Corinth.

³⁴ Paul seemed to take this into consideration before sending the letter to the Corinthians. Even though he told them that he had sent Timothy to Corinth (1 Corinthians 4:17), he also told them that it wasn’t a certainty (1 Corinthians 16:10), saying “**If** Timothy comes...”

³⁵ See 2 Corinthians 8:1-4

³⁶ 2 Corinthians 1:1

³⁷ Acts 20:2-3. Corinth is the primary city of Greece, and Paul had promised the Corinthians that he would come to see them in person after traveling through Macedonia (1 Corinthians 16:5, 2 Corinthians 9:4).

³⁸ Romans 16:21. Paul wrote that he was staying at the house of Gaius (Romans 16:23), who was one of the few people in Corinth that Paul himself baptized (1 Corinthians 1:14). Paul also mentions “Erastus, the chamberlain of the

pany Paul on a sea journey to Syria (probably returning to Antioch).³⁹ However, since there were Jews waiting to kill Paul, the apostle decided to travel by way of Macedonia instead, apparently sending Timothy and several others ahead to wait for him at Troas.⁴⁰

Timothy was present in Troas on the Lord's Day when Eutychus fell asleep in an open window on the third story of the building where the church was meeting. This young man slid down and fell out the window to his death, but Paul healed him.⁴¹ Timothy then rode with Luke and some others in a boat to Assos, meeting up with Paul who had decided to go there on foot,⁴² and they continued their journey to Miletus. It was in Miletus that Paul waited, calling the elders of Ephesus to come meet him there.⁴³ These are some of the same men that Timothy would have interacted with during his initial time in that city with Paul, as well as during his time preaching there full-time some years later.⁴⁴

The young preacher accompanied Paul and the others as they made his way back east, sailing past Cyprus (where Barnabas and John Mark had last been seen), and finally arriving in Syria at Tyre. In this city, they stayed for a week, meeting with the disciples who lived there. Timothy must have been impressed by the love and care of the Christians in Tyre. The entire congregation—men, women, and children—walked Paul, Timothy, Luke, Sopater, Aristarchus, Secundus, Gaius, Tychicus, and Trophimus out of the city and to their boat. Then they all knelt together on the shore and prayed to God. These Christians did not head back home until Paul and his company had all boarded the ship.⁴⁵

Timothy's next stop was in Caesarea, where he got to meet Philip, the man who taught the

gospel to the eunuch of Ethiopia.⁴⁶ Philip welcomed the traveling missionaries into his house for "many days," being overjoyed no doubt at the aid which the churches of Macedonia and Achaia had sent for the poor saints in Jerusalem. It was while staying in Caesarea that Timothy saw a prophet named Agabus grab Paul's belt and tie himself up with it, prophesying that Paul would be arrested in Jerusalem and turned over to the Romans as a prisoner.⁴⁷ Timothy began to beg and plead with Paul not to go,⁴⁸ but the apostle stood firm, telling him and the others who also pleaded, "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready, not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."⁴⁹ Finally, Timothy and the rest of Paul's company ceased their pleading, instead saying "The will of the Lord be done," and they traveled to Jerusalem in the company of one of the early disciples, Mnason,⁵⁰ with whom they would stay in Jerusalem.⁵¹

Timothy during Paul's Imprisonment

Timothy accompanied Paul and the others into Jerusalem, where they met with James, the brother of Jesus, as well as the elders of Jerusalem. They presented the funds, as well as gave a report of the great work God was doing among the Gentiles. This brought up a touchy subject in Jerusalem. There were thousands of Jewish Christians in the city, and they'd all heard reports that Paul was teaching Jews not to circumcise their children anymore, and that they should forsake all the customs passed down from Moses.⁵² All Paul would have had to do is point to Timothy to disprove

city" (Romans 16:23), and a first-century inscription in Corinth exists which says "Erastus, the commissioner of public works, laid this pavement at his own expense." (see introduction to Romans in "The Open Bible: Expanded Edition," 1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers).

³⁹ Acts 20:3.

⁴⁰ Acts 20:4-5.

⁴¹ Acts 20:6-12.

⁴² Acts 20:13-14.

⁴³ Acts 20:17.

⁴⁴ See 1 Timothy 1:3.

⁴⁵ Acts 21:3-6.

⁴⁶ Acts 21:8. As a side note, it is quite possible that Luke was able to talk to Philip at this time, gathering the information that he would later include when writing the book of Acts.

⁴⁷ Acts 21:10-11.

⁴⁸ Acts 21:12.

⁴⁹ Acts 21:13.

⁵⁰ Mnason may well have been one of the converts on the day of Pentecost.

⁵¹ Acts 21:14-16

⁵² It is important to note that James calls them "customs," and not "commands." By this point, the Law of Moses had no binding effect on anyone, having been superseded by the law of Christ. The customs would have included observing the Sabbath, circumcision, feast days, fasting, vows, meat restrictions, etc.

those rumors. Timothy was a Jew who had *not* been circumcised, yet Paul made it a point to circumcise him.

Some Jews from Asia had seen Paul in the temple, and began to make these same accusations, but added that he brought a Gentile into the temple, because they falsely assumed that Trophimus had accompanied him there. Paul was forcibly removed from the temple by a mob, and the doors were shut behind him. The mob began to beat Paul, and would have succeeded in killing him, had not the Roman soldiers arrived on the scene. It does not appear that Timothy was with Paul during this uproar, but no doubt he heard about it shortly thereafter.⁵³

Timothy was no doubt anxious the next day when the chief captain, Claudius Lysias, called together the high priest and the Sanhedrin to hear Paul's testimony. The proceedings quickly turned ugly, and Claudius removed Paul, "lest [he] should have been pulled in pieces by them."⁵⁴ It is quite possible that Timothy visited Paul while he was being held as a prisoner in Jerusalem, and brought him much-needed comfort.⁵⁵ Timothy most likely joined Paul as he was taken to Caesarea and was probably present during his trial before Felix.⁵⁶ Timothy was given freedom by Felix to visit Paul as often as he wanted, and this he no doubt did as Paul was there for two years. It is believed by some that Paul's letters to the Philippians, Colossians, Ephesians, and to Philemon were all written during this two-year period.⁵⁷ If this is the case, then Timothy's constant presence with Paul is confirmed, for he is mentioned as co-writer in three of those letters.⁵⁸

⁵³ Luke tells us that Paul went to the temple with the four men who had a vow on them. This would appear to exclude anyone else from being with Paul at that point.

⁵⁴ Acts 23:1-10.

⁵⁵ Paul's nephew was able to come see him (Acts 23:16-22), so it is not a stretch to think that others were permitted to as well.

⁵⁶ At the conclusion of Paul's trial before Felix, the ruler stated that Paul's acquaintances and ministers (assistants) were to be permitted to come and go to meet with him. This implies that Felix had knowledge of Paul's traveling companions.

⁵⁷ The majority of Bible scholars place the writing of these letters a few years later while Paul was imprisoned in Rome, as recorded in Acts 28.

⁵⁸ The only exception being Ephesians.

Paul, in order to guarantee that he wasn't turned over to the Jews, whom he knew would try to kill him, appealed to Caesar. This was the right of every Roman citizen, and required going to Rome and awaiting a convenient time for the emperor to hear his case. Luke does not record who, other than himself, joined Paul on this treacherous sea voyage,⁵⁹ but it would be surprising if Timothy was not among his companions.⁶⁰ If this is indeed the case, then Timothy would have experienced the Euroclydon, the "tempestuous wind" that attacked their ship for fourteen days, and was so bad that the professional sailors tried to abandon the ship, leaving Paul, Timothy, Luke, and the other 200+ to die in the storm. He would have come aboard the land at Malta, seen Paul get bitten by a viper, yet suffer no ill effects. He would have seen Paul heal many of the inhabitants of the island, and helped the apostle in preaching to them for the three months they were there.⁶¹

The prevailing view among Bible scholars, past and present, is that Paul wrote his "prison epistles" while in Rome under house arrest.⁶² The greeting at the beginning of Philemon, Colossians, and Philippians all include Timothy, showing he was there with Paul during his imprisonment.

Timothy after Rome

Anyone who has tried to piece together the life and movements of the apostle Paul after Acts 28 will tell you that it is difficult, and relies a lot on hints and a few guesses, since there is no detailed account of what he did afterwards. Trying to figure out Timothy's movements carries with it the same problems. However, there are some things we can know.

⁵⁹ Note the use of "we" throughout chapters 27-28.

⁶⁰ This is especially true if we assume—as do the majority of Bible scholars—that Paul's "prison epistles" were written from Rome, which include Timothy in their greetings. Some might suggest that Timothy was sent on missionary journeys to some of the congregations that they had visited before, informing them of Paul's current situation, and that is also a logical guess as well, considering that Paul would need financial support while under house arrest in Rome, awaiting trial.

⁶¹ These events are recorded in Acts 27-28. The specific time on Malta is given in 28:11.

⁶² This living arrangement is shown by Luke in Acts 28:16, 30-31.

Prior to Paul's release from prison, he was making plans to visit specific people and places. One of those was Philippi. To the Philippians, he said:

I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be of good comfort when I know your state. For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state. For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's. But you know the proof of him, that as a son with the father, he has served with me in the gospel. Therefore, I hope to send him presently, as soon as I shall see how it will go with me. But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly (Philippians 2:19-24).

Paul sent Epaphroditus back to Philippi with this letter, but planned on sending Timothy so that he could get a report on how the Christians in that city were doing. But Paul was waiting until he knew how things were going to go in his upcoming trial before Caesar before sending Timothy, probably because he wanted to be able to send that information as well—they being the main conduits from which support came during his imprisonment.

The book of Hebrews appears to have been written from Rome,⁶³ and the writer (Paul)⁶⁴ anxiously awaits the arrival of Timothy so that he can leave and visit the Christians to whom he was writing. It seems, then, as though Paul sent Timothy off on a mission (perhaps to Philippi in Macedonia), and was waiting on his return so they could go travel together again.

The two friends and fellow-soldiers of the cross went to Asia Minor, stopping at Ephesus, where they were able to reunite with the Christians they loved dearly and hadn't seen for several years. While they were there, Paul (and perhaps Timothy as well) probably traveled to Laodicea to

visit Philemon,⁶⁵ who he had told to "prepare me a lodging, for I trust that through your prayers I shall be released to you" (Philemon 22). Returning to Ephesus, Paul saw work that needed to be done in the congregation, but he also felt a very pressing desire to get to Macedonia personally and reunite with the ones who supported him tirelessly and out of their poverty. Thus, he told Timothy that they must separate. Timothy remained behind in Ephesus while Paul went on to Macedonia,⁶⁶ but he planned on returning at some point in the future.⁶⁷

Timothy's time in Ephesus was not the most pleasant of events. There were men who were completely unqualified who sought to join the eldership.⁶⁸ There were false teachers on the rise.⁶⁹ There were women who wanted to be teachers in the assembly.⁷⁰ Paul knew about these problems, but he was confident that Timothy would be able to handle them.

Paul most likely returned to see Timothy in Ephesus before leaving for more mission work, some believe westward to Spain. After some time, Paul made it back to Troas, but was arrested and taken back to Rome. Timothy has remained in Ephesus during this time, working with the congregation there, but then he receives a letter (2 Timothy) which causes him much concern. The Roman Empire has declared Christianity to be their enemy, and an Empire-wide persecution has begun. Paul, being perhaps the most well-known of the Christians, would have been one of their primary targets. Timothy reads the letter, which urges him to remain strong, to prepare people to continue to propagate the message of the gospel, and to endure hardships like a good soldier.⁷¹ Paul is telling Timothy that they may never see each other again on this side of death.⁷² So Timothy

⁶⁵ Most scholars place Philemon in Colossae, but this author believes the evidence points to the nearby city of Laodicea. See the introduction and appendix of *The Prodigal Slave: A Study of the Letter to Philemon* by this author for more details.

⁶⁶ 1 Timothy 1:3.

⁶⁷ 1 Timothy 4:13.

⁶⁸ 1 Timothy 5:21-22, 24-25.

⁶⁹ 1 Timothy 4:1-5.

⁷⁰ 1 Timothy 2:9-15.

⁷¹ 2 Timothy 2.

⁷² 2 Timothy 4:6-8.

⁶³ The writer, who has traditionally been identified as Paul, tells his readers "they of Italy salute you" (Hebrews 12:24).

⁶⁴ It is the belief of this author that Paul is the writer of the book of Hebrews. However, as this work is not focused on that book, nor is the point here being made one of major significance, the evidence for such a conclusion does not need to be presented here.

hurriedly gathers what things he needs and travels north to Troas to gather Paul's books, parchments, and cloak,⁷³ and travels to Rome with John Mark (who had apparently come to Ephesus), probably by ship.

Whether he made it to Rome in time to see Paul prior to his execution, we have no way of knowing.

Describing Timothy

Timothy was a faithful Christian, though he may have been vexed with anxiety. Paul spends a good deal of time encouraging Timothy to stay strong, to keep fighting, to remember why he is a minister of the gospel. This would seem unnecessary unless Timothy struggled with that sometimes. Paul wrote to the church in Corinth, telling them that if Timothy arrives, they are to take it easy on him, possibly because—unlike Paul—Timothy did not thrive on confrontation and debate.

If Timothy comes, see that he may be with you without fear: for he works the work of the Lord, as I also do. Therefore, let no man despise [belittle] him, but conduct him in peace that he may come to me (1 Corinthians 16:10-11).

In Ephesus, Timothy seemed to struggle with problems with the elders. This situation apparently was so stressful that he was having stomach ailments (many believe this is describing ulcers) and was frequently sick.

Against an elder do not receive an accusation, except before two or three witnesses. [But] them that sin, rebuke before all, so that others may fear. I charge you before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that you observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality. Lay hands

[or, ordain] suddenly on no man, neither be a partaker of other men's sins: keep yourself pure. Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent sicknesses. Some men's sins are open beforehand, going before un-

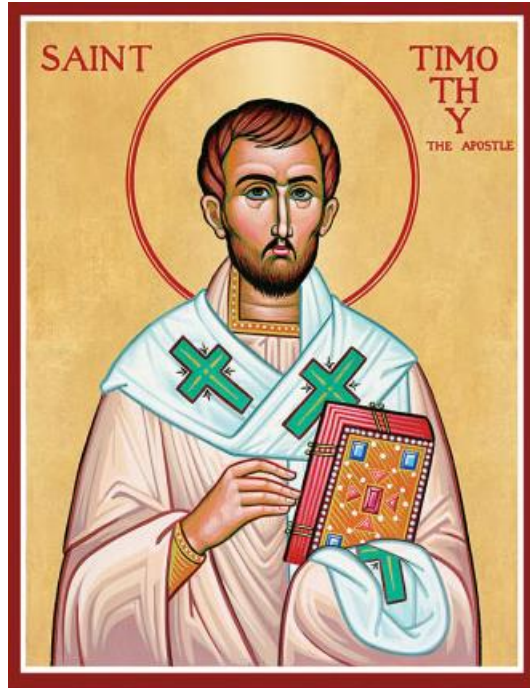
to judgment; and some men they follow after. Likewise also the good works of some are manifest beforehand; and they that are otherwise cannot be hid (1 Timothy 5:19-25).

The popular verse about “drink a little wine for your stomach's sake” is contained in a discussion of dealing with elders who sinned and those who aren't qualified trying to become elders. Timothy was making himself sick worrying about these problems. It says a lot about Timothy that he was

so concerned about the spiritual condition of the church and her leaders that he would be physically sick because of it.

Tradition

A work entitled the *Acts of Timothy* claims that Paul ordained Timothy as “Bishop” of Ephesus during the reign of Nero, and that Timothy remained there the rest of his life. In this apocryphal writing, a pagan festival called the *Katagogia* (the “bringing down”) was taking place in Ephesus, where men with masks took sticks and clubs “assaulting without restraint free men and respectable women, perpetrating murders of no common sort and shedding endless blood in the best parts of the city, as if they were performing a religious duty.” Historians are divided on whether this was done in the name of Diana (the chief goddess of Ephesus) or Dionysius (the god of liquor and revelry). Timothy, according to the story, stood in front of the mob, pleading with them to stop, preaching peace in the name of Jesus, but was clubbed to death in the street. This was said to have happened in AD 97.



⁷³ 2 Timothy 4:9, 13

Comforted Together:

ROMANS 1:12

Bill Howard

Comfort: Freedom or relief from pain, annoyance, want, sorrow, or distress. These are some of the meanings the dictionary ascribes to the word comfort. However, the words *comforted together*, taken from the words of the Apostle Paul in his letter to Christians in Rome, must have a far more profound meaning. Paul, in his salutation to his brothers and sisters in Christ who were in Rome, had denoted himself as a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle and charged with the teaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We will consider further this thought of comfort of which Paul speaks, but another thought or so to consider first.

An apostle (*apostolos*) literally means one who is sent forth. Jesus used the word to describe his relationship to God as he prayed. "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3, KJV). The author of the Hebrew letter also used the same word, speaking of Jesus. "Wherefore holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus" (Hebrews 3:1). So one sent out for a purpose is an apostle; however, there were those chosen to have greater responsibilities. These were prepared by Christ with special training and certain gifts to spread the gospel of the Lord. "And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of whom he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles" (Luke 6:13). To them Christ said: "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15-16). They were not to depart from Jerusalem until they

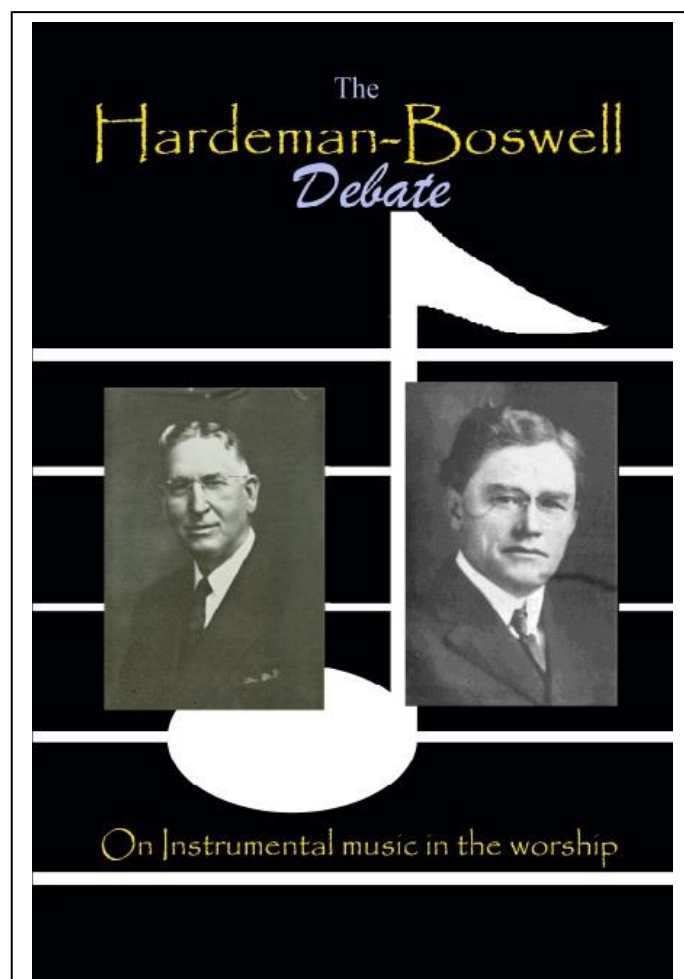
received the promise of the Father; they were to receive that POWER after the Holy Spirit was to come upon them. Then after receiving this power, Jesus said they would be witnesses unto him to the uttermost parts of the earth. Initially, Paul was not numbered among the original twelve disciples who were made apostles. Paul was commissioned at a later time by the Lord himself after his resurrection and ascension to preach the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 9).

Paul, aside from Christ, was without a doubt the most dedicated preacher of all time. After his conversion, his entire life was centered on teaching and preaching Jesus Christ and the salvation made available to all by the sacrifice of our Savior. To the Philippians he said: "Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death. For me to live is Christ." To the Galatians: "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me." Paul was set apart as an apostle, and his life was devoted to his love for the saving grace of God through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Paul had a desire to visit the church in Rome but had been hindered from doing so for various reasons. He wished to impart to them some spiritual gift that would strengthen them in the faith and that he and they might be *comforted together* because of their shared faith in God. When we consider his thought, comforted together, can we imagine anything more beautiful and meaningful than Christians intimately sharing their faith in God and the promise of eternal life in God's realm?

The thought of comfort might conjure up many different visions for different people. To the over-worked business owner, it might be a log cabin in the wilderness sans phones and people and computers. To the poor, it could be thoughts of grandeur in a palace with an unending source of income, lots of help to do the work, and fine automobiles. To the housewife overloaded with children, chores and other responsibilities, a day at the spa with a manicure, a pedicure, and massage. To the challenged student looking out of the window of the library, time to go to the beach or a day at the park. Each of these would be an enticement but must pale into insignificance when compared to the true comfort of our assurance of living forever in God's home. To the Corinthians: "Blessed be God, even the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort: Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God" (2 Corinthians 1:3-4). And: "Finally brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you" (2 Corinthians 13:11). This is the one and only true comfort to which man can aspire, that we may be comforted together in Christ Jesus.

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Shepherding the Flock:

Learning from the Chief Shepherd

Part Two

Shepherds are Known of Their Sheep

Jamie Beller

Shepherds, how well do you know the sheep you shepherd? How aware are you of your sheep if they are struggling, if they are straying (Luke 15:1), or if they are sorrowing? The principle of shepherds knowing their sheep is one rooted in the thought that physical shepherds know their sheep. Further, it is a principle rooted in the truth that Jesus, the Chief Shepherd, knows His sheep (John 10:14).¹ While shepherds do not have the ability to know the sheep they shepherd like Jesus knows His, it is still imperative that shepherds know the sheep they shepherd. It is difficult, if not impossible, for shepherds to “take heed unto the flock,” if they do not know the flock (Acts 20:28), neither will shepherds be able to give an accurate account of the sheep if they do not know the sheep (Heb. 13:17).

Before moving to a discussion of the next principle of shepherding that can be learned from Jesus, *Shepherds Are Known of Their Sheep*, just a brief note about another thing that shepherds should know—the spiritual development of the sheep. Perhaps one of the most neglected areas in this regard is that of education, specifically the Bible education program. How often are teachers entrusted with teaching a Bible class without assessing their spiritual development? Perhaps many

preachers can recall the level of questioning that occurs when they interview for a work to serve as the local preacher. This writer can recall receiving a 101-point questionnaire from a potential supporter while attending the Memphis School of Preaching. While we may not have an expectation of Bible class teachers to that level, we ought to have an expectation and assessment of their spiritual development. Unfortunately, in some cases those teaching Bible Classes are themselves “new babes in Christ” (1 Peter 2:2). While their desire is commendable, we must be cautioned that the spiritual development of Bible class can be delayed if the ones entrusted in teaching them are delayed in their own spiritual development. Shepherds, help to make the Bible education program an effective tool in the development of the congregation by knowing the spiritual development of your sheep.

Shifting from the shepherding principle of shepherds knowing their sheep, we now want to consider the principle of *Shepherds Being Known of Their Sheep*. Though the following conversation took place years ago, the writer still recalls it all too well. The conversation went as follows:

“Brother Beller,” said the Christian couple, “We have been attending this congregation for over a year now, and we have no idea who the shepherds are. Can you tell us who they are?”

After mentioning to the couple which men were entrusted with the care of their souls, the

¹ All Scripture references are taken from the KJV of the Bible unless otherwise noted.

couple said, “We know you are the preacher, and we often hear you speak, but rarely have we heard from the shepherds. We have long wanted to know who the shepherds were.”

At the next leadership meeting, the aforementioned conversation was shared with the leadership. It was rather shocking when the reply was, “If people want to know who is leading the congregation, there is a print-out with the various committee assignments and the men in charge of those committees. If someone has a concern, they can ask whoever is in charge of that committee.”

Prayerfully, this account is an exception and not the norm with regard to the leadership perception and practice that exists in congregations of the Lord’s church. Yet, whether it is the exception or the norm, it does illustrate a couple of things: (1) ignorance concerning the responsibility of shepherding sheep, and (2) ignorance of the role of shepherding a flock. Unfortunately, the aforementioned account also exposes an ignorance toward the principle under consideration, *Shepherds Being Known of Their Sheep*.

Shepherds, what do your sheep know about you? Let’s face it, in many cases the sheep know more about the preachers that preach to them than they do about the shepherds entrusted to shepherd them. Perhaps one reason this is the case is that as much as we decry the preacher being the pastor, we have perpetuated and promoted it by “delegating” the responsibilities of shepherds to be done by the preacher. In some cases, the preacher is hired to visit the sick, visit the wayward, be involved in the community, keep office hours “in case the members need you,” etc. As a result, the sheep, at times, have a closer relationship with the preacher than they do the shepherds. If shepherds are going to be good shepherds like the Chief Shepherd, they must be known of their sheep. Being known of their sheep requires more than being a Sunday-only shepherd, or being a shepherd that the sheep only see in the stable (church building). If shepherds are going to be known of their sheep, they must spend time with their sheep. In so doing, the

sheep come to know the character, communication, compassion, and command of the shepherds.

THE CHARACTER OF THE SHEPHERD

Vital to the work of a shepherd is the character of the shepherd. Shepherds, what do the sheep you shepherd know about your character? When one reads the parable of the Good Shepherd they are getting a glimpse of the character of the Chief Shepherd (John 10). First, the Good Shepherd is a person of integrity and trustworthiness (John 10:1-2). Jesus declares, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep” (John 10:1-2). Brother Guy N. Woods noted,

*The true shepherd of the sheep, known both to the sheep, and to the doorkeeper, enters properly, in contrast with the thief and the robber, through the door of the sheepfold. There is but one door; hence, but one place to enter. Thus, the manner in which one seeks to enter determines character.*²

What does it say about the character of a shepherd, if he is manipulating the sheep to stand with him when he has sinned? What does it say about the character of a shepherd, if having sinned, he lacks the humility to be penitent? What does it say about the character of a man, if desiring to be a shepherd, but lacking the qualifications, he manipulates his way into the eldership? What does it say about the character of a shepherd, when no longer being qualified to be a shepherd, he refuses to resign? What does it say about the character of a shepherd when, having lost the trust of the flock, is insistent on remaining a shepherd no matter what division it may cause? Beloved, the character of a shepherd is vital.

² Guy N. Woods, *A Commentary on the Gospel According To John, Vol. 4*. (Nashville, TN.: Gospel Advocate, Co., 1989), p.202

When one observes the character of Jesus, the Chief Shepherd, it is clear that His character, though often assassinated by His enemies, was of integrity and trustworthiness. When the character of shepherds is of integrity, trustworthiness, and humility, he is more likely to be known by his sheep. Certainly, the character of Jesus, the Chief Shepherd, was such that not only His followers, but His enemies could not honestly question it.

THE COMMUNICATION OF THE SHEPHERD

The lifeline in any relationship is communication. One of the principles of communication that we learn from the Chief Shepherd is that of voice recognition. Jesus declares, "...and he calleth His own sheep by and name and leadeth them out" (John 10:3b). Brother J.J. Turner remarks,

This recognition can occur only because quality time has been spent tending the sheep: they have been together for a long time...The elder-shepherds in the church spend so much time with their sheep that the sheep hear and recognize their leaders' voices in the midst of a world that is trying to lead them astray. The sheep, however, will not listen to the worldly voices.³

Can you imagine a meeting in which shepherds are discussing their flock to see who is absent, or who might be astray, only to say, "Who is that?" Can we honestly say that shepherds, and sheep alike, can effectively seek the sheep that have gone astray if we do not know the sheep by name? Shepherds, can you effectively seek the sheep that have gone astray if you rarely communicate with the sheep, or your communication with the sheep is delegated to what the preacher preaches on Sunday?

Not only is communication essential from seeking the sheep that have gone astray, it is also vital for feeding and caring for the sheep. Recall that Paul admonished the elders at Ephesus to, "Take heed unto themselves, and to all the flock over the which the Holy Spirit hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28). Vital to feeding the flock is knowing where each

sheep is in their development spiritually. Too often Bible classes are structured on the basis of where individuals are chronologically speaking (age), rather than where they are in the spiritual development (See Hebrews 5:11-6:2). Shepherds, do you know where your sheep are spiritually well enough to know what they need for their spiritual development?

THE COMMITMENT OF THE SHEPHERD

Shepherds, how committed are you to the flock? Concerning the Chief Shepherd, the text declares, "As the Father knoweth Me, even so know I the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep" (John 10:15). This great commitment that the Chief Shepherd had for His sheep was demonstrated on the cross, and serves as a wonderful principle that ought to be emulated by those who serve as shepherds over sheep of the Lord's flock. Is this commitment being emulated by "shepherds" who are too busy to visit the sick, restore the erring, etc.? Is this the commitment being emulated by "shepherds" who "feed not the flock" (Ezekiel 34:3)? Is this the commitment being emulated by "shepherds" who watch the sheepfold (congregation) scatter, and refuse to restore the sheepfold? Is this the commitment being emulated by "shepherds" who refuse to confront the wolves that enter in among them, "not sparing the flock" (Acts 20:29)? God forbid! If the aforementioned is descriptive of the "commitment" being emulated by a shepherd, such a shepherd needs to repent and emulate the commitment of the Chief Shepherd.

Conclusion

Shepherds, just as imperative as you knowing your sheep, is you being known by your sheep. If asked, what do those whom you shepherd know about you? What do they know of you in terms of your character? What do they know of you in terms of your communication? What do they know of you with regard to your commitment to the flock and to the Chief Shepherd? Like or not, what your sheep know of you will influence whether or not they follow you. Just as the Chief Shepherd said, so ought shepherds to be able to say with confidence, "I am a good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine" (John 10:14).

³ J.J. Turner, Shepherds, Wake Up! (Huntsville, AL.: Publishing Design, Inc., 2005), p. 62.



Shepherding the Flock: Holding to the Word of God

By Shane Fisher

There was once a farmer and his son who were plowing the field. The son was getting older and wanted to take on more responsibility. The father was happy that his son was maturing and decided to take care of a few other chores while the son plowed the field. The father gave his son some wise advice before he left: “Son, remember what I taught you about plowing the field. Always keep your eye on an object in front of you and plow toward that object and you will never go wrong.” The son heeded the advice as the father left. A few hours the father returned to see the finished work of his son on the field, and when he saw it he stood there horrified! There were zig-zags and all sorts of crooked lines all across the field. The father ran over to the son and shouted, “Son, what happened? Didn’t I tell you to follow my advice?” The son replied, “Father, I did heed your advice...that dog I kept my eyes on ran all around the field!”

The Crisis the Lord’s Church is Facing

There are some elders in a vast number of congregations of the Lord’s church who are like this boy—they have a noble and right goal ahead of them they want to fulfill, but they will use haphazard and dangerous ways of arriving at it. They may have the focus of desiring to see the local congregation flourish in number (which is a noble goal – Acts 4:4; 6:7) [All verses will be taken from the NKJV], but it is unfortunate and detrimental to the souls of those elders ***that they will use any means necessary*** to achieve that goal. This false philoso-

phy is known as pragmatism and it is better known by its popular slogan: “*the end justifies the means.*” There were some people in Paul’s day who were slandering him with this type of false philosophy (cf. Romans 3:8).

It may be the case that the elders of a local congregation will use these spiritual haphazard ways to achieve the goal of church growth: (a) they will allow couples who are in adulterous unions to place membership as though nothing is wrong with it [Matthew 5:31,32; 19:9], (b) they refuse to take any action in the process of disciplining a church member who is known to be involved in a public sin (and who refuses to repent), lest that member leaves the congregation [1 Corinthians 5:1-13], (c) they will allow any kind of innovation (such as mechanical instruments of music [cf. Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16], handclapping [cf. Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16], female preachers [cf. 1 Timothy 2:11-12; 1 Corinthians 11:2-16; 14:34,35]) to be introduced into the worship and life of the church in order to “enhance” the experience of the members, or (d) they will order the preacher to refrain from preaching on certain subjects of morality (such as gambling, “social” drinking of alcoholic beverages, etc.) lest it cause offense to some of the members and visitors. These real-life illustrations are symptoms of the disease that is hurting the body of Christ. The disease is *that these elders refuse to hold to the word of God.*

What Does It Mean to Hold to the Word of God?

One of the qualifications that must be found in a mature Christian man before being appointed to the eldership is that he must hold to the word of God. This qualification can be found in Titus 1:9: “holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.”

“Holding fast” comes from the Greek word *antecho*. BDAG defines this word as: “1. to have a strong attachment to someone or something, cling to, hold fast to, be devoted to.” This word is also found in Matthew 6:24. It states: “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be **loyal** [*antecho*] to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” In this context, it is being used of a man’s heart who is devoted to money as his main fulfillment and satisfaction rather than serving God. In the context of Titus 1:9, the heart of an elder is to diligently be attached and LOYAL to the word of God. How are elders to be loyal to the word of God? There are several ways that an elder’s heart can become more attached to the word of God.

L – Learning

How is it possible for an elder to become more diligently attached and loyal to the word of God? He can do so by remembering that before he ever is appointed to the eldership he needs to *be a diligent student of the word of God*. You cannot know a subject very well unless you have studied it diligently. This applies especially to the word of God. An elder needs to manifest the attitude of Ezra in Ezra 7:10: “For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the Law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach statutes and ordinances in Israel.” An elder needs to prepare his heart with all diligence to receive what the Bible teaches on a certain subject. Even though he will never fully master the Bible, he needs to constantly stay in the word because there will be difficult situations that arise within the congregation and will require prudence, wisdom, and discretion which comes from a life-long study of the word of God. What are some ways in which an elder can study the word of God?

1. The eldership ought to work on having a church library containing good, solid materials that will be checked out by the individual elders (as well as other members) so they can constantly stay in the word. These libraries ought to contain vari-

ous lectureship book series that have been covered in the past years on a variety of subjects (such as the Annual Denton Lectureship, Freed-Hardeman University, Spiritual Sword, etc.), and various brotherhood schools of preaching lectureships (such as Memphis School of Preaching, Florida School of Preaching, etc.).

2. There should be videos that are added to this library that can be ordered from Apologetics Press and Focus Press (which will train the elders in Christian apologetics [1 Peter 3:15] since they will be dealing with various subjects in the church such as atheism, agnosticism, macroevolution, etc.), World Video Bible School (which will train the elders in how to study the Bible for themselves since they probably have not gone to a school of preaching or some similar institution), and other similar brotherhood video publications. An eldership ought to *never* let the preacher be the only student who is constantly studying. The eldership has no right to substitute the preacher to do that. They, as well as every other member, need to become more diligent in studying God’s word! In 1 Peter 2:1-3: “Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, **desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby**, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious.”

3. We are blessed to have access to technology such as the internet, and there are many great brotherhood websites that contain tons of information such as the Christian Courier (christian-courier.com), Apologetics Press (apologetics-press.org), and many others. Elders need to be constantly updated as to what is happening in the world and in the Lord’s church so they are aware of doctrines that may come up. In the book of Revelation, some of the churches in Asia Minor were warned about the doctrine of the Nicolaitans (Revelation 2:6, 15). Many false doctrines have run rampant in congregations because elders were not aware of what was happening until it was too late. An example of this would be what is known as the A.D. 70 theory, which was popularized by Max King in the 1970s. It is known by its many names such as realized eschatology or covenant eschatology. Its proponents have many websites that inform the public of what they teach, and it is important that elders need to know what they teach and how to expose that error (Titus 1:9).

A problem that unfortunately has manifested in many congregations is that the church library is not used. It is sadly more like a tomb full of cobwebs and dust rather than being used by diligent students who really want to know God's word. We need to return in a spirit of restoration of all wanting to be diligent students of God's word.

An elder ought to have the desire to be learning because otherwise he will stay in ignorance—and ignorance of God's word is not bliss! An elder is to rather “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18).

O – Obedience

An elder's heart ought to be attached to the word of God because he wants to obey the Lord Jesus who is King over all creation (Matthew 28:18). There are those of the human population who have been “called out” of spiritual darkness (1 Peter 2:9,10) because they were touched by the clear evidence that teaches He is the Son of God (John 20:30-31) and they rendered obedience to the plan of salvation (Acts 2:37-38; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9). They recognize that Jesus is presently reigning and desire to let their hearts be submitted to His reign. An elder's heart is in the right place if he recognizes that in order to help expand the kingdom of God and its glory, he must know what the King requires of His subjects. An elder will be obedient in learning what the word of God teaches so that he can teach others faithfully (2 Timothy 2:2).

Y – Youth

In America, we are facing a great crisis in the Lord's church regarding our youth. Many young people are turning away from the true church. One of the symptoms of this contagious disease that is harming our young people is that they were never convicted of the truth on the reliability and accuracy of the Scriptures. It is now high time that we get back to teaching our young people Christian apologetics so that they can see for themselves the firm foundation on which Christianity has stood for centuries. One of the factors that will help the future of the Lord's church to have great elders is to teach our young men to be trained for the role of an elder. They must be taught what is required and how serious the role is. We need to prepare their hearts to have the desire for it so that they can be a blessing to future generations.

Solomon was wise when he wrote in Ecclesiastes 12:1: “Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come, and the years draw near when you say, ‘I have no pleasure in them.’”

This was stated of Timothy by Paul in 2 Timothy 3:14-15: “But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.”

A young Christian man who grows up learning and applying the Bible to his life will be better equipped to take on the role of becoming an elder in the Lord's church.

A – Action

Loyalty requires faith in action. A true and active faith is a living faith (James 2:14-26). An elder will show himself to be loyal when the tough times come. This is where his faith will be tested (1 Peter 1:6-7). If there are sinful situations that start to rise within the congregation, will the elder be the type of leader that will be loyal and uphold the word of God? Or will he stand aside and allow sin to persist in its detrimental way? Will he allow a precious soul to continually persist in sin? Or will he have the courage to stand in the gap?

L – Love

One of the great cardinal virtues in the Christian system is love. Love is doing what is best for the individual. If an elder is to be loyal to the word of God, he must show love in all that he does. 1 Corinthians 16:13-14 states: “Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. Let all that you do be done with love.” If sinful situations arise within a congregation, an elder will do what needs to be done because he loves the word of God above all else, which teaches him to love his neighbor as himself (Matthew 22:37-40).

Conclusion

If you desire to partake in the work of an elder someday, then you must have a heart of loyalty that will be given to the word of God and it alone. You cannot allow any other to get in the way and compete for your heart. The word of God must stand above all else. May the hearts of all elders everywhere have the desire to follow only the word of God.



Shepherding the Flock:

Motivations for Becoming an Elder

by John Ratliff

The office of an elder is not for the faint of heart. It is an office that comes with great responsibility, because those who take on this office are then, not only responsible for their own souls, but also for the souls of those they shepherd (Hebrews 13:17).¹ In this study, the terms *elder*, *bishop*, *shepherd*, *overseer*, and on the rare occasion *pastor* will be used interchangeably. Each term applying to the same position (that of being an elder), but pointing to a different aspect of the position. Within the church, God has ordained a specific way which He desires His church to be organized. He desires for there to be a plurality of elders (bishops), deacons, and of course members (Philippians 1:1). It is from the members that men are selected to be elders. This selection of men to fill this office comes with some strict guidelines. Paul states, “This is a faithful saying: If a man desires (literally, “to reach out after”) the position of a bishop (elder), he desires a good work” (1 Timothy 3:1). He then continues by giving the guidelines for a man that would be suitable for the work that

is set before him. However, not to diminish anything from what Paul has said regarding these guidelines, the focus here will be on the very first statement made by him, “if a man desires the position...” From this it is seen that a man must have the desire to hold this position in the Lord’s church. What would cause a man to desire such a position, what would motivate him to become an elder? Understand that with any position or office a person may desire to hold, there can be both positive and negative motivations. It is here that some of those motivations will be considered, please understand that this will not be exhaustive, for there are a number of motivations and each individual might be motivated for different reasons.

Negative Motivations

In 1 Peter 5:2, Peter speaks of a motivation that would fall in to the negative category. There he states, “Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, **not by compulsion but willingly**, not for dishonest gain but eagerly.” First, notice that Peter makes it clear that an elder is not to be in the position by compulsion. That is he should not be there because he felt that he was forced or pressured into the position. It should be

¹ All Scripture references are from the New King James Version unless noted otherwise.

rather clear that this would be a problem. If a person feels as though he was forced in to a position that he did not want, he will not perform his duties as he should. Everyone at some point has known someone or may have even been the one who was pressured into a position that he did not desire. With this in mind, it does not mean that the person cannot perform the task and do it well, but with anything, if one's mind is not in it, then there is no motivation to do the task and do it well. No one likes feeling as if they have been *made* to do something. This can certainly be a negative motivation, especially since a man is to “desire” the position.

Secondly, focus on the phrase, “**not for dishonest gain but eagerly**.” A man may desire the office for the wrong reason because he may see it as an opportunity to benefit in some personal way. There are many people who are always out seeking a way to make things work better for them. This would be a selfish reason for wanting to be an elder. However, it is the unfortunate reality that there are some who desire this position because of what they believe they can get out of it—whether it be monetary, prestige, or to simply be seen by men. There are a number of things that could fall into the idea of “dishonest gain.” There are also many who simply are not willing to help others unless there is something in it for them. It is interesting that Peter should mention this to Christians who were elders. Yet, there no doubt was a reason for this exhortation: turning back the pages of time, the children of Israel where being led (shepherded) by individuals who were doing it for themselves (Ezekiel 34:1-10). In verse 2, God issues a “woe” to the “shepherds of Israel” because they were feeding themselves and not the “flock.” In verse 3, God speaks of these shepherds as those who were taking care of themselves and not the people. They were taking what they could without any concern for anyone else. In verse 4, they were not strengthening the weak, helping the sick, fixing the broken, or seeking to bring back those who were lost. They were ruling with “force” and “cruelty.” Simply, it seems they were doing what they were doing for their own benefit. In the text it is clearly seen that God was not pleased with their actions, and He would rectify the problem (Ezekiel 34:7-10).

In some congregations men seek to be elders because it is a paid position. Being paid is not inherently wrong, in fact it is Biblical (1 Timothy

5:17-18). Nevertheless, the problem arises when a man desires this position because he can be compensated for it. Nothing that is done for the Lord and His church should be done because of what one can get out of it. While there is nothing wrong with paying an elder or a preacher for the duties that they perform it should not be the motivation behind it. One is paid so that their life can be dedicated to the work of the Lord, so that they can give it their undivided attention. This is especially true for those who are the overseers. They are the ones watching out for the souls of the congregation, keeping them on the pathway of righteousness, and it can be a full-time task. So no man should desire the position of an elder if it is for personal gain. Especially, when it comes to money (1 Timothy 3:3).

Thirdly, some have desired the office of an elder, because of the power that they believe comes with the position. In 1 Peter 5:3, again Peter states, “**nor as being lords** over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.” [Look at the picture at the head of this article and see if you can find the whip held by the shepherd.] The office of an elder is a humbling office. To sum up the position in one word, it is service. Elders are to be examples to those they watch over. They are there to serve them. On several occasions Jesus pointed out that a “servant is not greater than his master” (Matthew 10:24; John 13:16; 15:20). Jesus Himself proved to be a servant to all; and this is exactly what an elder should strive to be as well. However, there are some who desire this position because of their desire for power. They believe it entitles them to be able to rule over the people as a king might rule his people, thinking that they have complete dominion and authority over their subjects. Yet, this is not the case, Christ is the one with the authority, and those who serve as elders are still under Him. On two different occasions Paul reminded those who would have been slave owners, to treat their slaves respectively, because they had a “Master in heaven” (Ephesians 6:9; Colossians 4:1). Shepherds would do well to keep this in mind as well. The “golden rule” still applies even to this office (Matthew 7:12). God never intended for elders to take His place as the authority in the church, and He certainly did not intend for them to rule as though they were a monarch. Along the same lines, there are some who simply desire to be

elders because they want to be in charge, they want to be the “boss.” With this mindset they believe that they can now enforce their own rules, push their own agenda, propagate their own doctrines, and those that they shepherd better get on board or risk excommunication. Again, this is simply the wrong motivation. Having said all this, lest someone get the wrong idea, elders do have authority in the local congregation, so far as it is in accordance with the will of God.

Positive Motivations

Here the focus of this study will shift to the positive motivations for becoming an elder. If one were to simply seek one positive motivation in becoming an elder it would simply be the love of souls. This should be the utmost motivation in one’s desire to become an elder. Sure, there are others, and in fact a couple of them will be examined. However, if a man who desires to be an elder does not have a sincere love for the souls he will shepherd, then this position is not for him. Being an elder is not for the faint of heart; it demands a humble spirit, a loving attitude, and a desire to be a leader. It should be clear that God desires men who will be spiritual leaders of his people—godly men (1 Timothy 3:1ff)². These men who are chosen from the membership are to guide (1 Peter 5:1-4), guard/feed (Acts 20:28), and protect the souls of the congregation (Hebrews 13:17). In Hebrews 13:17, the writer declares, “Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for you souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.” It here becomes clear that a man desiring to serve in the capacity of an elder must have a love for those he is shepherding. Of course, ideally the flock helps in this matter, making this task easier. Unfortunately this is not always the case, for some seem to want to make it as hard as possible. Yet, this is why Paul by inspiration sets forth those qualities in 1 Timothy and Titus for men that would be suitable for this task. A man who loves the souls he is overseeing will be “...temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome...” (1 Timothy 3:2-3). Why would

a man need to have these qualities? Because it takes a sincere love for souls to desire such a position. Someone once said in reference to being a preacher, the great thing about being a preacher, you get to work with your brethren; the worst part about being a preacher is you get to work with your brethren. The same is true in being an elder. Nevertheless, those who have a love for souls will work hard through the thick and the thin. On a side note, for anyone reading this who is not a preacher or an elder, please make their task as easy as possible. For those who are, strive to express your love and appreciation for every member, and strive to maintain the disposition that would bring glory to God.

A second positive motivation is the desire to be a servant. It has been said that Christianity can be summed up in one word—service. No doubt this is especially true if one desires to be an elder; he must have the heart of a servant. The greatest shepherd that has and will ever exist is Jesus Christ. He is the epitome of what a servant should look like and what a servant should do. This concept was touched on earlier, but here the positive aspects will be examined. As one looks at the life of Christ and understands that He is the Good Shepherd (John 10:11, 14), there are many aspects that could be considered, especially when applied to a shepherd of the Lord’s church today. Jesus Christ always had others in mind, even up and to the point of His death (Luke 23:34). Just prior to His exodus, He taught His disciples an important lesson about servitude (John 13:1-17). Certainly, this is a lesson for all Christians, but applicable to the office of an elder as well. In the epistle to the Philippians, the apostle Paul spoke of the mind (attitude) of Christ (Philippians 2:5ff), at which point he declared:

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him...

² ff means to read the verse to the logical end of the passage

Again while this is certainly applicable to all Christian, it applies to the office an elder as well. It is impossible to be the kind of elder, overseer, shepherd that God desires without having the mind of a servant. A man who desires the position of an elder must humble himself, and let God do the exalting. It takes a man who can set aside his reputation and step down to the level of a bondservant to be an elder. If one desires to lead, then let him be a servant.

A third positive motivation might be sacrifice. One might wonder how this fits into a positive motivation. When one thinks of sacrifice, usually nothing positive or happy comes to mind. The story is told of a missionary traveling in a foreign country. As he was traveling with his interpreter, they came across a unique scene. The missionary noticed a young boy and father out plowing a field. The boy was pulling the plow as the father guided it. The missionary made mention of this to the interpreter, and asked, "Why do they not have a mule or ox to pull the plow?" To which the interpreter replied, "Last year the church building where they attend needed a new roof. Unable to gather the needed funds, they sold their only mule to provide the funds needed." The missionary replied, "That must have been some sacrifice," at which point the interpreter replied, "They do not call it that. They were joyful in that they had something to give."

Sacrifice, as so many things, is in the eyes of the beholder. What one might consider sacrifice, another might see as an opportunity.

The office of an elder is an office that demands sacrifice. It demands sacrifice of time, effort, energy, and resources. Yet, when one puts things in perspective, those things do not nearly add up to the sacrifice that was made for every individual that has ever lived or will live—the sacrifice of Christ. Elders and all Christian should have the attitude that says, "I am willing to sacrifice it all for the cause of Christ." Remember again the words of the apostle Paul, "But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ" (Philippians 3:7). Sacrifice is not always something that is viewed as easy, fun, or desirable, but it is what one makes it. To be an elder sacrifice is needed, but the rewards are heavenly.

Conclusion

The office of an elder, bishop, overseer, shepherd, pastor, presbyter, is a position that must be desired. There are certainly other negative/positive motivations for desiring the position, and depend completely upon the individual. However, as has been seen, there are certainly many things to consider: it is not a position to be taken lightly, and before a man ever takes on the task of being an elder, make certain that the motivations behind it are positive and pure. "This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work" (1 Timothy 3:1).



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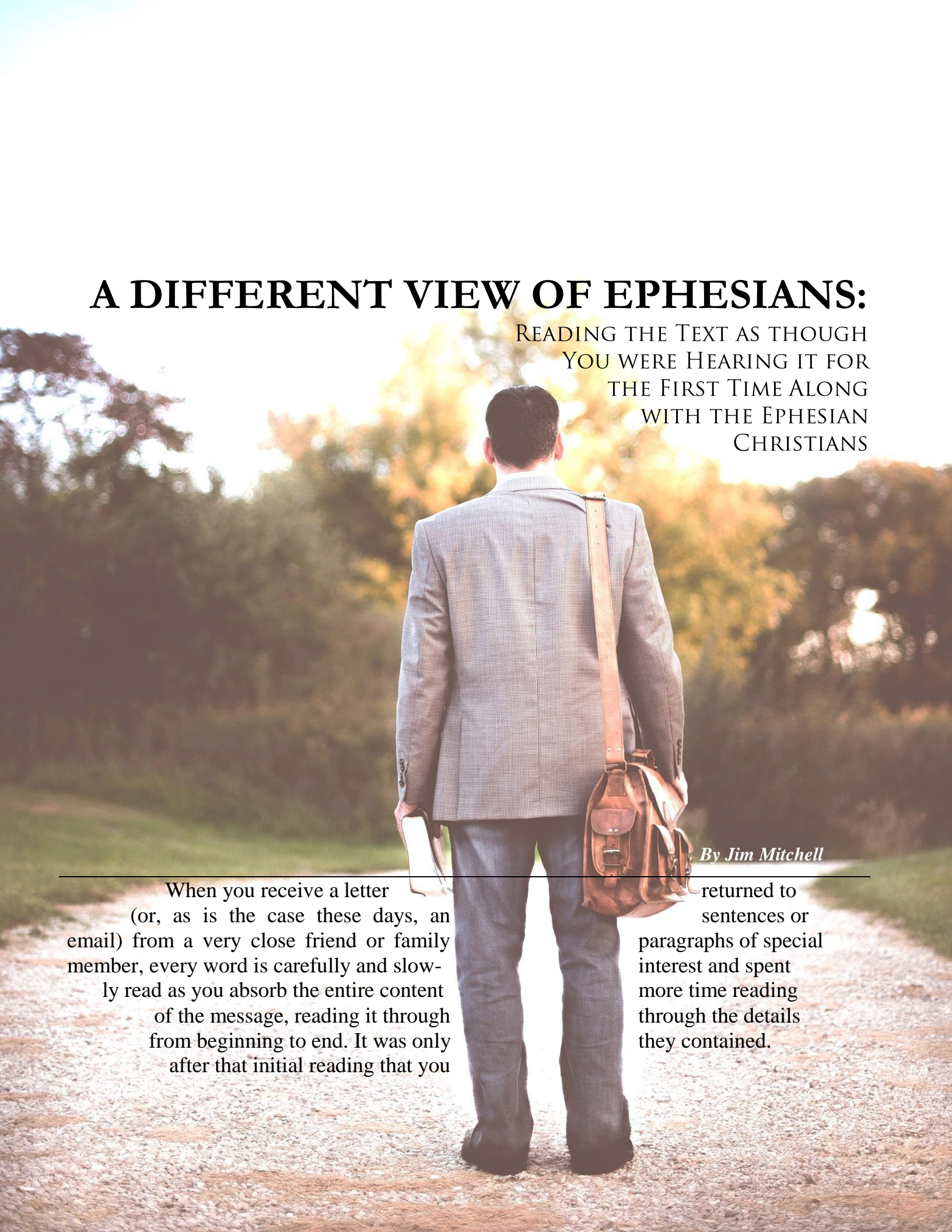
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A DIFFERENT VIEW OF EPHESIANS:

READING THE TEXT AS THOUGH
YOU WERE HEARING IT FOR
THE FIRST TIME ALONG
WITH THE EPHESIAN
CHRISTIANS

A man in a grey suit and dark trousers is walking away from the camera on a gravel path. He is carrying a brown leather bag over his right shoulder and holding a white folder or book in his left hand. The background is a soft-focus landscape with trees and a bright light source, possibly the sun, creating a warm, golden glow.

When you receive a letter (or, as is the case these days, an email) from a very close friend or family member, every word is carefully and slowly read as you absorb the entire content of the message, reading it through from beginning to end. It was only after that initial reading that you

By Jim Mitchell

returned to sentences or paragraphs of special interest and spent more time reading through the details they contained.

No one would read a paragraph of such a letter *today*, and then wait to read another paragraph every few days, finishing the initial reading a month or more after such a letter was received.

When engaged in a textual study of God's word in a weekly Bible class, how often do you go over the text of the book from the beginning to the end? How often do those in the class review the entirety of the book during the course of that study?

As we contemplate our level of motivation and interest in studying God's word outside of class time, think about Christians in the first century. What might Christians in those early decades of the Lord's church take away from hearing, for the very first time, one of these inspired books read in their midst? What, for example, would have most impressed the Christians in Ephesus when they heard the reading of Paul's letter for the very first time? How were their lives and their faith impacted as they heard one of the elders read this letter from Paul delivered into their hands by Tychicus (Eph. 6:21). As we think about the possibilities of that scenario, let's review some things about Ephesus.

The first mention of this city in the New Testament is during the second missionary journey of Paul. He had been in the country of Greece for some time, with Corinth being his last port of call before crossing the Aegean along with Priscilla and Aquila and arriving in Ephesus (Acts 18:18-21). For Paul, it was a brief visit, yet he mentioned to them he desired to return (18:21), which is recorded in Acts 19:1-20:1. It was during his much longer stay that he encountered disciples who, probably due to the early teaching of Apollos (Acts 18:24-26), had been baptized into John's baptism (Acts 19:1-7) and seemed to not have known of the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord.¹

¹If one is curious as to how these disciples could exist within the city of Ephesus without knowing about the death, burial, and resurrection, it needs to be kept in mind that in no place does Luke tell us that there was only one congregation within the limits of Ephesus. "By the time Ephesians was written there may have been a network of new churches established within the city. This consideration is made all the more plausible by recognizing that the lower estimates for the population of Ephesus in the first century begin at a quarter of a million." Clinton Arnold, *Power and Magic: The Concept of Power in Ephesus* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publ., 1989). p. 6.

Ephesus was home to one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. The temple to Diana (Artemis) was not only a magnificent structure, but was also known in that day as the common bank of Asia.² For those endeavoring to live in the shadow of the cross of Christ, the massiveness of the shadow of this huge, football-field size temple, could be overwhelming. However, the power of the message of Jesus had a tremendous impact upon the city. Books on witchcraft and magic were gathered and burned (19:18-20). In fact, the interest in magic and divination was so great in Ephesus that the phrase "Ephesian writings" (Ephesia Grammata) was synonymous in the ancient world with such practices.³ Artisans in the city whose trade was tied directly to tourists coming to view the great temple in Ephesus attributed the drop in their trade to the impact the teaching of the Gospel had on the city (Acts 19:23-41). The uproar against Paul and what he taught was so great that a great riot broke out in the city, eventually ending in the amphitheater where the crowd shouted for about two hours "Great is Diana of the Ephesians" (Acts 19:34).

If you are young in the faith, surrounded by cultic devotion to and worship of an idol known throughout the Roman world (Acts 19:27), and find yourself being vilified for your Christianity, how do you keep that faith intact and your commitment to Christ strong? While there are many ways in which the Ephesian letter can be analyzed, outlined, and studied – I would like to approach it as though you were one of those Christians in Ephesus whose devotion to God and Jesus is being constantly challenged in a pagan society. What do

²Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity: Third Edition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2003) p. 198. See also see – Bruce Morton, *Deceiving Winds: Christians Navigating the Storm of Mysticism, Leadership Struggles & Sensational Worship* (Nashville, TN: 21st Century Christian, 2009) p. 12, 13.

³Note the discussion of "Ephesia Grammata" by Clinton E. Arnold in *Power and Magic: The Concept of Power in Ephesus* (Baker Book House, 1989; reprinted by Wipf and Stock Publishers; Eugene, OR) pages 15-17. See also George Frederick Kunz, *The Magic of Jewels and Charms* (Philadelphia: J.P. Lippincott Co. 1915; reprint Mineola, NY: Dover Pub. Inc, 1997) Kunz notes "The wealth of books on magic and divination produced in the ancient city of Ephesus, in Asia Minor, was so great that the designation "Ephesian writings" was quite generally given to writings of this kind, more especially to denote short texts that could be worn as amulets or charms." (p. 325).

you hear in that first reading of Paul's letter that strengthens, encourages, and builds you up in the faith? In the following paragraphs, one theme will be mentioned from each chapter which does indeed serve to strengthen the faith of Christians then, and now.

Chapter 1

As you sit with the other members of the church in Ephesus and listen to one of the elders begin reading what Paul has written, anticipation runs high as you hope his letter might contain instruction to increase your faith in and commitment to the Lord, and your resolve to grow as a Christian. After the opening salutation and greeting, you hear these words –

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love...” (Eph. 1:3-4).

What do you hear? In Ephesus, surrounded by pagan worship to an idol whose temple was one of the wonders of the world and the center of finance for a large region of the empire, you hear from the Apostle Paul that you have: **1) Blessings which will never be depleted.** You have been and are a recipient of something no one worshiping an idol will ever know. God has blessed you with every spiritual blessing which will continue to be the case, no matter what difficulties one may face in this physical world. One of those spiritual blessings is that we have been adopted into the family of God (1:5-6). Paul writes about the redemptive process noting that we have *“through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace”* (verse 7) as well as an inheritance in Christ (1:9-12). Included in those spiritual blessings is the fact that Paul himself prayed constantly for the Ephesian Christians, for growth in their knowledge, wisdom, and understanding (1:15-18). No matter how insignificant one might have felt

when viewing the massive structure of the temple to Diana of the Ephesians, nothing about that idolatrous culture can compare with the spiritual blessings of God through Jesus Christ. No matter how discouraged you may be by the worldliness and sinfulness around you, when you hear these words read you recognize the power of what Paul has written and find yourself listening ever more intently as the reading continues. One eternal truth after another flows from the inspired pen of Paul and, as you listen, you are reminded of the power of a resurrected Savior (20) over a venerated object which was believed to have fallen from the sky (Acts 19:35).

Chapter 2

As chapter one ends with the significance of what the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished for humanity and continues into the next chapter, you are reminded that *“even when we were dead in trespasses”* God *“made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.”* (2:5-6). The impact of what Paul writes in chapter two culminates with these words –

“Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord” (2:19-21).

With the awareness that Christians are *“a holy temple in the Lord,”* the image of the temple to *“Diana of the Ephesians”* continues to fade in significance. As you hear these words for the first time you are struck with yet another truth. You are part of a: **2) Building which will never be destroyed.** As members of the household of God, you have *“been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets”* with Jesus as the *“chief*

[The church] is a spiritual building, and will continue to stand strong long after the massive structure of the pagan temple on the outskirts of Ephesus lies in ruins.

cornerstone.” It is a spiritual building, and will continue to stand strong long after the massive structure of the pagan temple on the outskirts of Ephesus lies in ruins.

Chapter 3

As you continue to listen to the reading of what Paul has written, you hear statements which give tremendous hope to those who are Gentiles. They are “*fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel...*” (3:6). As important as is the concept of inheritance, there is something even more astonishing found, once again, in Paul’s conclusion to this section of the letter.

“For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height – to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God” (3:14-19).

As great as it is to be an heir to an eternal inheritance, in his conclusion of chapter three Paul shares a concept even more profound. You have a: **3) Bond with the Divine.** They were (and we are) “*strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man*” (3:16). Christ dwells in our hearts through faith (3:17), and Paul’s prayer here is that they “*may be filled with all the fullness of God*” (3:19). For the Ephesian Christians, struggling to share the Gospel in a less than hospitable environment, the idea of a bond of fellowship with Christ, with the Father, and with the Spirit would seem equally significant (if not more so) to the inheritance which awaits the faithful after this life is over.

Chapter 4

The one holding the parchment appears to only be halfway through these encouraging words Paul has written, and already you feel the pressure of Ephesian culture being lifted from off your shoul-

ders. Each of these concepts seems to build upon what was previously written. 1) We are recipients of **Blessings which will never be depleted.** 2) We are part of a **Building which will never be destroyed.** 3) We have a **Bond with the Divine** Son of God who died for us.

What some Ephesians who are listening may be wondering is how all of this works together for, although the second chapter emphasizes that we are all parts of a spiritual building, what is yet to be addressed is how we learn to work better as one body in Christ. Here in the fourth chapter Paul gives us descriptions first of areas of responsibility followed in the latter part of the chapter by both the attitudes and actions which are needed in those areas of work. In the first portion of chapter four, the concept of “body” is emphasized. After a list of seven things of which there is only one (including “one body” – 4:4), Paul mentions “body” again in verses 12 and 16. Verses surrounding the mention of the body are well worth noting.

“And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;” (4:11-13).

The sentence continues through verse 16, concluding with the point of every part of the body doing its share which “*causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.*”

The Christians in Ephesus needed to understand and be reminded (as do we) that we are part of a: **4) Body which will not deteriorate.** For the body to be spiritually healthy, the “*old man*” must be removed by eliminating whatever may be a hindrance to truly living as God would have us to live, and by putting on the “*new man...created according to God, in righteousness and true holiness*” (4:17-32). The standard of conduct which Paul included in these instructions (4:22-32) provide a blueprint from which to address our interactions with one another. The Ephesian Christians needed to be reminded that they were not alone, but were surrounded by a spiritual family (body) where each member has a vital role to play.

Chapter 5

With the principles the listeners have been exposed to in this first reading of Paul's letter, and with all of the encouragement given through the first four chapters, you may wonder, as you sit listening to admonitions toward Christ-like behavior at the end of chapter four, whether or not we can truly know how Christ feels toward us. We have heard Paul's words about the Bond we have with God, Christ, and the Spirit (3:14-21), but how would that bond look if we were to view it not through our eyes, but through the eyes of the Savior? The second half of this fifth chapter deals with that relationship. Paul writes of the care the husband has for his wife (5:23-31) and then tells us what he is really speaking of is "*Christ and the church*" (5:32). That being the case, what is the point Paul is making?

With Jesus being pictured as the groom and the church as His bride, the care and concern Christ has for His church lets us know that the church is a: **5) Bride whom the Groom will never desert.** While there have been and still are times when some who are part of the bride of Christ do not act as they should and even desert the one who died for them, it is still the case that Christ will not desert His church. People may walk away from Jesus, but He will not walk away from those whose faith is evidenced in loving obedience. For those who are struggling to live for God while surrounded by a culture which thrives on idol worship, a Savior who loves them, cares for them, died for them, and will always be there for them, dwarfs devotion to a cold idol which can do nothing. Once again, the significance of the temple of and worship to Diana of the Ephesians is significantly diminished and shows itself to be powerless in contrast to Christ and His church.

Chapter 6

As the letter to the Ephesians draws to a close, how can they be further encouraged? What sort of principle is left which would help each Christian to better tackle an idolatrous culture which really did not want them sharing the Gospel in the first place? As is the case in the preceding chapters, there are truths which we have neither mentioned nor focused upon in this article. Our goal was to inquire as to what the initial impact may have been on the Ephesians the very first time they heard

Paul's letter read to them. Just like reading a letter (or email) from a close friend or loved one as was mentioned at the beginning, the multitude of inspired details will be gone over and over in Ephesus over the next weeks and months as they try to digest everything they did not fully understand the first time they heard it read.

The point Paul makes in this last chapter, which will serve both to encourage as well as challenge the Ephesians, begins in verse 10.

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (6:9-10). The same point is made again two verses later. "Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand" (6:12).

Often, we tend to delve into the pieces of that spiritual armor that Paul describes (6:14-17) without emphasizing what, I believe, the Ephesians would have noted which would have given them renewed strength for the spiritual war they were waging. Paul was telling them that they were a part of a: **6) Battalion that would not be defeated!** They would be able to stand their ground! They could stand against the wiles of the devil. They could "*withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand*" (6:13). Living in a city of at least a quarter of a million people with decadence and immorality all around and with the center of the cultic worship of an idol goddess present every day, they could stand firm in the knowledge that the Gospel of Christ could and would change hearts and lives even in a place like Ephesus.

Can I be certain that these first-century brothers and sisters in Christ would have been thinking and feeling exactly what I have here briefly expressed? No. But I can tell you that those are principles I believe I would have noticed if I was dealing with some of the problems they were facing. Furthermore, I believe very strongly that while they would undoubtedly continue to analyze, dissect, and study the intricate points and arguments Paul makes elsewhere in this marvelous epistle, they would have initially listened non-stop to a complete reading of the letter and perhaps have been impacted in the way suggested above.

So, how do you personally approach these marvelous inspired texts as you study God's Word? If it has been a while since you read through a complete book of the New Testament in one sitting, perhaps it is time to make that a regular practice. If we can give our complete attention to a movie which lasts for an hour and a half, or a sporting event which may take two to three hours,

can we not find an equal amount of time to give to what matters much more, God's Word? May each of us be always challenged, encouraged, and instructed by what we read from His divine word and may we be devoted students of His word every day!



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**Proclaiming Truth and
Encouraging the Brethren**

A FORGOTTEN WARRIOR:

Excerpts from the Life of J.M. Kidwell

From *Twenty Five Years of Trust:*
A Life Sketch of J.M. Kidwell
by E. A. Elam, 1893

Sometimes he would ride his buggy forty or fifty miles to an appointment, preach three times – Saturday night, Sunday and Sunday night – and receive only five dollars. Of course, he would then have to travel back home over the same distance. Sometimes he would preach a week and receive only five or six dollars. He was careful to set down every cent and everything he received. More than once I find in his memoranda that some brother gave him fifty cents. He held a short meeting at a place about forty miles from home and received four dollars and a pair of boots. At another time I find that some good brother gave him a pair of boots which cost five dollars and fifty cents, and at another a friend gave him a nice leghorn hat. Later on in his life some congregations supported him more liberally in his work. For instance, one gave him sixty dollars and several nice presents for a meeting of two or three weeks' duration. A very few congregations gave him sometimes from seventy-five to ninety dollars for a meeting. But in January, 1887, he visited a place, preached Sunday and Sunday night and received only fifty cents. For one of his late debates he received only eight dollars. Sometimes he received nothing for his labors at different places. For many marriage ceremonies he never received any fee. But in all this we never hear one complaint, not one... The fact was recorded without a comment or a murmur... In one of his note books I find this sentence, "Some followed Christ for the loaves and fishes; too many that way now."...

The following circumstances will give us an idea of the discouragements he sometimes met with: Soon after he began to preach he held a meeting at _____ in _____ county. The meeting continued eight or ten days, embracing therefore two Lord's days. It resulted in ten or fifteen addi-



tions. On the last Lord's Day of the meeting an old gray-headed brother arose and addressed the congregation thus: "Brother Kidwell has been with us now for some time; he has done good and faithful work; he has a family, and cannot leave them and preach for nothing; therefore we must take up a collection for him. Will Brother _____ and Brother _____ please pass around the hats while the congregation sings? Now, let us be liberal, brethren, with Brother Kidwell." The congregation sang, "On Jordan's stormy banks I stand," with a long chorus, entirely through, while the hats went around. The hats made a quick circuit and returned to the stand long before the song ended. After awhile, however, the last faint sound of the song died away and silence reigned while the money was counted out. It was carefully and deliberately counted, and all told, both hats contained the surprising sum of eighty-five cents. The congregation allowed him to leave the community with eighty-five cents. (pages 121-123)

Lynchburg, April 19, 1874: "Today, while crossing East Mulberry Creek, my horse reared and plunged until he fell. He and I both were in great danger of drowning. The good Lord delivered me

from all my trouble. I give myself anew to his service, and may he help me to search my heart and to purify it through faith in his word until my body, soul and spirit shall be wholly devoted to his will.” (page. 131)

W.H. Smith had two debates with Kidwell. After he learned of Kidwell’s death he had this printed in the *Baptist Helper*, published at Alexandria, Tennessee.

“Last Thursday night Bro. J.M. Kidwell, of Smithville, departed this life. He had been suffering with lung trouble for years, and neither himself nor his most intimate friends had expected him to live so long.

“The disciples of this country owe more to him than any other one man. He had the courage of his convictions, and engaged in many strongly contested discussions. It was our privilege to cross swords with him twice, each time for one week. In fact, his last battle was fought with us at Bagdad, Tenn., in February, 1890, since which time he has done very little, if any, preaching. He was one of their strongest debaters. The Gospel Advocate truly said, ‘All things considered, Bro. Kidwell is one of our best debaters.’

“Notwithstanding our two hard-fought battles of eleven days, we were, at the time, and have ever been since, the best of personal friends. It was our privilege to visit him several times during his confinement, and we always received a kind, brotherly greeting from him.

“One special feature we wish to commend. When he could no longer travel and preach, or do labor of any kind, his churches – at least one of them – did without a preacher, and paid over his salary as promptly as when he preached for them.

“This ought to be a stinging rebuke to a Baptist church that withholds the hard-earned salary of their pastor.” (page 158)



PLANNED FOR NEXT ISSUE

Missing Out on Millennials?

Shepherding the Flock: Apt to Teach

Did the Father Forsake Jesus?

Restoration Moments: Judge Jeremiah Black

When Sodom Lived in Lot’s Family
and much more!

Walk in a Manner Worthy

(Part 2A)

ALLOCATE OUR GIFTS – A STUDY OF EPHESIANS 4:7-16

Jake Schotter

Introduction

In the first installment of this series¹, “Walk in a manner worthy...”, on Ephesians 4, we noticed how important our walk is in relationship to the unity of the body of Christ. The first lesson in our study, therefore, was entitled, “Walk in a Manner Worthy...” and we saw that we, as Christians, and as a church, need to have a worthy walk. We also noted what characteristics we are to have in order to be declared “worthy.”

Ephesians 4 is the transition between the blessings (chapters 1-3) and the behavior (chapters 4-6) of the believer. Paul, in effect, said, “Christians in Ephesus, listen up! I have mentioned to you your doctrine, your position, and principles and I need you to now live out your duties and practice it! Because of what you know, act on it!” True Christians live out their doctrine.

In the previous article, we focused on verses 1-6 and the theme was “Walk in a manner worthy...”

In verse 1, we saw our call to a worthy walk.

Paul got personal, immediately, and said, “I’m a prisoner of the Lord” because he lived out what he preached. He was their example to follow (1 Corinthians 11:1). Not only was he faithful in living the gospel, but he suffered for Christ’s sake. He himself knew the personal price of pain and persecution for being obedient to Christ. In like manner, he called them to do the same when the time came.

In the next couple of verses, we saw the characteristics of a worthy walk. Paul gave them what was needed in order to “walk in a manner worthy.” He gave 6 qualities of a person involved in a worthy walk and had the desire for unity in the church: humility, gentleness, patience, tolerance, love,

and diligence to maintain the unity. To maintain the unity, what better fail-safe do we have to avoiding division than each individual, personally, having these characteristics?

CHART 1

“WALK IN A MANNER WORTHY”

(Ephesians 4)

W – WALK IN A MANNER WORTHY (1-6)

A – Allocate our gifts (7-16)

L – Live the new life (17-24)

K – Kill old life mannerisms (25-32)

CHART 2

W – WALK IN A MANNER WORTHY (1-6)

- I. The CALL to a Worthy Walk (1)**
- II. The CHARACTERISTICS of a Worthy Walk (2-3)**
- III. The CHURCH Has a Worthy Walk (4-6)**

¹ Readers are encouraged to read the first article in this series, found in the April 2017 issue of *The Quarterly* on pages 30-39.

We saw, finally, in the previous article, that the church has a worthy walk (verses 4-6). We must note that the chances greatly increase for the church to have a worthy walk if each Christian maintains the characteristics. In fact, it's integral to any chance for the church to be successful in this regard. The true church must be faithful about being united in the seven "ones." Paul listed them out very carefully so no one could be mistaken². When we talk about the "one body," we agree that Christ built one church and His church only, none other. Christ's body is to be united in the "one [s]pirit" – perhaps better translated as "mindset." The body of Christ has the "one hope" of the resurrection of the body and the realization of heaven. "One Lord" is significant because it clearly commands us to submit to the authority, the lordship of Jesus Christ. The "faith" is

² You may say that there has been misunderstanding on these issues and rightly so. However, none of the division regarding these "one" statements by Paul were caused by God but mankind and all of his wisdom. It is interesting to note that Paul lists six characteristics directed for all men to have. However, there are seven for the church that need to be 'agreed' upon. Perhaps, this says something very strong. This article's author wrote in the previous issue, "The number seven is very important... [i]t signifies completeness and perfection. Therefore, when we look at this passage as a whole, we see the complete and perfect body of Christ in all her glory. We may have six godly characteristics that promote unity (4:2-3), but that will never be enough to be the truly unified and saved. We must have Jesus as the "head of the body, the church" (Colossians 1:18) (page 35).

the system of beliefs that the Bible teaches (Jude 3; 1 Timothy 2:2). The "one baptism" is the baptism

that allows one to enter the body of Christ and be saved for the remission of sins. It all ends with "one God and Father of all." The God of the Bible is unique in relation to His ability (He is not an idol who has people do for Him what a god should be able to do) and His actions (He has offered a rope of redemption, an escape from hell for eternity).

In keeping with our study of Ephesians 4, we will use the acronym "W.A.L.K." (see Chart 3). Again, our first article dealt with the "W" – "Walking in a manner worthy." This second article, will fill in the "A" – "Allocating our gifts." The following

articles will deal with "L" – "Living the new life" and "K" – "Killing old life mannerisms." Hopefully, we will remember these and implement the kind of behavior Paul "implore[d]" the Ephesians to do (4:1).

Now, as we approach this next section, we must properly note the narrowing progression Paul makes (see chart 4) in this chapter. In the first 6 verses, Paul was addressing the congregation as a whole. Everyone was expected to live in such a way that would promote unity among the Body of Christ. Then, we see a shift in verses 7-16 when dealing with gifts that members of this Body have.

CHART 3

"WALK IN A MANNER WORTHY" (Ephesians 4)

W – Walk in a manner worthy (1-6)

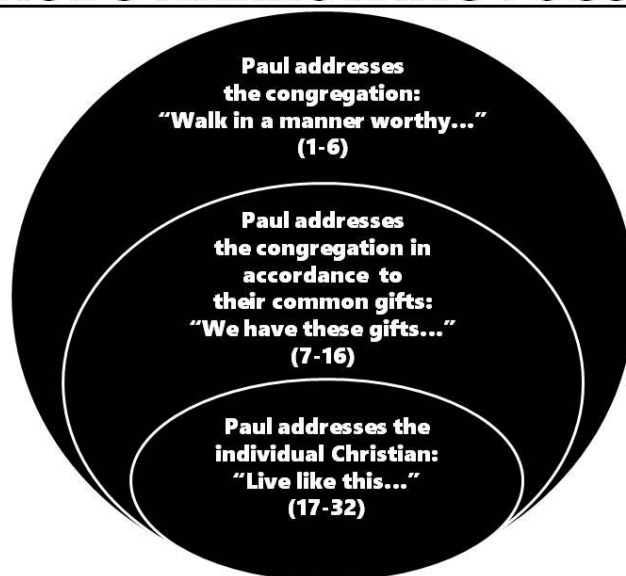
A – ALLOCATE OUR GIFTS (7-16)

L – Live the new life and

K – Kill old life mannerisms (17-32)

CHART 4

PAUL'S NARROWING FOCUS



We read a slight narrowing in verse 7: “*But to each one of us*” that highlights this. Not everyone has the same gift(s), so we are grouped into what our talents are. The final group is the narrowest: individual Christians (17-32). In this section, the identifying marker, “*you,*” appears 12 times. These divisions of audiences are very arbitrary, however, we do see that Paul is narrowing his audience in a sense with the progression. He begins with the whole congregation, then he makes distinctions based on our spiritual gifts, and then he discusses our lifestyles.

Since we understand the background of the text, let us read Ephesians 4:7-16. Paul writes:

But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift. Therefore it says, ‘When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, and He gave gifts to men.’ (Now this expression, ‘He ascended,’ what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above the heavens, so that He might fill all things.) And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

This section can be divided into 3 main headings (see Chart 5). We will only focus on the verses 7-10 in this issue.

The Grace That Has Been Given By Christ (4:7-10)

“But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift. Therefore it says, ‘When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, and He gave gifts to men.’ (Now this expression, ‘He ascended,’ what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above the heavens, so that He might fill all things.)”

In this first section, Paul gives us three details regarding the grace that has been

given. Paul, first, makes clear the exclusivity of the grace that has been given. The “*grace*” in view is not related to our salvation that *all* can receive. Rather, it is *directed* to some people in particular. It is rather a unique gift given to someone to use... “the privilege of a special calling in the service of God.”³ Paul wrote earlier in 3:7, “*I was made a minister, according to the gift of God’s grace which was given to me according to the working of His power.*” If God gave us all unique talents to use in our service for God, then in no way can we be able to proclaim that we were able to promote the unity of the Body – it was entirely because of God’s power that He gave us (1 Corinthians 15:10; Colossians 1:25, 29). “‘Grace’ supplies the particular gifts and abilities by Christ.”⁴ No one has the power to impart or authenticate any new revelation with these gifts given. This is made clear by their purpose, as we will see, in verses 12-13.

³ Foulkes, Francis. **Ephesians: An Introduction and Commentary**. The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, vol. 10. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 1989: 122.

⁴ Jobe, Glenn A.. “In Christ: Are Spiritual Gifts for Today? - Ephesians 4:7-13”. **Exalting Christ in the Church: Unsearchable Riches in Ephesians & Colossians**. Ed. David L. Lipe. Henderson: Freed-Hardeman University, 2002: 213.

CHART 5

A – ALLOCATE OUR GIFTS (7-16)

I. The GRACE that Has Been Given by Christ (7-10)

II. The GIFTS that Have Been Given to the Church (11)

III. The GROWTH that Occurs Among Christians (12-16)

These gifts emphasize the importance of unity in diversity. No, not a diversity of opinions (Paul attacked that very thought in his list of “ones” in Ephesians 4:4-6), but rather a diversity of gifts, used for the building up and the growth of the body. As one author commented, “Unity is not uniformity... [but rather] the uniqueness of believers.”⁵ This is certainly what Paul was talking about in a similar vein in 1 Corinthians 12. He wrote, “But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good... distributing to each one individually just as He wills” (vs. 7 and 11).

Simply put, Christ displays His grace to all of us by giving us gifts that are exclusive in nature. Everyone does not have the same gifts, but they all vary from person to person. These gifts are distributed in particular amounts to particular people as evidenced in the phrase, “given according to the measure of Christ’s gift.” Christ, in His wisdom, gave each one of us a set amount of gifts. The word “measured” reminds me of the words of any worker who deals with measuring and making something fit perfectly. We think of a tailor personally fitting a suit jacket

and trousers with a man. It’s not too stocky on the shoulders or too long on the legs – it is fitted only for that person. Someone else might be able to fit relatively well in another’s outfit, but it will not be a perfect fit because it was tailored for only one person in mind. There are general sizes that may fit a whole host of people, but in fitting with our illustration, several people overlap with their spiritual gifts.

Christ is our tailor... He is the one who gives us what we need to be able to stimulate growth and unity in the church. The individualized gifts from Christ “had resulted in many different talents and

abilities, but it had come from one divine source, and was intended to prepare each member for the service of the church.”⁶

After Paul explains the exclusivity of the gift Christ has given to each one of us, he mentions an Old Testament expression (v.8): “When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, and He gave gifts to men.” Here, Paul is quoting from David’s celebratory hymn in Psalm 68:18 and applies it to Christ as the victor.

It was the custom of victorious rulers to come back from battles with spoils and slaves. The historian, William Barclay, wrote, “The conqueror has come home with his trophies; and he demands the ransom and the tribute that the peoples he has conquered must give to him.”⁷ John Stott further emphasized “there was invariably both a receiving of

tribute and a distribution of [generous gifts]. What conquerors took from their captives, they gave away to their own people. The spoils were divided, the booty was shared.”⁸

That leads us back to Ephesians 4:8 and causes us to ask some pertinent questions: who did Christ defeat, and what did He distrib-

ute to His people? The key to unlocking this verse is in a study of the word, “captive.” This will give us a complete picture of what Paul is discussing. The answer to our question is simply the devil and death were defeated; Christ and Christians are conquerors. Now, that was easy to say but let me show you the Scriptural support. It was prophesied that Satan would be defeated, right after the fall in

CHART 6

CHRIST’S CAPTIVES AT THE CROSS

Devil’s Defeat	Death’s Defeat	Christ and Christians Conquer
Genesis 3:15		Matthew 16:18
Romans 16:20	Hebrews 2:14-15	1 Peter 3:18-19
Job 2:6	John 14:19	2 Corinthians 2:14-16
Revelation 20:10	1 Corinthians 15:54	1 Timothy 1:17
John 12:31	Matthew 16:18	Romans 8:37
John 16:11		Revelation 6:2

⁶ Erdman, Charles. **The Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians: An Exposition.** Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1966: 87.

⁷ Barclay, William. **The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians.** The Daily Study Bible Series, vol. 10. Philadelphia: Westminster, 2017: 169.

⁸ Stott, John R.W. **The Message of Ephesians: God’s New Society.** The Bible Speaks Today Series. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1979: 156-157.

⁵ MacArthur, John. **Ephesians.** The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, vol. 20. Chicago: Moody Press, 1986: 134.

the garden (Genesis 3:15). Even early on, Satan did not have omnipotence, but his power was limited in regard to what he could and could not do (Job 2:6). Fast forward, to the end of time, we may be confident that Satan and his minions will be defeated soundly, once and for all, and punished eternally (Revelation 20:10). For a more complete picture of this word study, read chart 6 on the previous page.

However, in another sense, can Christians be the ones taken captive? Considering we are slaves of Christ and should be identified as such, this is a possibility. In a very insightful volume, yet thoroughly Calvinistic in its approach, John MacArthur wrote at length the connection of Christians as a slave, someone taken in captivity, for a purpose. We find numerous occurrences in the New Testament where a Christian refers to himself as a slave (Romans 1:1; 1 Corinthians 7:22; Galatians 1:10; Ephesians 6:6; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 4:12; Titus 1:1; James 1:1; 1 Peter 2:16; 2 Peter 1:1; Jude 1; Revelation 1:1). “According to the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia... some commentators have proposed that the term ‘Christian’ literally means ‘slave of Christ.’ For example... [Deissmann]... suggests that Christian means slave of Christ, as Caesarian means slave of Caesar...”⁹ Wouldn’t we also consider ourselves as slaves to Christ when we do everything He says to do, to please Him, to serve Him, to be approved by Him? After all, that is the language of Judgment Day (Matthew 25:23). We are owned by Christ. He purchased us (Acts 20:28; Revelation 5:9; 1 Corinthians 6:20; 7:23)!

⁹ MacArthur, John. **Slave: The Hidden Truth About Your Identity In Christ**. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2010:13.

These both are reasonable interpretations, and both are absolutely true. However, in light of the statement at the end of the expression, “*gave gifts to men*,” the “*captives*” cannot be Christians, even if we are slaves to Christ. Rather, “*men*” is a reference to Christians. After all, how can it not be a reference to us when we belong to Christ as His people and He gives us the gifts? We cannot be defeated victors where, as captives, we have to

give up our property and ourselves to the victors (which would mean to give ourselves to ourselves with our stuff). It does not make sense.

This victory was completed and put into effect when Christ resurrected from the dead (Matthew 28:1-8; Mark 16:1-8; Luke

24:1-12; John 20:1-10) *and* ascended into heaven (Acts 1:9-11). How can it be two separate and distinct events, you may ask. The answer is in the power of Him being God. Both include Him being ascended, both declare His deity, and without Christ being raised up from the dead, how can He have been ascended still being yet dead?

By now, I hope you see that this verse contains several meanings from David’s original audience to Paul’s application. Although we have explained the meanings, let’s simplify what has been said and condense it into chart 7.

To help us even more in what Paul’s application is here, he includes an explanation (vs. 9-10). Paul comments on the meaning of this, I believe, in Philippians 2:6-9. He wrote, “...*although He [Christ] existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even*

CHART 7

MULTIPLE MEANINGS OF EPHESIANS 4:8

Key Word	David’s Audience (Psa. 68:18)	Paul’s Application (Eph. 4:8)
“He”	David	Christ
“Ascended”	Military victory in a battle	Resurrection and Ascension
“Captive... Captives”	War Enemies	Devil, Demons, and Death
“Gifts”	Wealth, bounty, slaves	Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, Teachers
“Men”	Citizens of victorious king’s territory	Christians

death on a cross. For this reason also, God highly exalted Him the name which is above every name..." Christ was with God in the heavens, He descended from heaven to earth for His ministry on earth and to die on the cross as a substitute for our sins (2 Corinthians 5:21). He was then resurrected from the dead, and ascended into heaven afterwards. This is a "reference to earth itself and include[s] all that occurred in Christ's incarnation. If this is the case, then earth is seen as the battleground into which this conqueror came to deal with the enemies of God."¹⁰

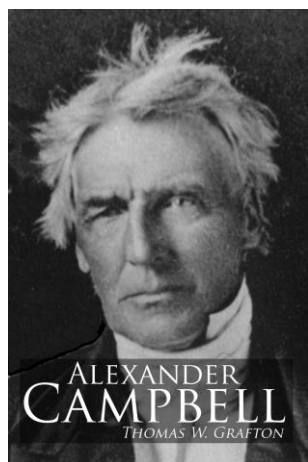
Paul also elaborates on "*He might fill all things*" in verse 11 in regards to the equipping of the church and their various gifts. In other words, Jesus covered "all bases" and with the gifts, as we will see, is complete and not lacking to fulfill the intended goal. This makes sense as a reference to the church, as it is referring to the church in 1:22-23.

*"Paul's point in Ephesians 4:8-10 is to explain that Jesus' paying the infinite price of coming to earth and suffering death on our behalf qualified Him to be exalted above all the heavens (that is, to the throne of God), in order that He might rightfully have the authority to give gifts to His saints. By that victory He gained the right to rule His church and to give gifts to His church, that He might fill all things."*¹¹

[To be continued in part 2B]

¹⁰ Orbison, Jr. Guy. **A Study of the Letter Paul Wrote to the Ephesians with Guy Orbison, Jr.** Tackling The Text. 2013: 39.

¹¹ MacArthur, **Ephesians**, 140.



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GIVING GLORY TO GOD

Devin Self

So often in this life we ask God for the things we need. More often than not I could probably say we have something in mind even when we don't ask it of him. You know, for example, "if I pray this many times, do this or that, and go to church three times a week for two weeks. Then if I get what I want, or nothing happens, I'll stop going."

Read Philippians 2:3-7 where it is written,

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interest, but also to the interest of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus. Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped but made himself nothing taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

Talk about the perfect role model for how we should be as Christians! Jesus could have had anything he wanted, could have had any prayer answered but instead he humbled himself in servitude to God. He knew what the greater purpose was, not his own needs but the will of God which is better than any plan out there. Just as Christ was, we also should be, having a servant's attitude and serving God for the purposes of love for him and not for our own gain, guilt, or fear.

Now read with me about what Paul said in Acts 21:13 to the people when the prophet Agabus told him of his impending imprisonment by the Gentiles. Here he said, "Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

See, Paul knew what was ahead of him but still he did not stop to consider his own desires or thoughts, but was rather ready to give his own life, even for God's will if that was what he needed to do. How many of us, knowing pain, torment, and possibly death was ahead of us, would still go through

with it for the sake of God? I know it's hard to think of it from that point of view—even more so because we live in a country of more, more, more and I'm happy and I'll thank God one of these days.

Psalms 106:13-15 is part of a song about Israel when God helped them out of Egypt and when they were in the desert. It reads,

But they soon forgot what he had done and did not wait for his counsel. In the desert they gave into their craving, in the wasteland they put God to the test. So he gave them what they asked for, but sent a wasting disease upon them.

See, Israel was so determined to get what they wanted that in the meantime they put aside what God desired of them. They were more concerned about themselves in selfishness than about what they needed to be doing as servants of God. Does this sound familiar? I know I'm guilty of it myself. I've got to do this or do that. I'll get back to God and what I need to for him in time. Now, this is where we are wrong. God always needs to be at the top of our checklist, not constantly being moved around closer to the bottom.

The main point is that our focus needs to be on God no matter what we do. We have to realize our own priorities and desires should never interrupt our desire and need to do God's will. Lastly consider Philippians 4:12-13: "I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through him who gives me strength."

See, if we trust in God and put him foremost in our lives he will take care of us. Paul understood this and focused on the eternal life rather than the short one we live here. We must be like this, giving glory to God first and placing our own desires last.

TABERNACLE SHADOWS

THE PILLARS AND WALLS

Mark McWhorter

The Court Wall and its Pillars are described in Exodus 27:9-19 and Exodus 38:9-20. The Court was 100 cubits by 50 cubits (150 feet by 75 feet). The Wall was 5 cubits high (7 feet, 6 inches). There was 70 talents of brass involved. That is approximately 9000 pounds of brass.

The Pillars

The pillars of wood were covered in brass. The pillars could not have been solid brass because the numbers do not add up for the amount of brass given. Other items were wood overlaid with substances so it is reasonable to assume the same for these.

There were 60 pillars. In Exodus 24:4, Moses erects 12 pillars representing the 12 tribes of God's people. Thus, pillars can represent those who follow God/Christ.

In Revelation 14:1-3, John sees Christ with 144,000 who have the Father's name on their foreheads, and they are singing a new song. The large number represents those who are redeemed by the Lamb. 144,000 is a multiple of 60.

Christians become pillars in the church after perseverance and trial, becoming and living as a Christian, and thus clothed with Christ's bronze (Revelation 3:12).

According to Paul, the Church is the 'pillar and ground of the truth' (1 Timothy 3:15).

The Brazen Sockets

There were 60 of these in which the pillars stood.

Brass represents the steadfastness of Deity, security, and endurance. God holds us in place so that we can stand upright. He separates us from the earth. We are on the world but not in the world.

The Tabernacle was set up on sand. The sockets gave a sure foundation.

In Revelation 1:15, John sees Christ standing with feet like fine brass. The ASV has 'as if it had been refined.'

Ezekiel saw Jesus as one with "his feet like in color to polished brass," (Ezekiel 12:6).

Zechariah 6:1 pictures the message of Christ coming from between two mountains of brass.

Matthew 7:26, "And every one that hears these sayings of mine, and does them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand." In Philippians 4:1, we are told to "stand fast in the Lord."

In 1 Corinthians 15:58, we are told to be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." And work is what was being done inside the Wall in the Court.

According to Paul, the Church is the "pillar and ground of the truth," (1 Timothy 3:15). The word 'ground' comes from a word which means 'support.' A person cannot have the Christ without the Church. Nor can one have the Church without the Christ.

Silver rods connected the pillars on either side.

There were 60 of these and they were filleted. They aided in keeping the pillars stable. The word 'fillet' comes from a root word that means 'to cling, to love or delight in.' Christians are held together by the love for Christ and love for each other.

Exodus 30:16 tells us they were made from the atonement money appointed for the service of the Tabernacle. It was a half shekel of silver for each

man 20 years old or older. The silver was a constant reminder, memorial, of the ransom required for their soul. The ransom silver prevented a plague among them (Exodus 30:12). Without the ransom silver, a man could not engage in service to God.

Christ is the silver rod holding us together. By being tied together with the silver rods, we have fellowship one with another (1 John 1:7). Paul stated in Colossians 3:14, "And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness." The word 'above' in the Greek means 'upon.' The items placed on and around the pillar bring about a perfect or complete bond.

The rods could not be seen by those outside the Tabernacle due to them being covered by the linen. Those inside could see the rods. Those inside the church have a fuller view of the Christ than those in the world.

Hooks, Chapiters (Capstones), and Filleted Bars

In Exodus 38:25-28, some of the atonement money was used to make these. There were 60 capstones. 1775 shekels were specifically used for these. That comes to 29.6 shekels per pillar. It is interesting that Jesus was sold for 30 pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:13 and Matthew 27:9). Thus, Jesus' sale value of treachery was equal to the amount of silver for each pillar. Every pillar (Christian) needed that silver.

The silver hooks kept the linen sheets from falling. The Christian is clothed with Christ. As long as the Christian stays in Christ, the hooks will not allow the cloth covering to fall. This covering is righteousness. It is by Christ that we have that covering. If the Christian removes himself from Christ, the hooks are removed and the righteous clothing falls away. One cannot lose the hooks and keep the righteous linen.

The capstones represent the Christian topped by Christ. It is his thoughts that now direct the Christian in life. The Christian is to no longer think of earthly things, but of heavenly things. Colossians 3:1-3, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sits on the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God."

Christians wear the helmet of salvation (Ephesians 6:17). The pillar must have the silver capstone. There is no salvation without it.

This also gives a future picture of the crown of righteousness and glory awaiting those who are found worthy at the Judgment, (1 Peter 5:4 and 2 Timothy 4:8).

It also brings to mind that Jesus was crucified at a place called Golgotha, which means skull, cranium, or head (Matthew 27:33; Mark 15:22; and John 19:17). This term was used for the polling places which were used to count and collect the head (capitation) tax. The geographic name came from the Hebrew word used by Moses when he conducted censuses (golgolet). One of these stations was near the top of the Mount of Olives on the road which led from the East Gate of the Temple to the top of the Mount. They symbolism seen is that God's head tax was paid for each of us by Jesus. The redemption money of silver paid by Christ covers our heads.

Cords and Pins (pegs) of brass.

There were 120 of each of them, (Numbers 3:36-37).

In Isaiah 22:23-24, Isaiah pictured Christ as a nail. The same holds true for these cords and pins. Romans 14:4 tells us a man shall "be holden up; for God is able to make him stand." We stand connected together. The cords and pins aid the bars and sockets in giving unity to the Wall.

In Ephesians 4:3, Paul said, "Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." When all the items of the Wall were joined there was peace. No part fought against another part. All worked together to make a strong Wall of peace and love.

The pins were planted in the ground. Part of the pin is above ground. Christ was buried, but he arose out of the ground. The Christian is aided in standing on the bronze socket of endurance by the assurance of Christ as the risen Savior. "If in this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable. But now Christ is risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept," (1 Corinthians 15:19-29). Christ is our hope, and that hope is our anchor (Hebrews 6:19).

The Cords are cords of love. It is love that bridges the gap between grace/mercy and justice. Love connects the risen Savior with the Christian.

The main force of the cord is directed towards the pin. If the pin is not secure the pillar could, through the cord, pull the pin out of a secure position. However, if the pin is secure, then it draws the

pillar toward it. Nothing is more secure than the risen Savior. "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love: and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them," (Hosea 11:4). Notice that they were cords of a man. Jesus in the flesh. We love Him because he first loved us, (1 John 4:19).

The Oaths

It should be pointed out that there were oaths made when the pillar allowed itself to be tied to and with the bars, hooks, pegs and cords. Oath-taking is serious with God.

Numbers 30:2, "If a man vow a vow unto the Lord, or swear an oath to bind his soul with a bond; he shall not break his word, he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth." This principle also applies when the animal is tied to the horn of the Brazen Altar.

Hebrews 6:16-17, "For men verily swear by the greater; and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath."

Peter referenced God's oath to David about the Christ in Acts 2:29-30. Zacharias, father of John the Baptizer, referenced God's oath for a Savior in Luke 1:73.

The Christian is making an oath to God when he/she becomes a Christian. Jesus made an oath to every Christian. The oaths are serious.

Fine Twined linen

The fine twined linen is mentioned in Exodus 27:9. Each long side of the Wall was a single 100 cubits long sheet. A total of 1400 square cubits on linen was used, excluding the Gate.

The linen represents being covered with the purity and righteousness of the Christ. Isaiah 64:6 tells us that we have spiritual clothing like filthy rags when we are in sin.

Jesus at the Transfiguration had his clothing become "shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them" (Mark 9:3).

Revelation 19:8, "And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints."

Revelation 19:14, "And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean."

Psalm 132:9, "Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness; and let thy saints shout for joy."

God demands righteousness. However, "we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." Only the righteousness from God allows one to be inside the Tabernacle (Romans 10:1-3).

Romans 10:4, "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believes." Christians hold up Christ to the world. The world should see Christ, not us. The glory of Christ that we present is of one source and one character.

There are not separate doctrinal purities for numerous denominations. There is one doctrine and one type of purity. The single sheet covers a side. All Christians share the same glory.

Since the Christian is clothed with the righteousness of Christ, the Christian is separated, walled off, from sinners. "For such an high priest became us, who is holy, undefiled, separate from sinners..." (Hebrews 7:26).

The Outer Wall

The Outer Wall and Gate had a total of 1500 square cubits of linen.

1500 years is very close to the exact years from the giving of the Law of Moses to the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2. The Mosaic Law/Tabernacle gave only a shadow of Heavenly things for 1500 years.

The Wall is representative of Hearing by those in the world, the first step in the plan of salvation.

The non-Christian sees Christ in the lives of Christians. The Christian shows forth the Scriptures in word and actions. The Wall is saying, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden," (Matthew 11:28).

Psalm 148:11-13, says, "kings of earth, and all people; princes and all judges of the earth: both young men and maidens; old men and children. Let them praise the name of the Lord...."

Revelation 22:17, "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that hears say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Many will look with curiosity, but never come close. Many will not even take the time to look. Others will be very interested. But, they will not take the next step through the Gate.

It may appear that the person is ready to take that step. But, "those by the way side are they that hear; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the

word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved,” (Luke 8:12).

The non-Christian can walk around in the Court, but cannot become a part of the Wall. Obedience to the plan of Salvation is the only thing that allows a person to become a pillar in the wall. This situation was seen in the Temple with the Court of the Gentiles.

The Wall also represents the hedge which God puts around those who obey him. Proverbs 2:8, “He keeps the paths of judgment, and preserves the way of his saints.” The word ‘keeps’ is a Hebrew word meaning ‘guards in a safe place.’

Proverbs 2:11, “Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee.” The word ‘preserve’ is a Hebrew word meaning ‘hedge’.

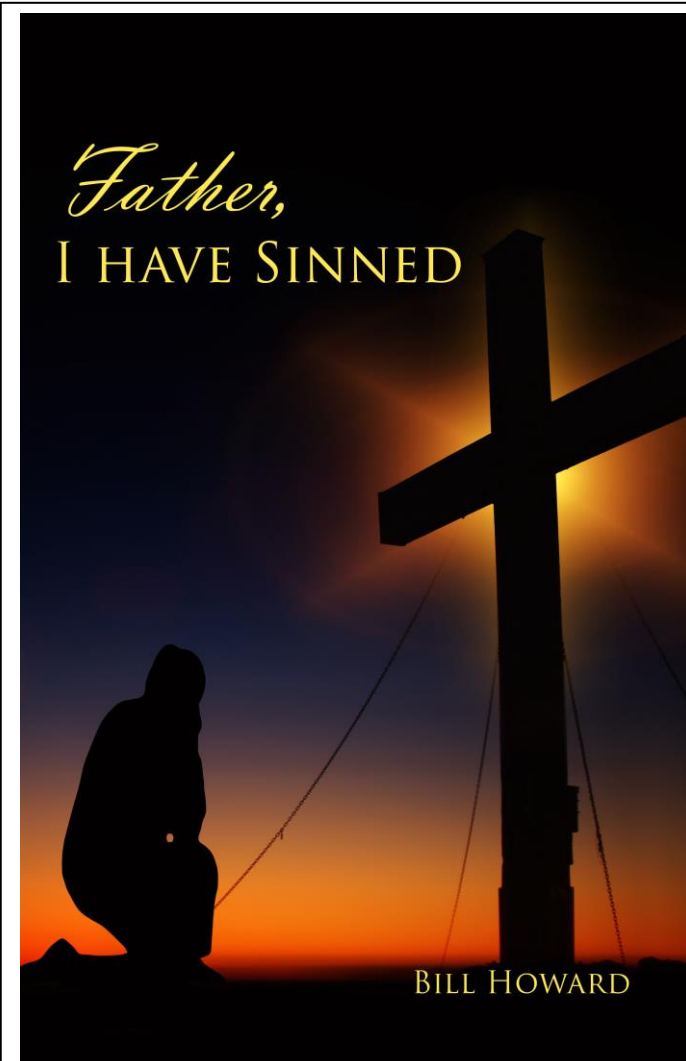
The account of Job demonstrated that Job’s faithfulness was not because of his wealth and health. Satan mistook those blessings as the hedge

God had given him. Instead, God had blessed Job because of his faith. The true hedge around Job was the providential care given in reward for faith. Nothing Satan did could remove the hedge.

The pillar in the Wall did not have to worry about the linen cover leaving. However, if the pillar became unsound, it would need to be removed and replaced by a sound pillar.

Conclusion

As has been shown, there are a number of principles and fore-pictures presented by the Wall of the Tabernacle. It is hoped that some of these will be seen clearer as we continue with further articles. Remember that God spent a great deal of space in Scripture to the details of this structure. Spiritual applications to Jesus and his church are involved. It is just a matter of study to see them.



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Why I Became a Preacher

By Samuel Stinson

"For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" (1 Corinthians 9:16).

I'm sitting here, typing on my laptop in my office on campus instead of elsewhere in a church building. Working full-time in the academy, teaching English, has somehow become a primary way of providing for my family's needs. But never too far away from my mind is the work that I've committed myself to, to preach and teach the gospel. This other, greater occupation—preaching and teaching—is that thing I do.

That other secular work is that which I do so I can press on to do the *greater* work. Support for preaching is never presumed: being self-supporting is not always a choice for preachers, but many times it is a necessity. Especially this is true when working with smaller groups. But woe unto me, I if I preach not the gospel. Because there is always great need for workers in the fields, since the fields are white and ready.

When I think about why I became a preacher, I recall the forgiveness of my many sins. Brought back into mind is my condition before God, whose ways are higher than my ways, and the way back to him that leads to peace with God. I remember again that I, too, was a sinner separated from God, but that through Christ I have, like Paul, died to the law, and am a new creation by the blood of Jesus. I have nothing to glory of, except the cross of Christ my Lord.

I remember my baptism in vivid detail, thinking back to how it felt—being immersed in the cold water, hands folded with one covering my nose, being tilted backwards and then being raised up. That day, January 4, 2004, I was 23 years in age but just being born. In that next moment, I received hugs from my gathered friends and new spiritual family, as my motivations had become immediately clear: I wanted to obey Jesus, the

Lord, the Son of God, and to be forgiven for my sins—which were many.

So, a necessity is laid on me: If God has been so kind as to forgive my many sins, who am I not to share the gospel? If God has raised me up and instructed me, so that I may learn and grow in grace and truth, who am I not to help instruct and encourage my brethren? I became a preacher so that I could in some small way give back to God for the grace and mercy, and the peace he has provided me.

To God be the glory, great things he hath done. While opportunities of support come and go, the gospel is here until death is swallowed up in victory. Who am I, and who are any of us, not to want to go and do likewise?

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Book Review

*The Greatest Work in the World —
Education as a Mission of Early Twentieth-Century Churches of Christ: Letters of Lloyd Cline Sears and Pattie Hathaway Armstrong.*

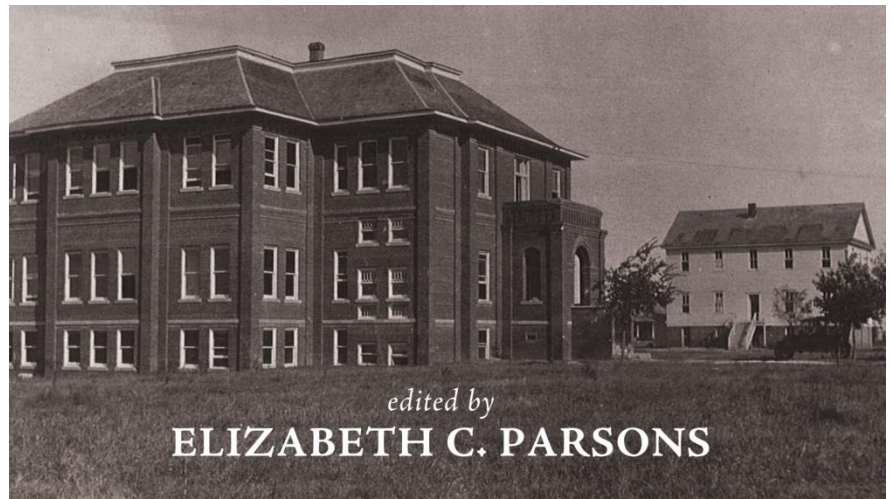
Edited by Elizabeth C. Parsons,

(Eugene OR: Wipf & Stock, 2015)
256 pp. \$27.20

Review by Terry Gardner

Few extended families in the history of Churches of Christ have exerted more influence on “Christian Education” than the Harding-Armstrong-Sears family. Elizabeth C. Parsons, a direct descendant of the authors, has edited a volume of letters written by Pattie Hathaway Armstrong (1899-1977), a granddaughter of James A. Harding and the daughter of John Nelson Armstrong; and Lloyd Cline Sears (1895-1986), whom she would marry in 1918. Her collection also includes several letters from Jack Armstrong and his wife, Ida Woodson Harding. While these are primarily the love letters of “Pataway” and Cline, letters that were never intended for publication—although they were read closely by Pataway’s parents!—the editor allows us to peek behind the curtain as we read other people’s mail and learn much about these historically significant authors and “Christian education” one hundred years ago that we could not learn in any other way.

The book itself is an attractively presented paperback, its 256 pages are printed on high quality paper, including four pages of photographs—several period photographs of Cline and Pataway, as well as a candid photograph of her parents. The book’s cover also features several of the buildings of the old Cordell Christian College and its students. It is Cline Sears, drawing on the cumulative



The Greatest Work in the World

*Education as a Mission of Early
Twentieth-Century Churches of Christ:
Letters of Lloyd Cline Sears
and Pattie Hathaway Armstrong*



influence of the Armstrongs and his eye-opening experience as a “University man” preparing to teach, who in a letter to Pataway anoints Christian education as “the Greatest Work in the World.”

Organized chronologically, the letters are preceded by Richard T. Hughes’s Foreword and a thirty-three-page introduction by the editor, who is identified as “Lecturer in Religion, Culture, and Development at Boston University School of Theology,” as well as a grandchild of the letter writers. While the editor’s knowledge of the history of Churches of Christ is admittedly limited, she marshals many of the extant sources that bear on the

letters, working from secondary literature. Her unfamiliarity with primary materials—exactly the kinds of sources she is working diligently to provide—opens several gaps in the editor’s analysis.

Neither Daniel Sommer nor the “Bible college controversy” are well defined or understood in the Introduction. Sommer was convinced that J.N. Armstrong and others in the Bible college work believed it was, indeed, the “greatest work in the world”—and therefore its importance superseded everything else. On 27 October 1904 Armstrong wrote, “Remember that the school [at Odessa, Missouri] is a certainty whether you help or do not help. The starting of the work does not depend upon your gift, for God’s hand is not short; he has other servants that he can stir up to furnish the means needed to begin this work and we believe that he will do it. Your salvation may depend upon your gift, but the school doesn’t.” Sommer found this declaration of faith close to idolatry. “This implies,” he wrote in response, “that the mentioned school is so certainly in the divine favor that those who refuse to give to its support may be lost!” For Sommer, a disciple of Jesus should give “as the Lord directs.” Years later, writing to Pataway on 26 September 1920, Cline Sears echoes Armstrong’s attitudes: “Old Daniel Somer [sic] and few others may have a heavy debt to pay sometime.”

If Bible college work were indeed the greatest work in the world, then it must be protected, nourished on the milk of money, and isolated from scandal. By 21 June 1916, the Odessa Bible College co-founded by J.N. Armstrong was in “an awful fix,” according to Pataway. Richard Neely Gardner, president and one of the other co-founders of the school, had “whipped his wife.” Not satisfied with his first day’s work, he “whipped her twice” the next day and “bruised her all over.” The following Sunday Gardner attempted to explain himself in a three-hour speech in which “he didn’t show any penitence in any shape, form or fashion. He said he whipped her because he thought he ought to. He had thought over the matter and prayed over it and he did just what he thought was right.” Their conflict had arisen from the presence of a young female student in the Gardner home whom Mrs. Gardner had tried to get out of the house, while her husband had insisted that the young woman should stay. Western Bible and Literary College was already, the editor notes,

“in severe financial straits.” Those who believed that Bible college work was “the greatest work in the world” blamed its demise shortly after this incident on opposition from Daniel Sommer and his adherents. As M. Norvel Young wrote, Sommer’s opposition “contributed in large measure to the school’s closing.”

Bible colleges begun by the Harding/Armstrong family were the work of segregationists. Cline Sears writes to Pataway on 20 September 1920 that he does not imagine she’d like that “negroes and whites are in the classes” and that sometimes they talk together “very familiarly.” When the segregation of Harding College was challenged by faculty and students alike in 1957 (nearly 75% signing a petition stating they were ready to end “racial discrimination” at Harding), Cline Sears was academic dean, presumably advising George Stuart Benson, the college president, but he does not appear to have taken any action to further desegregation. (It should be noted that Jack Wood Sears, son of Cline and Pataway, signed the petition.) The hated Daniel Sommer had held his first “Bible Reading”—Sommer’s answer to Bible colleges—in 1894. An extant class photograph of that study group shows ten students; one is an African-American. In the 1950s and early 1960s Sommer’s *American Christian Review*, then edited by his children, mocked the Christian colleges repeatedly as “Negro-hating contraptions set up to (imagine!) teach the Bible.” See *American Christian Review*, 99 n. 9 (September, 1954): 11.

Money was central to the Bible college work, and one of the main reasons for the sad failure of Churches of Christ schools to desegregate immediately following *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954. Marshall Keeble sadly noted in the mid-1960s that David Lipscomb College (co-founded by James A. Harding) was only then integrating “just cause we had to follow somebody else but we should have led! We should have led!! I would have been so glad if we could have led this. We missed many a man that would have been in the Church of Christ if we had led it.”

Pursuit of money led to an announcement in the 15 February 1923 *Gospel Advocate* that a “James A. Harding Memorial Building” would be built at Harper College (then administered by J.N. Armstrong). When A.A. Bunner asked J.C. McQuiddy if James Harding would have approved of such a

project in his lifetime, McQuiddy replied, “I am sure that James A. Harding would not approve of building a memorial building in his name.” McQuiddy added that Harding “taught that if one was devoted to God and trusted him, God would see that he received sufficient freewill offerings to support him in his work; in fact, this was the way to get money for the cause of Christ. I am not saying who was right, but simply stating Brother Harding’s position. I do not believe it is right to build a memorial to the name of any man, but this is especially true of Brother Harding. It looks like deifying the name of a fallible man and of capitalizing it in order to get money. It is selling his name.”

Two weeks after McQuiddy’s pointed comments, M.C. Kurfees weighed in with a hearty amen.

A “Harding Memorial Building” indeed! Were he here and should speak out with the fire and force that characterized his opposition to such things while he lived, he would most likely speak of it as desecration to his memory; and it would no doubt stir him to quote, “He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord” (1 Cor. 1:31), and, “Let no one glory in men” (1 Cor. 3:21). Hence, let the preachers and churches and young men and young women everywhere follow the noble and self-sacrificing example of Brother Harding, and let them give their money in the name of the Lord for the spread of gospel over the earth. This is the monument he would want them to build and it one on which will always rest the approval of God.”

Of course this was too little, too late, as the Nashville Bible School had been renamed David Lipscomb College almost before Lipscomb had been buried, and Uncle Dave was just as firm in his opinions of such things as Harding had been. Already, in Harding’s lifetime and under his aegis, Potter Bible College been named in honor of a person. The Harding Memorial Building project may

have died, but only a year later Harding College would be born.

Writing to Pataway on 19 June 1915 Cline affirmed, “I am now forever and eternally, even unto the end of the world, amen, opposed to a large school at Cordell.” He then believed that with six or seven hundred students “the real heart training that we have to do in a Christian College” would be impossible. “In every large school,” he then thought, “it would be impossible to have any Christian influence over the students.” At the same time, Cline opposed “raising our college to the rank of a university, unless it can be demonstrated in the

...Cline opposed “raising our college to the rank of a university, unless it can be demonstrated in the years to come that we can do university work and not lose our spirituality...”

years to come that we can do university work and not lose our spirituality. This will first have to be shown to me.” Pataway replied on 21 June 1915, agreeing with Cline and adding that “The Nashville Bible School [now Lipscomb University] is larger to day than it ever has been, but it is losing its spirituality—and we must not do that.” In an interview recorded shortly before his death, former Harding student and longtime Harding Board member Jim Bill McInteer recalled that in his student days, in the early 1940s, Sister Cathcart was gravely ill and the school stopped and the students were all called to the chapel to pray for her. Given the size of the school today, McInteer then remarked, such an event was “now impossible.”

Jefferson Davis Tant, a younger contemporary of Daniel Sommer, older than J.N. Armstrong, remained throughout his sixty years as a pioneering evangelist an ironic and perceptive observer of Bible colleges and their products. Unschooled, rough-hewn, and plain-spoken, Tant was hardly an “anti-intellectual”—he wrote two books and an uncounted number of articles in Churches of Christ periodicals, in simple, declarative sentences as direct and pungent as his speech. In 1937 Tant recalled that he had for a number of years past “been noticing the church of Christ getting under the control of our Bible colleges and drifting and building up a machine to make modern pastors,” who would be “up to date.” Tant had earlier wondered what might

have happened had Jesus gone down to the Bible College at Alexandria to find his disciples, rather than choosing twelve unlearned men. Surely then, he speculated, the early church would have been truly successful! His articles on the advancing professional clergy had been overlooked, Tant thought in 1937, “because I did not have a college education.” Tant was pleased to see that even “J.N. Armstrong, a college president,” among others, had begun to “claim we have the located pastors and point them out.” Tant did not oppose the education of young preachers but rather what they did with their education. They had become “pastors” who “coordinated” the work of local congregations large enough to pay them rather than evangelists preaching good news to the poor on the far side of the tracks or in remote places. Tant had seen that the schools, under academic pressure “to standardize to be like the sectarian schools around us... would soon begin to standardize the church to be like the sister churches around them.” See *Firm Foundation* 54 no 12 (23 March 1937): 5.

Eleven days before his death in 1944, J.N. Armstrong reflected on his life’s work of building Bible colleges in a letter to his longtime friend W.W. Otey.

I feel distressed sometimes over the condition of the church everywhere—For instance I think that our schools are all in line to build up the clergy and that the church in general is trending toward denominationalism. I do not know what can be done, maybe nothing, but I do think there is a need for us to put on the brakes, and warn the brotherhood about the definite trends of these times. I am not pessimistic, but my optimism does not keep me from facing facts. I think, as said above, that all our schools are set for the training of professional preachers. I tell them at Harding College that we are also being influenced by these trends. For all these years the schools have not offered separate courses for preachers and in the schools in which I have taught, we have

“...I think that our schools are all in line to build up the clergy and that the church in general is trending toward denominationalism.”
—J.N. Armstrong, 1944

stressed the teaching of the Bible to all students. I am still trying to stress this. We have never had a class here that was not open to any and all students, both boys and girls. But still there is a stress here toward preacher training. I do not know that it does any good for me to write these things to you, but I don’t believe that you are in sympathy with the ideas that I express. Maybe you could write an article for the papers that would help.

These letters demonstrate, ironically, how much Cline Sears, the Armstrongs, and their nemesis, Daniel Sommer, were alike in important ways, and how, in equally important and portentous ways, they were different. In 1915 Daniel Sommer, after three years of college instruction under the heirs of Alexander Campbell and more than forty years of undirected reading, was as well-schooled as any “University man” teaching in a Bible college and assuredly less an “anti-intellectual” than any of them, including Cline Sears and J.N. Armstrong. In 1915

the aging Sommer and young Sears were equally appalled by the moral behavior and attitudes of all classes of American humankind, but they diverged widely in prescribing a remedy for that condition. For Sears and his mentors, Bible colleges could isolate young people from the “world” in an intellectual cocoon, where they could be shaped into faithful church members who would be impervious to the darts of Satan and would be loyal supporters of more Bible colleges to carry on “the greatest work in the world.” For Sommer and his cohort, “Christian education” was the task of the Church and could be accomplished by the Church alone: to “make disciples of all nations... teaching them” so that they make more disciples and so build up the Church, which will transform “the world.” Sommer believed that the “Bible college” usurped and misdirected the work of the Church, inevitably producing the professional clergy that J.N. Armstrong equally abhorred.

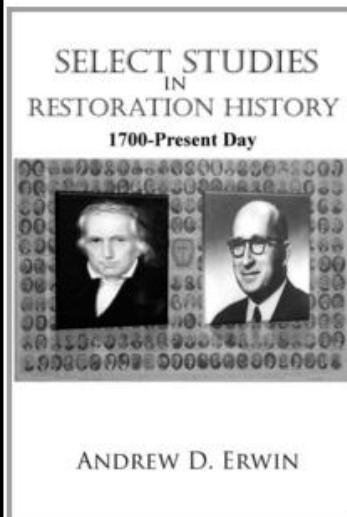
Sommer, the realist working through churches, saw what Armstrong and Sears, the idealists work-

ing through institutions, could not see. Sommer was educating, in his way, at least one black preacher as early as 1894; it would be 69 years before Harding College, beholden to entrenched, monied interests, would admit an American of African descent to study the Bible. On the other hand, Sommer supported the military might of the United States and argued that disciples of Jesus should serve if called by their government to military conflict. Armstrong and Sears vehemently opposed participation in the wars of the human political order, and Armstrong's adamant refusal to sanctify the world war with the blood of his students led to the closing of Cordell Christian College. Cline Sears had already proven equally adamant, in a situation of great potential cost to himself, when he might have remained silent without repercussions. "To-day we were discussing the European war in the class," Cline wrote to Pataway on 22 July 1915, "and I told them I was opposed to war and believed that all killing was murder. Ramey said he thought the bond of patriotism and national honor was stronger than the bond of religion or any brotherhood movement. I told him it might be for many, or most, people, but that it was not for all and should not be for any." As an articulate sectarian with the courage of his convictions, Cline Sears appears to have won the respect if not the agreement of his teacher, Andrew Robert Ramey, who in 1920 would strongly recommend Cline for graduate study in the University of Kansas, as these letters show. Daniel Sommer, holding strongly an opposite view, might well have admired the courage of his young antagonist.

Armstrong's work turned out very differently from what he had envisioned and Elizabeth Parsons's diligence brings home lessons that good history can teach us. This book is important. Its strength is in the remarkable letters—tender, heart-rending, prejudiced, loving, and oh, so very human. The editor's footnotes are valuable, but more annotation would have been helpful. The book includes good indexes to personal names and subjects, as well as a chronology that make the book more useful. Anyone with an interest in the history of Churches of Christ should read this book, which may be ordered directly from the publisher or via Amazon.com. The book has a base price of \$27.20 from the publisher's website, plus \$3.99 for postage and handling. As a primary source for the life

and times of the Harding, Armstrong, and Sears families and their remarkable influence on the Churches of Christ this book is well worth the investment.

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Chapter Eleven: THE SEPARATION.

The poets all sing of June. And it is no wonder. Rather midway between the cooling breeze of spring and the arid rays of summer, it speaks the language of beauty, of life, of geniality, that affords the soul a soothing balm. It is the time the cuckoo sings, the time to talk of life and love, of hope, and stars, and sunshine. No more lovely spot was to be found in Bethel on such a day than the lawn in front of Judge Leyden's residence. And on just such a day in June, following the winter that Paul and Rose learned the lesson we all must learn, sooner or later (for it is one of the purest gems that has survived the fall), they sat together on a rustic seat, of which a number were scattered, here and there, in the shade of the wide-spreading branches of the forest trees. The light of the sun, mellowed by its approach through the overhanging leaves, fell gaily at their feet, while the aroma of flowers, wafted by a gentle breeze, regaled the senses with delicious fragrance. Everything around was fair, but the fairest of all was the beautiful and gentle Rose, with eyes so blue and full of soul, an air of peculiar grace that marks a mind unstained and pure as the unsullied mountain snow — but, pshaw! there goes my pen again, when I promised to leave out all the painting and tell it in plain Saxon. Her voice, always so mild and at times a little plaintive, seemed a little husky as she welcomed Paul to the arbor. The half averted eyes and down-cast look gave him a premonition that something was wrong, so he quietly asked:

"Is there any trouble, Rose?"

"I have heard," she answered, in a voice rather unsteady but still clear, "that you have boldly and publicly avowed yourself an infidel, and I wish to know if it is true."

"I presume," said Paul, for he had no desire to deceive her, "that what you have heard is true. Persons will talk to me upon the sub-ject; and if I ex-

press an opinion, I must tell them just what I think about it. They therefore call me an infidel. The reason why I am an infidel is a long story, perhaps, and I have often thought I ought to tell you the facts about it."

He was about proceeding to give her his reasons, when she interrupted him by saying:

"That is enough. It matters not what may be your reasons, with these I have nothing to do; it is only with the fact that I must deal. Plainly, then, I love you, but cannot marry you, for I cannot marry an infidel. Marriage with me is one of the holiest ties, the wisest of all our probationary institutions, through which we fit ourselves, under God, for the eternal sphere; and, much as I revere it, it were better that I never marry, than marry one who rejects the light by which I live."

"Surely, Rose, you are not in earnest; this is only a freak of yours to test my convictions," said Paul, feeling that it could hardly be possible that all his future hopes were to be thus overwhelmed. It was an unexpected avalanche, indeed.

"Yes, Paul, I am not deceiving you. I cannot disobey the apostolic injunction, to 'be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.' If you were my husband, I would not leave you, but you are not, and never can be. Henceforth, if you wish, we may meet as friends, but as lovers no more."

"That is it," said Paul, a spirit of resentment springing up in his heart, "quoting the Bible; that book is what lies at the bottom of it."

"Yes," responded Rose, with a great effort at calmness, "the Christ of that Bible is the elevator of my sex. Under the teachings of all other ancient philosophers, woman is regarded as the inferior, and by many as the drudge, the slave of man, while the Christ gives her the dignified station of equality in the great work of life. When it speaks of his great love, it is said that 'Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus,' thus lifting her up in the

great scale of love and humanity, as the equal of man.”

“Very good,” said Paul (and for a moment the temptation to pretend to be religious, and renounce his infidelity to win her crossed his mind, but it was so utterly foreign to his nature, that it was repelled almost ere it was suggested), “have I ever given you the least reason to suppose that I regarded you otherwise than my equal? Why, then, do you propose to let a difference of opinion come between us?”

For a moment she faltered, for the contest between love and duty was stirring to its innermost depths her burdened soul, but she closed the scene by saying:

“It is enough, Paul, if it were only a difference of opinion, but to me it is not. I have not been hasty in my decision. I have wept, I have prayed over it, I have looked at it in the light of the here and the hereafter, and my decision is made. It is only adding unnecessary pain to both to continue this interview. I shall pray for you, but think of you as my husband no more.”

She had risen to her feet while uttering the last sentence, which seemed to transfix Paul to his seat. Stooping, she kissed his fore-head, and ere he could detain her, fled to the house.

Paul went home, love for Rose, hate of religion, pride of self, malice toward the church, each striving for the mastery of his heart. Long and bitter was the contest. To describe it is impossible. It was a tragedy and not a comedy. He could not hate her, the one he had loved, yea, still loved, but his pride was a strong element of his nature. I do not think his thought of self-respect would have let him join the howling mob that crucified Jesus, had he been there, but his feelings toward the religion of the Nazarene would certainly have led him to have assisted Saul in holding the clothes of those that stoned Stephen. Maledictions, not prayers, were the outgoings of his heart. In fact, the “old man with his deeds, anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, evil speaking, and evil purposes,” held full sway for a time and seemed likely to engulf and wreck all of good within. The pendulum began to swing back at last, however, and the better sentiment, to “wait and see,” at last prevailed.

Chapter Twelve: OLD FRIENDS.

Dr. Van Buren, a young physician in Bethel, was very much astonished one evening to be the

recipient of a visit from his old friend, Arnot Love. They had been playmates in childhood, school-mates in their youth, and had often vowed eternal friendship. Many times, like David and Jonathan, like Damon and Pythias, they had vowed to be true to the end of life. But, alas, how many of those early vows are like the morning dew, the noonday of separation dispels them until they become like the vanishing vapor, lost to sight and memory.

Reader, if your locks are whitening, retrospect a moment and tell us how many of the friends of the olden time are lost in the tomb of memory. New friends, new associations, new surroundings make fresh impressions and the old ones are buried in the grave of the past. I can lift the vault lid of my own memory as I pen these lines, and see many friendships long buried. I call them precious memories, though many of those friends are sleeping the sleep of death. Men may call me fanatical, call me enthusiast, call me credulous, but there is an abiding faith in my heart that those buried friendships shall see a resurrection morning. There is something in the hope and veneration of my very nature, to say nothing of the grand pyramid of evidences that God has erected, that tells me, that it must be so, that

“Spring shall visit the mouldering urn,
Day shall dawn on the night of the grave.”

A stream cannot rise higher than its source. Nature cannot beget an aspiration beyond her power to satisfy. All things are possible. “The whole creation groans and travails together in pain until now, waiting in hope to be delivered.” Every groan, every tear, every sigh, point to deliverance. Every creature, yea the whole creation, has just such a future as it groans after, as it prepares for just such a future as comes to it. Surely man is not an exception. His greatest work, his dearest thought, whether enlightened, civilized, semi-civilized, or barbarous, is the future life. This universal aspiration argument of Paul in the eighth chapter of Romans has been much befogged and much disputed, but it is either true or there is no order in the universe, no God, and nature an abortion. For when he says that while we are “waiting for the adoption,” for “the manifestation of the sons of God,” his thought is simply that this is in harmony with the aspirations of the whole creation.

On coming to man’s estate Love had chosen the humble vocation of a preacher of the gospel,

while Van Buren had entered upon the study and practice of medicine. The doctor had married and settled in Bethel, where he was leading a quiet, uneventful life. He had been religious in his earlier years, but his light had become hidden in the cares of life, and few, if any, of his neighbors knew that he had ever made a confession of his faith in the Messiah. Desiring to succeed in his business, and the religious partyism of the various sects in Bethel being so strong, he concluded it better that he act independently. Thus if he did not gain the especial favoritism of one party, he did not get the ill will and opposition of the others. Solacing himself with the alluring thought that he could live just as good a Christian and keep it to himself, he had grown cold and indifferent. Blame him not too hastily, gentle reader, for all men are not heroes, and sectarian hate is a bitter bow and shoots no dull arrows. Even so conscientious a man as Saul of Tarsus could hold the clothes of those that stoned Stephen, and a Calvin could let a Servetus burn at the stake without any great effort to save him. Let the spirit of sectarian partyism once enter the heart of a man and he is a persecutor as certain as the tree produces the fruit. His love for party exceeds his love for humanity or even the Word of God itself. Every man who has investigated the subject is painfully aware of the fact. I have known men who could listen with the calmest indifference to men who denied the existence of God, the truthfulness of the Bible, and the resurrection of Jesus, whose temper would assume a white heat if a man were to presume to call in question their peculiar dogmas or deny the truthfulness of their human creed. A remarkable illustration is found in the trial of Prof. David Swing, of Chicago. He was charged with denying the inspiration of some parts of the Old Testament, and not accepting some of the articles of the Westminster Creed. On the first charge his prosecutors spoke with calmness and not excessively ill feeling, but in the latter it was plainly to be seen a more vindictive spirit was developed. Dr. Van Buren was not, therefore, altogether without excuse, though it may have been a poor one.

As the two friends began to recall the events of their school-days, and the Doctor began to think, and thinking began to quicken his conscience, the fact that his life had not borne the religious fruit of a true servant of the Nazarene, began to appear before his mind in its true light, and he resolved to

make amends for the past. He had prospered in a financial way, but his soul had dwarfed in many respects. At the same time, however, it had lost some of its narrowness.

The aspirations of our youthful days often make us ashamed of our present work, and so it was with the Doctor, and I am assured that many of the most marvelous things in the changes in the lives and conduct of men are traceable to this source. A celebrated gambler, who reformed his life and never touched a card for the last ten years of his life, was asked what means accomplished so great a change. "I was sitting at the card table in Calcutta," said he, "and the man with whom I was playing, in the interval of dealing the cards, sang in a low tone a hymn my mother taught me when a child. The memories of that past flashed across my mind so vividly, the kind words of my mother, the many promises I had made to her to lead an upright life, so strongly impressed me that I resolved to never touch another card while I lived, and I have kept my word." That which God saw in man to love although he was sinful, when he sent his Son to save him, is the very element, it is that man is a creature of faith, hope, veneration, and aspiration, with an indestructible memory and a religious nature which purified from the dross of sin will make him a fit companion for the messengers that do the will of the Infinite. Let us ever remember then our old friends, for those memories will often make us better in heart, stronger in purpose, more hopeful of triumph, less fearful of difficulties, and more earnest in the work of good will to men.

Chapter Thirteen: AN ATHEIST.

A physician's office is a place with which we must become familiar to enter without a feeling of discontent. The rows of bottles, filled with nauseating looking powders and tinctures, the grinning skeleton, the mannequin, the anatomical maps, and other medical paraphernalia, are gentle reminders of an event and time we have no particular desire to reach. But we soon establish a familiarity with them and then they become mere common-place matters.

Dr. Van Buren kept his library in his office, and it was a favorite resort for a few of the literary men of the town, especially those who prided themselves on their liberal sentiments, where they went to discuss Christianity, Pantheism, Monotheism, Polytheism, Mohammedism, Mormonism, Bud-

dhism, Brahmanism, and all the other isms, that fill the whole earth, that afflict or bless mankind according to the standpoint from which you look at them. Paul Darst was, of course, one of the number, and, despite the outspoken character of his infidelity, was, owing to the general suavity of his manner and his seemingly honest skepticism, a general favorite. Unruh Henry was another of the leading skeptics of Bethel, and the mention of his name places me in a quandary. I am not often puzzled to know just what to say and tell the truth.

If I tell all I know about Unruh Henry and tell the truth I shall be charged with exaggeration, and if I tell a part only, my conscience will condemn me. It is a risk in either case. But as conscience is always present, and those who may read this will be absent, I shall rather claim the friendship of the former and tell the whole truth. Henry was an Atheist. I remember when a boy listening to the preachers, and they talked about Atheism, Pantheism, Pelagianism, Calvinism, Armenianism, etc., and it was all Greek to me. I therefore deem it proper to give a definition of an Atheist, or rather substitute a definition made impromptu by Job on one occasion. He was earnestly engaged in a discussion with Henry, when the latter as if in contempt of Job's ignorance said somewhat pettishly, "What do you know about such a subject, you can't tell what an Atheist is?"

"Well, perhaps, I can't, but my 'pinion is a Atheist is a Infidel gone to seed."

The definition is certainly a good one; unbelief in Divine Revelation just as certainly results in Atheism as the plant produces the seed. Henry had passed through all the gradations. He was first a Unitarian of the broad-gauge school, then a Spiritualist, then an Infidel and at last an Atheist. The moving cause of his Atheism was his pride. His estimate of his own ability was so great, that he could not admit a higher power in the Universe than himself. He could not perform a miracle, therefore a miracle was fabulous and God powerless to do so. Miracles were impossible to him, therefore miracles were impossible to God, and no amount of testimony could prove that one ever had or ever could take place. No fear of God, no fear of hell, in fact the only fear he was ever heard to express was the fear that he would "make a prostitute of his mind" by the acknowledgement of a superior power. Doubt was a part of his being, although he

was not a doubting Thomas, for he would not accept the testimony though he saw it, for nothing could be proved by testimony. He doubted everything but his own ability, in that he had an unfaltering confidence. He possessed the vulgarity of Tom Paine, without the wit of that great scribbler, and was mad against the Holy Scriptures. The sin of David, the licentiousness of Solomon, the failures and weakness of the characters portrayed in the Bible were food to his distempered spirit, and no miser ever clutched his gold so earnestly, or with such greedy avidity as he swallowed every sentence of the men who perverted and opposed the truth of Divine Revelation. Condemning bigotry, he was the chief of bigots; decrying the authority of men, he followed Paine, Voltaire, and Hume with a most slavish submission. It was enough that they condemned the Bible, he questioned not why. Prating about "enlarged civilization and enlightened justice," he plead for a civilization in which there shall be no God and a justice in which there could be no responsibility. Shouting for progress, he chained man to the car of absolute fate. Talking of man's happiness, he destroyed the sweetest emotions of happiness, trampled remorselessly upon the pleasures of hope, by blotting out God and the future life. Boasting of the spirit of investigation, he absurdly proclaimed the dogma that it did not concern man to know his origin or his destiny. Compelled to acknowledge the excellency of the moral teachings of the "Man of Calvary," he sought with demoniacal delight to transfer them to Confucius and others without a shadow of reason or evidence. The pure life of Jesus was a myth with no higher origin than the imagination of an author of fiction. The vagaries of speculative philosophy, if they opposed the authority or authenticity of Revelation, were the solid rock of truth to him. When compelled to acknowledge that man exists, he would do so only on condition that his adversary would acknowledge himself a fully developed ape. Man was a mouse. Blind material force was a cat that sported with him awhile, then took pleasure in destroying him. Nature was God and God was Nature, as best suited the fancy of the hour or the necessities of the argument. He was in fact a true materialistic philosopher, worshiping blind, insensate matter as possessing all the "power and potency of every form of life."

About the Authors

Jamie Beller has been a preacher in Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas, and South Carolina. He presently works with the church of Christ in Prague, Oklahoma, while also working full-time at Tinker Air Force Base. He loves discussing the Bible with friends and strangers alike.

Gantt Carter is married to the former Julie Johnson. They have two young children and reside in Elk City, OK. He has been preaching for about a decade, and he is currently the preaching servant for the 2nd & Adams congregation in Elk City. He enjoys fishing, martial arts, and spending time with his family and friends. Gantt delights in God and in studying the Word of God. His greatest desire is to glorify God with his life and to encourage others to do the same.

Gerald Cowan has been preaching the gospel for over 50 years. In addition to many mission trips to Albania, he has also taught in the British Bible School, and has spent the past 2 ½ decades working for the Lord in Southern Illinois. He has an email publication (Gerald Cowan's Personal Periodical) that he sends out for free to all who are interested.

Shane Fisher is a missionary in Seoul, South Korea, working along with his wife, Emily, at Korea Christian University. He is a native of McMinnville, TN and likes to read, write, and has made a music album that contains country/rock music called Shane Fisher - The Power of Choice.

Kyle Frank is a Christian, Restoration Movement enthusiast, and book lover. His writings have appeared in *Gospel Light* as well as *Faith and Facts Quarterly*. He has edited a three-volume set of the Life and Letters of Jacob Creath Jr., two volumes on Elder Benjamin Franklin, the autobiography of Daniel Sommer, as well as compiling *The Lost Sermons of H. Leo Boles*. His latest book is *A Life Richly Lived: The Life and Writings of Tolbert Fanning*.

Terry Gardner is an independent scholar who can be found at every "Friends of the Restoration" lecture (at the Freed-Hardeman University lectures and the Faulkner University lectures), often delivering fruits of his immense research. He has visited literally hundreds of gravesites of Restoration Movement personalities.

Bill Howard has been serving the Lord for more than half a century, preaching in small congregations, and presently serving as an elder in Dale, Oklahoma. His latest book for growing Christians, *Father I have Sinned*, was released this summer. He is a former restaurateur who still loves to cook when he isn't writing detective novels and books for new converts.

William Howard lives in Dacula, Georgia with his wife and children. He is easily amused and thinks dryer lint is funny. William is currently enjoying the fall of the year while drinking coffee and eating things not on his diet. He loves discussing philosophy and theology and needs to lose weight. William also preaches on Sunday.

John Krivak preaches for the church of Christ in New Castle, Pennsylvania. His family includes Becky, his wife, two daughters, three grandchildren, and occasional foster children. He's been a Restoration Movement enthusiast since the baptismal waters flooded over him, and he has a special appreciation for Alexander Campbell. His studies of the Bible at Harding University emphasized Biblical Languages, and his favorite professor was Dr. Paul Pollard. He may be contacted at jkrivak@zoominternet.net.

Mark McWhorter is a former medical professional, a research fanatic and history nut, a missionary, a book-seller (with his wife, Teah), and that doesn't even come close to all that he does. He has written for several brotherhood periodicals, spoken on sev-

eral lectureships, helped present Restoration Movement seminars, and was integral in starting Roundhouse, an annual gathering of members of the church who homeschool. He also has, from time to time, gone dumpster diving. (Editor's note: He's also an overachiever and a great friend.)

Jim Mitchell obtained his Bachelor of Arts from Freed-Hardeman University & Master of Divinity from Oklahoma Christian University, and has been preaching for more than 35 years and has worked with congregations in Florida, Virginia, and Oklahoma. He served as the minister for the church of Christ in Harrah, OK, from 2006 to 2014 and is now the pulpit minister for the Cherokee Hills church of Christ in Oklahoma City.

John Ratliff was born on a cold and snowy night...who are we kidding? He was born in Mesquite, TX, where it is summer most of the year. Since April 2014, he has been the evangelist for the church in Prescott, AR. Prior to that he worked with church in Alba, TX. He and his wife, Ashley, have been married 12 years (time flies when you're having fun), and have two children: Isaiah (who loves Legos and playing Minecraft) and Haniah (pronounced Hannah) who loves animals of all sorts and aggravating her brother. He holds a Journeyman electrician's license, is a 2011 graduate of the Brown Trail School of Preaching, and holds an Associates of Science Degree from Paris Junior College.

Jake Schotter is an aspiring preacher in Goodyear, Arizona. He loves studying the Bible, reading books, preaching, and writing about the Truth. He has been preaching since 2009. He has been very fortunate to be able to grow his library to over 2,500 books and loves ordering them for cheap prices. He currently attends West Valley church of Christ and can be contacted at jakeschotter@gmail.com. He is planning to attend Freed-Hardeman University in a couple of years, after he graduates from high school.

Devin Self is a member of the Gravel Hill Church of Christ in Dover, Arkansas. From a very young age he knew he wanted to serve the Lord. Going to church camps, youth devotionals, and vacation bible schools were part of his favorite childhood memories, as well as the many great influences that kept him growing stronger. He is married to his

wonderful wife of 2 years, Kelsey, and they hope someday to have children to be raised up with Christ as their foundation.

Michael Shank is a former office equipment guru who later ran his own electrical business. Between those two jobs, he became a preacher and wrote some book called *Muscle and a Shovel*. If you've not read it, you should.

Keith Stonehart has been married to Kelly for 20 years. They have 2 children, Kiah (18) and Kole (11) and a "son born out of due time", Carlos who is 28. Keith was the lead singer and guitarist in a touring rock band until 2001 when he was taught the truth. Keith is the full time Evangelist at the Fultondale church of Christ in Fultondale Alabama just north of Birmingham.

Jim Stutts is retired from full-time preaching, but still enjoys taking the time to encourage younger Christians whenever he has the opportunity.

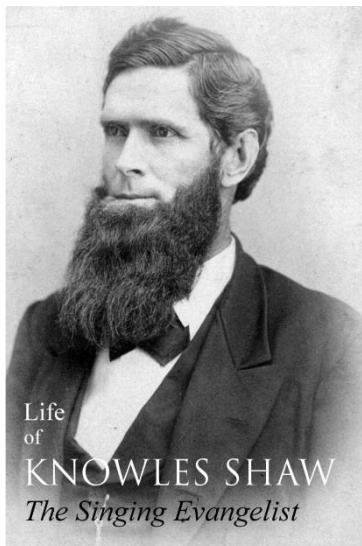
Bradley Cobb is rapidly learning the art of home renovation and repair as he and his best friend (his wife of 17 years) get settled into their new 1930's house in Charleston, Arkansas. In between sanding floors, scraping ceilings, installing ceiling fans (for other people), and emptying storage units, he also writes, edits, eats, (occasionally) sleeps, and helps to run the most unique Facebook group for preachers of the Lord's church. Oh, and tries to figure out ways to become debt-free. Still working on that...

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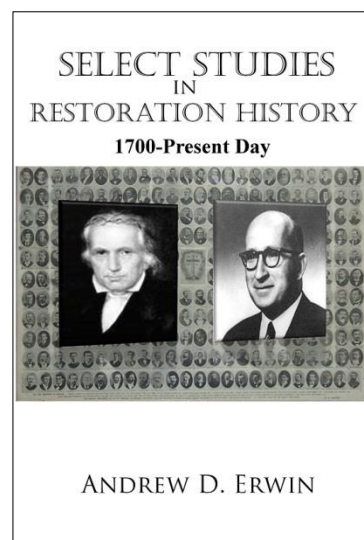
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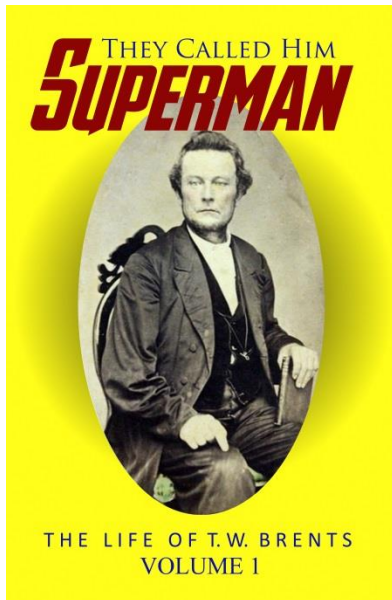
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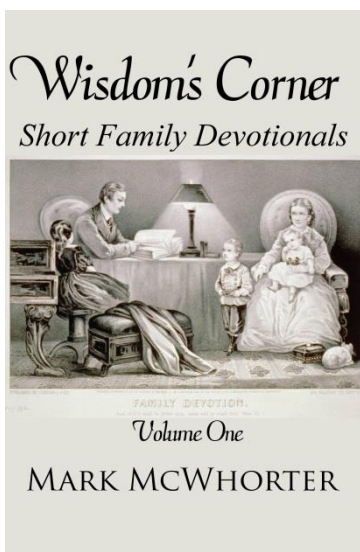
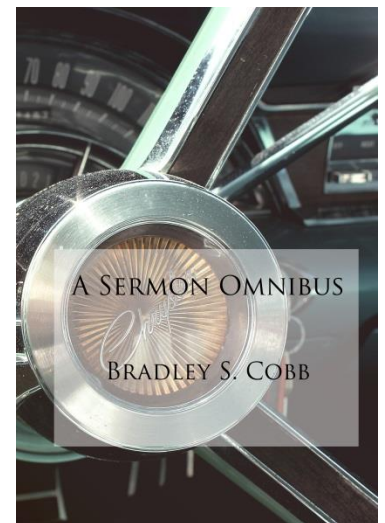
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