



Vol. XLII

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April 16, 1998

# What Would You Pay To Go To Heaven?

Johnie Edwards

According to a survey reported in the October 24, 1997 *USA Today*, the wealthiest 1% of families were asked what they would pay for first and how much, stated “they would pay \$640,000.00 for a place in heaven.”

### **Heaven Cannot Be Bought With Money**

When Simon tried to buy the gift of God with money, he was told, “. . . thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. For I perceive that thou art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity” (Acts 8:13-23). The gift of God referred to in this passage was that of spiritual gifts bestowed by the laying on of an apostle’s hand in the first century, before the word of God was completed. Money could not buy God’s gift and it cannot today!

**Even though one cannot buy his way into heaven; heaven is not without cost. First, it cost God. It cost God the sending of his Son.**

### **Heaven Has Its Cost**

Even though one cannot buy his way into heaven; heaven is not without cost.

First, it cost God. It cost God the sending of his Son. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). It cost Jesus his life. “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8).

### **The Church Had Cost**

The church of the New Testament is the saved, “. . . And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved” (Acts 2:47). As the apostle Paul bids farewell to the Ephesian elders, among other things, he said, “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the

See “What Would You Pay” on p. 247

# Editorial

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**Manuscripts** should be sent to Mike Willis, 6567 Kings Ct., Danville, Indiana 46122-9075. He is available at 1-317-745-4708.

**All business matters** should be addressed to O.C. Birdwell, Jr. who serves as Executive Vice-President for the Guardian of Truth Foundation. He is available by phone at 1-800-633-3216 or by mail at P.O. Box 858, Athens, AL 35611.

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# I Will Put You In Remembrance

Mike Willis

**Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me (2 Pet. 1:12-14).**

The book of 2 Peter was written shortly before Peter's death. The Lord foretold the death of Peter ("even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me") in John 21:18-19. There Jesus said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt *stretch forth thy hands*, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not" (John 21:18). The Apostle John adds, "This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God" (John 21:19). How Jesus' statement signified "by what death" Peter would die is not as obvious in English as it was in Greek. The phrase "stretch forth" is translated from *ekteino* that basically means "stretch out." However, the phrase is used "of one who is crucified" in several places (Epict. 3, 25, 22; Josephus, *Antiquities* 19, 94; Epistle of Barnabas 12:2). Early church historians are uniformly agreed that Peter was taken to Rome and put to death by crucifixion (*Eusebius* Chap. 25), some adding that he was crucified upside down. Based on John's comment in 21:19, I conclude that this word was intended to convey to Peter the manner of death that he would die — that he would be crucified.

No doubt Peter could see events leading to his death developing and, therefore, penned this short letter. Knowing that his death was imminent, he wanted to remind the Christians of some things that they need to keep in mind, lest they slip away from them. The work of reminding Christians of the basic truths of the gospel is just as much a work of gospel preachers today as it was for Peter. The Apostle was afraid that false teachers would lead men away from the truths of the gospel which he re-enforced; therefore, he wrote to remind them of those fundamental truths.

We also see the need to remind men of some fundamental truths which we are in danger of losing. That is not to say that the truths that

See "Remembrance" p. 248

# Why Not Libya?

Connie W. Adams

From the time I was a teenager and began trying to preach the gospel, I have had a keen interest in preaching the gospel to the whole world. This began when we had a preacher at Hopewell, Virginia who had just spent some time preaching in Alaska before it was a state. His accounts of work there, along with pictures he showed whetted my young appetite to some day have a part in preaching the gospel in other parts of the world. Before my first wife and I were married, we talked about spending some of our life on foreign soil in the work of the kingdom. It was that determination which prompted us to go to Norway in 1957 to help begin the work in the land of the midnight sun.

In the years since, we have been back to Norway four times and maintain a keen interest in what is being done there. The light of truth has flickered at times, but it is still burning. All of my life as a preacher, I have prayed for the Lord to open doors of opportunity for me to preach the gospel. He has abundantly answered those prayers and sometimes there have been several doors open at the same time and so decisions have been made as to where we could do the most good at that time.

It is very easy to become excited about the work in which we are involved. It is natural for this to happen. But it is also easy to become judgmental as to the motives of others who have chosen to work in other fields. Remember, the field is the world. All of it — not just the part in which we have taken a special interest.

While it is true that the scattered disciples went everywhere preaching the word (Acts 8:4), it is also true that some of the apostles and other brethren remained in Jerusalem for there was still much work to do there. I don't read about those who were scattered questioning the motives of those who stayed in Jerusalem. Those who left and those who stayed were all involved in the Lord's work.

## Why This Article?

A good brother who lives in Nebraska (a state where there is much work to do and where congregations are scarce) wrote a piece in the November-December, 1997 *Russian Update* entitled "Why Not Russia?" Along with many others, I have followed with interest the reports from several brethren who have worked in Russia since the fall of the Iron Curtain. We have had some part in helping and encouraging some of

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those who have gone. I look forward to the *Russian Update* and read every article with keen interest. But I fear that our Nebraska brother got a little carried away in his article.

First, he talked about those who “are missionaries.” Now, I have had a part in preaching the gospel in several countries, but I simply did the work of an evangelist the same as I do in Kentucky or wherever else I preach. Evangelists work to convert souls to Christ and establish congregations, not missions. This whole notion of missions and missionaries is born of denominational jargon.

Then he spoke of “hot spots” where some “missionaries” have gone. He named the Philippines, Africa (which country? — it is a huge continent), Eastern Europe, and even China and Vietnam. Well, I have been to both the Philippines and South Africa in the heart of summer in both places and he is right — they are “hot spots.” They are also places where much good work is being done and fruit being borne. Trips to any of these places involve much expense and hectic schedules which are physically and mentally exhausting. Some of us have also been in some “cold spots” even as he has in Russia.

He then began to judge the hearts of brethren who choose to stay where they are and preach when he said, “Some sit in their offices and say, ‘There’s too much work to do right here!’” Well, has our brother considered the possibility that might just be true? He wondered if we are so vain as to think the work would not survive without us. It well might, but does that mitigate the fact there are times when a work might be hindered by a precipitous move?

He then shames us by saying, “Russia is not an exotic location like Africa or the Philippines.” Has our brother been in either place yet? If not, I would like for him to tell me how “exotic” Tondo is in the Manila area or Soweto near Johannesburg. Both of these are huge areas which can be largely described as ghettos. I have seen garbage piled waist high in Tondo and open drainage ditches into which raw sewage flowed. You could smell the stench far away. How “exotic” is it to wade water to your knees after the river overflowed and flooded the town, or to preach with a towel to wipe sweat. How exotic is it to ride a bus with the passenger seated beside you holding a goat, or two chickens with the feet tied together? How exotic is it to sleep under a mosquito net in a nipa hut? The brethren who work in South Africa, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Nigeria, or India can add much to the “exotic” list. He says Russia is a “dirty, depressing environment” where the work is difficult. I am sure he is right. But Russia is not the only place in the world where that is true.

But the most severe judgment of all is when he wondered out loud “if some American preachers are not still cold warriors at heart who just can’t get excited about the idea

of making our former enemies our brethren.” My brother, if you seriously have wondered this, it would have been far better if you had kept that to yourself. That is a serious indictment of your brethren and unless you have hard, cold facts to sustain such a suspicion, it would have been far better to have withheld that suspicion. I get around among a good many brethren over the country and I just don’t believe that is a proper assessment at all.

Then he raised this question: “What right do we have to say where we will and will not go? So you don’t want to go to Russia. Are you here to do your will or his?” Has all choice now been removed from us and placed in the hands of this brother? Is it his right to decide where in the world we all shall preach? Then he said, “But if you don’t go to Russia, nobody will.” That is not quite true. We have had three men from here in Kentucky to go to Russia. John Smith of Winchester has made several trips. One of the elders of a Louisville congregation took early retirement from his job, learned the Russian language and moved to Russia.

Is there work to do for the Lord in Russia? To be sure. There has been an open door and we are praying that the recent legislation there will not bring to a halt the access which American workers have had to that field. If it does, there are native Christians remaining and it can only be hoped that they will be steadfast in the face of whatever hardships there may be.

But, why not Libya? Or Saudi Arabia? Or Iraq? Or Iran? Should we lecture the brethren and say, “If you don’t do to Libya, nobody will.” Brethren, there is something to be said for open doors. Several times in the New Testament reference is made to these “open doors” (1 Cor. 16:9; Col. 4:3; Acts 14:27; Rev. 3:5). These references indicate that opportunities were present. Sometimes doors open and sometimes they close. We must be alert to opportunities and strike while the iron is hot. If that makes a place a “hot spot,” then so be it.

Now, none of this has been said to dampen or discourage the work of good men in Russia, or those who may be planning to go. Of course, more help is needed. Gospel preachers around the world are spread thin. If you don’t think so, then talk to Tom or Terrell Bunting in Norway. Ask them about the rest of Scandinavia. The last thing Scott Tope said to me when we parted after the training school for preachers at Eshowe, South Africa was “tell the brethren in America that we are spread very thin.” We need more work done in Russia. We need more work done in many places in the world, including many parts of the U.S.A. But I, for one, do not intend to allow a preacher who has made a trip to Russia to deprive me of my right to use the best wisdom I can as to where and when I shall preach the gospel for my remaining days. I appreciate his desire to promote the

## What Is Gospel Preaching?

I am still a great believer in the power of gospel preaching. I am convinced that absolutely nothing will put God's true message across as well as a forceful lesson from a godly preacher or teacher. I say this because I firmly believe that we not only draw from the words of those who teach us, but from their lives and character. While I was quite a young preacher I worked with an elder of the church, who I am sure did more to shape my future than any man. This godly man taught me a great deal, you may be sure. And yet, strange as it may seem, I cannot remember precisely as much of what he taught me as I can remember about him; his life, his character, and his attitude.

In (Acts 4:13) please notice what is said about Peter and John. "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." They took note that these men "had been with Jesus." I grant that more was involved in this statement than there is now, because miracles were involved, but the principle remains the same. The people could tell that these men "had been with Jesus."

So, what we need today is not more gimmicks, not more novel plans, not more ingenious approaches, but more godly men who will set forth the unsearchable riches without fear or favor, and do so free of fanaticism. We need men, and women as well (within their limitations of teaching) who will demonstrate in word and deed that they have "been with Jesus." We must remember, when

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work in a part of the world where he has a special interest, but please don't put the rest of the brethren on a guilt trip when their zeal leads them to other parts of the field.

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*P.O. Box 69, Brooks, Kentucky 40109-0069*

people are called with "secular attractions" it takes bigger and more fascinating "attractions" to keep them. You cannot call people with the things of the flesh and expect them to walk after the things of the Spirit. When people are truly called by the plain and simple gospel that is all it takes to keep them. Jesus said to the woman at the well: "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." True gospel preachers and teachers never have to resort to anything except the word of God. I am never under pressure to come forward with some astounding thing that is bigger and better. As a preacher, I find that most comforting.

The "Social Gospel" influence upon us today has caused many to look with disdain upon "old fashioned gospel preaching." The new idea is to get the message across with "puppet shows" and "Bible drama" and a host of other things which are designed to entertain and do a little teaching at the same time. I must confess, I just don't believe a puppet or an actor could have much of a spiritual impact on me. But, that godly elder did! He didn't entertain me, but he taught me, and let me freely observe that teaching in his life. I had the wonderful opportunity to see what it is really all about. When people listen to you and observe you, can they tell you have "been with Jesus"?

So, while the denominational world and the liberal-minded brethren give the world "puppet shows" and "Bible dramas" and all kind of presentations that obscure and water down the truth, let's get on with the real work. Let's give the lost and dying world the forceful, but simple gospel of Christ, falling from the lips of truly spiritual men. Not lessons that are shrouded in a lot of philosophical jargon, but lessons filled with a "thus saith the Lord." We may not have the most listeners and we may not have the biggest crowds, but we will make people who do hear us "meet for the Master's use" and prepared for eternity (2 Tim. 2:21). After all, that's what it's all about.

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*From The Messenger, February 1, 1998, Conroe, Texas 77303*

## Our “Beloved” Brethren

One might ask “Why isn’t the church of Christ growing in number like it once was?” That is a valid question and one that deserves an honest answer. Many elders, preachers, and members might offer various reasons as to why the church is not growing in number like it once was. But I believe the answer lies within our midst, our own “beloved” brethren! Over the past five years of preaching I have seen and experienced the hatred that some brethren have toward one another. The word “hypocrite” is etched on their forehead as they attend service after service “in the name of the Lord” (Matt 7:21-23). There is no way the Lord’s church can and will grow as long as the brethren won’t get along. Notice I said won’t, not can’t. All Christians can and will get along with one another if they really *want* to. The problem is, many do not want to. Many are guilty of wanting to condemn their brethren rather than trying to restore them.

### “Go And Sin No More”

Jesus gives us an example of this in the account of the woman who was caught in adultery in John 8:2-11. These scribes and Pharisees wanted to see her stoned to death as the old law stipulated should happen. But Jesus, wanting them to understand the importance of forgiveness, asked for the one without sin to throw the first stone. Fortunately, they all did a self-examination and concluded that “we all have sin” and therefore no one felt he was above sin to be able to punish her with death. Jesus told the woman that he would not condemn her but rather offered her forgiveness, telling her to go and “sin no more.” This woman was given “another chance,” a renewed life, because Christ, in his example, showed that Christianity is a religion of forgiveness, not condemnation.

Jesus pointed out to Peter the importance of forgiving

as often as one asks (Matt 18:21-22). Forgiveness is “to give up resentment against or the desire to punish; pardon. To overlook an offense; to cancel.” Many brethren say they forgive when in reality they don’t. When brethren resent one another, they are not really ready to forgive one another. As each new occurrence happens these brethren, though they say they have forgiven in the past, will continue to bring up previous occurrences and place them before the supposedly forgiven party. What if God did that to each one of us? We fully expect God to forgive us of our sins when we ask him to, yet often we will not truly forgive our own brother in Christ. When this happens, we are guilty of murder.

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### Are We Guilty of Murder?

When we do not have a genuine loving and forgiving attitude as evidenced by the fact that we are not truly leaning toward the restoration of our brethren, then we are guilty of murder. Notice the words of God as John writes in 1 John 3:4-15:

Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin. Whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him. Little children, let no one

deceive you. He who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous. He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God. In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother. For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another, not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother.

And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil and his brother's righteous. Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you. We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death. Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

If we do not exhibit a sincere love and concern for our brethren, then we are guilty of murder. If we believe that our brother is in sin and we do not have an attitude of wanting to restore him but would rather "avoid him" and condemn him, then we do not have love and are guilty of murder!

I encourage you to listen to the word of God in this matter (Heb 4:1-16). When one does not love his brother then we know he is not of God. Jesus said: "You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it" (John 8:44). Vine's *Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words* uses the same Greek word in John 8:44 as in 1 John 3:15. Notice what is said: *murderer*: "*anthropoktonos*" "manslaying," "a manslayer, murderer" (*anthropos*, "a man," *kteino*, "to slay"), is used of Satan (John 8:44), of *one who hates his brother*, and who, being a "murderer," has not eternal life (1 John 3:15, twice). When one does not have the love of the brethren to the point that they are striving for reconciliation with each other and God, then they have an attitude as Esau had toward Jacob (Gen 27:41). In addition, when we stand to condemn rather than try to build up and restore, then we are guilty of murder — taking the very life of our neighbor (Lev 19:16-18). Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder,' and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment. But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire" (Matt 5:21-22).

### **"Have Love For One Another"**

Churches of the Lord have been torn asunder because some do not exercise a loving attitude for one another. Some Christians seem to stay busy talebearing and causing strife within the local church. Solomon wrote:

Where there is no wood, the fire goes out; and where there is no talebearer, strife ceases. As charcoal is to burning coals, and wood to fire, so is a contentious man to kindle strife. The words of a talebearer are like tasty trifles, and they go down into the inmost body. Fervent lips with a wicked heart are like earthenware covered with silver dross. He who hates, disguises it with his lips, and lays up deceit within himself; When he speaks kindly, do not believe him, for there are seven abominations in his heart; Though his hatred is covered by deceit, his wickedness will be revealed before the assembly (Prov 26:20-26).

These things should not be taking place in the church of our Lord. A handshake and words of love should be sincere among the brethren!

I would like to urge each and everyone of us to understand how eternally important it is that we exercise genuine love for one another and seek each others betterment while we live here on this earth. Jesus commanded that we love (John 15:17) and also taught us an example of forgiveness with the woman caught in adultery. May we learn from it and exercise a willing attitude to *want* to forgive as God has forgiven us, striving for unity always. Remember, one can know who a disciple of Christ is by his love. "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34-35). When we exercise sincere love toward one another, then all saints will certainly be "our beloved brethren!"

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## **New Testament History**

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## Situation Ethics and the Child of God

Situation ethics is a philosophy that teaches that sin may be acceptable, or at least, overlooked by God under certain specific situations. The philosophy says that one may be placed in a situation where he must choose between the lesser of two evils. Those in the secular world would not view either choice as sin, but the child of God would readily see the sin involved. So, the idea facing us as Christians is that we may be placed in a situation in which the only choice we have is to sin or face some horrible, agonizing situation that we deem intolerable.

For example, the abortionist uses situation ethics to convince young, pregnant girls that termination of a fetus (murder of a baby) may be preferable to bringing a baby into a poor, unwanted situation. They portray the life of the baby and mother as being very difficult and disadvantaged and the only viable option is to abort the fetus and try to do better the next time. There are clearly other and better alternatives, but the abortionist has an agenda to promote and he will promote it with whatever lie he has to use in order to further his cause. Abortion is murder and no amount of mental gymnastics will change it (Gen. 9:6). It violates many Bible principles (Matt. 7:12; Rom. 13:9; Mark 12:31).

The idea of euthanasia is promoted by liberals in our society and situation ethics is one of the wicked tools they use to promote it. Sometimes children are subtly taught situation ethics, or values clarification as it is sometimes called, in school at an early age in order to soften them for this sinful practice. A picture is drawn of three people on a deserted island with no food. There is a young man, a middle-aged man, and an elderly man, but no food to support their existence. It is determined that one must die, but who? Obviously, the conclusion they want the young to arrive at is that the elderly must die in order to help the younger generation. He has, according to this theory, lived most of his life and now it would be better for him to die so that the younger might live. What about what God's word says about murder (Gen. 9:6; Exod. 20:13)? To the situation ethics promoter, it is no longer murder because of the situation these people find themselves in. It is a small step from that island to our old-folks homes

and Dr. Kervorkian. If an elderly person gets in the way of a younger person leading a better and easier life, then just remove the older person after determining that such is necessary given the present situation.

God has already determined the way that we should go in any and every situation and he has not given man the authority to change that way based upon any particular situation. It is always wrong to do wrong and right to do right. Choosing the right course may produce hardships, but God has promised to carry us through those hard times (Heb. 13:5-6).

Consider some in Bible times who could have utilized situation ethics to alleviate hardships in their life. Joseph was pressed by Potiphar's wife to commit fornication (Gen. 39:7-9). From the viewpoint of those promoting situation ethics, Joseph would have been right to commit fornication and avoid offending Potiphar's wife and going to prison. This is a very subjective doctrine and each man ends up doing what is right in his own eyes based upon the particular situation. Who can say he is wrong if such a doctrine is allowed?

Daniel and his three friends all could claim exemptions from God's law based upon the extreme positions they found themselves in, but they chose to put their faith in God and do right (Dan. 3:16-18; 6:10). Situation ethics would have taught otherwise!

Stephen was arrested for teaching the truth and in making his defense before those who arrested him, but he continued to teach the truth. This action cost him his life (Acts 6:12-14; 7:51-60). Situation ethics would allow him to soften his approach, compromise the gospel, and accommodate those listening to him, but faith in God would not allow such!

Situation ethics appeals to human reason and logic, not the Word of God. We do not have to reason about the truth, God has revealed it (John 8:32). Whatever situation we find ourselves in, we can trust that God will provide a way of escape that will not cause us to sin (1 Cor. 10:32). We should teach people to trust and obey, not analyze the



## When You Think No One Is Looking . . .

So you think you've gotten away with something you knew you shouldn't have done. There was the fear of getting caught, yet at the same time the excitement of getting by with it. After a while you become confident, perhaps even a little arrogant, that no one saw what you did. Alas! You were spotted by someone who knows you, by someone whom you influence. Just when you were sure no one was looking, he was! You are not the first, nor will you be the last to have such experiences.

When Moses was 40 years old, supposing his Israelite brethren would understand (Acts 7:23ff), he killed an Egyptian who mistreated an Israelite. The next day when Moses saw two Israelites fighting each other, he attempted to reconcile them, only to learn that he had been seen as he killed the Egyptian and buried him in the sand the day before (Exod. 2:11-14). Like Moses, we frequently think that no one is really watching when, in fact, they are closely observing us. They want to see how we who profess to be Christians act and react in various circumstances in life.

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situation and determine if sin should be committed or would a sinful action be allowed under the given circumstances.

Some preachers are theorizing that we may be placed in situations where sin must be chosen or where we must choose between the lesser of two evils. They use, or misuse would be a better term, Old Testament examples and comments from worldly men as their source of authority. The Bible records the errors of many people in the Old Testament without commenting on God's approval of their actions. We must not use these situations as justification for transgression. Let us have faith in God, always do right, and trust that God will deliver.

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They watch us in environments like . . .

*The Workplace.* We can build or quickly destroy our influence by our conduct on the job. Our language, behavior, honesty, etc., can serve as gauges of our sincerity and devotion to Christ. We must be circumspect (Eph. 5:15; Col. 4:5). When we think no one is watching us, *at that moment* someone has his eyes fixed on us to see what we will do.

*The Home.* How husbands and wives treat each other, how parents raise their children, how children treat their parents, how the extended family is dealt with, etc., are all indicators of whose we are and how well we are serving him. We may think no one is paying attention, but don't be fooled!

*On Vacations.* Everybody needs a vacation occasionally, and most are quite enjoyable. But we can't let our guard down in serving God and exemplary conduct. In fact, it may be possible to have a greater influence on someone while on vacation than when at home because they see that our Christianity has gone on vacation. When we maintain fidelity to God on vacation, just as we do when we are home (and this assumes, of course, that we maintain fidelity to God when at home), it speaks volumes to those who watch.

Wherever you are, in whatever you are doing, just when you think no one is looking — someone is!

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George Harris

# Mission Impossible Without Commitment

We live in a modern world of advanced technology and creative competition. When we take a long hard look at the world, it becomes obvious that we can take a leaf out of their book. The Lord told us that we are to “be as wise as serpents and harmless as doves” (Matt. 10:16). Secular organizations galvanize themselves behind a shared mission, which can be an exciting and successful place to work, but it takes the commitment of every employee to attain the goal of the mission statement.

Cases where managers have created a real sense of mission, set a daunting standard for the less able . . . Bill Marriot, for example undertook “walkabouts” with his hotel managers where he noted down in his pocket-pad a range of faults, some seemingly trivial, but not to Bill. The news of Bill’s likes and dislikes quickly circulated to all the other Marriot hotel managers. Such attention to detail has undoubtedly helped the group become one of the most successful hotel chains in the world.

Forrest Mars, founder of the Mars Corporation in Slough, England some 65 years ago, considered product quality to be the most important factor for his customers. Certainly, competitive prices, availability, packaging etc. were also very important, but quality was above all. His motto was, “I want to be proud of our product.”

The apostle Paul was proud of his product. He said, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith” (Rom 1:16-17). This characteristic demonstrated boldness of spirit in a series of characteristics is revealed by him as a true spiritual leader in the first chapter of his epistle to the Romans. He reveals the gospel’s power, salvation, righteousness, and faith. The Greek word for power is *dunamis* from which our English word “dynamite” is derived. Paul expressed that he had a dynamite product. Some nearly

two thousand years later we have the same product, and what a powerful product it is. It is God’s power to save depraved man from a fate worse than death, and give him a hope beyond that which he could have ever dreamed of. It is the gospel (the good news) of Jesus Christ.

Marriott and Mars, both founder entrepreneurs, were “walking missionaries” in their organizations, constantly demonstrating and expressing in their day-to-day activities, their preferred ways of doing business. The Bible says, “where there is no vision the people perish” (Prov. 29:18). The church needs leaders who are visionaries, people of God who lead the flock of God by example, to live, eat and sleep their mission statement. The employees of Marriott and Mars were left in no doubt about “the way things should be done.”

Percy Barnnevik of Asea Brown Boveri, the giant Swiss conglomerate, has created a sense of mission which permeates his portfolio of over 1300 companies. He has a simple

The Lord has given us our mission statement. In probating his own will, subsequent to his resurrection but prior to his ascension, he told his disciples, “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).

but compelling philosophy which can be paraphrased as “putting people before cost, thinking globally, but acting locally, and keeping business small and simple so they remain customer focused.” In Christian terms Christ put the souls of men before the cost to himself, the church thinking universally, in prayers for all the saints, but acting locally in carrying out its mission, keeping the gospel simple (not as false teachers) so that she can remain soul focused.

A mission statement is only created with a sense of mission if the mission statement is understood, believed, and acted upon by the majority of the organization’s members. Campbell and Yeung, “gurus” in this field, suggest a mission with these qualities will have four components: purpose, strategy, values, and behavior standards. The *purpose* of the mission statement of the gospel is to “present every man perfect in Christ” (Col 1:28), the *strategy* to preach the gospel to every creature in every nation (Matt 28:19; Mark 16:15), the *values*, love, joy, peace and all the other fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22, 23) and *behavior standards*, to “put off the old man, put on the new man, and walk worthy of the gospel of Jesus Christ” (Col 3:9-10; 1:10)

Some mission statements of big business that are worthy of our consideration are: Sainsburg’s (an English supermarket chain) “. . . contribution to the public good and the quality of life.” Merck (a big American health care group), “We are in the business of preserving and improving human life.” Matsushita, “To recognize our responsibilities as industrialists, to foster progress, to promote the greatest welfare of society. . .” All of these mission statements have a spiritual tone to them but are secular in nature, as are the businesses that produce them.

The Lord has given us our mission statement. In probating his own will, subsequent to his resurrection but prior to his ascension, he told his disciples, “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). “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world” (Matt. 28:19-20). “Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luke 24:46-47). Within this mission statement are the four components: *purpose*, *strategy*, *values*, and *behavior standards*.

The Lord did not give us an impossible mission, but there are many among us that act as if he did. Yes, from a worldly view point the mission may seem impossible, but the world takes God out of the equation. God is “able to do exceed-

ingly abundantly above all that we are able to ask or think” (Eph. 3:20). It takes commitment to be challenged to the mission. It requires vision to see the results of the mission, and it necessarily depends upon laborers for the execution of the mission. The Lord has told us, “The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth laborers into His harvest” (Matt. 9:37-38). If secular business was given the church’s mission statement, would its performance be more successful than the children of light?

Nehemiah had the vision to get the city walls of Jerusalem rebuilt. He had a passionate perception of what his mission was. He planned the work meticulously, then he worked the plan. He motivated a demotivated people to rise up and build the wall. The wall was completed in an extra-ordinary time frame because “the people had a mind to work” (Neh 4:6).

A hit and miss approach to the mission at hand will not get the task done. It is the Lord’s business. It is the greatest work that the world has ever known. It requires laborers who have a mind to work. The mission statement has been given. Every worker of Jesus Christ must take up the challenge and conduct the business within the framework of the mission statement. The mission statement must be “understood, believed and acted upon by the majority of the organization’s members.” However, it will be mission impossible without commitment.

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Lindsay A. Allen

## Who Divided the Lord's Church?

**W**hat better way to hinder the gospel of Christ than to divide the church? Thus, in 1849 and 1859 respectively he (Satan) introduced, through his emissaries, the missionary society and instrumental music.

Those who take a firm stand on a "thus saith the Lord" for all they believe and practice in their service to God are accused of splitting the Lord's church, and are labeled with such unworthy epithets as "antis" and "orphan home haters." This is a serious charge of the greatest magnitude, for it is much more serious to divide the spiritual body of Christ than his physical body. Such a false charge demands a forthright and honest reply, and above all it must be scriptural. The purpose of this article is to do that. Let it be understood in the beginning that the author of these lines has no ill will toward any person, much less his own brethren. Contrariwise, since he and his brethren are cut from the same gospel pattern, he has nothing but love and goodwill toward them. The only purpose of this article is to search out the truth concerning this charge, for Jesus said, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"; "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 8:32; 17:17). Paul reminded the Thessalonians that God would send a "strong delusion" to those who did not love the truth, that they could believe a lie and be damned (2 Thess. 2:10-12).

In order to have a firm background for the study of division in the Lord's church, it would be helpful to make a brief survey of division in the church in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Such a survey will show the true nature and cause of such divisions.

The restoration movement began on

American soil in the early years of the nineteenth century. Its purpose was to restore the Lord's church in doctrine, in work, and in worship as it was in the beginning. The "battle-cry" of this movement was in perfect harmony with its purpose — "Where the Bible speaks, we will speak, and where the Bible is silent, we will be silent." What a noble undertaking, and far superior to previous efforts to reform Roman Catholicism and to reconcile the animosities and differences among Protestant denominationalists.

It should be emphasized at this point that the battle-cry of the restoration movement was nothing new — it is simply a re-statement of the truths taught in the New Testament. In 1 Corinthians 4:6 (RV) the Apostle Paul reminded the Corinthians not to go beyond the things that were written; in 1 Peter 4:11 the Apostle Peter said, "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God"; and John reminds us (2 John 9-11) that "whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God." Brethren, what the Holy Spirit is saying here is that the Bible, the word of God, is complete and needs no additions or subtractions; it must not be tampered with in any manner, for it meets man's needs. As someone has well said, "The gospel God gave is adaptable to the man that he made"; it equips the man of God for every good work (2 Tim. 3:16-17). It is man's responsibility to study it, to believe it, and to obey its precepts.

The restoration preachers preached the gospel without fear or favor to overflowing crowds who were hungry for something that would satisfy their spiritual needs. The time was ripe for religious reform for denominationalism was torn asunder, corrupted, and hopelessly divided by the doctrines of men. Thousands, even whole congregations, responded to the gospel call, were baptized into Christ and became New Testament Christians. These Christians met on the first day of the week to eat the Lord's supper (Acts 20:7), to sing songs of praises to God (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16), to lay by in store (1 Cor. 16:1, 2), to engage in prayer to God (Acts 2:42) and to preach the gospel as was done in New Testament days. These meetings continued in peace and harmony, but not for many seasons for Satan, the arch-enemy of mankind, was ready to strike at the success of the gospel. It is well to remember that Satan, who works through carnal men, does not work haphazardly but has definite plans and schemes to perfect his work. What better way to hinder the gospel of Christ than to divide the church? Thus, in 1849 and 1859 respectively he introduced, through his emissaries, the missionary society and instrumental music.

These two innovations not only divided the church, thus creating ill will and bitterness among brethren, but corrupted the worship and dethroned God. The feelings created by animosity and ill will grew so intense that brethren who opposed these innovations found themselves locked out of their places of worship. Appeals to the courts were futile and only added fuel to the fires of division. Numerous efforts were made to settle these divisions on Bible grounds, but to no avail. These conditions existed for the next fifty years with brethren leaving their home congregations and finding separate places of worship. The larger group of brethren who had initiated and defended these innovations are today known as "Disciples of Christ" and are among the most

liberal denominations in the nation; they have added numerous unscriptural activities besides instrumental music and the missionary society, even to open membership of the believers in Christ. Brethren, this is an object lesson teaching us the danger of going beyond that which is written. We cannot afford to be a part of that history that will repeat itself!

### **A Brief Survey of Some of the Divisions in the Restoration Movement in the Twentieth Century**

The twentieth century has proven to be turbulent with changes. The industrial revolution has brought many major changes that have lifted the face of the nation. The building of business enterprises to do the work that God gave the church, and the introduction of numerous innovations have corrupted the church and will lead to apostasy. The last two decades have seen a decided change in the substance of preaching. Sermon topics today consist principally of moral and ethical lessons that deal with the issues that beset our nation. Many of these sermons are scriptural, timely, and need to be preached, but brethren, that is *not* the full gospel. Jesus said, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). Regardless of what else preachers may preach, the fundamentals of the gospel must not be put on the "back burner." There is no substitute for the gospel, for it is God's power to save the sinner (Rom. 1:16, 17). In the division of the nineteenth century those who opposed innovations were the smaller of the two groups; after separation they soon grew to be the larger, for the preachers preached the gospel without fear or favor — it brought results! Brethren, what I am saying here is this: *the church will die without the gospel!*

In 1906 the U.S. Bureau of Census listed the non-instrumental churches of Christ as a separate and distinct group. This separate listing of churches of Christ was both timely and encour-

aging, for it gave the brethren a solid place in society. In 1910 the church at Columbia, Tennessee established the Tennessee Orphan Home that was moved to Springhill, Tennessee in 1935. The advent of the orphan homes brought a new era to the disciples for they and their children's children would experience strife, alienation, and division throughout the remaining part of the century. It is safe to say that the orphan's home has divided more churches of Christ than any other one innovation. The late Luther Blackmon sums up the influence of the orphan's home in this short statement: "The Orphan's Home is the key that opened the treasuries of the churches of Christ to human institutions." The key that opened the treasuries of the churches was its emotional appeal, for there is nothing that touches the human heart more than the cry of a hungry orphan child. Satan knew that this device would get the job done (2 Cor. 2:11)! Many brethren followed their emotions, not the Scripture!

### **What Then, Is the Issue That Divides Brethren?**

Let us look first of all to the negative: it is *not* orphan care, all orphans need care; it is *not* orphan homes, for all orphans need a home. The issue is simply this: *do churches of Christ have divine authority to build and maintain, from their treasuries, social institutions?* This question begs for a scriptural answer. How far can the church go in the social field? Some churches of Christ are now building and maintaining schools, orphan homes, old folks homes, homes for unwed mothers, and medical clinics (or hospitals). Brethren, if churches are to build and maintain orphan homes from their treasuries, why engage a human institution to do this work? Do you not believe that the church is sufficient to do all the work that God gave it? The inspired Scripture tells us that the word of God is able to furnish the man of God completely unto *every* good work (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Finally, does God not have a plan to care for orphans? Yes! In every age God has cared for orphans. In the Old Testament he exhorted the people time after time to look after widows and orphans. In the New Testament the only passage that deals with the care of orphans is James 1:27; here the responsibility is given, not to churches, but to individual Christians — “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.” Brethren, *this is God’s answer!*

### The Social Gospel

The purpose of the social gospel is to improve the quality of human life. To this end many churches are engaged in some kind of social work such as orphan and elderly care, education, recreation, entertainment, and as one preacher put it recently, “just plain fun.” This so-called “gospel” (or pseudo-gospel) is in sharp contrast to the gospel of Christ; one is carnal and thus creates carnality, while the gospel of Christ deals solely and entirely with the salvation of the soul. The social gospel followed the orphan home in influence in the states for several years, but has been more widely accepted than any other innovation and thus, has led more churches away from spirituality to carnality and secularism than any other one innovation.

The social gospel, instead of making the world a better place to live, is laying the foundation for widespread apostasy in the next few years. When churches capitalize on fun and frolic and give little or no attention to Bible study and to spiritual worship, they are preparing the minds of the people to accept any kind of false doctrine or dogma. Friend, the social gospel is subtle and acts as a decoy for it gives to the people a sense of false security — they think they are busy doing the will of the Lord with all their social activity.

This statement may surprise the reader, but the roots of the social gospel reach back to near the close of the middle

ages. When the Roman church built schools for priests and went into the education business, began to look after the poor, the down-trodden and the sick, they laid the foundation for the social gospel. During the Protestant reformation the Protestant churches (some time later) took over the role of the social gospel.

In England and in the states, the industrial revolution played a major role in crystallizing the idea of the social gospel. Factories brought multitudes of people from the country into the city to small congested areas which created slums and many other unhealthy situations. Industrialists saw the need of giving some assistance to these poor people, and then later turned the work over to churches.

In the 1950s and 1960s in the states, the social gospel grew rapidly and was accepted by most of the churches of Christ who had already accepted the orphan homes and the schools. The social gospel continues to grow rapidly among some churches of Christ. Even as this article is being written there are churches in this county who are either building separate buildings for fellowship halls or are adding such to their present buildings. These halls will be used for congregational meals, for banquets, for special events during graduation, and there will be basketball goals, volleyball nets, and other athletic equipment.

Brethren, have you forgotten, or have you ever known, that the word “fellowship” as used in the Scripture *always refers to spiritual fellowship, never to secular affairs?* The auditorium is the only “fellowship hall” you need. Recently I asked a young lady how the church was doing in her community; she said, “Fine, we have just given the grandest program and supper for the volunteer fire department.” Brethren, that bothers me; have you forgotten that the Lord’s church is *spiritual*, that its work is spiritual, and that the church does not engage in carnal activities?

These things as stated above only lay the foundation for widespread apostasy in the near future. Since preachers do not preach the gospel as they once did, and many churches have given themselves over to fun and frolic, what can you expect of the church in the future?

Brethren, now is the time to get busy; lay aside these carnal works and activities and concentrate on things spiritual. Brother Preacher, preach the gospel; preach the power of God unto salvation to those who receive it (Rom. 1:16, 17). *Nothing* can take the place of the gospel of Christ. Let us keep the church pure as the Lord gave it to us in the beginning. *This is serious business; let us get busy!*

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## A Watchdog Must Be Gentle

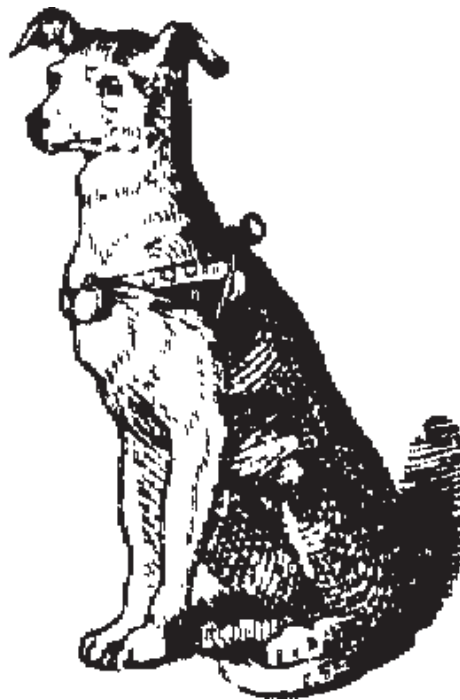
The Lord's church needs watchdogs. A watchdog sniffs out doctrinal danger and barks the warning. A watchdog remains alert, capable of recognizing a threat and sounding the alarm. The watchdogs of ancient Judah were failures in this respect. The Lord reprimanded Judah because "His watchmen are blind, They are all ignorant; They are all dumb dogs, They cannot bark; Sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber" (Isa. 56:10).

Among God's people today, preachers and elders are especially charged with watchdog duty. As those who rule over churches, elders watch out for your souls, as those who must give account" (Heb. 13:17). The elders of the church in Ephesus were warned of "savage wolves" who would come in among them, not sparing the flock; they were therefore commanded to "watch" (Acts 20:29-31; Tit. 1:9). Similarly, in order to fulfill the ministry of evangelist, a preacher must "convince, rebuke" and "be watchful in all things" (2 Tim. 4:1-5).

Leaders in churches must understand that being a watchdog is a serious responsibility. A watchman (or dog) is held personally responsible for the damage done when he fails to issue a warning (see Ezek. 33:6-7; Heb. 13:17). We must also realize that the duty to watch and warn extends beyond the borders of the local church. Paul had deep concern for *all the churches* (2 Cor. 11:28), and if apostolic examples are still worthy of imitation so should we. As a preacher, Titus was to make it his business to stop the mouths of the many false teachers in every city in Crete (Tit. 1:5, 10-14).

But as important as it is to have alert and active watchdogs, it is just as important for each watchdog to be well

trained in every aspect of his job. An untrained, undisciplined, and uncontrolled watchdog is a greater danger than no watchdog at all. In the real world, we sometimes hear of dogs turning on members of the very household they are supposed to be protecting. We have seen TV news footage of children horribly disfigured by attacks from a neighbor's watchdog. Sadly, the same kind of thing can and does happen in the Lord's church.



One key attitude or behavioral trait that every watchdog must learn is meekness or gentleness. In 2 Timothy 3:24-25, Paul is training Timothy to be a good watchdog when he tells him that "a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth." Yes, Timothy needed to deal with those who were in error, but he needed to do so with gentleness. A watchdog who is *never able to* confront danger and warn against it without starting a dog fight is not doing his job correctly.

Gentleness is an outgrowth of proper attitudes toward oneself and others. With respect to others, the gentle watchdog is acting from motives of genuine love and concern.

He knows that biting and devouring another is not consistent with his mission to serve, love and protect (cf. Gal. 5:14-15). If there are enemies, the watchdog lets you know, but it gives his hearers no pleasure. Paul demonstrated the heart of a faithful and loving watchdog when he told the Philippians that "many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ" (Phil. 3:18).

With respect to himself the gentle watchdog knows nothing of pride and everything of humility. He is humble

Harry R. Osborne

## “I Plead The Fifth, Lord!”

Have you ever noticed how politicians answer questions? Most of them will not give a straight answer. One of their tricks is to talk around a subject for a while, but when they are done, they have not said anything. Another trick is to answer a question with, “No comment.” It is as if they have a natural tendency to plead the fifth amendment regardless of the circumstance. Why would someone try to shun an answer and keep a matter shrouded in silence? Why would one not want it to be known where he stands on a question? The most common reason is the fear of opposition from those who may not agree with the stated view. The safe road to avoid taking a stand is to stay quiet or issue a disclaimer to signal neutrality.

The recent efforts to speak plainly on the immorality manifesting itself in our local schools have shown this tendency by some in our community. Very few seem ready to boldly oppose immoral teaching and practice even when they agree that it is immoral. They do not want to offend others. It seems the majority of those in places of influence are more concerned with covering up problems rather than correcting them. The disclaimer put on our article in the newspaper was an amusing example of this to me. Instead of taking a stand one way or the other, it was deemed safer and more politically correct to state their neutrality. The fact is that there is no neutral ground with morality and service to God. We are either for the Lord or against him (Matt. 12:30).

In Bible times, there were those who refused to take a stand for God and his truth. They were always condemned for such cowardice. It was the people of courage who dared to stand against the views of those in places of power who God approved.

### **Elijah vs. The Powerful In Israel**

Elijah was a man who stood in opposition to the wicked ways of King Ahab and his wife, Jezebel. Ahab and Jezebel had introduced the idolatry of Baal to Israel with all of its associated evils. Elijah stood against that system and urged others to oppose it as well. When Ahab came face to face with Elijah, the king’s first words were these: “Is that you, O troubler of Israel?” (1 Kings 18:17). Elijah replied, “I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father’s house have, in that you have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and you have followed Baal” (1 Kings 18:18). This man of God rightly understood that the one standing for truth was not the cause of trouble. Those who disobeyed God were the reason for problems and the resultant division.

When all of the people were gathered, they had a clear choice. Who would they believe and follow? Their king who had the power over them or Elijah who spoke an unpopular message of truth in opposition to the king. The Bible records the occasion in these words:

And Elijah came to all the people, and said, “How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God,

because he sees himself as he is. He is, after all, a dog. He knows that he too is fallible, capable of making mistakes and committing sin. As he attempts to correct or restore a brother overtaken in “any trespass” he does so in a spirit of gentleness,” considering himself lest he also be tempted (Gal. 6:1). No matter who he is dealing with, he is “gentle, showing all meekness unto all men” because he knows that he himself has at one time or another been “foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating” others (Tit. 3:2-3).

Watchdogs are so greatly needed among God’s people today. We need watchdogs who are alert, vigilant, faithful, and gentle. And we need watchdogs who can read an article like this and profit from it, even if it has stepped on their tails.

*From The Exhorter, Townsend Ford Road, Athens, Alabama*





follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him.” But the people answered him not a word (1 Kings 18:21).

It was a fifth amendment crowd who feared the king more than they loved the truth. However, God gave victory to his truth through Elijah that day when he was used to show God’s power on Mount Carmel. If we wish to be victorious along with God’s cause, we must stand boldly for the truth even in the face of powerful opposition. Silence will not get the job done when the truth is at stake.

### **The Blind Man, His Parents and Jesus**

In John 9, Jesus gave sight to a man who had been born blind. When the Pharisees who opposed Jesus asked the man who had made him to see, the man answered unashamedly even over the objections of the powerful Pharisees. At the first, the man knew by the miracle worked that the one working such a miracle must be from God. Therefore, when asked who Jesus was, the man said, “He is a prophet” (John 9:17). Later, when the Pharisees tried to get him to change his testimony, they ridiculed the man for being a disciple of Jesus whereas they claimed to be disciples of Moses. The Pharisees chided, “We know that God spoke to Moses; as for this fellow, we do not know where He is from” (John 9:29). Undaunted, the man replied:

Why, this is a marvelous thing, that you do not know where He is from, and yet He has opened my eyes! Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His will, He hears him. Since the world began it has been unheard of that anyone opened the eyes of one who was born blind. If this Man were not from God, He could do nothing (John 9:30-33).

This man was not a fair weather supporter of Jesus Christ. He was ready to face the opposition and remain unmoved. The power of the opponent did not make him fearful.

However, the man’s parents did not exhibit such courage. The Pharisees asked them how their son received his sight. The parents responded, “By what means he now sees we do not know, or who opened his eyes we do not know. He is of age; ask him. He will speak for himself” (John 9:21). This answer was a dodge. They knew how he was made to see, but they were afraid to tell the Pharisees for fear of what they might do in retaliation. The next verses make that clear in the following words:

His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had agreed already that if anyone confessed that He was Christ, he would be put out of the synagogue. Therefore his parents said, “He is of age; ask him” (John 9:22-23).

They were cowards who issued their disclaimer to protect themselves from the Pharisees instead of standing for

the truth regardless of the cost.

### **The Rulers Seeking Praise Of Men**

In John 12, we see another case of the same thing involving those who were themselves in places of power. They did not want to lose their position by confessing Christ. Notice how the Bible describes these people:

Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God (John 12:42-43).

Their problem was not one of ignorance. They knew who Jesus was, but were too cowardly to confess him before others. What a shame it was that these people loved the praise of men more than God! It is a sad fact that some still do.

### **Conclusion**

If we are to serve God acceptably, we must realize our responsibility to stand for God and his truth regardless of the cost. At times, it will cost us as others ridicule, oppose and even denounce us. But we must always remember that it is the ultimate praise of God that we seek, not the temporary popularity of this world. Like those of Bible times, we live in a world where standing for truth is not popular. In fact, it is so unpopular that we are sure to be opposed (2 Tim. 3:12). What should we do? Remain silent? Go along with the crowd? Issue a disclaimer to truth? No, we must “*preach the word; be urgent in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching*” (2 Tim. 4:2). Those who justify sin and error will oppose us as will those who sit in silence. But God will bring us to victory with his truth in the end!

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# Reading, Writing, and Reflecting

Steve Willis

## Correction?

In my last “Reading, Writing and Reflecting” I reported on the male rock singer who goes by the name of Marilyn Manson. My information was, taken from an issue of the *Alberta Report* which read: “Manson, 28, a skinny, chinless Floridian who wears androgynous make-up, Nazi-style clothing, and fishnet stockings, is a Church of Satan minister. He drinks his own blood and has (had oral sex with) male groupies during concerts.”

Since then, Manson has come to Alberta. With reports like the above abounding, his act was shut out of a performance in Calgary, though he did appear in Edmonton. Articles appeared in the newspapers, both for and against the performance. In one of the articles, it was revealed that the American Family Association was helping to spread the anti-Manson news by distributing “affidavits from two teenage girls who allege they saw live homosexual acts, child abuse and animal slaughter on stage at one of Manson’s shows.” When Manson’s lawyers sued the AFA for defamation, “it backed down and admitted the ‘affidavits’ were fabricated” (from *Medicine Hat News*, July 12, 1997, B6).

Now if he didn’t do the acts, I certainly want to withdraw the allegation that he did do the acts. Perhaps there are no affidavits to say he did. However since that issue, there has been another issue of the *Alberta Report* with Manson as the cover article (July 18, 1997). Manson’s guitarist is quoted from *Rolling Stone* magazine, as saying, “We’ve done much worse things than that. I had my 11-year-old brother onstage in one of the shows completely naked. It was like child pornography” (34).

I’ll leave it to the magazines to sort all that out. It seems clear enough from other things reported that this is not a musical group that you’d want your children to see, or probably hear.

## Don’t Do as I Say!

One recent phenomena in music is the spoken word set to music or sound samples: Rap. There are several varieties of this format. One is called “gangsta” rap. Some songs exhibit brutal feelings of men toward women. Others are against the police and have advocated killing the police.

Many include offensive language, and are marked as such in stores. One producer, Sean Combs, was questioned about gangsta rapper Biggie Smalls, who was gunned down in L.A. Smalls had been in a verbal feud with another rapper who was also killed in gunfire. Combs was asked: “You’re a father. Do you think hard-core rap records should carry stronger parental warnings?” He replied, “I don’t have no problem with that. I think kids shouldn’t be able to listen to some albums till their minds are fully developed and ready to digest an album with certain realities on there. There are realities that may be too harsh for young ears. Even though it’s a reality and needs to be said, it may not need to be said to a 10-year old.”

The follow-up question was, “What about a three-year old? Do you let your three-year-old son Justin listen to gangsta rap?” Combs reply, “Well, he can’t listen to the Biggie album (the recently released “Life After Death”). Some things on my album he can’t listen to. He just listens to the singles. The clean-up singles” (*Time*, Aug. 4, 1997, Canadian Edition, 44). How about a few more “really” cleaned up songs?

## Passive Smoking Can Harm You

Passive smoking is defined as smoke you breath when another person is handling the cigarette. Many recent studies have found that smoking is bad for one’s health. This year airline stewardesses filed legal claims that they were physically harmed by having to work in past years in planes where people smoked. Also, tobacco companies made a major a \$368-billion capitulation in court cases involving U.S. states health insurance claims. Some companies are even turning in evidence against the others that smoking is harmful and company leaders knew just that.

What is the effect of second-hand smoke on you? Last summer, *Time* reported, “Get out the gas mask. A major study concludes that non-smokers double their risk of heart disease when regularly exposed to the thousands of chemicals in passive smoke. The researchers warn: if you can smell it, it can harm you” (June 2, 1997, Canadian Edition, 16). So, can you smell it?

Later, under “Where there’s smoke” *Time* reported,

“Boys born to moms who smoke during pregnancy are more likely to exhibit aggressive, destructive, or other problem behaviors. Nicotine may disrupt fetal brain development” (August 4, 1997, Canadian Edition, 10).

Does the love of tobacco or the love of Christ control you? (cf. 2 Cor. 5:14).

### **What’s Quicker than a Quickie Divorce?**

Married couples in Utah, California, and Arizona can now get a quicker divorce than the “quickie” divorce. All they need to do is find the closest Quick Court machine. It resembles an automatic bank teller machine, and will produce divorce papers about as fast. After the papers are later certified by a lawyer, their divorce is official. This process started in Arizona with three machines in 1993. It became so popular in that state that it plans to have 150 machines by the end of 1997.

Compare that to Louisiana’s recent attempt to make marriages more permanent by instituting “covenant” marriages which limit the reasons that a couple can be divorce. I thought Matthew 19 limited the reasons to one! (Info from *Alberta Report*, Oct. 6, 1997, 43).

### **More Divorce Statistics**

“If your parents divorce, you’re also more likely to do so” says an article in the August 25, 1997 issue of *Time*. “Now a study finds that if you experience more than one divorce as a kid, you’re four times as likely to go through multiple marriages as an adult” (Canadian Edition, 12).

### **Homosexuals on TV**

Last Spring, ABC’s *Ellen* show was featured on many magazine covers as lesbian Ellen DeGeneres’ character on the show decided it was time to make her homosexuality known. Here are a few of the “outing” covers: *TV Guide*, “Ellen’s Big Outing: Another TV Taboo Comes Tumbling Down as Ellen DeGeneres Opens the Door to Prime-time’s First Gay Lead”; *Time*, putting words into DeGeneres’ mouth, “‘Yep, I’m Gay’: Exclusive: Ellen DeGeneres explains why she’s coming out/The changing nature of sex on TV,” *Out* (a publication to “outing” homosexuals) “Come on Out, Ellen! The Water’s Just Fine!” Well, it’s not just fine, according to the Scriptures (1 Cor. 6:9).

*TV Guide* cited a poll that 63% of regular viewers of *Ellen* were not planning to watch the coming out show (*Alberta Report*, May 12, 1997, 29). Yet, the TV show was nominated for one of many Emmys. These nominations and voting for awards was by the Hollywood elite — remember the people who plan, write and act in shows on TV. This year the Gay and Lesbian Alliance is bragging that there are 30 (thirty!) homosexual characters featured in U.S. network series this fall. Spokesperson Chastity Bono, daughter of Sonny and Cher Bono, said that the number of homosexual roles is up

23% from the start of TV’s last season. She said that the outing of Ellen’s character opens possibilities for characters other than the “odd recurring character” (*Alberta Report*, September 1, 1997, 50).

Is it no wonder that people are getting fed up with some of the programming and policies of the media companies? Did you realize that the Disney company, originally noted for its family-oriented programming, had purchased ABC’s television and radio networks? Last year one large religious body threatened to boycott Disney for their “anti-Christian” and “anti-family” policies. They have released films that have been anti-religion and anti-family values. Homosexuals have used the Disney theme parks openly for gay pride days. Disney did not respond to the hints of boycott, so, this year the same religious group, plus two others decided it was time to boycott the Disney organization (*Christianity Today*, July 14, 1997, 72). Not long before this decision was made, the *Ellen* “outing” show aired, and following that show, were others in which the character and her friends tried to “deal with” her sexuality.

In a show aired in October, ABC at least put up a parental warning, for the script called for “Ellen” the lesbian to kiss another woman. This is not the first time there has been a same-sex kiss on TV. However, it may have been the first since the new TV rating system was revised. This warning/rating has the real Ellen upset. It was reported that she had threatened to walk off the show — though on Larry King’s show the same night, her mother denied that to be the case. My feeling? Let her go.

While on the one hand, activists say that putting homosexuals on TV has no effect on people, TV advertisers are lining up for the best slots to influence people. Did you realize that the Vice President spoke on the matter too? In Los Angeles, Al Gore said, “So many television shows, songs, and movies have dramatically changed the way we see vital issues. In this sense, the very term ‘entertainment industry’ is incomplete. For while you entertain, you also open minds and hearts. . . . When the character ‘Ellen’ came out, millions of Americans were forced to look at sexual orientation in a more open light” (quoted from the Larry King show on CNN, Oct 16, 1997).

Maybe it is fair to point out that another Vice President, Dan Quayle, also spoke about media’s influence on culture, condemning their influence for showing a single woman choosing to get pregnant on TV’s “Murphy Brown” show. Many, including the President, later said that Dan Quayle was right. We need to consider carefully the influence shows like this have on our families.

DeGeneres began her comedy career with a skit wherein she was on the phone to God. Maybe it’s time she and others actually listen to what God said in the Bible.

## Heirs According to the Promise

The book of Galatians is a book that deals with the difference between the Old Law and the New Covenant. The Old Law was limited in its scope. It pertained to the Jews only. The Old Law was limited in forgiveness of sins. It required the blood of animals as sacrifices on a daily basis to remit sins. However, in the New Covenant, Paul tells us that a person must come in contact with the blood of Christ in baptism to have forgiveness of sins, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death. Therefore we are buried with Him in baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:3-4). A person who is baptized becomes a child of God (Rom. 8:14-17). Romans 8:17 makes this point clear, "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ . . ." Paul also said in Galatians 3:29, "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and

heirs according to the promise."

The word "heir" according to Thayer's *Greek Lexicon* means, "to possess of Christians, as exalted by faith to the dignity of sons of Abraham and so sons of God, and hence to receive the blessings of God's kingdom promised to Abraham." *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* says the word "denotes one who obtains a lot or portion." It carries with it the idea that all children of God are heirs to an inheritance that is yet to come. When do Christians become heirs? They become heirs when they put Jesus Christ on in baptism and are born again to be adopted by the Father (John 3:3, 5; Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:5). If you're a child of God, then you are an heir according to the promise of God. We are currently waiting to receive our inheritance of heaven.

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### Is the Sauce for the Goose Good for the Gander?

Just see if it turns around fairly in the public's view. A letter to the editor of the *Alberta Report*, addressed the issue of whether or not homosexuals should be allowed to adopt or foster children. So, they turned it around: ". . . Are homosexuals fit to parent foster children? To answer this question, let us take two gay men, dress them up in black suits with clerical collars, and jowl them out a bit. We now have two Christian Brothers from the Mount Cashel Boy's Orphanage, who sexually abused young boys for years. Defrock these brothers, remove their titles, and a wonderful transformation takes place. They are now considered worthy, by our deluded politicians, to foster children. . . . The homosexual community accuses anyone of objecting to their death style as hating them, but they are sinners like the rest of us, needing mercy. However, they are not fit to foster children and never will be" (Allen Iddings, in Sept. 22, 1997 issue, 3).

### False Prophecy

As I was doing a little research on another topic, I came

across a "prophecy" about Diana Spencer (deceased), princess of Wales: ". . . I see her married and very, very happy. And there will be another child, a girl. Of that I am certain" (Betty Palko, "clairvoyant"; in March 1995 *Miracles and the Extraordinary* magazine, 10). Just how wrong can one be? Let us not forget the Bible teaching about such prophets: "And you may say in your heart, 'How shall we know the word which the Lord has not spoken?' When a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the thing does not come about or come true, that is the thing which the Lord has not spoken. The prophet has spoken presumptuously, you shall not be afraid of him" (Deut. 18:21-22).

Just a note: It may seem there are many quotes and references to the *Alberta Report*. Yes, indeed there are. Since moving to Alberta, I've found it a good source to keep up with this kind of information. I hope it is useful to you also.

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18 Rossmere Ct. SE, Medicine Hat, Alberta T1B 2M3

## God's Promise

In order for us to understand the great promise of God we must return to when the promise was originally given. The covenant and promise was given to Abraham. God promised that through Abraham's seed a nation would inherit a land that God would give them. He also promised that through Abraham's seed all nations of the earth would be blessed (Gen. 12:1-3). God renewed the promise of a nation and land in Genesis 15:3-6. The heir to these promises first was Isaac. God renewed the covenant with him in Genesis 26:3-4. The heir to Isaac was Jacob. And God renewed the same promise to Jacob that he had made to Abraham and Isaac (Gen. 28:13-14). It was through one of Jacob's sons that the seed promise would be fulfilled, that son was Judah (Gen. 49:10). The seed promise made by God was the Messiah coming to bring salvation.

Genesis 15:6 declares that Abraham believed and obeyed the God of heaven. Other New Testament passages show that Abraham trusted in God's word and was obedient. Thus, he was called a friend of God (Rom. 4:3-6, 20-25; Gal. 3:6; Heb. 11:8-17; Jas. 2:20-25).

God promised that through Abraham's seed all families of the earth would be blessed in the Messiah. The promise was for those who follow the Messiah, they would never die, share in the blessings, and would receive an inheritance (John 3:15; 6:35, 40; Heb. 1:1-4). Paul said in Ephesians 1:10-14, "That in the dispensation of the fulness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him. In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will: That we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory." We know that this promise is sure and true because God cannot lie and sent Christ to purchase our souls (Gal. 4:4; Tit. 1:2).

## The Law of Moses

God not only promised Abraham the great promises, but said that his descendants would spend 430 years in captivity (Gen. 15:13-16; Acts 7:6; Gal. 3:17). When they escaped Egyptian bondage, they received the Law of Moses (Exod. 20-34). The Law served two purposes: (1) It was added because of transgressions or sins (Gal. 3:19); (2) It showed us the promise to come (Gal. 3:21). But the Law of Moses was not a perfect law, "But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith, but after that faith is come, we are no

longer under a schoolmaster" (Gal. 3:23-25). The faith is a reference to a better testament, "But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also He is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second" (Heb. 8:6-7). The Law could not take away sins. It was an imperfect of faith, "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not ceased to be offered? Because that the worshipers once purged should have had no conscience of sins. But in those sacrifices there is remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins" (Heb. 10:1-4).

## The Perfect Sacrifice of Christ

Since the Law could not take away sins there had to be something better. Jesus Christ came and was the perfect sacrifice for sin. His death made possible the forgiveness of sins, even the sins of the whole world. He bore them all — the sins of those under the Old Law and those who were living during the Patriarchal age (Isa. 53:5, 8, 10-12; Heb. 10:12). The Old Law was given till the seed should come — that seed was Christ (Gal. 3:19, 26). He offered himself just once for all time (Heb. 9:28; 10:8-14). Christ's death opened the door of salvation for all mankind — the perfect, great salvation (Heb. 2:3; Eph. 2:11-22). Jesus' instructions were for people to believe, repent and be baptized (Mark 16:16; Luke 24:47). The apostles followed those instructions by preaching it (Acts 2:38-40). The Jews on Pentecost believed it and obeyed it (Acts 2:41). When we follow those same instructions, we become heirs as all who have obeyed the Lord (Gal. 3:27-29). Those who obey share in the blessings (Eph. 1:3; Rom. 8:28-30). We become members of the body of Christ — the church (Acts 2:47; 1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18). The body is where God wants all to be one (John 17:20-21; Gal. 3:14; Eph. 3:6). The inheritance will be given when Christ returns or if we should die first and after we face God on the Judgment Day (2 Tim. 4:8; Rev. 2:10; 1 Pet. 1:4; Heb. 4:9-11).

Can we not see how this all ties together? If in Christ, then are we Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise. Our responsibility is to proclaim the great message of salvation to all (Matt. 28:18-20). God's promises are sure and true, our hope is tied into them (Heb. 6:13-15, 18-20). We wait for the new heavens and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness (2 Pet. 3:9-13). Those who obey can receive the blessings and become "heirs according the promise" as well. Brethren, let us remain faithful and loyal to God and keep the promise of the inheritance.

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*P. O. Box 183, Middlebourne, West Virginia 26149*

## Consequences of False Teaching

There was a time among God's people that false teaching and false teachers weren't tolerated. In many congregations they still aren't. One example that we can cite in the Scriptures is found in Galatians 2:1-5. Paul, referring to those who were teaching error concerning circumcision, said in verse 5, "To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you." It is a shame that cannot be said about some of my brethren today. We hear a plea for tolerance by those who are either teaching error or by those who have been caught up in the error. While I believe that we should be patient with each other (2 Thess. 5:14), there is a big difference between patience and tolerance.

An analogy that I like to use, is with my own children. I can, and must, be patient with my children as they grow up, but I cannot tolerate bad behavior. They must know the difference between right and wrong, and I must patiently teach them those things. I can, and must, be patient with those who are newly converted to the Lord. I need to help them as they mature to full grown Christians and I would expect other Christians to be patient with me as I grow to maturity. I also must be patient toward all my fellow men. Being patient though doesn't mean that we can't, and don't, correct someone when he is wrong. Such was the case with Apollos (Acts 18:24-26). However, I cannot tolerate someone who is teaching that which is contrary to the will of God. The word "tolerate" means: (1) to allow; permit, (2) to recognize and respect (others' beliefs, practices, etc.) without sharing them, (3) to put up with; bear (*Webster's New World Dictionary*). If I can tolerate error concerning the divorce/remarriage question, or the issue of fellowship, then why can't I tolerate the error taught by the Baptists, Methodists, or any other denominational group? Some brethren would probably contend that we could. The word of God teaches us to reprove and rebuke (2 Tim. 4:2; Eph. 5:11), not to tolerate error.

There are some consequences that fall out as a result of false teaching. I have made some observations and I would like to notice a few of these.

### **It Causes Folks to Depart from the Lord**

One of the things that amazed Paul was that so many of the Galatians were so soon removed from the Lord (Gal. 1:6). As a result of the false teaching that was going on at Galatia, people were starting to go back to the law of Moses (Gal. 5:4). When error is taught today, folks have to make a decision. Are they going to follow the Lord or follow the false teacher (2 Pet. 2:2)? A lot of the blame lies at the feet of those who teach error, but some of the blame must also go to those who follow it. Brethren, we need to ground ourselves in the truth, so that we won't be "tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive" (Eph. 4:14). When we start demanding book, chapter, and verse (1 Pet. 4:11), then I believe that we will stop the departures from the truth. The thing that appeals to many Christians is the "good words and fair speeches" (Rom. 16:18) that are being used by so many preaching brethren. When lessons that are brought from the pulpit are filled with stories and cute little sayings, then we can expect some who don't want to hear the truth to depart from the Lord. Then there are other Christians who do not have the courage to confront the error and just go along with it to keep the "peace." It is amazing to me that folks, who should have been grounded in the truth, have left it and are willing to follow those who teach error.

### **It Gives People a False Sense of Security**

When some "religious leaders" (i.e., the Pope, Billy Graham, etc.) teach things that soothe the conscience of those who hear them, the hearers have a false sense of security. When Billy Graham teaches that a person can be saved without baptism or that he can put his hands on the TV and accept the Lord as his Savior, it gives him hope that he is saved, when in fact he is still lost! The same thing happens when a gospel preacher teaches error concerning divorce and remarriage, or the issue of fellowship, or the deity of Christ, or a myriad of other subjects. It gives people a false sense of security. Folks who are caught up in adultery don't want to hear that they are in sin (Matt. 14:3-4; 19:9), and that they must get out of that adulterous relationship in order to be saved (1 Cor. 6:9-10). So, there are some gospel preachers who will teach what they want to hear (2 Tim. 4:3-4). It is shameful that some brethren

have taken a simple passage like Matthew 19:1-9 and made it so complex and difficult for some to understand. Just as there are many in the denominational world who believe that all a person has to do in order to be saved is have faith, I am sure there are some so-called Christians who have believed the error taught concerning divorce and remarriage and are still living in adultery even though they have “obeyed” the gospel. We don’t have the space here to get into all the error that is being taught about divorce and remarriage by some brethren, or all the other error that is being taught about other subjects. Suffice it to say however, that all who teach, believe, and practice error have a false sense of security.

**It Will Cause People to Be Eternally Lost**

The charge, “My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation” (stricter judgment, NASB) (Jas. 3:1), should stir all of us who teach to “take heed unto thyself, and unto the *doctrine*; continue in *them*: (emphasis mine SL) for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee” (1 Tim. 4:16). Those of us who preach and teach have a great and grave responsibility. We are helping to shape the hearts and minds of those we teach. As a direct result of what we teach, people will either be lost or saved. If we are teaching the truth, it will cause people to be saved (John 8:32). If we are teaching error, it will cause people to be lost (2 Thess. 2:11-12). To think that we had a hand in teaching someone the truth and they obeyed the gospel and were saved is a thrilling thought indeed! But to think that I taught error and it caused people to be lost is a discouraging thing to think about. Someone may ask, “But how will I know if it is truth or not?” Put it to the test (Acts 17:11; 1 John 4:1). If someone teaches something that is contrary to the will of God, confront him with it. It may be that he accidentally taught that which is wrong or it may be that you misunderstood. Or it may be he just blatantly taught error. This is serious business! Souls are at stake!

**Conclusion**

Just as “the gospel is the power of God to save” (Rom. 1:16), error is the devil’s power to cause folks to be lost. There will always be some who will depart from the truth and teach unwholesome words, so we must not lay our swords by. We must continue to fight the battle against the devil. Let us be determined to teach the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27).

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**“What Would You Pay”** continued from front page which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church which he *hath purchased with his own blood*” (Acts 20:28). God demanded the shedding of the blood of Christ to bring the church into existence.

**Redemption Has Its Price**

Redemption is “. . . in Christ” (Eph. 1:7; Rom. 3:23); but this redemption was not without cost. Peter penned, “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from our vain conversation, received by tradition from your fathers: But with the precious *blood of Christ*, as a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Pet. 1:18-19). Heaven will cost you being “baptized into the death of Jesus Christ” (Rom.6:3-4) where you contact the blood shed on the cross (John 9:34).

**Christians Can Pay For They Are Rich**

Paul told the Corinthian Christians, “For we know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be *rich*” (2 Cor. 8:9). Saved people owe a debt and must pay. Paul said that he was “. . . debtor, so, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel” (Rom.1:14). Heaven will cost us time to teach others (2 Tim. 2:2), to be holy and godly (Tit. 2:11-12), our time (Eph. 5:16), sacrifice (Rom. 12:1-2), money, (1 Cor. 16:1-2), good influence (2 Cor. 3:2; Phil. 2:15), and a life-time of faithful and steadfast service unto God (1 Cor. 15:58; Rev. 2:10). Are you ready to pay the price to go to heaven? Jesus asked, “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?” (Matt. 16:26).

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## “Remembrance” continued from page 2

will follow are the most basic. Indeed, the deity of Christ, his atonement, the inspiration of the Scriptures, and many other doctrines are certainly fundamental principles that we must not forsake. However, the following truths seem to be some fundamental truths that are in jeopardy at this present hour. We remind brethren of them, not to exalt them above other truths, but because they are under assault.

### The Plan of Salvation

When I was a child, I distinctly remember hearing sermons about the “plan of salvation.” Everyone understood that man’s salvation depended upon both what God does and what man does. God’s part was demonstrated in his loving grace toward us in sacrificing his only begotten Son for the sins of mankind (John 3:16). Our religious neighbors were fundamentally agreed on what God had done for mankind through Jesus Christ. However, our religious neighbors were fundamentally disagreed on man’s part in his salvation. So brethren preached many sermons on the “plan of salvation” in which they presented what the Bible teaches that man must do to receive the gift of God’s grace.

They developed that man’s part in his salvation is the following: (1) The hearing that produces faith (Rom. 10:17; Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16). (2) Faith in Christ (Heb. 11:6; John 8:24; 14:6; Mark 16:16). (3) Repentance of sins (Acts 2:38; 17:30; 2 Pet. 3:9). (4) Confessing one’s faith in Christ (Acts 8:37; Matt. 10:32; Rom. 10:10). (5) Baptism (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Col. 2:12; Rom. 6:3-4; 1 Pet. 3:21). Our brethren emphasized that (a) Baptism is a burial in water; (b) Baptism is administered to penitent believers; and (c) Baptism is for the remission of sins. We understood that there is only one way to become a Christian, by “obeying the gospel.”

Roman Catholicism teaches salvation through meritorious works and Protestant denominationalism teaches salvation through “faith only.” Both are in error. What the gospel presents as the conditions for man’s salvation was a distinctive mark of the gospel preaching I heard in my youth.

There are evidences that our brethren are drifting away from this fundamental truth. Max Lucado has preached salvation through faith only. Others are more subtle in their criticism of preaching the plan of salvation, charging that such is preaching salvation by works. What they mean is that we are emphasizing what man must do to be saved to the neglect of preaching what God has done to save us. (What good would preaching either one be to the neglect of the other?) Basically what these critics are condemning is preaching that water baptism is a condition for salvation!

I intend to preach the “plan of salvation” so that when

my days on earth are over there will still be a remnant who clings to the fundamental truths of the gospel.

### The Five Acts of Worship

Another fundamental lesson that we heard when we grew up pertained to revealed worship. Gospel preachers emphasized to us that God has a pattern for worship. They emphasized that when men violate God’s pattern for worship, God is displeased, as shown by Cain’s unauthorized worship (Gen. 4), Nadab and Abihu’s offering “strange” fire which God “commanded not” (Lev. 10:1-2), and Saul’s unauthorized worship (1 Sam. 15). We learned that God has a pattern for worship in our own age as well.

The acts of worship that God has commanded are as follows: (1) *Prayer* (Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 14:15). For prayer to be acceptable, it must be offered in Jesus’ name (John 16:23-26). Prayer offered in the name of the virgin Mary is not acceptable worship. (2) *The Lord’s supper* (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:20-33). The Lord’s supper is observed weekly (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:20; 16:1-2). The elements to be used are unleavened bread and the “fruit of the vine” (Matt. 26:17, 26-28). Both the bread and fruit of the vine was taken by all participants. The Lord’s supper is not a sacrifice anew of the literal body and blood of Jesus (as in transubstantiation). (3) *Giving* (1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 9:6-7). The church’s work is financed by the free-will offerings of its members. The early church did not tithe, take up several offerings, raise funds through commercial enterprises (rummage sales, raffles, cake sales, car washes, etc.), and such like things. The church only took a contribution on Sunday, not on any other day of the week. (4) *Singing* (1 Cor. 14:15; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). The Lord commanded that his saints lift their voices in praise to him in song. Men have changed this part of worship by: (a) Choirs, (b) Professional entertainers to perform for the group, and (c) Mechanical instruments of music. (5) *Preaching* (Acts 2:42). That which was preached from the pulpit was apostolic doctrine. The pulpit is abused when another message is preached (such as *The Book of Mormon*, the *Koran*, *Science and Health With Key to the Scriptures*). The pulpit is abused when those who believe the Bible do not use the Bible when they preach, choosing rather to tell anecdotes and self-motivation stories. Faith is built through the preaching of the word (Rom. 10:17). When the word is not preached, faith cannot be built.

If there is no pattern for worship, then one kind of worship is just as good as any other (Rom. 4:15). That there is a pattern for worship is obvious from God’s condemnation of idolatry (1 Cor. 6:9). The very fact that idolatry is condemned demonstrates that there is a pattern revealed for man’s worship. The departures from that pattern of worship are just as serious in our own day as they were in the first century.

There is plenty of evidence that indicates brethren are



moving away from this concept. Just how long has it been since you have heard a sermon on the five acts of worship? Among our liberal brethren, a few churches have allowed mechanical instruments of music to be used, a chorus (choir), and solos sometimes performed in their public worship, the word of God is less and less emphasized in their preaching and teaching programs, some churches have “hummed” a song while the Lord’s supper is being taken, and some have raised funds through selling admission to certain programs.

Will there be a remnant who still insist on the New Testament pattern of worship in the next generation? That depends upon whether or not we put our brethren in remembrance of these things.

### **The Church of Christ**

Another lesson that was a distinctive part of the preaching we learned as children concerned the Lord’s church. Brethren of that generation distinguished between divinely revealed religion and that devised by men. They were not ashamed or embarrassed to preach the distinctive features of revealed religion.

The church of Christ has always been distinctive. One can easily distinguish the worship of the New Testament church (congregational singing, partaking of the Lord’s supper on the first day of each week, prayer in the name of Jesus, contribution, and preaching apostolic doctrine) from that of any sect of Judaism (with its Temple sacrifices, Levitical priesthood, Levitical choirs, tithing, etc.) or any pagan temple. Had the church not been distinctive, there would have been no reason for its separate existence.

The church of Christ is just as distinctive from the unrevealed religions of the late twentieth century as it was from those of the mid-first century. Among the things that are distinctive about the church today are the following: (1) *Its names* (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:15). Although the church does not have one exclusive name by which it is called, it is distinctive in that it wears only those names found in Scripture. Paul condemned the wearing of the names of men (1 Cor. 1:10-13) and that condemnation is just as certain in the twentieth century as it was in the first. We do not wear those names that exalt men (Lutheran, for Martin Luther), some religious act (Baptist, for baptism), some organizational structure (Presbyterian or Episcopalian), some emotional religious experience incorrectly named (Pentecostal, named after the Day of Pentecost, not some religious experience), or other non-biblical name. (2) *Its organization* (Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1-14; Tit. 1:5-7). Each local church was organized congregationally. Each local church was independent and autonomous, without any organizational structure tying local congregations together (as exists in conferences, synods, and councils). The officers in the church are elders and deacons (1 Tim. 3:1-14). There was a plurality of elders in each local church

(Acts 20:17, 28; Phil. 1:1; etc.). Churches soon departed from this simple form of church government to develop their own, as was done in Roman Catholicism (with its priests, bishops, archbishops, cardinals, and pope) and the varieties of government in Protestant denominationalism (pastor oversight, inter-congregational organizations, conferences, etc.). (3) *Its work is unique*. The church is designed to do these works: (a) Evangelize the world (1 Tim. 3:15); (b) Edify its members (Acts 20:32); and (c) Relieve the physical sufferings of its members (Acts 6:1-6; 11:27-30). Churches are not designed to (a) Form political action committees; (b) Build and maintain colleges, high schools, grade schools, etc.; (c) Build and maintain hospitals; (d) Feed the poor of the world; (e) Operate child day-care facilities; and such like works.

Already there are evidences that brethren are moving away from preaching the distinctive nature of divinely revealed religion. Brethren are writing that when we preach the distinctive features of the divinely revealed church, we are preaching “ourselves” rather than Christ. Such preaching is said to be a departure from the gospel because it is “church centered” rather than “Christ centered.” How can one preach the divinely revealed kingdom of God without emphasizing the King who gave its laws?

So long as I am in the tabernacle of this body, I intend to remind brethren of the distinctive nature of the Lord’s church, lest there come a time when the Lord’s church no longer exists. There is a danger of the Lord’s church becoming just another Protestant denomination. It already has in too many places.

### **The Moral Purity of Its Members**

Another feature of gospel preaching of my youth was a fervent call for Christians to live like Christ in their moral conduct. Brethren plainly condemned the immoral conduct of the world and called on Christians to walk in holiness.

The church has always been faced with the danger of being conformed to the moral standards of the environment in which it exists (Rom. 12:1-2). We are in danger of conforming to the world’s moral code in the following areas: (1) *Dress* (1 Tim. 2:9-10). Many see nothing wrong with wearing shorts that expose most of the thigh, wearing one or two-piece bathing suits in the company of those of the opposite sex, low cut blouses, tight fitting blue jeans, skirts with splits half-way up the thigh, dresses with an open back, and other sexually stimulating apparel. (2) *Divorce and remarriage* (Matt. 19:9). In contrast to the Bible standard that allows remarriage for the innocent party when one puts his mate away for fornication, the world sees nothing wrong with divorce for any reason and subsequent remarriage. (3) *Attitude toward drinking intoxicating beverages* (1 Pet. 4:3). (4) *Gambling*. (5) *Sexual immorality* (Gal. 5:19). The world sees nothing wrong with consensual sex

outside of marriage (fornication) and homo- sexuality. (6) *Lasciviousness* (Gal. 5:19). The world thinks that sexual stimulation is natural and sinless. Consequently, it does not condemn such things as pornography, dancing, calling sex phone lines, attending girlie shows, and such like things.

There is plenty of evidence that some have quit preaching against some of the things that the Bible demands in moral purity. One can find disagreement in about any local church by preaching on immodest dress, dancing, divorce and remarriage, and gambling, because already we are being influenced to conform to the world's moral standards.

### Conclusion

Many first century churches no longer exist. In the state of Israel today, there are only two institutional congregations, even though in the first century 3000 obeyed the gospel on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41). These churches have ceased to exist. What will become of the Lord's church in our area over the next 50 years? That depends upon whether or not we do the work of a faithful preacher in reminding brethren of the fundamental truths of the gospel.

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6567 Kings Ct., Danville, Indiana 46122

## Preachers Needed

**Byrdstown, Tennessee:** The Lord's church which meets at Star Point in Byrdstown, Tennessee is looking for a preacher to work with them. They are a small group of about 18 and can offer partial support. Byrdstown is located about 5 miles south of Static, Kentucky and about 40 miles north of Cookeville, Tennessee. Further information can be obtained by contacting Harlan Jones at 931-864-3933.

**Perry, Florida:** The Spring Warrior Church of Christ in Perry is looking for a full-time preacher. For more information, one can reach one of the elders, Mr. Billy R. Willes at 850-584-5281.

**Independence, West Virginia:** The church in Independence is looking for a full-time preacher. They are a small congregation with about 24 in attendance. They have a house and can supply some support, but extra support would be needed. They are located about 15 miles south of Morgantown. If interested, please send resume to Dean D. Brewer, Sr., Rt. 1, Box 193, Independence, WV 26374 or call 304-864-6721.

## Preacher Available

**Douglas W. Hill, 605 N. Travis, Deer Park, TX 77536 (phone: 281-479-7287):** I am 26, and finishing my last semester of university. I plan (Lord willing) to move to Lithuania in August of 1998 and am looking for faithful churches and brethren who would be interested in helping in this work. For a more detailed letter, please contact me. Also, I will gladly answer any questions about what I teach on any subject. I believe you have the right and obligation to know about those with whom you have fellowship. My e-mail address is Douglaswh@juno.com

## Obituary

### Dewey Stalvey Loved To Go Church

He is no longer the imposing figure of broad shoulders and a gaitly walk. For almost 100 years, he has walked among men. For many who know him, he has always been an older man. He has lived through numerous world wars, economic boom and depression, travels from horse and buggy to space travel, leaders great and small and a myriad of experiences too numerable to list. It is hard to imagine the pictures seen by his dimming eye sight.

The keepers of his house tremble now as the sun and the light, the moon and the stars are darkened. The grinders have ceased and the windows grow dim. The almond tree has blossomed as the grasshopper is a burden. His desire fails as he prepares to go to his eternal home. Soon to be loosed is the silver cord that has bound him for nearly a century. The golden bowl formed so perfectly in 1898 is about to be broken and the pitcher shattered at the fountain. The wheel of life has slowed at the well as it breaks in one final turn.

All who know Dewey Stalvey know the Bible is important to him. He loved to preach to friend and stranger. He loved the message of the gospel and the proclamation of such. On one occasion of a gospel meeting, he implored his family to let him go into the community and invite each one from door to door. With aged body but clarity of mind, he was taken by the preacher and declared the good news to many a door. "Behold, a sower went out to sow" (Matt. 13:3).

Dewey Stalvey is not ashamed of his God and his Lord. He enjoyed the assembling of saints together to lift up his

voice to God. He rarely needed a song book as the words of the song were implanted in his mind. His golden voice would rise to the highest heights and his heart lifted up the words to Heaven. Dewey Stalvey loved to sing about marching to Zion. "Come we that love the Lord, and let our joy be known," is how the song would go and his voice would open wide with the joy he felt.

His heart was touched by the amazing grace of God and how much the Lord had loved a man called Dewey Stalvey. It was a sweet sound to the ears of an old man who knew so long how God had saved an old wretch like him. The old rugged cross was a place Dewey Stalvey thought of as on that hill far away, stood an emblem of suffering and shame. With head held high and lips resounding the joy of heaven, he sought the place where his Lord would say, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Dewey Stalvey came from a different bolt of cloth. He came from a mantle of time when men sought God and believed in the Bible. In his day, the church was important and men sought after spiritual things. Their world was not cluttered with all the materialistic pursuits of today's generation. He

knows that all the world's possessions cannot take the place of that which he possesses in his heart — his God.

Dewey Stalvey loved to go to the assembly with the saints. His aged body with all of its frailties would hinder his going. A loving family would bless his spirit by laying his church clothes on his body as he lay there in bed. His white shirt and red tie would fill his spirit with the presence of the saints he longed to be with.

We need more people like Dewey Stalvey — more men who seek to be godly men and lead others to Christ. He had his human frailties as we all do but he looked for "city which has foundations whose builder and makers God" (Heb. 11:10). That makes the difference in Dewey Stalvey and most men.

Dewey Stalvey died February 27, 1998 in Trenton, Florida. He was 99 years old. Submitted by Kent E. Heaton, Sr.



**Moral Responsibility**

"Every adult, no matter how unfortunate a childhood he had or how habit-ridden he may be, is free to make choices about his life. To say of Hitler, to say of the criminal, that he did not choose to be bad but was a victim of his upbringing is to make all morality, all discussion of right and wrong, impossible. It leaves unanswered the question of why people in similar circumstances did not all become Hitlers. But worse, to say 'It is not his fault; he was not free to choose' is to rob a person of his humanity, and reduce him to the level of an animal who is bound by instinct" (Harold S. Kushner, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* via *The Reader's Digest*, May 1996, 154).

**Obligated to Subsidize Ending Life**

"Just four years after Oregon voters narrowly approved physician-assisted suicide, 'right-to-die' advocates are now telling taxpayers they have an obligation to subsidize poor people who wish to end their lives.

"The Oregon Health Services commission voted 10-1 to authorize delivery of lethal prescription drugs for the 340,000 low-income residents insured under Medicaid.

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"Euthanasia opponents say proponents never mentioned suicide subsidies when they promoted the law. They should not have been surprised. Once a right is created, it isn't long before anyone who cannot afford to exercise that right is regarded as a victim of discrimination and petitioners demand that tax dollars be used to bring that person up to the level of the 'rich' who can afford to kill themselves" (Cal Thomas, *The Indianapolis Star* [March 8, 1998], D2).

**What Would You Do?**

What would you do if this were the day  
 For Jesus to come and take you away?  
 Would you be glad the day finally came,  
 Or would you be sad, and suffering shame?

Would you say, "Jesus, Lord here am I,"  
 Or would you be shaken and starting to cry?  
 Would you sing loudly, your praises to God?  
 Or would you be looking for some place to hide?

Would you cry "Mercy, dear Lord, on my soul?"  
 Or would you stand firmly on what you were told?  
 Would you be sure by the scriptures you've read,  
 Or would you rest purely on what someone has said?

Remember, my friend, this could be the day,  
 When Jesus will come to take you away.  
 Then where would you go, to heaven or hell?  
 The answer is yours as you know very well.

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*Henry Priest, 811 Liberty St., Marked Tree, Arkansas 72365*