

Contending FOR THE Faith™

FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THE TRUTH AND HATE ERROR

[The following article is the first chapter of the late brother G. C. Brewer's book, The Model Church, McQuiddy Printing Co., NASHVILLE, TN, 1919. —Editor]

WHAT CONSTITUTES A CONGREGATION

G. C. BREWER

The Church General. The church of Christ, in its universal sense, includes all Christians. It is the family of God; and, of course, it contains all of God's children. There is no such thing known to the Bible as first becoming a Christian and afterwards joining the church. Some men of the present time may teach that sort of doctrine, but it has come as a result of the many religious parties and denominations which now exist, but which are all also unknown to the Bible. Certainly one may become a Christian before one joins any particular religious party, and one may live as a Christian and never join any religious party or denomination; but when one becomes a Christian, one then and thereby becomes a child of God, a member of the family of God, which is the same as the church of God.

Religious people of today frequently have union meetings, in which they convert people, make Christians of them (they claim), and then urge them to "join some church"—to "join the church of your [their] choice." But we never read of anything like that in the Bible. In the days of the apostles people obeyed the gospel, and that added them to the church. It is said that the Lord added them to the church, because that is the Lord's way of making church members. (Acts 2:37-47.) They did not join some denomination or have some preacher add them to his communion according to his rules

of receiving members—the rules of his creed. It would be interesting to hear some denominational preacher tell what church the Ethiopian officer became a member of when he obeyed the gospel under the preaching of Philip (Acts 8). In the same chapter, we read that Philip went down to Samaria and preached the gospel, and verse 12 says: "**But when they believed Philip preaching good tidings concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.**" There is nothing said about these people joining the church; that expression is never found in the Bible; but are we to suppose that they were not members of the church?

Paul went to Corinth to preach the gospel, and we read that "**many of the Corinthians hearing believed, and were baptized**" (Acts 18:8). Did that constitute them members of the church? If so, what church? If that made them members of the church of God, then, without doubt, we have learned how we may become members of God's church to-day. That they did become members of the church of God is clearly proved by the fact that Paul wrote them a letter and addressed it to "**the church of God which is at Corinth.**" Those who at Corinth heard, believed, and were baptized constituted the church of God at Corinth. If people will now hear the gospel, believe the gospel, repent of their sins, and be baptized into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, they will then be children of God, Christians, members of the church of God; and there is no need for them to join any human organization, with a human head

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Contending FOR THE Faith™

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Ira Y. Rice, Jr., Founder
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Editorial...

RESTORING CHRISTIAN LIVING

Many years ago I heard the late Guy N. Woods say we have restored the Bible as the only rule of faith and practice in religion. Moreover, we have restored the plan of salvation, and the church in her organization, work, worship, and her eternal home. However, we continue to have far, far to go in restoring Christian conduct in the lives of many church members. As a young preacher, I believed brother Woods comment. I believed it because I knew most of the New Testament was written to Christians to teach them that becoming a Christian was not enough, but that one had to remain faithful to the Lord all of one's life. Also, after almost 60 years of preaching the gospel, I can truthfully say that my experiences as a member of the Lord's church testify to the veracity of brother Woods sage comment of years ago.

Sadly, God's people have been known to tolerate all sorts and sizes of sin among themselves—especially sins of omission. It is easy for certain brethren to ignore certain sins as long as those guilty of them do not impact them personally.

Elders can know that certain brethren miss church assemblies regularly, but fail to show much interest in learning why or attempting to do all the New Testament teaches about the same. Some see no reason to get involved in shepherding the personal lives of brethren. After all, to get involved in the personal lives of individual church members takes too much time away from other matters of this present world that they had rather be doing, not to mention the "Pandora's box" of troubles that getting involved with members would open. It is much easier to be elders in name and position only. Thus, such "elders" do not desire to get involved with what is necessary to shepherd each one of the Lord's sheep under their watch/care. To get personally involved with the members they oversee will possibly bring to light things about certain members they had rather not know. After all, ignorance is bliss, isn't it?

Elders who are "glad-handers" and "good humor men," promoting the "go along to get along" attitude in dealing with church members are not going to get too involved with the members lest they find themselves having to oppose sin in one's life. "Elders" of this stripe do not want anyone to get angry with them. Further, if elders get too involved with how members are living they may be compelled to consider practicing corrective church discipline to the point of leading the church in withdrawing fellowship from a rebellious disorderly, unrepentant church member. And, to elders who live and breathe the worldly view of "how to win friends and influence people," getting personally involved with the members will make the philosophy of "go along to get along" blow up in their faces.

Has the church in many places become a "come as you

are and live as you please” crowd, holding on to the New Testament form of the church in her work, organization, etc., but condoning the members living as they please? The rank liberal churches (those who by their teaching and/or conduct loose brethren from what the Bible binds on them) have some time ago “thrown in the proverbial towel” when it comes to the New Testament being the only infallible pattern for restoring the scriptural terms of entrance into the church as well as the inspired pattern for the organization, worship, and work of the same. That being the case, it is only a small step from the foregoing for elderships and churches to tolerate church members living in various sins—adultery, drinking beverage alcohol, participating in the modern dance, wearing immodest clothing, and involving themselves in all kinds of worldly conduct and believing various false doctrines.

Operating from a sick, subjective, syrupy, sentimental emotionalism that liberal church members have been taught to believe is biblical love, they oppose rebuking, exposing, and condemning the rebellious. Of course, they also oppose pleading with and begging the erring to repent of their sins. After all, few church members want to be thought of as being “judgmental,” even though Jesus said, **“Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment”** (John 7:24; See Psa. 119:172 for God’s definition of righteousness). He also taught, **“Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them”** (Mat. 7:20). In fact, Jesus declared, **“Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him”** (Luke 17:3). There is a judgment that is wrong and we must not engage in it. However, there is a judgment that is right and, if we would be faithful to Christ, we must engage in it (Mat. 7:1; John 7:24). It is as much of a sin to omit the judgment Jesus enjoins upon us as it is to engage in the judgment He condemns. The truth of the matter about judging is that one cannot live without making judgments about all sorts of things. And, those who condemn judging, end up engaging in it as they seek to condemn it. What hypocrites! Of course, one must have the scriptural motive behind and standard

for making scriptural judgments (1 Cor. 13; Col. 3:17; John 12:48). Indeed, the reader of this article will judge this article as to its worth. But woe to the person who judges that one should not judge anything or anyone under any and all circumstances and situations. If one cannot see what the previous sentence indicates about a person who would do that, then that one is beyond, at least, my help.

But the foregoing is not all the story. Among the churches that continue at least to give “lip service” to restoring ancient, pure, primitive, New Testament Christianity, there continues to be the growing attitude among elders and other members to stay aloof from the personal lives of brethren for reasons previously noted in this article. Nevermind what we are taught to do in such scriptures as Galatians 6:1, 10. As the attitude mentioned becomes more and more acceptable, then other errors will slide into the various congregations. If such goes on unchecked, these churches will in time reject the New Testament pattern for the church and walk with the likes of Rubel Shelly, Max Lucado, et al., ending up in the middle of the evil they once opposed.

Paul taught the church at Corinth,

Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore, let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth (1 Cor. 5:6-8).

The denominational world does not believe Acts 2:38, 10:48, et al. But sadly, many members of the Lord’s church do not believe what Paul said to the brethren at Corinth as he wrote part of the New Testament—the document that will be the infallible standard by which the world and the church will be judged on that last day (John 12:48; 2 Cor. 5:10). Let us honestly, prayerfully, and scripturally engage in righteous judgment throughout our lives, beginning with ourselves, so we will not be condemned at the final judgment.

—David P. Brown, Editor

ARE WE TOO TOLERANT?

Foster L. Ramsey

We are living in an age when it is popular to be tolerant and broad-minded. In fact, if you do not have the attitude of broad-mindedness, you are looked down upon and left out of many things. Almost everything points to the fact that most people have become entirely too broad-minded, too tolerant. We realize that the following will not apply to some people, but we also realize that it is the prevalent attitude of the day.

For some reason or other, it is considered funny to see a person who is drunk. Most people laugh at the disgusting antics of the one who has drunk too much beer, wine, or whiskey.

The American people have come to tolerate and condone the evil

divorce. Despite the fact that broken homes breed broken morals and crime, we tolerate the calamity of divorce and have come to accept it as a part of the American way of life

Immorality and corruption in the lives of those in high places have been taken for granted. It has been accepted as a matter of course that such things have to be, therefore we have come to tolerate them.

All of this indicates a change in the thinking of men and women. Such things would not have been acceptable to the majority of people in years gone by. It also denoted a lack of moral fiber that should be present in the lives of the men and women of our country. [From 70 years ago. *Firm Foundation*, 2/2/1952—*Editor*]

—Deceased

**[THE MORAL AND SPIRITUAL MESS OF TODAY
DID NOT BEGIN YESTERDAY—EDITOR]**

(Continued From Page 1)

and a human creed, in order to live the Christian life. They can and they should do all the Lord commands them to do in the name of the Lord, and not in the name of some human society; as Christians, and not as Campbellites, as Methodists, as Baptists, or as Presbyterians.

But some one may say that there must be some system, some organization, or some understanding before the Lord's work can be done. That is exactly true, and it is the purpose of the following chapters to point out the system that God has ordained. Because the church of the New Testament is not a great ecclesiasticism, with a human head and man-made methods, no one should suppose that there is not, therefore, any organization or any system about the Lord's work. The Lord's plans are perfect; and if his pattern is followed, the Lord's children will live in harmony and their work will be done regularly, systematically, and enthusiastically. You are invited, therefore, to a careful study of the Lord's plans.

The Church Local. Those who have obeyed the gospel as described above constitute the church of God in any locality. But the Lord has ordained that they should unite their efforts or band themselves together in order to carry out his appointments and to be mutually helpful one to another; and thus they become an organization, which we usually designate as a congregation. The word *congregation* has about the same meaning as the word *church*, but we more often use the latter word in its universal sense the *church*, including all Christians; hence, all congregations or local churches. The Greek word for "church" is *ecclesia* and means "assembly." The word *congregation* is from the two Latin words *con* and *grex*. *Con* means "together" and *grex* means "a flock." Hence, a congregation means a flock together or a flock assembled. To take the word literally, therefore, Christians compose a congregation only when they are congregated or assembled. But we use the word to mean those in a town or community who meet together for worship at a stated place and at appointed times. But the place of worship must be prepared and maintained and the time must be agreed on. This, if there were nothing else, would necessitate some sort of organization; but there are many other and far more important things to be done, and the Lord has ordained that every congregation shall be an organization with divinely appointed officers. There is no organization in the church of God larger than the local church, and every church is independent of every other church and has its own bishops and deacons. No church is, therefore, a model church, does not fill the divine measure, till it has appointed men, who are scripturally qualified, as bishops or elders or overseers or pastors. (All these terms designate the same office.) There may be—yes, there are—many congregations that do not have men who meet the requirements of an elder, and in a case of that kind it is better to remain scripturally unorganized (because not full grown) than to become unscripturally organized. In a band of conscientious and zealous Christians men should soon grow

to the divine pattern laid for an elder. The duty of developing elders will be considered in another chapter.

But some one may protest that it is not necessary to have bishops in every congregation. In reply, it would only be necessary to say that if every congregation is not to have bishops there should be no bishops at all, for it is certain that the bishops of one congregation have no authority to oversee the affairs of another congregation. They have authority in only the one congregation. All the ecclesiasticisms and hierarchies of the present day have come as a direct result of a failure to observe that principle—the principle of congregational independence. If there are to be no elders or bishops at all, what would constitute a congregation, and in what sense would it be an organization? How could order be maintained or discipline be enforced?

Nothing is more plainly taught than that the New Testament churches all had elders over them. The mother church at Jerusalem had in it the twelve apostles, but it also had elders—not the apostles as elders, but we read of the apostles and elders. "**The apostles and the elders were gathered together**" (Acts 15:6). "**Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church**" (Acts 15:22). The letter to the Gentiles began: "**The apostles and the elders, brethren,**" to those in Antioch, etc. (Acts 15:23). Paul, who had great anxiety for all the churches and who returned to them again and again to see how they fared, "**appointed for them elders in every church**" (Acts 14:23). The Holy Spirit, probably through Paul, had made certain men elders in the church at Ephesus (Acts 20:28). It is evident, too, that the church at Thessalonica had elders, for Paul exhorts that church to esteem highly its elders—those who "**are over you in the Lord**" (1 The. 5:12). The church at Philippi is often called "a model church," and it is certain it had both bishops and deacons, for Paul addresses them as follows: "**Paul and Timothy, servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus that are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons**" (Phi. 1:1). If there is any further need of proof, it is supplied by Paul's charge to Titus. To him he said: "**For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that were wanting, and appoint elders in every city, as I gave thee charge**" (Tit. 1:5). Paul also gave Timothy full instructions as to what sort of men to appoint as elders, which shows clearly that to set things in order—to perfect each organization and to appoint elders in each congregation was also a part of Timothy's charge.

From the instructions given to the churches of Galatia and Corinth we learn that each church had a common fund or treasury into which they put their contributions each Lord's day—contributing as the Lord had prospered them; and this shows the necessity of having some one to have charge of the funds and to look after the disbursements.

In the face of all this plain teaching of the New Testament, can any one deny that all scriptural congregations are organized—each one an independent organization, with di-

vinely appointed officers.

Membership. It is now in order to consider the question of membership in a congregation. Since God has ordained that certain men should be overseers, it is inevitable that there should be others over whom this oversight is exercised. And these persons must submit to this oversight and in some way make known their willingness to be under the rule, discipline, and watch care of the elders; otherwise there could be no elders, and hence no divine organization. When a Christian severs his connection with one congregation—goes from under the oversight of one set of elders—he must, if he wishes to respect the Lord’s order, unite himself with the congregation where he goes and publicly make known his willingness to be under that eldership. Much teaching is needed on this point.

The condition in some cities, and even in some rural districts, is such that the individual drifts from one congregation to another not claiming to be members of any local congregation or church. Such persons are clearly out of harmony with the will of God and are hindering his cause.

Again, there can occasionally be found a brother, who is neither as wise as a serpent nor as harmless as a dove, but who is rather more hobbyistic than holy, who will prate against keeping a church roll and against “putting in membership” or “taking membership” with a congregation. But men of that kind would thwart the divine arrangement and defeat the plan of God. How can the elder have charge of persons to watch concerning their souls without knowing who is thus committed to him? And how can he exercise the divine function of oversight, rule, control, etc., unless the persons submit themselves to him? Just such objections as we are here considering have resulted in the disorganized condition of the churches all over the country. They have nullified the work of elders and have robbed the church of the living God of its power in every place where their influence is felt. People hear the gospel and are converted to Christ; but the church, which should offer them a home and spiritual food, recognizes them just long enough to count them and report a “big meeting,” and then goes on splitting hairs, wrangling, and riding hobbies, and these babes in Christ straightway go back into the world. Not only is this too frequently the case, but it is also a fact susceptible of demonstration that a large percent of our own children are growing up and either joining some denomination or remaining unbelievers. This condition must not be allowed to continue. If Christianity is not strong enough to impress itself upon one who has been under its influence from infancy through all the years of adolescence—the formative period of life how will it ever overcome its bitter antagonists? How can we say, “**This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith,**” if our faith doesn’t even overcome those nearest to us? Is the fault in the principle of the religion, or is it in our lives? Is the fault in the faith or in our faith—rather, our lack of faith? These questions get close to the secrets of our lives,

and we should all give them careful and conscientious consideration. Too frequently we find people whose faith seems to be in some doctrine, theory, or hobby, and not in Christ. Their efforts are prompted by partisan zeal, and their only exertions in the name of religion are when some opponent attacks what “we” believe; then they will rush with might and main, muscle and money, to the defense of “*our doctrine.*” They love “our doctrine,” but they manifest but little love for the millions of souls that are perishing at home and abroad for the want of the gospel of our blessed Lord. They can argue eloquently that only those who hear the sayings of Christ and do them can be saved; they can prove by numerous passages of scripture that one who refuses to be baptized has not done the will of Christ—is a rebel against his authority and command; but they seem to be utterly unable to see that if they fail to contribute of their means as the Lord has prospered them, if they fail to regard the Lord’s appointed order in the congregation, if they do not read the Scriptures, pray, repent, and confess their sins, forgive one another, love one another, and bear one another’s burdens, they are also not doing the Lord’s will—they also are rebels. The worst and saddest of all is that they are self-deceived. They think they are Christians. There are not many of that type, however; and it is hoped that they will become fewer and fewer.

Every congregation organized after the New Testament order should be a missionary society and every member a campaigner for Christ. Forsaking not “**their own assembling,**” but “**exhorting each other daily,**” they labor together in mutual helpfulness; and when one member suffers, all the members suffer with him; and when a member moves out of the town or community, he departs with the blessings of the church and with letters to commend him to the brethren wherever he may go. Then they will receive him readily and give him the encouragement and spiritual help that he needs and must have in order to be faithful.

Under our present slipshod way of doing things, any sort of schismatic or hobbyist may tear up a church and then go to another and be received and get in his evil work there before he is known; or even one who has been withdrawn from by a congregation for unchristian conduct, incest, or immorality may go to another congregation and be received. We are a long way from the New Testament.

In a scriptural congregation, if a member leaves without formally severing his connection with the congregation by asking for a letter, the faithful elders will soon miss him and find out where he has gone, and then communicate with the elders of his nearest congregation concerning him. Yes, and they will communicate with the brother himself, for they watch concerning his soul. So perfect is the Lord’s arrangements.

—Deceased

NATHAN AS A PREACHER*

Thomas F. Eaves

NATHAN THE MAN

Nathan is first introduced in 2 Samuel 7:1 as a prophet. His name means gift¹, and very little is known of this court prophet or his family. 1 Kings 4:5 mentions a Nathan who is the father of Azariah and Zabud who were chief officers of Solomon. Some think that this was Nathan the prophet whom we have under consideration.²

1 Chronicles 29:29; 2 Chronicles 9:29 refer to “The Words” or rather “The Acts of Nathan the Prophet” as well as those of Samuel and Gad. “There can be no doubt that these are nothing more than references to the narratives in which Samuel, Nathan, and Gad are mentioned in our books of Samuel.” (Curtis on 1 Chr. 29:29). In 1 Chr. 29:25, sanction is claimed for Levitical temple-music as being commanded by God through Nathan and Gad.³

It has also been noted that Nathan is always referred to as a “**prophet**” in Samuel and Kings and never as a “**seer**.”⁴

Nathan is mentioned several times in the Old Testament but there are only three main events recorded concerning him. In two of the three instances, he had a message from God to be delivered to the King of Israel (2 Sam. 7 and 12). In the third account, he was an active participant in anointing Solomon to be King over Israel (1 Kin. 1:32-40).

NATHAN’S MESSAGES

FIRST MESSAGE: “THOU SHALT NOT BUILD...”

From the parallel accounts of this event (2 Sam. 7:1ff; 1 Chr. 17:1-15) we learn that king David desired to build a house for Jehovah. After the ark had been brought to Jerusalem, David became aware of the inconsistency of the picture. He dwelt in a house of cedar while the ark of Jehovah God was residing in curtains. Making his plans known to Nathan the prophet, he received words of encouragement. “**And Nathan said to the King, Go do all that is in thy heart: for Jehovah is with thee**” (2 Sam. 7:3).

That night, however, God appeared to Nathan with a message for David. “**...Thou shalt not build me a house to dwell in**” (1 Chr. 17:4). The reason for this refusal is stated in 1 Kings 5:3 and 1 Chronicles 28:2-3. David had been a man of war and had shed blood. God revealed unto David that his dynasty would continue and that one of his sons would build the house for Jehovah (1 Sam. 7:13).

Nathan, the prophet of God, faithfully fulfilled his mission. “**According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David**” (2 Sam. 7:17). How difficult it must have been for Nathan to take this negative message to the King who had set his heart on build-

ing a house for God.

SECOND MESSAGE: “THOU ART THE MAN.”

David, the son of Jesse, is described by God himself as, “**a man after my heart**” (Acts 13:22). Without a doubt one of the darkest days in the life of David was when he sinned with Uriah’s wife Bathsheba.

And it came to pass at eventide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king’s house: and from the roof he saw a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon. And David sent and inquired after the woman. And one said, Is not this Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam—the wife of Uriah the Hittite? And David sent messengers, and took her; and she came in unto him, and he lay with her (for she was purified from her uncleanness); and she returned unto her house. And the woman conceived; and she sent and told David, and said, I am with child (2 Sam. 11:2-5).

Following Bathsheba’s message, David immediately attempted to cover his sin. However, in the swift moving events that followed, he only succeeded in piling sin upon sin. David the King: lied (2 Sam. 11:6-12); made Uriah drunk (2 Sam. 11:13); plotted and ordered Uriah’s death (2 Sam. 11:14-15—Uriah, returning to the army and Joab, carried his own death warrant); and after Uriah’s death David lied again when he sent word to Joab saying, “**let not this thing displease thee, for the sword devoureth one as well as another**” (2 Sam. 11:25). Uriah was not simply slain in battle, he was killed in an attempt to cover sin. No matter how hard David attempted to cover his sin with Bathsheba, David was unsuccessful and 2 Samuel 11 closes with the words, “**But the thing that David had done displeased Jehovah**” (v. 27b).

The inspired record in 2 Samuel 12:1-7 tells us that Jehovah God once again sends Nathan to David with a message.

And Jehovah sent Nathan unto David. And he came unto him, and said unto him, There were two men in one city; the one rich, and the other poor. The rich man had exceeding many flocks and herds; but the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own morsel, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter. And there came a traveller unto the rich man, and he spared to take of his own flock and of his own herd, to dress for the wayfaring man that was come unto him, but took the poor man’s lamb, and dressed it for the man that was come to him. And David’s anger was greatly kindled

against the man; and he said to Nathan, As Jehovah liveth, the man that hath done this is worthy to die: and he shall restore the lamb four-fold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity. And Nathan said to David, Thou art the man.

After he had delivered God's message to David, established guilt, and identified David as the guilty party, Nathan reveals the punishment to be meted out to David.

- 1) The sword shall never depart from thy house (12:10).
- 2) I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house (12:11).
- 3) I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbor (12:11).
- 4) The child to be born to Bathsheba would die (12:14).

Once again Nathan delivers God's message to David with great boldness.

NATHAN AS A PREACHER

The word *preacher* is translated from the Greek *kērux* which means a herald or proclaimer of public proclamations.⁵ Barclay says of this word "Kērux is the Greek word for herald, and the herald was the man who brought a message direct from the King."⁶ This word describes the preaching of Jesus, Paul, Peter and many others and should describe the preaching of today. Barclay describes the herald in the following manner.

- 1) The herald had in his voice a note of certainty. There was no doubt about his message; he did not come with "perhapses" and maybes and "probably;" he came with a definite and indisputable message.
- 2) The herald had in his voice the note of authority. He was speaking for the King; he was laying down and announcing the king's law, the king's commands, and the king's decision.
- 3) The herald's message came from a source beyond himself, it came from the king. Preaching speaks from a source beyond the preacher: It is not the expression of one man's personal opinions; it is the voice of God transmitted through one man to the people.⁷

Look carefully at the work of Nathan through the meaning of the word *preacher*.

1. Nathan's message came from a source beyond himself. **"...the word of Jehovah came unto Nathan..."** (2 Sam. 7:4), and **"...Jehovah sent Nathan unto David"** (2 Sam. 12:1).

2. Nathan had in his voice a note of authority, **"God said."**

3. Nathan had in his voice a note of certainty. There was no way David could misunderstand. **"Thou shalt not build me a house to dwell in"** (1 Chr. 17:4), and **"...thou art the man"** (2 Sam. 12:7).

No one can view the life and work of Nathan without discovering the characteristics of a dedicated life. Nathan loved God and was courageous in obeying the instructions of God.

HERALDS OF THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST

Those of us who are faithfully preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ today are heralds of King Jesus. We have been sent by the king. **"Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"** (Mat. 28:19). **"Preach the word; be urgent in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long suffering and teaching"** (2 Tim. 4:2).

The King has commanded, **"GO"** and **"PREACH."** Brethren, we, like Nathan, have a message. We are to proclaim God's Word (2 Tim. 4:2), the only way of salvation for the sinner (Rom. 1:16), and the only way of life for the Christian (Rom. 12:1-2). As we study the work of Nathan, we should be concerned with one question: Are we delivering the message as Nathan did, or are we like the hireling of John 10:12-13?

GOD'S MESSAGE TODAY

Our message is a message of salvation to those who are out of Jesus Christ. This message should be preached boldly in love to all of God's Creation. As heralds of God we have no authority to change the message in any way but must, as Peter on Pentecost, declare the whole counsel of God (Acts 2). Peter preached Jesus (Acts 2:29-35); He declared Jesus to be both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36); He convicted his hearers of guilt (Acts 2:36, 37); and He instructed them how to rid themselves of sin (Acts 2:38-41). This is God's only message of salvation to the sinner. Some who profess to be heralds of the King today boast, "I never preach on 'first principles' or the 'plan of salvation.'" Then my brother you are not proclaiming all of the King's message and may the day hasten when you realize your tragic mistake.

Our message is a message of morality to those in and out of the Kingdom. Our King says, "dress in modest apparel" (1 Tim. 2:9), **"...let your light shine before men; that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven"** (Mat. 5:16). **ARE WE HERALDING THE MESSAGE?**

We live in a society where adultery is practiced openly, defended by many under pseudo respectable terms such as swinging, making love, or the blasphemous description, "trial marriages." While the world jokes about this sinful relationship, novels are written to guide minds through the valley of illicit affairs, while movies and television programs are produced to glorify this degrading act. Meanwhile, in the Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ some professing Christians openly practice adultery without being disciplined and some so-called-preachers teach God's children to commit

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adultery (as Jezebel of old, Rev. 2:20) because of their man-satisfying doctrine on marriage, divorce and remarriage.

The Kings message is clear: Genesis 2:18-25; Matthew 19:1-9; Romans 7:1-4; and 1 Corinthians 7:39. Brethren, let's be faithful in proclaiming it.

The time has already passed when God's heralds should forcefully teach that the Christian's body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19-20) and the use or misuse of anything which is detrimental to the physical body is a sin and hinders our effectiveness as we work in the Kingdom of God (Mat. 5:16).

"But, brother Eaves, if we condemn worldliness we will be at odds with the most influential brethren within the congregation." Brethren let's be like Nathan and go to the King himself if the occasion demands it! There may be some kings and queens in the church today, but God's message **MUST** be **PREACHED!** Paul states in 1 Corinthians 9:16, "**for woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel.**"

Nathan stood with God against ALL. Nathan faithfully delivered God's message. I pray that God will raise up more

preachers cut from the same mold as Nathan, and that he will give us the strength and courage to be like Nathan the preacher.

FOOTNOTES

* *American Standard Version*, 1901

1. David Francis Roberts, "Nathan," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia IV* (1955), 2120.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 2121

3. *Ibid.*, p. 2121

4. *Ibid.*, p. 2121

5. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of The New Testament* (Chicago; University of Chicago Press), p. 432.

6. William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1958) vol. 1, p. 69.

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 69-70.

—Deceased