

SEARCHING *the* SCRIPTURES

"Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me' — John 5:39.



"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily whether those things were so" — Acts 17:11.

"DEVOTED TO THE SEARCH FOR DIVINE TRUTH"

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SINCERE WORDS

"The preacher sought to find out acceptable words: and that which was written was upright, even words of truth (Ecc. 12:10)."

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THE BENEFITS OF HELL

You know, they tell us that if we look close enough at anything we can find something good about it. Sure enough, for the benefit of all who are making plans to go to hell, we have closely examined that place and have concluded that there really are some advantages in going to hell that exceed this life on Planet Earth.

No More Preaching

Some folks have the feeling that every time they attend services the preacher picks on them. They think all he does is sit around dreaming up some new way to make them mad. For this reason, some don't want to get too close to the preacher. Unless they are on their deathbed, they avoid him. Spasmodic attendance is usually an indication.

Well, if preachers make you nervous (2 Tim. 4: 1-5; Tit. 2: 15), if preachers are making you mad by trying to get you to do better and are telling you where you are going if you don't, then just wait awhile! You will be in a place where you will never be bothered by preachers again. You can show them a thing or two. You will never have to listen to another message preached or another warning.

This is not to say there won't be some preachers in hell. There may be as many of them as of any other class of people. But they won't be preaching there. Isn't that great?!

No More Contributions

Some have a rough time enduring this on earth (1 Cor. 16:1, 2; 2 Cor. 9: 6, 7). It is an imposition on their wallet or

purse and they find it disgusting. Here's good news! One of the benefits of hell is that there will be no contributions, sermons on giving, or classes on the subject. Not one place in the word of God is there any mention whatsoever about collection plates in hell. While preachers may be there, they won't be asking for donations. If you find it disturbing to be faced with sacrificing for the greatest work on earth, then rest assured that once you enter the portals of hell you will never hear another sermon on giving or have to look at another collection plate. With some, this will be the greatest benefit.

No More Calls to Holy Living

One of the things many do not like about the church of Christ is its emphasis on pure living (Tit. 2: 11, 12; Gal. 5: 19-21; 1 Tim. 2: 9, 10; Eph. 4: 24; Mt. 5: 28). Uprightness is not "in" for our modern age. The masses don't see any reason in all this "self-denial" (Lk. 9: 23). Why can't people just live their own lives (morally and religiously) without someone telling them how they should dress and talk and where they should not go? After all, we wouldn't be the first society that ever did that (Judg. 17: 6; 21: 25). A little idolatry, bestiality, homosexuality, adultery and drunkenness never hurt them, did it? If we could just call a meeting to get together and decide how much lower we should lower the standard maybe we could make some headway against all these restrictions. This is the age of liberation. We demand our rights!

To all who feel this way, we have examined the scriptures closely. There is not one place in the entire Bible that indicates that those who go to hell will be bothered by someone preaching to them about blending in too much with the world. No one will rebuke you for the lifestyle you choose. Think of all the freedom! **No More Personal Evangelists**

If Christians coming to your door or calling on the phone about living for God and worshiping regularly bugs you, just wait. You may soon be free of them at last! If the fellow at work keeps hounding you about attending the services, about repentance and baptism, or about being restored to faithfulness and is agitating you, don't worry — be happy! From everything I have read about hell (and I think I have read every verse), there will not

be one tract passed out in hell and no one will try to get you to change your life when you reach this place of freedom. Won't it be wonderful there?

No More Invitations

Some folks can pretty well handle the preaching, collections, calls to holy living and the personal workers. They can even endure the prayers for their salvation and the hymns about judgment. They have managed to develop a protective shield that keeps such things from penetrating and have gotten to where they almost don't feel a thing. And if they would just do away with extending the invitation things would be ideal! But for some reason they ask everybody to stand and sing an invitation song while the preacher makes a plea for sinners who have never obeyed the gospel to repent and be converted or for erring Christians to get back on the right track. This is hard for some to handle and they plain don't like it. It makes them fidget and squirm till they can hardly stand it. That's the reason some stay home.

Boy, have we got news for you! We have examined the scriptures thoroughly and there is not even a hint that invitations will be extended in hell. Once there, you won't have to think about how repulsive an invitation is.

No More Demands on Your Time

Going to services, preparing to teach a class, visiting the physically and spiritually sick, cleaning the building! These all take time. I know it sounds too good to be true, but you are not dreaming. Think of all the free time you will have in hell! We are talking Utopia, Man!

Conclusion

There's just one catch. Once you step across that line from this life to that other place there will never be an opportunity to change your mind. If you think for one moment that someday you just might wish to hear a gospel preacher talk about holy living; if you think there would be a time when you might welcome a phone call from a concerned Christian; if you think you might wish to support the Lord's work; or if you think you might want to stand and sing just one more invitation song, or teach a Bible class, or clean the church building—then it would be wise right now to start thinking very seriously about where you are headed.

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READ YOUR BIBLE TODAY

Editorial

Connie W. Adams

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LEARNING FROM THE PROPHETS

"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Rom. 15: 4). It is a grave mistake to neglect the study of the Old Testament. It is true that God speaks to us "in these last days by his Son" (Heb. 1: 2). But the Son by whom he speaks is linked to the Old Testament. Jesus said "Search the scriptures... and they are they which testify of me" (Jno. 5: 39). It is impossible to comprehend the New Testament without some knowledge of the Old Testament. It has been wisely said that "the Old Testament is the New Testament concealed, and the New Testament is the Old Testament revealed."

Try to make sense of the book of Hebrews without some background knowledge of the books of Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy! How could you fathom much of Paul's argument as it unfolds in Romans without knowing something of the books of law as well as the prophetic books. There are 400 allusions to the Old Testament in the book of Revelation. Unless one is familiar with the prophetic symbolism of such books as Ezekiel, Daniel, Zechariah, not to mention Isaiah and Jeremiah, he will have great difficulty with the last book in the Bible. A study of the sermons of the apostles in the book of Acts reveals frequent references not only to the Psalms but also the prophetic books. After the resurrection, Jesus connected that momentous event with the prophecies which had gone before. "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself: (Lk. 24: 27).

There are many practical lessons for us in the message of the prophets of old. Consider these with me.

God Is The Answer To Our Problems

Even though many of the problems of Israel were the product of their own folly, God still loved them. Over and over the prophets challenged them to "Hear the word of the Lord." Though described as a "sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward" (Isa. 1: 4); yet God said "Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow" (1: 18). When they were tempted to turn to Egypt, or some other nation to come to their defense against impending invasion and captivity, repeatedly the prophets taught that only by turning to the Lord in repentance could they find

help.

God is still the answer to our problems. Things" are no defense. They perish with the using. Human wisdom has its limits. Many have turned to alcohol and drugs. Mystics have been consulted. Satan worship is on the rise. Religious cults and quacks abound. Paul urged the Athenian philosophers to "seek the Lord" and said "he is not far from every one of us" (Acts 17: 27). There is one true God and we are his offspring. There are many false gods which can do nothing. Israel only found help when they turned in repentance to the one true God. That is where we will find our help. "So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me: (Heb. 13: 6).

God Reacts To Sin

"For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; How shall we escape.... (Heb. 2: 2-3). Sometimes in the Old Testament days, God's reaction to sin was instantaneous. At other times it was measured and deliberate. Both the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities were foretold by prophets who pleaded with the people to repent and avert these calamities. The eloquent and statesman-like utterances of Isaiah were unheeded. The plaintive, weeping speeches of Jeremiah were despised and he was mistreated. When captivity came, it was God's punitive reaction to their sins.

God is still offended by sin. The grace, mercy and love of God provided a covering for sin. "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission: (Heb. 9: 22). "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5: 8). But we must not trifle with the grace and forbearance of God. While he is not willing that any should perish, the day of the Lord will come (2 Pet. 3: 9-10). "Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness... (Acts 17: 31).

The Remnant and The Messianic Hope

Even before the captivity of Israel, those prophets which foretold it offered a ray of hope when they promised that God would recover a remnant of his people and settle them in their land again. While Isaiah (10: 22-23) and Jeremiah foresaw a remnant salvaged before the captivity even began, Daniel and Ezekiel offered the same hope from within the captivity. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah report the return of the remnant. Even in the midnight of Jewish History, there was hope of better things to come.

The church is God's remnant now. "Even so then at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace" (Rom. 11: 5). There are moments in human history when it seems that nearly all have forsaken the Lord, but God still has his "seven thousand which have not bowed the knee to Baal." MAN'S EXTREMITY becomes God's **opportunity**. In despair, there is yet hope. Remember the prophets.

The Providence of God

The book of Daniel impresses the lesson that God rules among the nations (5: 21). When a nation becomes too wicked for God to tolerate, then another power will subdue it, though it may also be wicked. In due time that evil nation will fall unless it repents. I do not understand

how one could study the prophets without seeing this. Israel was God's "holy nation" (Ex. 19: 6). Yet, he punished the northern kingdom at the hands of the Assyrians and later, made Babylon his rod to chastise faithless Judah. God's providence continued to work in captivity for there were Daniel and Ezekiel to remind the people of the word of the Lord and to keep hope alive. Further, the captivity provided time for rebellious people to ponder, and to come to repentance. Through captivity, God providentially broke them of idolatry, for while they committed other sins after the captivity, idolatry was not among them. God cared for them even by the rivers of Babylon. When the captivity ended after seventy years, the providence of God had a Zerrubbabel, an Ezra and a Nehemiah to lead the returnees.

If God provided for a temporal nation, preserved a seed and fulfilled his promise to give the world a Saviour through that restored remnant, is he any less concerned for his spiritual children now? Indeed, "the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous and his ears are open to their prayers" (1 Pet. 3: 12).

The people of God are often defenseless against the prophetic speculators and would-be seers who build their cases on a misuse of the prophets and extract passages from their historical context and ignore the fulfillment of them in events described in the New Testament. The premillennial and dispensationalist preachers have sometimes deceived and mesmerized even members of the body of Christ who would have known better had they studied the prophets. What about where you worship? Do you include the prophets in your Bible classes? Preachers, are you acquainting the people with this important part of the word of God? It takes time, effort and skill to make it come alive, but it is well worth the effort and the practical lessons for living in today's world, abound.

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(2 Cor. 5:9)

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LOVE NOT THE WORLD

FORNICATION AND ADULTERY (Part 1)

Fornication and adultery are prevalent sins. We don't have to read far into the Old Testament before we see men and women engaging in immoral conduct. Gen. 34 reveals that Shechem and Dinah (the daughter of Jacob) committed fornication (vs. 1-7). Just four chapters later we read of Judah and Tamar doing the same (Gen. 38: 12-18).

Demosthenes said concerning the Greek world, "We keep mistresses for our pleasure, concubines for our constant attendance and wives to bear us legitimate children and be our faithful housekeeper." What a sad picture!

Today it is not much different. In 1987 Josh McDowell surveyed 1400 "church going" young people. He found that forty-three percent of them had committed fornication by the age of eighteen. Another thirty six were guilty of petting. Even among Christians it is not uncommon to hear of some teenager who is pregnant out of marriage or some man who has left his wife for another woman. A number of preachers have also been caught up in this immoral behavior.

Defining Our Terms

Fornication: This refers to "every kind of unlawful intercourse" (Bauer). Thayer says it means, "properly of illicit sexual intercourse in general." This term is generally used to describe unlawful sexual relations of those who are unmarried. Fornication is a broad term that includes adultery.

Adultery: This refers to "unlawful intercourse with another's wife" (Thayer). It is a more specific term than fornication. It is generally used to identify the sexual sins of those who are married. However, these two terms are used interchangeably.

In these articles we will talk about premarital and extramarital sex.

It Is A Sin

The very definition given above suggests that fornication is a sin. It is **unlawful** intercourse. It is sexual relations contrary to God's law — sin.

In the Old Testament: God has been grieved by such activity since the beginning of time. The seventh of the ten commandments said, "Thou shalt not commit adultery" (Exo. 20: 14; Deut. 5: 18). In fact, God instructed that the fornicator be put to death (Lev. 20: 10;

cf. John 8: 5). It is called a **heinous** ("hateful; odious; very wicked; outrageous" — Webster) crime and an "iniquity to be punished by the judges" (Job 31: 11).

In the New Testament: Paul warned that the un-righteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Among those he listed were fornicators and adulterers (1 Cor. 6: 9-11). Later in the same chapter he said, "flee fornication: (v. 18). The same writer listed fornication and adultery as works of the flesh that condemn souls to hell (Gal. 5: 19-21). The Thessalonians were commanded to "abstain from fornication: (1 Thess. 4: 3).

It is not sexual relations **that is condemned, but the unlawful sexual relations.** In marriage, this intimate relationship is honorable and undefiled (Heb. 13: 4). The thing that is condemned is the premarital and extramarital intercourse.

What It Does

Let's consider some of the serious consequences of fornication and adultery. Obviously, those who yield to the temptation have not seriously weighed the consequences.

It perverts the use of the body. Paul said that fornication is a sin against the body (1 Cor. 6: 18). In that context we see that the body is for the Lord (v. 13), is the temple of the Holy Spirit (v. 19), has been bought with a price (v. 20) and should be used to glorify God (v. 20). Therefore, to use the body to commit fornication is a perversion of the body.

It destroys your reputation and respect for self. The book of Job describes it as "a fire that consumeth destruction" (31: 12). Solomon warned about adultery in Prov. 6: 24-35. He said, "Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned?" (v. 27). "But whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding: he that doeth it destroyeth his own soul. A wound and dishonor shall he get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away" (vs. 32-33).

Fornication brings shame, dishonor, reproach and a cloud. It destroys a precious reputation that take years to rebuild, if it ever can be. It destroys your name, character and self-esteem. Perhaps this is best illustrated in a letter that a young lady wrote to Josh McDowell: "Having premarital sex was the most horrifying experience of my life. It wasn't at all the emotionally satisfying experience the world deceived me into believing. I felt as if my insides were being exposed and my heart was left unattended. I know God has forgiven me of this haunting sin, but I also know I can never have my virginity back. I dread the day that I have to tell the man I truly love and wish to marry that he is not the only one—though I wish he were. I have stained my life—a stain that will never come out. — Monica."

David faced his sin with Bathsheba every day. He said, "my sin is ever before me" (Psa. 51: 3).

It is cruel to others. Prov. 5 contrasts sexual immorality to marital faithfulness. In his warning about the former, Solomon said to flee from the harlot "Lest thou give thine honour unto others, and thy years unto the cruel" (v. 9).

The fornicator thinks only of himself. He may reason that he is hurting no one but himself. He may not realize

at first that he is being cruel to others. His actions are mean and devastating. Pain and grief come to others. It is cruel to self, the one you are with, your mate, the children and your parents.

Young lady, your date may tempt you saying, "If you love me you will," but you remember that the truth is that if you love him you won't!

It creates jealousy. In the context of warning about adultery, the Proverb writer said, "For jealousy is the rage of a man: therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance. He will not regard any ransom; neither will he rest content, though thou givest many gifts" (Prov. 6: 34-35). Jealousy is created in the mate of the one you are with as well as your mate. Furthermore, it creates doubt that may never be removed.

It destroys the home. The one exception to divorce being wrong is when one's mate had committed fornication (Matt. 19: 9). So, for one moment of pleasure you have destroyed your marriage. The children now have no Dad (or Mom) and suffer emotionally. Even if it could be worked out, it will take years and years to overcome all the heartaches that were created.

It hinders worship. When either the husband or wife are not what they ought to be, his/her prayers are hindered (1 Pet. 3: 7). Thus, one who fornicates cannot properly offer praises unto God, until he repents of his sin.

It stirs the wrath of God. Paul warned that we shouldn't commit fornication as some in the wilderness did for God slew 23,000 when they did (1 Cor. 10: 8). As Moses records it he said, "and the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel" (Num. 25: 3). Later he called it the "fierce anger" (v. 4). Young person, you just remember when the desires are stirred to the point that you are ready to yield, that you are about to make God angry!

It brings disfellowship. The Corinthian church was instructed to withdraw fellowship from the fornicator who refused to repent (1 Cor. 5).

It sends **one's** soul to hell. Paul listed fornication as one of the sins that would keep one out of heaven (1 Cor. 6: 9-11; Gal. 5: 19-21). John was a little more blunt when he said that the whoremongers spend eternity in a "lake which burneth with fire and brimstone" (Rev. 21: 8). If that doesn't cause one to think twice, I can't think what would.

It breeds other sins. That is exactly what happened in the case of David and Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11). Lust led to fornication which led to deceit and finally murder. If you commit fornication or adultery the next thing you know you will have to tell a lie to cover your tracks. Then more lies. Later he begins to neglect his family. Sin is just compounded upon sin. If one is willing to commit this sin (fornication), why not commit another? His resistance is now broken and so he willfully sins.

Next we will notice how this sin is committed so easily by some who know better and how we must flee from it.

DON'T FORGET TO PRAY!

DIVINE COMMUNIQUES

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DIVINE COMMUNIQUE: "MARRIAGE IS HONORABLE" (HEB. 13: 4).

Recently Lynda and I gave our daughter, Sherri Lynn, in marriage to a fine young Christian named Mark Alan McCray. We are proud of both of them and look forward to their happiness and usefulness among other Christians and in the larger society. Perhaps the comments I spoke to them at the wedding would be helpful to other young Christians who are blending their lives for the future.

At the marriage of the Prince of Wales and Lady Diana Spencer, the Archbishop of Canterbury began: "Here is the stuff of which fairy tales are made: the Prince and Princess on their wedding day." Mark and Sherri, you are no less a prince and princess on your wedding day than they. The wonderful portrait of your splendidly handsome young groom, Sherri, and your beautiful bride, Mark, is every bit as grand in true substance as the scene in London almost eight years ago.

We are not, however, experiencing a "fairy tale." These moments are as exciting as any fantasy framed in the minds of history's greatest novelists and poets. You are totally saturated with love. You are secure in your faith in one another. You are possessed by hope which looks to the future with joy and happy anticipation. But we are looking at **real life**, with our eyes wide-open to the eternal consequences of the changes we make in our lives today.

We are so very blessed and honored to be surrounded by our families and many of our friends today. You have grown up together in the company of our extended spiritual family. You have worshiped together and have grown to know each other's values, values upon which your love is being rooted and grounded. Today you have asked that we all come to be reminded of God's Divine will with regard to marriage, to edify one another by praying and singing together about the spiritual responsibilities and purposes which form such an important part of your concept of the union into which you are entering, and to hear you say your vows before the Lord because in fact you do recognize that it is He who joins men and women in marriage. You have both declared your commitment to allowing the will of Christ to guide you in this and all other relationships.

The Lord's view of marriage, it seems to me, includes a special emphasis upon three wonderful words which I would like to bring before your minds today:

The first is "LOVING." The vision of bride and groom suggests romantic love and I am thankful that you share that desire for one another. It has attracted you to each other and it will be important in your continuing union and faithfulness in the days ahead. When your hair turns gray, Mark; or when a slight character line appears alongside your eyes, Sherri; I truly hope that your desire for one another will not diminish.

More importantly, however, loving suggests trust and caring. It means actively sacrificing to give the happiness you desperately want for each other. It means putting your companion above yourself. It means placing your mate above all others except the Lord Christ. This love is what will truly fan the flame for as long as you live and give you warmth as your hands touch on the arms of your rocking chairs and your eyes meet after many years as one. Marriage is loving.

Secondly marriage is "SHARING." In marriage you will join your lives as one and partake together of the wonderful adventures before you: the splendors and miseries, the achievements and discouragements, the possessions and lack of them, the hopes and disappointments. You will see them all through one another's eyes as well as your own and your love will grow stronger, because you are not laughing or crying alone. Be gentle and tender with one another. Do not withhold yourselves from one another in anything. **Sharing** will become a bonding adhesive giving the bad times meaning, turning new experiences into occasions for maturing and learning more of life, and making the good times better. Marriage is sharing.

And marriage is "SERVING." You must not gaze only into the eyes of your spouse. Your marriage will have consequence beyond yourselves. You have the potential to be powerful influences upon others... not because you seek such, but because that is the necessary result when two Christians, more in love with the Lord than in themselves, use their blended lives to the encouragement and assistance of others. You will "live happily ever after" only if your new, combined life finds true meaning in serving, particularly when that is focused upon influencing others to do good as divinely directed by Christ.

Please remember, "**LOVING**," "**SHARING**," and "**SERVING**"... and remember them in three frames of reference:

LOVE one another, **SHARE** with one another every aspect of your lives withholding nothing good and right, and **SERVE** one another unselfishly.

LOVE others: **SHARE** your lives with others, particularly those whom you can help through life; and **SERVE** them, doing good unto all men, especially those of the household of faith.

But above all, **LOVE** God; **SHARE** your lives with Him never forgetting his companionship in all you do; and **SERVE** Him with all your mind, with all your heart, and with all your soul. In keeping with this message brought forth on your wedding day, your parents want to give you this Bible, used in your wedding, to take into your new home with the hope that you will read from this Good Book together every day of your lives.

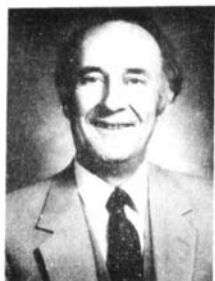
WHAT SAITH THE SCRIPTURE?

(Rom. 4:3)

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ONE-CUP DOCTRINE

QUESTION: Should we use only one loaf of bread and one container when we partake of the Lord's Supper? A brother said that G. C. Brewer introduced the multiple cups into the church. What about this?

ANSWER: The Bible does not tell us how many pieces of bread we may have in eating the Lord's Supper, nor how many containers. This is a matter of judgment and expediency. Can you imagine what problems the Jerusalem church would have encountered with one piece of bread and one container, trying to serve thousands of people.

Let's say a congregation is composed of 2000 worshippers and the time required to serve each one with one loaf and one container would be about 10 seconds. The total time for the whole assembly to observe the Lord's Supper would be in excess of 5 hours. Also, think of the size of the loaf, if just one piece, and the size of the container to accommodate 2000 people. They would be whoppers!

The container has no significance, whatsoever. We just as well bind the plate on which the bread is served as to bind the container for the fruit of the vine. We are told the container symbolizes the New Testament, but if we may have only one container in the assembly, it would follow that we may have only one copy of the New Testament in the assembly. This is where extremism leads.

When Paul wrote in 1 Cor. 11: 27 that those who eat the bread or drink the cup in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, he did not say one word about being guilty of the "container" of the Lord. This shows there are two elements in the Lord's Supper — not three.

1 Corinthians 11: 23-26 is plain about the bread and the cup that Jesus took when he instituted the Supper. Listen to Paul:

(1) "I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you" (v. 23). In other words, I passed on to you exactly what Jesus revealed to me and the following is the way it was. So, let's permit Jesus to tell us what is involved in the Lord's Supper.

(2) "That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread" (v. 23). If we take bread (unleavened), regardless whether one, two or a dozen pieces, have we not done what Jesus said and did?

(3) "After the same manner also he took the cup" (v. 25). What was the cup? Verse 26 states, "For as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup..." The CUP is what we drink, that is, the contents. We don't drink the container. Hence, the "cup" or fruit of the vine is representative of the New Testament in His blood (v. 25). The container does not represent the New Testament, but the contents symbolize it. How do I know? Jesus said so through Paul! That should be good enough for all of us.

In the Gospels, Jesus called the "cup" the "fruit of the vine." Notice: "For this cup is my blood of the new testament... I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until..." (Matt. 26: 28-29). In Mark 14: 24-25, "This (cup) is my blood of the new testament... Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until..." Yet, in spite of all of this, some still insist that Jesus was teaching that we are to use only one container. They need to open their eyes.

Paul wrote, apparently, 1 Corinthians from Ephesus. He stated, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ" (1 Cor. 10: 16)? Though separated by hundreds of miles, yet, the saints at Ephesus and at Corinth had only one cup of which both groups partook and one bread of which they broke. However, they had different containers—at least two, and different pieces of bread — at least two. Therefore, whether we have 2 containers or a thousand, and two pieces of bread or several, we still have ONE cup and ONE bread or loaf. I believe we must have one loaf, but not necessarily one piece on a plate for the entire assembly.

Concerning G. C. Brewer, what if he were the first one to introduce individual containers into the observance of the Lord's Supper? Does this make it wrong? Such a statement is about like saying, "John Doe was the first one to preach on the radio." Does that make radio broadcasting wrong because there is no specific Bible example of someone preaching on the radio? Certainly not!

Preaching the gospel is authorized and the methods used, such as preaching on the radio, comes under the general authorization to preach the gospel. Radio preaching is one of the expedient ways to execute the command. The same is true with individual cups. Jesus said to eat the bread and drink the cup. He did not bind the methods to expedite these commands. Hence, plates with bread on each one and individual containers are authorized.

Through the years some brethren have sown discord, caused division and hindered the growth of the church over a cup (container). This is regrettable. Hasten the day that we see the difference between what is binding and what is expedient.

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BREAD OF LIFE

"I am the bread of life. . . so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me." Jno. 6:35, 57.

Herschel E. Patton
7637 Fleming Hills Dr. S.W.
Huntsville, Ala. 35802



STUDIES IN TITUS (Ch. 1: 1-9) INTRODUCTION

We know practically nothing of the family or background of Titus. He was a Greek (Gal. 2: 3) and is mentioned only in three other New Testament letters (Second Corinthians, Second Timothy, and in the letter that bears his name). It is not known where he was born, or lived. Some have supposed he lived in Antioch of Syria since he was there when Paul, Barnabas, and Titus were sent to the apostles and elders in Jerusalem (Acts 15; Gal. 2: 1).

Titus was the bearer of the First Letter to the Corinthians, one of the most severe and censorious letters Paul ever wrote, indicating Paul's confidence in Titus' ability to deal with a troublesome situation. He also delivered the second letter. He was chosen by Paul to direct the raising of funds for poor saints in Jerusalem (2 Cor. 3: 16-17, 23; 12: 18). Paul referred to him as "mine own son after the common faith" (Titus 1: 4), indicating that the apostle had converted him, and as "my partner and fellow helper concerning you" (2 Cor. 8: 23). He was left in Crete to teach and help in the organization of the churches there (Tit. 1: 5), and to be "a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, and sound speech" (1: 7). From Rome, Paul sent Titus on a mission to Dalmatia (2 Tim. 4: 10).

Knowing that Titus was a faithful partner and fellow helper with Paul, it is a mystery that he is never mentioned by name in the book of Acts, written by Luke. Some have suggested Titus and Luke were relatives, even brothers, and according to an ancient custom, Luke refrained from mentioning even his own name in his writings, using the pronouns "we" and "us" when he was involved.

This letter to Titus, and First Timothy, were probably written after Paul's release from his first imprisonment and before his second imprisonment, about A. D. 65.

This letter to Titus, an evangelist, so far as aim and instruction are concerned, is in perfect harmony with the theme of first and second Timothy, "Saving thyself and them that hear thee" (1 Tim. 4: 16).

Paul's Salutation — Tit. 1: 1-4

In the first four verses of Titus, Chapter one, Paul, in a very long sentence, declares the cardinal principles of God's great scheme of redemption and his connection, as an apostle, with it. Note, in the first four verses, these words, familiar to the Christian System

and telling the gospel story—God, Jesus Christ, Saviour, servant, apostle, faith, elect, knowledge, truth, godliness, hope, eternal life, promised, word, message (preaching), entrusted (committed unto), commandment, grace and peace. These words refer to a life in Christ that people of the world know nothing about.

Paul refers to himself as "a servant (bondservant) of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ," suggesting he was bound to God and was appointed by the Lord Jesus Christ an apostle of His. Such would show to Titus, and others, the authority backing Titus in the work he was assigned to do.

"According to the faith of God's elect... knowledge of truth... after godliness" seems to be expressing the purpose of Paul's apostleship. Williams renders the statement "To stimulate faith in God's chosen people and to lead them on to a full knowledge of religious truth, in the hope of eternal life."

The "hope of eternal life" evidently refers to that hope all who embraced the faith Paul was commissioned to preach could have. It begins at conversion and continues, if we remain faithful, without end. Efforts to limit this hope to a way of life in this world, reaching not beyond the temporal and visible, are a denial of the faith and immortal hope in a life beyond this one, set forth in the gospel and cherished by the early church. This is something God, who cannot lie, promised before the world began. What God promises or says is always truth, and has had, or will have, its fulfillment in due time. While all this was purposed by God before the world began, and promised in the long ago, it was not fully known until the preaching of the gospel. This was the commissioned work of the apostle Paul, other apostles, prophets, and evangelists.

Titus' Special Work in Crete — (v. 5-9)

There was a particular work that Paul left Titus in Crete to do (v. 5). Something was wanting (lacking) in the churches in Crete. The thing lacking was "elders in every church," so Titus was to "set in order" that which was lacking by "ordaining elders in every city."

In verses 6-9 the apostle Paul gives qualifications showing the kind of man who can be ordained. These qualifications were considered in the study of 1 Timothy 3: 1-7. The reader is urged to look back to that study and review that lesson on qualifications for elders. (STS Nov. '87, Vol. 18, p. 536-8)

Since these qualifications are discussed in a previous lesson, I will not repeat here. However, I would like to make some comments about churches being "in order," with elders. Often, in our day, churches that have been "set in order" are soon found in trouble and disorder because of the appointment of elders. This has caused some to conclude that a church is better off without elders, so they abandon God's appointed order.

Titus' charge to remain in Crete and ordain elders in every city was to promote peace, the salvation of souls, and to prevent deception and apostasy. This is why there should be "elders in every church" today. It is tragic that God's order is so often the source of discord and apostasy. In over fifty years of preaching, I have observed that many serious church troubles have as their source the preacher or the elders. This, I think, is usually due to a misunderstanding of their work, relation to each other

and the flock, hinged to a degree of that forbidden vice—"self-willed."

Many troubles arise over hiring or firing (asked or told to leave is the more modest term) the preacher. This is frequently done with no stated cause or charge because of the "hired hand" concept on the part of the elders and or the congregation. The preacher is not just a hired man. He is one who has committed himself to studying and preaching the word of God to save souls. Churches, through the elders, if they have such, invite a preacher to come live in their midst while engaging in the work to which he has committed himself, and they will supply his family material needs.

Saving souls is not only the primary objective of the evangelist, but also the church and elders. This objective will be greatly hindered if the elders and preacher do not work and plan together for it's accomplishment. Elders meeting to plan and discuss the work of the church and the preacher, apart from him, is, I think, bad judgment. I can think of no reason for elders meeting apart from the evangelist, even to consider his salary, work, or some rumor or complaint they have heard. Above all others, he is the one who ought to be present for such considerations. There should be no secret, behind the door, activities in the elder-preacher-congregation relationship. There is nothing wrong, but much good, with the evangelist, if otherwise qualified, being an elder where he labours. Anytime elders suddenly, without a charge of sinful action, impropriety, or unsound teaching, decide to ask (fire) a faithful preacher to leave, within a set time, they cause hurt, unhappiness, and confusion with the preacher and in the congregation. There is hurt, embarrassment, and family and financial burdens to a faithful servant of God, and unrest within the congregation.

Even if elders genuinely feel that "a change" would be good (expedient) for the church, there is a way to bring this about without offence to the preacher or the congregation. If there exists a proper elder/preacher relationship, fears, dissatisfaction, and feelings will be freely discussed between them. Any sincere minister can tell when a difference in thinking and feelings are becoming prominent, and will begin looking about for a move. It may take him a year or more to find another place where he could fulfill his spiritual commitments, meet his family needs, and be adequately supported. This would be better than some hasty, forced action that would result in hurt feelings, loss of confidence, and unhappiness plaguing a congregation for many years.

Of course, many times the cause of trouble is not the elders, but the evangelist. Some are self-willed, domineering, and intolerant of any who would oppose them. They may claim "evangelistic authority" that exceeds that of elders. If they can't manipulate or intimidate the elders, they will politic the congregation until they turn, at least, a sizable number against the elders, resulting in getting rid of them, or leading out a group to start "another work." To avoid this situation, elders should carefully investigate a preacher (his life, attitudes, disposition, ability, past works) before asking him to come work with them. The preacher/elder/congregation work

and relationship is god's order and if each is what it is supposed to be, and functions as the Lord directs, souls will be saved, unity and peace will prevail, and God will be glorified.

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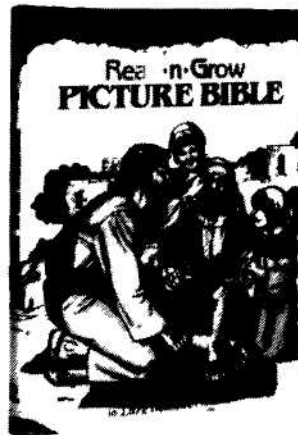
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WHERE DO YOU STAND ON DIVORCE?

To paraphrase Churchill: Never has so much been based upon so little with so many unsettling consequences. I speak of the volumes which have been written and published over the quarter century of my preaching life on various phases of the marriage-divorce-remarriage topic. I am confident that if the Lord had revealed one one-thousandth of what brethren have written on this subject that all our questions would be fully answered.

"Where do you stand on divorce?" I know of one group of elders who asked that question of a preacher who was considering the work there. He replied: "I'm against it." I agree with him. And sometimes I think that about all I really know about it is "I'm against it."

We are widely divided on this subject. If blackballing and ostracism were consistently applied few of us would have enough friends for a pot-luck supper. We would be splintered a dozen different ways. We don't even agree on what the essential components of marriage are; let alone the right to remarriage. Some say that the marriage bed is the necessary consummation of marriage; others disagree. Some believe that couples may be legitimately married by common law; some say no.

As for divergent views on divorce and remarriage, they are numerous. Some claim that such is wrong for any reason. Most teach that fornication is a scriptural reason to put away one's spouse and remarry. Many are of the conviction that the abandonment of a believer by an unbeliever is another scriptural cause. Some say that the civil divorce proceedings constitute the putting away of Matt. 19: 9. Others believe the putting away is distinct from any civil authority. Some believe that one who has been divorced or put away, regardless of the cause, may never remarry. Others are convinced that an innocent party who has been unjustly and unscripturally divorced may remarry if the other party in the original marriage is guilty of fornication. Some believe that God's marriage laws are addressed only to Christians. Many say that if a person who has a right to be married enters a marriage with someone who has no right that said marriage may be dissolved and the first party has the right to marry again. Many would take issue. Some say that both parties in a divorce that is because of fornication have the right to marry again. Others teach that only the innocent party may scripturally remarry. Some would say that if the innocent party

in a divorce dies, the guilty party may then remarry. Others would say that the guilty party may not remarry even then. Some demand that adultery be proved beyond any shadow of doubt and that it be the expressed cause of divorce in the civil proceedings. Others are a bit more lenient in their interpretation of circumstances.

Now I am not suggesting that such questions are unimportant or unworthy of our study and discussion. I have convictions on most of them. The jury is still out on some of them. But I have learned that if I even get close to thinking that I have all the answers, I soon learn that I haven't even heard all the questions. I have facetiously made the comment that if someone wants all the answers, I can't help him, but I know some brethren who can. But really, I know that's not true. I've asked those brethren some questions they did not have the answer to.

Brethren have uniformly admitted the difficulties involved in these questions. Men of spiritual wisdom and unblemished reputations have reached different conclusions. I am not sure that I know anyone with whom I totally agree on this subject. Yet on most phases of it the majority of us seem to get along; treat one another as brethren; and not attack each other as false teachers. There seems to be some space for tolerance in this area. Am I overstepping the boundary of good judgment to suggest that we may need to make room for more?

After all, we disagree in other areas which are surely as crucial. The question of participation in war or law enforcement is a good case in point. If I could fellowship a brother who is a murderer or an advocate of murder as the conscientious objection view considers it, it would seem that consistency would demand tolerance in some other areas. I heard one preacher exclaim in response to this parallel that if a brother were going out and killing someone every night, he wouldn't fellowship him either. I hardly think that such a premise is the basis of our unity in diversity on such differences. The fact is a soldier in war or a policeman may kill someone at any time.

Brethren, let's teach what we believe to be the truth on such matters. But let's be humble enough to grant the possibility that we may not know everything; and charitable enough to allow some individual applications and sincere differences. I realize that this stance produces problems of its own. But I had rather err on the side of charity on such matters as these than on the side of rigidity. It might help us to remember that the Lord has not given to us the prerogative of final judgment.

Many will doubtlessly disagree with me, but I believe the following exhortation is appropriate: **"But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ"** (Romans 14: 10). EDITOR'S NOTE: Lest readers are left with the impression that the subject at hand is so complicated that we cannot understand what the Bible says on the subject, we cite the following passages:

"It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: 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" (Mt. 5: 31-32).

"And I say unto you, whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery" (Mt. 19: 9).

"And he saith unto them, Whosoever shall put away his wife, and shall marry another, committeth adultery against her, And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery" (Mk. 10: 11-12).

"Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery" (Lk. 16: 18).

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LOOK WHAT'S BEHIND THE WALL

**Doug Focht, Jr.
107 Hoffman Drive
Tallahassee, FL 32312**

Not long ago, Harry E. ("Buddy") Payne, Jr. held a four-day meeting in our area on creation & evolution. During that meeting he made several profound observations, but one which particularly impressed me was his explanation of the "language" of DNA. DNA is a 3-foot long molecule which is wound inside virtually every cell of a living organism. Its two strands are twisted around each other and held together like rungs on a ladder by four chemical building blocks. The DNA acts as a kind of blueprint for cell formation. By "reading" the coded DNA, some cells become limbs; other eyes, blood vessels, and so forth. Today, scientists are in the process of reading and decoding this molecule to determine which parts are responsible for what results. In fact, biologists have been able to take apart a DNA molecule and reassemble it in a different order. By this means they have actually been able to produce a fruit fly that has a leg growing out of its head! (cf "The Infinite Voyage: The Geometry of Life" produced by WQED/Pittsburgh in assoc. with the National Academy of Science, 1988)

All of this may sound quite bizarre (and where this will take us is the topic of another study altogether), but the point being made was that if from outer space we were to receive "non-random" signals with a "language convention," we would conclude that such signal emanated from an intelligent source. In fact, Carl Sagan used this very line of reasoning in arguing for governmental funding in search of intelligent life from outer space. And yet, not from outer space but from the minuteness of our existence we have discovered what are indeed "non-random signals" within a "language convention." The four chemicals of the DNA molecule are arranged orderly, and in specific sequences which can be deciphered and understood. Why would such a find also not point to an intelligence?

Those who believe in God, and especially who believe in the Bible as His word, may take these and other such discoveries for granted. In fact, we can be almost haughty about it if we're not careful. One might be tempted to say to the scientist, "Huh! What's so surprising about that? You don't need science to find God!" Maybe not, but such thinking severely limits a person's appreciation for the God in whom he believes. In fact, the most astonishing thing to me is that we are privy to information unknown by mankind since his creation! And why life's details be made so infinitely complex from the beginning when no one would know it until our day? It's as if God is saying "go ahead, keep searching! There's plenty there for you to find out. No matter how deep you search, you will still see my hand in it all!"

Look at it this way. Suppose you bought a house. You were impressed by the workmanship from the first day you saw it; in fact there was none like it anywhere. And now that you've moved in and lived in it you appreciate even more the craftsmanship of its builder; craftsmanship that you could not have known without living there. You noticed that the corners and floors are square and plumb as that big bookcase stands straight against the wall without leaning; that ceilings and window frames are perfectly formed and level. Doors fit snugly without letting in light around the edges, and windows open and close easily without sticking.

Then, after living there for awhile, you decide to do some remodeling. And when you tear open a wall, behind it you find wall studs that are straight and true, selected from the finest wood without knots, splits or blemish; they have even been planed, sanded, painted, and they are screwed — not nailed — to the upper and lower plates. Instead of wiring that is stapled along the studs, some studs have had a groove routed in them to accommodate the wiring. Even the paneling you pulled out from the wall has been finished on both sides. Of course, no one would build a house like that! Who would ever look inside a wall to appreciate all that work anyway, except maybe by accident, or in your case, remodeling? Who indeed?!

The human race has occupied this house a long time — since creation. We have known for ages about the beauty and order of life, of the earth, of the universe surrounding us. Yet only now are we discovering what lay hidden by the builder for millennia behind those walls; hidden to be discovered, not by the Psalmist who said "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (Ps. 139: 14) for he could not have known the half of what he said (but God knew); not even by the pioneers of microbiology; but by those of our own time, even as these words are being written. And yet, faith wagers that until the end of time there will be yet more to find.

This might look like a good place to end our discussion, but there is a far more important lesson in this than that of God in nature. I speak now to the believer. Nature can reveal certain things about God, but not God himself. We acknowledge that He has revealed Himself in His word, but do we intend to see what's behind the walls of that house too — to search' out the depths of His word? Or are we content with knowing about the first principles of the oracles of Christ? The threat of complacency in our lives toward His word is real; and how shall we know the deep things of God without searching? Do you think that searching is not necessary? Are first principles sufficient for you? Do the Sunday sermons and Bible classes stimulate your search, or do they satisfy it? And, most of all, do we suppose that our own traditions and experiences are sufficient guides to understanding the mind of God? The book of Hebrews cries out against such complacency (see for example Heb. 5: 11-14). No other book in the Old or New Testament teaches against the sin of neglect in such a forceful way. The most terrifying admonitions anywhere are found in Heb. 2: 2-3; 4: 11-13;

6: 1-8; 10: 26-31 and 12: 25-29, and each of them follows on the heels of complacency and neglect — not fornication, drunkenness, murder, or other so-called "terrible" sins, but complacency and neglect. And so the real lesson is this: We must diligently seek out God continually (Heb. 11: 6), because the person who is not concerned about what's behind the wall in His house will soon not care about the house itself.

SIMPLICITY IN CHRIST

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DISCIPLINE AND FIRST PLACE

We claim that the church is essential to salvation because the Lord purchased it with his own blood (Acts 20: 28); that the Lord adds the saved to it (Acts 2: 47); and that Christ will save that body (Eph. 5: 23). Some give lip service to the command of Jesus, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God... (Mt. 6: 33), and then put the church in second, third, or fifth place. There are times when I do not think the church is even in the top ten on some lists.

A lawyer who violates the ethics of his profession is subject to disbarment; a physician is answerable to his colleagues in the American Medical Association. Employees are bound by certain rules and regulations as a condition of employment, both initial and continued. Amateur and professional athletes, and contestants in beauty pageants are subject to certain rules, and face discipline or disqualification if those rules are broken. Some labor unions require an oath of allegiance and can levy fines, reprimands, or even purge from their ranks those who violate that oath. The teaching profession, various clubs and organizations of a civic or social nature, fraternal organizations and even volunteer groups are protected by charters, laws and by-laws. The military branches of the government can dishonorably discharge from their ranks those who violate their codes of conduct.

But just let the church warn negligent, unruly, or disorderly members that they are violating terms of their membership, and the church is accused of meddling. Let the church exercise discipline toward those who will not repent and reform, and the church is guilty of harassment and subject to ridicule, or worse, to a civil lawsuit.

Any organization may mis-trust its members, or violate its own code of ethics. But generally, all the church is trying to do is to save the soul of the offender, warn and protect the offended (the rest of the body), and obey the head of the church (2 Thes. 3: 6). While there may be a case of malpractice occasionally, there seems to be a wide gap of inconsistency, disparity, injustice and hypocrisy

between what we allow secular organizations to do and what we allow the Lord's church to do.

And, in the latter case, let us not forget that the final decision of things pertaining to Christ's body is not going to be determined by the courts of this present world, but by the Lord himself (Jno. 12: 48, 2 Cor. 5: 10, 11).

EYES

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"The eye evolved," say evolutionists. Poor foolish men pretending to be wise; While they are urged to stop and look, and learn That God has made ten billion human eyes.

All alike We talked with an ophthalmologist. He is an eye surgeon with many years' experience. We asked him if he had ever found any eyes further "evolved" than others. He replied that all of them are alike in all their parts. How strange it would have been, with so much "adapting" during "millions of years," that some eyes did not "adapt" differently or faster than others! Would not such an even rate and uniformity by chance have been nearly as great a wonder as the creation itself?

Formed When the Lord God formed man (Gen. 2: 7), He also "formed the eye" (Psalms 94: 9). This marvelous invention was among the systems of organs which together constituted a human being, God's finest creature. The intricacies of each "system" and their harmonious working together "boggle the mind." And all this "happened by chance"? "Please, Professor, don't give me that."

Duplication Perhaps even more wonderful than the rest of the original invention was the devising of the process of reproduction. G. K. Wallace used to say that if, some morning, he found his little car building a nest, he could put Henry Ford out of business. By designing our race to be self-perpetuating the Almighty repeated the "forming" over and over so as to make the billions of peoples' eyes. Never was mass-production more magnificent.

Individual We must conclude that through the generations there was close personal supervision all the while. "Thee" in Isaiah 44: 2 is singular, about **one** person, where the prophet speaks of, "Jehovah who made thee and formed thee from the womb." With the Psalmist (139: 14) each of us can say, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made." We should note "me" and "my" in Verse 13, (NASB and margin of ASV), "For thou didst form my inward parts, Thou didst knit me together in my mother's womb." We can be assured that each pair of eyes receives careful attention. Color and all. they are "custom-built."

Praise Everyone should make a careful study of all the parts and workings of the eye. Meditating about these will cause each Christian more and more to appreciate and praise our great good Creator. As He made every other part of us, so, also, did He form our eyes.

WAKE THE WORLD AND TELL THE PEOPLE

Wilson Adams
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ANTIOCH — THE POWER OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

Romans 8: 29 targets God's plan for your life and mine, that being to become "conformed to the image of His Son." God wants to build into us the same qualities that made Jesus distinct and different. And central to that plan is the local church.

I am convinced that in many instances the local church has been overlooked and under appreciated in God's scheme of individual spiritual development. We need to see the local church as a family of brothers and sisters dedicated to helping each other reach their spiritual potential. A family shows love. A family offers forgiveness. A family exhorts, admonishes, and encourages. And a family not only provides its members with an opportunity to receive but, more importantly, to give. A quick survey of the "one another" injunctions of Scripture ("encourage..." "build up..." "forgive" "greet..." "be devoted to...") reveals in each case the necessity of giving in the context of a local church. And herein lies the problem with the fellow who wishes to divorce himself from the local assembly and be a "Christian at large." He is selfish to the core. He hasn't learned the thrill of giving. Let's face it: there just isn't any way to fulfill our "one another" responsibilities of giving apart from being with one another in a local church. That's what makes the local church so special in God's plan. That's what makes Antioch so exemplary.

Let's move into Acts 13: 1-3 with two observations concerning a church and their enthusiastic commitment to growth.

The Uniqueness of First Generation Christians

For the most part, this was not a collection of people who had "grown up in the church." They were not Christians because mom and dad were Christians (see 11: 20-24). The fact is, they had obeyed the Gospel at tremendous cost. Their decision for Christ had led them away from their upbringing, their family, their way of living. It wasn't easy. They knew all about hardship caused by the good confession. Their cross was heavy. Their price was high. They were first generation Christians.

And just what did it do for those people? It created an inseparable bond of commitment between them and their Lord. They didn't **take it for granted!** That's exactly what made Antioch so powerful. The opposite is what makes many churches today so weak.

Second and third generation Christians have a tendency to take it all for granted. Admittedly, it's one of the toughest struggles I have. As a third generation Christian I reap the benefits of parents and grandparents who have had to study their way out of denominational error, engage in unpleasant confrontation and forge out ideas that are consistent with Scripture. Years later it's a great temptation to take it all for granted and simply view New Testament Christianity with a "ho-hum" mindset. This is no imaginary problem. It's REAL!

That's why I love first generation Christians — their enthusiasm, their willingness to try, their positive outlook and fresh input. First generation Christians challenge my thinking by questioning the basics. They keep me on my toes. They keep me alive. They help this third generation Christian review his commitment. And I need that.

There is something to be said for a church filled with first generation Christians. That is not to say that a church filled with first generation saints will not have some unique problems with which to deal. It will. That is not to say that a congregation doesn't need the teaching and balance that older and wiser people can give. It does. But it is to say that a group of new Christians will be full of zeal, devotion and committed to bringing others to Jesus. I've seen it happen. So have you.

Remember... when you first obeyed the Gospel? That burning excitement? The first Sunday you took the Lord's Supper? The quest to learn more and more? To be more and more? Remember? But days turn into weeks and then months and finally years and before we know what has happened we have lost the edge of appreciation for what we have and who we are. I challenge you: GET IT BACK AGAIN! Rekindle that flame of commitment. Re-light that original fire. The fire is dying in too many local assemblies because we have begun to take it all for granted. Don't. Please don't. Another generation follows in our wake....

But back to balance. Antioch had it. Antioch had the balance of young converts plus seasoned inspired instructors in Barnabus, Paul, Simeon, Lucius and Man-aen (13: 1). Romans 10: 2 pinpoints the problem of imbalance — "zeal for God **but not in accordance with knowledge.**" Enthusiasm without direction in a congregation is disastrous. But when the two are brought together it makes for a living illustration of the power of the local church.

Organized Teaching Program

"Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets **and teachers...**" (verse 1). "Prophets" were men who spoke from God without error. Sometimes they spoke warning, sometimes prediction but always revelation. These men provided the Antioch congregation with special exhortation and guidance directly from God. "Teachers" were those who took the revealed truth from the prophet and gave explanation

and application more fully (see Eph. 4: 11-13). (No doubt, these offices at times overlapped). Obviously today the office of the prophet has been removed for God's entire revelation has been given (1 Cor. 13: 8). And the miraculous element in first century teaching and instruction remains (2 Tim. 4: 1-2).

The point? The church at Antioch was not a hodge-podge, unorganized "who are we gonna' get to preach for us this Sunday?" congregation. There were God-directed men providing the direction, stability and order needed in the church. In 1 Cor. 14: 40 Paul admonished the Corinthians to clean up their assemblies by saying, "**But let all things be done properly and in an orderly manner.**" That's the way it was in Antioch.

Local churches need to give time and attention to conducting orderly worship services. Services need to start on time. Those asked to serve the church need to serve the church. (Nothing grates on me any more than to have a brother appointed to lead in prayer wait until the song is over and then saunter up to the front. He's not waiting on the church. The church is waiting on him!) Those who preach need to recognize time limitations. Those who conduct the singing need to plan for that responsibility. Those who teach Bible classes must teach in a way that captures the attention of their students while modeling the lessons by personal example. Mark it down. A growing church that is alive will be marked by two things; enthusiasm from first generation Christians and order from those grounded in the knowledge of God.

The Result: GROWTH!

There is nothing more exciting than a growing, healthy local body of Christ. It has a magnet effect that draws people together. If you want a thermometer that will register the temperature of a local church, here it is: look at when people come (early or late) and watch how long they stay. I've been in places where some view the assemblies much like pit row at the Indianapolis 500 (zip in and zip out in minimal time). I mean as soon as A-Men!" is said its: vvvrrroooooom! — here they come and there they go! That church has problems.

I don't guess that there is anything more demoralizing than seeing a church once alive, active and healthy go on the decline. The poet, Joyce Kilmer, wrote —
Whenever I walk to Suffern, along the Erie track I go by
a poor old farm house with its shingles broken and black.

I suppose I've passed it a hundred times But
I always stop for a minute And look at that
house, the tragic house, The house with
nobody in it...

There's something worse than a house where nobody is home and that's a church where the flame has gone out. There are places all across this land where the truth of God once echoed off the walls of auditoriums packed with people but which are now houses with nobody in them. God makes no promises here. If you and I fail to live for Jesus Christ with the same enthusiasm and conviction of past generations then we will gradually see what we have slip away. It doesn't have to be.

Look at Antioch. A church of enthusiastic new believers joined with seasoned saints knowledgeable in the

truth of God. Think how exciting it must have been! Think how exciting it CAN BE TODAY if we begin to mirror what we see reflected in that local assembly. It can be done. No. It MUST be done. Another generation hangs in the balance... "... and there arose another generation after them who

did not know the Lord, nor yet the work which He had done..." (Judges 2: 10)

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THE NEWS LETTER REPORTS

"... They rehearsed all that God had done with them..." — Acts 14: 27

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LARRY R. DEVORE, P. O. Box 313, Medina, OH 44258 — We continue to enjoy the work at Medina. In January, a sister was restored from whom we had earlier withdrawn. One was baptized in March and another restored in April. We had a men's training class one night a week from Feb. 25th to May 20th and also have a class for ladies meeting in different homes each Wednesday morning. I was in a meeting at North Ridgeville, Ohio April 16-21 where Ed Holcomb is the preacher. Also, I was at Wooster, Ohio at Burbank Rd. in a meeting May 21-26. Ray Vess is the local preacher.

ERNEST A. FINLEY, 506 Front St., Poteau, OK 74953 — We just concluded a very fine meeting with Don Hastings. Six were baptized and one requested prayers in the meeting and one has been baptized since the meeting closed. This meeting was with the church at Saratoga, Arkansas. I will begin work with the church in Poteau, Oklahoma on June 18. We are looking forward to our work there. Pray for us.

EDGAR J. DYE, 4700 West 28th Ave., Pine Bluff, AR 71603—James W. Adams of Lufkin, Texas was with us July 24-28, 1989 and spoke on Institutionalism and Centralized Cooperatives among churches of Christ, past, present, and future - what they are; what is wrong with them; and the evil fruits which have, and no doubt, will result. (We regret that we received this notice too late for it to appear prior to the event. Again we urge all who wish to have such announcement made before the event, to please give us ample time. We must have your news item five weeks before the issue in which you want it to appear. We wish we did not require so much time but have no choice in the matter. Editor)

TYLENE KENNEDY

TYLENE JOSPEHINE KENNEDY, wife of Dr. Martin Kennedy of Salem, Indiana, passed away quietly on June 5, 1989 at the age of 58. Her husband, Martin, is a dentist in Salem, Indiana and also preaches for the Westside church in Salem. He has served as a deacon at Pekin, Indiana and has done considerable preaching over the last few years, mostly in southern Indiana. She served the Lord faithfully and without fanfare. She is survived by her husband, Martin; one daugh-

ter, Wendy Thompson; two sons, Timothy W. Kennedy and Stephen M. Kennedy, and two grandchildren. Funeral services were conducted at Pekin, Indiana with over 300 present. Harold Comer and Bob Buchanan conducted the services in which there was congregational singing.

— Bob Buchanan

J. DAVID POWLAS, 3430 Kay St., #D-3, Columbia, SC 29210 — I have just completed my first year with the Lower Richland congregation as preacher. In the Columbia metropolitan area, there are 9 institutional churches and 3 non-institutional churches. These three are small in number. We have baptized 2 at Lower Richlands in the past year. We recently completed a gospel meeting with preaching by Chris Reeves from Camden, SC. Chris is a young man in his early 20's and this was his first week-long meeting. He presented the teaching of the Bible just as accurately, boldly and clearly as those men who are widely known in meeting work. He has an understanding of the Scriptures usually characteristic of older men. We highly recommend him to any congregation looking for a man for a gospel meeting. If you have friends or relatives in this area we might contact about the kingdom, please call us at (803) 776-0754 or (803) 772-4371.

LUTHER W. MARTIN, 707 Salem, Rolla, MO 65401 — Would you let the brethren know that I buy and sell preacher's libraries.

BILL CAVENDER, P. O. Box 595, Cullman, AL 35056—Would you let the brethren know of the need of a good man? James W. Shear, P. O. Box 1766, Milledgeville, GA 31061 (Phone 912-452-1212) is losing \$400 a month support from a church here in Cullman County due to internal problems and some folks moving away. There are 31-35 meeting now in Milledgeville and he would like to stay due to the need of the work there. Also his daughter has special needs and is in the state school and work program there where she can be greatly helped. Brother Shear is a good man and a dedicated and experienced preacher who is worthy of support.

(Editor's note: I also have known James W. Shear for many years and concur in what brother Cavender has said. I hope there will be some who will see this and be moved to help him stay in a work where he

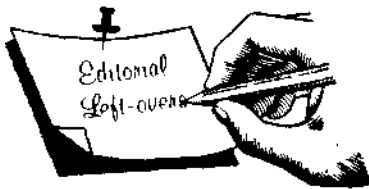
is badly needed. There are 100 counties in the state of Georgia where there is no sound congregation.

EFRAIN F. PEREZ, Apartado 27026, 08080 Barcelona, Spain — I am now preaching for the church meeting in Badalona. There is much to do. We rejoice that five persons have been baptized into Christ for the remission of their sins. We now have a phone number (398-2273). We are thankful to all who make it possible for us to work here.

RANDY S. REESE, SR., P. O. Box 14, Ashiya Shi, Japan 659 — One of the young Japanese men has been teaching his fiancée and she was recently baptized. Two weeks later they were married. We continue to have several studies underway.

ALLEN AND VERLE NICHOLLS, R. R. #1, Dunnville, Ontario, Canada — We made our second trip to Capetown, South Africa this past February-March. Thanks to STS we started to correspond with Eric Reed prior to leaving. He now works in the Capetown area. We also read of the stand of Conrad Steyn and met him through Eric Reed. We were thrilled when they combined their Sunday worship so we could meet them all. We met in the house of one of the members where Conrad preaches. They have no permanent meeting place. Then we traveled a fair distance to Bellville (a suburb of Capetown) for evening service where Hendrick Joubert very ably taught a lesson on prayer in the home of Eric and Sandra Reed. Their home is situated in an "African" stronghold with five large Dutch Reformed churches and they are not allowed to build or rent a place to meet. They have a congregation of blacks, whites and coloureds. We have much admiration for Conrad Steyn and his wife, Ann Marie. They are honest people who walked away from a large congregation, nice building and good support when confronted by error, although this had been their life's work. They are still suffering persecutions through untruths being told about him after all this time. Members who left with them, plus new Christians are planning a new place to worship. A young Jewish couple (new Christians) are taking time from their work and lives to help renovate a house in a new area to worship, a monumental job as well as expensive. The Steyn's son-in-law, George Harris is faithfully working with them. We must pray for these good people and hold up their hands.

(Editor's note: I have known the Nicholls for a number of years and stayed in their home once during a gospel meeting at Wellandport, Ontario. They are people of ordinary means and their trips to visit the brethren in South Africa have been at their own expense and out of regard for the work of the Lord there. This is refreshing, isn't it?)



POUND, VIRGINIA

This column is being written at Pound, Virginia where I am in my third gospel meeting with this congregation of about 70. Pound is located in the extreme western tip of the Commonwealth of Virginia, my home state. I was born and reared in southeastern Virginia far from this mountainous region. Pound is located in the heart of the coal fields which extend through this part of Virginia, West Virginia and the extreme eastern part of Kentucky. There are many signs of prosperity in this part of the country. The rundown looking cabins and shacks that once lined the sides of the highways have long been replaced by modern ranch-type houses with pleasant landscaped yards. Business appears to be booming and there are shopping centers springing up near the outskirts of many of the towns. In the homes of the people, I see no difference in the way people live than in other parts of the country. There are poor people in many parts of the country but the great cities of the northeast and midwest have as many or more than are in evidence here. This is not the picture painted by the news media when they do their documentaries on "poverty in Appalachia."

Leonard Salyers is the preacher here. He is a distinguished man and a hard working preacher of the gospel. I have known him for many

years and have worked with him in a number of gospel meetings over the years. He has been a voice for soundness, sanity and stability. He has led many people to the Lord in his work in Dayton, Ohio, eastern Kentucky and here in western Virginia. The church at Pound is at peace and the members love each other. They have an attractive meeting house and make an effort to let the community know they are here and at work for the Lord. A weekly radio program reaches out and many hear it. There are a number of small congregations scattered through these mountains and among them you will find some devout Christians. I just thought our readers, who have never been in this part of the country, would like to know that there are a number of good brethren in these parts and that the church at Pound, Virginia is alive and well.

THE PREACHER'S PANTS

Several years ago, while in a meeting in west Tennessee, I stayed with a fine older couple who lived on a big farm. It was July and plenty warm. They gave me their bedroom downstairs because it was the coolest room in the house. I hung my clothes in the same closet where they kept theirs. I would get ready for services and vacate the room so they could change without having to move all their things. One night on the way to the meeting, the sister, who was in the back seat suddenly leaned over the seat and said to her husband, "Where'd you get them pants?" Before he could answer, she said, "Oh, my land, you've got on the preacher's pants!" It was too late to go back and change. She was "mortified" and begged me not to tell it. I said "Sister, that is too good a story to keep to myself and I am going to tell it as soon as I get in the pulpit." And I did, much to the delight of her many relatives in the audience.

In case you think preachers lead dull, uninteresting lives, I can tell you otherwise. I have had my shirts put in yard sales, had my toothbrush used to brush the dog's teeth, had to push a dresser against the door to keep ungoverned boys from barging into my room, have preached in the Philippines in an area where there was armed conflict between Muslim rebels and the Philippine army and where fourteen armed soldiers guarded the premises where we slept every night for a week, and have been threatened by bullies who did not like what I preached. Every preacher I have met, who has had much experience, has his own set of stories to tell. The toils, sacrifices and heartaches of many of the pioneer preachers make our more modern-day experiences pale by comparison. Beyond all that, I am humbled every time I read 2 Cor. 11; 23-33. Have you read that lately?

PREACHERS NEEDED

ALBANY, OREGON — The Oak St. church here needs a full time preacher. We are a congregation of about 60, and have our own building. We will be able to partially support a man, although some outside help will be needed. Possibly we could help in securing this support. If interested please contact Chuck Carroll, P. O. Box 454, Albany, Oregon 97321, or call (503) 926-7670, or leave a message at (503) 928-5286.

CLEVELAND, MISSISSIPPI — This small congregation (35-40), 100 miles south of Memphis, Tennessee, and 100 miles north of Jackson, MS, needs a full time preacher. We own our own property but cannot supply full support. In the past, two other congregations have helped the local preacher in his support. Call Allen Williams at (601) 843-1532.

CALGARY, ALBERTA — The Northside church in this city of 600,000 needs a full time gospel preacher. We now have 35-40 members. We would prefer a man between 30-40 who has had some experience dealing with institutionalism. There is a large liberal church here. There is much work to do in this area where there are so many people. If interested, write: Wayne Bailey, 1707, 620-67 Ave, S. W., Calgary, Alberta, Canada T2V 0M2. Or call (403) 258-1358.

IN THE NEWS THIS MONTH

BAPTISMS	270
RESTORATIONS	47

(Taken from bulletins and papers received by the editor)