



Vol. XLII

No. 14

July 16, 1998

## Of Quarreling Brethren

Norman E. Fultz

*Truth Magazine* is a religious journal now into its 42nd year of publication. It hardly seems possible that I have subscribed to it for all but the first of those years, and I have that year in a bound volume. From very early on when it began as *Truth Magazine*, I have also submitted a number of articles that have appeared in the paper. The paper has never sought to evade controversy when its editors thought a matter needed discussion. I have by no means agreed with all that has been printed, but it has afforded opportunity for many issues to be discussed in very forthright style. Brethren have often set forth opposing views on a number of topics. Several written debates have been carried in its pages, one as recently as the November 20 issue.

In the December 4, 1997 issue, a younger brother (been preaching about ten years) had an article entitled, "*Quarreling Brethren: Discouragement to a Young Preacher*." I understand his perplexity as he has struggled to understand the many different articles and sermons that have been presented concerning the matter of fellowship, especially as it is affected by one's comprehension of Romans 14. My thoughts here do not address an exposition nor an application of this passage. If all that has been written and said on the passage were compiled, it would surely be sufficient for several large volumes. My thoughts here are basically some reactions I had when I first read the article by the young brother.

To several of the thoughts he registered, I could borrow the modern, sometimes overworked phrase, "Been there; done that." I can identify with the discouragement which controversy among brethren engenders in a young preacher.

When I first began preaching, I was absolutely amazed at the range of issues among brethren. Early on I became aware of a couple of issues. One questioned whether a school operated by brethren in which the Bible was taught as a part of its curriculum had a right to exist. Another was whether a congregation could have a "located preacher," a man who worked with

see "*Quarreling*" on p. 440

---

**Let us love truth  
above persons and  
principles above  
personalities. Let  
us be desirous of  
marching under  
no banner but  
that of truth.**

---

## Editorial

Vol. XLII July 16, 1998 No. 14

**Editor: Mike Willis**

**Associate Editor: Connie W. Adams**

### Staff Writers

J. Wiley Adams	Irvin Himmel
Donald P. Ames	Olen Holderby
O.C. Birdwell, Jr.	Frank Jamerson
Dick Blackford	Daniel H. King
Edward Bragwell	Aude McKee
Paul J. Casebolt	Harry Osborne
Bill Cavender	H.E. Phillips
Bob Dickey	Donnie V. Rader
Johnie Edwards	Tom Roberts
Harold Fite	Weldon E. Warnock
Larry Hafley	Lewis Willis
Ron Halbrook	Bobby Witherington
Clinton D. Hamilton	Steve Wolfgang

### Guardian of Truth Foundation

#### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Connie W. Adams	Fred Pollock
Alan Birdwell	Weldon E. Warnock
O.C. Birdwell, Jr.	Mike Willis
Dickey Cooper	Steve Wolfgang
Ron Halbrook	

#### — Subscription Rates —

\$19.00 Per Year

Single Copies — \$2.00 each

Foreign Subscriptions — \$22.00

#### — Bulk Rates —

\$1.25 per subscription per month

**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.

**Subscriptions**, renewals and other correspondence should be sent to Truth Magazine, P.O. Box 9670, Bowling Green, KY 42101.

**Book orders** should be sent to Truth Bookstore, P.O. Box 9670, Bowling Green, KY 42101. Phone: 1-800-428-0121.

**Postmaster:** Send change of address to P.O. Box 9670, Bowling Green, KY 42101.

# The Intolerance of Liberalism

Mike Willis

In March, Reggie White, a pro-bowl defensive end who most recently played for the Green Bay Packers and who will probably be a Hall of Famer, caused quite a stir when he spoke at the Wisconsin State Assembly. He spoke about homosexuality as a sin saying that homosexuality is “one of the biggest sins” in the Bible. He continued, “Homosexuality is a decision. It’s not a race. . . . People from all different ethnic backgrounds live in this lifestyle. But people from all different ethnic backgrounds also are liars and cheaters and malicious and back-stabbers.”

The news reporters zeroed in on his statement, condemning him for his judgmental statements. When he was interviewed on *20/20*, White did not back down. He said, “I am going to speak the truth. . . . If people think that’s a contradiction and that’s hate, they need to take them up with God, not with Reggie White.”

The response to White’s statement has been interesting. Although Nike and Edge Gel continue to use him as their spokesman, Campbell Soup let White’s endorsement contract expire days after the statement. CBS had a job offer on White’s desk for him to be a football analyst for the network. Although the job was practically in the bag, CBS Sports withdrew the job offer.

The interesting thing about this is that those promoting acceptance of the gay lifestyle insist that we should tolerate alternative lifestyles. Yet, the Christian lifestyle, with its moral beliefs, is not tolerated. It is condemned by those preaching tolerance. If White’s contract had been withdrawn because he announced that he was homosexual, the civil rights activists would have been up in arms because of CBS Sports’ action. But when CBS mistreats one who openly espouses his Christian beliefs, his job offer is withdrawn and no one raises an eyebrow. Make no mistake about, American culture is moving toward persecution of Christians.

### We Are In A War

Christianity has been presented in most denominations in such terms that its militancy has been removed. The denominations are preaching about love in sentimental terms (not *agape* love), substituting pop psychology for the gospel, and employing entertainment groups to draw a

See “Intolerance” p. 441

# The Value of Public Worship

Connie W. Adams

Christians belong to the Lord all the time. We are his whether at home, at school, at work, at play, on a vacation trip, or wherever we happen to be. There is great value in private study of the Bible, private prayer and meditation. "In his law he meditates day and night" (Ps. 1:1-2). Such continual devotion is a deterrent to sin. "And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as he is pure" (1 John 3:4). "Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You" (Ps. 119:11).

Beyond all that, the Lord in his wisdom has ordained certain activities of a public nature in which his children jointly participate. The most common word translated worship means "to make obeisance, do reverence to" (Vine's on *proskuneo*). It is homage paid by the performance of prescribed acts. Finite man would not know what acts of devotion would be acceptable to an infinite being apart from divine revelation. If he attempted such in the absence of such revelation, that would constitute "will worship" (Col. 2:23). That is worship suited to the will of the worshiper rather than to the will of the object of worship. Jesus said that the Father would seek men to "worship Him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23-24).

There can be no doubt that the early church met publicly to engage in worshipful activities. "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). They were "continuing daily with one accord in the temple" (Acts 2:46). At Antioch, Barnabas and Saul "for a whole year . . . assembled with the church and taught a great many people" (Acts 11:26). At Troas the disciples "came together to break bread" and while there heard Paul preach (Acts 20:7). At Corinth a disciplinary matter was to be carried out "when you are gathered together" (1 Cor. 5:4). Paul spoke of their public gathering to eat the Lord's supper. "When you come together as a church. . ." (1 Cor. 11:18). He wanted their coming together to be for the better and not for the worse (v. 17). He wrote of "the whole church" coming together "in one place" (1 Cor. 14:23). In that context he wrote of singing, praying, and teaching and said, "Let all things be done for edification" (v. 26). Singing together was calculated to teach and admonish one another (Col. 3:16).

*continued next page*

**Of Quarreling Brethren**  
Norman E. Fultz..... front page

**The Intolerance of Liberalism**  
Mike Willis..... 2

**The Value of Public Worship**  
Connie W. Adams..... 3

**Playing "Follow the Preacher"**  
Richie Thetford ..... 5

**The Status of Divorced Persons**  
Leon Mauldin..... 6

**Thinking About the Family (3)**  
Greg Litmer..... 8

**Kenneth Hoyle: His Life's Sermon**  
Larry Ray Hafley..... 10

**A Choice Must Be Made!**  
Shane Williams ..... 12

**Does It Make A Difference What One Believes?**  
Donnie V. Rader..... 14

**Metaphors for Baptism**  
Tom Hamilton ..... 16

**Unity With Error: A Comparison**  
Steve Wallace ..... 18

**Order In The House of God**  
Bobby Witherington..... 20

**Settling Disputes and Acts 15**  
Paul K. Williams ..... 22

**Society Has Failed You**  
Kenneth D. Sils ..... 23

Christians have a mutual responsibility to “consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the day approaching” (Heb. 10:24-25).

### Why Is Public Worship Neglected?

The foregoing passages clearly indicate the will of God touching the matter of public worship. Then why is it so often neglected? In every congregation there are some members who view such gatherings as entirely optional. They will go if they have nothing else to do. They will be absent because of ball practice, extra-curricular school functions, family reunions, or family holiday gatherings. Some think that vacations exempt them from seeking out and meeting with faithful brethren on the Lord’s Day. Some who are careful to attend a Sunday morning service will skip other opportunities to worship the same God and learn more of his word.

Why is this? There are some things to be done on a weekly basis. When Jesus instituted the Lord’s supper, he said, “This do in remembrance of me” (1 Cor. 11:25). The practice of the early church was to do this “upon the first day of the week” (Acts 20:7). On that day Christians were to “lay by in store” so that collective work of the church could be done (1 Cor. 16:1-2). Other ordained worship activities may be done at other times (teaching, singing, and praying). When a Christian chooses not to meet on the first day of the week to break bread and lay by in store, he has chosen to violate a clear directive from the Lord. Jesus said, “This do,” but you say, “No, I have company” or “No, I don’t want to do that today. We are going to a family gathering, or on a picnic, or to an amusement park.”

Such behavior is rebellion against the Lord of Glory. It places the convenience of the worshiper above the true object of worship — the God of the universe. It reveals a lack of true conviction. In essence it says, “I know what

the Lord said, but I think. . .” If that isn’t will worship. then what is? “Oh Lord I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps” (Jer. 10:23). It places human wisdom above divine wisdom.

It further ignores the mutual responsibilities Christians have toward one another. We draw strength from each other. We all live in a society which is becoming increasingly secular and in which godly principles are held up to ridicule. *We need each other.* Our children need the influence of godly parents who see the need for regular, consistent worship of the Almighty and who are willing to keep their priorities straight. Weak Christians need the worthy example of those who are truly committed to the Lord.

Yes, sometimes it requires great effort. The responsibilities of jobs, families, and other social demands are taxing of strength and energy. But I remind you that it was not easy for our Lord to leave his heavenly existence, take the form of a servant, suffer the toils of a peasant existence, and then to endure the indignities of his trials and then the agony of the cross. What if he had gone to a family reunion that day? What if that would have made him miss a great sporting event? What if he was just too tired and that was his only day off?

I tell you, when we get our genuine convictions in line, we will see the need for public worship. The Lord requires it for our good. We need it. Our fellow Christians need it. The world needs to see an example of people who truly believe and whose convictions are not for sale, even for the sake of their own convenience.

---

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

### If Only He Knew

by Gary Smalley

Smalley helps the husband understand his wife and meet her needs.

Paper.  
**\$9.99**

### For Better Or For Best

by Gary Smalley

Smalley helps the wife to understand her husband and build a better marriage.

Paper.  
**\$9.99**

# Playing “Follow the Preacher”

Richie Thetford

Since last August our adult class has journeyed through the pages of the Old Testament from Joshua to Esther. In that journey one thing stands out above anything else and that is for the most part the children of God were obedient to God when their chosen leader followed God. There were Joshua, Samuel, Saul, David, Solomon, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Joash, Amaziah, Uzziah, Jotham, Hezekiah, and Josiah. When all of these individuals dedicated themselves to serving God, then the people followed after them and served God also. During all this period of time the children of Israel drifted in and out of faithfulness to Almighty God, as their leaders changed in name and heart.

Then two other individuals came on the scene, both determined to serve God. These two were Ezra and Nehemiah. When the children of God were released from captivity and allowed to return to their land, Ezra came later with the purpose of turning their hearts to God. We read in Ezra 7:10: “For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.” Ezra was determined to serve God and to get the children of Israel to do likewise. He preached to the people and turned them from social, moral, and religious degeneracy. The people followed Ezra’s preaching and even disposed of their wives and children that they had no right to. Ezra had turned the people’s hearts to serve the Lord their God — or did he? Were the children of Israel truly worshipping God, or following the commands and teachings of Ezra because of the man?

Later we read about Nehemiah, another great man of God coming to Jerusalem to build the wall that had been destroyed years earlier. He gathered the people together and they were working together to build the wall. When the wall was completed, Ezra came and read to the people the law of God. The people showed great reverence to the law of God and worshiped God Almighty. They even made a covenant unto God to hold true to his statutes and ordinances. We see a people that seems to be devoted to God and following after him. But then Nehemiah leaves Jerusalem and travels

back to Babylon. We don’t know how long he was gone but when he returned to Jerusalem the people of God had drifted into apostasy! Nehemiah had to once again restore the people to follow after God.

What can one learn from this? God’s people only seemed to be motivated to serve him when they were happy with the leader that was motivating them to do so! They seemed to be obeying the teacher and not the teachings. God sent individuals such as Ezra and Nehemiah to help his children see the necessity in serving him. God also used many prophets to speak to the people urging them to *repent* and serve him with *all their heart!*

Do you know of those today that seem to be following the preacher instead of the *teachings* of the preacher? Some Christians seem to serve God faithfully as long as they are satisfied with the existing preacher and his work. I know of a case where the preacher left a local work and moved across town to work with another group and one family went with him. There are many cases of Christians that have given up and drifted into unfaithfulness when the local preacher left. Their hearts were not really set on serving God. We are told by Jesus in Mark 12:30: “And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.” When all Christians are determined to serve God first and foremost, no matter who the preacher is, then they will be able to adjust to any situation because their trust and loyalty is in God Almighty, not a man! We need to be like Ezra of old and have our hearts set to be determined to serving and obeying God. Let us not attach ourselves to decrees of men (Col. 2:20-22; 2 Tim. 4:3), but rather to hold fast to all the oracles of God (1 Pet. 4:11)!

---

510 Floyd Ave., Dumas, Texas 79029



# **The Status Of Divorced Persons**

Leon Mauldin

## **Who Can Marry?**

The Bible teaches that there are three classes of people who are eligible for marriage. One class would be those who have never been married. God's will from the beginning was, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh" (Matt. 19:4, 5). A second category would be those whose spouses have died. Paul said, "For the woman that hath a husband is bound by law to the husband while he liveth; but if the husband die, she is discharged from the law of the husband. So then if, while the husband liveth, she be joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if the husband die, she is free from the law, so that she is no adulteress, though she be joined to another man" (Rom. 7:3, 4). The third category is those who have put away their spouses for fornication. Jesus said, "Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth her when she is put away committeth adultery" (Matt. 19:9). These, and only these are eligible to marry. No other persons have the scriptural right to marry.

## **Is It Lawful To Divorce If One Doesn't Remarry?**

Just here we need to notice the binding nature of marriage. Sometimes people reason that divorce is not wrong, so long as one does not remarry. But consider 1 Corinthians 7:10-11: "Now to the married I command, yet not I but the Lord: A wife is not to depart from her husband. But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried, or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife" (NKJV). The Lord's command, the charge (ASV), is, "Don't divorce." This is not a passage giving permission to divorce. But the text does address the issue of what to

do when divorce has occurred. The text says, "... let her remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband." The reason these instructions are given can be easily understood in light of our opening paragraph. Reconciliation is desirable, but is not always possible. But remarriage to another is not permitted. If one has put away his spouse for any cause other than fornication, he is not in a position to choose to marry. If one is the "put-away" party in a divorce, he is not scripturally qualified to select another companion. For these persons, another marriage with anyone (with the exception of being reconciled to one's spouse, 1 Cor. 7:11), is simply not an option that they have!

## **What About Dating?**

There has been good teaching regarding the sinfulness of the unlawful, adulterous marriage. This is not the thrust of this article. Here is the specific issue we want to deal with: How do divorced persons (those not free to marry) stand in regard to such activities as dating? Actually, an understanding of who is scripturally eligible to marry helps us to see who is eligible to date. Now it is obvious that those whom we saw are scripturally free to marry are also free to date. But what of those who are not eligible to marry? The Bible's answer is that such are to "remain unmarried." Of

course this means that one cannot contract another marriage. But we are raising a practical question in asking, "Is one who is ineligible to marry in a position to date?" What if one reasons, "I know I can't remarry, but we're just friends," or "I don't ever plan to marry again, but I need companionship, and I just take her out to have someone to talk to"?

Actually, those who reason in this manner are usually

just deceiving themselves. Have you ever noticed that we usually end up marrying someone whom we have dated? The dangers ought to be apparent. One who dates a person who is ineligible for marriage is truly “playing with fire.” The chances are good that he will end up in an unscriptural marriage.

But what if they do not ever marry? Does the dating of divorced persons meet with God’s approval? We again insist that when we see from the Scriptures who is eligible to marry, we have defined for us who is eligible to date. Persons eligible to marry are free to be together, talk, court, and plan (of course with all activities conforming to God’s standard of morals and purity, etc.) because they are in a position to follow through on the fruition of courtship; their relationship may culminate in marriage if they so choose. On the other hand, when we see defined from Scripture those who are not eligible to marry, we have also at the same time learned who is not eligible to date. If one is not free to marry, he is not eligible to date!

Sometimes one who is himself free to marry will be attracted to one who is ineligible. Before long, the two may agree to go on outings of various kinds together. A man needs to recognize that when he is with a woman who has divorced her spouse for any cause other than fornication, or one who has been divorced, he is with another man’s wife. The woman (even if she on her part may be free to marry) who accepts the invitation to go somewhere or do something with a divorced man (i.e., dating), needs to recognize that she is with someone else’s husband.

This truth can be seen clearly enough if we are considering a married couple, two who are living in the marriage relationship and are not divorced. While one may have friends of the opposite gender; married Christians recognize that they are not in a position to date those friends (and of course should not want to). But why would that be wrong? Because they are married, they are not eligible to date. A Christian husband does not, for example, reason, “My wife cannot go with me to the gospel meeting tonight, so I will go by a friend’s (female) house, and take her with me, for companionship, of course.” The very same principle is involved when a divorced person is dating, and going on outings, etc. The one who accompanies him is with someone else’s spouse! Therefore, an unscripturally divorced person may not date for the same reason that a married person may not date. Neither is free to do so; both are ineligible to do so!

While one hopefully has many friends, a spouse who seeks to please God recognizes that there are bounds which he must not cross. For example, a Christian spouse does not take a friend of the opposite sex for an all-day trip to town and arrive back home late in the evening. The issue is not one of whether he may have friends, but rather one

of that conduct in which he may properly (before God) engage. One who is himself free to marry cannot (with God’s approval) put himself in the above type of situations with divorced persons, because they are not free.

If the idea persists, “I still don’t see anything wrong with divorced persons dating,” we would ask, “Is it possible for it to become wrong at any point short of an adulterous marriage, and if so, at what point?” Is it right if the relationship is “casual,” but wrong if it is “serious”? If so, how serious does it have to become? Would it be steady dating, or engagement, before it became wrong? I believe the relationship becomes wrong when it starts, just as the same relationship would be wrong for married persons.

It would perhaps be appropriate here to also give attention to the “singles” seminars, rallies, classes, etc. While nothing is intrinsically wrong with special studies for singles, we object to the church’s providing opportunities for persons to find companions, with no regard as to whether or not they are eligible for marriage. One brochure I received for a “Single Adult Rally” is typical of advertising of such events. It included the following topics: “Laying Bricks or Throwing Stones,” “Singles, Sex and Sanity,” “Single Parenting: Building a Christian Foundation,” “Single Again,” “Success or Survival,” “Building Success as a Single Woman,” and “The Body Beautiful.” To be fair, the topics are not necessarily wrong in themselves. But one wonders just what would be taught in that setting on those subjects. But consider also what is not listed. Keep in mind that this “rally” will include those who are “single-again” without distinction as to why one is single again (i.e., regardless of whether or not one has a scriptural divorce). Yet the listing of topics does not include, “A Discussion of Matthew 19:9,” or “What the Bible Teaches Regarding Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage,” or “It Is Not Lawful For Thee To Have Her.” To the extent that such programs for singles involve a compromise of truth regarding God’s marriage law we stand opposed to them. To the extent that they provide opportunities for “companionship” and dating for those who are not scripturally free to marry, they are in violation of the Word of God.

If you are free to marry, you still have to make some choices regarding whom you will date. Restrict your dating to those who are eligible to marry. Don’t date anybody that is not a proper subject for marriage. We would encourage you to be a faithful Christian and marry a faithful Christian. If you are divorced (unscripturally) you need to recognize your standing: If you are not free to marry, you are not free to date!

---

204 ½ Dean Ave., Hanceville, Alabama 35077

# Thinking About the Family (3)

Greg Litmer

For many of us one of the happiest, as well as one of the most frightening, days of our lives was the day when the doctor said the test was positive and there was a baby on the way. As we looked into the eyes of our spouse and held each other close we knew that we were embarking on a new and exciting adventure. Do you remember the feeling? Do you remember the love you felt for that person you had chosen to spend your life with? Do you remember the feeling of responsibility knowing that you were going to be bringing a new life into this world? Remember the countless hours spent in discussion about how you were going to raise that child, what you would and would not do? Oh, the innocence of inexperience! Remember the childbirth classes, the shopping, the showers, and all of the things that go along with the impending arrival of a new addition to a family?

What a blessing it is to be parents! The psalmist wrote in Psalm 127:3-5, “Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is his reward. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man, so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.”

God’s plan for the family is a wonderful thing — one man and one woman together for life, being fruitful and multiplying, bringing children into the world. Within his plan God has provided for the physical needs of the child, for the intellectual needs of the child, and for the spiritual needs of the child. To summarize how God has provided for these needs we can simply say, “the parents.”

The responsibility to provide for the physical needs of the child is found in such passages as 1 Timothy 5:8, “But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.” When it comes to the intellectual, emotional, and spiritual needs, such passages as Deuteronomy 6:6-7

and Ephesians 6:4, show that God has placed the primary responsibility in these areas on the shoulders of the parents. When we choose to become parents, we choose to assume these responsibilities. If ever there is a situation where God would have us to put the needs of others before ourselves it is in the realm of parenting. Certainly, when it comes to manifesting genuine care and concern for others, our children must be at the top of the list. Why is it then that we are seeing more and more parents within the Lord’s church acting like those in the world when it comes to their children and their parental responsibilities?

I truly believe with all of my heart that, barring death, a child has the God-given right to grow up with both parents. Surely that truth is contained in our Lord’s teaching concerning marriage in such passages as Matthew 5:32, “But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.” God’s intention is that marriage consist of one man and one woman together for life. I truly believe that a child has the God-given right to have all of his or her needs provided through the faithful fulfillment of their responsibilities by the parents. Yet more and more we are seeing parents fail miserably in this area and the children suffering because of it, and it is happening within the church.

There is a passage of Scripture that I would like to take out of its context because the wording of it fits this topic. It is found in Genesis 42:22 and is a statement Reuben made to his brothers concerning their ungodly treatment of their brother, Joseph. Reuben said, “Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child: and ye would not hear? Therefore, behold, also his blood is required.” When marriages deteriorate into unhappiness and discontent, or when they dissolve altogether and end in divorce; the children of that marriage are being “sinned against.”



A child should not be deprived of the constant presence of a mother or a father. The child has the God-given right to both. A child should not have to listen to his mother and father fight. A child should never have to choose one parent over another and certainly should never have to hear one parent trying to convince him to choose over the other parent. A child should not have to undergo emotional problems because he or she somehow feels responsible for the ungodly behavior of the parents. A child should never have to be used as a pawn in a power struggle between two adults who brought that child into the world. I stood in a courtroom hallway one time and watched and listened as two “divorce” lawyers (representing two Christians) negotiated over the children. They were actually bargaining with one another as the parents sought to *win* the battle, and the children were the bounty. A child should never have to be deprived of one set of the grandparents. There are times when a divorce is scriptural, but even that is brought about because of sin, and it is always the children who suffer.

Even within a family that stays together there are ways that the children can be “sinned against.” In our modern society it is often the case that both the mother and the father work outside of the home. There are circumstances where this arrangement is necessary simply to provide for the necessities of life — food, clothing, shelter, and so on. There are many other situations in which this arrangement is found where the primary purpose is not to provide the necessities, but to provide the luxuries. And so the children often have the best toys money can buy, and all of them; they have the nicest clothes, money in their pocket, late model cars to drive, and everything else of a material nature they desire — but they don’t have their parents at home to talk to.

It certainly seems that money breeds the desire for more. Let me give you a common scenario that is often played out. There will be a married couple, both of them working and spending everything they make. Children come but they are too far in debt to allow the mother to stop working, so the children go into day care. Day care costs a lot of money, so every bit of extra they might have had now goes to paying that. However, the more this couple has the more they want. So as one credit card gets paid off, another gets filled up. Or perhaps even more frequently, when one credit card hits its limit, another one is applied for, received, and used. Soon the old house is not good enough. A new one is needed in a nicer neighborhood with a huge monthly payment. New cars are also added to the mix, and even though they may be moving up in their companies, they are also moving deeper and deeper into debt. All overtime must be worked, both of them are constantly tired, and with that tiredness comes a certain shortness of temper. They fuss with one another, they fuss with the kids, and what the kids really wanted more than anything else was their mom and dad.

In this common scenario attendance at services and Bible study becomes just another demand on their limited time. Instead of being an oasis of calm and a time of spiritual refreshing, it becomes more of a chore. Before long you will hear, “I was just too tired to come,” and sitting at home with the parents are the children. Their Bible study is neglected but not their education. For as they sit at home with their parents who are just too tired to go to services, those children are learning. They are learning that there are other things more important than service to God. They are learning that secular work and the things it will buy are more important. They are learning that physical comfort is more important. They are learning that God fits in when it is convenient to put him in. When this happens, the children involved are being “sinned against.”

It is sad, but true, that many times couples become more spiritually minded as they get a little older and wiser. They will become more faithful in their attendance and even start to get personally involved in the work of the church. Oftentimes these same couples will suffer the terrible heartache of seeing their children leave the Lord altogether and with tears in their eyes express a lack of understanding, “How could this have happen?” Maybe it is because when the children were little and the foundations were being laid, the parents were most concerned about the things that matter the least. The truth of Proverbs 22:6 is seen everyday, “Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it.”

---

1415 Central Ave., Louisville, Kentucky 40208

## The Chronological Life Of Christ

by Mark Moore

Using the Thomas and Gundry NIV Harmony (all four Gospels overlaid to read as one) these 2 volumes provide an in-depth study of the life of Christ. Paper.

Vol. 1: From Glory to Galilee — **\$19.99**

Vol. 2: From Galilee to Glory — **\$19.99**

**Call: 1-800-428-0121**

# Kenneth Hoyle: His Life's Sermon

Larry Ray Hafley

**Introduction By Sammie Hoyle:** Here's a few things about my one and only Kenneth. He was born near Abbott, Texas, September 12, 1927 and died in Beaumont, Texas, February 25, 1998. He was in the ICU for 40 days suffering from pneumonia. They had it under control at the time of his death, but his body couldn't recover from all the damage that was done.

We met and were married in Hillsboro, Texas, on June 1, 1947. We were married 50 years last year. Our first two children were adopted, Jan and Lynn. They both preceded Kenneth in death. After waiting many years, Karen and Mary were born to us. We have six grandchildren and two of the very finest sons-in-law, David Kibideaux and Norman Harrison.

To the above children we added many, many more whom God gave us. Young couples by the number were added to the Kenneth Hoyle family by virtue of the Lord's work. Kenneth was a true, dedicated soldier of the cross. His utmost desire was to please God. His preaching was all in the state of Texas until 1991. He preached in Borger, La Porte, Nacogdoches, Rosenberg, Texas City, and West Orange.

In 1991 we moved to Lake Charles, Louisiana. He helped established the Southside congregation with 25 folding chairs in the Kinder Care Learning Center. Those were delightful days. Young couples, little children, and the true church being established. We met nine months there, then located the present building at 3919 Auburn and purchased it in May 1993. This work was Kenneth's "joy and crown." He was never, never happier. Unity abounded and it was all based on "a thus saith the Lord." (Sammie Hoyle, 4310 Dean, Lake Charles, LA 70605)

When Kenneth's Hoyle's dear wife, Sammie, called to discuss what would be an appropriate theme for her husband's funeral, she said, "Tell them that Kenneth wanted *no compromise*. Tell people that the best way to remember him is to never turn either to the right or to the left. This was on Kenneth's heart. He was worried about all those who once stood firm, but who now refuse to condemn error and stand for the truth because of their friendship with some who won't stand up and be counted."

## **Life's Sermon: "No Compromise"**

Sammie expressed the very words of Scripture when she said that Kenneth did not want us to "turn either to

the right or to the left." Those words mean that one will stay on course (cf., Deut. 2:27). He will not veer off the path; he will cut a straight row (2 Tim. 2:15). Thus, "Ye shall observe to do therefore as the Lord your God hath commanded you: *ye shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left*" (Deut. 5:32). "And *thou shalt not go aside from any of the words which I command thee this day, to the right hand, or to the left*" (Deut. 28:14).

Brother Hoyle was concerned about principles regarding Romans 14 and fellowship, and errors being taught with respect to marriage, divorce, and remarriage. Too, he saw the general trend toward compromise and softness, the

development of a less militant spirit against evil and error. He thought that toleration of error and the support of men who teach it was begotten by the leaven of a compromising attitude. In other words, various departures centering around Romans 14, marriage and divorce and fellowship were symptomatic of a deeper, widespread acceptance of error (2 Tim. 4:3, 4).

Kenneth spoke of his puzzlement about those who would apologize for the severity of truth (2 Cor. 2:15-17; Tit. 1:13; 2:15). He could not understand those who would criticize men who speak, *as he himself did*, with great plainness of speech regarding modest dress, godly living, and the undenominational nature of the New Testament church (2 Cor. 3:12). Kenneth said there was a time when brethren thought one “could not come down too hard” against immorality, immodesty, and denominationalism, but, that now, such material was being apologized for by those who do not want plain speech on those issues. In conversation, Kenneth expressed his amazement at how viciously some condemn those who speak out against error and compromise. He said that some who protest against being too harsh and “negative” were the very ones who used very hard and caustic words against those who are standing for the truth. (Kenneth, when he spoke on such matters, never lost his kind, gentle, sweet spirit. He did not have a bitter bone in his body.)

This is part of the enduring legacy of the life and memory of Kenneth Hoyle. Kenneth was not widely known. His name is not a household word among brethren around the world, but we “rather rejoice, because” we have reason to believe his name is “written in heaven” (Luke 10:20). No, Kenneth’s name is not on some famous debate book, but this quiet, unassuming man was engaged in a running debate in the local newspaper with a Catholic priest at the time of his death. He was not often engaged in a series of prominent lectures across the country, but many people were drawn to an appreciation for the faith of Christ by his unflagging faith. Ask a host of brethren who look to Kenneth and Sammie as their spiritual father and mother in the gospel. Ask the Intensive Care Unit doctors, nurses, interns and staff assistants in the hospital where he died — they will tell you that a great and good man has left us. They will tell you what they think of the Lord’s people based on the life of this one man and his loving family (Matt. 5:16)!

A couple of years ago, after having conducted a meeting where Kenneth preached, I made the following report concerning his work to the local church. It testifies to his life’s sermon:

As most of you know, we have just concluded our second meeting with the church in Lake Charles, Louisiana. Kenneth and Sammie Lou Hoyle are doing an outstanding work in the Lord in that area. For a number of years, this church

has been privileged to have “fellowship in the gospel” with the Hoyles. Brethren, as many of you already know far better than I, it has not been a misplaced trust.

There can be no better people than Kenneth and Sammie. They are pure in life, devoted in service, devout in worship. They care for people as for their own family. Their nurturing deeds and their kindness endear them to the church. Truly, some have been converted, not simply through the word of God, but also through the good works which they see in Kenneth and Sammie (Matt. 5:16; cf., 1 Pet. 3:1). They exemplify the salt and light qualities that ought to be characteristic of all saints.

Brother Hoyle is determined in his stand for truth and righteousness. Though he is blessed with a disarmingly kind and gentle personality, his love for the truth is as stout as the heart of a lion (Prov. 28:1, 4). There is no foolishness or weakness in Kenneth Hoyle’s desire to earnestly contend for the faith. The modern tendency to coddle error and play footsie with dubious doctrines has not affected him, or his good wife.

Due in large part to their sterling character and fervent faith, the church is blessed with the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Several solid families work in perfect harmony with the Hoyles. Though the church is relatively small in number, they are blessed with a good blend of age and maturity and with young families, too. Our work with them was a blessing to Marilyn and me. Though this is more personal than most articles, I thought the church here, and all who love and respect the Hoyles, would want to hear about them and the good work they continue to do (cf., Rom.16; Phil. 2:25-30; 4:3; Col. 4:9-15).

#### **Life’s Sermon: “Bible Education”**

Many tender and touching stories have been told since the passing of our dear brother in the Lord, Kenneth Hoyle. One of them was related to me by his long time friend, Lynn Black. Years ago, in the 1960s, Kenneth and Sammie came to Nacogdoches to consider the work there. During the course of the church’s interview of brother Hoyle, he was asked, “What kind of Bible training or Bible education do you have?” Without a pause and without embarrassment, Kenneth simply opened his Bible and held it out for all to see. “That,” he said, “is my education. That is the source of my religious training.” A respectful silence fell over the room.

Brother Black said that one statement did more than anything else to persuade the brethren to secure him to work with them. They were impressed with his humility and godly sincerity, and with his refusal to flaunt worldly achievements. When he quietly extended his arm and displayed his worn and well used Bible, the brethren knew they had found their next preacher.

How many churches today would be content with a man who could only point to an open Bible as his fount and foun-

*continued bottom of next page*

# A Choice Must Be Made!

Shane Williams

One thing that most everyone in the world does every-day is make choices. We make choices about what we do for recreation, the company we keep, our profession, and whom we marry. Some decisions affect us for a short period of time while others last forever. Spiritual choices are the most important and need the utmost consideration before they are made. Let us look at some choices that individuals made in the Scriptures and how they were affected.

## Moses Made a Choice

Hebrews 11:25 tells us that Moses chose to suffer affliction with the people of God, rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

Moses was a good man but he didn't become this way overnight. It took time and effort. He could have lived a luxurious life in the palace of the Egyptians but he chose instead to help one of his Hebrew brethren, risking everything that he had.

Moses chose affliction instead of an easy life. Why? He knew the pleasures of sin last only a season but the blessings of God are everlasting.

What kind of choice would we have made in this situation? Or maybe better yet, what kind of choice *do* we make? Do we choose the easy path instead of the path that God would have us take? Our reward in heaven won't be based on a couple of times that we made the right choice, but it will be based on whom we followed, who was most important in our lives, whom we consistently obeyed even when times were rough. It will depend on our obedience to the Scriptures.

## Joshua Made a Choice

As Joshua was nearing the end of his life, he addressed the people of Israel. He said, ". . . Choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the river, or the gods of

---

dation of faith? How many preachers today would boast of academic training and of the religious education they have received at some so-called "Bible College" or theological seminary? How many of us would be ashamed to admit that our religious educational credentials were obtained through a personal study of the word of God?

"O how I love thy law! It is meditation all the day. Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than my enemies. . . . *I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation.* I have more understanding than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts" (Ps. 119:97-100). "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple" (Ps. 119:130). "When ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ" (Eph. 3:4).

A sound education is not to be ridiculed. It can be an invaluable asset in one's quest for knowledge in the word of God. However, let us never disdain those who, with limited scholastic opportunities, have educated themselves in the knowledge of God, for that is the only true education, the only abiding wisdom (Eccl. 2:12-16; 12:8-14). Brother Hoyle knew this. May God bless the memory of this dear man. May his spirit of faith, trust, and confidence in the word of truth be perpetuated by those of us who learned from him (2 Tim. 2:2).

---

4626 Osage, Baytown, Texas 77521

the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Josh. 24:15).

Joshua had lived a life under the rule of God. He recognized the importance of following God *all* of his life. He said, “You have seen all that the Lord your God has done to all these nations because of you, for the Lord God is He who has been fighting for you” (Josh. 23:3). He goes on to say in vv. 12-13 that if they ever turn away and cling back to the other nations, that God would certainly not continue to drive these nations out from before them. If they turned from God, he would depart from them.

Joshua had made a choice in his life. He chose God over everything else. What would we have done in that situation? Would we have followed other gods like most of Israel, or would we have taken a stand and served the true and living God?

What kind of choice do we make in our lives today? Do we serve God or other things? We don’t have to be bowing down to little man-made objects to be doing the same thing that Israel did. It doesn’t take that much. All it takes is us putting something before God. Forsaking worship by staying home and watching football will put us in the same boat as Israel. Choosing to do things with friends instead of worshiping God will have the same effect. If we are going to put father, mother, brother, sister, friends, hobbies, recreation, anything or anyone ahead of Christ, we are not his disciple (Luke 14:26).

### **Mary Made a Choice**

Jesus and his disciples were traveling and they came to a certain village. The woman, Martha, welcomed him into her home. Her sister, Mary, was sitting at the Lord’s feet wanting to listen, but Martha was distracted with all her preparations and said to Jesus, “Do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Tell her to help me.” But the Lord answered and said to her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things; but only a few things are necessary, really only one, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her” (Luke 10:40b-42).

Mary chose to be concerned with the teachings of Jesus instead of being worried about the serving. She recognized the importance of Jesus’ words. The other things could wait until Jesus had left.

Do we study the words of Jesus, which contain eternal life (John 6:68) or do we find better things to do? Are we concerned with what the word of God says, or is it really too much of a hassle and I could have a better time doing something else? Understanding what God has said to us takes lots of study. It takes diligence to handle accurately the word of truth (2 Tim. 2:15). Paul tells us not to be

foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is (Eph. 5:17). If we don’t take the time to study and find out what God has said to us, we are foolish! We can’t understand his word if we do not study. Do we really want to learn or just learn when it is convenient?

### **King Agrippa Made a Choice**

King Agrippa heard Paul’s defense in Acts 26. He heard Paul talk about how he had persecuted Christians and imprisoned them. Paul told him about his trip to Damascus and how he had been spoken to by Jesus. He told Agrippa that he was not going to be disobedient to that heavenly vision (Acts 26:19). Paul then proceeded to tell Agrippa that Jesus was the one prophesied about by Moses and the prophets.

After all this, Agrippa said to Paul, “You almost persuade me to become a Christian” (Acts 26:28).

We sing a song called “Almost Persuaded.” Almost will not do it for us. If I almost get in a car accident, I still didn’t get into one. If I almost bought a new car, I still don’t own one. If I almost became a Christian, I’m still not one!

Some people seem to think that if we are almost good enough to make it to heaven, God will go ahead and let us in. That is not the case. Remember in school if you had a nice teacher and you were getting an 89.9% in the class, usually she would give you an A- anyway. It doesn’t work that way with God. Judgment will be easy for him. It will be as easy as telling a sheep from a goat (Matt. 25:33). Either we have been doing the will of God or we haven’t. We have either accepted his word and are following it or we have rejected it. A choice must be made!

---

*P.O. Box 107, Kewanee, Missouri 63860*

## **Smith’s Bible Dictionary**

by William Smith

The best-known Bible dictionary ever published. This edition is a revision by F.N. and M.A. Peloubet.

**Price — \$9.97**

# Does It Make A Difference What One Believes?

Donnie V. Rader

**T**he religious world is divided. There are thousands of sects or denominations. Thus, many different doctrines and practices exist. Does it make any difference about any of this? Does it make any difference in which church one chooses to be? Does it make any difference what one believes, the doctrine he endorses or teaches, or what he practices?

Let's consider this popular concept that says, "It does not make any difference what one believes" in light of the word of God.

## **The Popular Concept**

The prevalent idea in the religious world is that it really doesn't make any difference what one believes in religion. We hear such statements as "Just believe on the Lord . . . faith alone will save." That says that you can believe and practice anything you like, as long as you believe in Christ; that's all that matters.

Many are consoled when they hear that sincerity is all that matters. That says you can believe and practice anything as long as you are sincere in it. Countless numbers have been deceived into thinking that one can just attend the church of his choice. Again, the bottom line is that it really doesn't make any difference what one believes.

The term "Christian" is used rather loosely today. Any good moral person (who may not even go to church) will be described by some as a "Christian." Like those ideas above, it says that God does not care what you believe or practice in religion.

## **A Barrier To The Gospel**

If it doesn't make any difference what one believes, there is no need to study the questions and issues that divide the religious world. Those issues become trivial matters. Questions about baptism, the Godhead, the one church, worship, instrumental music, the operation of the Holy Spirit, and the work and organization of the church are all like the question of where Cain got his wife.

In spite of their lack of understanding, those who are deceived by this concept are made to feel comfortable no matter what they believe or practice. Since it doesn't make any

difference, why should different beliefs and practices concern them?

If those who think this way already have a church they go to, they don't need another. Thus, when you invite them to visit with you or attend a gospel meeting, they may politely thank you saying that they already go to church. Since "one church is as good as another," they need another church about like a man with a new car needs another car.

This concept is one of the devil's most effective tools. As long as one has the concept that it doesn't make any difference what one believes, the gospel cannot get through that barrier to penetrate the heart.

## **It Makes A Difference What One Believes**

*1. This popular idea will not work in other areas.* It doesn't work in the business world. Does it make any difference what one believes about investments. Suppose one puts \$10,000 into a business or in stocks, believing it is a good investment. However, the business fails or the stocks decline. Certainly what he believed made a difference.

This will not work in matters of health. Suppose one drinks a glass of liquid *believing* it to be water. How-

ever, if it is poison, it will still kill him even though he believed it was water. Several years ago a Nashville newspaper reported a story about a man who dug up some worms to go fishing. He thought the worms were rather large. He had never experienced worms “biting” him as he tried to put them on his hook. He continued to fish *believing* that he was bitten by worms. He died sometime later because the “worms” were actually poisonous snakes. You see, it made a difference what he believed.

Numerous people have been killed while driving on the wrong side of a four lane highway, because they *believed* they were on a two lane road.

2. *There are some things we must believe.* If I can show that there is even *one* thing that I *must* believe, then it makes a difference what one believes. We must believe that God is and that he is the rewarder of those that seek him (Heb. 11:6). We must believe in Christ. If we don’t, we will die in our sins (John 8:24). If we die in sin, we cannot go to heaven (John 8:21). We must believe the truth (John 8:32). If we believe any message contrary to the truth, we are accursed (Gal. 1:6-9). It does make a difference.

3. *There is an objective standard.* If I can show that there is an objective standard (a fixed standard) by which we determine what is right and wrong, then we must conclude that it makes a difference.

To illustrate, let’s suppose that in the process of building your new house that a friend or neighbor offers to do all your wiring. You ask if he knows how to do that. He replies, “Not really, but it doesn’t make any difference how it is wired, just as long as the lights and plugs work when we are done.” If there is a code book or statute by which electricians have to abide, then it makes a difference how the house is wired.

The same is true in religion. There

is an objective standard. All of the following descriptions refer to the Bible, the word of God. We must abide by what is written of God (2 Cor. 4:13), the oracles of God (1 Pet. 4:11), the commandments of the Lord (1 Cor. 14:37), the word of God (1 Thess. 2:13), the inspired Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:16-17), and the words chosen by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 2:9-13). We must believe and practice only what we can find in harmony with the standard.

4. *The difference that it makes.* Now that we know it makes a difference, let’s consider the difference it makes. In 1 Kings 13 we read of a prophet who was instructed by God not to eat bread, drink water or return by the way he came (vv. 9-10). However, an old prophet invited him home with him. The prophet said he couldn’t because of the instruction of the Lord (vv. 15-16). The old prophet then *lied* to him saying that God told him that he could come to his house (v. 18). The prophet believed the lie. What difference did it make? He was devoured by a lion because he was disobedient (vv. 22-26).

Salvation or damnation is the difference it makes with us. In 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12 Paul shows a contrast between believing the *truth* and believing a *lie*. Those who believe the *lie* (v. 11) are deceived (v. 10), do not love the truth (v. 10), are deluded (v. 11), do not believe the truth (v. 12) and have pleasure in unrighteousness (v. 12). The consequence is that they will perish (v. 10) and be condemned (v. 12). Those who believe the *truth* (v. 12) and love the truth (v. 10) will be saved (v. 10).

#### **It Makes A Difference What One Practices**

1. *If not, one can do anything in religion and be accepted of God.* Handling snakes as an act of worship would be fine. I read of one “church” that came together and all engaged in fornication as their worship to God. What would be wrong with that, if it does not make a difference? “Oh,

that’s immoral!” someone says. “God condemns fornication.” Then it makes a difference!

2. *We must practice only what is authorized by God.* God, because he is God, has authority over man (Gen. 1:1). All that we do must be by the authority of Christ (Col. 3:17). We must abide within the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9). God has a pattern that we are to follow (Heb. 8:5). We must all walk by the same rule (Phil. 3:16).

3. *The difference that it makes.* Whether we are practicing what God has authorized or not has to do with whether or not we are in fellowship with him (2 John 9) and receive eternal life (Matt. 7:22-23; Rom. 2:7-8).

#### **Consequences**

1. *If it doesn’t make any difference what one believes* then it doesn’t make any difference *whether* one believes. “Oh, but we have to believe in Christ,” one retorts. Then it makes a difference! But if *what* you believe doesn’t matter, then *whether* you believe doesn’t matter. Since that is so, it would not make a difference whether one believes the Bible or not. Thus, what the Bible says is really unimportant. Since the Bible is God’s word, then what God says in unimportant. That is the consequence of the idea that it doesn’t make any difference what one believes. That is blasphemy!

2. *If it does make a difference what one believes* (and we have shown that it does), then we need to know the truth (John 8:32). We need to study and examine what we’re taught to see if it is really true (Acts 17:11). We need to obey the truth (1 Pet. 1:22). We need to be careful as we live the Christian life (Eph. 5:15).

---

408 Dow Dr., Shelbyville, Tennessee  
37160-2208

# Metaphors for Baptism

Tom Hamilton

The plain and direct statements of Scripture on the proper role and meaning of baptism are complemented by seven metaphors for baptism. These figures of speech emphasize various aspects of baptism's significance and importance.

## Washing

Perhaps the most well-known and obvious metaphor is the figure of washing. The significance of this figure goes back to the literal washings of purification required under the old covenant. These washings pointed toward the spiritual cleansing which would be available through Christ. Even in the Old Testament, we already see writers such as Ezekiel looking toward a figurative or spiritual washing (Ezek. 36:25). This is a passage the Hebrew writer alludes to in Hebrews 10:22-23 in referring to this spiritual cleansing which is now fulfilled in Christ — “having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.” Paul identifies Christ's disciples as those who have been washed, justified, and sanctified (1 Cor. 6:11), regardless of what sins they had committed. In addition, Paul says that God “saved us, not on the basis of deeds we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and the renewal of the Holy Spirit” (Tit. 3:5). Paul identifies God's people as the sanctified bride of Christ, “having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word” (Eph. 5:26). One who fails to abound in godly character “has forgotten that he was purified from his former sins” (2 Pet. 1:9).

The force of the figure is unmistakable — the washing is the definitive action which separates the dirty from the clean, the filthy from the washed, the unholy from the sanctified. Prior to being washed, one is contaminated by the filth of sin; after being washed, he is cleansed and forgiven.

In addition, the Bible is clear that this washing is associated with baptism — not that baptism is merely a symbol of washing, but that it is the washing. The sins of the believing

and penitent Saul were certainly not washed away until he was baptized, because Ananias asked Paul, “Now what are you waiting for? Arise! Be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on His name” (Acts 22:16). However, Peter makes it clear that this washing is not ritualistic. It has no physical effect, as if the water itself were magical, but is effective through God's grace. It is an appeal to God for a clear conscience by an obedient trusting heart — “In like manner, baptism also now saves us, not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the appeal to God for a good conscience” (1 Pet. 3:21). We are not washed of our sins until we humble ourselves in obedient trust and do what God has commanded — arise, be baptized, and wash away our sins!

## Circumcision

Circumcision is another metaphor for baptism which is taken from the Old Testament. The rite of circumcision was the sign of the covenant relationship between God and Abraham's family, first instituted in Genesis 17. As such a symbol, it was a clear and definitive line dividing those in the covenant from those outside of the covenant, just as the act of washing separates the dirty from the clean.

The New Testament speaks of a figurative or spiritual circumcision in which sin is cut away from one's heart and cast aside and in which one enters into a covenant relationship with God. “For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart” (Rom. 2:28-29). Paul comments elsewhere, “. . . in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with Him in baptism” (Col. 2:11-12). Again, baptism is emphasized as the definitive action which divides those within the covenant of Christ from those outside of the covenant of Christ.



## Exodus

Another metaphor for baptism drawn from the Old Testament is the exodus of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage. Throughout the Old Testament, Israel is portrayed as redeemed and made to be God's people upon the crossing of the Red Sea. For example, in Psalm 106:9-10 we read, "Thus He rebuked the Red Sea and it dried up, and He led them through the deeps, as through the wilderness. So he saved them from the hand of the one who hated them and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy."

Here again, the metaphor focuses on a definitive act which separates two distinct peoples, the unredeemed and the redeemed. Just as the Israelites had been in the literal bondage of slavery, mankind is in the bondage of sin. Just as the passage through the Red Sea freed and redeemed them, our baptism into Christ marks the point of our redemption from sin. Paul uses this analogy to compare the new covenant with the old — ". . . our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (1 Cor. 10:1-2). So also Christ Jesus "gave himself for us that he might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for himself a people for his own possession" (Tit. 2:14).

## Clothing

Galatians 3:27-28 reads, "For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ . . . for you are all one in Christ." Here baptism is compared to putting on clothes, the clothing of the character of Christ. In Ephesians 4:22-24, these new clothes of the new man in Christ are contrasted with the old self of sin which we take off — "lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and clothe yourselves with the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth" (cf., Col. 3:9-10). Of course, this act of clothing oneself with Christ is not a once-for-all action, but a lifelong process (Rom. 13:14), as seen in the fact that all of these passages were written to Christians. However, the figure demonstrates that there is a definitive point at which one goes from not being clothed to being clothed with Christ, and the Bible affirms that this point is baptism into Christ.

## Birth

The Bible frequently uses the figure of new birth, renewal, or regeneration to describe coming into a covenant relationship with God. Our lives are to be so dramatically different than they were before that the Scriptures describe it as a rebirth, starting all over again completely new (e.g., 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 2:1-10; 4:23-24; Col. 3:9-10; 1 Pet. 1:3, 23; 1 John 3:9; 4:7). In fact, this new life living in us is to be Christ (Gal. 2:20).

It is not surprising that this figure of new birth is associ-

ated with baptism as the definitive turning point at which the new birth takes place. In Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus in John 3, he paralleled being "born again" (3:3) with being "born of water and Spirit" (3:5). Jesus does not refer here to two different births, but a singular one which involves both water and Spirit. Without this new birth of water and Spirit one cannot enter the kingdom of God.

Likewise, Paul refers to our salvation through the "washing of rebirth and the renewal of the Holy Spirit" (Tit. 3:5). It was this new birth which Peter urged upon his listeners in Acts 2:38 — to be baptized for the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

We are able to know for certain that Jesus' "water" and Paul's "washing" are indeed references to baptism, because this same figure of new birth is also used as part of the figure of our spiritual resurrection, in which baptism also stands as a figure of burial (Col. 2:12-13). As we consider this next related figure, we will come to see baptism as the crucial turning point which may be described both as a burial in terms of signaling the end of the old life and as a new birth in terms of signaling the beginning of the new life.

## Burial

Paul uses the metaphor of burial as a description of baptism in Romans 6:3-6: "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ have been baptized into his death? Therefore, we have been buried with him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have become united with him in the likeness of his death, certainly we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin." Paul also used this figure in Colossians 2:11-14, along with the metaphor of circumcision: ". . . having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. And when you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with him, having forgiven us all our transgressions" (2:12-13).

In both cases, the meaning of the metaphor is clear. Just as a person must first die, then be buried, and then be resurrected, the proper order of our spiritual insurrection is first death (by repentance), then burial (by baptism), and then our spiritual resurrection or "newness of life." Those who teach that one is first saved (i.e., made alive spiritually) and then baptized afterwards makes as much sense as burying a living person, because that is what they are claiming to do. You must decide whether it is the scriptural order that makes sense, or those who want to rearrange the biblical order to suit their peculiar theological views.

# Unity With Error: A Comparison

Steve Wallace

Modern denominations are built on the sands of error and have now long sailed on the seas of human wisdom. One result we are seeing in our day is that many churches are seeking unity beyond the restrictions of their particular rules of faith. The kind of unity that has resulted is one that clearly tolerates sin, i.e., it is even clear to many in human denominations! This is very similar to the kind of unity some brethren have called for today. Hence, it is helpful to compare some of the things going on in the religious world with what is happening among us. Please notice the following elements that are part of such unity efforts among human denominations and among brethren.

## Receiving People Who are Clearly in Sin

This is exemplified in the following quote which comes

from an article entitled, "Pastor who backs Bible on sex elected to head Presbyterians:"

An Alaskan pastor who said he upheld biblical standards on sexuality was elected Thursday to lead the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

The Rev. David Lee Dobler, 43, was elected moderator of the 2.8 million member church . . .

In questioning before the balloting, Dobler said he supported the church's position in opposition to sex outside marriage for ordained persons, *but said homosexuals or heterosexuals who violate the church standard should not be excluded from the church.*

Not only that, but Paul is rather explicit that baptism is the point at which we are spiritually made alive or resurrected. It is once again that definitive turning point which separates God's people from those who are spiritually dead. In Colossians 2:12, Paul says baptism is that "in which you were also raised up with him." Are we raised up with Christ in baptism or not? Likewise, in Romans 6:3-5, Paul stated that the reason we were "baptized into Christ" or were "buried with him through baptism" was "in order that . . . we too might walk in newness of life." Is this the reason we were baptized or not?

## Complete Union

Finally, we may consider how the literal action of baptism — that is, immersion — comes to represent the completeness of the spiritual union which we have with Christ. We are said to be immersed or "baptized into Christ" (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27), and Paul explicitly connects this with our being united with Christ (Rom. 6:5). Clearly, this is the point at which we enter into Christ and are united to him. In a similar way, we are said to be immersed into the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13). Clearly, this is the point

at which we enter into the body of Christ, his church. It is at the point of baptism that we bury the crucified old man of sin to the point that we are able to say that "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Gal. 2:20).

## Conclusion

Whatever the metaphor or figure of speech, in every case the Bible makes clear that baptism is the definitive turning point which separates the forgiven from the unforgiven: the clean from the unclean, the circumcised from the uncircumcised, the one in covenant relationship with God from the one who is not, the clothed from the naked, the new from the old, the dead from the living, the one in Christ from the one outside of Christ.

These metaphors are simple, understandable illustrations which complement the plain teaching of Scripture elsewhere — that baptism makes disciples (Matt. 28:19), brings forgiveness (Acts 2:38), and saves (1 Pet. 3:21).

---

*From In Christ, February 1998*

With one arm, we should embrace our biblical standard,” Dobler said. “With our other arm we should embrace those persons by being caring, concerned and loving” (*The Stars and Stripes*, May 5, 1993, my emph, sw).

The people whom Mr. Dobler above advocates “embracing” are fornicators! It matters little that he “said he upheld biblical standards on sexuality” when he fellowships such people (Tit. 1:16). Let us not miss how this compares with what is going on among churches of Christ today. Brethren among us can be found who condemn the false teaching of a given brother on marriage, divorce and remarriage, but still will have that same brother in for a gospel meeting, or they will advocate fellowshiping him in spite of his error (cp. Rom. 16:17-18; 2 John 9-11). These same brethren will condemn homosexuality and we are all thankful that they will not fellowship homosexuals. However, as we consider the above example from the denominational world, how long will it be before one of our brethren does in the realm of homosexuality what others among us are doing in the realm of marriage, divorce, and remarriage?

#### **Failure to Preach on Differences**

Several years ago, a newspaper article described an effort by the 1993 Parliament of World’s Religions:

Leaders of Christianity, Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism and other faiths have drawn up these guidelines as part of a historic Global Ethic. . . .

The goal of the parliament, the first since an 1893 gathering that marked the beginning of the interfaith movement, is to promote peace among religions and nations.

In that spirit, the global ethic does not delve into such issues as abortion, euthanasia, women clergy or homosexuality that are divisive within each of the major faiths (*The Stars and Stripes*, Sept. 4, 1993, my emph, sw).

The only way such a movement as that described above could ever begin or continue to exist is by failing to preach on serious differences. These people did address such matters as murder, marriage, and remembering the poor and the aged. *However, it is what they did not address that brought about and maintains such unity as described above.* In this light, one cannot help but note the reticence on the part of some among us to openly and specifically condemn error (Eph. 5:11). However, a much more powerful lesson for Christians is to be learned from the above quote: Once you embark on the road of tolerating those in error you will either stop it or you will get to a point where you say goodbye to any teaching which would condemn the error you are tolerating (cp. Acts 20:27; 2 Tim. 4:2-3). Sadly, some churches of Christ have already come to the point where they no longer preach on differences which clearly involve adultery, a sin which will send souls to hell (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

#### **Finding a Broader Basis for Unity**

When one seeks the kind of unity under review in this article he will have to use something other than the Bible as his basis. An AP article from the late 1980s tells of a unity effort which did just this:

Now at its 25-year mark, a grand-scale plan to unite American Protestants still is moving ahead, but on an altered tack that seeks a loose-knit form of unity. . . .

The nine denominations involved, with a total membership of 23 million, include: (lists participating churches, sw).

Moede (Rev. Gerald Moede, General secretary of the Consultation on Church Unity, sw) said the covenanting approach would involve “*inity in essential things*, but with the present structures still in place, and with a lot of diversity in traditions” (Eugene, OR, *Register-Guard*, April 25, 1987).

It is axiomatic that one cannot bring nine different denominations together without finding a broader basis upon which to do it. The rules of faith of the participating denominations are simply not broad enough to facilitate such unity. Likewise, the rule of faith of the Lord’s church (the New Testament) is not broad enough to allow the kind of unity some have argued for today (Matt. 28:20). Hence, we should not be surprised when we hear of brothers Owen or Harrell using honesty and sincerity as a basis for receiving an erring brother or of brother Rubel Shelley saying that there are different levels of truth, some essential and some not so much so. More such bases may be in store for us in the future. When someone seeks a broader unity than the Bible allows, he must find a broader basis than the Bible.

#### **Conclusion**

The Bible instructs us clearly on the three points discussed herein. It tells us how to treat those in sin (Gal. 6:1; Jas. 5:19-20; 1 Thess. 5:14; 2 Thess. 3:6-15; 2 John 9-11). We are taught to preach the word “in season and out of season” (2 Tim. 4:2-3). We are to let the word of God be the sole basis for unity with others (John 17:20-21; 1 Pet. 4:11).

Some of our denominational neighbors have reached bottom and began to dig. The accounts given herein of what is happening among them may teach another lesson beyond those we have drawn above. They may help some among us to see more clearly where this is all headed in spite of the protestations of the leaders in the present call for unity-in-diversity.

---

*PSC. 2, Box 7257, APO AE 09012*

# Order In The House of God

Bobby Witherington

**For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you (Tit. 1:5).**

Titus, the person to whom the epistle bearing his name was written, was in Crete (one of the largest islands in the Mediterranean Sea) at the time when the apostle Paul wrote this letter. We cannot know for certain the exact date when the gospel was first preached in Crete. There were some “Cretans” present in Jerusalem when the gospel was first proclaimed on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:11), and it is possible that some of them were converted and later returned home and converted others who also resided on the island of Crete. Other than a brief stopover when Paul sailed as a prisoner from Caesarea to Rome (Acts 27:7-12), we have no record of Paul himself being at Crete prior to his first imprisonment in Rome. However, at some point in time Paul had been in Crete, for he “left” Titus “in Crete” (Tit. 1:5). In the judgment of this writer, it is very probable that Paul visited Crete after being released from prison in Rome, and that he then left Titus while he (Paul) traveled elsewhere in his efforts to further the cause of Christ.

In view of the close personal ties that existed between Paul and Titus (2 Cor. 2:13; 7:6; 8:23), one might wonder why Paul would leave him behind when he (Paul) left Crete. However, from our text (Tit. 1:5) we learn why Titus was left in Crete — it being to “set in order the things” that were “lacking.” Apparently certain important items were not “in order.”

The expression “set in order” is translated from the Greek *epidiorthoo* which, according to Robertson’s *Word Pictures In The New Testament* (4:598) was a compound word, meaning “to set straight (*orthoo*) thoroughly (*dia*) in addition (*epi*), a clean job of it.” Worded a bit differently, it meant to do a thorough and clean job of setting things straight. According to Weust (*Word Studies In The Greek New Testament*, Vol. 3), this expression was “used by medical writers of setting a broken limb or straightening

crooked ones.” From each of these definitions it is apparent that the command to “set in order the things that are lacking” implies that some items were crooked, or in a state of disorder, and were in need of being straightened out. God obviously wants order in the church!

The opposite of “order” is disorder. The very charge to “set in order the things that are lacking” implies that a failure to so act will leave the church in a state of disorder. The implied “disorder” may (or may not) be evident to men, but rest assured it will be obvious to God! In the following paragraphs we suggest that in the eyes of God . . .

## **Disorder Prevails When**

*1. The local church is not properly organized.* Contextually speaking, appointing “elders in every city” was one of the things involved in correcting that which was “lacking” with regards to the divine arrangement in Crete. Elsewhere (Acts 14:23) we learn that elders were “appointed . . . in every church,” and that elders’ oversight (as elders) begins and ends with the local church of which they are members (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2). According to Philippians 1:1 the complete organization of a local church consists of “saints in Christ Jesus . . . , with the bishops (elders) and deacons.” Of course, the men serving as “bishops and deacons” (Phil. 1:1) must be scripturally qualified (Tit. 1:5-9; 1 Tim. 3:1-13), and functioning in their respective roles in keeping with the revealed will of God. Some churches exist for decades without ever appointing qualified men to serve as “bishops and deacons.” Other churches appoint men who are biblically unqualified. In many instances the bishops (or elders) of a local church neglect to honor their shepherding responsibilities to the local flock. And there are numerous examples of local church elders “assuming the oversight” of brotherhood, centralized works which involve the pooling of funds collected from hundreds of churches. In each of the aforementioned situations, before God, disorder prevails!

2. *The worship is not “in spirit and truth” (John 4:24).* “In spirit” reflects the disposition, attitude, and thought processes of the worshipers. For example, if one eats the bread and drinks the fruit of the vine while physically partaking of the Lord’s supper, but neglects at the same time to discern “the Lord’s body” or to reflect upon his “death” (1 Cor. 11:23-26), then he is not worshipping God “in spirit.” However, worshipping “in truth” is of equal importance, and God’s “word is truth” (John 17:17). Hence, if one, as an act of worship, introduces into the worship things which are foreign to the New Covenant (such as instrumental music, burning incense, holy water, the mass, etc.), then a state of disorder exists.

3. *Carnality and division exists.* When the apostle Paul wrote his first epistle to the church at Corinth he wrote to brethren who were “carnal” and characterized by “envy, strife, and division” (1 Cor. 3:3). Would any deny that a state of disorder prevailed at Corinth? And could any deny that disorder yet prevails in any local church which is currently plagued by such ungodly conditions?

4. *The focus changes from “what pleases God” to “what pleases me.”* God is the proper object of our worship (John 4:24). Whatever we do must be done with the intent of glorifying God (1 Cor. 10:31). However, in many places the simple, scriptural worship which God ordained is considered “too routine,” “too dull,” and “too boring.” So numerous changes are made — changes which ostensibly reflect a desire to “spice up” the worship, and make it more “meaningful” and “relevant” but which, in reality, reflect a determination to please self instead of God. Often the same desire to please self results in intense pressure placed upon preachers to shorten their sermons, and then spice up what is left with jokes, relating personal experiences, and warm hearted pep talks designed more for the purpose of making people feel good about themselves than for convicting sinners with a realization of their own lostness before God. When this occurs, disorder prevails!

5. *The social gospel replaces the saving gospel.* The work of the church is three-fold: (1) Sounding out the word to lost souls (1 Tim. 3:15; 1 Thess. 1:7, 8), (2) edifying the saints (Eph. 4:11-16; 1 Cor. 14:26), and (3) providing benevolence for indigent saints (Acts 6:1-6; 2 Cor. 8, 9; 1 Tim. 5:16). But many “churches of Christ” have assumed the role of a glorified Salvation Army. Others have gotten caught up in recreation, family life centers, secular education, and seminars on virtually every topic from how to grow healthy children to how to grow healthy vegetables. In such instances, before God, a state of disorder prevails.

6. *Artificial lures are used to reach people.* The gospel is the “power of God unto salvation” (Rom. 1:16). The word of God “is able to save your souls” (Jas. 1:21). Sin-stained souls are “purified” when they obey “the truth”

(1 Pet. 1:22). However, many have lost confidence in the “power” of the gospel, and now depend on the power of youth outings, retreats, camps, recreation in general, rap sessions, candle light services and hand-holding events in which people are able to “open up,” “interact,” and relate to each others — events which may tingle the spine, but do not save the soul! Another example of disorder!

7. *Brethren withhold the truth from lost souls for fear of giving offense.* No one should delight in making others angry. Tact and wisdom in our choice of words are both wise and scriptural (Col. 4:6). However, God’s word “is truth” (John 17:17), and only the truth can make one “free” (John 8:32). And sometimes people look upon us as their “enemy” because we tell them “the truth” (Gal. 4:16). Being mindful of this, many brethren who are more concerned about their own standing before their friends than their friends’ standing before God, either withhold from them the truth, or else soft pedal it to such a degree that the lost are not made to recognize the sad fact that they are lost. And keep in mind this fact; no one is really interested in learning what to do in order to be saved until he first learns that he is lost!

### Conclusion

Yes, in many places much is “lacking” which should be “set in order.” However, as we conclude this article we urge each reader to make a personal application of the principles herein set forth. Dear reader, are there some things in your life which are “lacking” and which should be “set in order”? Perhaps the things “lacking” have to do with your attitude, your dress, your speech, your manner of life in general, your domestic situation, or your standing before God. Each one of us will give account of himself before God (Rom. 14:12; 2 Cor. 5:10). That being the case, then whatever is amiss in our lives must be corrected. Life is too short to be little, and eternity is too long for us to live disordered lives while we abide in the realm of time. Consider ye well!

---

2807 Malone Dr., Panama City, Florida 32504-3820

## Living Together in Knowledge

Don and Jane McWhorter, after more than 30 years of successful marriage, share their secret with you.

**\$5.95**

# Settling Disputes and Acts 15

Paul K. Williams

In an article concerning “Quarreling Brethren” (GOT 12-4-97) brother Keith M. Greer describes the controversy concerning “the proper exegesis of Romans 14.” He says he has studied “both sides” of these issues (I have detected considerably more sides than that), and he is concerned by attitudes of distrust evidenced by men involved in the controversy. That concerns me, too.

However, I am greatly alarmed at the solution he proposes. I was hoping that since he had studied everything so carefully he would give us an exegesis of the passage. Instead he wrote: “What did the apostles, elders, and brethren do in Acts 15 when a difference arose in the early church? They met to discuss the matter. Why? For the sake of the church and the love they had for the souls of their brethren.”

It is good for brethren to meet together and study the Bible. But to use the meeting of Acts 15 as a model for settling doctrinal differences is very dangerous. The denominations use that meeting to justify their “Church Councils” where delegates meet together and settle what must be believed and practiced in their denominations. Brother Greer’s suggestion that leading brethren get together in a meeting to settle the question of the correct exegesis of Romans 14 sounds like a “Church Council” to me, and it is *not* what happened in Jerusalem.

False teachers came from Jerusalem to Antioch teaching that “Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved” (Acts 15:1). Paul and Barnabas opposed them strenuously. However, the church decided to send men to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue.

There were two things which had to be determined. (1) Were the teachers of circumcision sent out by the church in Jerusalem to teach these things? (2) What was the teaching of the apostles on the matter?

Since Paul was an apostle, the church at Antioch should have listened to him without question. But evidently the false teachers were so plausible in their claims that brethren were shaken. They wanted the matter determined in a definite way. This was pleasing to God for Paul wrote, “It was because of a revelation that I went up” (Gal. 2:2). God wanted this matter settled in the minds of the disciples.

When Paul and Barnabas got to Jerusalem, it immediately became evident that (1) the false teachers had not been sent out by the church in Jerusalem. They wrote concerning them — “to whom we gave no instruction” (Acts 15:24), and (2) the apostles all taught what Paul taught on the matter.

The final, general meeting of all the brethren was a time when Peter, Paul, Barnabas, and James used approved example, necessary conclusion, and direct statement from Scripture to convince the multitude of the truth (Acts 15:6-29). They then wrote a letter stating that the teachers went out without their authority and telling what God’s will is.

These men had the right to write such a letter because they were apostles. What they wrote had the force of Scripture. *No meeting of uninspired men today can do what the apostles did in Acts 15!*

What brother Greer has written sounds like if all the quarreling brethren would get together and agree on a solution, the problem would be solved and we would all know what to believe! It reminds me of a telephone conversation my wife had with a sister back in 1957. After my wife patiently taught the sister that church-supported orphan homes are not authorized by the New Testament, the lady said, “But they haven’t decided that yet, have they?” I still wonder who “they” are! The apostles decided it a long time ago. We don’t have any deciding to do except to understand what they taught and to obey it.

This is done by individual study, not by a church con-

# Society Has Failed You

Kenneth D. Sils

A few months ago, a decision was handed down in a famous court case in Texas. This case involved the so-called “vampire” killer who murdered several people in very brutal way. The jury found him guilty of murder in the first degree and the judge sentenced him to die for his heinous crimes.

While listening to the national news, I heard a curious statement reported of what the judge in the case had to say to this corrupt young man during sentencing. The judge reportedly said this to this killer, “Your parents failed you, *society has failed you!*”

This is not the first time I have heard such “foolishness” come from the lips of judges in America. Someone, somewhere, in some way has failed you. We live in a society that has accepted the liberal pap of someone else is to blame for your actions. Our country was founded on the truth of individual responsibility and accountability, but today the montra of our nation is, “find someone else to blame.”

From the dawn of time, man has attempted to justify

---

ference. It is done by appealing to apostolic example, necessary conclusion, and direct statement from Scripture. It is done by testing our conclusions by study with others, by debate, by articles, and the reviews of those articles. And it is done individually. Collective decisions don't count for a thing!

As for personal sins against one another, face-to-face meetings are what Matthew 18:15-17 tells us we should have. We should study the Bible with one another when there are differences of understanding. But church conferences in order to settle a doctrinal matter are fraught with danger and lead in the direction of denominationalism.

unlawful actions on the backs of other people. In the garden, God told man in Genesis 2:17-18, “Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.” We know the story! Satan tempted Eve and she ate, then she gave it to her husband and he ate. When God confronted them with their sin, they looked for someone else to blame: Adam blamed Eve, Eve blamed the serpent, and the serpent must have laughed. *God's way is personal responsibility.* God punished the serpent for his sin, Eve for her sin, and Adam for his sin.

This is and always has been the Bible way. Ezekiel told Israel to straighten up and quit blaming their fathers for the consequences of sin they were now reaping. Ezekiel 18:20 states, “The soul who sins shall die. The son shall not bear the guilt of their father, nor the father bear the guilt of the son. The righteousness of the righteous will be upon himself and *the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon himself.*” Only upon ourselves, guilt and punishment will come for our own wickedness. Although others may influence us to sin, God will demand payment from our hands. It is *our* fault regardless of the environment in which we live! Yes, maybe our parents didn't train us correctly. Maybe society deems our promiscuous behavior acceptable. Possibly all of our peers are doing it! Yet God will punish you for your sin and God will punish me for my sin! *You have failed yourself!*

Brothers and sisters, we need to place this truth deep into our hearts and the hearts of our families. God expects us individually to serve him and obey the gospel. He has given every able-bodied Christian the duty of “assembling with the saints” (Heb. 10:25) on a consistent basis. God admonishes each of us to bear his own load (Gal. 6:5). God encourages us to work in his vineyard as he has given us a variety of talents to utilize and bear spiritual fruits for the glory of God. Are you bearing your own load?

---

P.O. Box 324, Eshowe, 3815 South Africa.

*continued bottom of next page*

## “Quarelling” continued from front page

a single congregation on a regular, full-time basis in the teaching and preaching of the Word. While I was a college student, one of the chief proponents of the “no located preacher” and “no school operated by brethren in which the Bible is taught” position came to the campus. He stirred up no small controversy. Looking back on how the administration of the school handled the matter, I think they did not act wisely. When I then began preaching regularly, there was a congregation of that persuasion not far removed from us. For many years, I received and read journals published by brethren of that persuasion. I also read a published debate on those issues which was held right here in Kansas City. That debate book is still in my library.

Perhaps the issue with which I struggled hardest as a young preacher was one that was getting up a full head of steam about the time I began my first regular work in the boot heel of Missouri. Having only minimally become aware of it while in college, I soon found myself in a real struggle to try to understand what the arguments were all about. It had to do with principles of *congregational cooperation, centralization of oversight, and the support of various human institutions to do the work of the church*. My struggle with that issue lasted for a few years. I subscribed to and read journals published by brethren with differing views. I discussed it with fellow preachers. I went to hear “lectures” presented by various brethren. (Somewhere I still have a copy of some notes that I made on lessons presented by the late W. Curtis Porter in about 1955, I believe at Paragould, Ark.) I attended a public debate of the topics (several such debates in years following). In fact, it was during the debate that much of what I’d been reading “fell into place” and I began to see more clearly what the furor was all about.

There were other issues and questions which came up and were freely discussed, sometimes very heatedly and very pointedly. I can remember, as a young preacher,

---

One of the songs we sing exhorts us by saying, “There is much to do, there’s work on every hand.” Don’t attempt to put your load of spiritual service on another brother or sister. Don’t leave it for the preacher, the Bible class teacher, or the “faithful few.” When you drift from God, don’t blame the church for its lack of teaching or concern. If you are overcome in sin, don’t gnash out against your family or friends as though they are responsible for your wickedness. On the day of judgment, all people will stand before Jesus and you’ll *never* hear from him, “Your parents failed you, society has failed you!”

---

1827 Caroline St., South Bend, Indiana 46613

once thinking that if I was going to have to constantly be trying to wade through some issue over which brethren were disagreed that I just didn’t think I wanted to preach. However, I learned from the Bible that God’s people have always faced issues, some of them sharply contested and divisive. The prophets in the Old Testament periods had to stand against false prophets. In the New Testament era, there were questions about whether Gentile Christians had to keep the Law of Moses and be circumcised (Acts 15). Those who denied a resurrection (1 Cor. 15:12ff) and some who contended that the resurrection was already past had to be dealt with, for such teaching resulted in the overthrow of the faith of some (2 Tim. 2:17-18). And this is to mention only a few of the issues about which one reads as facing the early disciples.

This young preacher came to realize that there is no central agency or earthly headquarters charged with determining some kind of a creedal body of truth to which all must pay allegiance. Each person is responsible before God for his own study of inspired truth. As to issues that arise among brethren, somewhere along the way I decided that I’d do the best I could to study the word of God on the various questions that arise. Doing so I would eventually (*It might take me longer than it takes some, and longer than they think it should take me.*) arrive at a position with which I felt comfortable in my handling of the Word. My position might not be “the majority opinion,” but my ultimate judgment is not going to be by my brethren, but by him whom I am attempting to serve (cf. Acts 27:23; Rom. 1:9). And so while the young preacher in the GOT article, and others like him, could wish, as I did (*and still do*), that brethren could just “sit down face to face, heart to heart” and with “open Bibles” and “open hearts” through “*open, honest, meaningful, and forthright discussion*” arrive at a common understanding, I know that is not likely. In the meanwhile, as we grapple with the various issues and questions that arise among us, let each of us study while remembering that we have a great work to do affecting “precious souls and the growth of the Lord’s church.” Let us love truth above persons and principles above personalities. Let us be desirous of marching under no banner but that of truth, and let us owe allegiance to none but to him whom we confessed as Lord (Rom. 10:9-10). When brethren become embroiled in controversy, as some seem bound to do, let’s try to observe it from a sufficient distance as to maintain objectivity while remembering the great need to sound forth the word of the gospel to souls that are lost and dying in sin. Let those quarrel who feel that they must, but let us not allow their quarreling to become a discouragement.

One other thing, the honest and forthright discussion of differences need not degenerate into quarreling.

---

13018 N. Oakland Ave., Kansas City, Missouri 64167



## “Intolerance” continued from page 2

crowd. However, the crowd is composed of people who believe anything.

A few years ago, one of the denominations was revising its songbook and decided to remove “Onward Christian Soldiers” because of its militancy. The truth is that people, including some among us, would remove all references to Christian warfare from our Bible. But consider these texts:

Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses (1 Tim. 6:12).

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith (2 Tim. 4:7).

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints (Eph. 6:10-18).

Our adversary, the Devil, goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet. 5:8). The serpent of Revelation 12, frustrated in his attempt to destroy the child (Christ), turns its assault against the children of the woman “which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ” (Rev. 12:17). These passages and many others emphasize that *we are in a war!* At issue is not only the future of our country and the future of the church in America, but more importantly, *our souls!*

Those who are pressing to change the moral values of America have no qualms of conscience about preventing a Reggie White from having a job because of his beliefs about homosexuality. They will close every door of opportunity for him they can just as they did the same for Anita Bryant. *We are in a war!*

These are the same forces at work who will use statutes aimed at destroying the Mafia to stifle peaceful protests at abortion clinics. The same ones who defended those who

marched in the streets and burned buildings to promote the civil rights agenda will use the law to silence those who oppose abortion! *We are in a war!*

Those who are preaching tolerance are most intolerant!

### The Warfare in the Church

Make no mistake about this warfare. Its proponents have influence in the Lord’s church. Those who are saying that we should tolerate the preaching of diverse doctrines about divorce and remarriage work to cut off the support and close doors of opportunity for preaching for those who oppose these loose views on divorce and remarriage. Those who preach tolerance are very intolerant people! *We are in a war!*

One can watch the lectureships that are held around the country and see the intolerance. Those who have been outspoken in opposing the view that places divorce and remarriage in Romans 14 are not invited. How ironic! Those who claim that Romans 14 allows for “significant moral and doctrinal differences” have no room to tolerate those who differ with their interpretation of Romans 14. Those who preach tolerance are very intolerant people! *We too are in a war!*

### Conclusion

The “toleration” movement is just another ploy of the Devil to desensitize us in our battle against sin. If we can tolerate homosexuality, although we are not “gay,” then we grant it acceptability and make those who oppose it “homophobic.” If we can tolerate the preaching of loose doctrines on divorce and remarriage, although we do not believe them, we grant them acceptability and picture those who oppose those loose doctrines as loose cannons, spiritual zealots who are a greater threat to the church than those who preach their loose doctrines on divorce and remarriage. *Shades of Reggie White!*

6567 Kings Ct., Danville, Indiana 46122

## At The Feet Of The Master Teacher

by Daniel H. King, Sr.

King’s presentation of the teaching styles of Jesus’ contemporaries demonstrates his mastery of that period of history and enlightens us in understanding how Jesus’ methods of teaching were distinctive.

**\$14.95**

## Preachers Needed

**Seymour, Indiana:** The church in Seymour, Indiana is looking for an evangelist. Seymour is located off of I-65 halfway between Indianapolis and Louisville, Kentucky. For more information please contact Thelbert McIntosh at (812) 522-6318 or Bob Deweese at (812) 342-4646.

**Rockwood, Tennessee:** The church at Highway 70, Rockwood, Tennessee is looking for a mature preacher who can help the church to grow. They are a very small congregation. They need someone who has partial support. If interested, please contact Jim Woodall after 6:00 p.m. at 923-354-3624.

**Toronto, Ohio:** The Dennis Way church in Toronto, Ohio is looking for a full-time preacher. If interested, please call 740-537-4921 and leave a message on the answer machine or send a resume to Church of Christ, P.O. Box 67, Toronto, OH 43964.

**Memphis, Indiana:** The church in Memphis, Indiana is looking for a full-time preacher. If interested, please call Fred Minton, Sr. at 812-294-4012 or Jim Key at 812-246-3444.

**Roswell, New Mexico:** The church at Roswell, New Mexico is looking for a full-time preacher. Their attendance is 20-30 people. They need a preacher with partial support or someone who is retired. If interested, call Weldon Cecil at 403 S. Evergreen, Roswell, NM 88201, phone 505-623-5544 or write Church of Christ, 1212 N. Richardson, Roswell, NM 88201.

## A Plea For Help

We are a small Spanish-speaking congregation located here in Austin, Texas. We are eighteen in membership, but we are very much committed to the Lord's work. We are faithful and continue to strive for our loving God.

The church here was started by brother Rene Garcia in 1988. The beginning was very difficult because brethren and other prospects had to be contacted, taught and encouraged to start coming to and worship God. We are the only Spanish-speaking church within a forty-five mile radius.

We have been given permission in the past years to meet using the facilities of our English-speaking brethren in this

area: Wonsley Drive church of Christ in Austin and the Northwest church of Christ in Austin. We also leased a building for several years in another area of the city.

We have the desire and love to prosper for the Lord but, not having the proper place to meet has been a hindrance to us. We have been meeting in a small community center and in the homes of different brethren. We are on our own in making schedules, gospel meetings, and other church business.

We have been struggling trying to find an affordable and appropriate place to meet on a permanent basis. The cost of living in this area is expensive which is the result of the rapid economy growth.

We average from 25-30 in attendance. We would like for more people to visit us but, putting more than 25 people in a home presents a problem. We have hope of growth in spirit and membership, but the need for us to have the proper place to worship God in spirit and in truth is a concern to us.

We have found a church building in a good location in East Austin. The building belongs to "Bahai-I-Faith Temple" on 4317 Airport Blvd. We have shown a great interest in this building, however, the price has been set at \$110,00.00. We know this is a lot of money, but comparing it with others that we have seen, this is a reasonable price.

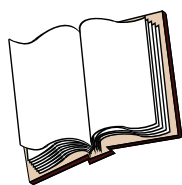
We are a small congregation but we have saved \$30,000 for the purpose of investing in a building. We can give this amount as a down payment, but this will leave a balance in our treasury of \$5,000. This amount will not meet our up-coming expenses. We are responsible Christians and we are working toward this important effort. We average \$1000 a month in contribution.

However, we need your financial help to prepare us to begin this commitment. We need a building to meet in so we can provide an appropriate place to worship God.

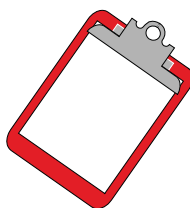
If any brethren wish to help us in a monetary manner, please contact the following brethren: Rene Garcia, 2002 Oxford Blvd., Round Rock, TX 78664 (512-388-1647), Efrain Tobias, 1603 9th St., Austin, TX 78702 (512-478-8035), or Paul Cervantes, 12312 Blue Water, Austin, TX 78758 (512-837-4634).

Thank you, brethren, for reading our letter and considering our request. God bless all and please remember us in your prayers. **Iglesia De Cristo, c/o 1603 9th. St., Austin, TX 78702.**





## Quips & Quotes



### **1 in 3 Teen Smokers Is Already Hooked**

“Atlanta — One in three high school students who try smoking even once develop a daily habit before they graduate, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported Thursday.

“Most high school smokers say they’ve tried to quit. And most fail.

“The study shows that many smokers develop a pattern of nicotine addiction and have a desire to quit in their teens, said Michael Eriksen, director of the CDC’s Office of Smoking and Health.

“Seventy percent of 16,000 students surveyed nationwide said they had smoked at least once, the CDC said.

“And almost 36 percent of students who had tried cigarettes said their habit escalated to smoking at least once a day” (*The Indianapolis Star*] May 22, 1998, A18).

### **Martin Niemoeller, on Nazi Germany**

“When they came for the Communists, I didn’t speak up, because I wasn’t a Communist. When they came for the Social Democrats, I didn’t speak up, because I wasn’t a Social Democrat. When they came for the Jews, I didn’t speak up, because I was already in a concentration camp. By then nobody was left who could or wanted to protest” (*Reader’s Digest* [December 1982], 127).

### **Merle Shain**

“The people in your life are like the pillars on your porch. Sometimes they hold you up, and sometimes they lean on you. Sometimes it is just enough

to know they’re standing by” (“When Lovers Are Friends,” *Reader’s Digest* [December 1982], 127).

### **William K. Kilpatrick**

“Any love that lasts becomes a love story. A marriage, for example, is a shared story: the partners grow in love partly on the basis of shared memories, and partly on the conviction that they are on a journey together. In having children, they bring them into the story and introduce them to the characters — aunts, uncles, and grandparents — who are already part

of it. It is an expression of confidence that the story ought to be continued” (“Why Johnny Can’t Tell Right From Wrong,” *Reader’s Digest* 47).

## *Preacher Available*

**Jerry Parker, 788 Kingswood Ave., Orange Park, FL 32073:** Brother Parker is seeking a place to preach within a radius of 100 miles from Orange Park. He is a gospel preacher with 35 years experience and has recently moved to Orange Park. If interested, please call him at 904-213-9630.

## **New Workbook By**

**Johnie Edwards, Titus Edwards, Johnie Paul Edwards,  
and John Isaac Edwards**

## **The Family And the Home**

13 Lessons for Truth Seekers and Growing Christians

The Home in the Beginning  
God’s Purposes in Marriage

Preparing For Marriage

Selecting a Life-Long Companion

Why Marriages Fail

The Role of the Man in the Family

The Role of the Woman in the Family

The Role of Children in the Family

Discipline in the Home

Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage

Problems Facing Today’s Families

Bible Parents With Troubling Children

Why We Lose Our Young People

Great for Jr.-Sr. High, Adult Classes, and Home Studies

**Price — \$3.95**

**Call: 1-800-428-0121**